CYBER BULLYING: A NEW AGE OF BULLYING AMONGST ADOLESCENTS AND WHAT EDUCATORS CAN DO ABOUT IT

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Cyber bullying: A New Age of Bullying Amongst Adolescents and What Educators Can Do About it

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Abstract

Cyber bullying is a relatively new form of bullying impacting the lives of adolescents as electronic forms of communication become the preferred way of interacting with one another. Offenders use email, social networking sites, texting, chat rooms and websites to harass their victims. Cyber bullying has been associated with anxiety, depression, aggression and academic difficulty for both the victim and the bully. This paper will discuss types of cyber bullying, prevalence, the effects it has on both the bully and the victim, and how the laws and freedom of speech have an effect on what punishments can be done to perpetrators. Finally, this paper covers what educators, school counselors, and parents can do to help prevent cyber bullying and approach the issue currently.
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Introduction

Bullying is a worldwide problem in our schools and communities that has been an issue of concern for educators for a long time. It can affect students’ academic and social outcomes, cause victims emotional and psychological disturbances, and in some cases, can lead to violence or suicide (Mason, 2008). Traditionally, bullying occurs face to face. However, due to the rapid increase in popularity of electronic technology such as computers and cell phones, a new form of bullying has developed—cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is defined as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). In addition, Calvete, et.al, (2010) define cyber bullying as, “aggressive and deliberate behavior repeated over time that is carried out by an individual or group using electronic devices towards a victim.” Although cyber bullying typically occurs outside of the school, it is often brought into the school by students discussing Facebook posting or texts, the bullying continuing in the school, and the negative effects it has on the students and their social, psychological and academic well-being (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Mason, 2008; Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009). Therefore, administrators and educators are working to implement programs in their schools to prevent and reduce cyber bullying.
Review of Literature

Traditional bullying

Traditional bullying is the face-to-face type of bullying that is what is normally thought of when one thinks of bullying. This type of bullying consists of proactive aggression, reactive aggression and indirect aggression (Calvete, et. al., 2010, Mason, 2008). Proactive aggression is deliberate, planned behavior with the intention of receiving a reward, while reactive aggression is a response to a perceived threat. Finally, indirect aggression, also called relational or social aggression, is harming someone through manipulating social relationships such as spreading rumors about someone, social exclusion, or revealing private information (Calvete, et. al., 2010; Mason, 2008). Another form of traditional bullying is overt aggression which includes physical bullying (hitting, pushing, touching) and verbal bullying (taunting, threatening) (Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols,, & Storch, 2009).

According to Li (2007), “up to 15% of students in American schools are frequently or severely harassed by their peers.” In many cases, bully-victim cycles are found in which individuals are both the bully and the victim, and in most school-shooting cases, bullying played a major role (Li, 2007). Finally, many characteristics such as popularity, physical strength, social competence, confidence, intelligence, age, gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status were perceived as power the offender had over the target (Mason, 2008).

Cyber bullying

Although there are some similarities between traditional bullying and cyber bullying, there are also a number of characteristics that differentiate them. In cyber bullying, the antagonist uses various forms of technology such as sending threatening text messages on cell
phones, posting malicious messages on social networking sites such as Facebook or Myspace, uploading embarrassing pictures or videos on the internet, and using chat rooms, websites, and emails to harass their victims (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Mason, 2008). Cyber bullies can remain virtually anonymous through fake accounts on social networking sites, emails, chat rooms and message boards (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010, Mason, 2008). However, studies reveal that many victims know (or think they know) the perpetrator and it is typically someone in their social circle. According to Li (2007, p. 1778), “cyber bullying is often very serious, including stalking and death threats… I can say anything I want. It’s impersonal. Face to face is a little intimidating.”

Second, there isn’t regulation that governs conversations and interactions in cyberspace, so inappropriate communication is frequently left unsupervised. Also, studies have shown that most adolescents use computers and cell phones away from their parents, teachers or other adults, so there is not supervision or proper guidance for online activities (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Cyber bullying can also spread much faster and more broadly than traditional bullying due to being able to forward or copy-and-paste messages, and it typically occurs outside of school property which make it harder to patrol (Li, 2008, Mason 2008).

