BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: A CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING
DIGITALLY-WISE TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL CYBERBULLYING

by
Tiffany Nicole Graves
Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
Liberty University
April, 2013
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APPROVED BY:

Cristie McClendon, Ph.D., Committee Chair

Meredith Furrow, Ed.D., Committee Member

Joan Rhodes, Ph.D., Committee Member

Scott Watson, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Advanced Programs
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of middle school, technologically proficient, or digitally-wise teachers, regarding how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying in four middle schools located in Southern Virginia. Data was collected using an open-ended questionnaire, archival data, including school public records and lesson plans, and interviews. Data for this study were triangulated and synthesized following Stake’s data analysis procedures to create naturalistic generalizations for the readers. All data was coded and 10 emergent themes developed. Digitally-wise middle school teachers voiced confidence about their ability to define cyberbullying; they shared that they utilized multiple strategies to prevent cyberbullying, and they relied on their students’ self-reporting to recognize cyberbullying cases, yet voiced that they were unsure of the exact prevalence of cases in their school environment. The participants shared that when handling cyberbullying they relied on their past experiences, felt empowered by Hilltop County rules, but would like further training on how to effectively handle cyberbullying. Implications of the study were to provide cyberbullying faculty training, conduct a school-wide survey to further explore stakeholder knowledge of cyberbullying, and provide an online method for teachers to have access to cyberbullying school data and resources.

Keywords: cyberbullying, social technology, peer victimization, social networking sites, digital native, digital immigrant, digital wisdom.
First, I give thanks to my God and Savior, Jesus Christ, for strengthening me during the years spent working and polishing this dissertation. I pray that doors will open and opportunities will be made available, after finishing this dissertation, to bring glory to His name alone.

I would also like to thank my loving husband and my better half, who has been such an encouragement during this process. Thank you for your patience, love, and words of wisdom. I love you.

Thank you also to my family, especially my parents, who are my role models. Dad and mom, thank you for instilling in me a Godly work ethic. You truly taught me how to set and pursue goals in life, and you encouraged me to never give up despite challenges along the way. Thank you!

Lastly, I would like to thank my Chair and committee who with their knowledge and expertise, assisted and guided me through the dissertation process. Thank you for everything!
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List of Abbreviations

Adequate Yearly Process (AYP)
Code of Conduct (COC)
Hilltop County Public Schools (HCPS)
Internet and Communication Technologies (ICT)
Instant Messaging (IM)
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
National Children’s Home (NCH)
No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
Promote Individuality and Nice Kindness (PINK)
Self-report Questionnaires (SEQ-SR)
Social Networking Sites (SNS)
United Kingdom (UK)
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)
Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)
Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Megan Bayer, Ryan Balligan, Phoebe Prittene, and Alexis Rockington (pseudonyms used) all had something in common. In addition to each of them being American teenagers in middle and high school, they were also victims of peer cyberbullying. In 2006, Megan hung herself when a “former friend’s mother took a male alias on MySpace, pretended to become her boyfriend and then publicly dumped her” (Cook, 2010, p. 18). Ryan, also 13 years of age, committed suicide when online rumors were spread that he was gay (Cook, 2010). Phoebe and Alexis also both committed suicide after persistent online teasing and harassment from their school peers (Cook, 2010).

These four teenagers are just a few examples of the many student lives that have been negatively affected by cyberbullying. Aydogan and Dilmac (2010) stated that one of “every four children is a cyber-victim” (p.185). Hinduja and Patchin (2007, 2008) found that between 15 and 35% of students in the United States were involved in cyberbullying and or had been a victim of a cyberbully. In more recent studies conducted by Siegle (2010) and Hinduja and Patchin (2010a), between 10% to over 40% of adolescents reported being cyberbullying. Sourander, et.al (2010) reported that in the United States and the United Kingdom, 12% of the individuals between the ages 10 and 17 admitted to using aggressive behavior online, 4% reported being targets of aggression, and approximately 3% admitted being both perpetrators and targets of cyberbullying. These
percentages are expected to continue increasing (Bauman & Pero, 2010; Sourander et al., 2010).

**Background**

Cyberbullying is the 21st century’s form of adolescent aggressive bullying. Bullying is used to describe acts of violence, whether physical or verbal (Bauman, 2008). More specifically, cyberbullying can be defined as “the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group . . . intended to harm others” (Ford, 2009, p. 535). According to Tokunga (2010), bullying occurs when people engage in actions intended to cause injury or discomfort to others. Unfortunately, this form of bullying has surfaced in the school environment today. As social technology has advanced, communicating electronically has drastically increased.

The use of the Internet has many positive benefits such as convenience, faster communication, and creating a global network. However, with the use of several online social networking sites (SNS), cyberbullying has gained notoriety in the media. Cyberbullying has the same goal as traditional bullying in the fact that both inflict harm on others (Bauman & Pero, 2010; Grigg, 2010). However, this new type of bullying brings concern because it persists beyond the school setting and can occur 24 hours a day and at any time (Tokunga, 2010). Cyberbullying takes several different forms such as sexting (sending sexual content in text messages), cyberstalking, and harassment. Additionally, it can be conducted through various social technology mediums such as emails, cell phones, social networking sites such as Facebook and Instant Messenger (IM), and can include people from elementary school to college age (Jager, Amado,
Matos, & Pessoa, 2010). Cyberbullying is also different than traditional bullying in that the cyber bully can be anonymous, and the anonymity can make it easy for students to adjust their behavior to the social norms of their peer groups (Jager et al., 2010; Spears & Lea, 1992). The theory of deindividuation shows that secrecy or anonymity results in a “decrease in self-observation, self-evaluation, and concern for social comparison” (Christopherson, 2007, p. 3044). This theory is sometimes present in cyberbullying, when anonymous teens use their secret identities to harass others with social technology, because they think their anonymity will keep them from being caught.

Over 40% of United States teenagers have, at one time or another, been victims of cyberbullying (Siegle, 2010). Patchin and Hinduja (2011) found that while cyberbullying seems to occur equally with both male and females in the secondary grades, females are slightly more likely to participate for various reasons. Females generally are not encouraged or expected to be physically aggressive, and thus, they may feel more comfortable voicing their aggression privately and anonymously (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011). Other reasons that females are more likely to participate in cyberbullying are because females often prefer relational aggression such as rumors, exclusion, and verbal slander as opposed to physical bullying (Patchin and Hinduja, 2011). Cyberbullying offers many opportunities for relational aggression, through text messages, social networking sites, and other technological devices (Chisolm, 2006). Further, Caucasian males and females are more likely to report cyberbullying to an adult, and females are more likely to report than males (Walker, 2009).

There are several different types of cyberbullying (Jager et al, 2010). These forms vary from online fights including vulgar language and insulting messages to
sharing others’ private secrets or images online. Coupled with the numerous types of cyberbullying, is the availability of technology for children and adolescents that allow them to take part in this dangerous epidemic. “The prevalence of technology available to children . . . provide[s] easy and convenient opportunities for students to cyber-bully” (Borgia & Myers, 2010, p. 29).

Unfortunately, while there are several easy opportunities for children and teen students to cyberbully, there are definitely no easy methods to end it (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007, 2008). Research and other proactive measures such as antibullying programs and school safety cyber contracts have failed to successfully inform, prevent, combat and respond to bullying issues (Bauman & Pero, 2010; Beran & Wade; 2011; Grigg, 2010; Haber & Daley, 2011; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Hossfeld, 2008). Nationwide, school administrators, teachers, and parents have tried numerous measures to try to prevent or combat bullying by using Internet contracts, mobile use contracts, discipline, website blocks, and Internet safety and policy classes for students and parents (Haber & Daley, 2011).

Adolescents use the Internet such as chatrooms, email, and instant messenger for about 18 hours a week (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). This extensive Internet use, coupled with their immaturity, (Haber & Daley, 2011; The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2005) can possibly explain why over 35% of United States adolescents report being cyberbullied (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007, 2008; Siegle, 2010; Yates & Smith, 1989). Thus, it could be concluded that the amount of time spent using the Internet and developmental stage are factors that affect the percentage of adolescents who report cyberbullying (Haber & Daley, 2011; Hinduja &
Patchin, 2007). This would mean that it is possible that more monitored use or positive role-modeling for Internet usage by teachers and parents would lessen the occurrence of cyberbullying amongst adolescents (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Herther, 2009; Lei, 2009; McLeod & Henderson, 2005).

The district targeted for this study is a school system that has had to respond and combat 21st century technology issues after adopting a 1-1 computer laptop initiative as a part of their 21st century technology plan in 2001 (Woodward, 2011). A part of their response was to create several opportunities for teachers and school staff to receive technology training. As a part of this initiative every teacher in the county and all students in grades 6 through 12 received a DELL Inc., laptop computer for school use (Woodward, 2011). These laptops were given to each teacher for use during the length of their contract and were loaned to the students at the beginning of each school year. The secondary students were able to take their laptops home to complete homework and school assignments daily. The student laptops were turned in on the last day of school. Secondary teachers and sixth through twelfth graders received extensive training on how to care and utilize their new laptops, along with safety training (Woodward, 2011).

Each laptop that was loaned to teachers and students was equipped with wireless Internet capability; therefore, each principal, parent and student had to sign a Code of Conduct which served as an Internet Safety Contract between the school staff, student, and parent. The contract provided legal evidence that stakeholders were made aware of proper use of the laptop and consequences for misuse of county property in the form of laptops and computers located in school labs. The county also created an online DELL Computer Student Center with several links, videos, and applications on Internet safety,
cyberbullying, and proper computer usage (Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), 2013c).

Many of the teachers in the county would have been referred to by Prensky (2001) a decade ago as digital immigrants, adults born before 1980, who did not grow up with technology. These digital immigrants, who became digitally wise through intensive technology training and experience provided by the county, changed their perspective on technology (Prensky, 2012b). The teachers and students in the county born in or after 1980, were referred to as digital natives (Prensky, 2001). As the distinction between digital immigrants and natives solely based on age became less useful, Presnky (2012b) suggested a move away from the immigrant and native metaphors towards working together to solve futuristic problems (Prensky, 2012b). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, digital immigrant and digital native teachers were categorized not by age, but by their quest for what Prensky referred to as digital wisdom (Prensky, 2012b). This term was defined by Prensky as “the ability to find, practical, creative, contextually appropriate, and emotionally satisfying solutions to complicated human problems” (Prensky, 2012a, Chapter 2, “What is ‘Wisdom,’ para. 10). Digital wisdom involves incorporating 21st century technology into one’s present thinking, decision-making processes, and being astute in the implementation of technology.

Based on previous research studies, a teachers’ knowledge of technology largely influences how she teaches her students, and it also affects how she perceives cyberbullying (Woodward, 2011). Teachers who are digitally wise have a higher level of understanding and experience with 21st century technology; thus, the digitally-wise teachers may be more equipped to teach today’s students about safe technology use, than
other teachers (Prensky, 2010, 2012b). Twenty-first century technology includes interactive Promethean whiteboards, social media such as YouTube, online blogs, and eReaders. While technology can include things such as an overhead projector or a CD player, these items are not the newest forms of technology created in the 21st century. Thus, may not be considered digitally wise to use them when there are newer technology tools available.

In general, teachers play a vital role in enforcing school policy and are on the front line daily in the classroom. They have been given the responsibility of addressing the complex and confusing cases of bullying (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, Wiener, 2005). However, research showed that students often report that their teachers either show little interest in bullying situations or do not intervene consistently to stop bullying (Atlas & Peper, 1998; Mishna et al., 2005; Moore-Thomas & Lent, 2007; Williams & Cornell, 2006). Beran and Stewart (2008), and Peters (2012), found that teachers frequently define bullying as physical victimization along with threats, which are only examples of overt bullying. Teachers’ conception of relational bullying and covert bullying such as exclusion and gossip is often limited (Beran and Stewart, 2008). Furthermore, teachers affirm that they do not have effective strategies to effectively deal with indirect or overt bullying (Townsend-Wiggin, 2001). Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that mirrors covert bullying, in that teachers and adults normally do not witness it, because it is done off of school grounds or anonymously using social technology, making it difficult to identify (Beran & Stewart, 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010a; Mishna et al., 2005; Tokunga, 2010). Because adults are not able to witness, identify, and assist in many
cyberbullying cases, it becomes a more dangerous epidemic than physical bullying that can be witnessed, easily identified, and intervened.

