Cyber-Bullying: Bullying in the 21st Century

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Acknowledgements

I never would have thought in my life that I would be completing graduate

program let alone a thesis on any topic at all. It has taken a lot of hard work, dedication,

and support for me to achieve this goal that I am about to embark on. I have had to

persevere through long nights of work, stress, anxiety, and frustration. I could not have

accomplished anything without the support of numerous people.

Without the guidance of my professor and advisor, Dr. Thomas Hernandez, this

thesis experience would have been much more frightening. His support, words of

encouragement and assistance have assisted in the quality of this paper.

Dr. Muhyi Shakoor, professor as SUNY Brockport, was one of the first

instructors I met in the Counselor Education program. His "Zen-like" calmness and

genuine caring of all people has modeled for me how one should not only be a student,

but also a better person. While having these traits he also was firm and had certain

expectations that he wanted out of his students which inspired me to further my education

and complete the Counselor Education Program.

I would also like to thank Bonnie Roberts, site supervisor and school counselor at

Livonia Junior High and Chuck D'Imperio Junior High School principal. They have

allowed me the opportunity to test my skills in a real school environment that is based on

one simple premise, the students come first. By their example, I hope that will continue

to learning and growing in my occupational life.

I hope the fellow graduate students I have met look upon me as I feel about them;

being grateful to have worked together on our journey in completing our masters degree.

There are a few individuals that I would particularly like to thank. Erin Halligan, who

was always there to support me, whether it is emotionally or academically, by making me think and put things in perspective. Bradley Rosenbaum who was always willing to listen to me "vent" and provide insight to be the best student I can possibly be. James Englerth who has not only supported me through this process, but who has been my friend for the past nineteen years.

My family throughout my journey has been a constant support of helping me by listening to me complain or help watch my children whenever necessary. Many thanks to my parents Ross and Dianne Rumfola for stead fast encouragement throughout my life has help me to develop into the man that I am today. My sister Lisa Rumfola is always there at any time of need that has occurred in my and my family's life. My brothers, Ross Rumfola and Chris Rumfola who I have tried to model my work ethic and life after, have continued to help me stay focus on the goal of furthering my education.

Last, and most importantly, I would like to acknowledge my wife Jody and my two sons Christian and Hunter. Jody without your undying dedication to our family and to our future, I could have never made it through these past three years. I owe so much of my success to you being the pillar of support and "putting up "with the struggle of me furthering my education. Christian and Hunter have taught me to live in the moment and cherish every single second of every day.

My thanks to these people could not be measured by just the words on this paper. Thanks to all of you for just being a part of my life and helping me be a better person.

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Abstract

The effectiveness of a Cyberbullying presentation is being evaluated among junior high students. Six junior high students in a rural, Western New York setting were participants in the presentation. A pre and post-test questionnaire was given to assess the effectiveness of a Cyberbullying PowerPoint presentation. The findings indicate that participants were better able to identify types of cyberbullying and how to keep themselves safe. This information is relevant for counselors as cyberbullying appears to be a current trend affecting a multitude of students nationwide.

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Introduction

Megan Meier of Dardenne Prairie, MO, made a new friend Josh, who she met on MySpace. After only a month of conversation, Josh started to post messages saying that Megan was cruel, a slut, and that she was fat. After that one short month, they ended their friendship. One day later, Megan committed suicide (Democrat and Chronicle, 2007).

Technology is constantly changing and evolving at a rapid pace. As advances in communication technologies grow, schools are finding it harder and harder to keep up with the current trends (Willard, 2007). With this increase in technology, there is a new challenge facing our youth and our schools today and this challenge is known as cyberbullying (Willard, 2007). Adolescents are using technological devices to communicate by instant messaging, text messaging, and to set up profiles on websites such as MySpace.com and Facebook.com. Although these technologies can be beneficial, it is important to recognize and examine the potential abuse of these facets of communication.

According to Colt (2007) I-Safe statistics provided at a 2007 Summit on Cyberbullying Conference in Rochester NY, 31% of all students have a personal webpage, and over 80% of students spend at least one hour per week on the internet. 55% of all students have reported that they have given out their personal information on the internet to someone they have met online. Moreover, 58% of all students admit to using the internet unsafely, inappropriately, or illegally. Of all students polled, over 12% reported they have unsupervised internet access at their respective schools (Colt, 2007).

Middle-school students who use the internet, 19% have met face to face with someone they first met online, 10% of middle school students have met face to face with a stranger from the internet who was not their own age. Of those students, 7% have been asked by the internet strangers to keep their relationship a secret (Colt, 2007).

Over 13,000 students were polled and 22% of students know someone who has been bullied online while 19% admitted to saying something harmful or hurtful to someone else online (Colt, 2007). Examining cyberbullying and its role in a school setting is becoming an increasingly significant issue to address.

<div align="center">Review of the Literature</div>

Cyberbullying definitions

Bullying has been an issue within schools for a long time but there is a new threat that needs to be addressed, cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Many researchers have come to define cyberbullying in a few different ways all varying in degree and intensity of the cyberbullying. Hinduja et.al. (2007) described cyberbullying as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text. Shariff and Gouin (2007) have a similar definition but gets more specific. They stated cyberbullying consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the use of electronic mediums such as cell phones, web-logs and web-sites, on-line chat rooms.   Nansel and his colleagues asserted that bullying is aggressive behavior or intentional harm by one person or a group, generally carried out repeatedly and over time that involves a power differential (Nansel et al., 2001). Li (2005) stated that cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online

polling Web sites, to support deliberate repeated and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others. As technologies have expanded so has their use by children worldwide.

Types of cyberbullying

There are many different types of cyberbullying, flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, tricking, exclusion, cyberstalking, and cyberthreats (Willard 2007). According to Nancy Willard (2007), Flaming is online aggression with the use of vulgar language between two parties (Willard, 2007). Harassment is repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages (Willard, 2007) (sexual harassment would fall under this category). Sexual harassment can be broken down into three categories-gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion (Willard, 2007).

According to Barak (2005), gender harassment is defined as sexual messages, offensive nicknames, and pornographic material. Unwanted sexual attention is defined as uninvited behaviors that explicitly communicate sexual desires or intentions toward another individual (Barak, 2005). Sexual coercion relates to threats of force that are implied that can be misconstrued by the victim (Barak, 2005). These definitions are applicable to on-line and real-life interactions.

