CYBERBULLYING: AN EXPLORATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH CYBERBULLYING INCIDENTS IN LOUISIANA

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This qualitative phenomenological study explored school administrators' experiences with cyberbullying. The participants were secondary administrators in Louisiana public schools. Notable findings indicated that cyberbullying is a complex problem because the greatest amount of cyberbullying is occurring off-campus. This study found Facebook and other social media sites are the most common places for cyberbullying to occur; therefore, students need to be taught to use social media responsibly. Findings illustrated that female students were more likely to participate in cyberbullying, cellphones are used as a source for cyberbully, and there is a disparity between administrators regarding the effectiveness of Louisiana cyberbullying laws.

Introduction

Cyberbullying is a new twist on an old problem in education (Ackers, 2012). Bullying is a serious issue that schools across the world have been battling for decades (Accordino & Accordino, 2011). However, cyberbullying brings new complications, new laws, and a new territory that the school system must address (Willard, 2007). As a fairly new issue, the research on cyberbullying is limited, but the effects of cyberbullying are considerable (Butler, Kift, & Campbell, 2009; Grigg, 2010). In fact, several research studies identify cyberbullying as a growing problem that affects adolescents all over the world and across various cultures (Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Ang & Goh, 2010).

Research has shown that cyberbullying can occur at any time in life, but it typically peaks in middle school (Sbarbaro & Smith, 2011). Some researchers have found that females experience cyberbullying more often than their male counterparts (Ackers, 2012; Price & Dalgleish, 2010; Snell & Englander, 2010). In contrast, other researchers have concluded that there is no significant difference in cyberbullying among girls and boys (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). However, all researchers appear to agree that the effects of victimization from cyberbullying are far reaching and include low self-esteem (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010), increased chances of suicide (Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010), distress (Juvonen & Gross, 2008), anger (Burgess-Proctor, Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Ortega et al., 2012), frustration (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2010), and negative "mental health" issues (Reeckman & Cannard, 2009, p. 48).

Olweus (1993) described the act of bullying as repeatedly harassing another person and causing harm. This type of bullying can be both direct and observable or subversive and difficult to detect. In addition, bullying behaviors result from an "imbalance of power" (Violence Prevention Works!, n.d., para. 3) and when "he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself" (Violence Prevention Works!, n.d., para. 2). However, in recent years bullying has taken a new direction: cyberbullying. According to many researchers, bullying and cyberbullying are closely linked and students typically participate or experience both forms of bullying (Maher, 2008; Twyman, Saylor, Taylor, & Comeaux, 2010). Cyberbullying is the repeated harassment of someone through the use of email, texting, or other electronic means (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009). The number of students who experience cyberbullying as a victim varies depending on the study. For example, Ybarra, Diener-West, and Leaf (2007) found 34.5% of students reported being cyberbullied. In addition, 10% of those students admitted to repeated cyberbullying abuse. Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, and Tippett (2006) concluded that approximately 22% of students are, at one time or another, victims of cyberbullying.

As technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, school administrators are faced with the problem of disciplining not just bullying among students, but cyberbullying as well (Accordino & Accordino, 2011). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore school administrators' experiences with cyberbullying incidents.

Specific research questions included the following:

1. What experiences do school administrators have with cyberbullying?
2. What cyberbullying policies are in place at your school and how effective are they?
3. What unofficial procedures are used at your school and how effective are they?
4. What are recommendations to strengthen school cyberbullying policies and procedures?

Literature Review

Cyberbullying may be a new phenomenon, but research shows that it is growing rapidly with the change of times and technology (Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Ang & Goh, 2010; Bullock, Wong-Lo, & Gable, 2011). Cyberbullying has gained increased attention through various forms of media and is the new hot topic in education (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). The review of the literature includes the following topics: traditional bullying, cyberbullying defined, types of cyberbullying, age and gender, cyberbullies, cybervictims, bystanders, parents, schools, cyberbullying laws, and cyberbullying in the media.

Traditional Bullying

Several researchers have described bullying as a problem that has continually caused detriment to children around the world (Olweus, 1993; Ortega et al., 2012). Bullying is the repeated harassment of another person through name calling, exclusion, physical violence, creating false accusations, or any other form that causes harm (Olweus, 1993).

