Cyberbullying, School Violence, and Youth Suicide

Mark Leopold Bennett Trachtenbroit

University of Southern Mississippi

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The University of Southern Mississippi

CYBERBULLYING, SCHOOL VIOLENCE, AND YOUTH SUICIDE

by

Mark Leopold Bennett Trachtenbroit

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2011
ABSTRACT

CYBERBULLYING, SCHOOL VIOLENCE, AND YOUTH SUICIDE

By Mark Leopold Bennett Trachtenbroit

December 2011

The frequency of occurrences of cyberbullying among school aged children and its co-occurrence with school violence and risk factors associated with youth suicide have been quantified in numerous national studies in recent years. However, the degree to which school administrators, school teachers, and school counselors at the middle school and high school levels are aware of these national statistics regarding cyberbullying has not been thoroughly researched. The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was developed to assess educator awareness of cyberbullying. Secondary school educators in this study were found to have inadequate awareness of the national statistics regarding cyberbullying, underestimating the number of secondary school students that cyberbullying affects and underestimating the linkages between cyberbullying and physical aggression, physical injury and carrying a weapon to school while overestimating the likelihood that students who are cyberbullied will attempt suicide. Underestimation of the problem of cyberbullying and its association with school violence at the local school level can have dire and sometimes deadly consequences at school and in the community. As well, lack of appropriate preparation for and response to the problem of cyberbullying at the local school level may result in risk of liability and litigation.
The University of Southern Mississippi

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
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Approved:

Dr. Rose McNeese
Director

Dr. Tammy Greer

Dr. David Lee

Dr. Ronald Styron

Dr. Susan Siltanen
Dean of the Graduate School

December 2011
DEDICATION

The writer dedicates this dissertation to the memory of his father, Morton Trachtenbroit.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

With advances in technology that are regularly used by youth to communicate, such as the Internet and cellular phones, a new form of school bullying has emerged, referred to as “cyberbullying” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Cyberbullying is a behavior that has recently been linked to school violence and youth suicide. National rates of cyberbullying are 3.7% for 12-18-year olds based on 2007 data from government databases (Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, 2009). However, anonymous online surveys of nearly 1,500 youth found rates of cyberbullying in the 70-75% range in 2005 and 2008 (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; National Crime Prevention Council: Stop Cyberbullying Before it Starts, 2007). Even using the more conservative government statistics, cyberbullying affects approximately one million youth in the United States.

Cyberbullying

Twenty-first century technologies and related emerging tools bestow unprecedented benefits to educators as well as learners. At the same time, these advantages that provide youth educational assistance unparalleled in history, carry with them dangerous and sometimes life threatening consequences. A new phenomenon, coined cyberbullying, is creating havoc in and for educational institutions.

Cyberbullying is defined as the willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Cyberbullying is a growing concern among school administrators who find that it is one of the most difficult behaviors to identify and control (McCuistion, 2008). National
studies have placed the risk of children ages 12 to 17 being targets of cyberbullying as high as 72% (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

Cyberbullying and Violent Consequences

Research indicates that cyberbullying is associated with violence and student attempted suicide. Patchin and Hinduja (2006) stated, “The negative effects inherent in cyberbullying…are not slight or trivial and have potential to inflict serious psychological, emotional, or social harm” (p.149). When experienced among members of this highly impressionable and often volatile adolescent population, this harm can result in violence, injury, and even death (Meadows, Bergal, Helling, Odell, Piligian, & Howard, 2005; Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002) and eventually criminality for both the initiator and recipient of bullying (Olweus & Limber, 1999; Patchin, 2002).

Ybarra, Diener-West and Leaf (2007) found that victims of cyberbullying were 1.5 times more likely to have attempted suicide than those who were neither the victim of nor the perpetrator of cyberbullying. These rates are significantly higher than the national suicide attempt rate of 7% for youth grades 9-12 as reported in the Youth Suicide (2009) publication of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This same publication reported that boys were more likely to have complete suicide at 84% than girls who completed suicide at 16%.

Cyberbullying and School Liability

Willard (2007), an attorney and noted legal authority on cyberbullying, discussed the authority and responsibility of school officials in responding to cyberbullying. The author stated that there is, to date, no case law regarding the use of a school district’s
Internet in a negligence case but indicated that the legal question in a negligence case would be, “Did the school exercise a reasonable standard of care?” (Willard, 2007, p. S65), while under civil rights statutes the legal question would be, “Did the school effectively cause, encourage, accept, tolerate, or fail to correct a hostile environment?” (Willard, 2007, p. S65).

Willard (2007) also argued that under *Tinker v. Des Moines*, (1969) a case could be made that a school district may be liable for online harmful speech (both on campus and off campus) “if a school official has actual knowledge of online harmful speech that has created a hostile educational environment that is impairing the ability of the student protected under any of the civil rights statutes to receive an education, that official must take corrective action” (p. S65). Willard (2007) further contended that under *Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District* (1998) that “a school district could be held liable if: (a) an appropriate school official has actual knowledge of discrimination; (b) the school official has authority to take corrective action to address the discrimination; (c) the school official fails to respond adequately; and (d) the inadequate response amounts to deliberate indifference” (p. S65).

Theoretical Framework

Miller and Dollard (1941) authored *Social Learning and Imitation*. This work presented a behavioral model of learning in which observers learn by watching what others do and by imitating these observed actions. Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory built upon the work of Miller and Dollard (1941), incorporating a cognitive behavioral framework. The social learning theory of Bandura may be used to explain how cyberbullying behavior develops in children. Bandura (1977) explained the
importance of learning as:

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information services as a guide for action. Because people can learn from examples of what to do, at least in approximate form, before performing any behavior, they are spared needless errors. (p. 22)

Bandura (1977) discussed the effect of observing unpunished behavior and stated, “Exposure to unpunished transgressions tends to increase prohibited behavior in observers” (p. 121). Infrequently unpunished behavior “has an especially weak restraining effect on people whose range of options for securing valued rewards is limited largely to anti-social means” (Bandura, 1977, p. 121). By the 1980s, Bandura embraced the term social cognitive theory to discuss his theory or learning rather than the term social learning theory.

Cyberbullying is a largely covert behavior where perpetrators may be difficult to identify and observers may be very large in number. As a result, the likelihood of observed punishment for cyberbullying is, at this point in time, minimal. Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory provides a framework for understanding how cyberbullying behavior develops and is maintained in normal school aged child populations through a combination of vicarious learning and absence of negative consequences where punishment is expected. This model is particularly potent for those school aged children whose options for securing valued rewards are limited and for whom antisocial behavior
becomes an avenue toward achieving status and recognition in the peer group.

Mouttapa, Valente, Gallaher, Rohrbach, and Unger (2004) sought to identify the social network predictors of bullying and victimization. These authors found that social cognitive theory rather than dominance theory, which postulates that aggression facilitates access to a central position in the peer network, best explained the friendship patterns associated with bullying, victimization and aggressive victimization among adolescents (Hawley 1999).

Research has indicated that children in the United States are exposed to an alarming rate of violence in their lifetimes. Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod and Hamby (2009) conducted a comprehensive national survey of children’s exposure to violence from birth to 17 years 11 months of age. For all children surveyed, their lifetime-prevalence for exposure to any (a) physical assault was 56.7%, (b) assault with no weapon or injury was 47.5%, (c) assault by a juvenile sibling was 37.2%, (d) teasing or emotional bullying was 29.5%, (e) assault by peer was 27.5%, (f) bullying was 21.6%, (g) assault with injury was 15.3%, (h) assault with a weapon was 9.8%, (i) assault by a gang or group was 3.7%, (j) bias attack was 3.0%, (k) Internet harassment was 2.5%, and (l) dating violence was 2.1% (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

Current Trends in School Safety

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) fulfills a congressional mandate to report comprehensive statistics on education in the United States, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is the federal entity responsible for disseminating statistical information about crime in the United States. NCES, BJS, and the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) have jointly produced the *Indicators of School Crime and
Safety (Dinkes et al., 2009) on an annual basis for the past 11 years. Dinkes et al. (2009) are the authors of the most recent Indicators of School Crime and Safety report. Dinkes et al. (2009) reported that children remain at far greater risk for serious violent crime away from school than at school. However, these authors found that children are not immune from violence, even at school and that bullying is the single school violence indicator that is significantly increasing at this time. The social cognitive theory of learning may explain this trend when children are being exposed relatively frequently to bullying behaviors for which they expect to be punished but which are only punished infrequently if at all.

Frequency of Crimes in Schools

Current research illustrates that of the reported crimes studied within the school environment, a large number of those categorized as potentially criminal have either declined or have remained stable during the period in which school violence statistics were presented in the Indicators of School Crime and Safety reports (Dinkes et al., 2009). The potential criminal behaviors which have statistically declined include school associated non-fatal/serious violent crimes from 245,500 in 1992 to 173,600 in 2006. Students in grades 9 through 12 who reported carrying a weapon to school at least one day during the previous thirty days decreased from 11.8% in 1993 to 5.9% in 2007. An associated behavior that has decreased over time is a student’s fear of attack or harm at school, where students ages 12 to 18 who reported being afraid of attack or harm at school decreased from 11.8% in 1995 to 5.3% in 2007 (Dinkes et al., 2009).

The reported categories of potential criminal behaviors that have remained stable over time include school associated threats and/or injuries with weapons. The percentage
of students in grades 9 through 12 who reported being threatened or injured with a
weapon at school during the previous 12 months has remained stable at 7.4% in 1997 and
7.8% in 2007. Another behavior which has remained stable over time is students
avoiding or not coming to school due to fear of attack and or harm. For this behavior,
students ages 12 through 18 reported avoiding school due to fear of attack or harm at
6.9% in 1999 and at 7.2% in 2007 (Dinkes et al., 2009).

One specific area of potential criminality has challenged this trend of decline and
stability as it relates to safety and security while at school. This is in the realm of
bullying behavior. Bullying at school has significantly increased. Dinkes et al. (2009)
indicated bullying at school, which includes bullying in the school building, on the school
grounds or on the school bus (including the school bus stop) is on the rise. Shaw (2001)
reported that bullying is common in schools, is deeply embedded in peer culture, and is
often underreported. Bullying has been around for generations and is often considered a
normal, if not unpleasant, part of growing up. However, research has shown that bullying
is related to a number of negative developmental and behavioral consequences
Council (2003) stated, “Bullying, intimidation, and harassment can serve as the
foundation for more lethal events in the future, and educators now consider them to be
predictors of more serious crimes in schools and elsewhere” (p.1).

Cyberbullying: A New Form of an Old Behavior

Hinduja and Patchin (2008) defined cyberbullying as “Willful and repeated harm
inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (p.
129). Huesmann (2007) reported on the impact of electronic media violence and
indicated that youths’ use of electronic communication media, such as computers and cellular phones, has opened up new venues for victimization which break the traditional boundaries of family, neighborhood and community that might have been protected in the past. Huesmann (2007) concluded that youth access to and use of today’s technology makes it harder to protect youth from victimization. McCuiston (2008) reported that cyberbullying is a growing concern among school administrators who find that it is one of the most difficult behaviors to identify and control.

According to Hinduja and Patchin (2008), bullies today are utilizing technology to expand their reach and to harm victims via the Internet. Harassing/threatening e-mails; harassing instant messages; obscene, insulting and slanderous messages to online bulletin boards or social networking sites; and web pages designed to promote and disseminate defamatory content have become preferred methods employed by the perpetrator of the bullying behavior. Cellular phones have also become a terrorizing instrument utilized by the executor incorporating text, pictures and video. These authors reported that cyberbullies are emboldened by their beliefs that they (a) can remain “virtually” anonymous, (b) send hurtful and humiliating content to large numbers of people in a short amount of time in the unsupervised cyber world, (c) bully their victims in a number of locations, and (d) remain detached from the immediate and real effects of their bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). A large number of studies confirm the use of Internet for the purposes of cyberbullying (Burgess-Proctor, Patchin, & Hinduja, n.d.; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; National Crime Prevention Council: Stop Cyberbullying Before it Starts, 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Williams & Guerra, 2007; Wolak, Mitchell, &
Finkelhor, 2007; Ybarra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2007; Ybarra et al., 2007).

**Cyberbullying Statistics**

Data reported by Dinkes et al. (2009) indicated in 2007 that 3.7% of children ages 12 to 18 years of age reported being cyberbullied. Other national studies, however, have placed the risk of cyberbullying in a range from 9% to 75% (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; National Crime Prevention Council: Stop Cyberbullying Before it Starts, 2007). In an earlier study, Hinduja and Patchin (2008) conducted an online survey of 1,378 youth under the age of 18. The authors found that about 70% of their sample had been the victim of cyberbullying, about 24% of which occurred in chat rooms. The authors also discovered that those who are victims of traditional bullying offline are more than 2.5 times as likely to be the victims of cyberbullying. The researchers further found that those who are perpetrators of traditional bullying offline were also more than 2.5 times as likely to be the perpetrators of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Juvonen and Gross (2008) conducted an anonymous web survey of 1,454 children between the ages of 14 and 17 in 2005 and found that nearly 75% of teenagers reported being cyberbullied at least once during a recent 12-month period with 41% reporting 1-3 episodes, 13% reporting four-six episodes, and 19% reporting seven or more episodes in the previous 12 months. However, only 10% reported cyberbullying to a parent or other adult. Forty-six percent of 12 to 14 year old girls and 27% of 12 to 14 year old boys indicated that they did not report cyberbullying because they feared restriction of their Internet usage by adults, and about 30% of 12 to 14 year olds feared they would get into trouble with adults. *The National Crime Prevention Council: Stop Cyberbullying Before*
it Starts (2007) conducted an online survey of 824 13 to 17 year olds. The review found that three out of four teens surveyed admitted to engaging in cyberbullying of others, 18% percent of middle school aged children reported feeling scared by cyberbullying while 11% of high school aged children reported feeling scared by cyberbullying.

Ybarra et al. (2007) found that victims of cyberbullying were eight times more likely to carry a weapon to school, illustrating one of the more serious ways in which off campus cyberbullying may have a negative effect on campus. Olweus and Limber (1999) found that bullying perpetration also has serious consequences for children with approximately 60% of those characterized as bullies in grades 6 through 9 being convicted of at least one crime by the age of 24 compared to 23% of their peers who were not characterized as either bullies or victims. Approximately 40% of the bully perpetrators had three or more convictions by the age of 24 compared to 10% of their peers who were not characterized as either bullies or victims. And finally, in the area of statistics, as mentioned earlier, Hinduja and Patchin (2008) conducted additional research to specifically assess suicidal ideation and suicide attempts related to traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Their research quantified that cyberbullying victims were 1.9 times more likely to attempt suicide while cyberbullying perpetrators were 1.5 times more likely to have attempted suicide than those who were neither the victim of nor the perpetrator of cyberbullying.

Statement of Purpose

The frequency of occurrence of cyberbullying among school aged children and its co-occurrence with school violence and risk factors associated with youth suicide have been quantified in numerous national studies in recent years (Olweus and Limber, 1999;
Ybarra et al., 2007). The data indicate that cyberbullying is a growing problem in United States secondary schools and has serious implications relative to safety and effective education in the school setting. However, the degree to which school administrators, school teachers, and school counselors at the middle school and high school levels were aware of these national statistics regarding cyberbullying has not been thoroughly researched. No studies were found specifically addressing teacher knowledge of the actual occurrence of cyberbullying in the United States. One study was conducted in Canada in 2008 focusing on students enrolled in a two-year post degree teacher education program (Li, 2008). This Canadian study found that “although cyberbullying has been identified as a serious problem in school systems, a majority of our preservice teachers are not aware of the significance of this problem” (Bamford 2005, Campbell 2005, Li 2006; & Li 2007, p. 5).

This study sought to quantify the degree to which school administrators, school teachers, and school counselors at the middle school and high school levels are aware of the national statistics regarding the frequency of cyberbullying and its co-occurrence with school violence and risk factors associated with youth suicide. This study also explored whether middle schools and high schools have conducted formal needs assessments with their students in the area of cyberbullying. Finally, this study explored secondary educators’ beliefs regarding the accuracy of their experiences and professional judgment versus formal needs assessment with students relative to assessing the problem of cyberbullying in educational settings.