There are many different types of cyber bullying that are not associated with traditional bullying. Bombing occurs when the aggressor uses an automated system to send thousands of messages to the target’s email causing it to fail. Online fights are known as flaming and use electronic messages that contain hostile and vulgar language; slandering is when the intimidator sends cruel images or rumors about others to ruin their reputations or social relationships; impersonation (hacking) is when the bully gets into someone else’s account in order to send messages that make the target “lose face, cause trouble for or endanger the victim, or harm the
victim’s reputation or friendships;” *defamation* is spreading secrets or embarrassing information about someone; finally, deliberately excluding someone from an online group and repeatedly sending messages that are intimidating or threaten injury are also ways of cyber bullying (Calvete, et. al., 2010; Chibbaro, 2007; Beale & Hall, 2007). Another phenomenon of cyber bullying is called *happy slapping* in which the person who is being attacked is recorded on cell phone cameras, and the video is later shared online or with friends (Calvete, et. al., 2010).

Unfortunately, online sexual harassment is also on the rise and the non-regulation could be a contributing factor. In one study, one third of undergraduate students reported being stalked over the internet (Li, 2007). According to Li (2007), this type of harassment ranged from “flaming (over attacks on a person) to highly sexual comments and visual pornography that dehumanize women and seduction under false pretenses, electronic stalking, and virtual rape.” In another study, several participants described situations in which a boy would threaten a girl to take a picture over the webcam or otherwise run the risk of having her secrets divulged (Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009).

**Prevalence**

With the use of technology rapidly increasing, it is estimated that at least 90% of adolescents use the Internet, with about 50% using it daily, and nearly half of teenagers have a cell phone allowing them direct access to texting (Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols, & Storch, 2009; Beran & Li, 2007; Mason, 2008). In fact, students reported that they and their peers spend at least three hours a day on their computers and spend more time on their computers than they do watching television (Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009; Mishna, et. al., 2011). In addition, the age at which children use the internet and cell phones is becoming younger and younger.
In the study done by Mishna, Saini, and Solomon (2009), they found that 21% of children between the ages of six months and six years old have used computers.

In 2000, a New Hampshire study found that only 6% of students had been cyber bullied (Li, 2005). However, according to the 2007 Bureau of Justice Statistics Indicators of School Crime and Safety Report, about 28% of students between 12 and 18 years old reported that they were cyber bullied in the past six months, 11% once or twice a week and 8% daily (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). This is constant throughout many different studies that have been done on cyber bullying and shows that it may be on the rise making it even more important for educators to address the problem. Two studies in particular found that over half of students had experience with cyber bullying, while 25-35% of the students had been both bullied and bullies over the internet at least once (Li, 2007; Beran & Li, 2007).

Cyber bullying peaks between 13 and 15 years old, with the highest prevalence occurring in 8th grade, but it is found at all three levels of schooling (Beale & Hall, 2007). Most studies report that females prefer this type of bullying, while other studies found that gender did not play a factor in whether or not the person was involved in cyber bullying. (Calvete, et. al., 2010; Beale & Hall, 2007). There is also a close relationship between bullies and those who are targeted. In many cases, the victims of cyber bullying are also bullies. In fact, one study found that about 30% of students who reported they were bullied were also bullies (Li, 2007; Beran & Li, 2007; Mishna, et.al., 2011). Beran and Li (2007) also note that 71% of students who shot their schoolmates were victims of bullying. One reason for this may be because students who are both targets and bullies are in the same social group of friends, and the social groups that tend to bully others also bully each other (Li, 2007).
There have been many instances of cyber bullying reported around the world. For example, in Australia, a nine-year-old girl received pornographic emails from her classmate, and in Quebec, Canada a 15-year-old boy became unwillingly famous when a film he made of himself doing a Star Wars fight scene was posted on YouTube by some classmates. The clip received millions of views and he was so humiliated that he dropped out of school and sought counseling (Li, 2007; Campbell, 2005). In another incident, an overweight boy was photographed by a cell phone camera in the school locker room and it was posted online (Campbell, 2005). Another incident happened on a website at Calabasas High School in California where “vicious gossip and racist and threatening remarks grew so rampant that most of the school was affected” (Li, 2007).

