

Bullying in Public Schools in Missouri

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Abstract

The research conducted sought to find evidence and data to support or lack of support to the following questions: Do school administrators perceive a problem with bullying in their schools in Missouri? Is there a relationship between the victim of bullying and the learning process? Do female adolescents engage in cyber bullying more than male adolescents? Do public schools in Missouri have policies in place that address bullying? The researcher used the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program survey on bullying. The study examined the perceptions and beliefs of the superintendents in the State of Missouri concerning bullying and student responses from students in the Western Missouri Conference Schools. Significant findings included more experienced S\superintendents stating that there is little or no problem with bullying in their schools or in the schools throughout Missouri, while less experienced superintendents believe that there is a tremendous problem with bullying in schools. One hundred percent of the superintendent responses revealed that all believe that there is a need for more anti-bullying programs in their schools. Out of the students surveyed, more than 50 percent reported that they had never been a victim of a bully, however, other studies make valid points to stress that younger students have a tendency to be bullied, or at least report the bullying behavior, than the older adolescents or adults. Eighty-three percent of the student responses showed that they had bullied another student in some way other than a physical confrontation. With 100% of the superintendents reporting the need for more anti-bullying programs in schools and 83% of students responding that they have bullied other students in some way, more studies and research on this topic would appear to the researcher to be of great value in the ongoing attempt to keep all children safe.

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Chapter 1: Introduction of the Study

Bullying in schools has become a widespread problem that can have life-long negative consequences for both the bully and the victim. Because of the long lasting effects it has on those involved, bullying is a hot topic and a definite area of concern for both parents and educators alike. Bullying is comprised of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more individuals against a victim. (Banks, 1997)

Bullying is an ever-growing problem among students of all ages (Banks, 1997). And now, more than ever, it is becoming even more frightening. Many bullies choose victims and will not give them any relief for months or even years (Hanish, L. D., & Guerra, N. G., 2000). These victims may end up with low self-esteem, possibly acquiring violent behaviors themselves or even becoming suicidal as a result of the habitual badgering (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993). There is no 'cookie cutter' description of a bully or a victim. There is also no 'cookie cutter' description of how to help a bully or a victim. Studies have shown, however, that a school with an anti-bullying program in place can greatly reduce the number of bullying episodes as well as teach students better conflict resolution and anger management skills. In order for an anti-bullying program to work, all individuals involved with the school, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff must be willing to work toward the common goal of the program and must stay on top of all incidents that may occur (Carney, A. G., & Merrell, 2001). All of those involved must also be willing to confront incidents that are in progress.

When bullying occurs at school, it poses a definite problem for teachers, students, and even for parents. Teachers often consider changing classroom management styles to those based around bullying and its characteristics (Milson, A., & Gallo, L. L., 2006). It is difficult for teachers to monitor and separate bullies from their victims every minute of every school day. Students who are being bullied often find it difficult to pay attention in class because they are consumed with concerns and fears about being bullied. This directly affects their learning, and ultimately, their self-esteem. (Olweus, D.,1991) Parents are rightfully concerned with their child's safety while at school. In some cases, parents have found it necessary to transfer their children to a different school due to excessive bullying.

Research supports the fact that there is a lot of negativity surrounding bullying, and all schools need to address the problem appropriately (Carney, A. G. & Merrell, 2001). There are countless resources available to school districts. Some of these programs are free of charge, but others cost money. Cost is an issue for many school districts today, but the money spent on a bullying prevention program could be well worth the cost if all children can come to school and feel safe.

Effects of Bullying

The presence of bullying behavior has been shown to have adverse effects on many areas of a child's life (Olweus,1993). In their publication entitled *Youth Bullying*, the American Medical Association stated that "bullying may have serious effects on the psychological functioning, academic work, and physical health of children that are targeted" (AMA, 2002, p.11). Being bullied has been found to lead to lower self-esteem (Delfabbro, et al., 2006; National Education Association, 2003), higher rates of

depression (Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivera & Keric, 2005; Nansel, Graig, Overpeck, Saluja & Ruan, 2004), loneliness (Glew, et al, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001), and anxiety (Delfabbro et al., 2006). In a 2003 article aimed at increasing the public's awareness of the issue of bullying, the National Education Association (2003) stated: "Students who are targets of repeated bullying behavior can, and often do, experience extreme fear and stress. They may be afraid to go to school or even to ride the bus to school. Once there, they may be afraid to be in certain places in the building, such as restrooms. They may exhibit physical symptoms of illness and may not be able to concentrate on schoolwork" (NEA, 2003, p.7).

Numerous studies exist proving that bullying in grades 7-12 in public schools is a well-documented problem, but there has been very little research of this problem regarding the psychological, social, and academic issues that are experienced by the victims of bullying (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993). The fact that bullying exists in the traditional form in public schools is a given; however, there is now a growing trend with a new style of bullying which includes several types of electronic bullying (Hinduja and Patchin, 2005). This type of bullying includes, but is not limited to, text messaging and internet bullying. Electronic bullying is commonly referred to as "Cyber Bullying" (Hinduja and Patchin, 2005). The most common forms of cyber bullying can be found using cellular phones and internet websites such as Facebook and MySpace.

Bullying is a major problem in education today and affects the primary role of the school system, which is to educate young people. Several studies have demonstrated the link between academic achievement and the child's physical and mental health (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, 2003; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2002; Perry, 2001;

Taylor-Seehafer & Rew, 2000). The majority of the research dealing with the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program demonstrates its effectiveness at reducing the occurrence of bullying behaviors; little research has been done into the effect the program has on academic performance. The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of bullying in Missouri Public Schools by superintendents, the relationship between the victim of bullying and the learning process, the analysis of cyber bullying behavior of male and female adolescents, and the bullying policies currently in place in Missouri Public Schools.

Background of the Study

Since the 1970s, the public schools in America have been placed under the microscope and accountability in all areas has been demanded. Parents are familiar with issues of testing and facility safety, but an additional area that has been brought to the forefront of the nation's attention is that of student safety. One specific area of significant concern has been the issue of bullying and the implications that student behavior can have on the safety and security of all students.

Studies have shown that 75% of adolescents have been bullied while attending school (Bulach, Penland Fulbright, & Williams; 2003 Peterson, 1999). This staggering statistic shows that bullying is a major issue that needs to be identified and addressed in school systems today. The first step in addressing this issue is to gain a clear definition of bullying and identify characteristics and examples of bullying. Bullying is a pattern of repeated, intentionally cruel behavior and differs from normal peer conflict in a number of ways (Palomares, Schilling, 2001). In fact, it has been proven that bullying is a learned behavior, evident as early as two years of age (Paul, J. J., & Cillessen, A. H.,

2003). The act of bullying can take many forms. “These forms range from teasing and name-calling to more insidious belittling and degrading of the victims. In more extreme cases it may be connected with demands of money or property and/or involve attacks on property or person” (Chappell, 2004, p.14). Bullying can also come in the form of sexual harassment. Both boys and girls can experience unwanted jokes, comments, and taunts about sexual body parts. Children being bullied may have difficulty concentrating on their studies, have lower academic achievement levels, and become more fearful of calling attention to themselves by speaking up in class (Bullying in Schools, n.d.). Although sexual harassment can occur with both sexes, it typically has a more significant impact on girls.

Little research exists today on the perception of public school administrators in Missouri with regard to bullying being a problem in their school. In order to address the problem of the school-yard bully, we must first examine the attitudes and mind sets of the men and women in charge of educating and protecting our young people during the school day. Before realistic steps can be taken by administrators in combating school bullies, one must first understand and recognize that bullying is a problem. Research reveals that there are indeed physical, psychological, and emotional problems exhibited by the victims of bullying while attending school, but previous research has made a weak attempt to properly connect the emotions of the victims with the ability to learn while at school. (Kumpulainen, K., & Rasanen, E., 2000) Although bullying is an age old problem in America, gender also plays a major role in the types and characteristics of bullying at school (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Female and male adolescents have a tendency to act and react differently under the pressure of a school bully. Traditional

forms of bullying still take place throughout classrooms and play grounds of American public schools, but in today's world we are now threatened with an even more powerful and possibly more psychologically damaging form of bullying, which is commonly referred to as "cyber bullying".

State Recognition of Bullying

The act of bullying has been recognized as a problem in schools by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Missouri and the Missouri Legislature, which has recently recommended that schools implement some version of the state-wide bullying discipline policy to help prevent the act of bullying. According to the state of Missouri, "Bullying occurs when a student communicates with another by any means including telephone, writing, or via electronic communications, with the intention to intimidate, or inflict physical, emotional, or mental harm without legitimate purpose" (DESE 2007, p.8). "Bullying also occurs when a student contacts another person with the intent to intimidate or to inflict physical, emotional, or mental harm without legitimate purpose. Physical contact does not require physical touching, although touching may be included" (DESE 2007, p.8). Students who are found to have violated this policy will be subject to the following disciplinary consequences: The state of Missouri recommends that on the first offense, a student will receive up to five days out of school suspension; second offense, five to thirty days out of school suspension; third offense, thirty to eighty days out of school suspension; and fourth offense, one hundred eighty days out of school suspension up to expulsion. The policy also states "The district is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment free from any form of bullying or intimidation by students toward district personnel or students on the school grounds, or

school time, at a school sponsored activity or in a school-related context. Bullying is the intentional action by an individual or group of individuals to inflict physical, emotional or mental suffering on another individual or group of individuals” (DESE 2007, p.9).

Students violating the state bullying discipline policy would also be subject to disciplinary actions according to the local school district’s code of conduct.

Although the recognition by the state of Missouri concerning the problem of bullying in schools is a step in the right direction, the lack of mandated policies directed to every district continues to leave individual districts struggling to create policies, which effectively address bullying in their own school. The perception of the superintendent and school board members can be a determining factor in a school’s aggressive or non-aggressive approach to dealing with the issue of bullying.

Cyber Bullying Legislation

The concern over bullying and cyber bullying legislation is not just isolated to the state of Missouri. This phenomenon is vastly becoming a nationwide epidemic. Several states have recently enacted legislation to help in the fight against cyber bullying. These laws represent a crucial step toward national anti-cyber bullying laws which will protect children of all ages in every corner of the country. The following is a list of states with current laws concerning cyber bullying:

Arkansas

In 2007, the Arkansas legislation passed a law allowing school officials to take action against cyber bullies even if the bullying did not originate or take place on school property. The law gave school administrators much more freedom to punish those individuals who sought to harass their fellow students.

Idaho

In 2006, Idaho lawmakers passed a law that allowed school officials to suspend students if they bullied or harassed other students using a telephone or computer.

Iowa

Iowa has passed several laws that force schools to create anti-cyber bullying policies which cover bullying “in schools, on school property or at any school function or school-sponsored activity.”

New Jersey

In 2007, New Jersey amended their laws to include bullying via “electronic communication.” These laws give additional power to the school system to enforce bullying-related punishment for actions that may not take place while on school grounds.

Oregon

Laws passed in recent years in Oregon expand the boundaries of what constitutes cyber bullying to include those actions which “substantially interfere” with the education of the young person.

Missouri

The suicide of 13-year-old Megan Meier, who was the victim of an internet hoax, greatly raised the awareness of cyber bullying and its consequences in the state of Missouri.

Governor Matt Blunt created a task force whose sole purpose was to study and create laws regarding cyber bullying. Missouri has also toughened their laws on the matter, upgrading cyber harassment from a misdemeanor to a Class D felony.

New York

New York created a system to investigate claims of cyber bullying that would help police

and school officials better ascertain the circumstances of each occurrence and prosecute or punish the culprits to the fullest extent of the law.

Rhode Island

The governor of Rhode Island is currently trying to pass a bill that would force repeat cyber bullying offenders to appear in family court, where they would be charged as delinquents under the terms of the state's laws for young offenders.

Vermont

Vermont has added a \$500 fine for cyber bullying offenses. There is currently a bill being discussed that would increase the reach of the school's powers regarding cyber bullying when the action puts the individual's ability to learn (or health and safety) at risk.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of bullying has existed since the beginning of time. The issue of student safety in schools as it relates to school-yard bullying, however, was brought to the forefront of the American public with the tragedies at Columbine, Jonesboro, Conyers, and Paducah. The problem continues and has been aggravated by the advent of the cyber bullying potential. Young people's lives have been impacted for their entire future by seemingly senseless childhood acts. The questions arise: Are adults and educators, aware of the potential damage that bullying can do? Do young people realize the damage that their actions may create? And is there a gender difference in the bullying behaviors that pervade the hallways of our schools? The research questions below create a foundation from which to discuss these and other issues related to academic performance and bullying behaviors. The responses to the questions raised will open discussion and assist

in future studies not only with the issues concerning academic performance, but all areas concerning bullying.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed:

1. Do school administrators perceive a problem with bullying in their schools in Missouri?
2. Is there a relationship between the victim of bullying and the learning process?
3. Do female adolescents engage in cyber bullying more than male adolescents?
4. Do public schools in Missouri have policies in place that address bullying?

The Professional Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a perception that existed or did not exist within the ranks of Missouri public school administrators and students of Missouri public schools concerning the area of bullying among adolescent-age children. If the study revealed that bullying in fact existed in public schools in Missouri, what was the impact for the victims of such acts on their academic achievement? If bullying is determined as a problem in schools, do male and female adolescents engage in bullying equally and by using the same methods? Another key component of this study is to identify what, if any, schools policies currently are in place in public schools in Missouri and the possible need to create and adopt additional policies in order to protect the victims of bullying. Although this study could be viewed as a qualitative study, the researcher has chosen to analyze the data and develop conclusions based on the responses of perceptions, academic achievement, and policies that are currently found in the questionnaires and surveys. This was a descriptive research with the purpose of laying a

foundation for further research in specific areas identified as having possible significant impact on student performance and educator-preparation programs.

The goal of the study is to offer empirically researched, educated suggestions and answers regarding what and how to create and implement policies dealing with all forms of bullying. It is the intention of the researcher that this data, once analyzed and dissected, will be a meaningful tool to any school district in the state of Missouri and around the United States in the area of school policies. It is the premise of the researcher that this study will shed new light on the issues of electronic devices, their use at school, and the impact that those devices have on the learning process.

Previous research has demonstrated the impact bullying has on the emotional and physical well being of a child (Delfabbro et al., 2006; Rolland, 2002; American Medical Association, 2002; Delfabbro, et al., 2006; Nansel et al., 2001). Other studies have been conducted to demonstrate a link between school climate, safety perceptions, student motivation, and academic performance (Glew, et al, 2005; Nansel et al., 2004; National Education Association, 2003). This research sought to establish and gather responses and analyze the responses through frequency and types to assist in recommendation for reduction of bullying behaviors within the school and the improvement of academic performance by the students of the school. With the data established, more efficient decisions regarding the limited resources of a school system may be attained. Bullying through electronic means has become a significant problem in public schools today. Laws regulating electronic devices in schools or in society as a whole is lacking and much needed (Bulach, 2005). The researcher chose to examine this phenomenon by

administrator perception, gender of bullies, and academic achievement. The issue of current policies pertaining to bullying was compared and reported.

Olweus (1993) theorizes that bullying behavior of children is developed because of family factors, especially authoritarian parenting, and that “violence begets violence” (Olweus 1993, p.40). Hoover and Stenhjem also point to the roots of familial aggressive practices of bullies in early childhood that are “clearly associated with later antisocial and delinquent behavior” (Hoover, J., & Stenhjem, P., 2003 p.5). Garbino and deLara agree that adolescence, for the most part, “is the culmination of childhood patterns, not some dramatically discrepant period of life with little relation to what has gone before” (Garbino and deLara , 2002, p.21). It is clear that bullies develop over time and do not just go to school one day and become aggressive and harmful to other students. All of the authors point to one harmful impact of bullying in K-12 schools: school avoidance or dropping out.

"Violence and aggression are a common problem among youth in society today, not only in America, but also around the world. One of the most common ways that this frustration is expressed among youth is bullying. Bullying may have more media coverage today than in eras past, but it is, nonetheless, an age-old occurrence with which school children have been forced to deal. The problem is acute in America, where violence in schools ranges from the traditional extortion of lunch money typical of decades of bullying, to the more modern appearance of guns and other weapons being brought to school to terrorize other students. Aggressive bully-like behavior in schools is most often caused by an identifiable group of bullies who systematically victimize specific groups of their peers" (Bartini, p.14). The definition of a bully is someone who

uses physical or verbal aggression on something of a regular basis against other young people (Bulach, C., Penland Fulbright, J., & Williams, R., 2003). Usually, bullies are found to be stronger, bigger, and more aggressive than their peers and victims (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993). Bullying is defined many ways in many terms, but in every case and every situation it is the stronger taking advantage of the weak.

Overview of Methodology

The research conducted could have been in the form of a non-experimental quantitative form, but the researcher chose to compare and contrast perceptions, gender involvement with bullying, and current policies of school districts and correlate the findings with the effect that all phases have on the learning process of the victims of bullying, thus placing this study as descriptive research with the purpose of laying a foundation for further research on specific areas identified having possible significant impact on student performance and educator preparation programs.

The researcher electronically sent out questionnaires and surveys to 523 superintendents throughout the state of Missouri. Out of the 523 surveys sent, 323 responded and completed the survey. The surveys were taken from the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and modified by the researcher to meet the targeted group. The data was limited by the number of responses returned to the researcher. A written questionnaire was distributed by the researcher to all eight public schools which are members of the Western Missouri Conference. The WEMO conference schools have a population of 405 total students in grades 9-12. Of the 1,228 students, 505 responded to the OBQ. The compiling and analyzing of data was done by the researcher assisted by Math Chair at Cass Midway R-I School District Brett Burchett. The results and

determination of their relevance will be made known to all participating administrators in this study. A copy of this entire study has been made available electronically to all participants.