No studies were found specifically addressing the accuracy of teacher judgment regarding the problem of cyberbullying in schools. One working paper by the National
Center for Education Statistics (1996) reviewed the literature on the accuracy of teacher judgment on academic performance for students grades K-5. The study found that “correlations between teacher judgments and more standardized, objective measures of achievement have been as high as 0.80 or 0.90” (Perry & Meisels, 1996, p.28). Whether teacher accuracy regarding judgment of academic performance may be generalized to assessing the problem of cyberbullying in schools remains to be determined by research.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses presented in this study are:

H1: There will be no difference in secondary school educators’ accuracy of the extent of cyberbullying compared to national statistics based on school level or position.

H2: There will be no difference in the number of secondary school educators’ who believe that experience and professional judgment versus a formal needs assessment is a more accurate method of ascertaining information about cyberbullying in schools.

Definition of Terms

_Cyberbullicide_ is defined as suicide indirectly or directly influenced by experience with online aggression (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

_Cyberbullying_ is defined as the willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

_Deliberate Indifference_ is defined as officials having knowledge of an incident and having authority to respond to the incident but failing to take adequate corrective action (Willard, 2007).

_Secondary School_ is defined as a school serving grades 6-12.

_Secondary School Educators’ Cyberbully Awareness Survey_ is a tool designed for
use in this study by the researcher.

*Substantial Disruption* is defined as an incident that is likely to substantially interfere with a student’s educational performance.

Assumptions

The assumptions of this study include the following:

1. The national database used in the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* reports is valid and reliable.
2. The non-governmental studies of cyberbullying are scientifically constructed, and their results are valid and reliable.
3. The respondents to the Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey used in this research were answered honestly and to the best of their ability.

Delimitations

Delimitations for this study include the following:

1. The use of a range of percentages and likelihoods for respondents to quantify their knowledge of national and local cyberbullying statistics may limit a wider range of responses that could be informative.
2. The lack of survey questions that allow free form response may also limit a wider range of responses that could be informative.
3. The use of a respondent pool from a single school district limits generalizability of results as noted above in limitations.

Justification

This study is important because awareness is the first step in effectively addressing the problem of cyberbullying in school safety plans. The degree to which
school administrators, school teachers and school counselors at the middle school and high school levels are aware of the national statistics regarding cyberbullying has not been thoroughly researched. As well, the degree to which these same professionals are aware of the problem of cyberbullying and the means by which they assess the problem of cyberbullying at the local level has not been well researched. False assumptions that cyberbullying is not a problem can leave schools open to litigation and liability and can have dire and sometimes deadly consequences at school and in the community.

This analysis adds to the growing body of literature regarding cyberbullying by linking existing data generated by studies that query secondary school aged children and quantify the students’ experiences with cyberbullying with data that quantifies the degree to which secondary school educators are aware of this problem, the method by which secondary school educators assess this problem at their schools (formal needs assessment with students versus adult experience and professional judgment), and secondary educators’ beliefs regarding the accuracy of the method by which they assess this problem at their schools (do secondary school educators believe that their experience and professional judgment are as accurate as a formal needs assessment conducted with students would be?). The differences between secondary education group settings (middle school versus high school), as well as differences based on role (administrators versus teachers versus counselors), were quantified.

Awareness is the first step to effective intervention in addressing cyberbullying (McCuiston, 2008). It is imperative that school administrators have a full and accurate understanding of the scope of cyberbullying and its serious consequences. Barriers, where they exist, such as school administration reliance on personal experience and
professional judgment rather than data to inform and guide action to ameliorate school safety problems, must be identified when there are discrepancies between perception and reality. Quantifying school administrator, teacher and counselor knowledge of national statistics regarding cyberbullying, as well as their perception that such data is necessary, facilitates a full and accurate understanding of the problem of cyberbullying that has been quantified and is necessary to develop and implement an effective safe school initiative.

Summary

Children in the United States are exposed to a significant amount of violence in their lifetimes. National statistics confirm that while other indicators of school violence are either decreasing or remaining stable, bullying is significantly increasing. The social cognitive theory of learning may provide a framework for an understanding of how cyberbullying behavior develops and is maintained. While the scope of cyberbullying is well quantified in studies with school aged children, the degree to which school administrators, teachers and counselors are aware of the national data and the method by which they assess and respond to the problem of cyberbullying in their local schools has not been well researched. This study sought to quantify answers to these questions in order to facilitate the implementation of school safety plans that are informed and driven by data.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter II will review the following; (a) children’s lifetime exposure to violence in the United States and (b) national statistics regarding school violence. Cyberbullying will be presented as a new form of bullying that is significantly increasing in schools while other school violence indicators are either decreasing or remaining stable. Research linking cyberbullying to school violence and suicide will be identified. Bandura’s social cognitive theory of learning is proposed as a framework for understanding how cyberbullying behavior may be developed and maintained by children through the process of vicarious learning. Legal risks to the school community and legal cases to date will be reviewed, and best practice interventions will be summarized.

Background

What follows is a statistical review of children’s lifetime exposure to violence in the United States. This is a relevant baseline of personal experience and vicarious observation with which children enter and participate in the secondary school environment. Using a social learning theory framework, one may view this baseline as formative of children’s expectations regarding the level of violence that is acceptable and predictive of how children may respond to their observations of cyberbullying.

Violence, Abuse, Suicide, and Crime Exposure Among Children

Finkelhor et al. (2009) conducted a comprehensive national survey of children’s exposure to violence. The survey sample included children ages birth to 17 years and 11 months. The results of the study showed that during their past year the percentage of
children exposed to any (a) physical assault was 46.3%, (b) assault with no weapon or injury was 36.7%, (c) assault by a juvenile sibling was 29.0%, (d) teasing or emotional bullying was 19.7%, (e) assault by peer was 17.6%, (f) bullying was 13.2%, (g) assault with injury was 10.2%, (h) assault with a weapon was 5.4%, (i) assault by a gang/group was 1.9%, (j) Internet harassment was 1.8%, (k) bias attack was 1.7%, and (l) dating violence was 1.4%. The survey further found that for all children assessed, their lifetime prevalence for exposure to any (a) physical assault was 56.7%, (b) teasing or emotional bullying was 29.5%, and (c) bullying was 21.6% (See Table 1).

Table 1

*Children’s Lifetime Prevalence for Exposure to Violence in the United States*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Violence Exposure</th>
<th>Lifetime Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Assault</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with no Weapon of Injury</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault by Juvenile Sibling</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teasing or Emotional Bullying</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault by Peer</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with Injury</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with Weapon</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault by Gang or Group</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bias Attack</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Harassment</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Violence Exposure</th>
<th>Lifetime Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dating Violence</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=4,549 children ages birth to 17 year 11 months. Adapted from “Violence, Abuse, and Crime Exposure in a National Sample of Children and Youth” Finkelhor et al., (2009)

Lifetime prevalence for any physical assault, assault with no weapon or injury, assault with a weapon, assault with injury, assault by peer, assault by gang/group, dating violence, bias attack, bullying and Internet harassing was greatest for children ages 14-17. Lifetime prevalence for assault by a juvenile sibling was greatest for children ages six-nine. Lifetime prevalence for teasing or emotional bullying was greatest for children ages 10-13 (Finkelhor et al., 2009). Males were more likely to experience greater lifetime prevalence of any physical assault, assault with no weapon or injury, assault with a weapon, assault with injury, assault by juvenile sibling, assault by peer, assault by gang/group, dating violence, bias attack and bullying while females were more likely to experience a greater lifetime prevalence of teasing or emotional bullying and Internet harassment (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

Similarly concerning results were obtained for past-year and lifetime exposure to sexual victimization. The survey found that for all children surveyed, their past year exposure to any sexual victimization was 6.1%, sexual harassment was 2.6%, flashing/sexual exposure by peer was 2.2%, sexual assault was 1.8%, Internet sex talk was 1.5%, sexual assault by a peer was 1.3%, rape attempted or completed was 1.1%, flashing/sexual exposure by adult was 0.4%, sexual assault by adult stranger was 0.3%, sexual assault by known adult was 0.3%, completed rape was 0.2%, and statutory sexual
offense was 0.1% (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

The survey found that for all children surveyed, their *lifetime prevalence* for exposure to any sexual victimization was 9.8%, sexual harassment was 4.2%, sexual assault was 3.9%, flashing/sexual exposure by peer was 3.7%, sexual assault by a peer was 2.7%, Internet sex talk was 2.4%, rape attempted or completed was 2.4%, sexual assault by known adult was 1.2%, completed rape was 0.7%, flashing/sexual exposure by adult was 0.6%, sexual assault by adult stranger was 0.5%, and statutory sexual offense was 0.4%. In all categories of lifetime prevalence for sexual victimization, children ages 14-17 were at greatest risk. For all categories, with the exception of flashing/sexual exposure by peer, females are at greater risk than males (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

Finkelhor et al. (2009) also identified risk of occurrence of other types of victimization co-occurring with each category. For *previous year victimization*, those children victimized by any physical assault were at increased risk for any sexual victimization of 5.0%, and any sexual victimization was associated with increased risk for any physical assault of 1.8%. For *lifetime victimization*, those children victimized by any physical assault were at increased risk for any sexual victimization of 5.3%, and any sexual victimization was associated with increased risk for physical assault of 1.7%. Even indirect exposure to violence had significant negative effects for children. For example, lifetime exposure to violence increased childrens’ risks of any sexual victimization by 3.4% and any physical assault victimization by 1.5%.

The authors concluded that there are high levels of exposure to violence, victimization and abuse among American children. The writers further noted that most forms of victimization queried occurred across a broad age range, with the exception of
date violence, and that many children experience multiple forms of significant types of victimization (Finkelhor et al., 2009). The current statistics on school violence confirm that children are at greater risk for violence away from school than at school; however, a level of risk for violence continues to be present in the school environment. Historical data will be presented to demonstrate that school violence indicators are either decreasing or remaining stable over the past 10-15 years with the exception of bullying which is significantly increasing.

**Violence Away From School**

Children remain at far greater risk for serious violent crime away from school than at school. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) fulfills a congressional mandate to report comprehensive statistics on education in the United States, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is the federal entity responsible for disseminating statistical information about crime in the United States. NCES, BJS, and the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) have jointly produced the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* on an annual basis for the past 11 years. Dinkes et al. (2009) have compiled the most recent of these reports and references 2007-2008 school year data.

Dinkes et al., (2009) indicated that generally, 50 times as many murders of youth occur away from school than at school, and at least 140 times as many suicides of youth occur away from school than at school. The most recent government data regarding level of risk for violent serious crime at school in the United States is quantified in the *Indicators of School Safety: 2008* report. Major indicators for school-associated violent death and non-fatal serious violent crimes have all decreased or remained stable over the past 10-15 years, with the exception of bullying, which is increasing (Dinkes et al., 2009).
School Associated Violent Deaths

Dinkes et al. (2009) indicated that school associated violent deaths include homicides, suicides and unintentional firearm related deaths of students, staff members and other non-student incidents that occurred at school and on the way to or from school including school sponsored events. School associated violent deaths have remained about the same over the past 10 to 15 years when students, staff members and others who are not students are included with 57 in 1992-1993 and 55 in 2006-2007. However, school associated violent deaths involving only students have decreased slightly from 40 in 1992-1993 to 35 in 2006-2007. Most school associated violent deaths are due to homicide. According to Dinkes et al. (2009), the most recent statistics indicate that, of 55 school associated violent deaths in 2006-2007, approximately 50% (27 of 55) were student homicides and approximately 25% (13 of 55) were staff and other non student homicides. There were also eight suicides that occurred in schools in 2006-2007.

The Gun Free Schools Act of (1994) requires that each state receiving federal funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of (1965) must have put into effect, by October of 1995, a state law requiring student expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year and referral to law enforcement when it is determined that the student brought a firearm to school (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 2006). Clearly, The Guns Free Schools Act was insufficient to prevent all subsequent school shootings as evidenced most convincingly by the Columbine High School tragedy of April 20, 1999 in which 12 students, one teacher and two teen shooters were killed (O’Toole, 1999).
The Columbine school shootings gave new urgency to government investigations already under way on the topic of school shootings and fostered additional investigation as well, resulting in a variety of documents designed to facilitate threat assessment in schools. These documents discuss the importance of balancing school safety needs with the need to maintain an inviting environment in which children can learn and grow and form the foundation upon which best practices in the field of school safety rest today:


**School Associated Non-fatal Serious Violent Crimes**

According to Dinkes et al. (2009) school associated non-fatal serious violent crimes include rape, sexual assault, robbery and aggravated assault. According to the most recent statistics available, school associated non-fatal serious violent crimes have decreased over the past 10 to 15 years with 245,500 in 1992; 201,800 in 1997; and 173,600 in 2006 (the most recent statistics available for this variable). In 2005-2006, 17.1% of public schools reported serious violent incidents. Public schools with student to teacher ratios of more than 16 (25.8%) were about twice as likely to report serious violent incidents than public schools with student to teacher ratios of less than 12 (14.3%).
The most recent statistics from the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2008* report (Dinkes et al., 2009) indicated that there were 173,600 serious violent crimes committed against students ages 12 to 18 at school in 2006. This accounted for about 60% of all serious violent crimes committed against children ages 12 to 18 with 173,600 such incidents at school and 284,100 such incidents away from school in 2006. Males were more at risk than females, middle school children were more at risk than high school children, and Whites were more at risk than either Blacks or Hispanics for serious violent crime at school. In contrast, females were more at risk than males, high school children were more at risk than middle school children, and Whites were more at risk than either Blacks or Hispanics for serious violent crime away from school (Dinkes et al., 2009).

*Students Who Carry a Weapon to School*

Dinkes et al. (2009) indicated that students who report carrying a weapon to school has decreased over the past 10 to 15 years. The percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who reported carrying a weapon to school at least one day during the previous 30 days decreased from 11.8% in 1993 and 8.5% in 1997 to 5.9% in 2007 (the most recent statistics available for this variable). Statistics from 2007 indicated that males were much more likely than females (9.0% versus 2.7%) and Hispanics were more likely than either Whites or Blacks (7.3% versus 5.3% and 6.0% respectively) to carry a weapon to school. The states with the highest reported percentage of occurrence of carrying a weapon to school at least one day during the previous 30 days in 2007 were: Wyoming (11.4%), Montana (9.7%), Virginia (9.6%), New Mexico (9.3%), Oregon
(9.0%), Idaho (8.9%), Alaska (8.4%), Louisiana (8.0%), Vermont (7.5%), and District of Columbia (7.4%).

At the same time Dinkes et al. (2009) found that students who reported carrying a weapon anywhere has remained stable over the past decade. The percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who reported carrying a weapon anywhere at least one day during the previous 30 days remained relatively stable at 18.3% in 1997 and 18.0 in 2007. The states with the highest reported percentage of occurrence of carrying a weapon anywhere at least one day during the previous 30 days in 2007 were New Mexico (27.5%), Wyoming (28.0%), Alaska and Kentucky (24.4%), Idaho (23.6%), Tennessee (22.6%), Oklahoma (22.3%), Montana (22.1%), District of Columbia and West Virginia (21.3%), North Carolina (21.2%), and Indiana (20.9%).

School Associated Threats or Injuries with Weapons

During 2005 to 2006 Dinkes et al. (2009) reported that 7.2% of public schools reported incidents of possession of a firearm or explosive device at school. The percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who reported being threatened or injured with a weapon at school during the previous 12 months has remained about the same over the last decade with 7.4% in 1997 and 7.8% in 2007. The most recent statistics from the Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2008 report (Dinkes et al., 2009) indicated that males were at about twice the risk of females, children who are of mixed race and Blacks were at greater risk than Hispanics or Whites (13.3% and 9.7% respectively versus 8.7% and 6.9% respectively), and ninth and tenth graders were at greater risk than eleventh and twelfth graders (17.6% versus 13.1%) for being threatened or injured with a weapon at school. The states with the highest reported percentage of occurrences of being
threatened or injured with a weapon at school in 2007 were Utah (11.4%), District of Columbia (11.3%), Arizona (11.2%), Idaho (10.2%), New Mexico (10.1%), South Carolina (9.8%), West Virginia (9.7%), Indiana and Maryland (9.6%), Missouri (9.3%), and Arkansas (9.1%).