In addition, Olweus pointed out that a disagreement between two friends or between two people of the same strength does not equal bullying. Bullying is the most common type of violence that occurs to adolescents, and it happens most often in the form of name calling (Blosnich & Bossarte, 2011; Boulton & Underwood, 1992) and physically hitting each other (Boulton & Underwood, 1992).

Cyberbullying Defined
Although there is a great deal of research on bullying, the concept of cyberbullying is relatively new in comparison (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2011). Cyberbullying's definition transforms as new studies surface, but the fundamental elements derive from the definition of traditional bullying (Maher, 2008; Twyman et al., 2010). Hinduja and Patchin (2009) defined cyberbullying as when one person "repeatedly makes fun of another person through email or text message or when someone posts something online about another person that they don't like" (p. 5). Burgess-Proctor et al. (2010) pointed out that the actions must be repetitive and have malicious intent to be defined as cyberbullying; otherwise, it is online harassment. Grigg (2010) questioned the usefulness of Patchin and Hinduja's definition of cyberbullying. She remarked, "Research within this area has to propose a broader concept that embraces negative behaviours of internet and mobile phone users without current cyberbullying definitional and conceptual issues" (p. 152).

There is evidence that suggests that traditional bullying and cyberbullying are related because students are often involved in both forms of bullying (Maher, 2008; O'Moore, 2012; Twyman et al., 2010). Many students refer to acts of cyberbullying as bullying (Naruskov, Luik, Nocentini, & Menesini, 2012). However, several researchers have found that participation in cyberbullying actually occurs less commonly than traditional bullying (O'Moore, 2012; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008).

Types of Cyberbullying
Cyberbullies use their cell phones as a means of sending offensive messages to others (Ackers, 2012; O'Moore, 2012; Price & Dalgleish, 2010; Reeckman & Cannard, 2009; Smith et al., 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Out of 265 students surveyed, 88% owned a cellphone (Mark & Ratliffe, 2012). Price and Dalgleish (2010) found 19% of cyberbullying victims reported being harassed on cellphones. An example of this type of cyberbullying includes using cell phones to call and wake up their victims in the middle of the night (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). A second example of cyberbullying using cellphones includes texting obscene and threatening messages such as, "I will find you." (Mark & Ratliffe, 2012, p. 101).

Willard (2007) identified sexting as a growing issue among youth. Sexting occurs when individuals either send nude or sexually explicit images to others or forward images to cause emotional distress to the victim. Hinduja and Patchin (2012) explained the reasoning behind sexting as an attempt by adolescents to project themselves to their peers in such a way as to acquire attention and increase their public status.

The internet has become so widely available that cyberbullies have various options when harassing others (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). Mark and Ratliffe (2011) reported that 96% of adolescents reported having the internet readily available. Social

networking sites were identified as the most common place on the internet for a student to be cyberbullied (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). Other common types of cyberbullying included online threats, spreading of rumors, and having humiliating pictures posted. While Hinduja and Patchin (2010) reported making fun of someone online and sending harassing emails or messages as the most common types of online bullying.

Willard (2007) gave several examples of extreme cases of cyberbullying. For instance, posting a picture that would be considered private, sexual, or embarrassing is an example of cyberbullying or harassment. O'Moore (2012) reported that boys are more likely to post pictures or videos when cyberbullying because it causes a greater impact than words. Mark and Ratliffe (2011) reported YouTube as a site where videos that are disconcerting or violent are posted for others to view. Price and Dalgleish (2010) supported previous research in their report that 21% of students in their study were victimized through email, 20% in chat rooms, and over 40% in social networking sites.

Early incidents of cyberbullying occurred most often in chat rooms because that is where most school aged children would spend their time. Today, students spend most of their time in social networking sites where videos and pictures can be shared. These sites include places like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2011). The new direction of cyberbullying includes interactive games on the internet, three dimensional games, virtual websites, Game Boy, PSP, DSi, X-Box 360, and PlayStation (Ackers, 2012; Cyberbullying Research Center, 2011; Mark & Ratiffe, 2011).

Age and Gender
One research study of 213 college students analyzed the victimization and behaviors of cyberbullying predominantly among girls. It found that females participate in cyberbullying more often as both the cyberbully and the cybervictims in comparison to males (Ackers, 2012; Mishna et al., 2012.; Navarro & Jasinski, 2012; Price & Dalgleish, 2010; Snell & Englander, 2010).