**Reasons behind cyber bullying**

Adolescence is a difficult time both biologically and psychologically. According to Li (2008), adolescence is a period of abrupt biological and social change. Specifically, the rapid body changes associated with the onset of adolescence and changes from primary to secondary school initiate dramatic changes in youngsters’ peer group composition and status. Changes in peer group availability, individuals’ status within groups, and peer support confront youngsters as they are entering new, larger, and typically impersonal secondary schools. One way in which peer status is achieved in these sorts of environments, especially by boys, is through the selective use of aggression and other agonistic strategies.

Because adolescents are changing friendships and seeing where they fit in as they figure out who they are, aggression towards their peers, especially within friend groups, occurs (Li, 2008). This is typically done by bullying, specifically relational bullying which can include
cyber bullying. Biologically, the adolescent brain has an underdeveloped pre-frontal cortex, which affects their reasoning and ethical decision making (Mason, 2008). A technological use of communication interferes with “the recognition of the connection between an action and a harmful consequence” (Mason, 2008).

In terms of aggressive behaviors, studies have shown that children and adolescents may believe that it is okay to attack others when they deserve it, making them more likely to be aggressive (Calvete, et. al., 2010). According to Calvete, et. al. (2010), Bandura’s social learning theory also plays a role in bullying. Adolescents who observe positive consequences for aggressive behaviors learn to believe that being aggressive leads to good consequences. This means that adolescents who are exposed to violence in their home, school, community or the media are more likely to be violent towards others (Calvete, et al., 2010). Studies have repeatedly shown that there is a clear relationship between rejection and bullying. Students who felt rejected by their peers were more likely to bully other students (Calvete, et. al., 2010). Similarly, in regards to Erikson’s theory, the task of adolescents is to explore and resolve their identity crisis, and the anonymous nature of the internet allows them to experiment with multiple identities (Mason, 2008). Erikson’s psycho-social developmental theory posits eight stages of development that people go through. This theory also looks at the biological, psychological and social aspects of development within these eight developmental steps. During the adolescent years, the stage is identity vs. role confusion in which teens are trying to figure out who they are as a person (Mason, 2008).

On the other hand, Beran and Li (2007) use the Social Rank Theory to explain why adolescents use this form of aggression against their peers. They claim that peer groups become established as a hierarchy (with the “popular” group on top) in which some students higher up in
the hierarchy use this aggression to dominate their peers in order to gain prestige, power or access to resources (Beran & Li, 2007). When the peer targets submit to this dominance by crying or feeling intimidated, the aggressors will continue to hold power over them, making it a long term ordeal. Children and adolescents who allow this to happen may be at risk for continued bullying in cyberspace. This means that the bullying can follow them home, making it impossible to escape (Beran & Li, 2007).

According to Patchin & Hinduja (2010), Mason (2008), and Mishna, Saini & Solomon (2009), adolescents find it much easier to be vengeful through technological means of communication because the offender is physically separated from the victim and because personal and social norms, rules, morals and law are considered to be less relevant when partaking in electronic communication. Therefore, adolescents who would normally stay away from face-to-face bullying, partake in cyber bullying because the anonymity implies the lack of consequences (Calvete, et. al., 2010; Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009; Mason, 2008).

Part of this is because there is limited supervision of adolescents using the internet. According to Mason (2008), there was a 54% increased likelihood of adolescents harassing others online if there was no internet supervision. The location of the computer in the home was found to be a predictive factor of cyber victimization (Mishna, et. al., 2011). Children who used the internet in private places, like their bedroom, were at a higher risk of getting cyber bullied than children who used the computer in open spaces in their home because there were greater opportunities for parental supervision (Mishna, et. al., 2011). Compared to traditional bullying, using electronic means of bullying also allows the bully to not only target a greater number of people at one time, but to reach a larger audience as well (Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols, & Storch, 2009; Mason, 2008).
Retaliation is also common in cyber bullying. Adolescents who are bullied over the internet retaliate against the other person by returning angry statements and sending harassing messages. Retaliation may serve to protect the student from feeling embarrassed, sad or powerless by making them feeling angry and in control instead (Beran & Li, 2007). Mishna, et. al., (2011) found that bully-victims would be more prevalent in the cyber world because revenge or payback might be easier than traditional bullying.