**Student Fear of Attack or Harm at School Decreasing**

Dinkes et al. (2009) indicated that student-reported fear of attack or harm at school has decreased over the past decade. Students ages 12 to 18 reported being afraid of attack or harm at school 11.8% in 1995, and 5.3% in 2007 (the most recent statistics for this variable). This was true across gender, ethnicity, grade, urbanicity and public and private school settings. Statistics indicated (Dinkes et al., 2009) that schools have generally increased safety and security measures over time for periods during which data is available. For example, locked/monitored building doors increased from 74.6% to 84.9%; locked/monitored building grounds increased from 33.7% to 41.1%; closed campus for student lunch increased from 64.6% to 66.1%; student identification badges increased from 3.9% to 6.1%; faculty identification badges increased from 25.4% to 47.8%; security cameras increased from 19.4% to 42.8%; and telephones in classrooms increased from 44.6% to 66.8% from 1999-2000 to 2005-2006. As well, students ages 12 to 18 reported their knowledge of the following security measures, which have increased in schools, including increased security guard and/or assigned police officer presence from 54.1% to 68.8% and locked entrance or exit doors during the day from 38.1% to 60.9% from 1999-2000 to 2005-2006. At the same time, random checks with metal detectors for students decreased from 7.25% to 4.9% while metal detector use for visitors remained low at .9% to 1.0% from 1999-2000 to 2005-2006.
Bullying: Effects on School Environment and Student Behavior

While other indices of school violence have either remained the same or decreased over time, bullying has significantly increased. The following statistics will highlight problems of student avoidance at school that are related to bullying and will quantify the degree to which bullying is increasing in schools.

Students Avoid School for Fear of Attack or Harm

While fewer students fear attack or harm at school over time, it appears that those who do have these fears are continuing to avoid at school as a result. Dinkes et al. (2009) indicated that students ages 12 to 18 reported avoiding at school due to fear of attack or harm at school 6.9% (the first year statistics were available for this variable) and 7.2% in 2007 (the most recent statistics for this variable). According to Dinkes et al. (2009) statistics for 2007 indicated that 2.6% avoided school activities, school hallways, and school restrooms while 1.9% avoided the school cafeteria, 1.5% avoided the school entrance, and 0.8% stayed home altogether. Males were more likely than females (6.1% versus 5.5%); Blacks were more likely than either Whites or Hispanics (8.3% versus 5.3% and 6.8% respectively); middle school aged children were generally more likely than high school children (7.8%, 7.5%, & 5.9% for 6th, 7th, & 8th graders versus 6.7%, 5.5%, 4.2%, & 3.2% for 9th, 10th, 11th, & 12th graders); and public school children were more likely than private school children (6.2% versus 1.4%) to avoid at school due to fear or attack or harm (Dinkes et al., 2009).

Bullying at School

Shaw (2001) reported that bullying is common in schools, is deeply embedded in peer culture, and is often underreported. Bullying has been around for generations and is
often considered a normal, if not unpleasant, part of growing up. However, research has shown that bullying is related to a number of negative developmental and behavioral consequences, including school violence and suicide. For example, Hinduja and Patchin (2007, p. 92) reported that “research on traditional schoolyard bullying has linked victimization and offending with other antisocial behaviors, including vandalism, shoplifting, truancy, dropping out of school, fighting and drug use” (Ericson, 2001; Loeber 1984; Magnusson, Statten, & Duner, 1983; Olweus, 1999; Patchin 2002; Rigby, 2003; & Tattum, 1989). Other studies have found that victims often feel vengeful, angry, frustrated, or depressed (Borg, 1998; Ericson, 2001; Rigby, 2003; Roland, 2002; Seals & Young, 2003).

State laws have been developed to address bullying since 1999. Not unlike The Gun Free Schools Act (1994) laws against bullying have proven insufficient in and of themselves to address the problem. For example, the original Georgia anti-bullying law (1999) was one of the first anti-bullying laws. One of the law limitations was that it only applied to grades 6 through 12, therefore providing inadequate coverage for elementary school students. In the wake of high profile bullying cases in schools, Georgia’s anti-bullying law was recently modified and approved into law on May 27, 2010. The revised Georgia anti-bullying law (2010) expanded upon the definition of bullying and now covers children in grades kindergarten through 12. As well, a perpetrator of bullying must transfer to an alternate school away from the victim after three incidents of bullying in a school year. Noncompliance results in school forfeiture of state funds (The Georgia Bullying Law, 2010). It remains to be seen if recent enhancements of state anti-bullying laws are effective. Dinkes et al. (2009) reported that bullying at school includes in the
school building, on the school grounds or on the school bus. In 1999, the first year for which national statistics were reported, 5.1% of students ages 12 to 18 reported being bullied at school during the previous six months. At that time, males were more likely than females, Blacks were more likely than either Whites or Hispanics, rural students were more likely than either urban or suburban students, and public school students were about twice as likely than private school students to report bullying (Dinkes et al., 2009). Students in sixth and seventh grades were about twice as likely as students in eighth or ninth grades, about three times as likely as students in tenth and eleventh grades, and about 90% more likely than twelfth graders to report bullying (Dinkes et al., 2009).

The most recent statistics in 2007 indicated tremendous increases (Dinkes et al., 2009) in reports of bullying at school. In 2007, 32.2% of students ages 12 to 18 reported being bullied at school and cyberbullied anywhere during the school year with 31.7% of the bullying occurring at school. The 2007 statistics indicated that females were more likely than males (33.7% versus 30.6%), Whites were more likely than either Blacks or Hispanics (34.6% versus 30.9% and 27.6% respectively), and public school students were more likely than private school students (32.4% versus 29.4%) to report being bullied at school. Sixth graders remained at highest risk for being bullied at school (42.9%) with generally decreasing risk through the rest of middle and high school (to 23.5% by twelfth grade). The 2007 statistics also provided additional data as to the geographical location of at school bullying occurrences with 78.9% occurring inside the school and 22.7% occurring on the school grounds (Dinkes et al., 2009).
Table 2

*Percentage of Students Ages 12-18 Who Reported Being Bullied at School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Characteristics</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* At school includes school buildings, school grounds, on school bus, and going to and from school. Adapted from “Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2008” Dinkes et al., (2009).

*Bullying at School: Associated with School Violence and Suicide*

The National Crime Prevention Council (2003) stated, “Bullying, intimidation, and harassment can serve as the foundation for more lethal events in the future, and educators now consider them to be predictors of more serious crimes in schools and elsewhere” (p. 1). Dinkes, Cataldi, Kena, and Baum (2006) indicated that nearly 25% of
students who were bullied at school suffered physical injuries ranging from bruises and swelling to teeth being knocked out, bones being broken, being rendered unconscious or suffering internal injuries.

Vossekuil et al., (2002) promulgated The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, which reviewed 37 incidents where a current student or recent former student attacked someone at his or her school with lethal means (e.g., gun or knife), and the attacker specifically chose his or her school as the location of the attack. The 37 school based attacks involved 41 individuals in 26 states over a 25 year period from 1974 (the earliest identified incident in U.S. history) through June of 2000. The authors also conducted supplemental interviews with 10 perpetrators of school based attacks in order to examine the incidents from the point of view of the attacker.

The study conducted by Vossekuil et al. (2002) found that 71% of attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked or injured by others prior to the attack. The authors noted that in several cases, the attackers had experienced bullying that was long-standing and severe and that in some cases being bullied was related to their decision to mount an attack at school. In the companion document from Fein et al. (2002) titled Threat Assessment in School: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates, school shooters described being bullied “in terms that suggested that these experiences approached torment” and which met the legal definitions of harassment and assault (p. 23).

Vossekuil et al. (2002) discussed other attacker characteristics. One hundred percent were male, 76% were Caucasian, and 63% came from two-parent homes. Ninety
five percent were passing their academic classes, 68% had some close friends, and 63% had never had significant disciplinary problems at school. Seventy-three percent had no change in friendships, 68% had no change in school disciplinary problems, 59% had no change in school interest, and 56% of attackers showed no change in academic performance prior to the attack. Seventy-eight percent exhibited a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts; however, only 17% had been diagnosed with a mental health or behavioral disorder prior to the attack. Fifty-nine percent demonstrated some interest in violence, but only 31% had ever acted violently towards others prior to the attack. Ninety-eight percent perceived some major loss, and 83% demonstrated behavior indicating that they were having trouble dealing with the loss prior to the attack.

At the same time, Vossekui et al. (2002) identified key characteristics of victims of violent school incidents, including the following: (a) in 54% of incidents, attackers selected at least one school administrator, faculty member or staff member as a target; (b) in 41% of incidents, attackers selected a student as a target; (c) in 44% of incidents, attackers had identified more than one target prior to attack; (d) in 73% of incidents, attackers had a grievance against at least one of their targets; (e) in 46% of incidents, the individual targeted became a victim; (f) in 57% of incidents, non-targeted students were also harmed; and (g) in 39% of incidents, non-targeted school administrators, faculty or staff were also harmed.

Vossekui et al. (2002) identified key characteristics of violent school incidents, including the following: (a) in 73% of the incidents, the attacker killed one or more students, faculty or others at the school while in 24% of the incidents, the attacker used a weapon to injure at least one person at the school (in one incident, the student killed his
family and then held his class hostage with a weapon); (b) in 59% of the incidents, the attack occurred during the school day while in 38% of the incidents, the attack occurred before or after school (22% and 16% respectively); (c) in 95% of the incidents, the attacker was a current student at the school while in 5% of the incidents, the attacker was a former student at the school; (d) in 100% of the incidents, the attacker was male; (e) in 92% of the incidents, the attacker carried out the attack alone (in 11%, of these, although the attacker acted alone, he had help in planning the attack) while in 8% of the incidents, two or more attackers carried out the attack together; and (f) 61% of attackers used handguns, 49% of attackers used rifles or shotguns, and 46% of attackers had more than one weapon with them at the time of the attack.

**Bullying and Suicide**

Shaw (2001) in *Promoting Safety in Schools: International Experience and Action* (2001) shared that bullying is related to other forms of school violence, including suicides. Kim and Levanthal (2008) reviewed 37 studies from 13 countries, including the U.S., which addressed bullying and suicide. They found that five of the 37 reports reviewed indicated that victims of bullying were two to nine times more likely to have reported suicidal thoughts than those who had not been the victim of bullying.

Hinduja and Patchin (2010) administered a survey to 1,963 middle school students across 30 schools in the U.S. to specifically assess suicidal ideation and suicide attempts related to traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Their research quantified that traditional bullying victims were 1.7 times more likely and traditional bullying perpetrators were 2.1 times more likely to have attempted suicide than those who were neither the victim of nor the perpetrator of traditional bullying. Klomek, Sourander,
Niemela, Kumpulainen, Piha, Tamminen, Almqvist, and Gould (2009) found that bullying was related to increases in subsequent suicide, particularly among women.

Cyberbullying: A New Form of an Old Behavior

Hinduja and Patchin (2008) defined cyberbullying as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (p. 129). Cyberbullying is a growing concern among school administrators who find that it is one of the most difficult behaviors to identify and control (McCuiston, 2008). Huesmann (2007) reported on the impact of electronic media violence and indicated that youth use of electronic communication media, such as computers and cellular phones, has opened up new venues for victimization, which break the traditional boundaries of family, neighborhood and community that might have been protective in the past. Huesmann (2007) further concluded that youth access to and use of today’s technology makes it harder to protect youth from victimization.

Hinduja and Patchin (2008) reported that bullies today are utilizing technology to expand their reach and to harm victims via Internet, such as harassing and threatening e-mails; harassing instant messages, obscene, insulting and slanderous messages to online bulletin boards or social networking sites; and web pages designed to promote and disseminate defamatory content; and cellular phone using text, pictures and video. These authors reported that cyberbullies are emboldened by their belief that they can remain “virtually” anonymous, can send hurtful and humiliating content to large numbers of people in a short amount of time in the unsupervised cyber world, can bully their victims in a number of locations, and can remain detached from the immediate and real effects of their bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p.1-2).
Williams and Guerra (2007) stated that technology has transformed the landscape of children’s social lives, with an estimated 45 million 10-17 year-old children using the Internet daily. Kowalski and Limber (2007) reported that 97% of 12-18 year-olds use the Internet and more than 50% of teens use the Internet on a daily basis, 45% have their own cellular phone and 30% of teens communicate via text messaging. Hinduja and Patchin (2008) added that among a sample of 1,378 youth under the age of 18, youth were computer literate and were spending an average of 18 hours per week online and engaging in over five different online activities.

A technological divide between educators and students has been identified by Prensky (2001). Learners who have grown up with technology and speak the vernacular associated with such technological advances have been coined “Digital Natives” (p.1). Prensky (2001) defined a digital native as “native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet.” Instructors not from this generation have been labeled “Digital Immigrants” or those “not born into the digital world” (Prensky, 2001, p.1). Prensky (2001) contends “the single biggest problem facing education today is that our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language” (p.2). As a result, learners are detached and disengaged from their teachers. Prensky (2004) stated “when Immigrants use the exact same technology such as eBay, or blogs, Natives and Immigrants typically do things differently. This often causes dissonance and disconnect between the two groups” (p. 2). Best practice interventions should not only address learners but must take into account the digital divide which exists between teacher and student. Without attention to this matter, program effectiveness may be compromised.
Managing the Cyber World Safely

Hinduja and Patchin (2009) conducted a telephone survey of 935 children ages 12 to 17 and found that 55% have created a personal profile page online and 85% of them have used MySpace to do so. The authors noted that the media have reported many instances in which MySpace profiles have been linked to problems, such as cyberbullying, cyber stalking, planned or executed bombings, planned school shootings, suicide and murder, with the biggest concerns centering on vulnerability of youth to sexual predators. The authors sought to test the vulnerability of youth based on their MySpace profiles. Their final youth sample was 1,475 profiles that were publicly accessible. They found almost 57% of youth profiles included at least one picture of the profile account holder. Particularly concerning were those youth who posted pictures of themselves and/or others in swimsuits or underwear. The study found that 40% included the youth’s first name with 9% including their full name, 81% included the youth’s current city, and 28% included the youth’s current school, which taken together constitutes more than enough information to locate someone offline. Hinduja and Patchin (2009) also discovered that in four cases, youth reported their phone numbers. This number extrapolated to all adolescents on MySpace suggested that as many as 75,000 youths may be including this very private information in their online personal profiles, putting them at risk for physical violence.

Cyberbullying: United States Government Statistics

Dinkes et al. (2009) indicated that 3.7% of children ages 12 to 18 reported being cyberbullied. The 2007 statistics reported that females were more likely than males (5.3% versus 2.0%), Whites were more likely than either Blacks or Hispanics (4.2%
versus 3.2% and 2.9% respectively), and public school students were more likely than private school students (3.9% versus 1.0%) to report being cyberbullied. Tenth and eleventh grade students were at greatest risk for cyberbullying with risks as follows per grade: 3.1% in sixth; 3.4% in seventh; 3.3% in eighth; 2.5% in ninth; 4.6% in tenth; 5.1% in eleventh; and 3.5% in twelfth grade (See Table 3).

Table 3

*Percentage of Students Ages 12-18 Who Reported Being Cyberbullied Anywhere During the School Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Characteristics</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The frequency of cyberbullying is great. Sixty-two percent of children ages 12 to 18 reported the occurrence of cyberbullying once or twice in the school year; 20.7% reported the occurrence of cyberbullying once or twice per month in the school year; 10.1% reported the occurrence of cyberbullying once or twice per week in the school year; and 6.6% reported the occurrence of cyberbullying on a near daily basis during the school year. Much of the time, children did not inform any adult about being cyberbullied (36.1%). Interestingly, while White children were more likely to be cyberbullied than Blacks or Hispanics, Whites were less likely than either of the other racial groups to report being cyberbullied to an adult. Conversely, Dinkes et al. (2009) reported that although middle school children were generally less likely to be cyberbullied than high school children, middle school children were much more likely to tell an adult.

*Cyberbullying: United States Non-government Statistics*

National non-government studies have placed the risk of cyberbullying in a range from nine percent to 75%. Wolak et al. (2007) conducted a national telephone survey of 1,500 Internet users ages 10 to 17. They found that nine percent were harassed online in the past year, 43% by a known peer and 57% by online only contacts. Of these, 25% of incidents with known peers and 21% of incidents with online contacts only involved repeated interactions, which caused distress to victims or required adult intervention, rising to the level of cyberbullying. These authors appear to focus on victim distress and a need for adult intervention in their definition of cyberbullying.

Williams and Guerra (2007) conducted a study utilizing questionnaires and a follow up survey with 2,293 students in grades 5, 8, and 11 about cyberbullying using the
Internet only. They found that in physical bullying, males were about twice as likely as females to be perpetrators, but that there was no significant gender differences with perpetration of cyberbullying on the Internet. They reported that physical aggression victimization occurred at 34.8% among fifth graders, 44.6% among eighth graders, and 37.8% of 11th graders. They further reported that cyberbullying victimization occurred at 4.5% among fifth graders, 12.9% among eighth graders, and at 9.9% among eleventh graders on the Internet. Of the fifth, eighth, and 11th grade students included in this, the researchers reported that both physical aggression and cyberbullying victimization occurred more frequently for eighth grade students and less likely for fifth grade students.