Due to the need for unaltered and authentic examples of the communication used in cyber-bullying activities, the researcher used purposive sampling, seeking personal writings posed online by adolescent girls and boys (bullies and victims) as one type of methodology for this study. All names were removed from the study and bloggers will appear as anonymous. Social networking websites that were used in this study are popular teen websites such as MySpace, LiveJournal, Facebook, Xanga, and Yahoo.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be used:

- Administrator-- Any public school official in the State of Missouri holding a current valid certificate as a principal or superintendent who is currently employed in such a position in a Missouri Public School.
- Appropriate -- the desired behavior that is acceptable to society as a whole
- Bully-- someone who uses physical or verbal aggression on something of a regular basis against other young people. Usually, bullies are found to be stronger, bigger, and more aggressive than their peers and victims.
- Bullying-- Acts which are comprised of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim. In addition to direct attacks, bullying may also be more indirect by causing a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion.

- **Victim of Bullying--** Victims of bullying are typically anxious, insecure, cautious, and suffer from low self-esteem, rarely defending themselves or retaliating when confronted by students who bully them. They may lack social skills and friends, and they are often socially isolated.
- **Zero-Tolerance--** The policy or practice of not tolerating undesirable behavior such as violence or illegal drug use, especially in the automatic imposition of severe penalties for the first offense.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

For far too many adults in the United States today, the most vivid memory from their school days involves a distinctly unpleasant incident or a series of incidents, with a bully often at the heart of the memory. Some adults may remember being the victim of a bully. Some may recall being forced to stand by and watch as a good friend or weaker classmate became a victim of bullying. Another group of adults may reflect, with remorse, the days when they actually bullied other students at school. The act of bullying, however, has far more ramifications than simply contributing to unpleasant childhood memories. Many researchers have documented the association of bullying with other antisocial behaviors. The pioneering research of Dan Olweus in the late 1980s and early 1990s documented that 60 % of the boys identified as bullies in grades 6-12 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24. Of these former middle-school bullies, 35 to 40 % were convicted of three or more serious crimes by their mid-twenties (Olweus, 1993). After Olweus' initial studies in Norway and Sweden, bullying in schools soon began to receive attention in Japan, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, and the United States. The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2004), a division of the Centers for Disease Control, cites bullying or being bullied as a "risk factor" for youth violence. An April 2003 report published by researchers from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development demonstrates a strong and constant link between bullying and subsequent violent behaviors among U.S. children. Although the association was strongest for those who exhibited the bullying behaviors, both bullies and victims of bullying showed higher rates of weapon carrying, fighting, and being injured

in fights in schools than those who were bullies or victims. Clearly, bullying is a problem that must be acknowledged and addressed.

Since the 1970s, research has dealt with the issue of the bullying in schools. It was not until the events of Columbine High School, Jonesboro, Conyers, and Paducah that the nation re-examined the seriousness of the act of bullying in public schools. The rapid advancement in technology over the past decade also brought on a new era in bullying at school, which is now referred to as cyber bullying. The information derived from these issues provides a basis for the present study. This chapter will examine the theoretical literature and empirical studies that relate to all aspects of bullying in public schools in Missouri.

Theoretical Framework

There have been attempts by researchers to define the learning process or optimal learning, but little research exists on the actual effect that being victimized by bullying has on the learning process. Even less research exists on the perception of school administrators and its overall affect on the learning process. The growth and learning process is explained in Maslow's theory known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The pyramid shape diagram which explains Maslow's theory of self-actualization is based on the foundation that a human being must feel safe and secure. When a child at school does not feel safe, learning takes on less importance as the victim is concentrating on survival. A child who finds himself a victim of bullying faces multiple barriers each day in the form of verbal and physical aggression from a bully, low self esteem, dealing with teachers' and administrators' attitudes concerning bullies, and physical pressures brought on by stress. Research has shown that stress associated with bullying can affect children

in numerous ways, all of which are negative and left unattended can lead to problems during adult life (Bulach, C., Penland Fulbright, J., & Williams, R., 2003).

The following areas of literature were reviewed for this study:

1. Literature on bullying prevalence, which contained evidence of the problems that exist with bullying at school.
2. Literature on the physical, emotional, and psychological effects experienced by victims of bullying.
3. Literature on the consequences of bullying in school.
4. Literature on the attitudes and perceptions of school officials with regards to bullying.
5. Literature on the effect of gender and the bullying process.
6. Literature on current school policies and laws concerning bullying.

Theoretical Literature

In the United States, school bullying did not generate much research until the 1990s—this increased interest may be due to rise in school shootings during that decade. According to Garbarino and deLara, the school shootings in Columbine, Colorado, “... changed everything, or at least it should have. The tragedy offered to open our nation’s eyes to the pain so many of our kids feel as they confront emotional violence at school” (2002, p.3). The authors contend that school violence, especially lethal, is conducted by those who feel they have been bullied and thus are seeking revenge. Bullied students all over the world have been found to suffer many negative consequences, including school avoidance, low self-esteem, and high levels of anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide (Chappell, 2004). The 2001 *School Crime Supplement* states that bullied

students (K-12) are at a higher risk for truancy or dropping out of school than those not bullied.

"The incidents of April 20, 1999, from Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, put bullying into a new perspective. Two students, Dylan Klebold and Ryan Harris, who were, for all intents, intelligent and well adjusted went on a killing spree. They killed and injured several members of the school including a teacher" (Rosenberg, 2000, p.4). They then turned the guns on themselves. Their plans were grandiose. After the massacre, they intended to flee the country. Once the madness had died down, new information showed that the two students were generally quiet, withdrawn, and subjected to bullying by their peers, especially the physically stronger students. Klebold and Harris were emotionally and physically abused. Isolated, they developed a hatred for their fellow students. This manifested in initial thoughts of suicide and then murder. The Columbine incident was the biggest and got the most coverage.

Bullying is composed of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim (Batsche, G.M., & Knoff, H.M., 1994). In addition to direct attacks, bullying may also be more indirect by causing a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion. While boys typically engage in direct bullying methods, girls who bully are more apt to utilize these more subtle indirect strategies, such as spreading rumors and enforcing social isolation (Ahmad & Smith, 1994; Smith & Sharp, 1994). Whether the bullying is direct or indirect, the key component of bullying is that the physical or psychological intimidation occurs repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993).

Various reports and studies have established that approximately 15% of students are either bullied regularly or are initiators of bullying behavior (Olweus, 1993). Direct bullying seems to increase through the elementary years, peak in the middle school/junior high school years, and decline during the high school years. Although direct physical assault seems to decrease with age, however, verbal abuse appears to remain constant. School size, racial composition, and school setting (rural, suburban, or urban) do not seem to be distinguishing factors in predicting the occurrence of bullying. Boys engage in bullying behavior and are victims of bullies more frequently than girls (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Nolin, Davies, & Chandler, 1995; Olweus, 1993; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Studies have shown that 75% of adolescents have been bullied while attending school (Bulach, Penland Fulbright, & Williams; 2003 Peterson, 1999). This staggering statistic shows that bullying is a major issue that needs to be identified and addressed in school systems today. The first step in addressing this issue is to gain a clear definition of bullying and identify characteristics and examples of bullying. The typical definition used by schools and organizations working with young people defines bullying as a pattern of repeated, intentionally cruel behavior and differs from normal peer conflict in a number of ways (Palomares, Schilling, 2001). In fact, it has been proven that bullying is a learned behavior, evident as early as two years of age (Take Action against Bullying, 2003). The act of bullying can take many forms. “These forms range from teasing and name-calling to more insidious belittling and marginalizing of the victims. In more extreme cases, it may be connected with demands of money or property and/or involve attacks on property or person” (Bulach, Penland Fulbright, & Williams, 2003, p.3) Bullying can also come in the form of what students commonly refer to as ‘joking’ and

often takes on a sexual overtone which quickly moves to sexual harassment. Both boys and girls can experience unwanted jokes, comments, and taunts about sexual body parts. Children being bullied may have difficulty concentrating on their studies, have lower academic achievement levels, and become more fearful of calling attention to them by speaking up in class (Bullying in Schools, n.d.). Although harassment both sexual and traditional can occur with both sexes, in the past, it has typically had a more significant impact on girls.

Who Bullies?

Bullying occurs among both boys and girls (Kumpulainen et al., 1988). Boys are more likely to be bullied by other boys, but girls may be victimized by boys, girls, or mixed groups (Schuster, 1996). Girls tend to use ridicule spreading rumors to victimize, and boys typically utilize physical forms of attack to bully.

There are several psychological factors that are associated with those who bully. Researchers (Bosworth et al., 1999; Kumpulainen et al., 1998) have found that bullies:

- Have higher levels of anger,
- Lack confidence in the use of nonviolent strategies,
- Accept aggression as justifiable and satisfactory,
- Are unhappy at school,
- Are impulsive,
- Have feelings of depression,
- Lack a sense of belonging in school,
- Dislike or are dissatisfied with school, and
- Have problems at home.

In addition to the above factors, childrearing practices may also contribute to bullying behavior. Researcher (Olweus, 1995) has found that authoritarian or punitive parenting can lead to bullying. Children brought up in a harsh, aggressive environment may become angry and aggressive themselves. Children whose parents practice coercive parenting behaviors such as yelling, name calling, and threats of punishment, have children who tend to model this aggressive behavior with their peers. Other care-giving practices identified with bullying behaviors are parental permissiveness for aggression, indifference, and lack of warmth or involvement. Also, the type of temperament or the basic tendencies and personality traits can influence bullying behaviors. Children with active and impulsive temperament may be more likely to bully others (Olweus, 1995). The entire home environment plays a greater role in creating future bullying issues than ever realized before the research conducted by Dan Olweus. It is also recognized that not all children with psychological factors and negative home environments become bullies.

Gender Differences in Bullying

Research has indicated that male adolescents are more likely to bully their victims through direct face-to-face confrontations (Li, 2006). Unlike males, females typically display aggression through indirect means. Therefore, females prefer cyber bullying to face-to-face aggression, and 60% of cyber victims are female (Li, 2006). This style of relational aggression stems from the way in which society constructs meaning about what it means to be a girl and how girls are taught to display aggression. Relational aggression is more effective than overt aggression for females since it hinders the development of closeness and intimacy within the peer group, and this is found to be more important for

girls than boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). The way in which girls communicate with one another directly affects the forms that female bullying takes. As opposed to direct physical or verbal aggression often displayed by males, relational aggression involves covert and manipulative methods of bullying based on social isolation that can cause serious psychological damage to the victim (Seals & Young, 2003). Electronic media offers an avenue for relational aggression that is appealing to female aggressors and is often referred to as cyber bullying. Due to the hidden nature of electronic communication, female cyber bullies display unique communication aspects (more commonly associated with male verbal aggression) that are direct, overt, and aggressive (Galen & Underwood, 1997). We as educators may not realize that Facebook and MySpace are damaging to adolescents, but it is.

Since we know that there are gender differences in regard to bullying, we see different behavioral expectations begin immediately at birth and continue throughout the lifespan. As social learning theory asserts, rewards and punishments teach children gender-based preferences for clothes, toys, behaviors, and communication that they may not naturally hold. “Although boys and girls themselves show little difference in toy preference during the preschool years, they are often encouraged to adopt gendered preferences” through the ways in which parents decorate their rooms, what toys they purchase, and the chores they assign to them (Wood, 2007, p. 167).

Boys tend to form large playgroups, organized hierarchically with memberships in multiple groups (Cummings, Iannotti, & Zahn-Waxler, 1989). Boys have the opportunity to be leaders at times, followers at others, and learn based on performance and ability. Most of their games are physically based, and “their speech, contains frequent

use of phrases of toughness” (Joffe, 1971, p. 473). “The nature of boys’ games is such that a larger number of participants are required for proper play” (Lever, 1976, p.480). Team sports or “fantasy games like ‘war’ have to be played outdoors ... boys, playing outdoors, move in larger, more open spaces and go farther away from the home which, undoubtedly, is part of their greater independence training” (Lever, 1976, p.480). Seventy two percent of the boys compared to 52% of the girls reported that their neighborhood games usually include four or more persons” (Lever, 1976, p.480).

Lever (1976) also makes the distinction between ‘play’ and ‘games.’ “Play was defined as a cooperative interaction that has no explicit goal, no end point, and no winners” while “games are competitive interactions, governed by a set body of rules, and aimed at achieving an explicit, known goal” (p. 481). His study indicated boys reported engaging in ‘games’ for 65% of their activities, compared to 35% for girls (Lever, 1976). Another interesting aspect of male play found by Lever was “boys could resolve their disputes more effectively [than girls] ... boys were seen quarrelling all the time, but not once was a game terminated because of a quarrel, and no game was interrupted for more than seven minutes” (1976, p. 482).

Overt aggression is considered more socially appropriate for boys than for girls. Research shows that “parents positively reward verbal and physical aggression in sons and positively reward interpersonal and social skills in daughters” (Wood, 2007, p.164-165). This explains why “when attempting to inflict harm on peers (i.e., aggressing), children do so in the ways that best thwart or damage the goals that are valued by their respective gender peer groups” (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, p.710). For boys, valued goals include dominance, independence, and anything that isn’t female (Wood, 2007). Not

surprisingly, studies on male aggression in childhood have found that male bullies tend to use direct verbal and physical attacks to bully. Li (2006) found gender differences in bullying behavior starting as young as age three. Li contends “males are significantly more physically victimized than females” (p.161). Boys bully “through physical and verbal aggression ... these behaviors are consistent with the types of goals that past research has shown to be important to boys ... specifically, themes of instrumentality and physical dominance” (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, p.710). How strong, fast, or brave you are means everything in terms of male dominance in childhood and adolescence (Lever, 1976). Shakeshaft (1995), as quoted by Li contends “Males with atypical gender related behaviors were at a much greater risk for peer assault than other young men.”

Atypical masculine behaviors are socially defined, and usually target any action that is seen as ‘feminine’ or ‘homosexual’ by the peer group. This may fall in line with biological differences between the genders, with males being judged and selected by females through criteria of physical strength, ability to protect and provide, and sexual machismo (Wood, 2007). Possible examples for atypical behavior could include a disinterest in aggressive, competitive play, or a preference for dolls or dress-up games (Wood, 2007).

Young girls play encourages cooperation and talk. Most girls aim to ‘play nice’ and build intimacy through verbal and nonverbal interaction (Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996). Small groups or pairs of girls are often engaged in forms of imaginative, verbal play. Games that require parts and roles give girls the opportunity to try out gender roles, as well as mimic social interaction. Girls play “occurs in private places and often

involves mimicking primary human relationships instead of playing formal games” which helps to develop “delicate socio-emotional skills” (Lever, 1976, p. 484).

The girls in Lever’s (1976) study claimed to feel the most discomfort within groups of four or more, medium discomfort in triads, and the most comfortable in pairs. Deep intimacy develops between pairs and small groups of young girls, with the emergence of a keen ability to decode nonverbal messages (Lever, 1976). Lever emphasizes that “most girls interviewed said they had a single ‘best’ friend with whom they played nearly every day. They learn to know that person and her moods so well that through non-verbal cues alone, a girl understands whether her playmate is hurt, sad, happy, bored, and so on” (Lever, 1976, p.484). Girls’ early friendships may also serve as training for later heterosexual dating relationships (Lever, 1976). “There is usually an open show of affection between these little girls – both physically in the form of handholding and verbally through “love notes” that reaffirm how special each is to the other” (Lever, 1976, p.484). Interestingly, jealousy, possessiveness, and other traits commonly associated with dating relationships often are at the root of friendship dissolution. These gender differences are socially constructed, and say little about biological differences between the sexes. When natural, human emotions are internalized as ‘inappropriate’ for either gender, they do not disappear, they only manifest themselves in ways that are more socially appropriate. “Because girls are discouraged from direct, overt aggression yet still feel aggressive at times, they develop other, less direct ways of expressing aggression” (Wood, 2007, p.165).

The friendship networks of girls are very complex. They tend to switch and change dramatically, with many girls going through a series of ‘best friends’ throughout

childhood and adolescence (Besag, 2006). Besag explains how a friendship between two girls may switch from one in which they hardly speak to anyone else, pass notes to one another, eat together, talk together, and appear to be inseparable one day, and then suddenly switches from day to night. The girls will have very little to do with one another, and may cling on to a brand new friend with the same dizzying speed of intimacy development (Besag, 2006). Since membership in a friendship group is exclusive, it is reserved for those who have proven themselves to be worthy of the trust and intimacy needed to develop an emotional connection (Besag, 2006). "Sharing secrets binds the union together, and telling the secrets to outsiders is symbolic of the break-up (Lever, 1976, p.484).

It is very hard to spot a female bully. They look the same as everyone else; perhaps they are more dominant in friendships or they may exhibit some behavioral problems, but for the most part they blend right in (Brinson, 2005). When another girl is bullying a girl she does her best to not be seen. Utilizing covert forms of both verbal and nonverbal communication, the aggressor can manipulate her victim (Underwood, 2003). Reasons for girls to bully other girls can range from revenge to jealousy, specific to the situation. The obvious constant variable in female bullying appears to be the covert use of communication. A lot of time is spent talking out problems, fears, crushes, and intimate secrets in female friendships (Besag, 2006). Any self-revealing information can quickly become a weapon of immense psychological damage through gossip and the spreading of rumors. This does not mean that girls should not trust one another and share this information for fear of the inevitable friendship change. Girls seem to naturally need

to communicate in this way and in most cases the benefits of learning how to cooperate, share, and talk lead to an increased sense of empathy and judgment (Lever, 1976).

Most girls do not use personal information to bully other girls, yet at the same time most adolescent girls experience relational aggression. Since relational aggression is the aggression form of choice among females, and since anger, jealousy and hurt are natural and unavoidable emotions, it is reasonable to assume that all females will be aggressors as well as victims of relational aggression. This is due to the fact that girls frequently share confidential information with one another (Moultapa et al., 2004).