In contrast to the above research, several other researchers found that there is not a significant difference in the percentage of cyberbullying committed by females than males (Griezel et al., 2012; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). On the other hand, Fanti et al. (2012) studied over 1,400 students between the ages of 11-14 and found that boys were more likely to act as all types of bullies, including cyberbullies. They were also more likely to be the victim of all types of bullying. Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, and Rimpelä (2012) reported that girls were more likely to be the victim of cyberbullying, but that boys were more likely to act as a cyberbully.

Side Effects
The side effects of cyberbullying can be detrimental to young adults. Researchers appear to agree that the effects of victimization from cyberbullying are far reaching and include low self-esteem (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010), increased chances of suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Schneider et al., 2012), distress (Juvonen & Gross, 2008), anger (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2010; Ortega et al., 2012), frustration (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2010), and negative "mental health" issues (Reeckman & Cannard, 2009, p. 48). Students who are bullied both at school and on the internet show greater signs of distress (Ybarra et al., 2007). Side effects of cyberbullying that includes videos or images are more stressful for

students because the incident is typically viewed by a larger audience (Gillespie, 2006; Smith et al., 2008).

Hinduja and Patchin (2010) noted additional effects of cyberbullying consisted of lower self-esteem and self-worth. Reeckman and Cannard (2009) reported that students who were victims of either traditional or electronic bullying, attempted to commit suicide at a rate twice that of other adolescents. The mental health, school attendance, and participation of students are key effects of all forms of bullying (Reeckman & Cannard, 2009). It was noted by Hinduja and Patchin (2010) that minority students had increased ideals about suicide compared to their Caucasian counterparts. In addition, students who experienced cyberbullying had double the chance of having attempted to commit suicide. The same research study found that students who participated in cyberbullying as a bully also had increased thoughts of suicide (1.5 times) compared to non-victims or aggressors.

Ybarra et al. (2007) found that cyberbullying could cause problems at school. These problems included increased suspensions, playing hooky, and bringing a weapon on campus. In addition, 20-25% of students who were cyberbullied admitted to carrying a weapon on campus. It was suggested by researchers that schools should intervene, with the help of parents, when cyberbullying occurred because of the increase in negative school behaviors. It is important to note that according to Ortega et al. (2012) boys admitted to less side effects than girls when they were the victims of cyberbullying or traditional bullying.

Methodology

This is a phenomenological research study. According to Moustakas (1994), a phenomenological study examines the experiences of people who have lived through similar scenarios. In this study the phenomenon explored was cyberbullying and how school administrators handled situations of cyberbullying on their campuses. Since cyberbullying is a relatively new problem in education, a phenomenological approach was ideal because it is "rooted in questions that give a direction and focus to meaning, and in themes that sustain an inquiry, awaken further interest and concern, and account for our passionate involvement with whatever is being experienced" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59). Moustakas (1994) detailed a progression in phenomenological research starting with immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. In addition, Pereira (2012) pointed out that in order for a phenomenological research study to be valid, the study must be rigorous, credible, and bring awareness to the phenomenon being studied.

The Participants
The population for this study consisted of school administrators in Louisiana schools that are ranked an A, B, C, or D. According to the Louisiana Department of Education website, Louisiana Believes (n.d.), schools are given a rating system consisting of letter grades, A to F based on their end of year exams in the elementary and middle schools. However, high schools are awarded their letter grade based on 50% state performance scores (End of Year Exams) and 50% of their scores is based on four year cohort graduation rates. As of 2013, the schools' scores will be based on a 150 point scale. A school that earns 100-150 points will be awarded a rating of A. A school that earns 85-

99.9 points will be awarded a rating of B. A school rated a C earns a point value ranging from 84.9 – 70, a D school earns a point value from 69.9-50, and an F school earns a point value of 49.9 and below.

This study utilized purposeful sampling. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), purposeful sampling is when the researcher intentionally selects those individuals who are going to participate in the study because they have experienced the phenomenon in question. In this study, the participants were school administrators in public schools who work in an A, B, C, or D school within Louisiana. An additional criterion was that these school administrators must have had experiences with cyberbullying on their campuses. In addition, extreme case sampling was employed in order to "provide unusual, troublesome, or enlightened cases" (p. 174). In other words, the researcher explored accounts of extreme cyberbullying cases in Louisiana and then interviewed those school administrators. The researcher also used snowball sampling. This occurs when the researcher is introduced to new participants who meet the stated criteria through inquiry and suggestions made by other participants in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Thus, the researcher asked each participant if they knew of another school administrator who had experienced cyberbullying within their school.