Kowalski and Limber (2007) implemented the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire and their own supplemental questionnaire examining electronic bullying both as perpetrators and victims with 3,767 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. The researchers were interested in experiences with cyberbullying using any electronic media. They found that 8.3% of sixth graders, 12.1% of seventh graders, and 12.2% of eighth graders were victims of cyberbullying. They also reported that 3.3% of sixth graders, 7.2% of seventh graders, and 8.9% of eighth graders had been both a victim and a perpetrator of cyberbullying. This study discovered that girls were more likely than boys to be victims of cyberbullying (15.1% versus 11.1%) and that girls were also more likely to be both a victim and perpetrator of cyberbullying than boys (9.5% versus 6.8%). The study also found that about 50% of cyberbullying victims did not know who the perpetrator was while the potential audience to their victimization was essentially limitless (Kowalski & Limber, 2007).
Patchin and Hinduja (2006) conducted a study among a sample of 384 youth under the age of 18 and found that 47% reported witnessing cyberbullying, 30% had been the victim of cyberbullying, and 21.4% had been threatened via cyberbullying. The reported average number of cyberbullying victimizations for a single individual in a 30 day period ranged from 1.67 to 4.65, and the maximum number of cyberbullying victimizations for a single individual in a 30 day period ranged from six to an astounding 107 episodes. A follow-up study conducted an online survey with 1,388 adolescents in 2005 and found that 34% had been cyberbullied within the previous six months (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). These authors found that youth who reported being a victim of traditional bullying or a perpetrator of traditional bullying were each 2.5 times more likely to be a victim of cyberbullying or a perpetrator of cyberbullying. Of those cyberbullied, 12.6% reported feeling threatened, and 4.8% reported being afraid for their safety. Based on their research, these authors concluded that cyberbully victims may be at increased risk for negative developmental and behavioral consequences, including school violence and delinquency (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007).

The co-occurrence of Internet harassment and unwanted sexual solicitation, victimization and perpetration was examined by Ybarra et al. (2007). This study utilized “The Growing Up with Media” national online survey with 1,588 children ages 10 to 15 who had used the Internet at least once in the last six months. The findings indicated that victims experienced Internet harassment at least once in the previous 12 months 34% of the time and experienced Internet harassment monthly or more often in the previous 12 months eight percent of the time. Victims experienced unwanted sexual solicitation online at least once during the previous 12 months 15% of the time and experienced
unwanted sexual solicitation online monthly or more often in the previous 12 months three percent of the time. Perpetrators were also frequently victims, and the authors described the overlap between online and offline aggressive perpetration and victimization as “striking” in that those who were victims of both Internet harassment and unwanted sexual solicitation online (3.1%) were also victims of offline physical victimization 50.9% while those who were perpetrators of both Internet harassment and unwanted sexual solicitation online (0.9%) were also victims of offline physical victimization 76.5% (p.S38).

An online survey of 3,141 adolescent girls ages eight-17 was conducted by Burgess-Proctor et al. (2010). The authors reported that 38.3% of the adolescent female sample stated they had been bullied online. Of the respondents reporting cyberbullying victimization, 67.7% knew the perpetrator from school, and 28.2% knew the perpetrator only online. Quantitative analysis indicated several accounts of adolescent girls being cyberbullied by ex-boyfriends. Of the respondents reporting cyberbullying victimization, 35.5% reported telling no one, 13% reported telling a parent, and 7% reported telling another adult.

Ybarra et al. (2007) investigated the relationship between Internet harassment and physical assault specifically at school. They found that 33.2% were infrequently the victims of online harassment at school (less than once per month) and that 45.3% were frequently the victims of online harassment at school (monthly or more). Infrequent victims of online harassment (less than once per month) experienced physical aggression 15.8% of the time while frequent victims of online harassment (monthly or more) experienced physical aggression 49.5% of the time. They further investigated the nature
of the relationship between perpetrators and victims and found that for infrequent victims of online harassment (less than once per month), the same school mate perpetrated against them online and offline 11.1% of the time and that for frequent victims of online harassment (monthly or more), the same school mate perpetrated against them online and offline 17.9% of the time. Their findings also indicated that for infrequent victims of online harassment (less than once per month), different school mates perpetrated against them online and offline 9.1% of the time and for frequent victims of online harassment (monthly or more), different school mates perpetrated against them online and offline 14.7% of the time. Thirteen percent of those infrequently harassed online and 12.6% of those frequently harassed online reported that they did not know who the perpetrator was.

*Studies of Cyberbullying with Exposure Rates Greater Than Fifty Percent*

Hinduja and Patchin (2008) conducted an online survey of 1,378 youth under the age of 18. The authors found that about 70% of their sample had been the victims of cyberbullying about 24% of which occurred in chat rooms. There were no significant gender or race differences relative to being victimized by cyberbullying. The authors found that those who were victims of traditional bullying offline were more than 2.5 times as likely to be victims of cyberbullying. The authors also found that those who *perpetrate* traditional bullying offline were *also* more than 2.5 times as likely to be victims of cyberbullying.

Juvonen and Gross (2008) conducted an anonymous web-survey of 1,454 children between the ages of 14 and 17 in 2005 and found that 72% of teenagers reported being cyberbullied at least once during a recent 12 month period with 41% reporting one to three episodes, 13% reporting 4 to 6 episodes, and 19% reporting seven or more episodes
in the previous 12 months. However, only 10% reported cyberbullying to a parent or other adult. Forty-six percent of 12 to 14 year-old girls and 27% of 12 to 14 year-old boys indicated they did not report cyberbullying because they feared restriction of their Internet usage by adults and about 30% of 12 to 14 year-olds feared they would get into trouble with adults. Agatston, Kowalski, and Limber (2007) also found that a portion of youth victimized by cyberbullying reported in focus groups that they were reluctant to report cyberbullying to parents because they feared the loss of online privileges.

In 2007, The National Crime Prevention Council commissioned a study with Harris Interactive, Inc. and conducted an online survey of 824 children ages 13 to 17 years old. The review found that three out of four teens surveyed admitted having engaged in cyberbullying of others. Eighty one percent of teens surveyed felt that peers who engage in cyberbullying do so because they think it is funny. Eighteen percent (18%) of middle school aged children reported feeling scared by cyberbullying while 11% of high school aged children reported feeling scared by cyberbullying. The percentage of male and female teens who reported feeling scared by cyberbullying was nearly equal (12% and 13% respectively). Ninety percent of 10 to 12 year olds surveyed indicated their parents monitor their online activities while only 2% of this age group reported that they were able to prevent their parents from successfully monitoring their online activities. Forty-one percent of 13 to 15 year olds surveyed indicated their parents monitor their online activities, and approximately one third of these teens reported being able to prevent their parents from successfully doing so (37%).
Table 4

National Cyberbullying Statistics Summarized 2006-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Reference</th>
<th>% Cyberbullied</th>
<th>Age/Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wolak et al., (2007)</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>10-17 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams &amp; Guerra (2007)</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; graders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; graders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowalski &amp; Limber (2007)</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; graders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; graders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; graders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patchin &amp; Hinduja (2006)</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>Youth &lt; 18 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduja &amp; Patchin (2007)</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>Youth &lt; 18 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ybarra et al., (2007)</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>10-15 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgess-Proctor et al., (2010)</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>8-17 year old females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduja &amp; Patchin (2008)</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>Youth &lt; 18 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenon &amp; Gross (2008)</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>14-17 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The National Crime Prevention Council (2007)</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>13-17 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Hinduja and Patchin’s (2005) study indicated that while a significant percentage of children did not report cyberbullying victimization to anyone in their offline lives, 38% did tell an online friend about the incident. Results from Hinduja and Patchin’s (2005) study further indicated more than 50% of cyberbullying victims reported that cyberbullying was as bad as or worse than bullying in real life. Meech (2007) made the argument that cyberbullying has greater long-term negative consequences than traditional bullying because cyberbullying invaded the safe zone of the home, which may
create a sense of helplessness which terrorizes and traumatizes victims more than
traditional bullying which ends when a victim is within the safety of his or her home.

Cyberbullying: Association with School Violence and Suicide

The following will outline the research regarding cyberbullying and its more
serious association with school violence and suicide of youth. The research will
demonstrate that the lines between victim and perpetrator are not always clear and that a
youth may be both a victim and an aggressor against others. School authority and legal
cases to date will be summarized from a legal point of view. The National Center for
Health Statistics (2007) reported that suicide is the fifth leading cause of death among
children ages 5-14, and is the third leading cause of death among youth ages 15-24 (the
most recent national statistics). According to Hinduja and Patchin (2010), suicide due to
cyberbullying is referred to as “cyberbullicide” or suicide indirectly or directly influenced
by experience with online aggression. Hinduja and Patchin (2007) reported that among
those who reported being cyberbullied, 12.6% felt threatened and 4.8% were afraid for
their safety.

Chait (2009) indicated that similar to real life bullying, cyberbullying statistics
show that the effect of this abuse on victims can be devastating, ranging from poor
grades, poor self-esteem, and school absence to depression and suicide. Patchin and
Hinduja, (2006) stated,

Though they are intended to positively contribute to society, negative aspects
invariably surface as byproducts of the development of new technologies such as
these. The negative effects inherent in cyberbullying, though, are not slight or
trivial and have potential to inflict serious psychological, emotional, or social
harm. When experienced among members of this highly impressionable and often volatile adolescent population, this harm can result in violence, injury, and even death (e.g., Meadows et al., 2005; Vossekuil et al., 2002) and later criminality for both the initiator and recipient of bullying (e.g., Olweus & Limber, 1999; Patchin, 2002). (p. 149)

There are some who may argue that cyberbullying is not harmful because it generally does not involve direct physical contact between perpetrators and victims. However, Hinduja and Patchin (2007) indicated victims of cyberbullying may be at risk for negative developmental and behavioral consequences, including school violence and delinquency. For example, in their study 18.4% of the cyberbullying victims reported assaulting a peer, 7.7% assaulted an adult, and 5.2% carried a weapon. Ybarra et al. (2007) found that victims of cyberbullying were eight times more likely to carry a weapon to school, illustrating one of the more serious ways in which off campus cyberbullying may have a negative effect on campus.

Olweus and Limber (1999) found that bullying perpetration also has serious consequences for children with approximately 60% of those characterized as bullies in grades six through nine being convicted of at least one crime by the age of 24 (compared to 23% of their peers who were not characterized as either bullies or victims) and approximately 40% having three or more convictions by the age of 24 (compared to 10% of their peers who were not characterized as either bullies or victims).

Hinduja and Patchin (2010) administered a survey to 1,963 middle school students across 30 schools in the United States to specifically assess suicidal ideation and suicide attempts related to traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Their research
quantified that cyberbullying victims were 1.9 times more likely and cyberbullying perpetrators were 1.5 times more likely to have attempted suicide than those who were neither the victim of nor the perpetrator of cyberbullying. Research also indicated that female victims of cyberbullying have attempted suicide at 17.9% and male victims of cyberbullying have attempted suicide at 20.2% (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010).

*Cyberbullying and School Liability*

Willard (2007), an attorney and noted legal authority on cyberbullying, confirmed that “school officials have the authority and responsibility to respond to any harmful or inappropriate speech through the District Internet system (and) any harmful speech that takes place while students are using cell phone or other personal digital device on-campus,” and that “school officials have clear authority to respond to online material that raises a concern that a student may pose a threat to self or others” (p. 10). Willard (2007) stated that there was no case law regarding use of school district Internet in a negligence case but indicated that the legal question in a negligence case would be, “Did the school exercise a reasonable standard of care?” and under civil rights statutes the legal question would be, “Did the school effectively case, encourage, accept, tolerate, or fail to correct a hostile environment?” Hostile educational environments are those in which students are intimidated, threatened, abused, or in which their ability to participate in or benefit from an education program or activity is impaired. A legal case that came before the Supreme Court found a district could be liable for an employee’s harassment of a student when officials knew and failed to take sufficient action (*Gebser v. Laga Vista Independent School District*, 1998).
Willard (2007) argued that based on Gebser, a case could be made that a district may be liable for online harmful speech (both on-campus and off-campus) if it has created a hostile educational environment that is impairing the ability of a student and if school officials have actual knowledge of it and have authority to take corrective action but fail to respond adequately and this inadequate response amounts to deliberate indifference. The author recommended the following reasonable precautions for schools: (a) conduct needs assessment; (b) evaluate policy and procedure regarding Internet and cell phone usage; (c) monitor student use of Internet at school; (d) educate students and teachers about cyberbullying; (e) implement cyberbullying prevention; (f) evaluate effectiveness; (g) report on results; and (h) continually review. However, a school’s authority and responsibility to respond to student off campus speech is somewhat less clear.

Willard (2007) outlined the legally required components for school response to student off campus speech, including the following: (a) demonstrate that student off campus speech is connected to the school community (school nexus); (b) demonstrate that student off campus speech has or is reasonably expected to have an impact at school, including school campus, school sponsored events, and transit to and from school or school sponsored events; (c) demonstrate a specific and particular reason that student off campus speech has, or is reasonably expected to cause interference or disruption at school; (d) demonstrate that the impact of student off campus speech is or is reasonably expected to be significant (not merely offensive or controversial); (e) demonstrate that the student off campus speech interferes or disrupts school and thus impacts the rights of other students (significant interference with instructional activities, school activities or
school operations; physical or verbal violent altercations; a hostile environment for any student that impairs that student’s ability to participate in educational programs or school activities); and (f) demonstrate that the student off campus speech is, or is reasonably expected to be causally related to the school interference and disruption (and not some other factor, such as administrator investigation or action).

Cyberbully Legal Cases

*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969) is the landmark case which upheld a school’s ability to discipline for harmful speech both on campus and off campus which does or is reasonably foreseen to create a substantial or material disruption at school. *Saxe v. State College Area School District* (2001) upheld the decision that schools can respond to student speech that is sufficiently severe or pervasive that does or is likely to substantially interfere with a student’s educational performance and that *Sypniewski v. Warren Hills Regional Board of Education* (2002) clarified schools can respond to student speech that is materially disruptive of school or rights of others. However, speech that is merely offensive is not sufficient to initiate legal action.

There have been only a few legal cases that specifically involve school response to student off campus cyberbullying. Those that involve school personnel as targets include (*JS v Bethlehem Area School District* 2002, *JS v Blue Mountain School District* 2008, *Layschock v. Hermitage School District* 2006, *Weedsport Central School District v. Wisniewski* 2001). In the case, *Weedsport Central School District v. Wisniewski* (2001), the school was successful against a student for an instant message buddy icon depicting a pistol firing at a man’s head with the words “Kill Mr. X”, and Mr. X was a
teacher. The case was successful because this was considered to pose a true threat. In the case, *JS v Bethlehem Area School District*, (2002), the school was successful against a student for creating a website called “Teacher Sux” which included a picture of a teacher’s severed head dripping blood with a caption “Why She Should Die” and solicited funds for a hit man. The court found that the website was not aimed at a random audience but was rather specifically aimed at students of the school and did cause a substantial disruption at school. In the case, *JS v Blue Mountain School District* (2008), the school was successful against a student who created an online profile featuring the Principal’s photo from the school district’s website and portrayed the Principal as a pedophile because the court found that the school could discipline lewd and vulgar off campus speech that had an effect on campus even if it did not amount to a substantial disruption per Tinker. In the case, *Layschock v. Hermitage School District* (2006), the school was successful against a student who created a fake online profile of the Principal because the school was able to demonstrate substantial disruption at school due to several other students accessing the website during school.