**Consequences**

Adolescence is a sensitive and important time when identity development is at its peak. During this period, identity development is particularly dependent on one’s social environment (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Therefore, adolescents typically engage in behaviors and situations that help them value themselves positively and avoid those that make them feel negative about whom they are as a person (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Research has shown that experience with bullying has a negative effect on adolescent development. Many victims of cyber bullying have a lower self-esteem which is defined as a “favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the self” according to Patchin and Hinduja (2010). Self-esteem is also used as an internal representation by how much the students are accepted or rejected by their peers. It is unsure if being a target creates lower self-esteem, or if those who have lower self-esteem are more likely to be targeted for bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010).

When teens are abused verbally, they may not remember every word but in the case of cyber bullying, the targeted student can read what the bully has said over and over again over emails, texts, chat rooms and websites (Campbell, 2005). Written words seem more concrete and “real” than spoken words to adolescents (Campbell, 2005). According to Dempsey,
Sulkowski, Nichols and Storch (2009) and Mason (2008), cyber victimization also leads to depression, behavior problems, drug use, academic problems, eating disorders, suicidal ideations, chronic illness, peer aggression, and negative attitudes about the school environment. Additionally, targets reported feeling sad, anxious, lonely, insecure, angry and embarrassed and were affected both at home and in school environments (Beran & Li, 2007). Adolescents may also outwardly show signs by being impulsive or hyperactive, or oppositely, avoiding school which results in absenteeism or a poor concentration on schoolwork. This may explain reports of lower intelligence and academic achievement in previous studies (Beran & Li, 2007).

Bullies also have some negative effects in that they are more likely to engage in rule-breaking and to have aggressive behaviors. As the bullies get older, they are more likely to have a criminal record by the time they reach the age of twenty-four compared to those who were not bullies (Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009). According to a study done by Mason (2009), 60% of boys who were bullies between grades 6 to 9 had been convicted of at least one crime by the time they were 24 compared to 23% of boys who were not characterized as bullies. Furthermore, they found that 40% of bullies had three or more convictions by the age of 24. For both the victims and the bullies, developmental problems could persist into adulthood (Mason, 2008).

The Law

Combating the issue of cyber bullying is more difficult for schools than many people would expect. Not only are most bullies anonymous, but due to free-speech rights, it is difficult to take down a website or enforce punishment for what is said over technology (Li, 2007). The First Amendment places restrictions on school officials to formally discipline students who were involved in online speech (Mason 2008). The basic legal standard is that school officials can
place educationally based restrictions on student speech that appears to be school sponsored or is necessary to keep an appropriate school climate (Mason, 2008). In the case of the Calabasas High School, the principal did get involved

after comments [on the website] caused many of his students to be depressed, angry, or simply unable to focus on school. It might have been happening off campus…but the effects carry on into the school day…[However], the site has more than 30,000 members and any student can post a message…[further], getting the site stopped wasn’t easy. Talking to law-enforcement officials led to nowhere; there are few rules governing what can get posted on the internet (Li, 2007, pp. 1778).

Because of the anonymity, bullies are more likely to be more hurtful. However, because students are not under the school’s jurisdiction, bullies cannot be punished by the school or through criminal law unless they make real, intended threats or repeatedly and personally harass the student (Li, 2007). When looking at cyber bullying in the school context, courts have a standard to protect student free expression. However, under these standards, school officials can have educationally based restrictions on student speech and may apply discipline for violating those restrictions (Mason, 2008). In the Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent Community School District case regarding students’ First Amendment speech rights, the court acknowledged that unless the speech substantially disrupts learning, schools cannot restrict it. In regards to cyber bullying, another case determined that this type of harassment influences learning and emotional well-being and that schools cannot ignore threatening or offensive speech that has little value in the school setting (Mason, 2008). Administrators and educators should petition state legislators to add an electronic bullying component to existing state laws that way they are able to give consequences to those who are cyber bullying, even outside of school grounds, without worry
about free speech issues (Beale & Hall, 2007). Currently, forty-five states have passed legislation that prohibits cyber bullying (Beale & Hall, 2007).