Sending of explicit pictures via computers or phones is occurring all too often (Willard, 2007). "Denigration" is sending or posting cruel gossip or rumors about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships (Willard, 2007). "Impersonation" is breaking into someone's account, posing as that person, or sending messages to make that person look bad, get that person in trouble or danger, or damage that person's

reputation or friendships. (Willard, 2007). "Outing", according to Willard, is sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online, while "tricking" is similar but a person is tricked into revealing secrets or embarrassing information which is then shared (Willard, 2007).

"Exclusion" is intentionally excluding someone from an online group or leaving out of an online conversation (Willard, 2007). Strom and Strom (2005) stated some cases may involve more than one bully and a single victim. Others could involve a gang of bullies that persecute multiple parties. The latter occurs when students respond to online trash polling sites. These web sites, which are growing in number, invite students to identify individuals by unflattering characteristics, such as the most obese person at their school, the boys likely to be gay, and the girls who have slept with the most boys (Strom & Strom, 2005). One example of this type of website is juicycampus.com.

"Cyberstalking" is repeatedly sending messages that are highly intimidating, engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for their safety, and use of a technology to control another person (Willard, 2007). "Cyberthreats" are either direct threats or distressing material that raises concerns or provides clues that the person is emotionally upset and may be considering harming someone, harming them, or committing suicide (Willard, 2007). Willard further ascertained that real power is exerted in the virtual world in multiple ways. It is expressed in various electronic mediums through controlling topics available for discussion, posting inflammatory messages, and flaming (Willard, 2007).

Types of cyberbullies

Art Wolinsky of WiredSafety.org defines five different types of cyberbullies: Inadvertent, mean girls, revenge of the nerd, power hungry and vengeful angel. Inadvertent cyberbullies may not view themselves as cyberbullies, they often have alter egos online and tend to react to hateful messages and lash out as a reaction rather than an intentional harm. Inadvertent cyberbullies are often misunderstood in their messaging (Wolinsky, 2006).

Mean girl cyberbullies are usually girls but can be boys and it can be a group activity. Girls do this to promote social status and participate in this behavior out of boredom. Mean girls are extremely immature, are offline bullies, and usually are not anonymous (Wolinsky, 2006). Revenge of the nerd cyberbullies are typically a victim to off-line bullying, stays anonymous, is technically advanced, and acts tough online but is timid face-to-face (Wolinsky, 2006). Power hungry cyberbullies want to exert their power, brag to others, and may be victims to face-to-face bullying (Wolinsky, 2006). The vengeful angel cyberbully is a vigilante, doesn't see themselves as a bully, and work alone but may share activities with close friends (Wolinsky, 2006).

Cyberbully demographics

Li (2005) did a study of 177 middle school students in Canada where 23% of the respondents were bullied by email, 35% in chat rooms, 41% by cell phone text messaging, 32% by known school-mates, 11 % by people outside of school, and 16% by multiple sources including school-mates. Not surprisingly 41% did not know the identity of their perpetrators (Li, 2005).   Li (2005) continued by stating "boys owned up to the cyberbullying more often (52%) while girls were more frequently victimized (60%)."

The characteristics of these victims and bullies were also acquired. 60% of victims and 70% of cyberbullies were white (Li, 2005). Additional safety data was taken and youth believe that 67% of adults in school tried to stop cyberbullying when informed. Roughly 34% of youth told adults (Li, 2005).

According to Chu (2005), a study of 3,700 middle schoolers found that 18% of students reported being cyberbullied. 90% of middle school students have had their feelings hurt online (Wolinsky, 2006). 65 % of 8-14 year-olds have been directly or indirectly involved in a cyberbullying incident, 50% have heard of a bashing site directed at student in their school, and 75% have visited a bashing site (Wolinsky, 2006).

According to a survey by the National Children's Home Charity and Tesco Mobile (2005) of 770 youth, ages 11-19, 20 % of respondents revealed that they had been bullied by electronic means. The survey revealed that 73% knew the bully and 26 % did not know the offender. 10 % reported that another person took a picture of them by camera phone, consequently making them feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, or threatened (National Children's Home, 2005).   24 % of victims told parents, 14 % told a teacher and 28% did not tell anyone, while 41% told a friend (National Children's Home, 2005).

Ybarra & Mitchell (2004) did a study of 1498 adolescence from age 10-19 in 2000. 84% of offenders knew their victim, while 31% of victims knew their harasser. This fact is noteworthy; it appears that power and dominance are exerted online through the ability to keep offender's identity unknown (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) also found that youth who are victims of bullies in offline environments are significantly more likely to harass others in online environments (51%).

Hinduja and Patchin did a study of 1378 students under the age of 18. 80% of their respondents were Caucasian and were randomly picked to have an equal number of males and females (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). In this study 32 % of boys and 36% of girls reported being victims of cyberbullying while 18% boys and 16% of girls reported harassing others online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Thus there is no statistical significance in relation to gender and cyberbullying as a victim or offender. Girls did report being victimized more then boys (13%-10%) (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Hinduja and Patchin (2007) found statistical significance in offline maladaptive behaviors related to cyberbullying. Respondents who reported recent school problems, assault behaviors, and substance use were more likely than their counterparts to experience cyberbullying, both as a victim and an offender (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Also, youth who reported bullying others in real life…. were 2.5 times as likely to report bullying others online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). In addition, youth who were victims of traditional bullying were more than 2.5 times as likely to be victims of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007).

Hinduja and Patchin (2006) also did a study of 384 students that were under the age of 18. Most of their respondents were female and Caucasian mostly due to the fact that they gather data on a website related to a female pop star (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). In this study almost 11% of youth reported bullying others online, more than 29% reported being a victim of bullying, and more than 47% have witness bullying online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). Cyberbullying was most prevalent in chat rooms, then computer texts messages, and emails (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). How students were cyberbullied was broken down, as noted, 60% of respondents have been ignored by

others while online, 50% reported being disrespected by others, 30% been called names, and 21% have been threatened by others (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). In addition, 20% of youth were picked on by others, 19% were made fun of, and 19% had rumors spread about them by others (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). Results were given on negative effects associated with online bullying of victims (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). 43% of victims were frustrated, 40% felt angry, 27% felt sad. 32% reported the feelings effected them at school and 27% stated that it effected them at home (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). 22% reported not being bothered by being bullied and 43% reported that bullying online did not affect them (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). Data was taken on youth as to how they responded to online bullying. Respondents answered as 20% of victims stayed offline, 32% removed themselves from the environment in some capacity, and 56% confided in an online friend, and fewer than 9% of victims informed adults (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006).