There have also been several legal cases that specifically involve school response to student off campus cyberbullying of peers. In the case, *Killion v. Franklin Regional School District* (2001), the student was successful against school for suspension due to a “Top Ten” list created by a student from home about a teacher, which included statements about the size of the teacher’s genitals and was distributed at school by another student in a revised format. In this case, the school was unable to demonstrate the list caused a substantial disruption. In the case, *Coy v. Board of Education* (2002), the student was successful against school for discipline due to a website created by a student
from home, which contained pictures of three peers whom the student labeled “losers” and which the school subsequently found the student/creator accessing at school. In this case, the school was unable to demonstrate the website had any effect on the school. In the case, *J.C. v. Beverly Hills Unified School District* (2008), the student was successful against school for suspension due to a *YouTube* video posted by a student from home about another student who was referred to as a “slut” (Willard 2009, p.2). In this case, the school was unable to demonstrate substantial disruption at school despite the fact that a school nexus was established, that the target experienced emotional distress at school, and that approximately half of the target’s peers at school had viewed the video after several were contacted by the creator of the video and told about it. Further findings in *J.C.* established that school policy was unconstitutionally vague because it failed to place students on notice that off campus speech can be regulated by school. The 2009 Phoebe Prince case is pending and will likely be a landmark cyberbullying case. Phoebe Prince hung herself, allegedly as a result of stalking and criminal harassment by several teens at her school.

Among cyberbullying cases tried in the courts thus far, those in which *adults/staff* have been the target of off campus on-line bullying behaviors, school discipline levied against the perpetrators has been legally upheld. For those cases in which *student peers* were the targets of on-line bullying behaviors that transpired off school grounds, school discipline levied against the perpetrators has not been legally upheld include *Killion v. Franklin Regional School District*, 2001; *Coy v. Board of Education*, 2002; & *JC v. Beverly Hills Unified School District*, 2008.
Best Practices and Intervention

The list of interventions that follows illustrates some of the varying strategies recently developed for educators to implement in school settings.

*School Safety and Security Toolkit: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities*

Educators have come to realize that the foundation of all learning is safety and security. Attendance and academic performance are closely linked to how safe students perceive the school environment to be. It’s hard for young people to concentrate on learning when (they) feel vulnerable, and a climate of fear forces teachers to shift their focus from teaching to policing. Safety and security concerns are fast becoming an important part of any dialog about improving school wide academic performance. (The National Crime Prevention Council, 2003, p. 1-2).

This document specifically recommended tracking bullying as a negative indicator, or, one which should decrease with effective intervention.

*The Educator’s Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats*

Willard (2007) created *The Educator’s Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats*. A portion of this document specifically provided guidance to school officials regarding the occurrence of cyberbullying or cyber threat, including (a) legitimate imminent threats of violence and danger to others requires initiating a protective response and notifying law enforcement involvement; b) evidence gathering should include preserving all evidence, especially as it may relate to identifying the perpetrator; (c) violence or suicide assessment for victims and perpetrators: does the evidence gathered raise concerns a student may pose harm to others or to self; and (d) cyberbully assessment: is there a
“school nexus”, and can the school substantiate disruption or interference or threat at school as a result of the cyberbullying (p.12).

_Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools_

The Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice in 1998 produced a document entitled, _Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools_. This document stated the characteristics of a school that is safe and responsive to children is one which (a) focuses on academic achievement; (b) involves families in meaningful ways; (c) develops links to the community; (d) emphasizes positive relationships among students and staff; (e) discusses safety issues openly; (f) treats students with equal respect; (g) creates ways for students to share their concerns; (h) helps children feel safe expressing their feelings; (i) have in place a system for referring children suspected of being abused or neglected; (j) promotes good citizenship and character; (k) identifies problems and assesses progress toward solutions; and (l) supports students in making the transition to adult life and the workplace. This document stated, “Research shows that a positive relationship with an adult who is available to provide support when needed is one of the most critical factors in preventing student violence” (p. 6).

_Promoting Safety in Schools: International Experience and Action_

Shaw (2001) in _Promoting Safety in Schools: International Experience and Action_ recommended that schools (a) identify and mobilize partners including parents, community organizations and the private sector; (b) develop an assessment of local school problems; (c) develop local action plans to address the causes of school violence and victimization; and (d) implement and evaluate long and short-term prevention projects. This document noted that media can increase fear and inflame anxiety
following a tragic event at school. This document also recommended that schools have proactive protocols that detail who should speak to the press after serious events at school.

*Guide to School Vulnerability Assessment: Key Principles for Safe Schools*

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools in 2008 produced a document titled *Guide To School Vulnerability Assessments: Key Principles for Safe Schools*, which stated that school vulnerability assessments should take into account all hazards and threats that may affect the school and its students. This document included technology as an area of concern at school and specifically recommends that schools assess vulnerability relative to cyber bulling, Internet predation, and inappropriate use of Internet (pornography), etc.

*Stop Cyberbullying Before it Starts*

The National Crime Prevention Council’s *Stop Cyberbullying Before it Starts* (2007) document recommended teaching cyber-ethics, responsibility and Internet safety, such as (a) talking with teens about the risks and benefits posed by the Internet; (b) sharing examples of inappropriate incidents that can happen online, which teens may view as harmless or normal (being approached online by strangers); (c) tracking teen use of Internet; (d) visiting websites teens frequent to see what teens encounter there; (e) teaching teens to never give out personal information (names, addresses, phone numbers, school names, credit card numbers, etc.); (f) teaching teens to never arrange face-to-face meetings with someone they have only met online; (g) communicating online rules and responsibilities to teens and enforcing them; (h) keeping computers in highly trafficked areas where teens cannot hide their online activities; (i) teaching teens about
cyberbullying and that it is unacceptable; (j) explaining that cyberbullying has real and harmful negative consequences; (k) explaining that youth who perpetrate cyberbullying can be traced, located, and punished; (l) speaking to teens about how to react if they are cyberbullied by not responding to the bully but rather by reporting to the Internet Service Provider (ISP), tracking, blocking, and/or deleting; and (m) reassuring teens that being the victim of cyberbullying is not their fault and that they will not lose privileges for disclosing cyberbullying to adults.

Creating School-Wide Prevention and Intervention Strategies

Sprague (2007) produced a document titled, Creating School-Wide Prevention and Intervention Strategies which stated that the primary target for safe school interventions should be transforming destructive peer culture. Sprague recommended ongoing strategies for addressing this issue, including (a) bully-proofing the school setting by adopting science based anti-bullying and anti-harassment programs; (b) teaching anger management, impulse control and conflict resolution techniques; (c) referring troubled, anti-social and depressed youth to mental health services; and (d) asking students to sign a pledge not to tease, bully or put down others. Sprague also discussed the importance of the school creating a positive, inclusive school climate and culture and recommended strategies for addressing this issue, including creating and promoting a set of school based positive values that focus on treating others with civility, caring and respect for others and establishing school wide rules and behavioral expectations. Sprague shared the importance of involving parents by creating a parent advisory planning group devoted to school safety.
The Role of Mental Health Services in Promoting Safe and Secure Schools

Kutash and Duchnowski (2007) produced a document titled, The Role of Mental Health Services in Promoting Safe and Secure Schools, which discussed the evidence based mental health interventions for children compiled by five national organizations. These authors found that attending to the following five areas has been associated with decreasing bullying: (a) teachers developing positive relationships with students; (b) teachers making their academics interesting to students; (c) school establishing different intervention strategies for children who need extra help (mentoring, after school programs); (d) school implementing definite policies against student bullying and against teacher shouting at and ridiculing students; and (e) school having strong non-academic programs such as music, art and dance.

Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates

Fein et al. (2002) Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates recommended that to prevent school violence, creating a safe and connected school climate is essential. Specifically, this report recommended that school administrators (a) assess the school’s emotional climate using anonymous surveys, face-to-face interviews, focus groups, etc. to gather “key” real-time data (p.69); (b) emphasize the importance of listening in schools both about academic matters and feelings, recognize that respectful listening is a two-way street, and understand that schools with cultures of two-way listening empowers students to break the codes of silence that often exist; (c) take a strong but caring stance against the code of silence because silence unacknowledged may lead a young person on a path
toward violence; (d) work actively to change the perception that talking to an adult about a student contemplating violence is “snitching” because “a student who finds the courage to tell a caring adult about a friend in pain may save a life” (p. 70); (e) find ways to stop bullying; (f) empower students by involving them in planning, creating, and sustaining a school culture of safety and respect; (g) ensure that every student feels that they have a trusting relationship with at least one adult at school; h) create a mechanism for developing and sustaining safe school climates; (i) be aware of physical environments and their effects on creating comfort zones; (j) emphasize an integrated systems model because “people support most what they believe they have had genuine input in creating” (p. 71); and (k) all climates of safety are ultimately “local” and must be accepted “top down” as integral to the mission of the school (p.72).

*The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective*

In a document titled, *The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective*, O’Toole (1999), focused on school dynamics as one of the key indicators of risk and recommended that schools focus on (a) creating student attachment to the school through student activities and relationships with school personnel; (b) requiring respectful behavior with intolerance for bullying, racial divides, and favoritism; (c) ensuring equitable discipline (remembering that perception is critical relative to assessing this); (d) fostering a flexible culture that is sensitive to changing needs; (e) breaking the code of silence which remains due to lack of trust between students and staff; (f) supervising computer use; and (g) maintaining documentation of all incidents or problems involving students, so they are available for threat assessment when a serious concern is raised.
Furlong, Felix, Sharkey, and Larson (2005) recommended (a) developing a school safety team that includes a range of stakeholders, including administrators, faculty, staff, parents, students and community members sending the message that school safety is a shared responsibility; (b) collecting data to assess the strengths and risks of the school; (c) identifying and analyzing problems resulting in a prioritized list for action; (d) developing response proposals and reviewing and deciding on action plans; (e) implementing action plans; and (f) evaluating the effectiveness of action plans. These authors emphasized the prioritization of bully prevention and indicated that “bullying intervention programs are integral to overall violence prevention efforts. They sought to eliminate existing bullying problems, prevent the development of new bullying problems, achieve better peer relations at school, create a positive school climate, and increase caring behaviors toward bullying victims by peers and adults” (p. 13). Furlong et al. (2005) further emphasized that any interventions include training for all staff members, including bus drivers, maintenance workers and cafeteria workers because bullying often occurs in unsupervised areas, such as the hall or lunch area, and because the human resources of the school are the most important asset in prevention and effectively managing school violence.

Tips for School Administrators for Reinforcing School Safety

National Association of School Psychologists in 2006 produced a document titled *Tips for School Administrators for Reinforcing School Safety* in which they recommended the following; (a) be a visible and welcoming presence at school by getting to know students and parents and by visiting classrooms; (b) conduct a formal review of
school safety policies and procedures to ensure that emerging school safety issues are addressed at least annually; (c) review communication systems and how parent notifications are handled; (d) connect with community partners to review safety plans; (e) provide training to staff; and (f) provide violence prevention programs to students to teach alternatives to violence including peaceful conflict resolution and other positive interpersonal relationship skills. The National Association for School Psychologists (NASP) recommended that students be told (a) schools are safe places “although there is always the possibility of violence occurring in school, that the probability of the school experiencing a high profile violent act is extremely low” (p. 2); (b) our school is safe because highlighting the school’s unique safety features, such as limited access to the school building, security systems/metal detectors/video monitoring/alarm systems, monitored parking lot, supervision of student common areas, school-community partnerships to enhance student safety off campus but near school, presence of school resource officers/local police partnerships/security guards, monitoring of school visitors, programs to create and sustain a caring school climate, student/parent/community participation in safety planning, anonymous reporting systems for students, school preparedness drills; (c) we all play a role in school safety: you can anonymously tell a trusted adult about things you hear that might result in violence; (d) stay away from guns and tell a trusted adult if someone you know has a gun as access to guns is one of the leading risk factors for deadly violence, and you might save a life; and (e) violence is never a solution to a personal problem.
**Other Research Based Best Practice Recommendations**

Jimerson, Brock, and Cowan (2004) emphasized creating a climate of trust among students, parents, and staff members by sharing the responsibility for violence prevention, having and communicating what the threat assessment process is at the school, promising that all information about potential violence will be handled discreetly, and reminding all stakeholders that the purpose of sharing information with adults about potential violence is to protect both the potential victim(s) and the perpetrator(s). Williams and Guerra (2007) reported that the more youth are connected to a school that they perceive to be trusting, fair and pleasant, the less likely their involvement in any kind of bullying, including cyberbullying on the Internet, will transpire. Likewise, they found that the more youth are connected to friends that they perceive to be trustworthy, caring and helpful, the less likely their involvement in any kind of bullying, including cyberbullying on the Internet, will occur. Hinduja and Patchin (2009) recommended the following elements of an effective school policy on cyberbullying include: (a) specific definitions for harassment, intimidation and bullying, including the electronic variants; (b) graduated consequences and remedial actions; (c) procedures for reporting; (d) procedures for investigating; (e) specific language that if a student’s off school campus speech or behavior results in a “substantial disruption of the learning environment,” the student can be disciplined; and (f) procedures for preventing cyberbullying (workshops, staff training, curriculum enhancements) be developed (p.2).

McCuiston (2008) made a number of recommendations for dealing with cyberbullying at school by adopting an “Acceptable Use Policies” which students and parents acknowledge with written consent. Acceptable Use Policies should:
1. Educate parents about their children’s use of the Internet;
2. Educate students about risks peculiar to computer communication, rules for efficient, ethical, legal computer/network use, safe and appropriate computer social behavior, use of available and unavailable services;
3. Preserve digital materials created by students and teachers;
4. Protect vulnerable children from inappropriate approaches;
5. Discourage children from making inappropriate personal disclosures;
6. Encourage ethical behavior, and discourage criminal behavior;
7. Encourage accepted “netiquette” from the very start;
8. Encourage polite and civil communication;
9. Encourage individual integrity and honesty;
10. Encourage respect for others and their private property;
11. Allow enforcement of necessary rules of behavior;
12. Protect the school networking equipment and software from danger;
13. Help improve network efficiency” that students and parents acknowledge with written consent;
14. Educate students, parents, and staff about what cyberbullying is and its dangers;
15. Prohibit cyberbullying (including off campus cyberbullying which may have negative school based consequences) in Student Handbooks and school conduct policies, which clearly defined terms and consequences;
16. Monitor student computer and technology use at school using filtering software, child friendly search engines, and regular review of student computer
use at school, as well as restriction and/or monitoring of cellular phone use at school; and

17. Investigate cyberbullying complaints and reports in a timely and thorough manner, ensuring notification of parents of victims and perpetrators, making school counselors available to victims, and reporting cyberbullying that involves threats of violence, extortion, harassment, stalking, or hate crimes to law enforcement (p.4).

Agatston et al. (2007) underscored the importance of continuing to monitor student computer use at schools even when filters are used because a portion of their sample of 148 middle school students indicated that they could easily circumvent such filters.

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) recommended that victims of cyberbullying save all communications and tell a parent/adult. NCPC noted that although cyberbully perpetrators may believe that they are anonymous, they can be identified. NCPC further recommended that children never meet anyone in person that they have met online, never share Internet passwords with anyone other than parents, and never post/share personal information online, including (a) full name; (b) address; (c) telephone number; (d) school name; (e) parents’ names; (f) credit card numbers; (g) social security numbers; and (h) friends’ personal information. NCPC urged children and parents to talk about what children are doing online.

Hinduja and Patchin (2009) recommended the following safe and responsible social networking strategies to keep children safe online, including (a) assume that everyone has access to your MySpace and Facebook profile even if you have your profile restricted to “friends only”: always set your profile to “private” so that you can control
who has easy access to your information; (b) use discretion in putting pictures and other content on your profile: remember others, even strangers, can take your picture and use it elsewhere; (c) assume people will use the information on your profile to cause you harm: don’t put people on your profile as “friends” unless you know them offline and even if you think you know them, be skeptical; (d) assume that there are predators out there trying to find you: never post who you are, where you hang out, where you live, or other personal identification information anywhere online; and (e) you may be held responsible for inappropriate content on your profile: school districts across the country are revising their policies to allow them to discipline students for online behavior that can be linked to a disruption in the classroom environment even if you wrote or posted the content from your home computer (p.1).

Cyberbullying Curriculum

Cybersmart! Education’s (2009) *CyberSmart! Cyberbullying Package* is a research based prevention curriculum that includes K through 12 lessons that are provided for free to schools in partnership with the National School Boards Association’s Technology Leadership Network, the Character Education Partnership, the National Association of School Psychologists and the National Cyber Security Alliance. The CyberSmart! Cyberbullying Package includes standards based, non-sequential lessons that are based on best practices from the fields of cyber security, school violence prevention, and character education for use at school with home connection materials. Also, Hinduja and Patchin (2009) created www.cyberbullying.us, which provides free access to a number of cyberbullying resources to use in the education of children and adults who care about them.
Conclusion

The literature review provided indicates a solid research base regarding the extensive exposure to violence among children in the United States and specifically the problems of traditional bullying and cyberbullying in school aged children. Social cognitive theory of learning is discussed as a theoretical framework, which may account for how cyberbullying behavior is developed and maintained. Legal cases dealing with the problem of cyberbullying and their outcomes were identified. The literature review also provided an extensive and relatively cohesive set of best practice standards, including a curriculum free to use by schools that will help protect from litigation and liability.