This research study had both ontological and epistemological philosophical assumptions. In order to find out the teachers’ perceptions, the researcher had to determine the nature of the reality of the phenomenon of cyberbullying in middle schools. According to Lincoln and Guba (1988), the feedback of awareness and perceptions that the middle school teachers gave would be the reality of what had been constructed in their minds. Epistemologically, this study was carried out in a middle school setting in hopes of understanding the perceptions of middle school teachers. Both a constructivist and participatory paradigm was used to frame and guide the study. The voice of the digitally-wise middle school teachers was shared for the purpose of bringing an understanding for and about the phenomenon within the bounded system, in order to better support, educate and aide the participants.

**Situation to Self**

I am a fourth grade teacher in Hilltop County Public Schools and graduated from Hilltop County Public Schools in 2003, and furthered my studies at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), where I pursued a Bachelor’s degree in general science and a Master’s degree in teaching. After graduating from VCU in 2009, I applied to Liberty University where I am pursuing a doctorate and recently earned an educational specialist degree in education for administration and supervision. I am also enrolled in the women’s leadership program at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

I have 5 years of teaching experience (pre-K to fifth grade). All personal biases such as working for the county, attending the Hilltop County Schools, and living in the
community relating to my own experiences were bracketed, so that I could view the phenomenon with a fresh perspective and be receptive when hearing the participants detail their experiences with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Stake, 1995). This was necessary in order to launch the research study without prior knowledge, beliefs, or prior conceptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994) and give way to emic issues (Stake, 1995).

I adhered to a constructivist-interpretive view and used descriptive interpretation and categorical aggregation from the participants’ feedback to synthesize corresponding patterns (Stake, 1995). This constructivist viewpoint stems from Vygotsky’s social-constructivism that an individual’s beliefs and reality are constructed based on their own world experiences (Vygotsky, 1986). Thus, while investigating the experiences of the research participants, I used an interpretive unbiased view while setting aside my own preconceptions and prejudgments to truly uncover the essence of the researched case phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984). As the researcher I conducted the research with a Christian worldview, and saw my participants as valuable, and made sure that they were informed participants not deceived as to what the study was about (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994).

**Problem Statement**

There was limited research on what the perceptions were of middle school digitally-wise teachers regarding how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying as well as help-seeking behaviors in one school district located in Southern Virginia. The immediate urgency of this problem was that it affected middle school teens as seen in the real life story of a “National Kick a Ginger Day” that
was held in California in 2009 (Haber & Daley, 2011). Students at a California middle school created a Facebook sign up for school peers to join a group that existed to bully and abuse students who had red hair, pale complexions and freckles. The members of this group used the Internet to threaten students they called *Gingers.* No one alerted an adult until *after* the physical bullying took place, even though the bullying was planned online.

Cyberbullying is a real problem, and less than 50% of students alert adults for help (Haber & Daley, 2011; Lenhart, 2010). Students often report that they do not seek assistance and support when they are victim to cyberbullying because they do not believe teachers or other school officials are willing to assist them (Williams & Cornell, 2006). Also, adolescents report that they do not perceive that the schools view violence as a problem, while others fear that their cyberbullying technological devices will be taken from them (Sasseroli & Ruggiero, 2005; Unnever & Cornell, 2004).

Cyberbullying is negatively impacting the lives of United States’ adolescents, particularly, female adolescents compared to males, at a ratio of 2 to 1 (Lenhart, 2010; Walker, 2009). In issues of cyberbullying female middle school students have been found to report the victimization to an adult more than males (Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2004; Moore-Thomas & Lent, 2007; Nelson-Le Gall, 2006; Rigby, 1996; Williams & Cornell, 2006). While extensive research has been done to define what bullying and cyberbullying are and why students do not alert adults (Bauman & Pero, 2010; Beran & Grigg, 2010; Wade, 2011), there is little research on the awareness and perceptions of digitally-wise middle school teachers in relation to social technology and its impact on students. Few research studies actually defined cyberbullying behaviors and detail its
effect on school cases of cyberbullying (Herther, 2009; Lei, 2009; Mishna et al., 2005; Rigby, 2006).

Middle school teachers affirm that they often feel unprepared and untrained to effectively handle indirect bullying cases (Mishna et al., 2005). In particular, middle school teachers report being highly uninformed on how to best handle bullying between girls like covert bullying, and often find administration’s input in bullying cases non-beneficial (Mishna et al., 2005).

“The complexity in determining whether an incident constitutes bullying must be recognized” (Mishna et al., 2005, p. 730). A disparity exists between middle school teachers’ definitions of bullying and cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b; Prensky, 2012b), yet correcting this alone is not enough to assist middle school teachers’ understanding of bullying (Mishna et al., 2005). In relation to indirect bullying or covert bullying such as cyberbullying, teachers sometimes describe their students as misperceiving the situations of bullying (Anderson & Sturm, 2007) or as provocative victims, (Olweus, 1993; Unnever, 2004) and thereby their responses to their students communicate that the bullying is being ignored, tolerated, or trivialized (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Clarke & Kiselica, 1997). By doubting a student and not positively responding to help-seeking students, teachers may contribute the deficit of disclosure to teachers (Mishna et al., 2005). Middle school teachers must understand and be aware of cyberbullying via the use of social technology, so that they are able to respond effectively to their students and in turn boost students’ confidence in seeking teachers’ help in bullying matters (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Sullivan, Cleary, & Sullivan, 2006). This could save the lives of many students (Kelsey, 2007; Mishna et al., 2005). This study combined
these two gaps of research needed on discovering what knowledge teachers possessed about new technology and what knowledge they held of cyberbullying, while focusing specifically on digitally-wise teachers’ perceptions of cyberbullying in their middle school environment. Through the use of triangulation of research methods, teachers were asked about their perceptions of cyberbullying and their knowledge of Internet and technology use.

In response to the gap in literature that addresses the problem described above, regarding middle school teachers’ readiness to effectively define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying, middle school teachers were chosen for the focus of this study rather than students. Also, recent literature (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Herther, 2009; Lei, 2009; McLeod & Henderson, 2005) posed the need for research to discover the technological and cyberbullying knowledge that digitally-wise teachers possess, because it affects how effectively they are able to teach their students about safe Internet use (Prensky, 2012b), and how well they were able to define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying cases.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of middle school digitally-wise teachers regarding how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying as well as help-seeking behaviors in one school district located in Southern Virginia. The term, digitally-wise teachers, was used to describe teachers who were technologically proficient due to technology and computer training provided by Hilltop County. These digitally-wise teachers were not constricted by age boundaries and were united in their quest of digital wisdom because they seek
guidance to know what is wise in our current times and this new wisdom takes 21st century technology into account in how they teach curriculum as well as safe technology use (Prensky, 2012b). These teachers were considered wise because they possessed the ability to retrieve creative, useful, contextually appropriate, and sentimentally satisfying solutions to rather complicated problems using technology (Prensky, 2012b).

This study inquired and discovered how digitally-wise teachers in a 21st century technology driven district perceive cyberbullying. Teachers were selected for this study rather than students because the focus of this case study addresses a gap in literature pertaining to how middle school teachers, specifically digitally-wise teachers, perceived cyberbullying. While research is still young in the area of cyberbullying, there is not a large gap of research on middle school students’ perceptions of cyberbullying. However, further and future research would be beneficial to examine the perceptions of cyberbullied middle school students experience when seeking help from 21st century digitally-wise middle school teachers.

Significance of the Study

This study was very important to the realm of education because bullying conducted through social technology such as cyberbullying, is a new world-wide epidemic of the 21st century (Li, 2006) that occurs primarily outside of the school yard (Tokunga, 2010; Williams & Godfrey, 2011), yet is highly effecting the school environment (Harlow & Roberts, 2010; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Sourander et al., 2012; Tokunga, 2010). There is little research in the field on how to effectively handle and deal with this type of bullying, and therefore, adults are “less able to provide support” (Cross, Dooley, Gradinger, Spiel, & Strohmeier, 2010, p. 206).
By using a case study approach to research digitally-wise middle school teachers I was able to discover the case participants’ perceptions, awareness, and actions when dealing with cyberbullying cases. Also, from this research additional county programs and curriculum, and new methods to accurately respond and intervene in bullying cases could be created. This research addressed a gap in literature by discovering how teachers with a deeper wealth of technology knowledge identify and combat cyberbullying (Prensky, 2001, 2010; Tapscott, 2008).

Currently, the literature pertaining to middle school teachers’ perceptions of social technology’s influence on bullying shows that stakeholders lack a concise and thorough understanding of cyberbullying and of the basic knowledge and factors that influence their interventions, strategies, responses, and views (Lei, 2009; Mishna et al., 2005; Prensky, 2010; Tapscott, 2008). By understanding the participants’ perceptions, I was able to examine how digitally-wise middle school teachers defined cyberbullying, identified actions related to cyberbullying, how they responded to pleas for help, and the areas of training they needed to better handle cyberbullying cases, thus saving lives.

This study will also assist Hilltop County (pseudonym used), Virginia, with the 21st century Technology Initiative they adopted. In this initiative, every teacher and middle through high school student was supplied a DELL Inc., laptop for their education, with Internet and Microsoft software. The school system proactively implemented a Code of Conduct for their students, including rules and consequences for bullying and Internet and computer use. In addition, the county established mandatory Internet safety sessions for parents, teachers, and students. However, this did not completely prevent bullying and cyberbullying from taking place and thus, as a county who embraced
technology, this research will aid in adjusting and creating more proactive programs and further educate adult stakeholders of how to effectively aide and intervene in bullying cases. Hopefully, by discovering the perceptions held by digitally-wise middle school teachers regarding how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying in their school environment, the research can be used to help identify areas of weakness in understanding the current global phenomenon of cyberbullying by better equipping and preparing teachers to respond to the two-thirds of adolescents who witness cyberbullying (Haber & Daley, 2011).

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of middle school digitally-wise teachers regarding how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying as well as help-seeking behaviors in one school district located in Southern Virginia. The following questions guided this study:

Question 1: How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers define, and recognize cyberbullying?

Question 2: How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers currently prevent and handle cyberbullying and help-seeking behaviors from their middle school students?

Definition of Terms

Laptops – This is a description of a portable personal computer. DELL is the brand of laptop that the county has chosen for this study (VDOE, 2013c).

Internet – This is the word is used interchangeably the World Wide Web (Grigg, 2010; Jager et al., 2010).
Cyberbullying – refers to bullying that takes place through electronic media such as emails, text messages, or online social networking sites (Bauman, 2008; Ford, 2009).

Social Networking Sites – This is the description used to describe online websites that allow for people from around the globe to connect through communication and exchange of ideas in a chat room or through instant messaging, and other methods of electronic messaging. Examples of these sites are Facebook and MySpace (Jager et al., 2010).

Digital immigrants – These are people born before 1980, who are new to the technological and digital world and would like to return to the simpler ways of life such as use of paper, pencils, face to face interactions) (Prensky, 2001, 2010).

Digital natives – These are people who were born into digital culture in or after 1980 (Prensky, 2001, 2010; Tapscott, 2008).

Digitally-wise teachers – This term denotes all teachers, regardless of age who not only introduce and allow technology in their classroom, but utilize technology to inspire fresh ways of learning and teaching that 21st century technology enables (Prensky, 2012a). These teachers have not achieved ultimate digital wisdom, but are on an ongoing quest to be digitally wise and strive to keep abreast of new technology and how its positive use can make them and their students wiser (Prensky, 2012a).

Digital wisdom – Involves incorporating new 21st century technology into our present thinking and decisive processes, by executing it wisely and sharing the results (Prensky, 2012a).
Delimitations and Assumptions

Delimitations

Delimiting occurred by setting boundaries or limits on the study. This study only included digitally-wise middle school teachers who worked in western Hilltop County and taught at Copeplain Middle School, Fairflex Middle School, Shoreplain Middle School, or Cloves Middle School (pseudonyms used). I limited the study to digitally-wise middle school teachers and strictly bullying influenced by social technology, because cyberbullying is an epidemic that heightens around early adolescence and middle school years (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Pelligrini & Long, 2002; Smith & Gross, 2006) and students at the selected site schools had access to and utilized various forms of social technology (Anderson & Sturm, 2007) both at home and school. The average amount of at home use was determined based on previous Hilltop Count Stakeholder school year surveys. Also, each teacher in the selected school district worked in the school district for at least one full school year teaching a general core subject such as math, science, social studies, reading, or language arts, and met the qualifications of being a digitally-wise teacher as defined by Prensky (2012a),

The criteria are as follows:

1. The teacher was a quality controller in their own classroom, meaning that they received 21st century technology training on how to facilitate lessons with technology that allow students to access 21st century technology in the classroom and promote higher order thinking skills.