According to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in 2002, 90% of youth between the ages of 12-17 use computers.   20 Million kids between the ages of 2-12 logged onto the Internet in July of 2002, and 11.5 million used instant messaging programs (Netratings, 2002). America Online (AOL 2002, 2003) the most popular Internet service provider with more than 35 million users state that members join in on more than 16,000 chat sessions and send more than 2.1 billion instant messages per day across their network. As a point of reference 1.9 billion phone calls are made per day (AOL 2002, 2003).

Burgess-Proctor, Patchin, and Hinduja (2005) did a study on 3141 adolescent girls and the effects of cyberbullying. 78% of the girls were Caucasian in this study (Burgess-

Proctor et al., 2005). 38% of the respondents were cyberbullied. 49% reported being

ignored online, 43% being disrespected, and 11% were threatened online (Burgess-

Proctor et al., 2005). These behaviors most often occurred in internet chat rooms, 26%,

by computer text message, 22%, and by email 14% (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2005). 21%

of the girls reported that they never knew their cyberbully (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2005).

31% reported that being bullied online was done by a friend at school, 36% by someone

else at school, and 28% by someone from a chat room (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2005).

27% responded to cyberbullying by becoming a cyberbully themselves, 13% informed

their parents, told another adult (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2005). Most girls (47%) told an

online friend and 18% told another friend (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2005). 17% of the

girls stayed offline for a period of time, 35% did not report their victimization to anyone,

and 25% did nothing at all (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2005).

Each of these studies exemplifies the findings that cyberbullying has a prominent

effect on the emotional, physical, and psychological well-being of adolescents.

Adolescents most-often confide in friends when cyberbullied, however, not all

adolescents feel comfortable and safe reporting a cyberbullying incident to anyone. It is

important to recognize that cyberbullying does not have the same boundaries that real-life

bullying has and many electronic avenues may be used to violate adolescents.

Distinctiveness of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying differentiates itself from regular bullying in many ways. The

individual performing the act does not have to be bigger than or more powerful than the

victim (Strom & Strom, 2005). Cyberbullies can be anonymous and therefore may be

clueless on the effect they have on their victims (Schneier, 2003). With cyberbullying,

nothing is private. It is for everyone to see and experience if they have the ability to

access the information. Thus, this puts private matters in the public arena and may have a

more significant effect on the victims (Strom & Strom, 2005).

According to Cooper (2005), the fact that cyberbullies can remain anonymous, for

the most part, allows them to avoid any type of retaliation or significant consequence to

their actions. Patchin and Hinduja stated that individuals can set up temporary email

accounts, pseudonyms in chat rooms, instant message programs, and other internet

venues and can make it difficult for adolescents to identify their aggressors (Patchin &

Hinduja, 2006).

Another issue of cyberbullying is supervision of chat rooms and emails. While

there is no "policing" of emails, some chat rooms do monitor their chat rooms for any

forms of cyberbullying. However, most of the time this is monitored by reports from

users, after the act of cyberbullying has already been committed (Patchin & Hinduja,

2006). Patchin and Hinduja sum this issue up by stating electronic devices allow

individuals to contact others (both for prosocial and antisocial purposes) at all times and

in almost all places (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Adolescents, it seems, are equating legal behavior with ethical behavior online,

and consequently feel unrestrained within that "culture of deception" to engage in online

harassment (Berson et al, p. 66, 2002).   Patchin and Hinduja write that the elements of

perceived anonymity online, and the safety and security of being behind a computer

screen, aid in freeing individuals from the traditionally constraining pressures of society,

conscience, morality, and ethics to behave in a normative manner (Patchin & Hinduja,

2007) Willard defines this as disinhibition, where students use technologies for

communication and do not feel emotionally connected to the person they are communicating with (Willard, 2007). Patchin and Hinduja (2007) state that technological advances provide bullies with the ability to marshal power of online applications to infiltrate the home of the victims by contacting them through electronic means.

According to Hinduja and Patchin (2007) cyberbullying, then, greatly expands the reach and augments the intensity of interpersonal harm that occurs among this population. Shariff and Gouin (2007) state that although cyberbullying begins anonymously in the virtual environment, it impacts learning in the physical school environment. Fear of unknown perpetrators among classmates, and bullying that continues at school can be psychologically devastating for victims; it is also socially detrimental to all students (victims, bystanders, and perpetrators) detracting them from schoolwork (Olweus, 2001, DiGuilio, 2001). It creates unwelcome physical school environments where equal opportunities to learn are greatly reduced (Shariff, 2003).

Anonymity inherited in many electronic communication modes not only fosters playful disinhibition but reduces social accountability, making it easier for users to engage in hostile, aggressive acts (Herring, 2001). Cyberbullying requires no such personal traits and can be manifested simply through the outward expression of hate (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). The difference in cyber-space is that hundreds of perpetrators can get involved in the abuse, and class-mates who may not engage in bullying at school, can hide behind technology to inflict the most serious abuse. Power imbalances between victims and perpetrators are intensified by the extent of the audience of the aggressors. Racist, sexist, or homophobic statements and compromising sexual

photographs (emailed in confidence to friends), can be altered and sent to unlimited audiences once relationships sour (Harmon, 2004)

Effects of cyberbullying

Patchin and Hinduja (2007) write that youth are being (cyber) bullied in ways that could be negatively affecting their physical, social, emotional and cognitive functioning, development and well-being. Cyberbullying has a wide ranging effect on adolescents. Unlike traditional bullying, the effects of cyberbullying are hard to escape. A study was done by Burgess-Proctor, Patchin, and Hinduja of over 1200 (out of 3000) girls who reported being cyberbullied. Responses varied from feeling angry, sad, depressed, violated, suicidal, threatened, and fearful (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2005). Other responses (55%) dismissed any of affect by the cyberbully (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2005). Clearly, although online victimization is easily dismissed for some girls, for others the experience is, in fact, quite painful (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000).

Adolescence is a period of abrupt biological and social change. Specifically, the rapid body changes associated with the onset of adolescence and the changes from the primary to secondary school initiate dramatic changes in youngster's peer group composition and status (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). Adolescent is a time when physical aggression increases in frequency and intensity. This period also witnesses a series of abrupt changes in the social lives of youngsters (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000).