This study will focus on secondary school educator awareness of the problem of cyberbullying. Specifically, this study seeks to quantify the knowledge level of secondary school administrators, teachers and counselors at the middle school and high school levels with respect to the actual incidents of cyberbullying and its co-occurrence with school violence and risk factors associated with student attempted suicide. The guiding questions for the study included the following: Do secondary school educators have an accurate understanding of the national statistics available for cyberbullying? If not, do secondary school educators make assumptions about the cyberbullying problem in their local districts based on personal experience and professional judgment, and do they perceive that personal experience and professional judgment are as accurate as data gathered from national studies? These are questions that this study attempts to answer because awareness is the first step in effectively addressing the problem of cyberbullying in school safety plans. False assumptions that cyberbullying is not a problem can leave
schools open to litigation and liability and can have dire and sometimes deadly consequences at school and in the community.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The frequency of occurrence of cyberbullying among school children and its co-occurrence with school violence and risk factors associated with youth suicide have been quantified in recent national studies (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007, Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). The data indicate that cyberbullying is a growing problem in United States secondary schools and has serious implications relative to safety and effective education in the school setting. However, the degree to which school administrators, school teachers and school counselors at the middle school and high school levels are aware of these national statistics regarding cyberbullying has not been well researched. This study sought to quantify the knowledge level of secondary school administrators, teachers and counselors at the middle school and high school levels in a suburban southern United States school district serving over 106,000 students in respect to the actual incidents of cyberbullying and its co-occurrence with school violence and risk factors associated with student attempted suicide. This study explored secondary school educators’ beliefs regarding the accuracy of their experience and professional judgment versus formal needs assessment with students, relative to assessing the problem of cyberbullying in their educational settings.

This analysis added to the growing body of literature regarding cyberbullying by linking existing data generated by studies that query secondary school aged children and quantified the students’ experiences with cyberbullying with data that quantifies the knowledge level of secondary school educators in respect to the actual incidents of
cyberbullying. Furthermore, this analysis examined secondary school educators’ beliefs regarding the accuracy of the method by which they assess the problem of cyberbullying at their schools (Do secondary school educators believe that their experience and professional judgment are as accurate as a formal needs assessment conducted with students would be?).

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses presented were:

H1: There will be no difference in secondary school educators’ accuracy of the extent of cyberbullying compared to national statistics based on school level or position.

H2: There will be no difference in the number of secondary school educators’ who believe that experience and professional judgment versus a formal needs assessment is a more accurate method of ascertaining information about cyberbullying in schools.

Research Design

A Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey (see Appendix D) was developed to gain insight into the problem of cyberbullying in secondary schools. The majority of cyberbullying study has focused on the target and the individual occurrence. This survey sought to quantify the awareness of secondary school educators as it relates to national statistics garnered from the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2008*, developed in part by the United States Department of Education and the Department of Juvenile Justice, along with other major governmental organizations. Data utilized from the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2008*, is valid and reliable.

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey included 21 items in total which were presented in fill in the blank, paper and pencil format on a
single two-sided page. The survey provided a quantitative analysis of the research hypotheses. The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was also submitted to the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of the University of Southern Mississippi and the school district in which the survey was piloted and implemented. The IRB process ensured that subjects’ human rights were protected and that the process guaranteed participants’ confidentiality.

Sample/Participants

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was piloted and implemented with volunteer secondary school educators from southern United States middle schools and high schools in a district that serves over 106,000 students. The study student population mirrors the national secondary school population as noted in Table 5.

Table 5

*Study Population Comparison to US Secondary School National Population Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study Population</th>
<th>National Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligible for Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Population</th>
<th>National Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: Study population N=106,574; National population estimate 35 million


Non-response bias was managed by no coding of individual response or lack of response.

The only coding used identified school level and roles. Coding took the form of varying survey colors for each identified subgroup.

**Instrumentation**

A Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was developed to gain insight into the problem of cyber bullying in secondary schools. The majority of cyber bullying study has focused on the target and the individual occurrence. This survey sought to quantify the awareness of secondary school educators as it relates to national statistics, garnered from the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2008*, developed in part by the United States Department of Education and the Department of Juvenile Justice, along with other major governmental organizations.

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey included 21 items in total which were presented in fill in the blank, paper and pencil format on a single two-sided page. The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey specifically queried school administrators, teachers and counselors regarding the percentage of students cyberbullying has affected and at what frequency, the percentage of students cyberbullied who have also suffered physical injury, and the percentage of students cyberbullied who knew their perpetrators based on nationwide statistics.
Response options ranging from 0-5%, 6-10%, 11-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, and 76-100% in survey items 1-7 were presented to survey participants. The survey additionally queried school administrators, teachers and counselors regarding their perceptions as to whether cyberbullying has affected students *in their schools* and to what degree using the same response options in survey items 10-16.

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey also queried school administrators, teachers and counselors regarding how many more times students who have been cyberbullied are likely to have either carried a weapon to school and also to have attempted suicide based on *national statistics* with a range of responses from 0-5x’s, 6-7x’s, 8-9x’s, and 10x’s in survey items 8 and 9. The survey additionally queried school administrators, teachers, and counselors regarding their perceptions as to how many more times students who have been cyberbullied are likely to have either carried a weapon to school and to those students who have attempted suicide *in their schools* using the same response options in survey items 17 and 18.

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey additionally queried school administrators, teachers and counselors regarding how they form their perceptions about the problem of cyberbullying *in their schools* (formal needs assessment versus professional judgment) in survey items 19 and 20 and concluded by querying school administrators, teachers and counselors regarding their perceptions as to whether professional judgment is as accurate as data from a formal needs assessment would be in survey item 21.

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was piloted and later fully implemented in secondary schools located in a suburb of the Atlanta
metropolitan area. The pilot was implemented with 15 professional educators who served as a panel of experts. All participants in the pilot possessed a Ph.D., Ed.D., or are in the process of completing a Ph.D. or Ed.D. program. The feedback regarding the survey tool confirmed that the survey questions met the requirements of content validity. There were no recommendations for omitting items or rewording items. Therefore, no modifications were needed which required amended IRB approvals.

Several suggestions were made to increase face validity and included instructions to participants that the survey tool was two-sided and to be sure to complete all 21 survey items, instructions to participants to read all questions carefully, instructions to participants to answer survey items 1-9 based on their knowledge of national cyberbullying statistics, instructions to participants to answer survey items 10-18 based on their knowledge of the occurrence of cyberbullying at their school, and instructions to participants to answer survey items 19-21 based on their opinions regarding professional judgment vs. formal needs assessment as it related to cyberbullying at their school. Survey enhancements were made based upon suggestions of the expert panel in the pilot study prior to full implementation. These enhancements were delivered to participants in a one page instruction sheet attached to the two-sided one page survey.

Procedures

Institutional Review Board Process

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) process for the school district in which the Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was intended to be administered was followed. District approval was obtained prior to piloting and implementing the survey (See Appendix A). The IRB process for the University of
Southern Mississippi was subsequently followed, and approval was obtained prior to piloting and implementing the survey (See Appendix B).

Data Collection

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey included a two-sided cover page. Side one of the cover page included instructions to participants based on recommendations made by the panel of experts in the pilot study. Side two of the cover page was the University of Southern Mississippi Staff Consent to Participate Form (see Appendix C). The cover page was stapled in advance to a copy of The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey tool, which included 21 items in total presented in fill in the blank, paper and pencil format on a single two-sided page. The survey was typically completed within five minutes. The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey and the purpose of this study were presented to participants during staff meetings in each school location. The presentation did not exceed five minutes in duration. Surveys were made available to all in attendance, and the researcher sought volunteers to complete the survey. The survey contained the following written message for potential respondents: “Notice Regarding This Research: Participation in this survey is voluntary and NO personal identification or information is collected. Please place an “X” in the box that follows, indicating your agreement to participate ________.” The researcher committed to sharing the actual national statistics regarding cyberbullying, as well as the results of the survey with participants, in writing at the conclusion of the research. A drop box was provided at the school for respondents to anonymously return the survey.

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was expected to
be fully implemented with 100 school administrators (50 at the high school level and 50 at the middle school level), 200 teachers (100 at the high school level and 100 at the middle school level), and 50 counselors (25 at the high school level and 25 at the middle school level) who are volunteer secondary school educators from the same school district as was used in the pilot. A 50% response rate was anticipated, given a high level of interest in this new national phenomenon, which has been bolstered by high profile media coverage, as well as by recent bullying law enhancements and mandates in the state where the school district is located. A fewer number of counselors were anticipated to be surveyed because they are proportionately a smaller group than both teachers and administrators. Actual voluntary participation was as follows: 58 school administrators (25 at the high school level and 33 at the middle school level), 259 teachers (122 at the high school level and 137 at the middle school level), and 44 counselors (21 at the high school level and 23 at the middle school level). Response rates were as follows: 60% response rate (58 of 96 returned) for school administrators (25 of 46 returned or 54% at the high school level and 33 of 50 returned or 66% at the middle school level), 71% response rate (259 or 365 returned) for teachers (122 of 180 returned or 68% at the high school level, and 137 or 185 returned or 74% at the middle school level), and 67% (44 of 66 returned) for counselors (21 of 39 returned or 54% at the high school level, and 23 of 27 returned or 85% at the middle school level).

Human Subjects Protection

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey pilot and full implementation occurred with adult school personnel only. No minor aged students were involved. The survey return procedure was an anonymous drop off box to ensure non-
biased, volunteer participation with no coding of individual responses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analyses using a two-way ANOVA and a two-way Chi Square were utilized. A between groups analysis was conducted for both school level and staffing level. Survey questions 1-9 were analyzed for each group (school administrators, teachers, and counselors) to determine the percentage of respondents in each group who answered correctly and thereby indicated their awareness of national research findings (no difference between awareness/perception and national statistics). Respondents’ actual estimates of the national cyberbully statistics were also analyzed in order to assess the differences between perception and reality in situations where the correct response was not indicated. Survey questions 10-20 provided anecdotal information regarding respondents’ perceptions about the problem of cyberbullying in their local schools. Survey question 21 was analyzed for each group (school administrators, teachers and counselors) to determine the percentage of respondents in each group who respond “yes” to indicate that they do believe that professional judgment is as accurate as the results of a formal data based needs assessment (no difference between professional judgment and data from formal needs assessment).

Summary

This study sought to quantify the knowledge level of secondary school administrators, teachers and counselors at the middle school and high school levels in a suburban southern United States school district in respect to the actual incidents of cyberbullying and its co-occurrence with school violence and risk factors associated with student attempted suicide. This study also explored secondary school educators’ beliefs
regarding the accuracy of their experience and professional judgment versus formal needs assessment with students, relative to assessing the problem of cyberbullying in their educational settings. This study utilized a survey format, and data from the survey were analyzed using a Chi Square and an ANOVA to answer the research questions. A total of 527 surveys were disseminated and a total of 350 responses were sought. A total of 361 surveys were returned of 527 disseminated, resulting in an overall return rate of 68.5%.

This study added to the growing body of literature regarding cyberbullying by linking existing data generated by studies that query secondary school aged children and quantify the students’ experiences with cyberbullying, with data that quantifies the knowledge level of secondary school educators in respect to the actual incidents of cyberbullying. The study also examined secondary school educators’ beliefs regarding the accuracy of the method by which they assess this problem at their schools (Do secondary school educators believe that their experience and professional judgment are as accurate as a formal needs assessment conducted with students would be?). These are the questions that this study attempted to answer as awareness is the first step in effectively addressing the problem of cyberbullying in school safety plans. False assumptions that cyberbullying is not a problem can leave schools open to litigation and liability and can have dire and sometimes deadly consequences at school and in the community.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This study focused on secondary school educator awareness of the problem of cyberbullying. The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was designed and implemented to answer the following questions: Do secondary school educators have an accurate understanding of the national statistics available for cyberbullying? and Do secondary school educators believe that professional judgment is as accurate as data gathered from formal needs assessment as it relates to cyberbullying?”

Descriptive Statistics

Research has indicated that students grades six through 12 are at the greatest risk for cyberbullying. Therefore, secondary school administrators, teachers and counselors at the middle school and high school level were selected as participants of this study. The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was piloted and implemented with volunteer secondary school educators from southern United States middle schools and high schools in a county district that serves over 106,000 students. The student population in the study area generally mirrored the national secondary school population with regard to ethnicity, eligibility for reduced lunch, percent of students with disabilities and graduate rates (see Table 5). Seven high schools demonstrating the range of diversity among the county’s student population were selected. In addition 14 middle schools were also selected based on the same criteria. A greater number of middle school locations were required to ensure an adequate participation of school administrators and counselors. Five hundred twenty seven surveys were distributed. Of those, 361 adult
(18+ years of age) middle school and high school employees in the roles of administrator, teacher and school counselor returned the surveys. No students or parents were surveyed.

Table 6

Survey Response Rates (N=361)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># Distributed</th>
<th>% Returned</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>63.40</td>
<td>46.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>73.66</td>
<td>53.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Role</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>70.96</td>
<td>71.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66.77</td>
<td>12.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>16.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Level &amp; Role</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Teacher</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>67.78</td>
<td>33.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Counselor</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53.85</td>
<td>5.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Administrator</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54.35</td>
<td>6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Teacher</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>74.05</td>
<td>37.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Counselor</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>85.19</td>
<td>6.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Administrator</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>9.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

*Percentage of Educators Correctly Identifying Nationwide Cyberbully Statistics*

(Survey Items 1-7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0-5%</th>
<th>6-10%</th>
<th>11-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>16.94</td>
<td>31.67</td>
<td>38.61*</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.74*</td>
<td>23.82</td>
<td>29.08</td>
<td>25.48</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.36</td>
<td>24.09*</td>
<td>26.87</td>
<td>26.32</td>
<td>9.69</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>16.62</td>
<td>28.80*</td>
<td>23.82</td>
<td>18.56</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>23.12</td>
<td>30.36</td>
<td>24.79*</td>
<td>15.88</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>32.41</td>
<td>29.36*</td>
<td>15.79</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>16.11*</td>
<td>26.94</td>
<td>35.83</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates correct nationwide cyberbully statistic
N less than 361 indicates missing data

Survey results indicated that 38.61% of all secondary school educator respondents in this study were aware of the national statistic that 51-75% of secondary school students are affected by cyberbullying. Further, 24.79% of the respondents were aware of the
national statistic that 26-50% of secondary students who experience cyberbullying also experience physical aggression. Finally, 29.36% of the respondents were aware of the national statistic that 11-25% of secondary students who experience cyberbullying also experience physical injury. These results suggest that secondary school educator respondents in this study are aware of the problem of cyberbullying less than 40% of the time and are aware of its association with physical aggression and physical injury in the range of only 25-30%.

Table 8

*Percentage of Educators Correctly Identifying Nationwide Cyberbully Statistics*
(Survey Items 8 and 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>6-7</th>
<th>8-9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.83</td>
<td>40.56</td>
<td>19.44*</td>
<td>14.17</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.85*</td>
<td>31.58</td>
<td>33.24</td>
<td>21.33</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates correct nationwide cyberbully statistic

N less than 361 indicates missing data

While 19.44% of the secondary school educators in this sample correctly identified that secondary school aged students who are cyberbullied nationwide are 8-9 times more likely to carry a weapon to school, 60% of secondary school educators in this sample did
identify that secondary school aged students who are cyberbullied nationwide are in the range of 6-9 times more likely to carry a weapon to school.

Interestingly, the secondary school educators in this sample underestimated nationwide statistics concerning the degree to which secondary school aged students who are cyberbullied carry a weapon to school but overestimated their risk for an attempt of suicide. Only 13.85% of the secondary school educators in this sample correctly identified that secondary school aged students who are cyberbullied nationwide are zero to five times more likely to have attempted suicide, while 86.15% of the secondary school educators in this sample identified that secondary school aged students who are cyberbullied nationwide are in the range of six to 10 times more likely to have attempted suicide.