2. The teacher received training on ethical use of technology and ethically trained students on proper and wise use of technology.
3. The teacher used 21st century technology tools for professional teaching use.

4. The teacher used multiple emerging human inventions that help and improved mankind’s capabilities, also known as 21st century technology tools. In relation to this study these tools included applications on the district provided DELL Inc., laptop, Promethean Board, Activotes, ProScope, Skype, and Blogs were all considered 21st century technology tools.

These were the criteria that participants had to meet in order to participate. The criteria of years taught and employment was verified by the county, who agreed to randomly select possible participants using their database to verify the years taught in the county.

Participants in qualitative studies are able to clearly articulate their perceptions as digitally-wise teachers on the role that social technology plays in bullying cases (Moustakas, 1994). Elementary school teachers may have had a more of a limited perspective on the phenomenon because of factors such as students have more parent and teacher supervision when utilizing technology, such as lower chance of cyberbullying, also elementary students are not at the adolescent stage of wanting to be on their own, and elementary student are more reliant on adults for guidance (Smith & Gross, 2006). High school teachers also may have had more of a limited view. According to Olweus (1993) victimization in children gradually declines with age. This can be seen in Pelligrini and Long’s (2002) belief that by high school the chaos caused in middle school because of puberty, and dominance in social hierarchies has been established and settled by high school.
Assumptions

For this case study, I held the assumption based on Prensky (2012a) that age is no longer a barrier or determiner for how well someone may understand, properly implement, and teach safe use of technology. For the purposes of this study, the determiner for this was one’s digital wisdom as determined by the criteria. I assumed that digitally-wise teachers were able to effectively use technology in their classrooms and teach their students how to wisely, properly and safely, use technology (Prensky, 2012a). Another assumption was that these middle school, digitally-wise teachers had seen or dealt with cyberbullying cases, due to research that showed that middle school is the age where cyberbullying occurs the most (Hunter, Mora-Merchán, & Ortega, 2004; Lenhart, 2010; Moore-Thomas & Lent, 2007; Nelson-Le Gall, 2006; Rigby, 1996; Walker, 2009; Williams & Cornell, 2006) and that it was an issue in their school environment (Stake, 1995) whether they realized it or not (Mishna et al., 2005).

I assumed, for the purposes of this study that digitally-wise middle school teachers aspired to continue to learn new positive ways to use 21st century technology tools to be successful. The last assumption was that digitally-wise teachers wanted to teach their students how to wisely use 21st century technology tools to add to their understanding, thus making their students better decision makers who made better choices, and were better thinkers.

Research Plan

This qualitative study utilized a case study approach to examine the perceptions of digitally-wise teachers within a bounded system of Hilltop County Public Schools (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). An instrumental case study was conducted so
that I could focus on the issue of cyberbullying within the bounded system to illustrate the topic (Stake, 1995). The system was bounded by site location, sample size, and time. Data collection consisted of “multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73) consisting of questionnaires, archival data and interviews.

A case study design was chosen for this study because “it investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context” (Yin, 1984, p. 23). A purposive sample of seven digitally-wise middle school teachers was recruited to participate in the study. Criteria for participation included that they have been a general core content area middle school in the selected district, and must have taught in the district at least 1 full school year in Hilltop County. The full year of teaching in the county was necessary because they detailed the amount of technological training the teachers received from HCPS. The criteria was verified by the county itself, who used their employee database to select teachers from four of their middle schools, ensuring that teachers worked in the county and had taught for one full year.

Other qualitative designs were considered for this study, but were discarded. Phenomenology was not used for this study because I was not seeking to understand the digitally-wise teachers’ lived experiences with cyberbullying (Moustakas, 1994). Ethnographic research was not used because I was not seeking to focus on a comprehensive cultural group along with shared patterns of the culture group (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory was not used as a research method for this study because, I was not seeking to discover or generate a theory from the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007).
A case study research approach was used for this study to examine the case of
digitally-wise middle school teachers in the bounded system of Hilltop County.
Digitally-wise teachers, are by definition, teachers who are on an ongoing quest to learn
how to use 21st century technology to increase wisdom and actively use technology in
their classroom with their students to enhance learning (Prensky, 2012a). All Hilltop
County teachers attended mandatory technology training and also attended technology
seminars given by the county. Hilltop County teachers were skilled in current technology
applications, for use in the classroom such as Activote, Quia online, Keynote, Garage
Band, Skype, Promethean Software, online blogs, creating, updating, and posting
websites for communication. Because of their technology knowledge and training in
Hilltop County as professionals, I chose to invite teachers from this district to participate
in the study.

Extensive material was gathered through triangulation to create an in-depth and
rich illustration of the case. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) a case study can be
conducted to retrieve a rich description of different realities within one site, which for
this study was the two differing experiences of both digital immigrants and digital
natives, as digitally-wise teachers, within the system of Hilltop County Public Schools. A
case study investigation was used because as a naturalistic inquirer, I was seeking to
understand the natural experiences and perceptions of digitally-wise middle school
teachers within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2003)
and the contextual information gained from triangulation was grounded within the setting
of Hilltop County (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I strived to conduct a case study that will
give readers of this study a naturalistic generalization or working hypothesis of digitally
wise, middle school teachers’ perceptions, awareness and how they handled
cyberbullying cases in their school environment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995).
To ensure validity of the study, data was collected through multiple measures using
triangulation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Stake, 1995).
For this study, I collected data through a sequence of interconnected activities
with the intentions to gather and analyze information collected from answered research
questions from the participants. I started by getting permission from Liberty’s IRB and
then obtaining permission from Hilltop County and then consent forms from participants.
Participants were identified through a series of selection steps starting with an electronic
flyer sent by Hilltop County’s Research and Planning Department. Data was collected
using an open-ended questionnaire, archival data, including school public records and
lesson plans, and interviews. Member checking was also conducted after interviews to
allow participants to validate the accuracy of recorded responses and researcher derived
themes. To analyze all data and ensure that research methods are legitimate, I followed
the steps provided by Stake (1995) to achieve naturalistic generalization for readers.
In this case study I was trying to understand the phenomena of cyberbullying and
relationships within a bounded system therefore, I used Stake’s (1995) data analysis
procedure of categorical aggression; direction interpretation; correspondence and
patterns; and naturalistic generalizations. Stake’s (1995) process of data collection and
analysis began with me putting aside my assumptions in order to understand the case and
see the multiple views of the actors or participants in the case.
Analysis was an ongoing process that started at the beginning of the study. Issues
or key points of focus in research, as they are called by Stake (1995), were noted at the
beginning of the study and framed that focus of the study. To achieve a thorough analysis of data, two methods were used: direct interpretation and categorical aggression. The use of either depended on the occurrence of the phenomena in the case. Direct interpretation was used to look into my case when there was only one instance that occurred in the case and then to draw meaning (Stake, 1995). Direct interpretation is a set of steps where the researcher pulls data apart only to put it together again in a significant way (Stake, 1995). However, where there was more than one occurrence of the phenomena in my case, categorical aggression was used. With categorical aggression, I searched for emerging relevant meanings from the collection of instances occurring in the study. Lastly, corresponding patterns were created amongst the categories and patterns created from data (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Patterns were made throughout and from the search of meaning and correspondence will be searched for to find consistency in distinct conditions (Stake, 1995). For example this could be, “Talk of need for school uniform is related to gang aggression” (Stake, 1995, p. 78). I started to look for corresponding patterns throughout the study and commenced at the beginning of the study from observations and interview data.

To ensure that researcher bias was not used in the analysis of the data, I kept reflective journals and also met with a peer reviewer to discuss how the study was going and made sure that I stayed objective while researching. I also bracketed any experiences or thoughts that I had relating to Hilltop County, since I work there. My own personal experiences were be used to interpret the data.

Chapter 2 will be a literature review defining cyberbullying, detailing how it differs from bullying, cyberbullying’s impact on adolescents, help-seeking and
cyberbullying, and student and teacher perceptions of cyberbullying. The literature review will also define what digitally-wise teachers are. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology that was used for this study, following Stake’s case study method.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This case study was conducted to discover the perceptions of digitally wise, middle school teachers and how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying in their school environment (Herther, 2009; Lei, 2009; McLeod & Henderson, 2005). This study is significant in area of education because cyberbullying is an international epidemic (Li, 2006) that takes place predominantly outside of the school, but significantly impacts the school setting (Tokunga, 2010). The sample consisted of digitally-wise teachers who were formerly known as digital immigrants and digital natives (Prensky, 2001, 2010, 2012a), because there is little to no research on digitally-wise teachers’ perceptions, awareness, current strategies when dealing with cyberbullying (Herther, 2009; Lei, 2009; McLeod & Henderson, 2005; Prensky, 2012a).

To gather background research for this literature review I searched different scholarly journals for articles pertaining to the cyberbullying, using search words such as digitally wise, digital-immigrant teachers, digital natives, cyberbullying, perceptions of cyberbullying, impact of cyberbullying on adolescents, and adolescent help seeking and cyberbullying. This chapter contains the conceptual framework, detailing the foundational theories of Vygotsky and Piaget used for this study, followed by sections that detail what cyberbullying is, define what digitally-wise teachers are and their perceptions and impact on cyberbullying, concluding with the legal liability that schools face.
**Theoretical Framework**

The research study was related to Vygotsky’s (1986) social cultural theory and Piaget’s (1954) cognitive development in stages theory. Schutz (1964) argued that social sciences should concentrate on the customs of the life world and the experiential world. The social sciences, he believed should highlight each individual’s experience and detail how it shaped them. This is exactly what this qualitative case study did with the social cultural and cognitive development in stages theories as theoretical frameworks. The theories served as a foundation for the study to provide explanation for how the background and experiences of the middle school digitally-wise teachers influenced their perceptions of cyberbullying and were revealed in how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled cyberbullying.

**Social Cultural Theory**

Vygotsky’s (1986) social cultural theory is based on the assumption that human behavior cannot be analyzed separate from surroundings and background. Qualitative researcher, Husserl (1931), insisted that the direct relationship between objects and perceptions is not passive. Vygotsky’s (1986) sociocultural theory held the belief that human behavior is not separate from its surroundings. Human behavior, Vygotsky argued, is formed by interactions with culture. Culture is shared and common beliefs, knowledge, values, skills, and structure relationships to mold individuals’ behavior and perceptions (Vygotsky, 1986). Culture is shown through routines in family and society (Vygotsky, 1986).
Thus, culture directly affects one’s actions that are determined by perceived beliefs.

At any one point in history a culture is both a product of his own history and a provider of settings that shape children’s development and consequently the future of the culture. (Miller, 2002, p. 375).

Vygotsky’s theory set the foundation for this study where the teachers were not examined for the cause of their behavior or perceptions, but rather the research strived to focus on the conception the individuals and their perceptions, in the context of their cultural background (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Digitally-wise teachers’ backgrounds with technology as it was influenced by the culture they lived in were examined in relation to their perceptions. This was accomplished by examining and defining digitally-wise teachers as teachers who incorporated 21st century technology into their thinking and decisive processes, by executing it wisely, and then sharing this as digital wisdom with their students (Prensky, 2012a). Digital wisdom means using the 21st century technology tools one can, in order to keep students focused and to enhance their skills. These digitally-wise teachers were once referred to by some scholars as digital immigrants, who grew up in a culture almost free of technology and social media, as opposed to digital natives, who had known social media almost all of their life (Prensky 2001, 2010), but were united regardless of age in the ongoing pursuit of digital wisdom (Prensky, 2012a).

Enculturation, Vygotsky believed, was not a phenomenon that happened to people, but rather an event that people do (Miller, 2002). Cultural practice can be defined as an event that happens routinely in a person’s everyday life through social networking, classroom routine, and games. In relation to this study, cyberbullying became a cultural practice that did not simply happen to individuals, but became an event or activity that
people do. Unfortunately, many adolescents use social networking to retaliate, harass, and stalk and thus have become a part of the cultural practice of cyberbullying (Tokunga, 2010).

Cognition, according to Vygotsky, is the process of an individual trying to understand as opposed to cognition being a stored bank of static knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). With this framework in mind, the study relied on theories that see culture as everywhere and not as an external factor, but [culture] organized the phenomena and experience of the students and teachers at the site schools. Our culture is heavily bombarded with social technology that has positive and negative outcomes. Cyberbullying in this study was regarded as an outcome of the highly technological culture that we live in where being social does not include face-to-face conversations, but blogs, emails, and instant messages.