Another factor possibly contributing to female bullying involves the specific atmosphere of school. “This competitive, combative culture might be heard as an echo of the national culture of competition in education,” with teachers competing with teachers, peers competing with peers for grades, and the general fast passed nature of education (Duncan, 2004, p.149).

Unlike the bullying of boys, most of the quarrels and conflicts among girls appear related to their friendship groups. This means that the victims are unable to escape the mesh of social relationships within which the bullies lurk. The aggressors know all about their target due to past friendly relationships (Besag, 2006 p.537). In face-to-face cases, female bullying usually looks like squabbles and frivolous arguments between groups of girls. These squabbles are much more complex than they appear, commonly involving negative verbal and nonverbal messages expressed through indirect means with the goal of social exclusion. These aggressive acts can be devastating to the self-image of the victim due to the importance of communication and the sharing of social information by females (Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996).

Major changes in every aspect of life begin to occur around the ages of 12 to 16. Duncan (2004) found that the girls in his study held “a pronounced belief that the nature of their friendships had altered over the years, and several groups pointed to a difference between friendships in primary school and friendships in secondary school” (p. 140). Children who have changed schools have experienced more challenging school work, less socialization time at school, and more competition for resources (Crick, & Grotpeter, 1995). These changes alone create tension on previous relationships leading to bullying. Priorities begin to change from wanting to spend all of your time with the same sex to an emerging interest in the opposite sex (Crick, & Grotpeter, 1995). Gossip emerges as a very important activity for teen-aged girls, recognized by the girls in Duncan’s (2004) study as “an indulgence condemned by male authority and masculine values” (p.142). Even so, gossip appeared to be too exciting and socially valuable to discontinue. For example, Duncan (2004) found while “recounting some incidents, the excitement of the narrators was evident in the raised tone, pace and pitch of the conversation” (p.142). Even when the gossip was non-sensational, “they used the absence of key persons to explore emotive issues with reassurance, reparation or reconciliation” (p.143).

Popularity was an important factor in Duncan’s (2004) study, although no definition was unanimously agreed upon by the girls, “there was a general consensus that ‘popular’ was used to mean those girls who had the highest social status in the school and was linked to heterosexual attractiveness” (p.144). He also stated that “to be known as one of *the* popular girls implied you would be brash, aggressive and involved in rumors and fights amongst girls” (p. 144). These actions are in direct competition with the previously discussed socialization of girls to ‘play nice’ and cooperate in early childhood.

Earlier research by Duncan (1999, 2002, p. 137) found that results of bullying ended in some girls refusing to attend school or seeking transfers to other schools due to harassment by peers. Real reasons for seeking transfers were often concealed from parents and professionals for fear of retaliation by the more aggressive children or because of internalized guilt and shame. According to the National Resource Center for Safe Schools, approximately 30% of American children are regularly involved in bullying and 15% are severely traumatized or distressed as a result of encounters with bullies (1999). Abuse of this type can be extremely damaging, with psychological wounds that may take years to heal. Depending on the situation, bullying can continue relentlessly until the victim changes schools or sadly, commits suicide. It is often suggested that the aggressors in school shootings were victims of bullying, and their attacks stem from this form of psychological abuse (Seals & Young, 2003). The effects of bullying can have long term effects with “bullying and victimization [being] associated with negative consequences in adulthood” (Seals & Young, 2003, p.736).

Although girls are more likely than boys to report a bully (Li, 2006), there is still a great deal of reluctance to bring their stories to authorities. This can be explained in many ways. As mentioned previously, it is very difficult to spot a female bully, and since they use social exclusion instead of physical violence, it becomes very tricky to punish Aggressors (Li, 2006).

Psychological or emotional abuse is harder to prove and can cause mental doubt and self-blame, leading to even greater psychological distress (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). If the victim can't prove it; and if the bully can deny it, then the victim can feel as if they are going crazy. Girls may internalize the pain and feel ashamed or responsible for what

is happening to them (Besag, 2006). They may think, “If I lost ten pounds, they would be nice to me and like me” or “if I just had more money for new clothes, I’d be popular and they wouldn’t pick on me” (Besag, 2006, p.23). These tactics usually don’t work. If a bully has chosen to victimize, their goal is not to cause a change in the victim, and if a victim attempts to conform to some ideal like losing weight. The bully will simply switch their plan of attack from calling her fat to calling her skinny (Besag, 2006).

Historically, bullying primarily occurred in school during school hours; however, with the common use of computers and the internet since the 1990s, on-line bullying has become an increasing occurrence amongst adolescent girls (Li, 2005). The internet offers the perfect tool for mass, covert bullying due to its anonymity, its difficulty to regulate, and the removal of traditional social rules in regards to appropriate communication (Giuseppe, & Galimberti, 2003).

“The nature of new technology makes it possible for cyber bullying to occur more secretly, spread more rapidly and be easily preserved” (Li, 2006, p. 161). Bullying is a major problem in schools, and it seems to be on the rise with the widespread use of the Internet. “Cyber bullying”, according to Willard (2004) as quoted by Li (2006), “can occur in various formats including flaming, harassment, cyber stalking, denigration (putdowns), masquerade, outing and trickery and exclusion ...” it can lead to stalking, death threats and suicide (Li, 2006). “Unlike face-to-face bullying, people often feel that cyberspace is impersonal and they can therefore say whatever they want. Further, it is reported that females prefer this type of bullying” (Nelson, 2003; Li, 2006). Electronic bullying allows a person’s identity to remain hidden and can pose less of a physical confrontation than face-to-face bullying.

Teasing and Bullying

Teasing among children, pre-adolescents, and adolescents does not automatically exhibit a form of bullying. It is not until the teasing becomes hurtful by ridiculing the person being teased does it fall into a negative pattern. Hostile teasing creates an atmosphere where the victim may feel threatened, sad, hurt, or angry. The act of teasing at school becomes bullying when there is a willful intent and conscious desire to hurt another and put him/her under stress (Tatum & Tatum, 1992). Bullying consists of more than one act of aggressive behavior and may include physical contact, name calling, making faces, dirty gestures, or being intentionally excluded from a group (Olweus, 1995). In addition, bullying can be classified as direct or indirect bullying. Direct bullying includes those behaviors that are open attacks, but indirect bullying is characterized by social isolation or exclusion from the group (Bosworth, 1999). Bullying is an ongoing pattern of physical or psychological aggression that victimizes the person being bullied. Researchers (Kumpulainen et al., 1998; Hodges & Perry, 1996) indicate that victims of teasing share common characteristics. Among these are:

- May be physically weak,
- Quick to submit to the bully's demands,
- Reward the bully by displaying signs of distress,
- Use inappropriate group-entry skills,
- Lack humor and pro-social skills,
- May have few friends,

- May be different or socially insecure and awkward, and,
- Tend to score higher on internalizing and psychosomatic behaviors, such as feeling anxious, depressed, and outwardly show physical symptoms of these feelings.

Hazing

Another form of bullying can be found in what is commonly referred to as hazing. Hazing is an often ritualistic test which may constitute harassment, abuse, or humiliation with requirements to perform meaningless tasks; sometimes as a way of initiation into a social group. Hazing can be physical in nature or mental. Hazing was once viewed as a right of young people to engage in such acts as it was designed to bring about an eventual bonding experience. It has been proven over the years that hazing in any form is detrimental to young people and in many cases illegal. In public schools in America, hazing has been reported in a variety of social contexts, including: sports teams, academic clubs, school bands, and among class ranks. It is now understood among educators across America that hazing is considered a form of bullying and intimidation and cannot be tolerated. Hazing is considered a felony in several U.S. states, and anti-hazing legislation has been proposed in other states. The act of hazing has damaging effects on the victims.

Disability Harassment

Another form of bullying is disability harassment. Disability harassment is the form of bullying and teasing specifically based on, or because of, a disability. (Hoover, Stenhjem, 2003). This treatment creates a hostile environment by denying access to, participation in, or receipt of benefits, services, or opportunities at school (Hoover,

Stenhjem, 2003; PSEA Interactive, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Bullies tend to focus on peers who seem vulnerable, and often times it is the children with disabilities who attract bullies. There are many different levels of disabilities that children could have, but bullying at any of these levels is not acceptable. If the bullying of children with disabilities gets bad enough, it could fall under the category of being a hate crime. This is an example of a case where police or other authorities would get involved in the situation. Federal laws prohibit the act of committing a hate crime, but few members of public school across the United States would consider harassment and bullying of those with disabilities to be classified as such an act.

Misconceptions about Bullying

Even with all of the research about bullying that is available, there are still some common misconceptions or myths about the subject. One myth is that bullies are anxious and unsure of themselves under their tough surface (Bullying is Not a Fact of Life, n.d.). This information is incorrect because research has shown that bullies usually have a low to average level of anxiety and insecurity. Their self-image also tends to be about average or even relatively positive (Bullying is Not a Fact of Life, n.d.). Another common assumption is that bullying is a consequence of large class or school sizes, or the competition for grades and other pressures that school generates (Olweus, 2001).

In actuality, characteristics of a bully include, but are not limited to: a need for power and control, getting satisfaction from inflicting injury and/or suffering, showing little to no empathy for victims, being provoked by others, showing very little anxiety and possibly having high self-esteem. Studies also indicate that bullies often come from homes where physical punishment is used, where the children are taught to strike back

physically as a way to handle problems, and where parental involvement and warmth are frequently lacking (Banks, 1997). Generally speaking, bullies have the need to feel powerful and in control. Because of this need to be in control, bullies usually select victims who rarely defend themselves, are lacking social skills or friends, have controlling parents, or have low self-esteem. The major defining physical characteristic of victims is that they tend to be physically weaker than their peers. Surprisingly, other physical characteristics such as weight, dress, or wearing eyeglasses do not appear to be significant factors that can be correlated with victimization (Banks, 1997; Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993).

There are some major differences between techniques children use to bully their victims. Boys tend to be more direct and physical when they bully. They usually have no problem 'taking it outside' and physically hurting one another. In contrast, girls are very indirect and use psychological intimidation over a period of time. Many girls use talking behind others' backs, exclusion, rumors, name-calling, humiliation, and manipulation to inflict pain on their victims. Girls who bully also frequently attack within tightly-knit networks of friends, making their aggressive behaviors harder to identify (Simmons, 2002 p. 3). Many girls who bully use friendship as a weapon and this intensifies the damage done to their victims.

There are some serious long-term consequences that result from bullying. Bullying is harmful to both the perpetrators and the victims and is responsible for behavioral and emotional difficulties, long-term negative outcomes and violence (Bullying is Not a Fact of Life, n.d.). Bullying should no longer be viewed as a rite of passage that all kids have to go through or a phase that he or she will outgrow. It should

also not be seen as a normal, natural part of childhood. About 60% of bullies in grades six through nine have at least one criminal conviction by the time they turn 24 (Newquist, 1997). Many bullies also maintain their aggressive behaviors well into adulthood and have a difficult time maintaining positive relationships throughout their lives. Bullies are more likely to be poor students. They are also more likely to smoke or drink alcohol (Crawford, 2002).

There are also devastating consequences to the victim that can occur over time. The most disconcerting is that bullying can lead to low self-esteem, and ultimately, depression for the victims. Victims fear school and view it as an unsafe environment. Research has shown that as many as seven percent of America's eighth-graders stay home from school at least once a month because of bullies (Banks, 1997; Olweus, 1993). The act of being bullied tends to increase some students' isolation because their peers do not want to lose status by associating with them or because they do not want to increase the risks of being bullied themselves (Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

Children bullied in school by other children at school experience "... extreme fear and stress ..." (Maestas, nd, p.10). Furthermore, children who are bullied at school have been found by the National Education Association (2003) to be afraid to attend school, to visit the restroom while at school, to ride the bus home, and exhibit symptoms associated with physical illness as well as having a "...diminished ability to learn" (Maestas, nd, p.10). It has been indicated by findings in research that bullying results in both physiological and psychological harm.

Nader and Koch conducted research entitled: "Does Bullying Result in Posttraumatic Stress_Disorder?" Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is referred to as PTSD.

Their research showed that bullying in schools “is a widespread problem that has received greater attention in recent years” (2006; p.1). Nader and Koch state that bullying “occurs repeatedly over time and involves an ongoing pattern of harassment, intimidation and abuse” (2006; p.1). Furthermore, bullying may be physical or relational and generally occurs at school and “between peers within the same school year” (Nader and Koch, 2006; p.1). There have been studies to report negative psychological and physical effects of school bullying which include “... reduced self-esteem, poor physical health, decreased school attendance and performance and increased depression and anxiety” (2006; p.1). Nader and Koch state that bullying is different “from isolated, transitory interpersonal conflicts in that it involves systematic, intentional, prolonged and repeated negative attacks aimed at a person by one or more people, often resulting in the victim feeling unable to cope” (2006; p.1). Weaver (2000) conducted a study that examined bullying and PTSD in high school students in the United Kingdom and the United States and his findings revealed that: “... 37% of bullying victims self-reported suffering from PTSD symptoms” (2006; p.1). Another study that is related was conducted by Storch and Esposito (2003) which examined bullying and PTSD among elementary school children and states in their findings that “both overt and relational bullying were positively correlated with symptoms of PTSD” (Nader and Koch, 2006; p. 2). Bullying was found to lead to PTSD in two primary ways: (1) Bullying can result in the victim displaying overt anxiety signals, which can lead to more serious victimization; and (2) bullying can indirectly lead to PTSD through the development of personality variables that place the child at increased risk for trauma and maladaptive appraisals that can exacerbate anxiety reactions” (Nader and Koch, 2006; p.2).

The work of Brendtro (2004) entitled: “From Coercive to Strength-Based Intervention: Responding to the Needs of Children in Pain” states: “Recent clinical and brain studies indicate that troubled children and youth are reacting to distressing life circumstances with “pain-based behavior.” Those who deal with such behavior often lack the necessary skills to prevent and manage crisis situations” (p. 1). Brendtro also notes that brain states of emotional stress include the following stressors and the accompanying outcomes due to this stress:

- (1) Physical stressors produce physiological distress. (examples:
abuse, neglect of basic needs for food, sleep, shelter, and safety)
- (2) Emotional stressors produce psychological distress as
experienced in feelings of fear, anger, shame, guilt, and
worthlessness; and
- (3) Social stressors frustrate normal growth needs by interfering
with the development of attachment, achievement, autonomy,
and altruism. (Brendtro, 2004; p. 2).

Bendtro stated that the biological examination of violence and its effects on the individual show that “... episodes of extreme or chronic stress are chemically burned into long-term memory” (Brendtro, 2004; p.3). Brendtro states that this results in the individual developing: “... reactive patterns of defensiveness or aggression” (Brendtro, 2004; p.4). An article published in the May 15, 2007, issue of the *Science Daily News Journal* states that “Hormones in children’s saliva may be a biological indicator of the trauma kids undergo when they are chronically bullied by peers ...” (Science Daily, 2007). The report states that Pennsylvania State University professors of counselor

education Carney and Hazler “looked at the hormone cortisol in student’s saliva to evaluate its validity as a reliable biomarker in assessing effects of precursors to bullying. In humans, this hormone is responsible for regulating various behavioral traits such as the fight-flight response and immune activity that are connected to sensory acuity and aspects of learning and memory” (Science Daily, 2007). The spikes in cortisol levels take place when a threat is sensed by the individual, which negatively impacts both memory and learning functions. The report states: “The longer such a spike continues to exist, the more damage it can do to various aspects of a person's physical, social, and emotional health” (Science Daily, 2007).

Bullying has been shown in this study to be an enormous problem among school students of all ages. This study has also shown that bullying is rarely intervened upon when occurring by other students because they fear for their own safety. Students who are bullied experience fear while at school and traveling to and from school, and this results in reducing their academic achievement. Research has shown that bullying during childhood results in ongoing negative impacts on the individual’s economics and the progression of their career. There are potential lifetime negative impacts noted by research due to be on the receiving end of bullying as a child.

The act of bullying is not only psychologically and emotionally damaging to the victim, but the bully also displays issues that if not properly dealt with in life can manifest themselves into criminal behavior. Students who engage in bullying behaviors seem to have a need to feel powerful and in control. They appear to derive satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering on others, seem to have little empathy for their victims, and often defend their actions by saying that their victims provoked them in

some way. Studies indicate that bullies often come from homes where physical punishment is used, where the children are taught to strike back physically as a way to handle problems, and where parental involvement and warmth are frequently lacking. Students who regularly display bullying behaviors are generally defiant or oppositional toward adults, antisocial, and are likely to break school rules. In contrast to prevailing myths, bullies appear to have little anxiety and to possess strong self-esteem. There is little evidence to support the contention that they victimize others because they feel bad about themselves (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993).

Students who are victims of bullying are typically anxious, insecure, cautious, and suffer from low self-esteem, rarely defending themselves or retaliating when confronted by students who bully them. They may lack social skills and friends, and they are often socially isolated. Victims tend to be close to their parents and may have parents who can be described as overprotective. The major defining physical characteristic of victims is that they tend to be physically weaker than their peers—other physical characteristics such as weight, dress, or wearing eyeglasses do not appear to be significant factors that can be correlated with victimization (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993).

Victims often fear school and consider school to be an unsafe and unhappy place. The act of being bullied tends to increase some students' isolation because their peers do not want to lose status by associating with them or because they do not want to increase the risks of being bullied themselves. A child being bullied leads to depression and low self-esteem, problems that can carry into adulthood (Olweus, 1993; Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler (1994) surveyed students in the Midwest and found that a clear majority felt that victims were at least partially responsible for bringing the bullying on themselves. Students surveyed tended to agree that bullying toughened a weak person, and some felt that bullying "taught" victims appropriate behavior. Charach, Pepler, and Ziegler (1995) found that students considered victims to be "weak," "nerds," and "afraid to fight back." However, 43% of the students in this study said that they try to help the victim, 33% said that they should help but do not, and only 24% said that bullying was none of their business.