Cyberbullying is the unfortunate byproduct of the union of adolescent aggression and electronic communication, and its growth is cause for concern (Patchin & Hinduja, 2007). The fact remains that is social acceptance is crucially important to a youth's identity and self-esteem, cyberbullying can capably, and perhaps more permanently

wreak psychological, emotional, and social havoc (Patchin & Hinduja, 2007). Strom and

Strom (2002) found that 60% of victims were affected by online behaviors at school, at

home, or with friends (Strom & Strom, 2005). The predictable consequences for students

subjected to this shameful treatment (cyberbullying) are depression, hopelessness, and

withdrawal (Assuras, 2004). Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor, (2006) stated

depression is perhaps the most frequently citied correlate to bullying.

Willard (2007) delves into the development of the brain in teens. She states that

the frontal cortex of the brain is restructuring and that this part of the brain supports

rational and ethical decision making. Further, learning to make good decisions requires

paying attention to actions and consequences. Unfortunately the use of technologies to

communicate hinders this process. According to Pasternak and Kroth (2003), the

psychological development in adolescence from ages 10 -15 are varied. Adolescents are

looking for increased autonomy and focused on finding identity and peer relations, feel

awkward and strange, and struggle with a sense of identity. In this developmental stage,

it can be concluded that teens who use technologies as a form of communication can

loose sight of what is important to them.

Legal responsibilities

According to Hinduja and Patchin (2007) more and more states are trying to

implement cyberbullying legislation. By doing this they are trying to have school

districts take a more active role in addressing this issue. Some cyberbullying behaviors

fall under existing laws such as harassment, stalking, and felonious assault.

Hinduja and Patchin (2007) report some problems with passing legislation on

cyberbullying are that the First Amendment guarantees free speech. However, the use of

this amendment clutters the line between the use of speech and harassing of another

person. Also, there are concerns that cyberbullying occurs off of school grounds thus

leaving school demonstrators in a dilemma of providing a safe academic environment.

There are ways for schools to continue to pursue cyberbullies. Hinduja and Patchin

(2007) report school districts are well within their legal rights to intervene in

cyberbullying incidents - even if those incidents were initiated off-campus-if it can be

demonstrated that the incidents resulted in a substantial disruption of the educational

environment. Hinduja and Patchin (2007) have provided elements for anti-bullying

policy:

> Specific definitions for harassment, intimidation, and bullying (including

  electronic variants)

> Graduated consequences and remedial actions

> Procedures for reporting

> Procedures for investigating

> Specific language that addresses off-school behavior or speech that

  hinders the education environment and that students can be disciplined

> Procedures for preventing bullying (workshops, staff training, curriculum

  enhancements.

Shariff and Gouin (2007) proclaimed emerging litigation suggests that parents of

cyberbullied victims are increasingly willing to sue schools for failing to protect their

children from tortuous school mates. Significant concerns in school policies have

erupted in schools around the country. Shariff (2004) found that school administrators

assumed anti-bullying policies absolved them from doing more to protect victims.

Larson (1997) observed that when school administrators are confronted with unprecedented problems, they ignored the root causes and redefined the problem to fit traditional policy approaches. When this does not work, they find it easier to blame victims for inviting the problem; or worse, do nothing in hopes that the problem goes away.

Shariff and Gouin (2007) stated that teachers, school counselors, administrators, and policy makes have no less a responsibility than parents, to adapt to a rapidly evolving technological society, to address emerging challenges, and guide children to become civil minded individuals. Diguillio (2001) reports that bullying research and numerous media reports confirm that "bullyside" (suicide by victims of bullying) is on the rise. Gradually the courts are beginning to recognize emotional and psychological harm as "tangible", including mental shock and suffering (Shariff 2003). According to Willard (2007), school officials have the authority and responsibility to respond to any on or off-campus harmful or inappropriate speech though the District Internet System. Willard continues to say parents are financially liable for the harm caused by their children (Willard, 2007). Some cyberbullying meets the standards of criminal violations, including threats, coercion, harassing telephone calls or text, harassment, stalking, hate or bias crimes, child pornography, sexual exploitation, and taking a photo of someone in a private place (Willard, 2007).

Ways to address cyberbullying

According to Strom and Strom (2005)

➢ Adults close communication-support adolescents with reporting harassment.

➢ Adolescents should not share public information-educated on ramifications.

> ➢ Students, parents, educators, and law enforcement should know where to go for on-line abuses.

> ➢ Adults should educate students on fraudulent people in chat rooms. Example a 50 year old man saying he is fourteen.

> ➢ Teenagers should never meet someone they have chatted with online.

> ➢ People should be aware of how they are feeling and try to avoid delivery messages when angry or frustrated-flaming usually will occur.

> ➢ When adolescents tell adults-adults should respond by informing the authorities, contacting website, and phone services of the wrong doing.

> ➢ Victims should keep messages as evidence. Proper authorities can use this as evidence and way of tracking the perpetrator.

> ➢ Asking teenagers is the best way to become informed about their thinking, as well as an excellent way to model democratic practices (Pertson & Seligman, 2004).

Devising a rehabilitation curriculum acknowledges that a school has not given up on bullies and perceives them as still capable of learning social skills that are needed to get along with others (Sanders & Phye, 2004). Self-evaluation is a key factor in developing maturity, yet students rarely get to practice self-assessment in school or receive healthy criteria that they can apply. Middle and high school students identified as cyberbullies might benefit from being part of cooperative learning teams in which peer and self-evaluation are applied to provide anonymous feedback about social skills. The Interpersonal Intelligence Inventory provides individual student profiles of feedback from peers and compares team observations of performance with self-impressions (Strom& Strom, 2002).

Research on the topic of cyberbullying is becoming more inclusive and prevalent as this social issue becomes more significant. A lot of the current research on cyberbullying has been done on-line or over the phone, thus it has been difficult to verify that the sample of participants is in fact the selected target group. More "in-person research" is needed to verify the demographics of the sample group. Furthermore, many statistics and programs have been used in current research, but there is a limited amount of data that suggests interventions for cyberbullying and practical applications that may create change among young students.

In an attempt to provide junior high students with a practical, educational tool that defines, describes and provides characteristics about cyberbullying, a PowerPoint presentation was created.