**Cognitive Theory**

Along with the constructing of beliefs that Vygotsky (1986) believed take place, Piaget (1954) said that there are *schema* or *schematas* that are formed in organized patterns of behavior and it directly reflects a particular way of how the individual interacts with their external environment. Piaget’s perspective holds that the mind is an organized set of operations that are logical and mediate in between the *eo ipso*, known as the world and one’s current knowledge of the world. Piaget believed that since the world could not be directly conceived or known, knowledge thus must be constructed (Piaget, 1954).

For the purposes of this study, middle school students who cyberbullied, Piaget placed adolescents between the ages of 11 and 15 in the formal operational stage. At this
stage adolescents “consider . . . issues from a number of different perspectives and see how the issues related to a larger set of social relationships” (Miller, 2002, p. 58). A key-defining attribute of this stage is egocentrism where adolescents are impressed with the power of thought, yet according to Piaget can be naïve in their thinking and underestimate practical problems and it affects the overall society (Piaget, 1954). During this stage adolescents “presuppose a capacity to redescribe thought in the form of propositions, the precondition for which is, in some sense, being able to know what one knows” (Bruner, 1997, p. 66). Piaget’s attribute of egocentrism ties to cyberbullying, because adolescents post and send ridiculing and taunting messages to others naively, without thought to how the message will affect the person they sent it to. The perpetrator acts out of his or her own feelings and perceptions of the social relationship problem without thinking about the perspective or reaction of the victim.

Piaget’s theory states that cognitive growth is impelled through the process of assimilation and accommodation (Bruner, 1997). Assimilation takes place when individuals encounters the world and fit it into their current knowledge, whereas accommodation is when the individual changes current knowledge or structures to accommodate the encounter or phenomena they experienced (Bruner, 1997). Piaget’s theory of how cognitive growth occurs will serve as another theoretical foundation in the study. With this theory in mind, a digitally-wise teacher is defined as either a former digital immigrant or a digital native who has not merely assimilated 21st century technological skills and knowledge of social networking, awareness of cyberbullying, email, Instant Messaging, and blogs, into their current knowledge, but have ultimately accommodated the new knowledge and thus restructured their current beliefs and skills in
order to effectively teach current digital native middle school students how to become digitally wise, as well (Prensky, 2012a).

Piaget’s theory of developmental stages can also possibly explain not only how students learn, but why middle school students at this stage victimize others with technology and why they do not think through the consequences of their actions in such things as reactive cyberbullying, suicide, or sexting. Piaget’s theory proposes that due to the developmental stage of the adolescents, when they cyberbully, commit suicide, or sext a peer, they are incapable of thinking fully through the consequences or their actions and only see the situation from one self-centered perspective. This theory states that during adolescents’ developmental stage they long to be independent and self-reliant, and would help explain why victimized middle school students do not report the cyberbullying to an adult or peer helper who can help.

During adolescence, students’ identities are developing, and this construction is highly influenced by their social environment. A major part of an adolescent’s development is the development of their self-esteem, which is tied to an adolescent’s perception of how their social environment accepts them (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010a). Rosenberg (1965) defined self-esteem as a favorable and possibly unfavorable mind-set towards oneself. Leary and Downs (1995) defined self-esteem as an internal depiction of social rejection or acceptance and also an assessment psychologically that gauges the amount that one is debarred versus integrated. Cybervictims often have less self-esteem than nonbullies (Harlowe & Roberts, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010b). Self-esteem is frequently a primary predictor of adolescent troubles that both directly and indirectly
influence the performance of students both academically and behaviorally (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010b).

As a person continues to grow and develop, knowledge continues to develop. While Piaget’s stages stop at the formal operational stage, cognitive growth continues to death (Piaget, 1954). People, according to Piaget (1954) construct knowledge and the next stage of development incorporates the previous stage, yet transforms it to prepare for the next developmental stage. As the current middle school teachers of this study went through the same various developmental stages through life, Piaget would say that their current perceptions and memories are actually active understandings that are outcomes of their previous development stage (Piaget, 1954). Throughout their lives, as 21st century technology content presented itself, the teachers had the option to either accommodate or assimilate the information into their current knowledge. How they did this determines if they are a digital immigrant or a digitally wise teacher. Digitally-wise teachers’ perceptions and understandings social technology both the negative and positive outcomes, are shown in how they define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying cases that arise in their school environment.

Implications of bullying and cyberbullying are provided to define, give detail of the effects and causes of the epidemic on middle school students. A closer look at the specifications of cyberbullying is taken to clearly define what it is and how it differs from traditional bullying. The related literature section will serve as the building block and foundation in for the study in literature.
Review of the Literature

Defining Bullying and Cyberbullying

Today’s culture is filled with social technology, has highly affected adolescents and one of the negative outcomes is cyberbullying. Conceptually, the term cyberbullying is a phenomenon or subform of traditional bullying with the use of electronic tools or devices (Gradinger, Spiel, & Strohmeier, 2010). Cyberbullying is defined as an intentional aggressive act that is carried out by individuals or groups that involve the use of electronic communications, over time, repeatedly against a victim who is incapable of defending him or herself (Bauman & Pero, 2010; Grigg, 2010; Williams & Cornell, 2006).

Unfortunately, this aggressive form of behavior has surfaced and surmounted in our school environment today. A term closely tied to aggressive behavior is bullying, which is used to describe acts of violence, whether physical or verbal (Bauman, 2008). Bullying occurs when an individual(s) engages in negative actions that are intended to cause injury or distress on others (Tokunga, 2010). Traditional bullying can include shoving, hitting, threatening, calling others names, and rude teasing, whereas relational bullying includes social exclusion and spreading rumors (Bauman, 2008).

Included in the definition and understanding of cyberbullying are fundamental aspects such as intention, repetition, power imbalance, and anonymity and publicity (Calmaestra et al., 2010). These aspects are criteria that help researchers to define what cyberbullying is and what is not. Intention is considered to determine whether the predator truly intended harm; however, a common question is whether intentionality plays a role in the effect on the victim (Calmaestra et al., 2010). Because of the nature of
the World Wide Web (web), posting contents on the Internet is viewed as repetition, since the contents can be viewed or forwarded numerous times. Therefore, repetition when speaking in the context of cyberbullying is viewed as a single act possibly leading to several incidents of victimization (Calmaestra et al., 2010).

A power imbalance is created when a victim is not able to force Internet and social network providers to delete harmful blogs or posts (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Menesini & Nocentini, 2009a). The newest criteria of cyberbullying—anonymity and publicity—include the victim’s frustration and powerlessness, because they do not know who the perpetrator is and the involvement of a large audience opposed to two parties’ exchanges of information (Calmaestra et al., 2010). Publicity, according to students, is the most severe form of cyberbullying because it includes a public audience that is not small in size (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

While traditional bullying and cyberbullying definitions do interconnect, there is one main difference. Both forms of bullying include the criteria of intention to harm, repeated offense, and an imbalance of power (Grigg, 2010). While research on cyberbullying is still developing and young, the main difference is that cyberbullying includes the use of technological devices that are being used to achieve the aggressive act(s) (Bauman & Pero, 2010; Grigg, 2010). According to the definition of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, both are considered to be aggressive forms of behavior because of the intent of harm on a victim (Bauman & Pero, 2011; Calmaestra et al., 2010; Grigg, 2010; Jager et al., 2010).

Jager et al., (2010) conducted a study to define and examine definitions and concepts of cyberbullying of stakeholders whose aim was to educate others on
cyberbullying in their schools and communities. The stakeholders involved participants who were very knowledgeable of cyberbullying and some trained parents and school staff on cyberbullying prevention. Questionnaires were administered online in forums such as Moodle learning environment and questions created by Cybertraining. The results of their study showed that stakeholder participants viewed individuals’ patterns of social networking use, lack of social networking literacy and education, along with newer technical inventions, and a deficiency of government laws to be the main source of cyberbullying. Participants also responded that e-safety rules and monitoring systems would help to tackle cyberbullying.

While some researchers may argue that cyberbullying is a subform of traditional bullying, Jager et al. (2010) disagreed and reasoned that there are several indicators that show cyberbullying is a modern, divergent phenomenon in itself. Reasons are that cyberbullying is complex and takes various forms from harassment, impersonation, trickery, exclusion, or cyberstalking (Jager et al., 2010). Cyberbullying, despite its overlaps with ordinary bullying, is unique in that the bully can mask their identity and be anonymous to the victim. Also, cyberbullying can occur around the clock any hour of the day 24-hours outside of the school parameters (Jager et al., 2010).

**Prevalence of Cyberbullying**

Li (2006) conducted a study to examine the experiences of 264 seventh through ninth graders with cyberbullying. Data were collected through the use of a survey, and the participants were randomly selected from three Canadian middle schools in the city. The 26 question survey was anonymous and was used to analyze participants’ demographic data along with their individual cyberbullying experience. Approximately
25% of participants reported being cyberbullies, while 17% of participants reported being cyberbullied. Li (2006) found that 1 in 4 of the participants had been bullied electronically and almost half of the participants reported knowing a peer who had been cyberbullied. The results of the study also showed that 54% of the participants had been traditional bully victims and over 25% were cyberbully victims. Gender findings revealed that fewer girls in the study were cyberbullies and girls were more likely to report cyberbullying cases than their male peers.

Williams and Guerra (2007) conducted a study to compare the prevalence of cyberbullying and traditional bullying in grades K-12 with boys and girls to discover if and what correlations existed between traditional bullying and cyberbullying. A sample of 3,339 students in elementary, middle, and secondary grades, were asked to participate in the study. The participants responded to a questionnaire that measured prevalence of bullying (both cyber- and traditional), inquired about perceptions of bullying, and students’ perceptions of school climate and support. The researchers found a 0.66 or 66% of correlation between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. They also found that 6.6% of the sample of participants took an active role in verbal, physical, and cyberbullying. While the researchers found that cyberbullying and overt bullying such as physical bullying rose drastically in eighth grade, they found that it plateaued and declined in higher grades.

Patchin and Hinduja (2006) performed a study to examine the extent of cyberbullying conducted by adolescents. The study recruited 384 participants, under the age of 18. An online research survey was used to measure adolescents’ extent of bullying with the Internet and social technology. The results of the study was that 11% of
participants called themselves cyberbullies, 29% of participants admitted to being a victim of cyberbullying, and 47% of participants admitted to having been a witness of cyberbullying. No significant differences with gender were found to affect the frequency of online bullying.

Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) stated that preteens and teenagers between the ages of 10 and 18 include the use of modern technological tools to define cyberbullying. The use of the Internet or mobile phones, also referred to as ICT (Internet and communication technologies) for communicating is convenient because it is expeditious and dependable modes of communicating (Grigg, 2010; Jager et al., 2010). ICT communication can be sent and received through chat rooms, instant messaging, emails, or verbally. While technology offers several advantages, it can be devastating and distressing when receiving aggressive unwanted messages such as sexting and flaming/harassing, among others when used for cyberbullying (Grigg, 2010).

Carlyle and Steinman (2007) conducted a study to examine differing dimensions on bullying behaviors such as victimization and aggression while simultaneously examining demographic differences in pervasiveness, co-occurrence, and relationship. The researchers surveyed 79,492 students in grades 6-12 using school-based surveys in 16 different metropolitan/urban school districts in the United States. The researchers found that 28.2% of students admitted to being involved to some degree with bullying behaviors. Further 20.1% of the surveyed students reported being bullied within the previous year, and this was mainly students in the sixth through eighth grade. The researchers found that females were less likely than males to be the perpetrator or the victims of bullies. In regards to race and ethnicity, African American and Native
American adolescents involved in the study were found to likely to be victims of bullies and also perpetrators in cases of bullying (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007).

Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007) conducted a study with 84 high school adolescents between the ages 13 and 18 who were surveyed on three main types of cyberbullying experiences they had been involved in. The purpose of the study was to identify the association between traditional bullying and victimization and cyberbullying and victimization. Of the participants surveyed, 49% of the adolescents involved admitted to being bullied electronically in comparison to 71% of adolescents who report being bullied via traditional modes. Of the 84 participants, 21% admitted being cyberbullies in comparison to the 64% of adolescents who report bullying with traditional methods. The study concluded that many victims of cyberbullying were also found to be traditional bully victims, as well as traditional bullies being cyberbullies as well. Ybarra and Mitchell’s (2004) theory that victims of traditional bullying may also be cyberbullies, was tested; however, no significance was found between the two.

The United Kingdom (UK), the National Children’s Home (NCH) (2005) in England, conducted a study with the purpose of investigating the prevalence of cyberbullying amongst adolescents. They surveyed 770 students in the UK, between the ages of 11 and 19. The findings of the study were that 20% of students had been threatened or cyberbullied, and approximately 11% reported being the perpetrator and sending bullying messages using electronic devices to others.