Each participant was assured confidentiality and was provided with pseudonyms which allowed the participants to speak freely on the phenomenon being researched without fear of retribution (Simon, 2011). For a phenomenological study, Creswell (2007) stated that the population size should be between five and 25 participants. Morse (1994) recommended that the research participants should be at least six. For this study, the researcher chose to interview eight school administrators who met the specific stated criteria.

The participants in this study were a collection of principals and assistant principals in the State of Louisiana. All of the participants were on school campuses in the 2012-2013 school year, and represented a wide range of schools: three were middle school administrators, two were high school administrators, two were administrators on campuses with grades seven to 12, and one was an administrator at a ninth grade campus. The participants in this study included four male administrators and four female administrators. The participants in the study worked in four different parishes across the State of Louisiana. The schools ranged in size from 280 students to over 1000 students on campus. Every campus had a cyberbullying policy in place, and participants were all aware that their parish's policy was aligned with the state policy.

Data Collection

The goal of the interview process was to understand the phenomenon of cyberbullying and school administrators' experiences in handling cyberbullying. Therefore, the researcher chose individual interviews as the data collection tool. The interviews were based on the research questions and framed within a general interview protocol. However, participants were granted as much scope as needed to express their opinions freely and without researcher biases. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Each participant was provided with a pseudonym in order to afford them with a level of anonymity.

Each participant was first contacted through an email explaining who the researcher was, her background, and the research study. A second email and/or phone

call scheduled the time and date for the interview. In some instances, the researcher called several time and sent several emails to the participants before getting a response to the invitation to participate. Participants were given a copy of the interview questions in advance of the interview which lasted approximately 20-45 minutes. Before the interview began, participants signed a consent form verifying they understood their rights.

Treatment of the Data
Next the researcher transcribed the interviews. The interviews were coded and grouped and labeled to reflect broader themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The findings of the qualitative research study were then expressed through a narrative discussion. A narrative description was completed based on the transcripts and field notes. The narrative descriptions included the background of the participants, the cyberbullying incidents experienced, language used by the participants to explain the cyberbullying incident, and the participants' meanings or reality (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Provisions of Trustworthiness
In this study, the researcher used a variety of triangulation methods to lend credibility to the study. First the researcher used data triangulation through interviewing a wide range of participants in a variety of schools in order to increase the validity (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011).

Secondly, the researcher used peer debriefing as an external check on the research process. The researcher chose two peers to listen to the recorded interviews in order to determine if the interpretations of the researcher were precise (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In addition, the researcher conducted member checks which allowed the participants to review their transcripts and provide feedback on the interpretations made by the researcher to ensure accuracy (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Results

This study provided eight school administrators with the opportunity to discuss their personal experiences with cyberbullying on their school's campus. In addition, it allowed them to discuss what they felt were effective and ineffective policies and procedures that are in place in their district and schools. According to the interviews given by each participant, there did not appear to be any differences in perception based on gender in regards to cyberbullying. In addition, neither the grade level nor the size of the school appeared to be a factor in the type or severity of the cyberbullying that occurred. As indicated in the methodology section, all participants were assigned pseudonyms in order to assure anonymity.

Research Question One
Research question one asked participants to describe their experiences with cyberbullying in their schools. Emergent themes included the following: cyberbullying develops on social media, cellphones are a source, female students cyberbully more than males, most cyberbullying incidents happen off campus, parents want administrators to discipline

students for off-campus incidents, and cyberbullying students often target school personnel.

Develops on social media. Every participant in the study stated that most of the cyberbullying incidents that are reported to the office developed on social media. More specifically the school administrators pointed out that Facebook was the root of most cyberbullying. Some administrators identified other social media where cyberbullying is occurring including Instagram and Keek. One principal jokingly stated, "I think Facebook is the devil!" Another administrator pointed out that 90% of the problems they encountered with females on their campus was caused through Facebook or a text message. Mr. McCree identified a growing problem with females harassing male students through social media.

Cellphones are a source. Most participants identified a link between cyberbullying and cellphones. Cellphones have been used to bully others through text and taking unwanted pictures and then posting them to the internet. One participant explained how a female student took a picture of another student and then posted it to Facebook with derogatory comments which led to a larger problem when students arrived at school. Mr. Thibodeaux stated that he had received reports of sexting, the sending of nude pictures on cellphones, and threats that were sent through texts. Mrs. Walker described similar experiences with students using cellphones to take inappropriate pictures and then send them to other students or post them to websites. Mrs. Vincent had reports of students using their cellphones to video a teacher outside of school. In addition, Mrs. Johnson described an incident where a stolen cellphone was used to take inappropriate pictures on school campus.