Table 9

*Secondary School Educator Estimates Regarding the Problem of Cyberbullying at Their Schools (Survey Items 10-16)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0-5%</th>
<th>6-10%</th>
<th>11-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.46%</td>
<td>18.00%</td>
<td>24.93%</td>
<td>23.26%</td>
<td>16.89%</td>
<td>4.43%</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>50.83%</td>
<td>20.94%</td>
<td>15.08%</td>
<td>8.93%</td>
<td>3.63%</td>
<td>.55%</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>44.56%</td>
<td>25.90%</td>
<td>16.15%</td>
<td>8.91%</td>
<td>3.62%</td>
<td>.83%</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>37.11%</td>
<td>21.32%</td>
<td>20.22%</td>
<td>13.29%</td>
<td>6.37%</td>
<td>1.66%</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Estimate of the percentage of students affected by cyberbullying *at their school*

*Estimate of the percentage of students cyberbullied nearly daily *at their school*

*Estimate of the percentage of students cyberbullied weekly *at their school*
Table 9 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0-5%</th>
<th>6-10%</th>
<th>11-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>360</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Estimate of the percentage of students cyberbullied monthly at their school

| 14       | 37.50% | 23.61% | 18.33% | 13.33% | 6.38%  | .83%    | 360   |

*Estimate of the percentage of students cyberbullied who also experience physical aggression at their school

| 15       | 46.67% | 21.67% | 15.56% | 11.11% | 3.89%  | 1.11%   | 360   |

*Estimate of the percentage of students cyberbullied who also suffer physical injury at their school

| 16       | 15.04% | 8.91%  | 10.31% | 13.93% | 17.83% | 33.98%  | 359   |

*Estimate of the percentage of students cyberbullied who know the identity perpetrator at their school

Total less than 361 indicates missing data

Table 10

*Secondary School Educator Estimates Regarding the Problem of Cyberbullying at Their Schools (Survey Items 17 and 18)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>6-7</th>
<th>8-9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>60.33%</td>
<td>24.02%</td>
<td>10.34%</td>
<td>5.30%</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Estimate of the likelihood that students who are cyberbullied will carry a weapon at their school (vs. their estimate of the national statistic of 19.44%)

| 18       | 51.82% | 24.09% | 15.97% | 8.12% | 357   |
Table 10 (continued).

*Estimate of the likelihood that students who are cyberbullied will attempt suicide

at their school (vs. their estimate of the national statistic of 13.85%)

Total less than 361 indicates missing data

Table 11

Comparison of Secondary School Educator Estimates of the National Statistics

Regarding the Problem of Cyberbullying and Their Estimates Regarding the Problem of

Cyberbullying in Their Own Schools (Survey Items 10-18)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Estimate National Statistic</th>
<th>Estimate Own School</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.61%</td>
<td>16.89%</td>
<td>21.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.74%</td>
<td>50.83%</td>
<td>38.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.09%</td>
<td>25.90%</td>
<td>1.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.80%</td>
<td>20.22%</td>
<td>8.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>24.79%</td>
<td>13.30%</td>
<td>11.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>29.36%</td>
<td>15.56%</td>
<td>13.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.11%</td>
<td>13.93%</td>
<td>2.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.44%</td>
<td>10.34%</td>
<td>9.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.85%</td>
<td>51.82%</td>
<td>37.97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the similarities between the national school population and their local school population, secondary school educator respondent estimates of the national statistics regarding cyberbullying and estimates regarding cyberbullying in their own
schools should be relatively consistent. This was not uniformly the case with difference in estimates ranging from 1.81% to 38.09%.

Table 12

*Secondary School Educator Estimates Regarding the Method of Determining the Extent of the Problem of Cyberbullying at Their Schools (Survey Items 19-21)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>23.03%</td>
<td>76.97%</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Estimate regarding completion of formal needs assessment regarding the problem of cyberbullying at their school</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>92.98%</td>
<td>7.02%</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Estimate regarding reliance on professional judgment regarding the problem of cyberbullying at their school</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>35.21%</td>
<td>64.79%</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Agree that professional judgment is as good as a formal needs assessment regarding the problem of cyberbullying at their school</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total less than 361 indicates missing data

Regarding the use of formal needs assessment to quantify the problem of cyberbullying, 76.97% of the secondary school educators in this sample reported that a formal needs assessment had *not* been completed at their school and 64.79% of the secondary school educators in this sample expressed their belief that professional judgment alone is insufficient to quantify the problem of cyberbullying.
Statistical Analysis

H1: There will be no difference in secondary school educators’ accuracy of the extent of cyberbullying compared to national statistics based on school level or position.

This study utilized a survey format, and data from the survey were analyzed using an ANOVA and a two-way Chi Square analysis to answer the research question. The alpha level has been adjusted for questions one through seven to .005 utilizing the Bonferroni Correction. In order to determine whether there was a difference in accuracy in identifying the national statistics regarding cyberbullying based on school level (high school vs. middle school) and/or position (administrator vs. counselor vs. teacher), a two-way ANOVA was computed. Results from the analysis indicated a significant main effect of school level, $F(1,355) = 3.92, p=.048$ with middle school staff scoring more accurate ($M= 2.05$, SE$=.114$) than high school staff ($M= 1.71$, SE$=.129$). There was also a main effect of position $F(2,355) = 3.382, p=.035$, but Tukey’s HSD did not indicate any differences among the three groups. Teachers were slightly more accurate (not significant with Tukey’s HSD; $M=2.13$, SE$=.077$) than counselors ($M=1.73$, SE$=.187$) or administrators ($M=1.78$, SE$=.161$). To follow up on each of these main effects, two-way Chi Square analyses were conducted on each item first with level (high school, middle school) then with position (administrator, teacher, counselor) as independent variables and accuracy (yes, no) as the dependent variable. Results from these Chi Square analyses are in Tables 13 and 14.
Table 13

Two-Way Chi Square Analysis for Correct Responses to Secondary School Educators’ Cyberbully Awareness Survey for High School vs. Middle School (Survey Items 1-9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HS 25.6%</td>
<td>MS 49.2%</td>
<td>21.102</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 51-75% students are affected by cyberbullying nationwide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>HS 20.7%</td>
<td>MS 6.1%</td>
<td>17.252</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 0-5% students are cyberbullied nearly daily nationwide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>HS 29.3%</td>
<td>MS 19.8%</td>
<td>4.389</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 0-5% students are cyberbullied weekly nationwide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>HS 31.1%</td>
<td>MS 26.9%</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 11.25% students are cyberbullied monthly nationwide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>HS 18.9%</td>
<td>MS 29.4%</td>
<td>5.351</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 26-50% of those cyberbullied also experience physical aggression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>HS 25.0%</td>
<td>MS 33.0%</td>
<td>2.758</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 11-25% of those cyberbullied also suffer physical injury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>HS 14.0%</td>
<td>MS 17.8%</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 26-50% of students know their cyberbully perpetrator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>HS 17.7%</td>
<td>MS 20.8%</td>
<td>.561</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that students who are cyberbullied are 8-9 x’s more likely to carry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a weapon to school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Aware that students who are cyberbullied are 0-5 x’s more likely to have attempted suicide

N=361
School Level Key: HS=High School, MS=Middle School

Table 14

Two-Way Chi Square Analysis for Correct Responses to Secondary School Educators’ Cyberbully Awareness Survey for Administrator vs. Teacher vs. Counselor (Survey Items 1-9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>School Role</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Aware that 51-75% students are affected by cyberbullying nationwide

| 2        | 15.2%       | 7.0%   | 6.6%  | 4.752 | 2  | .093 |

*Aware that 0-5% students are cyberbullied nearly daily nationwide

| 3        | 26.8%       | 20.9%  | 14.8% | 4.210 | 2  | .122 |

*Aware that 0-5% students are cyberbullied weekly nationwide

| 4        | 28.0%       | 32.6%  | 29.5% | .388  | 2  | .824 |

*Aware that 11.25% students are cyberbullied monthly nationwide
Table 14 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>School Role</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 26-50% of those cyberbullied also experience physical aggression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 11-25% of those cyberbullied also suffer physical injury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that 26-50% of students know their cyberbully perpetrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that students who are cyberbullied are 8-9 x’s more likely to carry a weapon to school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Aware that students who are cyberbullied are 0-5 x’s more likely to have attempted suicide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=361

School Role Key:  T=Teacher, C=Counselor, A=Administrator

H2: There will be no difference in the number of secondary school educators who believe that experience and professional judgment versus a formal needs assessment is a more accurate method of ascertaining information about cyberbullying in schools.

Survey Question 21 was analyzed to determine the percentage of respondents who respond yes to indicate that they do believe that professional judgment is as accurate as
the results of a formal data based needs assessment (no difference between professional judgment and data from formal needs assessment).

_Survey Question Key:_

*Question 21.* Do you believe with this particular topic, professional judgment is as accurate as results from a formal needs assessment on cyberbullying?

In order to determine whether significantly more staff reported no versus yes to this question, a binomial test was computed. Results indicated a significant difference in the number of no versus yes responses with more staff (65%) responding that their judgments were not as accurate as results from a formal needs assessment (p < .001). To follow-up on this result, two two-way Likelihood Ratio Chi Square analyses were conducted first with level as the IV and second was with position as the IV and response to item 21 as the DV. As can be seen in Tables 14 and 15, there was no significant difference in yes/no responding as a function of level, but there was a significant difference in responding as a function of position.

Table 15

_Educator Belief that Professional Judgment and Formal Needs Assessment are Equally Accurate in Predicting the Problem of Cyberbullying by School Level_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>2.409</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=361

School Level Key: HS=High School, MS=Middle School
There was no statistically significant difference based on school level (high school vs. middle school) regarding educator belief that professional judgment is as accurate as the results of a formal data based needs assessment.

Table 16

_Educator Belief that Professional Judgment and Formal Needs Assessment are Equally Accurate in Predicting the Problem of Cyberbullying by School Position_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>School Position</th>
<th>Chi Sq Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>8.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=361

School Role Key: T=Teacher, C=Counselor, A=Administrator

To follow up on the significant LR Chi Square result, teachers were removed from a second LR Chi Square analysis with the resulting LR Chi Square decreasing to Chi Square (1) = 1.074, p=.300. This reduction in LR Chi Square (7.386) to a non significant value indicates that it was the teachers who were responsible for the variability in the pattern of responses. Therefore, teachers responded differently to the question than did administrators and counselors who responded similarly. Many more secondary school teachers in this sample (39.7%) do not believe that their professional judgment is as accurate as the results of a formal needs assessment.

In summary, the null Hypothesis 1 is rejected for survey questions 1 and 2 based on school level. Middle school secondary school educators were more aware than high school secondary school educators that 50-75% of students are cyberbullied based on
national statistics (Question 1) while high school secondary school educators were more aware than middle school secondary school educators that zero to five percent of students are cyberbullied on nearly a daily basis based on national statistics (Question 2). The null Hypothesis 1 is retained for survey Questions 3-9. There was no difference in secondary school educators’ understanding/awareness of cyberbullying (based on national statistics) for Questions 3-9. Further, there were no statistically significant differences in awareness of nationwide cyberbully statistics based on school level (high school vs. middle school) or school role (teacher vs. counselor vs. administrator) for Questions # 3-9.

The null Hypothesis 2 is rejected for survey Question 21 based on school position. Secondary school teachers were more likely to disagree that professional judgment is as accurate as the results of a formal needs assessment would be in quantifying the problem of cyberbullying than either administrators or counselors. The null Hypothesis 2 is retained for survey Question 21 based on school level. There was no statistically significant difference in secondary school educators’ beliefs that professional judgment is as accurate as the results of a formal needs assessment would be in quantifying the problem of cyberbullying based on school level (middle school vs. high school). In conclusion, there was no significant difference in yes/no responding as a function of level, but there was a significant difference in responding as a function of position.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY

Introduction

The frequency of occurrence of cyberbullying among school aged children and its co-occurrence with school violence and risk factors associated with youth suicide have been quantified in numerous national studies in recent years. Data indicate that cyberbullying is a growing problem in United States secondary schools and has serious implications relative to safety and effective education in the school setting. However, the degree to which school administrators, school teachers and school counselors at the middle school and high school levels are aware of these national statistics regarding cyberbullying has not been researched. No studies were found specifically addressing educator knowledge of the actual occurrence of cyberbullying in the United States.

This study sought to quantify the degree to which school administrators, school teachers and school counselors at the middle school and high school levels are aware of the national statistics regarding the frequency of cyberbullying and its co-occurrence with school violence and risk factors associated with youth suicide. This study also explored whether middle schools and high schools have conducted formal needs assessments with their students in the area of cyberbullying. Finally, this study explored secondary educators’ beliefs regarding the accuracy of their experiences and professional judgment versus formal needs assessment with students, relative to assessing the problem of cyberbullying in educational settings.

This analysis adds to the growing body of literature regarding cyberbullying by linking existing data generated by studies that query secondary school aged children and
quantify the students’ experience with cyberbullying with data that quantifies the degree to which secondary school educators are aware of this problem, the method by which secondary school educators assess this problem at their schools (formal needs assessment with students versus adult experience and professional judgment), and secondary school educators’ beliefs regarding the accuracy of the method by which they assess this problem at their schools (Do secondary school educators believe that their experience and professional judgment are as accurate as a formal needs assessment conducted with students would be?).

Awareness is the first step to effective intervention in addressing cyberbullying (McCuiston, 2008). It is imperative that school administrators have a full and accurate understanding of the scope of cyberbullying and its serious consequences. Barriers, where they exist, such as school administration reliance on personal experience and professional judgment rather than data to inform and guide action to ameliorate school safety problems, must be identified when there are discrepancies between perception and reality. Quantifying school administrator, teacher and counselor knowledge of national statistics regarding cyberbullying, as well as their perception that such data is necessary, facilitates a full and accurate understanding of the problem of cyberbullying, which has been quantified and which is necessary to develop and implement an effective safe school initiative. False assumptions that cyberbullying is not a problem can leave schools open to litigation and liability and can have dire and sometimes deadly consequences at school and in the community.

A Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was developed to gain insight into the problem of cyberbullying in secondary schools. The majority of
cyberbullying study has focused on the target and the individual occurrence. This survey sought to quantify the awareness of secondary school educators as it relates to national statistics, garnered from the *Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2008*, developed in part by the United States Department of Education and the Department of Juvenile Justice, along with other major governmental organizations.

The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey included 21 items in total which were presented in fill in the blank, paper and pencil format on a single two-sided page. The Secondary School Educator’s Cyberbully Awareness Survey was piloted and implemented with volunteer secondary school educators from southern United States middle schools and high schools in a district that serves over 106,000 students. The study student population generally mirrored the national secondary school population relative to ethnicity, eligibility for reduced lunch, percent of students with disabilities, and graduation rates based on the county and national "Report Card" (Report Card: County, 2009; Report Card: National, 2009).

Conclusion and Discussion

An overall return rate for the survey was 68.50% (361 of 527 surveys were returned). The return rate for school level (high school vs. middle school) ranged from 63.40% (high school) to 73.66% (middle school), and the return rate for school role (teacher vs. counselor, vs. administrator) ranged from 60.00% (administrator) to 66.67% (counselor) to 70.96% (teacher). This high rate of return suggests secondary school educator interest in the topic of cyberbullying.

H1: There will be no difference in secondary school educators’ accuracy of the extent of cyberbullying compared to national statistics based on school level or position.
Survey results indicated that 38.61% of all secondary school educator respondents in this study were aware of the national statistic that 51-75% of secondary school students are affected by cyberbullying. Further, 24.79% of the respondents were aware of the national statistic that 26-50% of secondary students who experience cyberbullying also experience physical aggression. Finally, 29.36% of the respondents were aware of the national statistic that 11-25% of secondary students who experience cyberbullying also experience physical injury. These results suggest that secondary school educator respondents in this study are aware of the problem of cyberbullying less than 40% of the time and are aware of its association with physical aggression and physical injury in the range of only 25-30%. This relatively low level of secondary school educator awareness of the problem of cyberbullying and its association with physical aggression and physical injury is of concern.

In exploring secondary school educator awareness regarding one of the more deadly consequences of cyberbullying, carrying a weapon to school, the results are even more alarming. Only 19.44% of the secondary school educator respondents in this study are aware that secondary school students who are cyberbullied are eight to nine times more likely to carry a weapon to school with 66.39% of the respondents underestimating the likelihood of a student who has been cyberbullied carrying a weapon to school. It appears that secondary school educators are not aware that cyberbullying may be as serious as traditional bullying has been found to be, relative to risk for school shootings as identified in government studies following the Columbine High School shootings. It is critical that the awareness of linkages between cyberbullying and carrying a weapon to school be heightened in order to avoid deadly consequences, such as school shootings.
Interestingly, 13.85% of the secondary school educator respondents in this study are aware that secondary school students who are cyberbullied are zero to five times more likely to have attempted suicide with 86.15% of the respondents overestimating the likelihood of a student who has been cyberbullied to attempt suicide. It appears that secondary school educators are aware that cyberbullying has been linked to youth suicide but perhaps overestimate the scope of this problem based on media coverage of recent tragic cases, such as Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clemente.