Aricak et al. (2008) conducted to investigate the prevalence, perceptions, and coping strategies of Turkish secondary school students in regards to cyberbullying. For the purpose of the study, 269 students were recruited between the ages of 12 and 19 (135
girls and 134 boys) who were in sixth through tenth grade at public and private schools in Istanbul. Participants’ schools were randomly selected based on socioeconomic status and students were given 15-minute surveys after school hours on the school campus by the authors of the study. The results of the survey showed that 35.7% of the participants exhibited bully like behaviors, 23.8% of participants exhibited both victim and bully behaviors, 5.9% of participants reported being cybervictims, 25% of participants admitted to reporting cyberbullying incidents to parents or peers, and 30% admitted to finding strategies or solutions when threatened with cyberbullying, to block the perpetrator. In relation to gender, boys exhibited both cyberbullying and cybervictim behaviors more than their girl peers.

In a study conducted by Bauman (2006) at four southwestern United States’ elementary schools were selected with a diverse ethnic makeup, yet predominantly Mexican American (92% of the study population). Other ethnicities involved in the study as participants were Blacks, Whites, Asians, and Native Americans, who made up 9% combined. The researchers analyzed overt and relational victimization along with depression in a mostly Mexican American environment. The 118 participants were students who attended the United States’ southwestern school district and were in grades between third and fifth. The school district selected served students where 80% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch, suggesting a low socioeconomic background. Self-report questionnaires (SEQ-SR) were administered to the participants and Spanish translations of the questionnaire were made available. The SEQ-SR questionnaires were administered on different color sheets of paper to ensure students were working on the right inventory. The inventories sought to measure frequency of
victimization, both relational and overt, and prosocial behavior of the recipient. The results of the study conducted by Bauman (2006) showed that gender, grade, and acculturation did not have any association with the depression and victims of bullying had symptoms of depression, regardless of ethnicity. The only predictor that was found significant was relational victimization.

Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) conducted a qualitative investigation on the perceptions that students have of cyberbullying. The adolescent participants were between the ages of 10 and 18 years of age. The researchers set up 53 focus groups in an effort to gain more insight on the views and experiences of adolescents with cyberbullying. Focus groups were organized with the purpose of asking questions pertaining to intentional harm, power struggle, and repetition (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). The study findings were that students felt the senders of cyberbullying electronic messages were mostly anonymous; however, students said that they could often tell who the sender was. To the participants, cyberbullying assaults were perceived as more serious than traditional bullying attacks and the participants listed several aspects of the Internet that they viewed as negative such as sexual intimidation, health related problems, cyberbullying, stalking, and threats.

Slonje and Smith (2008) investigated the extent and prevalence of cyberbullying through text messaging, phone calls, email, and visual communication in Swedish adolescents. The study involved 360 adolescents between the ages of 12-20 who were randomly selected from eight Swedish schools in Gothenburg, Sweden. The study was conducted with a questionnaire and inquired about the frequency of cyberbullying and types of cyberbullying that participants experienced and their role in cyberbullying.
situations. A significant amount of cyberbullying cases were found to occur in lower secondary grades however, no significance was found that identified gender as a cause or contribution to the amount of bullying cases. Adolescents in the study perceived that pictures and videos were the most negative form of cyberbullying. Lastly, students reported telling their peers or no one about their experiences with cyberbullying, meaning that adult stakeholders are often unaware that it was occurring.

Mishna, Saint, and Solomon (2009) conducted a grounded theory study to discover technology relationships and online bullying perspectives of the adolescents. Participants were in fifth through eighth grade and were asked to participate in a focus group. Adolescent participants perceived online bullying as a problem and thought that cyberbullying was more of a problem compared to traditional bullying. The study was conducted with a total of 38 students. The findings of the study, were consistent with other recent studies, and found that adolescents are using technology at a rapid pace, and the found theory stated that by adults underestimating the amount of time that adolescents use the Internet, a technology gap is created. These findings strongly support this current study on cyberbullying and digitally-wise teachers, because according to Mishna et al., (2009) the gap is caused by a technology gap across generations and can inhibit adults such as parents and teachers from protecting their students and youth from the dangers of social technology (Mishna et al., 2009). In the study mentioned above, about 75% of cyberbullies reported that while they may bully using Internet and communication technologies (ICT), they would not take part in traditional bullying, yet the most frequent location for bullying was found to be at school and victims of cyberbullying tended to additionally be victimized by traditional methods (Mishna et al., 2009). These types of
bullies, who take part in both traditional and cyberbullying, are often referred to as combined bullies. They have been found to have more adjustment problems than other students, and more often pursue motives like amusement, power, and affiliation (Gradinger, et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that combined bullies, bully not just to cope with problems and anger, but to achieve their own goals, showing that they are conscious about their actions (Gradinger, et al., 2010).

The studies presented in this section of the literature review provide a solid background for understanding the epidemic of cyberbullying as presented in this paper. The research studies above also provide solid proof that this form of victimization is similar to traditional bullying, yet very different and unique in its method of victimization and is being experienced in our society today by many adolescents. Due to the age group that was found to experience cyberbullying the most in these studies, digitally-wise teachers who teach middle school students (adolescents) were recruited as the sample for this study.

**Characteristics of victims of cyberbullying.** While cyberbullying research is still emerging, and definitions and generalizations across research can vary, many would argue that it is a worldwide epidemic, because adults on every continent are having difficulty combating it (Sabella, 2009) and is expected to increase (Bauman & Pero, 2010). Today’s 21st century bullies do not need large intimidating biceps, only quick typing fingers (Sabella, 2009). It is important to know the causes and the intent of the cyberbullies or combined bullies, in order to effectively prevent it from occurring (Cross et al., 2010). There are certain factors based on trends in research that can increase one’s risk factor of being teased. Bullied students are more likely to be “obese, enrolled in
remedial education, have developmental disabilities, or are insecure and anxious” (Peckham, 2007, p. 73).

Victims of cyberbullying tend to also be targets of traditional bullies and are generally intimidated of their peers, depressed, unpopular, and often isolated (Feinberg & Robey, 2009a). The peers that are most at risk tend to search for attention and peer acceptance online and therefore are more often susceptible for manipulation. Due to victims desire to be accepted, they often are not attentive to social networking safety regulations and less likely to seek help from adults or even report a precarious event online (Feinberg & Robey, 2009a).

Harlow and Roberts (2010) conducted a study to examine “the relationship between the broad spectrum of protective factors and victimization by bullies” (Harlow & Roberts, 2010, p. 15). The study recruited that involved 2,066 students grades 6, 8, 10, and 12, from Texas and New Jersey school districts. A survey was given to each participant and examined factors contributing to bullying, and found that bullying was more commonly experienced among students who were overweight, not physically attractive, and/or were challenged by a disability such as hearing, speech, or sight.

Hinduja and Patchin (2008), conducted a study that analyzed victimization and offensive linked factors. The researchers correlated illness, suicide, eating disorders, and malingering such as truancy with bullying in efforts to promote a desire for understanding how serious victimization is. The study was conducted with a survey online to with the purpose to ascertain the phenomenon of cyberbullying with adolescents. Over 6,800 research participants were involved in the study for a period of one month. Survey results denoted closeness in the relation of female and male
victimization; 32.7% of male participants were victims; 18% of males were offenders; 36.4% of females were victims, and 15.6% females were perpetrators. Hinduja and Patchin (2008) found that girls reported cyberbullying more than boys - 13% girls compared to 9.7% of boys.

**Characteristics of cyberbullies.** Cyberbullying perpetrators are most likely to be peers with their victims at the same school (Sabella, 2009). Cyberbullies, like cybervictims, tend to be older adolescents and can equally be male or female (Feinberg & Robey, 2009b). Cyberbullies tend to have weak relationships with family and actually more likely to be targets of traditional bullying than nonbullies (Feinberg & Robey, 2009b). Cyberbullies also engage in substance abuse, delinquent behavior, and use the Internet daily (Feinberg & Robey, 2009b). Ironically, cyberbullies often see themselves as protectors of friends who are under attack and tend to exuberate power in the form of fear. For females, cyberbullying is often done in groups (Feinberg & Robey, 2009b).

Sabella (2009) suggested that there are four main types of cyberbullies. First is the “Vengeful Angel” (p. 1) who does not view themselves as a bully, but rather believes they are righting wrongs and helping or guarding themselves from bad guys (Sabella, 2009). The “Power-Hungry and Revenge of the Nerds” (p. 1) bully, because they wish to wield authority and display that they have power to force others into obeying them, often using fear as their tool (Sabella, 2009). An immature, ego-based female cyberbully is often known as the “Mean Girl” (p. 1). Mean Girls cyberbully when they get bored and are looking for fun (Sabella, 2009). Lastly, the “Inadvertent Cyberbully” (p. 1) is the bully that does it because they can. They do not view themselves as a bully and inadvertent cyberbullies role play and pretend to be hard-hitting online, but are only reacting to harsh
messages they have received. They react online without thinking about their actions (Sabella, 2009).

In a study conducted by Sourander et al., (2012), the researchers sought to analyze associations cross-sectionally of cyberbullying and psychosomatic/psychiatric issues with teenagers. The study took place in Finland and recruited 2,215 participants between the ages of 13 and 16 years, who were all knowledgeable of cyberbullying. Of the participants 4.8% reported being victims of cyberbullying only; 7.4% admitted to being cyberbullies only; and 5.4% admitted that they had been both cybervictims and cyberbullies. The researchers found that being a cyberbully was associated with having and living with two parents (biological parents) and additional family, emotional issues, peer issues, a feeling of not being safe at school, and even difficulty sleeping. Cyberbullies were associated with hyperactivity, smoking, drinking alcohol, low social activity, and also not feeling very safe in the school environment.

**Psychological Effects of Cyberbullying**

**Victims.** Cyberbullying can post harmful psychological effects (Sabella, 2009; Sourander et al., 2012). According to Hampel, Manhal, and Hayer (2009) victimization is an interpersonal stressor for adolescents. Victims of cyberbullying are often left feeling hopeless, having feelings of insecurity, and embarrassed (Sabella, 2009). These feelings can cause a sense of being helpless and can lead to depression, suicidal thoughts, poor academic performance, and even contemplated suicide (Sabella, 2009). Often the anonymity that goes along with the use of technology to bully can cause these helpless feelings to soar (Sabella, 2009). All of these effects can make it very difficult for a cyberbullied student to succeed academically and socially (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).
According to Feinberg and Robey (2009b) cyberbullying can cause equal if not more psychological harm than traditional bullying, due to the way that information and rumors are transmitted instantaneously-making it hard to eliminate. The bully’s anonymity can also cause stress and feelings of helplessness for the victim (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010a; Sourander et. al., 2012). This stress can lead to the victim creating coping strategies that are intrapsychic, occurring within the mind, and action-driven that are used to master, minimize, endure or lessen the conflicts that tax the victim’s resources (Hampel et al., 2009).

Mental health risks related to bullying have been investigated by researchers over the past years (Kaltaiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimpela, 2000), and today we see more studies investigating cyberbullying’s effect on mental health in response to many recent suicides that have gained media coverage in the United States (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010a). Youth suicide is a prevalent and momentous public health trepidation in the United States (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010a) and has been connected with adolescent bullying. Experts, Drs. Hinduja and Patchin (2010a) examined adolescents’ experiences with peer harassment and bullying, both traditional and cyberbullying, and suicide ideation. They conducted a study with 2,000 middle school adolescents selected through a random sample. Participants were in the sixth through eighth grade, and responded to a survey that inquired about their relationships at home and school, along with questions about peer harassment, bullying, and suicide thoughts. Participants who reported having experienced bullying were found to have had more thoughts of suicide than their fellow peers who had not been victimized. Approximately 9.1% to 23.1% of participants reported having been a cyberbullying victim and 6.5% to 27.7% of all participants
reported having experienced traditional bullying. Results of the study also showed that 20% of all participants reported seriously thinking about committing suicide, and 19% of all participants reported having actually attempted suicide. Cyberbullying is not only an issue in the United States; it is an international concern that has led to cyberbullying studies in Turkey, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Finland, and Switzerland, and Germany (Aricak et al., 2008; Sourander et. al., 2012). Internationally, cyberbullying is sometimes trivialized by adults and not taken very seriously and this may cause teens to feel even more isolated and in despair (Williams & Godfrey, 2011).