Method

Participants

Six junior high students (four girls and two boys) volunteered to participate in this experiment. All students ranged in age from twelve to fourteen years old. Participants predominantly identified as Caucasian (n = 5).

Setting

This research took place in a rural junior high school district in Western New York. The junior high school has approximately three hundred ten students. Three hundred and three are Caucasian, four are African American, and three are Asian. The students who are Caucasian are split one hundred fifty three are female and one hundred fifty are male. Of the African American students one is female and three are male and the Asian student is female. There is a wide range of socio economic status that ranges

from extremely poor to upper middle class.   Currently sixty three students are considered

in the poverty range out of the three hundred and ten students.

Materials

Packets containing a statement of informed consent (appendix A) were given to

the participants in March and were asked to bring them home to their parents for

permission to participate. Group rules (appendix B) were covered with participants prior

to their involvement in this study. Participants were given a pre-test to determine their

initial understanding of cyberbullying (appendix C).   A PowerPoint presentation

(appendix C), that consisted of various narrative and descriptive information pertaining to

cyberbullying, was created and shown to students who participated in this study.

Additionally, different types of cyberbullying (appendix D) and types of cyberbullies

(appendix E) were handed out to students. A post-test, the same as the initial pre-test,

was then given to the participants to determine if there was a difference between their pre

and post responses.

Procedure

Participants were requited for this study from a junior high health class. Any

students interested in participating were given a copy of the informed consent to take

home to their parents. Parental signature was required for participation in this study

because the students were under the age of eighteen. Students were also required to sign

this informed consent. Consent forms were returned to the counselor's education office

in the junior high school. Students who were participating in this study arrived at a

specific classroom location at a pre-determined, designated time. The instructor of the

study discussed the ground rules and expectations with the participants prior to beginning the PowerPoint presentation.

The instructor gave the participants an initial pre-test to determine their general knowledge about cyberbullying and what technologies they currently use. He then began a informative PowerPoint presentation on cyberbullying. This PowerPoint presentation took approximately forty minutes. During the presentation, various participants felt comfortable enough to share personal information about cyberbullying experiences and asked pertinent questions about the act of cyberbullying. The instructor answered these questions as they arose. During the presentation, handouts with information about different types of cyberbullying and types of cyberbullies were given to the participants. This information was provided to participants as a supplement used for clarification and concreteness. Specific examples of cyberbullying and cyberbullies were utilized in these handouts.

Upon completion of the PowerPoint presentation the post-test was administered to participants. The instructor then collected the post-test and thanked students for their involvement in this study.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Participants of this study were asked to answer questions on a pre and post-test fill-in-the-blank questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed by the author. The terms "pre" and "post" were indicated at the top of each questionnaire and were kept separate for the purpose of analysis. Pre and post-test results were generated on a whole and according to each participant through the use of a numbering system. For example, "Participant 1 pre" was paired with "Participant 1 post" and so on.

Results indicated that on a whole, participants were more direct and gave more specific answers in relation to different types of cyberbullying. Participants were also better able to provide different ways to keep themselves safe when being cyberbullied.

On an individual basis, the two questions with the most prominent change in response were: (1) What are the different types of cyberbullying? and (2) What are different ways of keeping yourself safe from being cyberbullied? Five out of six participants were able to provide an accurate answer to the different types of cyberbullying question in the post-test, whereas they left the question blank in the pre-test (see appendix G #1). Additionally, five out of six participants were able to identify ways to keep themselves safe from cyberbullying in the post-test that were more accurate and distinctive. Examples of responses to this question include, "Call the police" and "Block the person on-line"(see appendix G #2). All six participants had a general knowledge of "what is cyberbullying" in relation to pre and post tests. No change in results were indicated for the following questions: "What are some of the effects of cyberbullying?", and "What is disinhibition". Also, additional questions such as "what technologies do you used most often?", "Have you ever been a cyberbully or been cyberbullied?", and "what arena do you most communicate with technologies?" were questions that would not change from pre to post test. These questions did have any different outcomes due to the power point presentation.

Discussion

The present study examined whether the PowerPoint presentation on cyberbullying was an effective tool in educating junior high students. Results of a pre-test and post-test analysis indicated that the PowerPoint presentation was effective in

educating students about the types of cyberbullies and ways to stay safe from

cyberbullying. The results of this qualitative study are difficult to compare to previous

research in that this study is predominately focused on the PowerPoint intervention.

Previous research (Strom & Strom, 2002; Willard, 2007; Sanders & Phye, 2004; Hinduja

& Patchin, (2007); DiGiulio, (2001); Chu, (2005); Patchin & Hinduja, (2006); Ybarra &

Mitchell, (2004); Herring, (2002); Olweus, (1993); Ybarra et. al (2006); Shariff & Gouin,

(2007)), however, around the topic of keeping yourself safe from cyberbullying, have

shown similar findings. The more education we provide for students about safety and

cyberbullying, the more apt they are to know what their safety options are.

Cyberbullying has been studied in reference to gender, psychosocial stressors and

ramifications, interpersonal relationships, relationship between bullying and

cyberbullying, and cyberbullying and drugs use and juvenile behaviors (Strom & Strom,

2002; Shariff & Gouin, (2007); Burgess-Proctor et. al. (2007); Pellegrini, & Bartini,

(2000); Herring, (2001); Nansel et. al., (2001), Ybarra, & Mitchell, (2004);). With all of

their findings, there was and is still a need to find a practical tool to help educate students

of today and the future of the ever growing problem of cyberbullying. Thus it is

important to educate our students about cyberbullying because of the increase in reported

incidents of cyberbullying and the long-term effects that cyberbullying can have on our

youth. One important question that still needs to be addressed is: Can cyberbullying be

prevented by more strict laws, school policies, school administration and adolescents

themselves? If not, what are the repercussions of continued cyberbullying and what level

will this violence get to? Suicide because of cyberbullying (also known as cybercide) has

gotten more media attention in recent years and is becoming more identifiable. For

example, Megan Meier and Ryan Halligan are two youth who committed cybercide and have received a lot of media attention. As a result, the states they lived in now have established cyberbullying laws. At what cost will it take to make New York State legislatures pay attention to this epidemic?