**Plan of Action**

Many students also feel that cyber bullying is particularly invasive as the bullying occurs often times in their own bedroom, and they feel their homes should be one of the safest places to escape from bullying (Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009). They were apprehensive in disclosing with parents that they were being bullied out of fear that they would get their computer privileges taken away, and they believed that adults would not be able to find evidence of the bullying or would be able to identify the bully (Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009; Chibbaro, 2005; Beale & Hall, 2007). Students also believed that because cyber bullying occurs off school grounds, teachers could not do anything about it (Campbell, 2005).

In fact, many students, about 30%, do not think that adults in schools tried stopping cyber bullying when it was reported to them (Li, 2007). Because of the belief that adults in schools will not help, many students who felt scared and powerless chose not to report their cyber bullying instances (Li, 2007). This means that it is important to build strong, trusting relationships between students and school staff so that students will be more likely to report the bullying and the teachers, administrators and school counselors will be more likely to take it seriously (Campbell, 2005). A key element of the prevention and intervention of cyber bullying is that it should be a joint effort among schools, family and the community (Mason, 2008; Beale & Hall, 2007; Campbell, 2005; Chibbaro, 2007).
Educators

School officials are sometimes reluctant to get involved in cyber bullying cases because they typically occur outside of school grounds. Also, many teachers, administrators and counselors are not aware of the extent that cyber bullying occurs off school grounds. Therefore, schools are not equipped with appropriate ways to deal with cyber bullying (Mason, 2008). To support the appropriate use of technology in schools, administrators and other school staff need to know about the different forms of cyber bullying and the extent to which it happens, as well as the negative effects it has on adolescents (Beale & Hall, 2007; Campbell, 2005; Mason, 2008).

To help determine the prevalence of cyber bullying at the home and at school, the administrator could have focus groups, class meetings and surveys that are sent to teachers, parents and students (Beale & Hall, 2007). Once this knowledge is gained, they can use this information to develop appropriate preventative and intervention strategies to help protect all students (Li, 2006; Mason, 2008; Chibarro, 2007).

One way school officials may be able to counteract negative effects of cyber bullying is by working to increase self-esteem in students. One way to do this could be through the use of peer support groups (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols and Storch (2009), Campbell (2005), Beale & Hall (2007), Mason (2008), and Chibbaro (2007) also believe that schools should take a proactive step to decrease the opportunity for cyber bullying to occur by developing and enforcing strict policies regarding the appropriate use of internet and cell phone use on school grounds. This includes providing immediate and consistent consequences for bullies both on and offline. With this, it is important for staff, parents and the students to clearly understand the seriousness of cyber bullying and the consequences of violating school
rules regarding harassment and intimidation (Beale & Hall, 2007; Chibbaro, 2007; Campbell, 2005; Mason, 2008).

Administrators need to make sure that the school’s anti-bullying policy includes harassment via internet or cell phones, as well as holding professional development seminars for their staff regarding the issue (Beale & Hall, 2007; Chibbaro, 2007; Campbell, 2005; Mason, 2008). They also should provide parents with education about what their students may be engaging in, what they can do to help prevent cyber bullying and monitoring their children, and what the potential consequences will be if their child is engaging in these behaviors (Beale & Hall, 2007; Campbell 2005; Mason, 2008). Some of these consequences could include loss of computer privileges, detention, suspension or expulsion (Chibbaro, 2007). It is also important to increase supervision in particular areas at school where cyber bullying is occurring (Campbell, 2005; Chibbaro, 2007).

**School Counselor**

Counseling and support should be given to both the target and the bully (Chibbaro, 2007). School counselors could provide information to bullies which includes the legal and personal consequences of cyber bullying (including losing friendships), developing a more positive self-concept, improving social problem-solving and anger management skills, and increasing their ability to empathize with their victims (Chibbaro, 2007). This could be done individually or in small groups. The school counselor can serve as an advocate for those who are cyber bullied by teaching the target to ignore or deflect harassing text messages or other forms of cyber bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Mason, 2008). Victims should also learn how to become more assertive in standing up for themselves, develop a higher self-concept, increase
social skills, and practice positive behaviors that will reduce the risk of further victimization (Chibbaro, 2007).