Peer harassment and victimization have been linked to loneliness, social anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Nishnina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005). Girls reported significantly more anxiety in social situations than males (Li, 2006) and numerous victims of cyberbullying show a lack of energy or interest in normally enjoyed activities (Ybarra, 2004). Victims of cyberbullying may show changes in eating, have mood swings, or misbehave at school (Sabella, 2009). Cyberbullying victims suffer the same, if not greater psychological effects than face to face bully victims experience and may become emotionally traumatized (Feinberg & Robey, 2009b; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Cyberbullying victimization is a strong indicator of suicidal tendencies and thoughts and offenders have 1.9 times more the chance of attempting suicide than those who were not offenders or victims of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, in press). Cyberbullying victims are 1.5 times more inclined to attempt suicide than those were not victims or offenders of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, in press).

Higher incidences of depression, drug abuse including alcohol and smoking have been found to affect students affected or involved in cyberbullying (Bauman & Pero,
There are long-lasting effects of bullying (Cross et al., 2010). Some of the long-term effects of this universal phenomenon is the risk for both short and long term mental, physical, and social health effects leading to depression, low self-esteem (Cross et al., 2009; Ttofi & Farrington, 2008). While it is true that bullying does affect the entire school (Feinberg & Robey, 2008; Peckham, 2007; Taylor, 2009), individuals who have been victims or bullies have long-term effects from their involvement. Victims, by the age of 23, are more likely to have lower self-esteem and be depressed, than their cohorts who are not victims of bullying. Bullies are also more likely to be convicted of crimes and be sent to jail (Peckham, 2007). Furthermore, alcohol and substance abuse is found to be used more 2.5 times used by victims of cyberbullying while the bullies may also use smoking or drinking to cope and this can extend through adolescence into adulthood (Goebert, Else, Matsu, Chung-Do, & Chang, 2010). Cyberbullies, according to Ybarra & Mitchell (2004), have a possibility to take part in criminal activity later in life.

**The bully.** The bully, or perpetrator, also can experience psychological effects from cyberbullying. Often the bully will feel heightened amounts of social anxiety. Hinduja and Patchin (in press) stated that cyberbullying psychological effects are so serious that both the bullies and victims have higher suicidal ideation in contrast to others who are not involved in cyberbullying or bullying. Cyberbullies often bully because of psychological emotional frustration like resentment and desperation and target others because of their deficiency in of self-worth (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Targets of cyberbullying experience high anger levels, sadness, and senses of powerlessness (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Based on cybervictim research completed by Hoff & Mitchell (2008),
cyberbullying psychological effects generally do not differ according to gender and “had a similarly negative impact on both male and female students” (p.658).

Adolescents’ Help-Seeking Behaviors and Perceptions of Cyberbullying

Adolescents’ help-seeking behaviors. Teachers and school personnel advise students to tell an adult if they are bullied, yet research shows that students do not (Bauman & Pero, 2010; Cross et al., 2010). According to Willard (2007), students are reluctant to inform adults in fear that the ICT devices will be taken away. Williams and Cornell (2006) suggested there are particular reasons why students do not turn to teachers for support when they are being victimized at school. Some students report that they do not seek help, such as assistance, support, backing, because they do not deem the teachers or other school officials as willing to assist (Williams & Cornell, 2006). Students can often have unrealistic views or expectations of the school officials (Moore-Thomas & Lent, 2007). Expectations or perceptions of students have been found to vary from gender, culture, and ethnicity (Moore-Thomas & Lent, 2007). Other reasons for not seeking help can be that the students view the school has having a high toleration of violence at their school (Williams & Cornell, 2006).

Student perceptions are formed by relationships and circumstances that occur within a school classroom (Tosolt, 2008). Students coconstruct these circumstances and they interpret the events based on their reality and expectations of how to act in class and school events (Tosolt, 2008). Very clearly, this can be a problem, because of the immaturity of middle school students during adolescence; their view often does not match the viewpoint of the school officials or teachers. Not only do students perceive
school culture, but they perceive teacher perceptions-expectations and attitudes that include teachers’ preferences about race (Tosolt, 2008).

In a study conducted by Williams and Cornell (2006), 542 middle school adolescents served as the sample in the study that analyzed what factors may influence students’ help-seeking behaviors when they are victimized. The participants were from a suburban middle school and were between the sixth and eighth grades. There were 244 girls and 264 males in the study and they ages were in a range of 10 years to 15 years of age. The ethnic breakdown of the participants was diverse and included Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American ethnicities, yet the majority of participants were Caucasian (72%). The participants were asked to complete an anonymous survey that inquired about the likelihood of them seeking help after being bullied. The survey measured students’ perceptions of teachers in the area of bullying tolerance, aggressive behavior, and nature of bullying. The results of the study showed that when students have a low view of the school environment, perceive that school officials are tolerant of bullying along and have an aggressive attitude; they are less likely to report bullying to an adult. Williams and Cornell (2006), in the study above, found that 53% of the participants reported that they would seek help from a school official if a peer were bullying them. About 30% of the participants reported that they felt that there were no adults at their school that they could report bullying to and about 50% of participants stated that they did not perceive their school’s teachers to have genuine concern for them. Sadly, research shows that students are even less likely to alert an adult when they experience cyberbullying rather than traditional forms of bullying (Smith et al., 2008).
Help-seeking behaviors can include asking a school official, parent, or teacher for help with an aggressive situation (Cross et al., 2010). Often students do not report cyberbullying cases to teachers and school officials out of concern that the teacher may not deem their report trustworthy or may reveal it, thus leading to more victimization or simply the adults’ lack of ability to help (Cross et al., 2010; Oliver and Candappa, 2007). Another common reason that students do not alert adults because they do not believe anything will be done to resolve the issue (Williams & Cornell, 2006).

School culture such as the discipline policies and teacher-student relations, can be a contributor to the amount of cyberbullying and bullying, as well as the amount of students that seek help (Williams & Cornell, 2006). Another demographic influence for help-seeking reporting, is that due to the independent stage and desire to mature on their own and become self-sufficient during the adolescent stage, students at this stage are less willing to seek assistance from an adult (Williams & Cornell, 2006). According to Williams and Cornell (2006), there is insufficient victimization research on whether or not ethnicity of the student has any correlation or deciding factor in whether a student seeks help when a victim of peer victimization. There is a possibility that shows that African Americans are less likely to seek help, because they view school officials and the school climate as not trustworthy (Marsh & Cornell, 2001; Williams & Cornell, 2006).

Cyberbullying occurs mostly at home (Cross et al., 2009) and it has been hypothesized that students may feel as though teachers are less concerned and therefore the students report it more to parents or peers. Hunter et al. (2004) stated that students are more likely to notify and report someone for bullying behavior if they felt as though something could be achieved. Since cyberbullying is more complex than traditional
bullying (Jager et al., 2010), students could feel more helpless, feeling as if there is no easy remedy for the victimization, making it less likely for them to report cyberbullying than traditional bullying (Cross et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2008). However, further research is needed to understand why students are so reluctant to notify school officials and teachers of cyberbullying cases as compared to traditional bullying (Cross et al., 2010).

In a study investigating help seeking of middle school victimized students, conducted by Unnever and Cornell (2004), six different Roanoke middle schools, in the sixth through eighth grade, were selected and then 2,437 students who had consent from parents completed a survey to help the school district and researchers examine bullying and help seeking behaviors. From the survey approximately 898 bullied students were identified and 25% reported not telling anyone about the victimization. About 40% of the bullied participants stated that they had not reported the bullying to an adult. The researchers found that the following influenced students’ decision to share their victimization experiences with school officials: school climate, mode/nature of bullying, and household demographics. Unnever and Cornell (2004) found that based on the survey data, that males were less likely to report bullying than females and the lower middle school grades were also less likely to report than the upper middle school grades. The study conclusion was that if students perceive their school climate tolerant and relaxed when dealing with bullying they are not likely to report the bullying to a school official or adult. A large number of students in the study stated that they would possibly seek help from an adult or school official if they knew of a student had brought a gun to school (90%) or had threatened to murder another student (73%) (Unnever & Cornell, 2004).
Thus, the researchers inferred that the high the chronicity of the victimization, the more likely middle school students are to report being bullied. However, this should raise serious concern as to why 100% of the students would not report such serious behavior to school authorities. This brings up the issue of snitching or ratting. It is possible that some students may not seek help because they fear being regarded a snitch. According to Unnever and Cornell (2004) majority of middle school participants reported in a study that bullying was indeed a pervasive problem in the middle school culture.

Despite common expectations and thoughts, the type of bullying (physical, emotional, social) did not affect the outcome of students’ help-seeking (Williams & Cornell, 2006). As this current research study sought to find out the perceptions teachers hold on cyberbullying and how it influences how they defined, prevented, recognized, and responded to cyberbullying cases, it was important to understand that teacher perceptions would vary because of their experiences and differences (Bishop & Pflaum, 2005; Moore-Thomas & Lent, 2007).

LeMare and Sohbat (2002) conducted a study that investigated perceptions of students in an effort to find out what traits of teachers increase help seeking of adolescents. Their study consisted of 115 students between second and seventh grade. The participants attended one of the six elementary schools selected to participate and give feedback in the form of semistructured interviews. LeMare and Sohbat (2002) found ten traits that affected the probability of students seeking aide from their teachers. The traits included capability, reactions to help seeking, teacher motivation, experience, temper, outlook, personality traits, and associations with students, expectedness, and gender (LeMare & Sohbat, 2002). The focus of the study was to zero in on the
perceptions students have of teachers’ reactions or responsiveness to help seeking behaviors. By finding out more about students’ perceptions of teachers when seeking help for cyberbullying, it will allow teachers, school officials, and peers to better equip themselves to respond and it will positively affect the student (Tosolt, 2008; Williams & Cornell, 2006).

Adolescents’ perceptions of cyberbullying. Middle school students’ perceptions of teachers have been examined very little (Tosolt, 2008). Sasseroli and Ruggiero (2005) stated that students believed that teachers were caring when they received constructive feedback, assisted students to stay out of trouble, and were alert and conscientious of students’ feelings, emotions, and safety. These perceptions have been found to possibly differ between minority populations such as African Americans, and majority population such as Caucasian. Both populations reported academic performance and interpersonal skills as a part of perceiving a caring teacher. However, African American students identified fairness in addition (Tosolt, 2008). Reasons why there are differences of perceptions between the two populations can be attributed to the facts that African American students score lower on standardized test than their white peers, they are less likely to be accepted to a college, more likely to be suspended and more likely to be retained (Tosolt, 2008). These discrepancies are lucid to African American students and can affect how minorities view their teachers. Native American and Latino students are found to perform similar to African American students; where Asian students perform closer to White students (Tosolt, 2008). Tosolt (2008) concluded that further research is still needed to examine how minority status affects students’ perceptions of teachers.
Perceptions that students have about their teachers and other adults, greatly impacts their actions of seeking help or not (Williams & Cornell, 2006). Middle school is particularly the age group that peer victimization takes place (Williams, & Cornell, 2006). At this age, middle school students are adolescents and are trying to be independent of adults and asking for help may appear weak or needy. *Culture of bullying* is what Unnever and Cornell (2003) referred to as the commonality between students in middle school. These students saw bullying as an epidemic that was not challenged by teachers and saw it as something that was a part of the school culture (Unnever & Cornell, 2004). Williams and Cornell (2006) hypothesized that middle school students may perceive teachers as having a high tolerance for bullying and this could lead to not seeking help for peer victimization.

This present study conducted further research on the perceptions and knowledge and experiences of teachers in relation to cyberbullying. By addressing this gap in the literature with further research, school officials can properly gauge the full extent to which cyberbullying is occurring in their schools and can better define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying cases in their school environment (Moore-Thomas & Lent, 2007; Newman, Murray, Lussier, 2001; Williams & Cornell, 2006). Newman et al. (2001) pointed out that too little research and focus has been given in finding out why students are reluctant to seek out help from school officials, adults, and peer helpers when they have experienced peer victimization. This research study sought to find out the perceptions of cyberbullying that teachers hold, which may help to better understand the reactions of victimized students to teachers.
Teachers’ Perceptions of Cyberbullying

A study conducted by Stauffer, Heath, Coyne, and Ferrin (2012) examined the current beliefs and attitudes of cyberbullying held by teachers. The study was conducted in an urban Western U.S. high school, where no cyberbullying or bullying policy was in place. Due to a mandated law in the state, the school would have to adopt a written policy that specified the school’s response on both bullying and cyberbullying. A sample of 66 teachers who served students in grades 9–12, took part in the study and completed an online survey created by the school district administrator. The survey inquired about the different facets of cyberbullying and asked about teachers’ perceptions of bullying and cyberbullying. The results of the study showed that 25% of the participant teachers reported that they believed that cyberbullying did not have negative long-lasting effects, and that cyberbullying aided in preparing students for life. Less than a half of the teachers agreed that implementing a cyberbullying prevention program was needed. The researchers of the study concurred that school administrators should work on strategies to foster more teacher involvement in targeting cyberbullying and should focus on creating a school-wide unified endeavor to decrease cyberbullying in the school environment.