Parents and Bullying

Parents are often unaware of the bullying problem and talk about it with their children only to a limited extent. (Olweus, 1993), Student surveys reveal that a low percentage of students seem to believe that adults will help. Students feel that adult intervention is infrequent and ineffective and that telling adults will only bring more harassment from bullies. Parents, if they suspect that their child is being teased or bullied, should ask the child directly. Some children may be reluctant to tell others, as they feel ashamed or embarrassed or fearful that the bully may retaliate if they tell. Parents should look for signs of fear of going to school, lack of friends, missing items or things being stolen from him/her, increased anxiety or even depression. All parents should take steps to make sure their children are safe. If the bullying is taking place at school, parents should contact school officials and report the incidents. If the teasing or bullying is taking place in the neighborhood or while going to or from school, the parents should make arrangements for an older sibling or older child to accompany their child to and from school. Other parents or neighbors should be notified and anti-bullying

programs may need to be established. If parents become aware that their child is a bully and involved in teasing and bullying behaviors the parent should get involved. They need to take the problem seriously and realize that research has shown that bullies suffer negative consequences in life. Bullies tend to have trouble later in life with relationships and are more likely to be convicted of crimes. If a parent discovers that they have a bully for a child, they should talk with the child about the problem and situation. Discuss with the child the negative impact that teasing and bullying has on other children. Limits should be set and consequences in place if the behavior continues. Do not allow the child to deny or minimize the behavior. Parents should make clear that this type of behavior will not be tolerated. In extreme cases, parents may choose to seek professional assistance in handling a difficult situation with their child (Craig, W. M., Pepler, D. J., & Atlas, R. 2002).

New Dimensions in Bullying

The definition of bullying “is the act of intimidating a weaker person to make them do something” (WordNet, 2009). Today’s students are dealing with some different kinds of bullying than the adults in our society have ever dreamed possible. Twenty years ago when someone said “bully” you would think of the big kid on the playground who picked on everyone. Today our students deal with physical bullying, emotional bullying, and the newest version, cyber bullying. Physical bullying can include hitting, shoving or tripping. It can also include sexual bullying in which there is inappropriate behavior between two people. Emotional bullying can include making fun of the way a student talks, acts, or looks. Cyber bullying would include slander and hateful messages via an electronic device. Websites such as MySpace or FaceBook offer students a place to

intimidate and harass victims of bullying. Many students use private emails accounts rather than the ones offered at school so that they are not as easily tracked or identified. Girls are more likely to bully emotionally, and boys are more likely to bully physically (WebMd, 2007). This does not mean that boys never engage in cyber bullying. It just refers to the fact that typically, boys prefer a face-to face confrontation.

With the change in types of bullying, the way we might think a bully looks has changed, also. Instead of the big kid, anyone can be a bully. Cyber bullying makes it easy for anyone to bully because it is harder to ever know who it is that is actually doing the bullying. It could be anyone bullying a student, even their best friend. This makes it hard to trust when you are the one being bullied (Nixon, 2003).

A study by the British Psychological Society found that when given a questionnaire, students ages 7-9, were very willing to report these different types of bullying. As students get older they report less and less. A young child will think that bullying involves people being mean. As they get older things such as psychological bullying and social exclusion come into play (Naylor, 2006). This shows us that children of different ages have different ideas of what bullying is and when it is happening to them. Another study found that there were a greater number of young students being bullied than older students. When the researchers looked further into the study, they found that the younger students were reporting the older students bullying them. Those that were in high school reported bullying happening in more than one period throughout the day. When asked why they thought people got bullied, the response came in four categories:

1. Victim's Appearance: thin, fat, ugly

2. Victim's Behavior: strange, talks different, shy, insecure
3. Social Background: different culture, religion, economic situation
4. Other: bad luck, no friends, the victim bullies others. (Frissen, 2007).

Another term for bullying is relational aggression. This term was coined by Nicki Crick, from the University of Minnesota, to describe the use of relationships to harm others. When this process of using relationships is carried out, it involves an aggressor (the bully or tormentor), a victim (the target), and often one or more bystanders (Nixon, 2003). There are many different studies that have been done on bullying. There are several different ways to define bullying. Such as what it is and who it involves. Everyone who does a study comes out with their own terms and categories. Another study puts the participants of bullying into four categories. The categories are: perpetrator, victim, victim-perpetrator, or neither. Every student will fall in at least one of the categories. In this study there were more perpetrators than anything else (Miller, 2007),

Cyber Bullying Is Introduced

With the onslaught of technology the old-age problem of bullying has expanded into a whole new dimension. The school-yard bully has now gone digital. The phenomenon of electronic bullying has become known as cyber bullying. Electronic aggression, in the form of threatening text messages and the spread of online rumors on social networking sites, is a growing concern. Although the majority of kids who are harassed online are not physically bothered in person, the cyber bully still takes a heavy emotional toll on his or her victims. Kids who are tormented online are more likely to get a detention or be suspended, skip school or experience emotional distress. Teens who

receive rude or nasty comments via text messages are more likely to say they feel unsafe at school.

Approximately half of U.S. students are impacted by traditional bullying each school day. It happens on buses, in the cafeteria, gym, hallways, playground, and in classrooms. The most frequent form bullying takes is verbal (teasing, taunting, ridiculing, name-calling, and gossip) not physical. This type of bullying happens in the physical world, and that world has time and space limits. Cyber bullying is making school days even more painful for many children and some school staff. Bullying in cyberspace is not bound by school hours, school days, or facing the intended bully victim. Unfortunately, the perceived anonymous nature of the internet often insulates the bully from the consequences of their damaging behavior.

As the number of households with the Internet dramatically increases and cell phone ownership expands to the 100 million mark, so do the ways kids bully each other. Cyber bullying in the form of text messages, emails, photos, and website postings can go school-wide in minutes and global in days. Slanderous information sent out into cyberspace is difficult, if not impossible, to expunge. Cyber bullying often takes the form of cyber gossip, where damaging content is based on whim, not facts, and is posted on social networking sites such as MySpace and FaceBook.

A study indicated that cyber bullying incidents have quadrupled in five years. A 2000 survey by the Crimes against Children Research center at the University of New Hampshire reported 6 % of young people had experienced some form of cyber bullying. In 2005, studies of 1500 Internet-using adolescents found that over one-third had been cyber-bullied and half of those admitted to cyber bullying others (Hinduja and Patchin,

2005). A study by National Children's Home Charity revealed that 20% had been cyber bullying victims. A 2004 survey conducted by i-Safe America of 1,556 adolescents found that 42 % had been bullied online.

The concern is that bullying is still perceived by many educators and parents as a problem that involves physical contact. Most research and enforcement efforts focus on bullying in school classrooms, locker rooms, hallways and restrooms. But given that 80 % of adolescents use cell phones or computers, "social interactions have increasingly moved from personal contact at school to virtual contact in the chat room" (Williams and Guerra, 2007). Cyber bullying tactics include humiliation, destructive messages, gossip, slander, and other virtual taunts communicated through e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms and blogs.

Need For School Policies

In order to better address this specific area, schools across the nation have begun reviewing and significantly revising policies to address the concerns. A major obstacle for schools creating and implementing bullying and harassment policies is the lack of case law and legislation on the subject. Cyber bullying gained national attention in November 2007 when the story surfaced of a 13-year-old Missouri girl who killed herself following an Internet hoax. Megan Meier, the victim of cyber bullying, thought she had made a new friend in cyberspace when a cute teenage boy named Josh contacted her on MySpace and began exchanging messages with her. Megan, a 13-year-old who suffered from depression and attention deficit disorder, corresponded with Josh for more than a month before he abruptly ended their friendship, telling her he had heard she was cruel.

The next day Megan committed suicide. Her family learned later that Josh never actually existed; he was created by members of a neighborhood family that included a former friend of Megan. Megan's parents filed a lawsuit against the adult neighbor who was responsible for the hoax. Missouri was the first state in the country that changed how the world views cyber bullying. The suicide of Megan Meier prompted Missouri Governor Matt Blount to create an Internet Harassment Task Force. Governor Blount also called on education officials to create computer ethics classes. Since the Missouri case, many states have passed legislation or have pending legislation concerning electronic bullying. There was no cyber bullying legislation introduced until 2007, which gives much evidence of the current crisis of this phenomenon. At least 13 states have passed laws, including Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina and Washington. California schools may suspend or expel students who commit cyber bullying. The law also singles out such harassment as a subject to be addressed by school officials.

Most of the laws are aimed at school districts, requiring them to develop policies on cyber bullying; for example, how to train school staff members or discipline students. Though many schools throughout the nation have developed their own policies, some remain unsure how to handle cyber bullying. It can be time consuming and difficult to investigate, as people on the Internet can remain anonymous. Educators may not understand the technology that students are using.

Chapter 3, Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a perception that exists or did not exist within the ranks of Missouri public school administrators and students of Missouri public schools concerning the area of bullying among adolescent age children. The research conducted was a descriptive study as the researcher chose to compare and contrast perceptions, gender involvement with bullying, and current policies of school districts and identifying pattern and trends by the use of the Pearson r . The researcher was looking for patterns and trends as revealed by the responses to the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire and the superintendent's survey.

Two instruments were used for the study. First the researcher used the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ). The OBQ is the survey component of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Permission to use the report was given to the district as part of the implementation of the prevention program in which Cass Midway school district was involved. Cass Midway is the researcher's school and has begun a preventative program addressing student behaviors and social interactions. The OBQ is a standardized, validated, multiple-choice questionnaire designed to measure a number of aspects of bullying problems within a school. The OBQ was designed to be used with students in grades 3 through 12, but for the purpose of this study, only students in grades 9-12 were surveyed. It was initially designed to be completely anonymous and maintained that anonymity for all student participants through the current study. The questionnaire provided a detailed definition of bullying so that students will have a clear understanding of how they should interpret the descriptors and therefore, enable them to more effectively respond when answering the questions. The response choices for most

questions are, “never, only once or twice, occasionally, and very frequently.” These choices are designed to avoid the vagueness that can be attributed to responses of often or fairly often (Olweus, 2007). The OBQ also asks nine specific questions pertaining to various forms of bullying activity, both about being bullied and about bullying other students. Finally, the OBQ asks several questions about the reactions of others to bullying, as perceived by those completing the questionnaire.

The selected populations for this study were school administrators and students of school districts in Missouri using a printed and electronic survey instrument. The researcher developed an electronic questionnaire with repetition of responses which is located as an appendix in the research study. The questionnaire was explored and critiqued by Superintendent of Drexel School District in Drexel, Missouri, Dr. Judy Stivers, in conjunction with a non-participating group of practicing and retired principals and superintendents familiar with current educational practice. This step was implemented within the research protocol to ensure ease of understanding, appropriate facilitation of materials, and content validity.

The questionnaire was preceded by an electronic cover letter to all Missouri superintendents. The survey and questionnaires were numbered and e-mailed to the administrators in Missouri. All responses to all surveys were numbered and the returned surveys were recorded on an excel spreadsheet. Of the 523 questionnaires sent, 323 questionnaires were completed and returned. From the spreadsheet, the researcher designed a template to tally the responses for percentage analysis. The numbered surveys were kept confidential and locked in the researcher’s office. The frequency and type of responses from all surveys were recorded to determine the perception of bullying in

schools in Missouri by both administrators and students. The final survey results were made available for review to all participants when this research was completed. Descriptive statistics techniques including percentage and frequency responses were computed to analyze the responses to the questionnaires and surveys. The survey identified the perception of bullying and was analyzed according to geographical regions, gender, experience as an administrator, and current policies.

The OBQ survey was used by the researcher. The surveys were from the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program with minor modifications to address cyber bullying. A written questionnaire was distributed by the researcher to all eight public schools which are members of the Western Missouri Conference (WEMO) to be distributed among student's grades 9-12. Out of the 1,228 surveys sent out, 505 were completed and returned. Once the responses were returned they were placed on an Excel spreadsheet in which a template was created tallying all responses by percentages. The compiling and analyzing of data was be done by the researcher and assisted by Math Chair at Cass Midway R-I School District, Brett Burchett. All responses to the OBQ were kept confidential and locked in the researcher's office. The results and determination of its relevance has been made known to all participating administrators in this study. A copy of this entire study has been made available electronically to all participants.

The responses were to reveal that bullying in fact exists or does not exist in public schools in Missouri. The next question which arose was what are the effects on the victims of such acts and their academic achievement? This study is a descriptive research with the purpose of laying a foundation for further research on specific areas identified

having possible significant impact on student performance and educator preparation programs.

The study took place in school districts located in the state of Missouri. The electronic survey and questionnaire was sent to superintendents of all 523 public school districts in the state. The survey and questionnaire for students were sent to the eight high schools (grade 9-12) which comprise the Western Missouri Conference. The Western Missouri Conference Schools include: Adrian R-III, Appleton City R-II, Archie R-V, Cass Midway R-I, Drexel R-IV, Miami R-I, Osceola , and Rich Hill R-IV. The student population, grades 9-12, of the Western Missouri Conference is 1,228 total students. Although this is not a comprehensive sampling of student populations within the state, it was determined that as a descriptive research process for designing further research, the convenience sample would be most feasible for this foundational investigation.

The second instrument used was a survey/questionnaire from the OBQ. It was, however, modified by the researcher to address specific perceptions and beliefs of superintendents in the State of Missouri concerning bullying in their district. The questions asked superintendents not only about their districts, but the State of Missouri public schools. The survey also gathered important information as to the current policies of each school district that responded to the survey in relationship to all forms of bullying. The responses were placed on a spreadsheet and analyzed according to the percent of the responses. At the conclusion of the study, the results of each instrument used were shared with all participants. The results were also made available to participants of the Missouri School Boards Association Summer Conference 2009.

Validity and reliability of OBQ

Using the Rasch measurement model, Kyriakides, Kaloyirou, and Lindsay (2006) found the OBQ instrument has “satisfactory psychometric properties; namely construct validity and reliability” (p. 781). Construct validity focused on the idea that the recorded performances are reflections of a single underlying construct. Rasch analysis provides indicators for how well each item fits within the indicated construct, therefore, allowing for the examination of the construct validity of the popular instrument (Kyriakides et al., 2006). The scales of the OBQ were examined concerning the extent to which children are and continue being victimized and the extent to which children are bullying others.

This study compared the responses for patterns and trends from the OBQ and the responses from superintendent’s survey in the State of Missouri. The responses to all surveys and questionnaires were recorded on a spreadsheet and analyzed according to the percentage of the responses to each question. It was expected that there would be a strong pattern between the two instruments data. The Pearson r for the relationship between the two scales was statistically significant and negative, each higher than 0.85 and was “therefore seen as relatively satisfactory” (Kyriakides et al., 2006, p. 791). “By comparing the differences and similarities of the responses of the two scales measuring the extent to which the same negative activity occurs in the school, a very consistent pattern was found which reveals a high internal consistency in the pupils’ and superintendents’ responses to the questionnaire” (Kyriakides et al., 2006, p. 796).

The study provided substantial support and information for the validity and reliability of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire and gave valuable insight to the views and perceptions of the school administrators in the State of Missouri. A Panel of Experts

were then identified which included five public school superintendents from the State of Missouri and five students from Missouri public schools, grades 9-12, who did not participate in the original surveys. To ensure additional validity and reliability to this study, the researcher created an additional student survey which included only those questions from the student original survey that were altered in any form from the OBQ. The researcher also redistributed the superintendent's survey to five superintendents who had not taken part in the original survey. The Panel of Experts' surveys were mailed individually to each respective participant. Their responses to the surveys were analyzed and compared to those of the original surveys. This comparison was done by the researcher and the math chairperson at Midway R-I School District, to ensure proper understanding and validity of the altered questions. This instrument review and process were chosen to give additional validity of the overall responses and to ensure the reliability of such instruments.

Data used in the present study include the administration of the OBQ. Data is also used from the questionnaire to superintendents throughout the State of Missouri. The results of the OBQ were provided in paper form to the researcher by the Olweus Bullying Committee chair of the Midway R-I School District. The data of each school was analyzed to determine the beliefs, perceptions, and practices of bullying in schools and the possible need for more training in this area. The three categories of being a victim of bullying activity, being a bully of others, and being a victim of and a bully of others were compared. The data from the surveys was made available to the researcher in electronic form by superintendents throughout the State of Missouri and in paper form from the students of the Western Missouri Conference Schools. This study was descriptive in

nature and was intended for reference for further study and research in the field of bullying in schools.

Given the restraint and complexities of the present descriptive study, this chapter has explained the methodology used to investigate the patterns and trends of the responses from the OBQ and the superintendents survey. The next chapter presents the results obtained from those methods.

Chapter 4, Results of the Study

The present study worked to determine if there was a perception that exists or does not exist within the ranks of Missouri public school administrators and students of Missouri public schools concerning the area of bullying among adolescent children. One of the goals of this study was to investigate whether or not there existed a trend between bullying and the perception of bullying by the superintendents of public schools in Missouri and the presence of bullying behaviors within the schools served by these superintendents. This chapter presents the results of the research project.

The issue of student safety in schools as it relates to school-yard bullying, however, was brought to the forefront of the American public with the school tragedies. The problem continues and has been aggravated by the advent of the cyber-bullying potential. Young people's lives are impacted for their entire future by seemingly senseless childhood acts. We need the answers to the questions: are adults and educators, aware of the potential damage that bullying can do? Do young people realize the damage that their actions may create? And is there a gender difference in the bullying behaviors that pervade the hallways of our schools. The research questions below create a foundation from which to discuss these and other issues related to academic performance and bullying behaviors. The problems statements addressed in this study were: Do school administrators perceive a problem with bullying in their schools in Missouri? Is there a relationship between the victim of bullying and the learning process? Do female adolescents engage in cyber bullying more than male adolescents? And, do public schools in Missouri have policies in place that address bullying?