It is also important for the school counselor to collaborate with teachers to put a stop to cyber bullying by presenting classroom guidance lessons on proper online etiquette and dangers of internet uses, and allow for an anonymous way to report cyber bullying (Beale & Hall, 2007; Chibbaro, 2007; Campbell, 2005; Mason, 2008). Along with classroom presentations, the school counselor could get a police officer to speak to the students about the legal consequences of cyber bullying (Beale & Hall, 2007). The school counselor should also collaborate with other staff members in the school, parents, and the students to promote a school-wide cyber bullying prevention program to help create a safe school environment that will not tolerate cyber bullying, and will allow students that are bullied to feel safe going to an adult for help (Beale & Hall, 2007; Chibbaro, 2007).

One of the most widely studied anti-bullying programs is the Olweus Bullying Prevent Program (BPP), which has shown to reduce levels of bullying in school by 25% to 50% (Mason, 2008). This program has increased positive awareness (extent of bullying, monitoring, and supervision) by school staff, limits to unacceptable behaviors, positive adult role models, and consistent consequences to rule violations (Mason, 2008). Guidance lessons using this approach should include teaching students effective decision-making skills, problem solving and communication skills, as well as focusing on the value of kindness and respect for others (Mason, 2008). Another program is the Lions-Question Conflict Management program, which covers bullying, prejudice and conflict (Mason, 2008). In one study, after two years, students showed a 68% decrease in violence-related referrals, and were five times more likely to have
pro-social interactions compared to the control group that did not go through this program (Mason, 2008).

**Parents**

It is important for parents to stand behind the school’s efforts to combat cyber bullying. In order for them to do this, they must realize that they need to address the problem and communicate with their own children about this issue, especially since cyber bullying typically occurs at the home (Beale & Hall, 2007). Because their children are often more tech savvy than they are, it is important for parents to get education about cyber bullying and the different aspects of it so that they are better able to monitor their teenagers at home (Beale & Hall 2007; Campbell, 2005). A recent study found that only 16% of parents discussed internet use with their children, and in order to prevent cyber bullying, this number needs to increase (Beale & Hall, 2007). Parents should have a family online agreement about where their children can go online, what they can do, how long they can be online, how to protect their personal information, and what to do if they are feeling uncomfortable about what is being said online (Beale & Hall, 2007).

If their child is being harassed online or through text messages, the parents should contact the school even though the situation occurred outside of school hours (Beale & Hall, 2007). The school may be able to give them resources or suggestions, such as contacting the bully’s parents to make them aware of what is going on (Beale & Hall, 2007). If there are threats of physical violence, intimidation, hate crimes, or sexual exploitation, parents should contact authorities for further investigation.
Conclusion or Discussion

Technology is intended to be a positive attribute to society that helps create a rich learning environment and introduce adolescents to new ideas, develop new skills, and broaden their perspectives. Along with that, many parents buy their teens cell phones to ensure their safety, especially after the children have earned driver’s licenses. However, this same technology has begun to be used in negative ways to harass others via text messages, social networking sites, email, websites, and chat rooms. Cyber bullying is a wide spread problem in our schools and communities that occurs worldwide. It can have negative effects on students’ academic and social outcomes, can cause the students emotional and psychological stress, and in extreme cases, can result in serious violence to themselves or their aggressors. Also, because cyber bullying occurs past school hours, there is no escape for victims; those who may not bully face to face have a means to bully online where they feel anonymous and cannot see how they are affecting the victim.

It is important that students feel comfortable going to an adult for help, and that the adult will follow through with the issue. School counselors are not the only people in the school who are responsible for students’ safety; however, they may be the ones that teachers, parents and students go to for help. It is important that all school faculty, parents and students work together to put a stop to cyber bullying. However, school counselors can present classroom guidance lessons, and partake in implementing a school-wide anti-bullying program with the help of faculty, parents and students. It takes a team of people and consistent rules and regulations to put a stop to cyber bullying.
Author’s Note

Throughout writing my Capstone Project, I found it very informative and helpful in what I can do as a future school counselor to help combat cyber bullying, as it has become a largely increased way of bullying among students. In fact, because of my capstone topic, I was asked to give a presentation to the La Crescent staff on a staff development day about cyber bullying, and I even put examples of what our own students were saying online in the presentation. Our staff was shocked by what students are actually doing and saying to each other, and it really opened their eyes. This experience reiterated to me how important it is to make sure that all staff know what cyber bullying consists of, the consequences, and how they can help students that are victimized. I was also able to share this presentation with future teachers at Winona State University, and was able to be part of creating a school-wide bullying prevention program at La Crescent Middle School. It is clear that cyber bullying is an important issue that is happening throughout our schools in our country and throughout the world.
References