It is also important to know if an educational tool can be developed for students to learn about cyberbullying. If students are able to understand their options (i.e. blocking, talking to adults, notifying web providers, etc.) that may be the best we can do as parents, adults, and school administrators. We might not be able to stop cyberbullying completely, but students need to know why they are engaging in these activities and how we can process the choices they make.

During this study's PowerPoint presentation a participant felt comfortable enough to say that she text messages her friends with the words, "You're a dumb bitch" and a smiley face after the message. She stated that this was their way of kidding with each other. This example raised a few additional questions about the intent of electronic messaging. For instance, maybe an individual does not understand the emotionality between being sarcastic or being serious through a text message or instant message. Should the receiver be forced to have to identify what the sender means by their message? Additionally, it is obvious that these comments may be taken the wrong way and, the bottom line is, the recipient of the text message may not be in the mood to handle the playful sarcastic language. Thus, the issue of cyberbullying may become engrained in the regular language of these youth.

Limitations

A sample size of six individuals is not large enough to provide statistical significance and thus, this study would benefit from a larger, more diverse sample size. Five of the six individuals who participated in this study identified as Caucasian. Because of the small sample size and lack of diversity, the results of this study cannot be generalized to the larger population.

Another limitation of this study revolves around time constraints. The instructor anticipated forty-five minutes for the presentation, unfortunately due to the depth of discussion and extended time needed for the pre and post-test questionnaire the presentation needed to be extended to the last fifteen minutes of the school day. Due to the gap in time from the start and finish of the presentation, it is not clear whether the students were able to retain the information from the first session to the last session. An example of this would be the question about defining "disinhibition". When the instructor began defining disinhibition there were only five minutes left in the presentation and thus could not emphasize the importance of this definition in relation to cyberbullying. When the participants met again at the end of the school day, disinhibition was not re-reviewed. It can also be addressed that at the end of the day, students may not be fully aware or interested in a presentation as their minds may be elsewhere, thinking about what they will do after school.

In regards to the pre and post-test questionnaire, some questions were not pertinent to the PowerPoint presentation. For instance, upon reflection, only four of the nine questions on the pre and post-tests were directly related to the cyberbullying presentation. Question number 3 about the effects of cyberbullying did not directly

pertain to the PowerPoint presentation and the following questions; "What technologies do you use most often?," "What arena do you most use when communicating with technologies?", "Have you ever been cyberbullied", and "Have you ever been a cyberbully" were asking for more demographic information then questions that were relevant to the PowerPoint presentation. Without an accurate and effective questionnaire, it is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain whether or not the PowerPoint presentation is an effective educational tool.

The PowerPoint presentation, while having important data, needed to be simplified to the level where junior high students could understand and relate to the information provided. In addition, the types of cyberbullies covered in the PowerPoint did not seem significantly relevant to the participants in the study. It may have been more effective to include a general discussion of the cyberbullying they have personally experienced with technologies as a way of directly relating to their experiences. Finally, the PowerPoint presentation includes information and topics that the instructor deems important about cyberbullying. This, of course, is up to the discretion of the individual presenting the information and may be difficult from one professional to another.

Future research

Face to face interactions with students will ensure that the researcher is targeting the group of individuals they intend to effect. On-line and phone studies cannot guarantee that the individuals responding are accurately identifying themselves by the correct demographic information.

Future cyberbullying studies should also attempt to combine basic, general definitions of cyberbullying into a definition that is all-inclusive and establishes severity.

Currently, the general definition of cyberbullying has been established and is consistent among many professionals, however the intensity and severity of cyberbullying has a tendency to become ambiguous. For example, a student who text messages, "You're a stupid bitch" has violated someone on a different level of cyberbullying then an individual who is asking for naked pictures of that adolescent on-line. For this reason, it is important for future research to distinguish between these various levels.

Collaborating with community agencies, school administrators, government officials, school counselors, parents, law enforcement officials and students will also be important in future studies in order to make a greater impact on youth and to better understand cyberbullying within each individual community. Cyberbullying can manifest itself in many different ways within an individual community and thus the support and recognition of cyberbullying within each specific community is imperative.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of cyberbullying programs for different age groups (i.e Kindergarten – 4th grade, 5th – 8th grade etc.) should be examined. The programs cannot be the same for each age group, as each developmental stage may bring a new level of involvement and inclusion in cyberbullying activities. To that end, more research should address what interventions work and do not work as a whole and within age groups, to develop a foundational assessment of where interventions have the potential to go. Most of the current research in this field focuses on statistical information about victims and offenders with limited attention given to what are different types of effective interventions.

Finally, future research should address how we educate parents about the effects of cyberbullying and what they can do to keep their children safe. Parents are typically

the first line of defense when it comes to effecting and influencing their children. It is important to continuously spread the message about what cyberbullying is because current research points to the fact that parents do not know what their children are doing with technologies.

Implications for counselors

Statistically speaking, adolescents are being cyberbullied. This is yet another area that school counselors will be addressing with students and should be informed about. It is important for school counselors to stay up to date with current trends and the topic of cyberbullying is definitely one of them. Adolescents today are growing up in a generation where new technologies are constantly evolving and are engrained into their culture. Thus, it appears that cyberbullying will not soon disappear.

Furthermore, school counselors and helping professionals will most likely be asked to set up interventions to educate staff, students and parents about the effects of cyberbullying in their community. There is a need to have practical tools and effective presentations that will not only educate, but also impact the way that our society views their relationships with technology.

Conclusion

With an estimated 700,000,000 individuals utilizing the Internet it is imperative that research, communities, parents, school districts and any other influence that reaches our youth are informed and equipped with the information necessary to combat the effects of cyberbullying. Now, more then ever, our youth are submerged in a society that focuses on the use of technology as a primary form of communication. Chat rooms, instant messaging, e-mailing, video game systems, personal websites, text messages,

polling websites – these are just a few examples of the facets youth are using to communicate with and unfortunately deface each other.

Cyberbullying is an unfortunate phenomenon that has the potential to hurt people's feelings, degrade their bodies, subject them to violence, and embarrass an individual with their own, personal information. The effects of these actions can have incredibly tragic repercussions for the youth they target. Depression, withdrawal, fear, decrease in school attendance, strained relationships with friends, extreme embarrassment, school relocation, drug use and even suicide are among the ramifications experienced by today's youth.