Female students cyberbully more than males. Over 50% of the participants stated that female students are the most likely to be involved in cyberbullying. Mr. Johnson stated in his interview, "I think 9th grade is the worse and girls are the worst cyberbullying. Girls cyberbully. I don't know if that's official, but girls do more cyberbullying." Mrs. Picou also emphasized that most cyberbullying incidents on her campus occurred between two female students. Mr. Thibodeaux said that most of his cyberbullying stemmed from "girl drama." While not all experiences recounted by the participants mentioned girls, specifically as cyberbullying more than boys, it is important to note that almost every incident described in this study included female students.

Most cyberbullying occurs off-campus. All participants in this study except one described incidents of cyberbullying that started off campus and were later brought to school. These incidents were brought to the attention of the administration through conflict that arose after the students returned to school, or they were notified by the parents of the students. In fact, Mrs. Picou stated that she had not encountered any cyberbullying that has occurred on campus; however, she described incidents with angry parents who reported the cyberbullying to the school. She explained, "They come back to campus, both girls are made and it becomes drama. Then it becomes Momma Drama." Mr. Thibodeaux also acknowledged that every incident that he has been made aware of has taken place away from school. Mr. Johnson explained that cyberbullying has only become a problem after the students return to school. Mrs. Wainwright agreed, "It spills over to campus because students love to talk. They love to come back and say what they

saw on Facebook." Mrs. Walker pointed out that what "happened in cyberspace ends up coming to life right here."

Parents want administrators to discipline students for off-campus incidents. Most administrators agreed that parents still expect the principals and assistant principals to discipline students for their actions on the internet and using their cellphones even though those actions took place away from the school campus. Mr. Jones expressed his dismay about this, "This is a private issue. It's kind of discouraging that some of these parents think that if there is a cyber-thing between two school aged kids that the school board needs to fix this or address it." In direct contradiction, Mr. McCree stated, "Anything that we can't cover at the school that we would press charges through the school resource officer on behalf of the school and behalf of the students being harassed."

Cyberbullying students often target school personnel. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying does not only affect other students but school personnel, as well. Mrs. Walker described two incidents in her interview where the teacher was involved as a target (directly and indirectly) of cyberbullying. One incident occurred when a student videoed a teacher correcting another student and then posted the video online. The second incident occurred when a female teacher was tricked by a few male students into leaning over the desk to offer assistance with the assignment. Unknowingly, a different male student put his cellphone up her dress and took pictures of her under-garments. The students then posted those pictures. The teacher chose to resign her position due to her humiliation, according to Mrs. Walker.

Mrs. Vincent described an incident where a middle school student videoed a school teacher during the town's festival consuming alcohol and dancing. In addition, Mrs. Vincent explained how an unknown person posted the following information about an administrator on a Facebook page, "If you need to relax after a stressful encounter with certain administration at [school name], then take a right on [number] highway and visit her husband. He will hook you up."

Research Question Two

Research question two was designed to identify the school policies on cyberbullying and their effectiveness. While all administrators were familiar with state and district policies, there was a disparity on how effective these were considered. They discussed the following laws/policies related to effectiveness: Louisiana laws on cyberbullying, school cellphone policies, school code of conduct, and other use policies.

Louisiana laws on cyberbullying. Every participant in the study identified that their districts' cyberbullying policy is drawn directly from the State of Louisiana state laws on cyberbullying. One participant identified Act 861 specifically by number; but, all participants knew there was a law that had been enacted and dictated their actions regarding cyberbullying. However, their feelings on the effectiveness of the law varied. Of the participants interviewed, five felt that the law was ineffective or at best only somewhat effective. The administrators knew that the law required them to notify parents before a bullying investigation began and to give parents the opportunity to be present during the process. In addition, the administrators were aware that there is a checklist and a packet of forms that are required when a student is accused of bullying in any form.

Mrs. Wainwright described her experience with the forms. She stated:

I have filled out the paperwork, the four and five pages of forms that are required for that and it is quite cumbersome to administrators. I understand the spirit of the law, but the way that it is actually written with its requirements is way too cumbersome.