A study conducted by Pusey and Sadera (2011) investigated preservice teachers’ knowledge and understanding of cybersafety, cyberethics, and cybersecurity. The study was conducted with a survey and approximately 318 participants who attended a Mid-Atlantic university and were in an introductory technology integration class at their college. The results of the study showed that these digital native preservice teachers, despite growing up in a time of ubiquitous Internet technology access, did not have sufficient knowledge on cyberbullying and could not teach their future students how to
keep safe while using social-technologies. The researchers determined that the findings of this study demonstrated a need for teachers and preservice teachers to be taught how to properly model and teach cybersafety, cyberethics, and cybersecurity to their students.

Yilmaz (2010) iterated that cyberbullying is a major issue that affects schools and students’ lives in a negative way. Thus, Yilmaz (2010) conducted a research study that examined preservice teachers’ perception of cyberbullying. There were 163 participants who were preservice teachers that took part in the study. About 54% of the participant sample was female, and the remaining 46% was male. The preservice teachers involved in the study were in their last year of the education program. The study was conducted over a 3 week time period, using seven Turkey state universities. The study utilized a web-based survey to gather information and data from participants. The results of the study showed that preservice teachers about to enter the school system as fulltime educators are aware of cyberbullying’s negative effects in students’ lives. Female participants reported more than male participants that they believed cyberbullying was a problem that heavily impacts adolescents. Lastly, about 50% of the preservice teachers’ reported not feeling confident if they had to handle a cyberbullying case and this displayed a gap between Turkish preservice teachers’ awareness of cyberbullying and their feelings of confidence in dealing with cyberbullying. These results implied that even digital native teachers report feeling unprepared to properly prevent and handle cyberbullying, and that all teachers need specific training on cyberbullying so that they will feel confident with dealing with cyberbullying (Yilmaz, 2010).

A phenomenological study was conducted by Akbulut and Cuhadar (2011) that investigated the cyberbullying victimization occurrences among preservice information
technology (IT) teachers, in hopes that by addressing their perceptions of cyberbullying and offering training, it would raise awareness and prevent cyberbullying instances. About 55 participants, both male and female, were involved in the study and were between the ages of 20 and 23 years of age. These participants had been deemed by their education department to be the most technology savvy preservice teachers, because they were required to take several unique technology courses, such as Information and Communication Technologies in Education and Internet-Based Programming. The study was conducted through an informational lecture on cyberbullying, with the intent to generate discussions pertaining to ways to prevent and handle cyberbullying. The lecture was followed by a reflective take home activity, in which the participants were asked to reflect on their own individual experiences, in light of their response to the lecture. The papers were analyzed and investigated by document analysis methods, by the researchers. The study findings rendered that 42 participants had experienced cyberbullying and about 55% of them were female and had reported the incident. According to participants cyberbullying like harassment, masquerading, and flaming, were conducted through the use of online platforms like Facebook, through email, texting, and instant messaging. The participants in the study also reported varying psychological issues that stemmed from the cyberbullying, such as paranoia, anxiety, suicide attempts, and academic failure.

The study conducted by Akbulut and Cuhadar (2011) displays that raising awareness through collaboration and discussion can be pivotal and is important. This current research study used discussion through interviews to provoke conversation with the digitally-wise teachers to invite them to discuss and reflect on their perceptions of cyberbullying.
Educators’ perceptions on cyberbullying are very important in determining how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled cyberbullying cases in their own school environment. While this current study investigated the perceptions of teachers, below is a study on the perceptions of those that teachers report to principals. Principals received the reports from teachers on what is transpiring in the classroom and then documented the incidents. Reviewing how principals regarded cyberbullying cases they experienced in their school environment, can allow for the contrast of stakeholders’ perceptions (teachers and principals), and possibly depict why teachers hold the perceptions that they do.

In a study conducted by Welker (2010), in a United States midwestern suburb, 18 principals from five middle schools and five intermediate schools were recruited using convenience sampling. The study’s purpose was to investigate the administrators’ perceptions of cyberbullying’s effect on the school culture. Data were collected through focus groups, interviews, and documents provided by the school system with data on cyberbullying occurrences. The findings showed that upper middle school grades, seven and eight, cyberbullied more than grades 5 and 6. Also, principals said that teachers and school staff reported cyberbullying more at the beginning of the school year after summer break and after a holiday break. Participants also reported that after cyberbullying has transpired between students outside of school, there is a nine out of ten chance that they find the effects of the cyberbullying follows the students to school soon after. The principals reported that a range of 75 to 100 cyberbullying in-school disruptions in grades seven and eight, in one entire school year; while grades five and six would maybe experience four disruptions in a school year.
The study by Welker (2010) confirmed that educators in school systems do view cyberbullying to have a negative impact on the school environment. The study supported other research (Tokunga, 2010) that cyberbullying, while it may occur at home, influences the school environment. Thus, school staff should be prepared in how to properly define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying in their school environment.

These studies are very important in explaining some perceptions that educators and teachers currently hold on cyberbullying and in understanding how these types of perceptions would disable a teacher from properly defining, preventing, recognizing, and handling cyberbullying. It is very important that teacher perceptions of cyberbullying are informed and that school districts give teachers the proper training on safe technology usage, why it is important, and how to train their students. Despite the research showing how cyberbullying negatively impacts students, teachers are often miseducated or uneducated about the effects of improper Internet use and this can be perceived by their students as not caring and thus students fail to report cyberbullying to teachers or other adults, and often think about, attempt, or commit suicide, or battle other psychological issues such as depression (Cook, 2010; Feinberg & Roberg, 2009a, 2009b; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008, 2010; Sabella, 2006).

**Teacher Strategies for Handling Incidences of Cyberbullying**

Students have been bullied for generations; however, this recent generation of digital native students has the ability to use social technology and the Internet to extend their fist and expand their arena of harm beyond the school yard (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b; Tokunga, 2010). The biggest challenge is preventing cyberbullying, because
people often do not see or understand how harmful it is because of a lack of knowledge and second because there are few people who are willing to respond appropriately. Teachers and parents often complain that they do not have the technology skills to keep up with the kids today and their online behavior, while teachers are also hesitant to intervene because it occurs most often away from the school environment. Despite these challenges, cyberbullying continues to negatively impact adolescents’ lives and the school environment (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b). It is not completely hopeless and researchers have given some strategies that teachers can use to effectively handle cyberbullying. In order for teachers to effectively discipline students, the school should have establish mandatory rules that make students aware that cyberbullying is unacceptable and will result in discipline, such as detention, suspension, and expulsion if needed (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b). School officials should utilize liaison officers and law enforcement to investigate cyberbullying incidents (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b).

Teachers can proactively prevent cyberbullying by educating students about what cyberbullying is and then by having students create antibullying posters and hang them in the classroom or on bulletin boards in the hallway. Clear and lucid rules against bullying should be posted in the classroom. This creates a safe atmosphere for students, where they are reassured not only that the teacher cares, but assured that bullying of any kind is not tolerated in the school environment (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b). Teachers can also provide literature, websites, and other forms of information to parents and students to help educate them about cybersafety and cyberethics. Teachers can also model proper usage of the Internet and social technology and have students simulate being online and
model for fellow classmates the proper use through class skits showing how to be safe online and solve real world arguments.

It is very important that teachers establish a rapport with students that communicates that as a teacher, they are a visible authority figure that has a responsibility to make their school experience both positive and safe (Olweus, 2011). By treating students with respect and acceptance, it demonstrates and models for other students how to positively interact with each other. It also shows students that their teacher cares, which is one of the reasons why some middle school adolescents state as the reason why they do not report cyberbullying to teachers; they do not think teachers care (Cross et al., 2010; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Olweus, 2011).

Teachers should form a relationship with the parents, based on clear communication, to help students be aware that they are in a partnership to handle cyberbullying. Teachers can provide the following websites to parents to monitor cyberbullying. The website mousemail.com is a website where parents can program their child’s phone for only specific usage hours and questionable texts are forwarded to the parents’ cell phone (Roustan, 2010). The website created by Hinduja and Patchin is cyberbullying.us and provides several cyberbullying resources, stories, strategies, fact sheets and strategies to help stakeholders put a stop to cyberbullying (Roustan, 2010).

There are classroom resources for educators that can be used in the school environment to help prevent cyberbullying. The programs created by Olweus Bullying Prevention Program help to create a climate of collaboration and respect, increase the awareness of students of cyberbullying behaviors and prevalence (Olweus, 2011). The Olweus (2011) sponsored programs also help synthesize classrooms that are secure
learning environments where students thrive and discover how to use social technology in productive ways.

If students report cyberbullying, teachers should encourage the student to keep copies the offensive emails or messages, which can be turned in to the principal or law enforcement to better identify the cyberbully (Rogers, 2010). Teachers should also advise students against retaliating, despite the temptation to do so, as it may make matters worse and then they would be breaking the law as well (Rogers, 2010). Immediate action for bullying behavior should be taken according to the school’s bullying rules. Parents of the students involved should always be contacted and notified about the bullying situation (Olweus, 2011).

In conclusion, teachers should be prepared and properly trained to deal with cyberbullying cases in their classroom with strategies and resources to assist students and families in combating students. In order for teachers to effectively role model and teach students, teachers must be trained and educated on the matter. School districts, local universities, and organizations often offer training seminars on cyberbullying for teachers in the local area (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b; Olweus, 2011; Pusey & Sadera, 2011) and teachers should be encouraged by their school administrators to utilize the opportunities (Olweus, 2011; Welker, 2010). Teachers must be lifelong learners and continue learning as the generations continue to change, if they want to effectively reach their students and learn how to effectively define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying issues.

**Generational Issues Related to Technology and Cyberbullying**

Every generation is largely influenced or impacted by their culture’s current events, trends, and even major personalities (Herther, 2009). “The brain is in the
business of reaching to its environment by continuously rewiring itself in response to external experience” (Herther, 2009, p.18). Twenty-first century social technology gadgets not only empower us, but harass us and change us (Gleick, 2002). As Richard Powers stated in his novel, Plowing the Dark, computers alter humans (Powers, 2000). While the terms digital natives and digital immigrants are no longer used by Prensky (2012a) in describing individuals’ technology knowledge, the terms are still often used. Therefore, this section will include information on digital natives and digital immigrants. This section will also include key information defining how both of these groups are united in the term digitally-wise teachers (Prensky, 2012a).

**Digital natives.** Prensky (2001, 2010) and Bennett, Maton, and Kervin (2008) said that digital natives are individuals who were born in or after 1980, into digital culture. Digital natives have grown up with digital technology since they were born. These digitally wise individuals can chat on their cell phone, surf the Web, and blog, all while completing homework (McLeod & Henderson, 2005). According to McLeod and Henderson (2005) the culture of DVDs, wireless Internet service, and PDAs are a part of their culture, not the digital immigrants’ who are normally their teacher. This is why it is important for teachers, regardless of age, to seek digital wisdom in order to truly teach the 21st century student (Prensky, 2012a). Digital wisdom is incorporating 21st century technology into our present thinking and decisive processes, by executing it wisely and sharing with others how to become digitally wise (Prensky, 2012a). Prensky said this sharing can be done by simply helping someone not as skilled in technology use new tools that could help make life simpler for them such as helping a friend who does not use email, to set up a Google email account to communicate.
These full-fledged Internet society members grew up during the time of Google measurements, the amount of time it takes for a Google search to complete, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) communication like Skype, and a telephone slash computer (McLeod & Henderson, 2005). Despite their constant communication, digital natives’ skills with face to face conversations and social contact rhetoric needs work (Herther, 2009). The impact of technology on the generation of digital natives is substantial and is showing that natives may understand how to operate the gadgets, but possess very shallow knowledge about what the black boxes are composed of (Herther, 2009). Thus, while they may be changing technology actively as natives, and using it in unique ways that alter the world, technology is inevitably changing them (Herther, 2009). The lives of digital natives are according to Herther (2009), mediated by digital technology and it interweaves their civic activities, relationships, and interactions socially. While digital native students may use various technological devices for socializing such as iPods, cells phones, and gaming systems, they lack social skills (Herther, 2009). According to Small, Moody, Siddarth, and Brookheimer (2009), one cause of digital native students’ lack of proper social skills, could be that too much time with technology, decreases the amount of time spent developing other useful communication skills.