In order to assist our adolescents with the social pressures and significant effects of cyberbullying it is ever-so important to actively participate in their lives, ask questions about what they are doing on-line and keep the lines of communication open. Only then, when we have an understanding of the significant influence that technology has on our youth, can we take the steps necessary to pull the plug on cyberbullying.

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Appendix A

Livonia Central School District
2 Puppy Lane
Livonia, NY 14487
Statement of Parental Informed Consent

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Mark Rumfola and I am a graduate student pursuing a Master's Degree in Counselor Education at SUNY Brockport. I am completing a thesis/project as a graduate requirement for a degree in Counselor Education from the State University of New York College at Brockport. I am an intern at the Livonia School District counseling offices.

The purpose of this research study is to determine the effectiveness of the presentation of cyber-bullying as an educational tool while helping your son/daughter learn about cyber-bullying (Cyberbullying is being cruel to others by sending, posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social cruelty using the internet or other digital technologies, Williard, 2007)and ways to keep oneself safe using technologies. I will be administering a pre and post test on cyber-bullying to determine the effectiveness of the PowerPoint presentation on cyber-bullying. Areas that will be covered by the presentation are and introduction of cyber-bullying (example), explanation of the presentation/objectives, structure and procedural issues, history (stats) of cyber-bullying, cyber-bullying types, prevention and interventions, cyber-bullying options (safety), options for schools, current laws, and any additional questions that need to be addressed. Throughout the process of this presentation, I hope they will have a better understanding of how to better use the technologies (computers, phone, etc.) in an appropriate way along with protecting themselves from cyber-bullies.

The seminar will be presented to students sometime on April 21. The principal, Mr. D'Imperio has given permission to hold the seminar during the school day. One class period will be missed during the day and your child is responsible for making up missed work. If any behavior problems arise during the seminar, I will speak with the student individually.

In order for your child to participate in this study, you informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision as to whether or not your child is able to participate. A list of group rules is included. If you want your child to participate in this project, and agree with the statements below, please sign below. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw your child from the study without penalty, even after the study has begun.

I understand that:

1. My child's participation is voluntary and my son/daughter has the right to refuse to answer any questions.
2. My child's confidentiality is assured. My son/daughters name will not be written on any documents. If any publication results from this research he/she will be not be mentioned by name.
3. There are no anticipated major risks, however confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because there is a risk of group members talking about the discussions without outside individuals. There are also potential benefits of this group which include better understanding of cyberbullying, affects, and how to keep one safe.
4. My child's participation involves learning about cyberbullying, the affects of cyberbullying, and how to address being cyberbullied.
5. 10 students will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a thesis at SUNY Brockport.
6. Data will be kept in a secured, locked filing cabinet in a locked office in the Counseling Office at Livonia Junior High School. All consent forms and documents will be shredded at the end of the spring 2008 semester.
7. This research is not a part of any regular school program and is not being conducted by the school, and my child's participation will not affect her grades.

I am the parent/guardian of _____. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to my child's participation in this study, realizing he/she may withdraw without penalty at any time during the process. Completion of this form indicates my consent to my son's/daughter's participation.

If you have any questions you may contact:

Student Researcher: Mark Rumfola
            (585) 346-4000

On Site Supervisor: Bonnie Roberts
            (585) 346-4000 x2005

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Thomas Hernández
            (585) 395-2258

_____   _____
Signature of Consent   Date

Livonia Central School District
2 Puppy Lane
Livonia, NY 14487
Student Participants Statement of Informed Consent

Dear Student:

My name is Mark Rumfola and I am a graduate student pursuing a Master's Degree in Counselor Education at SUNY Brockport. The reason I am meeting with you is because I am doing a project for my class.

The purpose of this research study is to determine the effectiveness of the presentation of cyber-bullying as an educational tool while helping you learn about cyber-bullying. (Cyberbullying is being cruel to others by sending, posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social cruelty using the internet or other digital technologies, Willard, 2007) and ways to keep oneself safe using technologies.   I will be administering a pre and post test on cyber-bullying to determine the effectiveness of the PowerPoint presentation on cyber-bullying. Areas that will be covered by the presentation are and introduction of cyber-bullying (example), explanation of the presentation/objectives, structure and procedural issues, history (stats) of cyber-bullying, cyber-bullying types, prevention and interventions, cyber-bullying options (safety), options for schools, current laws, and any additional questions that need to be addressed. Throughout the process of this presentation, I hope you will have a better understanding of how to better use the technologies (computers, phone, etc.) in an appropriate way along with protecting yourself from being cyber-bullied.

The seminar will be presented to students sometime on April 21. The principal, Mr. D'Imperio has given permission to hold the seminar during the school day. One class period will be missed during the day and you are responsible for making up missed work. If any behavior problems arise during the seminar, I will speak with the student individually.

In order for you to be apart of the presentation, I need you to sign this form. If you change your mind at any time, or decide later on that you do not want to be a part of the presentation anymore, please let me know. Please feel free to be honest with me. You are not obligated to participate in the presentation and if you need to leave let me know.

I understand that:

1. I do not have to attend the presentation and I know that I decide what questions I would like to answer and talk about.
2. What I say during this presentation will be kept in the room. Nothing will be shared with other teachers or adults, unless it is a safety issue.
3. Confidentiality is assured by Mr. Rumfola but cannot be guaranteed due to the other members.
4. Around 10 other students may participate in this study.
5. Information used and gathered will be kept in a secured, locked filing cabinet in a locked office in the Counseling Office at Livonia Junior High School.
6. This research is not a part of any regular school program and is not being conducted by the school, and your participation will not affect her grades.

My name is _____. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to my participation in this study, realizing that I may withdraw without penalty at any time during the process. Completion of this form indicates consent to my participation.

_____   _____
Signature of Consent   Date

Appendix B

Ground Rules for the Group

1. **Respect each other.**
2. **Keep things confidential.**
3. **Follow directions and remain focused.**
4. **Feel free to ask questions.**
5. **If you need help during or after seminar let instructor know.**
6. **Have fun and enjoy the seminar.**

Appendix C

Sample Pre and Post Test on Cyberbullying

This pre and post test was created by Mark Rumfola for the purpose of gathering data to learn more about cyber-bullying and how it relates to adolescents.

DIRECTIONS: Please take your time answering the questions. If you do not know the exact answer, please write down any ideas you might have or any words you would associate with the question. Thank you for being part of the cyber-bullying presentation!