Appendix A

Resources for Educators

1. A briefing for Educators: Online Social Networking Communities and Youth Risk
   http://csriu.org/cyberbully/docs/youthriskonlinealert.pdf

2. Educator’s Guide to Cyberbullying, Cyberthreats & Sexting
   http://csriu.org/cyberbully/documents/educatorsguide.pdf

3. Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use *cyber bullying survey*
   http://csriu.org

4. Cyber Bully Safety Tips for Teens, Educators and Parents
   http://cyber-safe-kids.com

5. Resources and Bully Prevention Program
   http://www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust/

6. Resources for Educators*
   http://www.cyberbullying.us/resources.php
Appendix B

Cyber bullying Survey

Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use

http://csriu.org

The following survey is seeking information from students about cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other communication technologies, such as cell phones. Cyber bullying might occur at home through your personal Internet account or a cell phone used at home. Cyber bullying might also occur at school, through the school’s Internet network or a cell phone used at school.

The responses to this survey will be used to help the school develop a plan to address Cyber bullying. The survey also will provide helpful information for researchers. Your responses to this survey are confidential. You may also choose not to respond to this survey.

Survey Questions

1. What grade are you in? ____
2. What is your gender? ___ M ___ F
3. Do you use the Internet at home? ___ Yes ___ No
4. Do you use a cell phone at school? ___ Yes ___ No
5. The following are a list of common cyber bullying actions. For each type of action, please answer three questions.
   a. Flaming. Sending angry, rude, vulgar messages about a person to an online group or to that person via e-mail or other text messaging.
      i. How often have you been flamed?
         ____ Frequently ____ Occasionally ____ Never
      ii. How often do you think students at this school are flamed?
ii. On the following scale, what is your reaction to flaming?

___ No big deal
___ Learn to live with it
___ Upsetting
___ Very upsetting
___ No opinion

b. Online Harassment. Repeatedly sending offensive messages via e-mail or other text messaging to a person.

i. How often have you been harassed online or through text messaging?

___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never

ii. How often do you think students at this school are harassed online?

___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never ___ Don’t know

iii. On the following scale, what is your reaction to harassment?

___ No big deal
___ Learn to live with it
___ Upsetting
___ Very upsetting
___ No opinion

c. Cyber-stalking. Online harassment that include threats of harm or is excessively intimidating.

i. How often have you been cyber-stalked?

___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never

ii. How often do you think students at this school are cyber-stalked?

___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never ___ Don’t know

iii. On the following scale, what is your reaction to cyber-stalking?

___ No big deal
d. **Denigration (put-downs).** Sending harmful, untrue, or cruel statements about a person to other people or posting such material online.

i. How often have you been denigrated online?
   ____ Frequently ____ Occasionally ____ Never

ii. How often do you think students at this school have been denigrated online at home?
   ____ Frequently ____ Occasionally ____ Never ____ Don’t know

iii. On the following scale, what is your reaction to denigration?
   ____ No big deal
   ____ Learn to live with it
   ____ Upsetting
   ____ Very upsetting
   ____ No opinion

e. **Masquerade.** Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material that makes that person look bad.

i. How often has someone masqueraded as you online and made you look bad?
   ____ Frequently ____ Occasionally ____ Never

ii. How often do you think masquerading occurs to students?
   ____ Frequently ____ Occasionally ____ Never ____ Don’t know

iii. On the following scale, what is your reaction to masquerading?
   ____ No big deal
   ____ Learn to live with it
f. Outing. Sending or posting material about a person that contains sensitive, private, or embarrassing information, including forwarding private messages or images.
   
i. How often have you had someone send or post sensitive personal information about you online?
   ___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never

   ii. How often do you think students at this school have had someone send or post sensitive personal information about them online at home?
   ___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never ___ Don’t know

   iii. On the following scale, what is your reaction to outing?
   ___ No big deal
   ___ Learn to live with it
   ___ Upsetting
   ___ Very upsetting
   ___ No opinion

  
g. Exclusion. Cruelly excluding someone from an online group.