In comparing the secondary school educator respondent estimates of the problem of cyberbullying nationwide and in their own schools, the secondary school educator respondents in this study underestimated the national statistics and estimated that the problem of cyberbullying was even less serious in their own schools. For example, the secondary school educator respondents in this study estimated that cyberbullying affects 50-75% of secondary school students, 38.61% nationwide and only 16.89% in their own school. Relative to estimates of cyberbullying being associated with physical aggression 26-50% of the time, the secondary school educator respondents in this study estimated that secondary school students who have been cyberbullied also experienced physical aggression 24.79% nationwide and only 13.30% in their own school. In regard to estimates of cyberbullying being associated with physical injury 11-25% of the time, the secondary school educator respondents in this study estimated that secondary school students who have been cyberbullied also experience physical injury 29.36% nationwide and only 15.56% at their own school. In addition, the secondary school educator respondents in this survey estimated that secondary school students who have been cyberbullied are eight to nine times more likely to carry a weapon to school 19.44%
nationwide and only 10.34% in their own school. Given that 76.96% of the secondary school educator respondents in this study indicated that a formal needs assessment has not been completed at their school, it is very probable that their estimates of the problem of cyberbullying at their own schools are as seriously underestimated as were their estimates of the problem of cyberbullying nationwide and possibly more so because the sample county used in this study generally mirrors the national school population. In other words, their estimates of the problem of cyberbullying nationwide and at their own schools should be more consistent given the similarities between the national school population and their local school population.

With regard to cyberbullying being associated with youth attempted suicide 0-5% of the time, the secondary school educator respondents in this study estimated that cyberbullying is associated with attempted suicide 13.85% nationwide and 51.82% at their school. It is possible that the secondary school educator respondents in this study may be more accurate regarding the problem of cyberbullying and youth suicide at their own school than they were regarding the problem of cyberbullying and youth suicide nationwide. However, this is impossible to verify in the absence of formal needs assessment at the local level.

H2: There will be no difference in the number of secondary school educators who believe that experience and professional judgment versus a formal needs assessment is a more accurate method of ascertaining information about cyberbullying in schools.

The secondary school educators in this sample report that formal needs assessments have not been completed at their school 76.96% of the time, but 64.79% disagree that professional judgment alone is sufficient. This indicates their awareness of
the need for a formal needs assessment to quantify the problem of cyberbullying at their schools. There was a statistically significant difference in responding as a function of position. Secondary school teachers were more likely to disagree that professional judgment is as accurate as the results of a formal needs assessment would be in quantifying the problem of cyberbullying than either administrators or counselors.

There was no statistically significant difference in secondary school educators’ belief that professional judgment is as accurate as the results of a formal needs assessment would be in quantifying the problem of cyberbullying based on school level (middle school vs. high school).

No previous research regarding secondary school educators’ accuracy of the extent of cyberbullying compared to national statistics is available to make comparisons against. Nor is there previous research regarding the number of secondary school educators who believe that experience and professional judgment versus a formal needs assessment is a more accurate method of ascertaining information about cyberbullying in schools to make comparisons against.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The following recommendations will address the need for education, assessment, and policy. Each of these areas is critical, and they are interdependent.

Secondary school educator respondents in this study are aware of the problem of cyberbullying less than 40% of the time and are aware of its association with physical aggression and physical injury in the range of only 25-30%. As well, only 19.44% of the secondary school educator respondents in this study are aware that secondary school students who are cyberbullied are eight to nine times more likely to carry a weapon to
school. *It appears that secondary school educators are not aware that cyberbullying may be as serious as traditional bullying has been found to be, particularly relative to risk for school shootings.* It is critical that the awareness of linkages between cyberbullying and carrying a weapon to school be heightened in order to avoid deadly consequences such as the Columbine High School shootings.

Interestingly, only 13.85% of the secondary school educator respondents in this study are aware that secondary school students who are cyberbullied are zero to five times more likely to have attempted suicide, with 86.15% of the respondents *overestimating the likelihood of a student who has been cyberbullied to attempt suicide.* It appears that secondary school educators are aware that cyberbullying has been linked to youth suicide but perhaps overestimate the scope of this problem based on media coverage of recent tragic cases, such as Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clemente. It is important that the linkage between cyberbullying and youth suicide not be so grossly overestimated as to become the primary focus of attention to the exclusion of other serious ramifications.

It is often assumed that secondary school educators are fully aware of the problem of cyberbullying and its serious consequences and are ignoring or responding inadequately to the problem of cyberbullying. This study demonstrates a lack of awareness of the national statistics regarding cyberbullying and its association with serious consequences. Awareness is the first step in addressing any serious problem, and clearly assumptions regarding what secondary school educators are aware of may be false as this study indicates. As well, without a solid understanding of cyberbullying, secondary school educators will be ill equipped to appropriately identify cyberbullying
when it does occur and appropriately deal with it as a serious incident. Therefore, lack of action by school administration may be better characterized as a lack of knowledge rather than a lack of caring or compassion.

Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures regarding prevention of cyberbullying and appropriate interventions and investigative techniques are needed for secondary school educators. Awareness alone is not sufficient. Policy and procedure drive action and ensure accountability. While the state departments of education may provide a template to help guide the development of such policies and procedures, the local school boards of education should have freedom to tailor the policies and procedures that will govern their school district.

Principals should task school psychologists with becoming local experts in the problem of cyberbullying. School psychologists should be integral in the development and implementation of interventions that are formalized in policies and procedures.

Formal Needs Assessment

The United States Department of Education should develop a brief and focused formal needs assessment tool for use by all school districts in all states nationwide. The state departments of education should be responsible to collect the formal needs assessment data regarding the problem of cyberbullying and its serious consequences annually and transmit the data to the United States Department of Education for analysis. Principals should task school psychologists with the administration and collection of formal needs assessment data regarding the problems of cyberbullying and its serious consequences annually and transmit the data to the state departments of education. This
data would help to identify the school districts with the greatest problems and the greatest need for support by the State Departments of Education.

*Digital Citizenship Education*

Education regarding the problem of cyberbullying and its serious consequences is needed for secondary school educators, as well as for students, parents and the community at large. District wide mandated education regarding cyberbullying would ensure that all levels and all positions within schools are informed in a standardized manner regarding the problem of cyberbullying.

The United States Department of Education should develop a series of age appropriate digital citizenship curriculum for use in elementary, middle and high schools nationwide. The state departments of education should be responsible to track compliance of local schools in providing digital citizenship training to students along with tracking the incidents of cyberbullying. Principals should task school psychologists with becoming local experts in the problem of cyberbullying, and school psychologists should be integral in a train the trainer model of education.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is an organization that sets standards for those who teach technology. ISTE (2009) specifically set standards for school administrators regarding digital citizenship with a focus on establishing policies for safe, legal and ethical use of digital information and technology and promoting and modeling responsible social interactions related to the use of technology and information. The ISTE standards should be the foundation of any school digital citizenship initiatives.
Limitations

Limitations of this study include lack of generalizability to non-southern regions of the United States, lack of generalizability to elementary school settings, lack of generalizability to inner city school settings, and lack of generalizability to rural school settings. Despite these limitations, this study sheds light on secondary school educators’ awareness of cyberbullying, its co-occurrence with school violence, and student attempted suicide in southern United States suburban middle schools and high schools, with potential implications for suburban middle school and high schools nationwide that may be demonstrated by future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on replicating the results of this study. Future research should also focus on generalizing the results of this study to non-southern regions of the United States. Development of a brief and focused formal needs assessment regarding the problem of cyberbullying in secondary schools is another area for future research. Development of age appropriate digital citizenship curriculum specifically addressing the problem of cyberbullying and its serious outcomes is another area for future research. Efficacy of formal needs assessment regarding the problem of cyberbullying in secondary schools and digital citizenship curriculum specifically addressing the problem of cyberbullying and its serious outcomes are also areas for future research. Finally, future research may focus on determining which of the many proposed best practice recommendations prove to be the most successful relative to reducing the problem of cyberbullying in secondary schools.
Summary

The problem of cyberbullying in secondary schools is a significant one, and its association with school violence has been demonstrated. Secondary school educators in this study were found to have inadequate awareness of the national statistics regarding cyberbullying, underestimating the number of secondary school students that cyberbullying affects and underestimating the linkages between cyberbullying and physical aggression, physical injury, and carrying a weapon to school while overestimating the likelihood that students who are cyberbullied will attempt suicide.

Underestimation of the problem of cyberbullying at the local school level can have dire and sometimes deadly consequences at school and in the community. This study demonstrates that the lessons learned from school shootings, such as Columbine, in which school shooters were found to have engaged in school shootings in part due to their having been seriously bullied appear to have been forgotten. As well, overestimation of the linkages between cyberbullying and risk of youth suicide in this study is concerning in that focus on risk of youth suicide to the exclusion of risk for youth violence creates an environment in which the risk for youth violence is not only underestimated but also insufficiently addressed relative to prevention. This study and its results reinforce the importance of remembering lessons learned in order to minimize the risk for future school shooting tragedies with a focus on cyberbullying as a new and very potent form of bullying.

This study has particular relevance to the United States Department of Education, state departments of education and school boards who are responsible to ensure a safe and supportive educational environment for all secondary school aged children. Lack of
appropriate preparation for and response to the problem of cyberbullying may result in risk of liability and litigation. It would seem reasonable to propose that being proactive rather than reactive relative to the problem of cyberbullying will not only be safer for the school community but will also be more fiscally responsible for our nation.
APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT SCHOOL SYSTEM IRB APPROVAL

March 10, 2011

Mr. Mark Trachenbrot
3350 Emory Drive
Marietta, GA 30062

Dear Mr. Trachenbrot:

Your research project has been approved. Listed below are the schools where approval to conduct the research is complete. Please work with the school administrator to schedule administration of instruments or conduct interviews.

Middle School A
Middle School B
Middle School C
6th Grade Academy D
Middle School E
Middle School F
Middle School G
Middle School H
Middle School I
Middle School J
Middle School K
Middle School L
Middle School M
High School A
High School B
High School C
High School D
High School E
High School F
High School G

Should modifications or changes in research procedures become necessary during the research project, changes must be submitted in writing to the Office of Accountability and Research prior to implementation. At the conclusion of your research project, you are expected to submit a copy of your results to this office. Results cannot reference the [redacted] or any District schools or departments.

Research files are not considered complete until results are received. If you have any questions regarding the process, contact our office at [redacted].

Sincerely,

Chief Accountability and Research Officer
APPENDIX B

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI IRB APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
Institutional Review Board
118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.

Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11032108
PROJECT TITLE: Cyberbullying, School Violence, and Youth Suicide
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 03/01/2011 to 02/29/2012
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Mark Trachtenbrot
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership & School Counseling
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 04/04/2011 to 04/03/2012

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

Date 4-5-2011
APPENDIX C

STAFF CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM

University of Southern Mississippi Staff Consent to Participate Form

My signature below indicates that I have read the information provided and have decided to participate in the study titled “Cyberbullying, School Violence, & Youth Suicide” to be conducted at my school between the dates of March, 2011 and April, 2011.

I understand the purpose of the research project will be to measure Secondary School Educator’s Awareness of the problem of cyberbullying in schools. I will participate in the following manner:

1. Attend a brief (5 minute) presentation during an already established meeting time scheduled at local school.
2. Sign this consent form.
3. Complete a 21 question survey, delivered in paper and pencil format. Completion time estimated at no longer than 5 minutes.
4. Return completed survey in a predetermined drop box location.

Potential benefits of the study are: This study will attempt to quantify secondary school educator awareness regarding cyberbullying. Awareness is the first step to developing and implementing effective intervention programs. False assumptions that cyberbullying is not a problem can leave schools open to liability and litigation and possibly may result in dire and deadly consequences in the school as well as the community.

I agree to the following conditions with the understanding that I can withdraw from the study at any time should I choose to discontinue participation.

- The identity of participants will be protected. Non-response bias will be managed by no coding of individual response or lack of response. The only coding used will identify schools and roles (middle school administrator, middle school teacher, middle school counselor, high school administrator, high school teacher, high school counselor). Coding will take the form of varying survey colors for each identified subgroup. The survey return procedure will be an anonymous drop box to ensure non-biased, volunteer participation with no coding of individual responses.
- Information gathered during the course of the project will become part of the data analysis and may contribute to published research reports and presentations.
- There are no foreseeable inconveniences or risks involved by participating in the study.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and will not affect employment status or annual evaluations. If I decide to withdraw permission after the study begins, I will notify the school of my decision.

If further information is needed regarding the research study, I can contact Mark Trachtenbroit at E-mail address- mtrach12@bellsouth.net.

Signature

<table>
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<th>Respondent</th>
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## Secondary School Educators’ Cyberbully Awareness Survey: Page 1 of 2

Notice Regarding Research: Participation in this survey is voluntary & NO personal identification information is collected.

Please place an "X" in the box that follows, indicating your agreement to participate:

Cyberbullying is willful & repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, & other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Please select ONE for each question, representing your best estimate of nationwide statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What percentage of students has cyberbullying affected nationwide?</td>
<td>0-5% 10-25% 26-50% 51-75% 76-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What percentage of students report being cyberbullied nearly daily according to nationwide statistics?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What percentage of students report 1-2 incidents of cyberbullying per week according to nationwide statistics?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What percentage of students report 1-2 incidents of cyberbullying per month according to nationwide statistics?</td>
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<td>5. What percentage of students cyberbullied at least monthly also experienced physical aggression according to nationwide statistics?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. What percentage of students who have been cyberbullied also suffered physical injury according to nationwide statistics?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. What percentage of students who have been cyberbullied know the perpetrator according to nationwide statistics?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. How many more times are students who have been cyberbullied likely to carry a weapon to school according to nationwide statistics?</td>
<td>0-5x's 6-7x's 8-9x's 10x's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How many more times are students who have been cyberbullied likely to have attempted suicide according to nationwide statistics?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please select ONE for each question, representing your best estimate of statistics at your school.

10. What percentage of your students has cyberbullying affected?  
   
   | 0-5% | 6-10% | 11-25% | 26-50% | 61-75% | 76-100% |

11. What percentage of your students report being cyberbullied nearly daily?  
   
   | 0-5% | 6-10% | 11-25% | 26-50% | 61-75% | 76-100% |

12. What percentage of your students report 1-2 incidents of cyberbullying per week?  
   
   | 0-5% | 6-10% | 11-25% | 26-50% | 61-75% | 76-100% |

13. What percentage of your students report 1-2 incidents of cyberbullying per month?  
   
   | 0-5% | 6-10% | 11-25% | 26-50% | 61-75% | 76-100% |

14. What percentage of your students cyberbullied at least monthly also experienced physical aggression?  
   
   | 0-5% | 6-10% | 11-25% | 26-50% | 61-75% | 76-100% |

15. What percentage of your students who have been cyberbullied also suffered physical injury?  
   
   | 0-5% | 6-10% | 11-25% | 26-50% | 61-75% | 76-100% |

16. What percentage of your students who have been cyberbullied know the perpetrator?  
   
   | 0-5% | 6-10% | 11-25% | 26-50% | 61-75% | 76-100% |

17. How many more times are your students who have been cyberbullied likely to carry a weapon to your school?  
   
   | 0-5x's | 6-7x's | 8-9x's | 10x's |

18. How many more times are your students who have been cyberbullied likely to have attempted suicide?  
   
   | 0-5% | 6-10% | 11-25% | 26-50% | 61-75% | 76-100% |

19. Are your school estimates based on a needs assessment?  
   
   | Yes | No |

20. Are your school estimates based on professional judgment?  
   
   | Yes | No |

21. Do you believe with this particular topic, professional judgment is as accurate as results from a formal needs assessment on cyberbullying?  
   
   | Yes | No |

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!
REFERENCES


Retrieved from www.cybersmartcurriculum.org/cyberbullying/


*Saxe v. State College Area School District, 240 F.3d 200* [3d Cir. (2001)]


*Sypniewski v. Warren Hills Regional Board of Education, 307 F. 3d, 243, 3d Cir. 2002*