Mr. Thibodeaux elaborated:

It is not practical that you must contact a parent prior to having a child interrogated. In our school, we might have to wait a half a day, a whole day; we might even have to drive home because the child has no working numbers.

Mr. Thibodeaux understood the idea behind the law, but he thought administrators should have a voice. Mr. Thibodeaux commented:

In my opinion, if you're an administrator and you don't understand all of these forms, how are you going to tell a parent or explain this to a parent? I mean, you almost have to take course work and a degree on bullying or cyberbullying just to understand.

Mrs. Walker remarked that they use the forms given by the state, but what is bullying and what is perceived as bully are not the same things. Whereas Mrs. Vincent admitted that the laws and policies are new to them and they have had little interaction with it.

Three of the administrators felt the cyberbullying policy was effective. Mr. Johnson explained, "So the new policy works if the kids let us know and if we do what we're supposed to do: document and follow procedures. I love it." Mrs. Picou stated that her district's policy read like the state's policy, and she felt that her district's policy was effective.

Mr. McCree identified a revised Louisiana statute, R.S. 14.40. This law addressed cyberbullying that occurs off campus and the rights of the schools to discipline those cyberbullying students involved. According to Mr. McCree, this statute gives the school the power to discipline students for actions taken while students are away from campus.

School cellphone policy. Most of the subjects in the study spoke about the relationship between cellphones and cyberbullying. The cellphone policies varied among the schools. Most often students are allowed to bring their cellphones to school as long as they are not seen. However, in Mrs. Wainwright's school, students are not allowed to bring them to school at all.

Mrs. Vincent's school had the most lenient policy. Her school allowed their students to bring cellphones to school and to use them in the mornings and at lunch on the quad. Three participants commented that they do not follow the cellphone policy in their district and the consequences it requires. Mrs. Walker stated that she does not suspend students if they are caught with their cellphones out at school even though it is written into their policy. She explained, "We don't do that because we wouldn't have any children here at school. That's not the reality of what happens with our children." She emphasized that students are "addicted to their technology."

Other school policies. Several of the administrators interviewed in this study identified a code of conduct that students are given at the start of each school year. This code of conduct details the rules and the consequences for violating those rules. In addition, a few principals mentioned an acceptable use policy that regulates internet usage on campus. These policies were discussed in relation to preventative steps to reduce cyberbullying; however, the participants did not identify any of these policies as effective or ineffective.

Research Question Three
Research question three investigated the unofficial procedures that school administrators use to effectively handle incidents of cyberbullying. Emergent themes included the following as most effective: communicating with parents, providing anti-bullying contracts, talking with students informally, and meeting with students at every opportunity.

    Communication with parents. Out of the eight participants in the study, six spoke of communicating with parents when incidents of cyberbullying were reported. The principals said that contacting parents was the most important part of handling cyberbullying. Mrs. Wainwright said she would bring the students in and talk with them. Then she would inform the parents of the accusations and suggest that the parents check their child's Facebook account. Mr. Jones explained that calling parents has been enough up until now. Mr. Johnson discussed educating parents during school orientation and explaining the code of conduct so parents are familiar with the rules and policies. Mrs. Picou's approach was similar to Mr. Johnson. She mentioned talking to parents at the start of school and during the first Parent and Teacher Organization meeting.

    Providing anti-bullying contracts. Several teachers identified using anti-bullying contracts or no contact contracts when they were asked about unofficial procedures they utilize at their schools. Mrs. Walker described her "No Contact Contract" that she has students sign when they have a conflict. She explained:

> I have something called a 'No Contact Contract' that we ask students to sign before any punitive disciplinary action is taken. So, for example, I have two girls who were in a conflict. I am going to call one of them in and … it says I'm not going to be mean, I'm not going to tease, I'm not going to make fun of, I'm not going to pursue this in any kind of way.

Mrs. Walker expanded on the contract saying that it is the first step in the documentation process. Mr. Thibodeaux's contract is called a "Non-confrontation Agreement" that works the same way. Mr. McCree's school has students sign a bullying contract, but they are also required to attend a conflict resolution course if the situation persists after the initial contract is signed.

    Talking informally with students. Most participants mentioned pulling students into their offices and having an informal discussion about the cyberbullying accusations and the consequences of their actions. Mrs. Wainwright explained, "That would just require me to bring the student in, let them know that I'm aware of it and if it continues, we will take further action." Mr. Jones stated that he would bring as many as 4, 5, or 6

students in at a time to discuss the situation in hopes of stopping the cyberbullying before it escalated.