As noted previously, the study was designed as a descriptive study to lay the foundation for future studies in the area of bullying in Missouri Public Schools. The study also examined gender roles in bullying, the aspects of electronic bullying, and the avenues taken by the victims of bullying. Results of the responses, or lack thereof, were examined regarding the phenomenon of bullying in schools.

The following section investigated the results of the surveys for the students of the WEMO Conference. The second survey used by the researcher was submitted to the superintendents throughout the State of Missouri.

Administration of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire

The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ) was administered to 9th-12th grade students of member schools of the Western Missouri Conference (WEMO). The OBQ was administered during the final quarter of the 2008-2009 school year. There were 440 students who took the questionnaire. Although the first two questions of the OBQ addressed specific demographic data, gender and grade level, questions three through twenty-six specifically addressed the issues of bullying as a personal problem for both the victim and the bully.

Missouri Superintendent Survey Overview

The Missouri Superintendents' Survey began with a question on experience then questions one through fifteen dealt with the superintendents' views, beliefs, interpretation, and knowledge of bullying in general and within their school districts. The results of the data gathered in the surveys provided a picture of the extent of the problem of bullying not only in the eight schools of the Western Missouri Conference, but also potentially

characterized a snap-shot of the perceived problem of bullying throughout public schools in Missouri.

The present study examined the relationship between bullying and the perception of bullying by the superintendents of public schools in Missouri. This chapter presented the results of the research project. The study was designed as a descriptive study to lay the foundation for future studies in the area of bullying in Missouri Public Schools. The study also examined gender roles in bullying, electronic bullying, and the avenues in which victims of bullying take. Results of the relationship or lack of relationship, with the phenomenon of bullying in schools were examined.

The results of the data gathered in the surveys provided a picture of the extent of the problem of bullying not only in the eight schools of the Western Missouri Conference, but a snap-shot of the perceived problem of bullying throughout public schools in Missouri. The surveys allow data to be gathered that can be used in further research and assist in reducing the incidents of bullying in public schools.

Student Responses to the OBQ

Question one of the student survey deals with the gender of the participant and question two with the grade level of the student. The next five questions on the OBQ identify various forms in of bullying in the school. The specific forms of bullying that are investigated include being called names, being excluded by other students, and being verbally or physically abused. There were 440 students in Western Missouri that took completed the survey with 52% of those being male and 48% female. Out of the 440 students, 29% were in the 9th grade, 25% in the 10th grade, 22% in the 11th grade, and 24% in the 12th grade. Question three asked “Have you ever been bullied by another

student in school?” Forty-seven percent of those students responded that they had “never” been bullied in school. Twenty-seven percent responded that they have been bullied “only once or twice.” Of those surveyed 20% stated that they were bullied “occasionally,” and 6% responded that they were bullied “very frequently.” Question four asked “Has another student ever bullied you verbally?” The students responded with 44% saying they were “never” bullied, 27% bullied “only once or twice,” 25% bullied “occasionally,” and 4% of the students stating they were bullied “very frequently.” The survey then asked in question five, “Has another student ever bullied you physically?” The responses of this questioned reported 68% stating that they had “never” been bullied physically, 26% was bullied “only once or twice,” 4% “occasionally, and 2% responded that they were bullied “very frequently.” Question number six then broadens the definition of bullying by asking “Has another student ever bullied you by intentionally isolating you or excluding you from a social group?” Sixty percent of those responding stated that they were “never” bullied by being intentionally excluded from a social group while 24% responded that they were bullied like this “only once or twice,” 14% “occasionally,” and 2% “very frequently.” Question seven asked “How often have been bullied in school in the past year?” Sixty-one percent of the students reported that they had “never” been bullied. Twenty-three percent indicated they had been bullied “once or twice” during that period, and 13% said they were bullied “occasionally.” Three percent said they were bullied “very frequently.”

Table 1 - Results of OBQ from WEMO Student Survey 2009	Very Frequently	Occasionally	Only Once or Twice	Never
3. Have you ever been bullied by another student in school?	6%	20%	27%	47%

1. Has another student ever bullied you verbally?	4%	25%	27%	44%
2. Has another student ever bullied you physically?	2%	4%	26%	68%
3. Has another student ever bullied you by intentionally isolating you from a social group?	2%	14%	24%	60%
7. How often have you been bullied by another student in the past year?	3%	13%	23%	61%

The most common forms of bullying reported in Table 1 were students being bullied verbally with 4% stating it occurred “very frequently” and 25% stating it occurred “occasionally” for a total of 29% of those surveyed. The least form of bullying reported was physical bullying with 2% of those surveyed reporting that they were bullied physically “very frequently” and 4% reporting being physically bullied “occasionally” for a total of 6%. (See Table 1)

Questions eight and nine of Table 2 referred to the gender of the bully. Question eight asks, “How often have you been bullied in school by a male student?” Forty-nine percent of the students surveyed stated that they had “never” been bullied by a male student at school. Twenty-eight percent of the students reported that they were bullied “only once or twice” by a male student at school, and 18% reported being bullied by a male student at school “occasionally” and 5% stated that they are bullied by a male student at school “very frequently.” Question nine asked, “How often have you been bullied in school by a female student?” Of the students reporting 61% stated that they had “never” been bullied by a female student in school, and 22% reported being bullied by a female in school “only once or twice.” The percentages of the response to the same

question in the “occasionally” and “very frequently” categories fell to 11% reporting being bullied by a female student at school “occasionally” and 6% “very frequently.”

Table 2 – Results of OBQ from WEMO Student Survey 2009	Very Frequently	Occasionally	Only Once or Twice	Never
8. How often have you been bullied in school by a male student?	5%	18%	28%	49%
9. How often have you been bullied in school by a female student?	6%	11%	22%	61%

Survey questions 10 and 19 dealt with bullying through “electronic devices” and bullying in “another way.” Question 11 asked if a student has altered their schedule or missed class as a result of being bullied. Question 10 read, “If you have been bullied in school was it with the aid of an electronic device?” Of the students surveyed, 80% reported “no,” and 20% reported that they were bullied at school with the aid of an electronic device. Question 19 stated, “I was bullied in another way.” In addition to the possible answers of very frequently, occasionally, only once or twice, and never were the additional selections of “text,” Internet,” and “both.” The student responded to question 19 with 61% stating they were “never” bullied another way in school, 27% reporting “only once or twice,” 10% “occasionally, and 2% reporting “very frequently.” It is interesting to note that electronic bullying is a phenomenon that has occurred since the original survey was designed and distributed by Olweus. Question 11 revealed that 20% of the students surveyed responded that they had indeed altered their schedules or missed class due to being a victim of bullying. Eighty percent stated that they had not altered their schedule or missed school due to bullying.

Table 3 - Results of OBQ from WEMO Student Survey 2009	YES	NO		
10. If you have been bullied in school was it with the aid of an electronic device?	20%	80%		
11. Have you ever altered your schedule or missed class as a result of being bullied?	20%	80%		
	Very Frequently	Occasionally	Only Once or Twice	Never
19. I was bullied in another way	9%	28%	43%	20%
19. b	TEXT 22%	INTERNET 26%	BOTH 20%	

Question 12 of Table 4 related to question 3 and asked, “If you have been bullied in school by another student, who have you told?” The responses to this question were 38% told a friend, 11% told a teacher, 3% told the school counselor, 3% told the school principal, 2% told another school adult, 13% told their parents/guardian, 11% told their sibling and 19% told no one.

Table 4 - Results of OBQ from WEMO Student Survey 2009	Friend	Teacher	School Counselor	Principal	Another School Adult	Parent/Guardian	Sibling	No One
12. If you have been bullied in school by another student, who have you told?	38%	11%	3%	3%	2%	13%	11%	19%

The survey questions 13 through 18 dealt with specific questions to students who have been victimized by bullying while at school. Question 13 stated “I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way.” Thirteen percent stated that they had “never” been called mean names, made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way, and 63% responded that they were “only once or twice.” Eighteen percent reported that it happened to them “occasionally” and 6% stated that they were called mean names, were made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way “very frequently.”

Question 14 stated, “I was hit, kicked, shoved around, or locked indoors.” On question fourteen, 68% of the students surveyed reported that they had “never” been hit, kicked, shoved around, or locked indoors. Twenty percent reported that they were hit, kicked, shoved around, or locked indoors “only once or twice.” Seven percent of those surveyed stated that they were hit, kicked, shoved around, or locked indoors “occasionally,” and 5% said they experienced this type of bullying “very frequently.”

Question 15 made the statement, “Other students told lies or spread false rumors about me and tried to make others dislike me.” Fifty percent of the students responded that they “never” had other students tell lies, spread false rumors, or tried to get others to dislike them. Forty-one percent of those surveyed said this happened to them “only once or twice,” 7% said it happened to them “occasionally,” and 2% reported that it happens to them “very frequently.” The survey then makes the statement in question 16, “I had money or other things taken from me or damaged.” The results of the survey showed 62% of the students stating they had “never” had money or other things taken from them or damaged, 23% reported this happening to them “only once or twice,” 13% saying it occurred to them “occasionally,” and 3% stated that it happens to them “very frequently.”

The students were posed the statement on question 17, “I was threatened or forced to do things that I did not want to do.” Sixty-nine percent of those responding to the survey responded by stating that they had “never” been threatened or forced to do things that they did not want to do. Twenty-four percent stated that this happened to them “only once or twice.” Question 17 results then revealed that 5% of the students surveyed reported that they were threatened or forced to do things that they did not want to do, and 2% reported that this happened to them “very frequently.”

Question 18 of the OBQ then stated “I was bullied with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning.” The number of those responding fell to 60%, 28% reported it happened to them “only once or twice,” and 10% saying it occurred to them “occasionally.” Question 18 also revealed that 2% stated that this happened to them “very frequently.”

Table 5 - Results of OBQ from WEMO Student Survey 2009	Very Frequently	Occasionally	Only Once or Twice	Never
13. I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way	6%	18%	63%	13%
14. I was hit, kicked, shoved around, or locked indoors	5%	7%	20%	68%
15. Other student told lies or spread false rumors about me and tried to make others dislike me.	2%	7%	41%	50%
16. I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged	3%	13%	23%	62%
17. I was threatened or forced to do things that I did not want to do	2%	5%	24%	69%
18. I was bullied with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning	2%	10%	28%	60%

Table 6 responses revealed that 16% stated that they had been bullied in elementary school “very frequently” or “occasionally,” and 84% responded that they

were only bullied in elementary school “only once or twice” or “never”. The comparative responses hold true when looking at the same question posed to the middle school experience. The “very frequently” and “occasionally” percentages fell by 1% of the elementary school responses to 15%. The “only once or twice” responses and the “never” responses increased by 1% to 85%. There are other studies that have been produced that suggest students are bullied more in elementary school and even middle school or at least reporting being bullied at the lower levels appears to be more common.

Table 6 - Results of OBQ from WEMO Student Survey 2009	Very Frequently	Occasionally	Only Once or Twice	Never
20. Were you ever bullied in elementary school in any way?	6%	10%	12%	72%
21. Were you ever bullied in middle school in any way?	5%	10%	14%	71%

The survey then changes the style of questioning from that of a victim to that of the bully. The survey questions 22 through 26 deals with the responses as if they were coming from a bully in school. The survey asks on question 22, “Have you ever bullied another student in school?” The responses revealed that 2% of the students surveyed said they had bullied “very frequently” at school, 6% said they did “occasionally,” 40% responded that they have “only once or twice,” and 52% of the students surveyed stated that they have “never” bullied anyone at school.

Question 23 asks, “Have you ever bullied another student in school verbally?” Sixty-two percent of the students surveyed said that they had “never” bullied another

student verbally. Twenty-seven percent responded that they have bullied another student verbally “only once or twice.” The students who responded that they bullied another student verbally “occasionally” were 8% and 3% stated that they have bullied another student verbally “very frequently.”

Question 24 reads, “Have you ever bullied another student in school physically?” The students responding “never” were at 88%, 7% responded that they bullied another student physically “only once or twice” was 7%. Three percent of the students reported that they had bullied another student physically, and 2% responded that they physically bully other students.

The survey then asked on question 25, “Have you ever bullied another student by intentionally isolating or excluding a student from a social group?” Sixty-eight percent reported that they have “never,” 28% responded “only once or twice,” 10% “occasionally,” and 6% answered “very frequently.” Question 26 asks, “Have you ever bullied another student by text messaging or by the use of a computer?” Out of the responses we find that 68% reported that they have “never” bullied another student by text messaging or by the use of a computer, and 20% said they did “only once or twice.” Nine percent responded that they have bullied another student by text messaging or by the use of a computer “occasionally” and 3% “very frequently.”

Table 7- Results of OBQ from WEMO Student Survey 2009	Very Frequently	Occasionally	Only Once or Twice	Never
22. Have you ever bullied another student in school?	2%	6%	40%	52%
23. Have you ever bullied another student verbally?	3%	8%	27%	62%
24. Have you ever bullied another student physically?	2%	3%	7%	88%

25. Have you ever bullied another student by intentionally isolating or excluding a student from a social group?	6%	10%	28%	56%
26. Have you ever bullied another student by text messaging or by the use of a computer?	3%	9%	20%	68%

The most prevalent form of bullying was “intentionally isolating or excluding a student from a social group with three categories making up 44% of the students responses on the survey stating that they engage in this type of bullying “only once or twice,” “occasionally,” or “very frequently.” Another category that was reported with the most frequency is that of bullying another student verbally. Of the four categories reported 38% were in the areas of “very frequently,” “occasionally,” and “only once or twice.” The method of bullying differs from time to time and perhaps incident to incident, but regardless if the method is isolating a child from a group or verbal confrontation, all must be viewed as a serious form of harassment and bullying.

Superintendent Responses to the Survey

The researcher surveyed superintendents of public school in the State of Missouri. The survey asked for years of experience as a superintendent and then focused on the knowledge, perception, and beliefs concerning bullying in each superintendent’s respective school district. The superintendents reported out of those surveyed 39% had 1-5 years experience as a superintendent, 27% had 6-10 years experience, 23% reported 11-20 years experience, and 11% responded that they had more than 20 years experience.

Table 8- Results of OBQ from WEMO Superintendent Survey 2009	1-5	6-10	11-20	20+
My years as a superintendent is	39%	27%	23%	11%

Question 1 stated, “Bullying is a problem in our district.” Only 2% of those responding stated that bullying was “never” a problem in their district. Thirty percent reported that bullying was a problem in their districts “seldom”, and 54% reported that it was a problem “occasionally.” Fourteen of the superintendents reported that bullying was a problem in their district “often” and 0% reported that it was “always” a problem. The answers shifted somewhat when asked about the problem of cyber-bullying being a problem in their districts.

Question 2 stated “Cyber bullying through text messaging and the internet is a problem in our district. Of the superintendents surveyed, 8% reported that cyber-bullying was “never” a problem in their district, 38% reported that it was “seldom” a problem and 41% stated that cyber-bullying was a problem “occasionally” in their district. Thirteen percent stated that cyber-bullying is a problem “often” and 0% reported that it was not a problem “always.”

Question 3 states, “Bullying affects the learning process in our district.” Nine percent of those surveyed reported that it “never” affected learning in their school, and 41% responded as it being a problem “seldom” and “occasionally.” Six percent of the superintendents reported that bullying “often” affects the learning in their school and 3% reported that it “always” affects the learning process.

Table 9- Results of OBQ from WEMO Superintendent Survey 2009	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1. Bullying is a problem in our district	2%	30%	54%	14%	0%
2. Cyber bullying through text messaging and the internet is a problem in our district	8%	38%	41%	13%	0%
3. Bullying affects the learning process in our district	9%	41%	41%	6%	3%

The survey then states on question 4, “male adolescents engage in acts of bullying more than female adolescents do.” Seven percent reported that males “never” engage in acts of bullying more than females, and 41% reported that males “seldom” engage in bullying acts more than females. Thirty-three percent responded by saying males “occasionally” engage in acts of bullying more than females, and 15% reported that males “often” engage in act of bullying more than females. Only 4% of the superintendents reported that males “always” engage in acts of bullying more than females. It would be interesting to note the gender of the superintendents who responded to the survey to determine if there is any pattern of responses which could be related to gender bias. This study did not investigate this phenomenon.

Table 10- Results of OBQ from WEMO Superintendent Survey 2009	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
4. Male adolescents engage in acts of bullying more than female adolescents do	7%	41%	33%	15%	4%

The survey then questioned superintendents on their knowledge and perception of bullying and the behavior patterns of victims of bullying as it pertains to school. The survey states in question 5, “Bullying should be viewed as a right of passage and is normal adolescent behavior.” Sixty-four percent of the superintendents surveyed stated that it should “never” be viewed as a right of passage and is not normal adolescent behavior. Thirty-one percent responded by saying that it is “seldom” a right of passage and is normal adolescent behavior. Only 3% believed that it is “occasionally” normal adolescent behavior, and 2% feel that it is “often” normal adolescent behavior. No survey responses stated that it is “always” normal adolescent behavior.

Question number 6 on the survey states, “Students who are victimized by bullies change their schedules or miss school due to fear of being bullied.” The perceptions of the superintendents surveyed were 2% felt that students who are victimized by bullies “never” change their schedules or miss school due to a fear of being bullied, and 22% of the superintendents surveyed said that the victims “seldom” change schedules or miss school. Other responses included 40% reporting “occasionally,” and 35% of the superintendents believed that students “often” change their schedules or miss school due to the fear of being bullied. One percent of the superintendents surveyed felt that victims “always” change their schedules or miss school due to the fear of being bullied. The data indicates that bullying is an educational issue that affects the learning process in schools. One main responsibility of school must and always have been to ensure the safety of all students. It is a serious problem when any student feels they must alter their schedule or miss school due to the fear of being a victim of bullying.