1. What is cyberbullying? _____
_____
_____
_____
.

2. What are the different types of cyber-bullying?
_____
_____
_____
.

3. What are some of the affects of cyberbullying?_____
_____
_____
_____
.

4. What are the different ways to keep yourself safe from being cyberbullied?_____
_____
_____
_____
.

5. What is disinhibition?_____
_____
_____
_____

6. What technologies do you use most often?(computer, phone,
    etc.)_____
_____

7. What arena do you most use when communicating with technologies?(chat rooms, emails, IM, phone,text,etc.)_____
_____
_____
_____

8. Have you ever been cyberbullied? If yes, please explain. _____
_____
_____
_____
.

9. Have you ever been a cyberbully? If yes how?_____
_____
_____
_____
.

Thank you for your time and input.

Appendix D

Cyberbullying: Bullying in the 21st Century

Mark Rumfola

College at Brockport

- In Dardenne Prairie, MO, Megan Meier made a "new friend" Josh, who she met on MySpace. After only a month of conversation, Josh started to post messages saying that Megan was cruel, a slut, and that she was fat. After that one short month, they ended their friendship. One day later, Megan committed suicide. (Democrat and Chronicle)

- It was found out later that the mother of one of Megan's friends posed as Josh on MySpace and knew of Megan's prior mental health issues.

What is Cyberbullying?

- "Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as: e-mail, cell phone, video games, text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites (MySpace, Facebook, you tube) and defamatory online polling Web sites to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or a group that is intended to harm others."

Cyberbullying Statistics

- According to Hinduja & Patchin (2007): There is no statistical significance in relation to gender and cyberbullying as a victim or an offender.

- According to Li (2005): 60% of victims and 70% of cyberbullies are white.

- Youth who reported bullying others in real life were 2.5 times as likely to report bullying others on-line.

- According to wiredsafety.org: 90% of middle school students have had their feelings hurt on-line.

- 15% of these middle schooler's parents knew what cyberbullying was.

- According to wiredsafety.org: there is an estimated 700 million people online.

Types of Cyberbullying

- Flaming
- Harassment
- Impersonation
- Outing
- Exclusion
- Tricking
- Cyber-stalking
- Cyber-threats

Characteristics of Cyberbullying

- Cyberbullies may be anonymous and therefore unaware of the effect they have on their victims. Anonymity is one way the cyberbully can protect themselves from consequences. However, there are ways to find out who a cyberbully is but it is difficult.

- With cyberbullying nothing is private. It is for everyone to see and experience if they have the ability to access the information.

- Technology allows people to lose emotional connection with the person they are communicating with. This is known as disinhibition.

Types of Cyberbullies?

- Inadvertent
- Mean Girls
- Revenge of the Nerd
- Power Hungry
- Vengeful Angel

Are YOU Safe?

- Never share personal information online. Such as address, phone number, passwords, school, family situations, pictures of you, etc.
- Never engage a cyberbully.
- Document all incidents.
- Talk to your parents, teachers, and counselors. These are people who can help and support you.
- Don't forget what you post online stays online - forever!!!!
- If you are feeling bullied change your screen name, cell phone number, or e-mail address.
- Contact MySpace or Facebook directly and tell them about the cyberbullying incident. They can monitor who is communicating with you on-line.
- Call the police.

What Can YOU Do?

- Start mediation groups about cyberbullying in your school.
- Ask for awareness programs about cyberbullying.
- Don't bully someone on-line and don't put up with people who bully you.
- Look up internet resources on cyberbullying.
- The Golden Rule.

Internet References:

- www.wiredsafety.com
- www.cybercullying.com
- www.bullyingonline.org
- www.netbullies.com/pages/1/index.htm
- www.mindoh.com/Cyberbullying.aspx
- www.bewebaware.ca
- www.cyberbullying.org
- www.internetsuperheroes.org/cyberbullying/index.html
- www.teenangels.org/
- www.pbs.org

Remember…

YOU HAVE POWER!

Stories

- Ryan:
- Bullycide:

Appendix E

Definitions of Cyberbullying

Flaming: On-line aggression with the use of vulgar language between two parties.

 Username1: You're a slut cause you slept with Johnny.

 Username2: You're a whore because you slept with 10 guys.

Harassment: Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, insulting messages over a period of time.

Impersonation: Breaking into someone's account, posing as that person, and sending messages to make that person look bad, get that person in trouble or danger, or damage that person's reputation or friendships.

Outing: Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images on-line.

 Username1: Johnny just told me that he's gay.

 Username2: No way!

Exclusion: Intentionally excluding someone from an on-line group or leaving someone out of an on-line conversation.

Tricking: A person is tricked into revealing secrets or embarrassing personal information.

 Username1: I have an STD.

 Username2: I do too.

 Username1: That's gross! I just wanted to see what you were gonna say.

Cyber-stalking: The use of technology to control another person, often by repeatedly sending messages that are highly intimidating and/or engaging in other on-line activities that make a person afraid for their safety.

Username1: I watch you while you sleep…

Cyber-threats: Either direct threats or distressing material that raises concerns or provides clues that the person is upset, and may be considering harming someone, harming themselves, or committing suicide.

Username1: Don't go to sleep tonight because when you do I'll be waiting for you.

Appendix F

Types of Cyberbullies

Inadvertent: Individuals, who are misunderstood in their messaging, unintentionally hurt others.

Username1: You are a horse's ass!

Mean Girls: Are cyberbullies, usually girls but can be boys, and it can be a group activity. They promote social status and participate in this behavior out of boredom. They are often immature, use their social status to gain power over someone, and are not usually anonymous.

Username1: Did you see what Sue was wearing today?
Username2: She'd never fit in with the cheerleading crowd!

Revenge of the Nerd: People who are typically bullied off-line, stay anonymous, bully on-line, but are timid face to face.

Power Hungry: Want to exert their power, brag to others, and may be victims of face-to-face bullying.

Vengeful Angel: These people bully out of spite and often do not know they are bullies, but may share their bullying-activities with close friends.

Appendix G

#1

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0												
tests	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post
Possible answers/participants	Part. 1		Part. 2		Part. 3		Part. 4		Part. 5		Part. 6	

What are the different types of Cyberbullying?

#2

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tests	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post
Possible answers/participants	Part. 1		Part. 2		Part. 3		Part. 4		Part. 5		Part. 6	

What are the different ways of keeping yourself safe from being cyberbullied?