      Meeting with students at every opportunity. An additional theme that emerged was talking to large groups of students at every opportunity about cyberbullying. This includes meeting with students during their Physical Education classes, Response to Intervention time, and orientation.

Research Question Four

Research question four asked school administrators what recommendations they had to improve cyberbullying policies and procedures. Emergent themes included emphasizing cyberbullying education and increasing parental responsibility. In addition, two principals stated that they did not know what could be done to improve the current policies and procedures.

      Emphasizing cyberbullying education. The most prevalent theme that emerged in research question four was the need to emphasize cyberbullying education. Education is required both on the part of the parents, students, and even school personnel. Mrs. Picou explained that, "Parents need to understand the true definition of what that means [cyberbullying], as well as, the ramifications if they allow their students to participate." Mr. Johnson suggested similarly, "You have to educate parents and again I'm going to say at least 50% of all our bullying, the parents did not help it."

      Mrs. Vincent said that students need the consequences of cyberbullying "pounded into their heads every day." Mrs. Walker stated that "education is the great equalizer." Therefore, we must teach students and parents the consequences of their actions. According to Mrs. Walker, once a student posts something online, it is there forever and they don't realize the ramifications of those actions. Mr. Thibodeaux pointed out that educators need more training in handling cyberbullying and what it really consists of.

      Increasing parental responsibility. The second emergent theme was increasing parental responsibility. Mrs. Wainwright explained:

> We need to have parents sign off and let them know that when those things spill over to campus, that there are going to be consequences and that their responsible for their child's behavior online. If they're going to let that child set up an account, then they need to be responsible for that.

Mr. Jones's recommendation was similar. He stated, "Well, I guess I would like to see that [the] awareness [about cyberbullying] be shifted more towards parents and less on government/school overseeing private lives that take place after 3:30."

Conclusion and Implications for Practice

A primary conclusion from this study suggests that cyberbullying is an especially complex problem for school administrators to handle. Much of this dilemma occurs because the greatest amount of cyberbullying is occurring off of the school campus. This is supported by research conducted by Smith et al. (2006). The problems occur when students return to school and the conflict follows them onto the campus and into the hallways. Since most of the occurrences of cyberbullying were instigated off-campus, it

appears that students find it easier to confront others while in cyberspace than in person. This is supported by Patchin and Hinduja (2006).

Based on the findings of this study, Facebook and other social media sites are the most common places for cyberbullying to occur. Cyberbullying Research Center (2011) also reported that students spent most of their time on sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube. This could explain why most of the cyberbullying in this study occurred on these sites. Therefore, this leads to another major conclusion of this study which suggests that students must be taught to understand and use these programs responsibly.

Today, students spend most of their time in social networking sites where videos and pictures can be shared such as Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2011). Furthermore, the new direction of cyberbullying includes interactive games on the internet, three dimensional games, virtual websites, Game Boy, PSP, DSi, X-Box 360, and PlayStation (Ackers, 2012; Cyberbullying Research Center, 2011; Mark & Ratiffe, 2011). This means that the problem is not going to go away and educators must face the problem of bullying that is occurring away from school, but that has ramifications on campus.

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from those findings, the researcher offers the following suggestions and implications for practitioners. Schools should create a cellphone policy that is simple, direct, and consistent in order to reduce the number of cyberbullying that occurs with the use of these devices. While eliminating the use of cellphones at school is ideal, a more pragmatic approach is that cellphone policies are reasonable and that students are educated about their use. Each school district should include an anti-bullying (no contact contract) contract into their cyberbullying policy. This will allow the students and parents to sign off that they understand that the student has been accused of bullying. In addition, each school should include within the school day an Anti-Bullying Program that includes cyberbullying. Sympathy training is a critical part of any Anti-Bullying program. This type of training will promote empathy for all students. Lastly, Louisiana legislators need to revise the current cyberbullying laws to include parental responsibility.

The limitations for this study include the small number of participants. In addition, this study is limited only to administrators within the state of Louisiana, and it is limited to administrators who worked in schools that contained middle and/or high schools. It is recommended for future research that this study be conducted with a larger sample of participants. In addition, it is recommended that the participants interviewed should include administrators from additional states.

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