Table 11- Results of OBQ from WEMO Superintendent Survey 2009	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
5. Bullying should be viewed as a “right of passage” and is normal adolescent behavior	64%	31%	3%	2%	0%
6. Students who are victimized by bullies change their schedules or miss school due to the fear of being bullied	2%	22%	40%	35%	1%

The survey deals with cyber bullying issues in questions 7, 10, and 11. Question 7 stated female adolescents engage in cyber bullying more than male adolescents do. The responses from the superintendents stated that 7% felt that females “never” engage in cyber bullying more than male adolescents, 10% believe they “seldom” engage in the activity, and 33% believe that females “occasionally” do. Forty-Three percent of the superintendents responded that females “often” engage in cyber bullying more than male

adolescents do, and 7% reported that females “always” engage in this activity over their male counter parts. The superintendents were then posed a question about their beliefs on administration involvement concerning cyber bullying.

Question 10 states, “Administrators should become involved in student cyber bullying issues of students.” No superintendent reported that they should “never” get involved. Twelve percent of the administrators responded that they should “seldom” get involved, and 29% reported that they should “occasionally” get involved. More than half of the superintendents surveyed responded that they should get involved in cyber bullying issues with students with 31% reporting that they should get involved “often” and 28% responding that they should be involved “always” in matters of student-to-student cyber bullying issues. The survey then questioned the superintendents on their beliefs concerning cyber bullying compared to physical bullying.

Question 11 stated, “Electronic bullying is as harmful to students as physical bullying.” Only 1% of the superintendents surveyed felt that it was “never” as harmful, 4% felt that it was “seldom” as harmful, 29% stated that it was “occasionally” as harmful, 37% said it was “often” as harmful, and 29% of the superintendents reported that electronic bullying is “always” as harmful as physical bullying. With 66% of superintendents responding that electronic bullying is “often” or “always” as harmful as physical bullying might indicate a need for a need for further research in this area. The high percentage on the responses may indicate a more serious problem exists. The difficulty exist that technology is in such a rapid advancement in our society that it keeping up with all forms of cyber bullying is at best a difficult task.

Table 12- Results of OBQ from WEMO Superintendent Survey 2009	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
7. Female adolescents engage in cyber-bullying more than male adolescents do	7%	10%	33%	43%	7%
10. Administrators should become involved in student cyber-bullying issues of students	0%	12%	29%	31%	28%
11. Electronic bullying is as harmful to students as physical bullying	1%	4%	29%	37%	29%

Questions number 8, 9, 12 deals with the superintendent's knowledge and perception of some types of possible bullying behaviors. Question 8 stated, "Teasing and name calling should be viewed as bullying." The responses from the superintendents included 2% responding that it should "never" be viewed as bullying, 11% believe that it is "seldom" bullying, and 37% feel that it is "occasionally" bullying. The largest percentage of the responses were reported with 37% of the superintendents surveyed viewing teasing and name calling "often" as bullying, and 13% responded that it is "always" considered bullying.

Another concept of bullying was posed in question 9 as it states, "Excluding or isolating a student from a social group should be viewed as bullying." One percent of the superintendents responded that it is "never" an act of bullying, and 13% stated that it is "seldom" bullying. The largest group responded that it is "occasionally" bullying according to 44% of the superintendents, 28% viewed it as "often" bullying, and 12% believe that it is "always" bullying.

Question 12 states, “Verbal attacks by students should be viewed as bullying.” A majority of the superintendents believed that it should be considered as bullying as the results of the responses revealed 0% “never,” 4% “seldom,” 27% “occasionally,” 33% “often,” and 36% of superintendents feeling like verbal attacks by students are “always” bullying.

Table 13- Results of OBQ from WEMO Superintendent Survey 2009	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
8. Teasing and name calling should be viewed as bullying	2%	11%	37%	37%	13%
9. Excluding or isolating a student from a social group should be viewed as bullying	3%	13%	44%	28%	12%
12. Verbal attacks by students should be viewed as bullying	0%	4%	27%	33%	36%

The survey concludes with three questions that explore the knowledge and perceptions of superintendents in the State of Missouri by asking a question about victims telling others of the bullying and two questions about bullying program in schools and is bullying a problem in public schools in Missouri. Question 13 states, “Victims of bullying tell someone about the bullying.” Two percent of the superintendents surveyed believed that they “never” tell anyone, 22% thought that victims “seldom” tell others, and 54% believe victims of bullying “occasionally” tell someone else. Out of the superintendents surveyed, 20% felt that victims “often” tell others, and 2% believe that victims “always” tell others of the abuse.

Question 14 asks superintendents in Missouri if “More bullying programs are needed in schools.” One percent of those responded with “never,” 12% reported that “seldom” do we need more bullying programs, 35% believed that we “occasionally” need more of these programs, 48% of the superintendents stated that we “often” need more of the bullying programs, and 4% said we need “always” need more bullying programs in schools in Missouri. It was interesting to observe the overwhelming responses of the vast majority of superintendents who believed that additional ant-bullying programs are needed in public schools throughout the entire state. The survey ends with a superintendent’s view of the issue of bullying in public schools by stating, “Bullying is a major problem in public schools in Missouri. One percent of the superintendents responded that it is “never” a major problem, 10% said it was “seldom” a problem, 55% viewed it as a problem “occasionally,” 32% feels it is a major problem “often,” and 2% believe that bullying in Missouri public schools is “always” a problem. It is the belief of the researcher that the responses of bullying in schools would be viewed as even a higher percentage of a problem if the principals or assistant principals were surveyed. It appears to the researcher that personal contact with the student body on a daily basis allows the building level administrators to have a better pulse on discipline in the building.

Table 14- Results of OBQ from WEMO Superintendent Survey 2009	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
13. Victims of bullying tell someone about the bullying	2%	22%	54%	20%	2%
14. More bullying programs are needed in schools	1%	12%	35%	48%	4%
15. Bullying is a major problem in public schools in Missouri	1%	10%	55%	32%	2%

Panel of Experts- Student Survey

Five students from the Raymore-Peculiar School District located south of Kansas City took part in the Panel of Experts student survey on bullying. These students were in grades 10 and 11 and had not participated in the previous student survey from the schools of the Western Missouri Conference. The results of the student survey from the panel of experts revealed amazing similarities from the original surveys as taken by students from the Western Missouri Conference Schools.

Question 1 asked the question, if you were bullied in school was it with the aid of an electronic device? Twenty percent responded by stating that, if they were bullied, it was with the aid of an electronic device. Eighty percent responded that they had not been bullied by the use of an electronic device. These percentages reflected the exact percentages from the original student survey question 10 of Table 3.

Question 2 of Table 14 asked students if they had ever altered their schedules or missed school due to being bullied. Twenty percent of the student responses stated that they had altered their schedules or missed school due to being bullied. This reflects the same percentages as the original student survey question 11 of Table 3. The researcher believed that 20% of students who alter schedules or miss school due to being bullied represent an alarming rate and further study is recommended.

Question 3 and question 4 from Table 15 asked the students if they were bullied in elementary and middle school. The researcher believed that due to only five participants in this survey of the panel of experts that the percentages are somewhat skewed. The similarities of the answers from the original student survey, however, and

the panel of expert survey, are remarkably similar. The validity of all questions has withstood the test and the reliability of this instrument.

Question 3 asked if they were bullied in elementary school. Twenty percent (one response) stated that he/she was bullied in elementary school “occasionally,” and 80% (four responses) stated that they had “never” been bullied in elementary school. Question 4 asked if they were bullied in middle school, in any way. The responses from the five experts were the same as question 3 with 20% stating “occasionally” and 80% reporting “never.” Question 5 stated “Have you ever bullied another student by text messaging or by the use of a computer?” Twenty percent (one response) stated that they had bullied electronically “occasionally,” 20% “only once or twice,” and 60% (three people) responded that they had “never” bullied another by text messaging or by the use of a computer. The responses from the student panel of experts are similar to the original responses from students listed on Table 7 question 26. Electronic bullying is a new dimension in bullying and data concerning the phenomenon is hard to obtain.

Table 15- Results of Panel of Experts – Student Surveys 2009	Yes	No		
1. If you were bullied in school was it with the aid of an electronic device? (Text messaging, internet, ect...)	20%	80%		
2. Have you ever altered your schedule or missed a class as a result of being bullied?	20%	80%		
	Very frequently	Occasionally	Only Once or Twice	Never
3. Were you bullied in elementary school in any way?	0%	20%	0%	80%

4. Were you bullied in middle school in any way?	0%	20%	0%	80%
5. Have you ever bullied another student by text messaging or by use of a computer?	0%	20%	20%	60%

Panel of Experts-Superintendents Survey

The participants of the survey were five superintendents from the State of Missouri that did not originally participate in the Superintendent’s Survey on Bullying. The superintendents were from the Aurora School District, Belton School District, Harrisonville School District, Lee’s Summit School District and the Raymore-Peculiar School District. The superintendents were given the survey and their responses were analyzed and compared to the responses from the original superintendent’s survey that was conducted by the researcher throughout the State of Missouri. Although the percentages were slightly skewed due to only five participants, the results revealed a strikingly similar pattern of responses with those responses collected throughout the entire State of Missouri. Table 16 shows the results from the Superintendents-Panel of Experts Survey.

Question 1 reveals that 20% of the panel of experts reports that bullying is a problem in their district “seldom,” and 60% stated that it is a problem in their district “occasionally,” and 20% believe that it is “often” a problem in their district. Question 2 asks if cyber-bullying through text messaging and internet is a problem in their district. Twenty percent responded that it is “seldom” a problem and 80% responded that it is “occasionally” or “often” a problem. When asks about bullying affecting the learning process in their districts 80% responded with “occasionally” or “often.” The experts were more divided on question 4 when asks if male adolescents engage in bullying more than female adolescents. Forty percent of the superintendents responded that males

engage in bullying more than females “seldom,” 40% reporting “occasionally” and 20% stating “often.” When asked if bullying should be seen as a rite of passage for adolescents, 100% responded with “never” or “seldom.” These percentages reflect similar numbers in the state wide survey.

Then the survey dealt with the concept of bullying affecting the learning process of students and the perceptions of the superintendents on this topic. Question 6 stated students who are victimized by bullies change their schedules or miss school due to the fear of being bullied. Eighty percent of the panel of experts -- superintendents reported that believe that victims of bullying alter their schedules or miss school due to being bullied. The researcher believes that this is an issue that cannot be ignored in public schools today.

On the issue of female adolescents engaging in cyber-bullying more than male adolescents, 20% responded that they “seldom” do, 60% reported that they “occasionally” do, and 20% reported that they “often” do. Questions 8 and 9 dealt with defining specific types of bullying. Question 8 asks if teasing should be viewed as bullying, while question 9 asks if excluding or isolating a student from a social group should be viewed as bullying. In response to both questions, 80% on question 8 and 100% on question 9 reported that both actions are “occasionally” or “often” acts of bullying. One hundred percent of superintendents responding reported that administrators should get involved in issues of cyber-bullying “occasionally” or “often” as reported in question 10.

The superintendents responses appeared to get more proactive when asked if electronic bullying is as harmful to students as physical bullying. Forty percent

responded that it is “occasionally,” and 40% stated that it is “often” as harmful, but 20% reported that electronic bullying is “always” as harmful as electronic bullying. Question 12 asks if verbal attacks should be viewed as bullying. Eighty percent surveyed believed that verbal attacks should “often” or “always” be considered bullying. One area that appears to need more research is found in question 13. The question asks if victims of bullying tell someone else about the bullying. The superintendents displayed various responses with 20% reporting “seldom,” 60% responding “occasionally,” and 20% reporting “often.”

The final two questions, questions 14 and 15 dealt with bullying being a problem in schools and if more bullying programs are needed in Missouri Public Schools. One hundred percent of the panel of experts responded that more bullying programs are needed “occasionally” and “often” in schools. One hundred percent also responded that bullying is a major problem in public schools in Missouri “occasionally” or “often.”

Table 16- Results of Panel of Experts – Superintendent Surveys 2009	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Always
1. Bullying is a problem in our district	0%	20%	60%	20%	0%
2. Cyber-bullying through text messaging and the internet is a problem in our district	0%	20%	60%	20%	0%
3. Bullying affects the learning process in our district	0%	20%	60%	20%	0%
4. Male adolescents engage in acts of bullying more than female adolescents do	0%	40%	40%	20%	0%
5. Bullying should be viewed as a “right of passage” and is normal adolescent behavior	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
6. Students who are victimized by bullies change their schedules of miss school due to the fear of being bullied	0%	20%	80%	0%	0%
7. Female adolescents engage in cyber-bullying more than male adolescents do	0%	20%	60%	20%	0%

8. Teasing and name calling should be viewed as bullying	0%	20%	40%	40%	0%
9. Excluding or isolating a student from a social group should be viewed as bullying	0%	0%	60%	40%	0%
10. Administrators should become involved in student cyber-bullying issues of students	0%	0%	60%	40%	0%
11. Electronic bullying is as harmful to students as physical bullying	0%	0%	40%	40%	20%
12. Verbal attacks by students should be viewed as bullying	0%	0%	20%	40%	40%
13. Victims of bullying tell someone about the bullying	0%	20%	60%	20%	0%
14. More bullying programs are needed in schools	0%	0%	40%	60%	0%
15. Bullying is a major problem in public schools in Missouri	0%	0%	60%	40%	0%

Chapter 5, Summary and Discussion

Studies have shown that 75% of adolescents have been bullied while attending school (Bulach, Penland, Fulbright, & Williams; 2003 Peterson, 1999). The researcher found the percentage to be much less in the population studied. This study revealed that 53% of the student responses stated that they were bullied during school. It is the belief of the researcher that the size and location of the schools and the demographics of the students has an impact on this statistic. It is also important to note that the subjects studied from Bulach, Penland, Fulbright, & Williams were a younger age group than those of this study. The students responding to this study were in grades 9-12, as opposed to the students in grades 3-12 of the other named study. The researcher believes that it is important to note that this study was conducted in the Midwestern section of the United States. The student survey was collected from students from the Western Missouri Conference Schools, which are rural, and small districts which range in total population, K-12, of 200 to approximately 740 students. The majority of the Western Missouri Conference School students come from middle class to upper class homes. It is the opinion of the researcher that if this study had been conducted in large metropolitan districts with a lower socio-economic situation, the responses and ultimately the study would have looked much differently. The area of the country could possibly have also played a role in the outcome of this study. The Midwest has become known as the "Bible Belt" certainly displays conservative values and practices as found in public schools on the east or west coast. With a conservative curriculum that includes Character Education courses, the Midwestern Schools are perhaps not as much of a threat to school yard bullies as other places in the country. Based on the past history of public education in

this country, there might be a need replication of this study in other parts of the country to give validity to the percentages and responses.

Bullying is defined as acts which are comprised of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim. In addition to direct attacks, bullying may also be more indirect by causing a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion. Whether the bullying is direct or indirect, the key component of bullying is that the physical or psychological intimidation occurs repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993). As a result of this study, the researcher found that bullying can take place through a variety of ways and methods. Bullying is a pattern of repeated, intentionally cruel behavior, and differs from normal peer conflict in a number of ways (Palomares, Schilling, 2001). The results of this study confirm previous studies with numerous other acts of bullying taking place rather than just those of a physical nature. From the responses of this study, 56% of the students reported being bullied verbally, 40% isolated from a group, 20% electronically, 87% called names or made fun of in a hurtful manner, 50% had lies told about them, 38% had items taken from them, and 31% were threatened. It was clear from the responses that bullying takes on many forms and styles. Of the superintendents responding to the survey, 100% believed that verbal confrontation, isolating a child, and electronic harassment is “occasionally” and “often” bullying.

The physical and mental effects that a victim of bullying has to endure can last a life time. The American Medical Association (2002) stated that “bullying may have serious effects on the psychological functioning, academic work, and physical health of

children that are targeted” (p.11). Being bullied has been found to lead to lower self-esteem (Delfabbro, et al., 2006; National Education Association, 2003), higher rates of depression (Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivera & Keric, 2005; Nansel, Graig, Overpeck, Saluja & Ruan, 2004), loneliness (Glew, et al, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001), and anxiety. (Delfabbro et al., 2006), a 2003 article from the National Education Association stated:

“Students who are targets of repeated bullying behavior can, and often do, experience extreme fear and stress. They may be afraid to go to school or even to ride the bus to school. Once there, they may be afraid to be in certain places in the building, such as restrooms. They may exhibit physical symptoms of illness and may not be able to concentrate on schoolwork” (Banks, 1997, p.1). Research has shown that as many as seven percent of America’s eighth-graders stay home from school at least once a month because of bullies (Banks, 1997; Olweus, 1993). Although the researcher agrees with the studies relating to physical and emotional problems faced by the victims of bullying, only 20% of the students responded that they had ever altered their schedule or missed school due to being bullied. It is interesting to note that 50% of the superintendents responded bullying affects the learning process “occasionally, “often,” or “always.” The response was significant in part due to the schools mission is to educated children and if the act of bullying is disrupting the school’s purpose and mission, the problem must be dealt with.