   i. How often have you been cruelly excluded from an online group?
   ___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never

   ii. How often do you think students at this school have been cruelly excluded from an online group?
   ___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never ___ Don’t know

   iii. On the following scale, what is your reaction to exclusion?
   ___ No big deal
   ___ Learn to live with it
___ Upsetting
___ Very upsetting
___ No opinion

6. Have you been cyber bullied by a student who attends this school?
   ___ Yes ___ No
   a. If you answered “yes” to 6, has he or she also bullied or harassed you in person at school?
      ___ Yes ___ No
   b. If you answered “yes” to 6, have you ever bullied or harassed him or her at school?
      ___ Yes ___ No

7. Have you ever cyber bullied students attending this school?
   ___ Yes ___ No

8. How often does cyber bullying occur through the school network?
   ___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never ___ Don’t know
   a. If you answered “frequently” or “occasionally,” please indicate what kinds of cyber bullying activities through the school network (check all that apply).
      ___ Flaming
      ___ Online Harassment
      ___ Cyber-stalking
      ___ Denigration
      ___ Masquerade
      ___ Outing
      ___ Exclusion

9. How often does cyber bullying occur through cell phones or other devices used by students at school?
   ___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never ___ Don’t know
a. If you answered “frequently” or “occasionally,” please indicate what kinds of cyber bullying activities through cell phones or other devices used by students at school (check all that apply).

___ Flaming
___ Online Harassment
___ Cyber-stalking
___ Denigration
___ Masquerade
___ Outing
___ Exclusion

10. How often does cyber bullying that involves students attending this school occur outside of school?

___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never ___ Don’t know

11. How frequently have you been a witness to cyber bullying incidents?

___ Frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Never

a. If you have been a witness to cyber bullying incidents, what is your normal response (check all that apply)?

___ Join in
___ Cheer the bully on
___ Watch or look, but don’t participate
___ Leave the online environment
___ Object to others, but not directly to the bully
___ Object to the bully
___ Try to help or befriend the victim
___ Report the cyber bullying to someone who can help the victim
___ Have not been a witness
___ Other ________________________________________________
12. If someone was cyber bullying you at school or if a student from this school was Cyber bullying you at home, would you report the cyber bullying to a school counselor, teacher, or administrator?

___ Probably yes ___ Probably no

a. If you answered “probably no,” what are the most important reasons why you would probably not report (check all that apply):

___ I don’t think school staff would understand or believe me
___ I don’t think the school would or could do anything to stop it
___ I could get myself into trouble, because I could also be at fault
___ I could get myself into trouble, even if I had done nothing wrong
___ The cyber bully could get back at me and make things even worse
___ Other students could make fun of me
___ My parents could find out and might restrict my Internet access
___ I need to learn to deal with cyber bullying by myself
___ Cyber bullying is no big deal. People should just ignore it
___ Other:

13. If someone was cyber bullying you at home, would you tell your parent/guardian?

___ Probably yes ___ Probably no

a. If you answered “probably no,” what are the most important reasons why you would probably not report (check all that apply):

___ I don’t think my parent/guardian would understand or believe me
___ I don’t think my parent/guardian would know how to stop it
___ I could get myself into trouble, because I could also be at fault
___ I could get myself into trouble, even if I had done nothing wrong
___ The cyber bully could get back at me and make things even worse
___ Other students could make fun of me
___ My parent/guardian could restrict my Internet access
___ I should be able to deal with cyber bullying by myself
___ Cyber bullying is no big deal. People should just ignore it
___ Other:
14. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree to the following statements:

a. Cyber bullying is a normal part of the online world. There is nothing anyone can do to stop it.
   ___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

b. I know of someone who has been really hurt by cyber bullying.
   ___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

c. Things that happen online should stay online.
   ___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

d. If someone is being hurt by cyber bullying, it is important to tell a responsible adult.
   ___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

e. I would report cyber bullying incidents, if I could do so without anyone knowing it was me.
   ___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

f. I have the right to say anything I want online, even if what I say hurts someone or violates someone’s privacy.
   ___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

g. Adults should stay out of this.
   ___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

h. I would like to create a more kind and respectful online world.
   ___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

15. Does the school’s Internet policy or other policies prohibit actions in school that would be considered cyber bullying?
___ Yes ___ No ___ I don’t know