It is also of great interest to the researcher to not only define bullying, but to determine who bullies. Bullying occurs among both boys and girls (Kumpulainen et al., 1988). Boys are more likely to be bullied by other boys, but girls may be victimized by boys, girls, or mixed groups (Schuster, 1996). Girls tend to use ridicule spreading rumors to victimize while boys typically utilize physical forms of attack to bully. Relational

aggression is more effective than overt aggression for females since it hinders the development of closeness and intimacy within the peer group, and this is found to be more important for girls than boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Boys seem to have more of a tendency to bully face-to-face. The responses from this study agree with other studies, but only slightly. The responses from students reported that 51% of the time they were bullied at school, physically, was by a male student. With 49% reporting that they were bullied by a female. An interesting and compatible response from the superintendents surveyed was that the superintendents believed males bullied more than females at 52% - 48%. The same group of superintendents, however, responded that females engage in cyber-bullying 83% to their male counterparts at 17%. It is very hard to spot a female bully. They look the same as everyone else; perhaps they are more dominant in friendships or they may exhibit some behavioral problems, but for the most part they blend right in (Brinson, 2005).

It is also the belief of the researcher that this study should be replicated using principals and possibly assistant principals as a control group rather than superintendents. Superintendents, by the nature of their jobs, have a tendency to lose touch with the students and teachers on a daily basis. It is the principals and assistant principals who interact with students and their families on a regular basis. It is the building level administrators who can identify changes in student's behaviors and certain patterns of change that may suggest some form of bullying or harassment is or has been taking place in a student's life at school or even away from school. As a former high school principal, the researcher was much more aware of everyday problems and situations that his students face. There is also a bonding that takes place between many students and their

principals that simply does not happen with superintendents. The constant physical presence that building-level administrators have with all students in their building is special and not shared by superintendents. The main task of the superintendent is that of finance, but the principal's concerns are the students and the learning process. An issue of bullying would perhaps only come to the attention of the superintendent if the issue became a public issue or possible criminal offenses. The principals are in a position to potentially intervene in bullying issues when they first begin.

Another interesting and compelling argument can be made that perceptions and beliefs of superintendents concerning bullying, especially cyber bullying, differ according to the experience of the superintendent and the chronological age of the administrator. It appeared to the researcher that younger administrators responded more aggressively to bullying, especially cyber bullying, being a major problem in Missouri schools than their older and more seasoned veterans counterparts did. Perhaps further study pertaining to age, experience, and even gender of superintendents and their gut-level values and beliefs of bullying would give us great insight into policies and legislation that may truly enhance all efforts to keep children safe at school.

The evidence of bullying and its effect on the well being of the student's grades 9-12 as well as all school-aged children has been well documented over the past several decades. It was not until the events at Columbine, Jonesboro, Conyers, and Paducah did the public and school officials realize that bullying had taken on a whole new dimension. Bullies were no longer dealt with on the playgrounds with fist fights, but rather with the use of weapons resulting in loss of life. As technology advanced, the age of electronic bullying was ushered into the schools. The act of bullying had taken on a new dimension

hiding bullies behind the veil of secrecy within the walls of cell phones or computers. Victims of electronic bullying are often tormented by obscene words or messages. With an estimated 5 million students potentially facing the effects of being a bullying victim and the acts of bullying becoming more violent, many within the schools and the community have reached a point where they must deal with the issue. Keeping our children safe at school is of the greatest importance, and schools are torn between educating students and preparing them for the global economy by providing them with a level of education that will allow them to compete with their peers from around the world while insuring their safety (Roberts, W. B., Jr., & Coursol, D. H.,1996). Limited resources of school systems continue to be reduced by many state legislators while the need for more programs on bullying are needed. It would appear that school officials and communities may be forced to decide between effectively addressing the issue of bullying and maintaining high academic standards so that our students can meet the demands of the global market place. It is not only the duty, but the responsibility of public school districts in Missouri to have anti-bullying programs in place and to adopt a no tolerance policy that addresses the issue of bullying at school.

Bullying: Perceived or Real?

The key factors in dealing with the bullying problem are the beliefs and perceptions of school administrators. Significant responses from the surveys for both students and administrators revealed the thought processes and beliefs concerning bullying in the State of Missouri. In several cases, like responses were given by both students and administrators, and in some cases the gap of belief and perception concerning bullying appeared wider. In Table 13, Question 15, 87% of the superintendents

reported that bullying is a major problem in public schools in Missouri, but only 13% believed it was seldom or never a problem. In support of the administrators' beliefs, like percentages to the superintendents responses were reported by students on the question from Table 1, Question 3 of the student survey when 53% of the students responded that they had been a victim of bullying while in grades 9-12. It was also interesting that Table 6 Question 22 revealed that 48% of the students responded that they actually had bullied another student while at school. The response from the administrators on Table 13, Question 14, reveals that 85% believe that more programs are needed in public schools in Missouri. Only 12% reported that such programs are seldom needed and only 1% reported that such programs are never needed. The low response recorded at 1% is insignificant and represented responses from superintendents with more than twenty years service. The responses given provided a valid argument that schools should have policies in place that address the issue of bullying at school. The policies should be derived from a plan of action to address the bullying dilemma. The plan should include components that deal with both education and prevention (Olweus, D., 2004). The education component for schools should include lessons and activities designed to raise awareness of the bullying issue and to offer tools for both the bullying victim and the bystander to more effectively handle a bullying incident (Olweus, D., 2004). The data obtained from the survey gave overwhelming evidence that superintendents in Missouri Public Schools do believe that a problem with bullying does exist in schools and more programs are needed to address the issue. According to this study, 100% of the superintendents responded that there is some need for more anti-bullying programs in public schools in Missouri. An effective anti-bullying program is one of the most

effective tools used in schools today to reduce the number of bullying incidents (Smith, J. D, Schneider, B. H., Smith, P. K., & Ananiadou, K. 2004).

Identifying Bullies

A bully is extremely hard to identify. Psychologists and behavior specialists maintain that bullies come in all shapes and sizes. Students bully other students; students bully teachers. Teachers bully students; teachers bully other teachers. Some generalizations and misconceptions concerning the phenomenon of bullying are interesting. The generalizations include: Boys are more apt to bully than girls. Strong adolescent boys are more likely to bully than weaker boys. Boys and girls have different styles of bullying. Boys more often use physical force when bullying; girls use relational tactics, shunning or excluding victims from in-crowd activities or opportunities. Bullies can be anyone in the school district.

Barbara Coloroso (2003), in her book *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*, defines bullying as “a conscious, willful, and deliberate hostile activity intended to harm, induce fear through the threat of further aggression, and create terror” (p.13). Coloroso contends that four elements characterize all bullies no matter what sex, age, or job title: (1) an imbalance of power, stronger, or more favorably situated than the victim; (2) the bully has an intent to harm, knowing that he/she will inflict emotional or physical pain, and revels in the fact; (3) a threat of further aggression exists, in which the bully and the victim both know that this act of aggression will not be the last; and (4) terror persists-- the extreme, continuing agitation of the victim. The essence of bullying, according to Coloroso, is not anger but contempt. The bully sees the bullied as not worthy of respect or empathy. The bully displays great arrogance. Bullying is harmful to

both the perpetrators and the victims and is responsible for behavioral and emotional difficulties, long-term negative outcomes and violence (Bullying is Not a Fact of Life, n.d.). Bullying should no longer be viewed as a rite of passage that all kids have to go through or a phase that he or she will outgrow. It should also not be seen as a normal, natural part of childhood. About 60% of bullies in grades six through nine have at least one criminal conviction by the time they turn 24 (Newquist,1997). Many bullies also maintain their aggressive behaviors well into adulthood and have a difficult time maintaining positive relationships throughout their lives. Bullies are more likely to be poor students. They are also more likely to smoke or drink alcohol (Crawford, 2002).

Bullying and the Learning Process

School administrators gave great insight into their perception on the question of bullying affecting the learning process. Of the superintendents surveyed, 98% on Table 10, Question 6 believed that students who are the victims of bullying change their schedules or miss school due to the fear of being bullied. It is with confidence that we can assume that changing class schedules or missing school altogether does indeed affect the learning process. It is rather unfortunate in the Land of Opportunity that any young person has to go to school with the fear of being bullied.

Gender based Cyber Bullying

The superintendents also reported that they believed that female adolescents engaged in cyber bullying more than male adolescents with a resounding 83% on Table 11, Question7. Although the numbers are lower on the student survey, the statistics are still alarming. On Table 2, Questions 8 and 9 it was reported by the students that were bullied by male students 51% of the time and by female students 49% of the time. The

responses from the students represent issues that some school districts do not even have policies in place to address such issues. This is a concern of the researcher concerning cyber bullying. According to a previous study, females typically display aggression through indirect means (Li, 2006). Therefore, females prefer cyber bullying to face-to-face aggression, and 60% of cyber victims are female (Li, 2006). With the onslaught of advanced technology, the responsibility and burden of keeping up with these issues lies squarely on the shoulders of the public schools.

Policies and Legislation

The phenomenon of electronic bullying has jumped to the forefront in educational settings across America within the last decade. This study looked into the area of cyber bullying and attempted to reveal any differences between male and female adolescents concerning this method of bullying. It is interesting to note that before the Megan Meier incident in which a teenager lost her life, there were no states with any current legislation on the books concerning cyber bullying. Since the Megan Meier case, until the writing of this study, 17 states have some type of cyber bullying legislation in place. Only one state, Missouri, has passed legislation making cyber bullying a felony. The other 16 states that have passed legislation consider cyber bullying a misdemeanor. To date, as far as the researcher was able to ascertain, no one has been found guilty of committing a misdemeanor or felony in the arena of cyber bullying. It is very clear, through previous studies, that cyber bullying is a growing problem in schools. The 2000 survey by the Crimes against Children Research center at the University of New Hampshire reported 6 % of young people had experienced some form of cyber bullying. In 2005, studies of 1,500 Internet-using adolescents found that over one-third had been cyber bullied and

half of those admitted to cyber bullying others (Hinduja and Patchin, 2005). A study by National Children's Home Charity revealed that 20% of adolescents had been cyber bullying victims. A 2004 survey conducted by I-Safe America of 1,556 adolescents found that 42 % surveyed had been bullied online. That statistic is important to school districts in many ways, but one of the most significant issues of online bullying is the fact that much of school assignments are completed electronically, allowing a bully to have access to this type of bullying with while using school property.

This study and the surveys gave us significant insight into the beliefs of school administrators in public schools in Missouri, as well as documented responses from students from the Western Missouri Conference Schools. It is interesting to note that concrete data of cyber bullying can be difficult to obtain due to the ability of the bullies to remain anonymous. On the student survey from students of the Western Missouri Conference schools, it was reported that 12% of the students had actually physically bullied another student while at school. Forty-four percent of the same students responded by saying they had bullied someone at school by isolating them from a group, and 32% responded by stating they had used electronic devices to bully another student. It is also important to note that there has been a misconception over the past decade that cyber bullying is not as harmful to adolescents as physical bullying, but current studies do not agree with that concept. When superintendents were asked on Table 11, Question 11 if cyber bullying was as harmful as physical bullying, 95% responded that it is as harmful as physical bullying. When asked on Table 8, Question 2 if cyber bullying was a problem in their school districts, 8% responded that it was never a problem. The researcher would also like to point out that 11% of the superintendents that responded to

the survey fell into the 20+ years in education designation. The entire 11% reported that cyber bullying was not as harmful as physical bullying and cyber bullying was not a problem in their districts. There seemed to be a gap in beliefs and perception concerning cyber bullying that was related to age and experience of the administrator. The younger superintendents have grown up in the electronic age, and it can be concluded that they have a better understanding of the technology issues and the dangers associated with cyber bullying.

What Can Schools Do?

It is the opinion of the researcher that all personnel in a school district must take the issue of bullying seriously. It is difficult to have and to enforce a no tolerance policy if there is anyone on a staff who believes that bullying is “normal” and that such acts harm no child. The mere fact that students stated that teachers never discuss the issues of harassment or bullying is quite concerning. In extreme cases, students who have been victimized by a bully must endure the embarrassment of being “teased” not only by other students, but some even by a teacher. This type of behavior by anyone, especially a teacher, is unacceptable and can not be tolerated. A school must adopt a no tolerance bullying policy for students and staff and must do an effective job of training staff on the signs of bullying and steps to combat the problem. School officials need to be aware of any potential situation that may be occurring with respect to bullying. Anti-bullying programs need to be established and discussed regularly at school. This behavior must be taken seriously by all members of the school district and not just by administrators. Students report that teachers seldom or never talk to their classes about bullying (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995). School personnel may view bullying as a harmless

right of passage that is best ignored unless verbal and psychological intimidation crosses the line into physical assault or theft. Effective interventions focus on a number of levels, including the teaser/bully victim, peer culture, the school, and home environments (Garrity & Baris, 1999). Since teasing and bullying are often done out of sight of adults and go undetected, adults must recognize the problem and investigate when they suspect teasing and bullying is going on. Once detected, a variety of school interventions plans can be put into action. Effective school intervention plans focus on:

- Helping the bully and the victim develop improved self esteem,
- Establishing a no tolerance policy for teasing and bullying,
- Creating and enforcing rules of respect and responsible behavior,
- Educate students on what to do when confronted with teasing and bullying as well as the negative consequences of such behavior,
- Educating and training staff on the nature of the problem and ways to intervene, and
- Involving parents and the community in the process.

Successful anti-bullying programs send clear messages that this type of behavior is not appropriate and that all children will be safe at school.

In the present study, the levels of bullying activity found at the schools surveyed seemed to be higher than other studies. The present study found that 53% students in grades 9-12 in Western Missouri have experienced some form of bullying at school (Table 1, Question 3). Of the students who reported that they had been a victim of bullying, 20% reported that they were bullied electronically. This phenomenon is considered a new frontier in bullying and complete studies of this topic are rare. A

concern by the researcher of this study is that the incidents of bullying at school are not decreasing with time, but rather are increasing. It is also noticeable that bullying is not a topic which is isolated to the United States of America and its schools alone.

Olweus (1993) found that approximately 15% of the students in Norway were experiencing bullying problems with some level of regularity. The same types of issues were reported in a study concerning schools in Northern Ireland. The study was conducted from a sample of both sixth and ninth grade students. The sixth grade primary pupils consisted of a sample size of 1,079 students, and the post-primary ninth graders consisted of 1,353 students (Collins, McAleavy & Adamson, 2004). The study, which was reportedly the first of its kind in Northern Ireland, found that 40% of the sixth grade students reported being bullied at school. Also, 30% of the ninth grade students reported having been bullied. These percents compare to about 39% of the students in the current study's experimental group that reported being bullied at school.

In Germany, Hanewinkel (2004) found that bullying activity peaked around the eighth grade. He surveyed third through twelfth grade students and found that starting with the third grade, the percentage for any level of involvement in bullying was 14%. In fourth grade, it rose to 23%, in fifth grade, it was still about 23%, in sixth grade, it was 30%, in seventh grade, it was 38%, in eighth grade, it was 39%, and it peaked in ninth grade at 40%. From that point, it began to descend to 36% in tenth grade, 25% in eleventh grade, and it fell to 17% in twelfth grade (Hanewinkel, 2004). Once again, the researcher had concerns that the phenomenon of bullying in schools is universal and appears to be growing at an alarming rate. Bullying has become a universal problem that must be addressed by public schools.

What Parents Can Do?

Parents are an important line of defense against school bullies. Children, even teenagers, cannot handle this all by themselves, and they will need lots of love and support to overcome bullying. It might take a while for the child to answer, but ask gentle questions about school, friends, and what is happening every day. It is hard for children to talk about something painful, but they will come around eventually.

Parents can also talk to other parents at Parent Teacher Organization meetings and remind them to keep their eyes opened for possible bullying incidents at school. Alert school officials about the problem but stick to the facts and do not become too emotional. Consider enrolling your child in a martial arts class. This helps them recapture some much-needed confidence that has been taken away by a bully. The goal is not to injure the bully; the goal is to encourage the development of confidence in the child's own ability to defend themselves (Olweus, 1993).

If the child comes home with torn clothing, a black eye or unexplained bruises, this indicates that the bullying may have escalated to a more serious level. Parents should notify the principal immediately, but should avoid confronting the bully's parents. Let the school do that. When bullying escalates to physical violence, it might be time to get the police involved (Olweus, 1993).

No child deserves to be bullied. Bullying is a growing problem and the effects can leave almost irreparable scars on a youngster, physically as well as psychologically. Parents and especially teachers need to be particularly vigilant and stop a bully when they are young. A bully can go on to commit serious criminal acts in later years, including vandalism and assault. Fighting a bully is not the answer (Newquist, 1997). The power to

stop bullying lies in the hands of the community as a whole. To allow bullying to continue can be destructive to individuals, families, and even communities. The current study has revealed that some students in grades 9-12 alter their schedules or miss school as a result of being victimized by a bully.

What Victims of Bullying Can Do?

When students find themselves victims of a bully they should look right into the eyes of the bully without staring and say calmly but firmly, "I am not frightened!" Data suggests that the next step would be to walk away but not to run, because the bully will feel empowered. Finally, the child should find an adult in whom they trust, and tell the adult about the encounter. The adults should be told that the child will come to them if another episode of harassment occurs (Craig, W. M., Pepler, D. J., & Atlas, R., 2002).

Bullied students can find strength in forming a strong circle of friends-- there is strength in numbers. The bullies tend to pick on kids who are isolated, so when the victim can count on the support of some trusted classmates, the bully will be outnumbered. The bully will not likely have the courage to take on a large group of students.

Victims must remember that the bully is the problem, not themselves. If the students who are targeted can stand tall and just ignore the scare tactics, then the bully's poor social skills and emotionally immature nature will be put under a large and uncomfortable spotlight. When the bullied child takes measures to address the bully, the bully may stop picking on the student who shows no fear and appears unaffected by the bullying. Many bullies receive no satisfaction if fear is not present (Craig, W. M., Pepler, D. J., & Atlas, R. 2002). School administrators must provide an avenue in which a victim of bullying can report the incidences without fear of retaliation.

Limitations

The researcher recognized certain limitations in the study. First of all, it is difficult to gather massive data on a current topic such as cyber bullying. With no case law on the books and schools scrambling to include bullying policies in their handbooks, it is a new and complicated phenomenon. Ages and experience of administrators and even students tend to have an effect on their perception of bullying in all areas. It was also a limitation that superintendents were surveyed instead of building level administrators. Principals and assistant principals interact on a daily basis with students and have a pulse for discipline in the school. Superintendents are somewhat distant from the students and do not deal with discipline issues on a regular basis. It is with this understanding that the researcher was not looking for causation, but instead only sought to find some level of trends and patterns of perceptions, beliefs, and realities relating to bullying and their victims. The researcher also attempted to show the need for policies and legislation as the issue of bullying in all aspects does not appear to be going away and remains a major problem for public schools as well as for society. The researcher believed that the sample size of the surveys were appropriate and adequate for this study. It is the hope of the researcher that this study is used in future studies to assist in bringing about solutions to counteract the practice of bullying.

Recommendations for Educators

Understanding that it is the responsibility of the school districts to keep students safe at school and realizing that bullying prevention programs are useful in combating this issue, schools need to take an aggressive and proactive approach to bullying. Although a safe school for all students is in itself a worthwhile goal for

educators to seek, a direct relationship between providing a safe school environment and greater academic achievement further justifies an educator's decision to spend time and resources in dealing with the issue of bullying. Administrators, teachers, staff, and parents need to be active in the attempt to allow every child within the school to feel safe during the school day. Demographics should not be a determining factor when it comes the well being of our children, and administrators must take every step necessary to ensure a protected learning environment. Action taken to address the issue of bullying in all areas will justify all of the time and resources invested, and our children will reap the benefits from such actions.

Based on anecdotal data, the formal review of research, and the current research study, the researcher has determined a strong need for some type of anti-bullying program to be in place. It is not only acceptable to have programs in place and adopted by the board of education, the programs need to be a "working model" and not just a "reference model." A working model is a program that offers initial and ongoing training to all staff, students, and parents. In seventeen years of public school administration experience, the researcher found numerous programs and curriculums that, if practiced, would have been beneficial to the district. A district needs to adopt a no tolerance bullying policy and refer to the policy often throughout the anti-bullying program. Principals need to develop a line of communication between administration/teacher, administration/students, and administration parents. The principal must develop a schedule for training of any anti-bullying program adopted by a district. The training should include some type of bi-annual or annual assessment, by the staff, students, and parents. It is also important for all administrators to keep up on all of the current

legislative issues concerning bullying that may come to the forefront. For instance, cyber bullying is such a new and expanding phenomenon, states are having a hard time keeping up with proper legislation to address such actions. Subsequently, school districts are finding themselves having to be reactive instead of proactive when dealing with new bullying issues. School districts must and will be held accountable for keeping all students safe for all aspects of bullying.

Suggestions for additional research

Further investigation and studies into bullying and especially cyber bullying is easily justified and much needed. A study to gain insight into possible solutions of bullying would benefit all of the academic institutions in America and around the world. Legislation concerning bullying is rare, and prosecution of such incidences is obsolete. A more controlled study into the current legislation concerning bullying would be of assistance to further research. It is through studies and research that we can shed light on this issue that so greatly impacts our children. Additional study into the long-term effect of bullying on the academic performance of individual students would be beneficial.

The act of cyber bullying is not decreasing; it is rising at an alarming rate and research is needed in this area for our children's sake (Hinduja and Patchin, 2005). It would serve the educational community well if data from this study was taken further and dissected into parts that would give arguments to the success rate of anti-bullying programs, specifically cyber bullying. In the opinion of this researcher, it would be beneficial to study perceptions and beliefs of school principals from across the United States.

The size and the demographics of schools used in a study would be significant and perhaps enlightening based on possible different outcomes of surveys. The age of the children studied is of interest. It is believed by this researcher that elementary school age children do a much better job of reporting bullying activities than those of older students. Dan Olweus studied 6th -9th grade students in Norway and Sweden, but additional studies of grades 9-12 in America would be of great value. It would also be of great interest and value to study the legal systems of the United States and around the world with respect for dealing with the issues of bullying and electronic bullying. Another area that could be explored by research would be the study of additional effects that bullying has on certain age children with respect to the learning process.

In the opinion of the researcher, a study examining the effects of bullying on young teachers and student teachers would be of value concerning this phenomenon. Future research should also include surveying principals and assistant principals in charge of disciplining students. The responses may differ from those reported in this study from superintendents. A study on the effects of bullying from the bully's perspective would also be of great benefit to the overall study of bullying.

In conclusion, the researcher hopes that this study has provided data and statistics that will be helpful in further studies. In order for an anti-bullying program to work, all individuals involved with the school, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff, must be willing to work toward the common goal of the program and must stay on top of all incidents that may occur. The entire issue of bullying must remain in the forefront of our educational systems. All children have the right to feel safe at school and become productive members of society.

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Olweus Bullying Questionnaire

1. How do you like school?

- a. I dislike school very much
- b. I dislike school
- c. I neither like nor dislike school
- d. I like school
- e. I like school very much

2. Are you a boy or a girl?

- a. girl
- b. boy

3. How many good friends do you have in your class(es)?

- a. none
- b. have in your class(es)?
- c. I have 1 good friend in my class(es)
- d. I have 2 or 3 good friends in my class(es)
- e. I have 4 or 5 good friend in my class(es)
- f. I have 6 or more good friends in my class(es)

4. How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?

- a. I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

5. I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way

- a. it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- b. only once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

6. Other students left me out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me

- a. it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- b. only once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

7. I was hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors

- a. it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- b. only once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

8. Other students told lies or spread false rumors about me and tried to make others dislike me

- a. it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- b. only once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

9. I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged

- a. it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- b. only once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

10. I was threatened or forced to do things I didn't want to do

- a. it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- b. only once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

11. I was bullied with mean names or comments about my race or color

- a. it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- b. only once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

12. I was bullied with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning

- a. it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- b. only once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

13. I was bullied in another way

- a. it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- b. only once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

14. In which class(es) is the student or students who bully you?

- a. I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- b. in a different class but same grade (year)
- c. in a higher grade
- d. in a lower grade
- e. in different grades

15. Have you been bullied by boys or girls?

- a. I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- b. by 1 girl
- c. by several girls
- d. mainly by 1 boy
- e. by several boys
- f. by both boys and girls

16. By how many students have you usually been bullied?

- a. I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- b. mainly by 1 student
- c. by a group of 2-3 students
- d. by a group of 4 – 9 students
- e. by a group of more than 9 students
- f. by several different students or groups of students

17. How long has the bullying lasted?

- a. I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- b. it lasted one or two weeks
- c. it lasted about a month
- d. it has lasted about 6 months
- e. it has lasted about a year
- f. it has gone on for several years

18. Where have you been bullied?

- a. I haven't been bullied in the past couple of months
- b. I have been bullied in one or more of the following places in the past couple of months

Have you been bullied?**18a. on the playground/athletic field (during recess or break times)?**

- a. no
- b. yes

18b. in the hallways/ stairwells?

- a. no
- b. yes

18c. in class (with teacher present)?

- a. no b. yes

18d. in the classroom (with teacher absent)?

- a. no b. yes

18e. in the bathroom?

- a. no b. yes

18f. in gym class or the gym locker room/ shower?

- a. no b. yes

18g. in the lunch room?

- a. no b. yes

18h. on the way to and from school?

- a. no b. yes

18i. at the school bus stop?

- a. no b. yes

18j. on the school bus?

- a. no b. yes

18k. somewhere else in school?

- a. no b. yes

19. Have you **told anyone** that you have been bullied at school in the past couple of months?

- a. I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
 b. I have been bullied but **I have not told anyone**
 c. I have been bullied and **I have told somebody about it**

Have you told (that you have been bullied)

19a. your class (home room) teacher?

- a. no b. yes

19b. another adult at school (a different teacher, the principal/ ,the school nurse, the custodian/school caretaker, the school psychologist/ mental health professional etc)?

- a. no b. yes

19c. your parent(s)/guardian(s)?

- a. no b. yes

19d. your brother(s) or sister(s)?

- a. no b. yes

19e. your friend(s)?

- a. no b. yes

19f. somebody else?

- a. no b. yes

20. How often do the teachers or other adults at school try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?

- a. almost never
b. once in a while
c. sometimes
d. often
e. almost always

21. How often do other students try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?

- a. almost never
b. once in a while
c. sometimes
d. often
e. almost always

22. Has any adult at home contacted the school to try to stop your being bullied at school in the past couple of months?

- a. I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
b. no, they haven't contacted the school
c. yes, they have contacted the school once
d. yes, they have contacted the school several times

23. When you see a student your age being bullied at school, what do you feel or think?

- a. that is probably what he or she deserves
b. I don't feel much
c. I feel a bit sorry for him or her
d. I feel sorry for him or her and want to help him or her

ABOUT BULLYING OTHER STUDENTS

24. How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school the past couple of months?

- a. I haven't bullied another student(s) at school in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

Have you bullied another student(s) at school in the past couple of months in one or more of the following ways?

Please answer all questions.

25. I called another student(s) mean names, made fun of or teased him or her in a hurtful way

- a. it hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

26. I kept him or her out of things on purpose, excluded him or her from my group of friends or completely ignored him or her

- a. it hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

27. I hit, kicked, pushed and shoved him or her around or locked him or her indoors

- a. it hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

28. I spread false rumors about him or her and tried to make others dislike him or her

- a. it hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

29. I took money or other things from him or her or damaged his or her belongings

- a. it hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

30. I threatened or forced him or her to do things he or she didn't want to do

- a. it hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

31. I bullied him or her with mean names or comments about his or her race or color

- a. it hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

32. I bullied him or her with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning

- a. it hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

33. I bullied him or her in another way

- a. it hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- b. it has only happened once or twice
- c. 2 or 3 times a month
- d. about once a week
- e. several times a week

34. Has your class (home room) teacher or any other teacher talked with you about your bullying other students at school in the past couple of months?

- a. I haven't bullied other student(s) at school in the past couple of months
- b. no, they haven't talked with me about it
- c. yes, they have talked with me about it once
- d. yes, they have talked with me about it several times

35. Has any adult at home talked with you about your bullying other students at school in the past couple of months?

- a. I haven't bullied other student(s) at school in the past couple of months
- b. no, they haven't talked with me about it
- c. yes, they have talked with me about it once
- d. yes, they have talked with me about it several times

36. Do you think you could join in bullying a student whom you didn't like?

- a. yes
- b. yes, maybe
- c. I don't know
- d. no, I don't think so
- e. no
- f. definitely no

37. How do you usually react if you see or understand that a student your age is being bullied by other students?

- a. I have never noticed that students my age have been bullied
- b. I take part in the bullying
- c. I don't do anything, but I think the bullying is OK
- d. I just watch what goes on
- e. I don't do anything, but I think I ought to help the bullied student
- f. I try to help the bullied student in one way or another

38. How often are you afraid of being bullied by other students in your school?

- a. never
- b. seldom
- c. sometimes
- d. fairly often
- e. often
- f. very often

39. Overall, how much do you think your class (home room) teacher has done to counteract bullying in the past couple of months?

- a. little or nothing
- b. fairly little
- c. somewhat
- d. a good deal
- e. much

Judy Stivers, Superintendent
Drexel R-IV School District
207 S. Fourth
PO Box 860
Drexel, MO 64742

Dear Judy,

Thanks so much for helping me out with these student surveys. I have enclosed enough for all of your student's grades 9-12. If that is not possible to survey all high school students, a class or classes would be appreciated. The more data received from each school would help validate the research and also give you more insight into the thoughts of your students. I will share with you all of the findings. The survey is intended not to identify any particular student, so names should not be on the surveys. I have enclosed an envelope for the return of the surveys. Please have the surveys returned no later than March 13th.

Thanks again for you help.

Sincerely,

David Copeland

9-12 GRADE STUDENT SURVEY ON BULLYING

The definition of being bullied at school is when a student who is more powerful than you repeatedly attempts to hurt you by: attacking you verbally, using harmful words, names, or threats; attacking you physically; intentionally isolating you or excluding you from a social group.

Please place a checkmark in the space next to the answer that is most correct for you.

1. I am a: ___ Male ___ Female

2. My current grade is: ___ 9th ___ 10th ___ 11th ___ 12th

3. Have you ever been bullied by another student in school?
 ___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

4. Has another student ever bullied you verbally?
 ___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

5. Has another student ever bullied you physically?
 ___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

6. Has another student ever bullied you by intentionally isolating you or excluding you from a social group?
 ___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

7. How often have you been bullied in school by another student in the past year?

Very frequently Occasionally Only once or twice Never

8. How often have you been bullied in school by a male student?

Very frequently Occasionally Only once or twice Never

9. How often have you been bullied in school by a female student?

Very frequently Occasionally Only once or twice Never

10. If you have been bullied in school was it with the aid of an electronic device? (text messaging, internet, etc...)

Yes No

11. Have you ever altered your schedule or missed school as a result of being bullied?

Yes No

12. If you have been bullied in school by another student, who have you told?

Friend Teacher School counselor Principal

Another School Adult Parent/Guardian Sibling No one

Other(s) (list) _____

13. I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way

Very frequently Occasionally Only once or twice Never

14. I was hit, kicked, shoved around, or locked indoors

___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

15. Other students told lies or spread false rumors about me and tried to make others dislike me

___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

16. I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged

___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

17. I was threatened or forced to do things that I did not want to do

___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

18. I was bullied with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning

___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

19. I was bullied in another way

___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

20. Were you bullied in elementary school in any way?

___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

21. Were you bullied in middle school in any way?

___ Very frequently ___ Occasionally ___ Only once or twice ___ Never

22. Have you ever bullied another student in school?

Very frequently Occasionally Only once or twice Never

23. Have you ever bullied another student in school verbally?

Very frequently Occasionally Only once or twice Never

24. Have you ever bullied another student in school physically?

Very frequently Occasionally Only once or twice Never

25. Have you ever bullied another student by intentionally isolating or excluding a student from a social group?

Very frequently Occasionally Only once or twice Never

26. Have you ever bullied another student by text messaging or by the use of a computer?

Yes No Text Internet Both

Subject: Missouri Bullying Survey

Dear Superintendents,

My name is David Copeland, Superintendent of Cass Midway R-I School District in Cleveland, Missouri. I am completing my dissertation on "Bullying in Public Schools in Missouri" and I need your help. Would you please take a few minutes and reply to this e-mail with your responses to the one experience question and the fifteen questions concerning bullying. A reply with a list of your answers would be sufficient.

Thank you for your time. Your help is greatly appreciated.

David

MISSOURI SUPERINTENDENTS SURVEY
ON BULLYING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

My experience as a superintendent is:

___ 1-5 years ___ 6-10 years ___ 11-20 years ___ more
than 20 years

Please circle the most appropriate answer the statements according to the following scale:

1 – Never 2 – Seldom 3 – Occasionally 4 – Often 5 - Always

1. Bullying is a problem in our district.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Cyber-bullying through text messaging and the internet is a problem in our district.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Bullying affects the learning process in our district.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Male adolescents engage in acts of bullying more than female adolescents do.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Bullying should be viewed as a “right of passage” and is normal adolescent behavior.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Students who are victimized by bullies change their schedules or miss school due to the fear of being bullied.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Female adolescents engage in cyber-bullying more than male adolescents do.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Teasing and name calling should be viewed as bullying.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Excluding or isolating a student from a social group should be viewed as bullying.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Administrators should become involved in student cyber-bullying issues of students.

1 2 3 4 5

11. Electronic bullying is as harmful to students as physical bullying.

1 2 3 4 5

12. Verbal attacks by students should be viewed as bullying.

1 2 3 4 5

13. Victims of bullying tell someone about the bullying.

14. More bullying programs are needed in schools.

1 2 3 4 5

15. Bullying is a major problem in public schools in Missouri.

1 2 3 4 5

Dear Superintendents,

I just wanted to thank everyone who responded to the Superintendents survey on "Bullying in Public Schools in Missouri". Your time and assistance is greatly appreciated. If you relied to the survey and received an "undeliverable" message, I was able to retrieve it from my spam. The response was great. I also conducted a student survey from students of the Western Missouri Conference Schools. My study should be completed this summer and I would be willing to share it with any of you. Just let me know if you would like a copy. Again, thanks for your help and words of encouragement. If I can ever be of assistance to any of you please let me know.

If you did not respond, but would like to, I have included my original e-mail and the survey below. Just simply reply with your answers.

Sincerely,

David Copeland, Superintendent
Midway R-I School District

Dr. Jeff Kyle, Superintendent
Raymore-Peculiar School District
21005 S. School Rd. P.O. Box 366
Peculiar, MO. 64078

Dear Dr. Kyle,

Thank you for discussing the issue of the surveys for the Student-Panel of Experts with me as part of my dissertation process for Liberty University. I appreciate all of your help and assistance in this matter. Please have five of your students complete the enclosed surveys and return to me in the self-addressed envelopes as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

David A. Copeland, Superintendent
Midway R-I School District

9-12 GRADE STUDENT SURVEY ON BULLYING
(PANEL OF EXPERTS)

The definition of being bullied at school is when a student who is more powerful than you repeatedly attempts to hurt you by: attacking you verbally, using harmful words, names, or threats; attacking you physically; intentionally isolating you or excluding you from a social group.

1. If you have been bullied in school was it with the aid of an electronic device?
(text messaging, internet, etc...)
 Yes No

2. Have you ever altered your schedule or missed class as a result of being bullied?
 Yes No

3. Were you bullied in elementary school in any way?
 Very frequently Occasionally Only Once or Twice Never

4. Were you bullied in middle school in any way?
 Very frequently Occasionally Only Once or Twice Never

5. Have you ever bullied another student by text messaging or by use of a computer?
 Yes No Text Internet Both