Hinduja and Patchin (2010b) suggested that adolescents ages 12 through 17, approximately 73% use online social networking sites. More specifically to the focus age of this study, 55% of teens, 12 to 13 years of age have their own social networking profile. Moreno (2010) stated that online social networking sites or virtual communities play a key role in adolescents’ lives in the 21st century. Three popular social networking sites (SNS) are Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace (Haber & Haber, 2007; Hinduja &
Patchin, 2010a; Kelsey, 2007; Moreno, 2010). On these SNS, digital natives are able to create individual profiles. The online profiles that digital natives create can include pictures, audio, videos, and blogs.

SNS popular site Facebook has “130 million U.S. users and 17 billion total yearly visits” (Moreno, 2010, p. 566). Facebook recently surpassed Google’s number of weekly website hits (Moreno, 2010), showing its vast popularity and use. Facebook, in particular allows users to share status updates that allow for a brief text description of users’ current emotions, location, or activity (Moreno, 2010). An example of a status update includes, “Maddox is feeling overwhelmed and tired” or “Nicole received EXCITING news today!” SNS also allows users to share photo albums online and videos. A particular feature of SNS is friending. Friending is when “two profile owners accept each other as online friends, the two profiles become linked and content is mutually accessible” (Moreno, 2010, p. 566). With mutually accessible profile, online friends can share their videos, blogged thoughts, pictures, and can leave messages on each other’s profile pages as feedback (Kelsey, 2007; Moreno, 2010). Often in shared messages between friends on SNS, the language is not common English vernacular. Digital natives today have a language of their own, and this also serves as a barrier, or divide, between parents and children (Haber & Haber, 2007; Kelsey, 2007). Symbols and numbers are commonly used on SNS to communicate one’s emotions or thoughts.

An issue that arises with the sharing of feelings, emotions, pictures, and thoughts on SNS, is that adolescence is a time where children experience a huge milestone in the development of their identity. SNS profiles are slightly dangerous, because they allow users to include only parts of their identity (Moreno, 2010). Adolescents experience
behavior and health risk experiences during their teen years and openly display or reference the experiences in their profiles. Moreno (2010) stated that adolescents’ SNS profiles include over 40% of substance abuse references, 24% reference sex, and 14% reference violence.

Two essential concerns that arise from online social networking site profiles is in regard to the accuracy of the information shared and the effect that the information displayed on the profile has on the friends that view the SNS profiles (Moreno, 2010). Why do students share more information on SNS? According to Moreno (2010) high levels of personal disclosure and free personal expression are encouraged by computer use, which suggests “that the online environment may encourage a teen to discuss or reveal personal information” (Moreno, 2010, p. 566). The powerful role of SNS on adolescent behavior is that these sites can function as a super peer that promotes and creates norms of teen behavior with other teens (Moreno, 2010). The issue of creating a false online profile with information that is not accurate about the true user creates an issue seen in cyberbullying with SNS anonymity (Calemaestra et al., 2010; Christopherson, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010a; Moreno, 2010; Sabella, 2009; Sourander et al., 2012).

Researchers (Carlye & Steinman, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Lei, 2009; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008) have voiced great concerns about adolescents’ use of social networking due to issues of safety from harassment, cyberstalking, hate crimes, school shootings, cyberbullying, and suicide. Social networking has been tied to these issues in media and has led to real-world consequences, where youth have experienced drastic consequences from the misuse of social
networking (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010a). More recently according to Hinduja and Patchin (2010b), adolescents are restricting access of others to their online profiles and now are less likely to share personal information on their public profile. “The most significant advance in persuasion since the radio was invented . . . mass interpersonal persuasion” (Moreno, 2010, p. 567). Facebook was what Moreno (2010) was referring to in the previous quote. Facebook is a SNS that has been argued to have a superior influence over customary media, due to the fact that Facebook combines both interpersonal persuasions with mass media (Moreno, 2010). Opportunities for cyberbullying are also present with venues for communication on SNS with emails, displayed comments or blogs, and instant messages (Haber & Haber, 2007; Kelsey, 2007; Moreno, 2010).

With such great media influence, SNS like Facebook and other forms of social technology, students are given more avenues to bully, rather than primarily traditional face-to-face bullying. With so many avenues to voice their opinion, emotions, and thoughts, adolescents have ample opportunity to harass or ridicule peers online, all while hiding their identity because it is conducted over the Internet, rather than in person (Kelsey, 2007; Moreno, 2010).

**Digital immigrants.** In truth, most of the teachers in the 21st century were born and educated some time ago (McLeod & Henderson, 2005). These teachers are what Prensky (2001, 2010, 2012a) referred to a decade ago as digital immigrants, because they are new to the digital and technological world. McLeod and Henderson (2005) stated they would like to return to simpler times in life with pens, paper, and face to face conversations, unlike their 21st century *digital native* students (Bennett et al., 2008; Prensky, 2001, 2012a; Tapscott, 2008) who enjoy social networking sites like Skype.
The generation born prior to 1980, Prensky (2001) and Bennett et al., (2008), stated are not only digital immigrants to 21st century technology, but are disconnected from the digital natives (Herther, 2009; McLeod & Henderson, 2005). These newcomers to the digital world are challenged in the classroom when teaching digital native students. Student satisfaction with school has declined (Herther, 2009). Our nation’s prize students are finding school uninteresting and the school assignments void of meaning (Prensky, 2010, 2012a). This undeniable crisis is rooted in technological advances that have created a digital gap (Herther, 2009; McLeod & Henderson, 2005; Prensky, 2012a). This educational crisis is not the only crisis that technology has created. Due to the lack of knowledge, skill, and often awareness of cyberbullying by those once referred to as digital immigrants, cyberbullying goes overlooked and unattended to and has become an international epidemic (Li, 2006).

**Digitally-wise teachers.** The digital divide can often be seen clearly with chronological ages, can be bridged by the adults learning and utilizing more about technology (Herther, 2009; Prensky, 2012a). Once referred to as digital immigrants, as described prior, are individuals who were born prior to 1980 (Bennett et al., 2008; Herther, 2009; Prensky 2001), and they were once thought to have minimal experience with technology because of age. This term covers individuals of all ages, but still often is more descriptive of older individuals, as the younger generation is saturated in technology (Prensky, 2012a). The students in today’s classrooms are from a generation highly influenced social networking technology, and huge aspects of their lives are friendships, social interactions, and civic activities. All these aspects of their lives are
carried out via digital technology (Herther, 2009). This generation is known as digital natives and was born in or after 1980 (Tapscott, 2009).

This generation gap has created a gap in the classroom often called the digital divide. This divide is one of the leading causes why parents, teachers and school officials are not properly able to prevent, assess, and deal with cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b, Prensky, 2012a). However, 1980 was over 31 years ago, and some of the digital natives have grown up and have recently graduated from teaching programs and are in classrooms teaching. This divide creates a problem in combating and preventing cyberbullying (Lei, 2009). While it is true that digital immigrants are often less technologically experienced, with technological training and a change in attitude about the usefulness of technology (Herther, 2009) they can become what Prensky called digitally-wise teachers (2012a).

Fernandez and Goldberg (2009) stated that the brain is flexible and never loses its capacity to learn or adapt. They argued that there is no current neuroscience research that supports the idea that digital native students are more equipped to handle technology, despite the fact that they more comfortable with technology than digital immigrants (Fernandez & Goldberg, 2009). Age, they concluded, is not as important as one’s behavior, attitudes, or habits, with regard to learning (Fernandez & Goldberg, 2009). Prensky (2012a) would agree and holds the belief that neuroscience, while advanced compared to previous years, is still trying to fully conceptualize how the brain works. Researchers understand a great deal, but the brain is the most multifaceted thing on earth (Prensky, 2012a). While we know bits and pieces about the plasticity of the brain and how and why it is flexible, Prensky (2012a) was less concerned about the increase in
humans’ understanding of how the brain produces wisdom, but how the brain interacts and corresponds with technologies and products of the technology such as prescription drugs and software.

This interaction and corresponding is *brain gain* and can be seen expanding human’s capabilities, but not quantified in a formula (Prensky, 2012a). Brain gain can be observed and shows human’s expanded capabilities, such as the use of a telescope or microscope to see. Brain gain differs from digital wisdom in that it may take more time to recognize and has to do with our choice in how we use the technology. Brain gain also differs from digital wisdom in that it simply enhances a function of the brain, where digital wisdom uses this enhancement to increase in knowledge and understanding and to become more informed and thus wiser from productively using the technology tool (Prensky, 2012a).

Research calls for teachers to be more knowledgeable of technology and cyberbullying (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Herther, 2009; Lei, 2009; McLeod & Henderson, 2005). Digitally-wise teachers are brought to life in the school environment by first realizing that as a nation, we are failing to develop inventive and critical thinking skills, team work, and problem solving skills in our American students (McLeod & Henderson, 2005). Good teaching is plainly still good teaching; however, it is a priority of understanding how students learn, knowing when and how to mentor and coach, rather than lecture and simply share information (McLeod & Henderson, 2005; Prensky, 2012a). Digitally-wise teachers will need to enable students to not only learn, but own their learning and teachers will be required to use and understand 21st century technology (McLeod & Henderson, 2005; Prensky, 2012a). Twenty-first century technology can be
defined as emerging human inventions that help and improve mankind’s capabilities, and include cell phones, laptops, hand held games, computer software, and social media (Prensky, 2012a).

Digital wisdom is a term coined by Prensky (2012a) to refer to individuals not based on the generation they were raised in or their predisposition to use technology, but on how they allow wisdom to influence how they utilize technology and how technology promotes their own growth of wisdom. Digital wisdom is an ongoing quest, as there will always be new technology (Prensky, 2012a). According to Prensky (2012a) when external technologies are incorporated into our brains, this creates brain gain, which is a part of acquiring digital wisdom. Brain gain itself, he says only increases one’s senses, like using a telescope, hearing aide, and thermometer. Brain gain is simply the enhancement of what the human can do; it is the enhancement of the brain. For example, digital tools have extended our memory with input tools, storage of information electronically, and data gathering tools that are digital and allow for complex data analyses. The power of technology has enhanced the human race in ways that are majorly positive and has freed us to know exceedingly more, be able to do more, and interact and communicate with more people (Prensky, 2012a). Humans are better as a result . . . we are wiser (Prensky, 2012a).

“Today our young people and many older folks as well see that much of our prior received wisdom no longer applies in life” (Prensky, 2012b, Introduction, “The Germ That Got,” para. 25). It is not that this wisdom from the previous generation is not needed, but all of it does not apply anymore. For example, Prensky (2012a) recalled how 10 or 20 years ago, it was perceived as unwise to have an answering machine, but today it
is considered unwise not to. “So we need new guidance on what is wise in our times—a new kind of wisdom, wisdom that takes all this technology into account: digital wisdom” (Prensky, 2012a, Intro, “The Germ,” para. 24). Figuring out when old wisdom does or does not apply and putting new wisdom into works is known as the quest for digital wisdom (Prensky, 2012a). If mankind wants to survive and move into higher levels, then a new type of thinking is necessary (Prensky, 2012a). Thus, new tools that promote thinking are necessary in the 21st century. A superior mind is one of those tools (Prensky, 2012a).

Technology helps us most when it makes us better thinkers who make wiser decisions and choices. We concentrate harder, communicate across the globe boundlessly, recall all past experiences, prevent crimes, like cyberbullying and debate issues more fully—we are wiser. Technology allows us to do this (Prensky, 2012a). There are warnings about technology usage that Prensky (2012a) gave in correspondence to advising a quest for digital wisdom. He referenced Postman (1984) who warned about the dangers of excessive pleasure that can be rooted in ill-usage of technology. “Lacking wisdom they will use technology to literally self-stimulate themselves to death” (Prensky, 2012a, chapter 2, “Wisdom and Technology,” para. 3). All technology needs wisdom to be used. “Each new technology humans invent presents us with a need to think about wisdom, because all technology can be used in positive and negative ways” (Prensky, 2012a, chapter 2, “Wisdom and Technology,” para. 5).

Digital wisdom involves incorporating 21st century technology into our present thinking and decisive processes, by executing it wisely and sharing the results (Prensky, 2012a). Digital wisdom is indispensable and needed, in the 21st century. While humans
are not born digitally wise, they can acquire digital wisdom and become wise when using technology and produce brain enhancement. Digitally-wise teachers use technology to keep students focused and enhance their skills by asking about the verbs, practice, master, learn, of what they need to teach and then sync them with the nouns, tools, technologies, to enable students to learn the verbs (Prensky, 2012a).

Prensky (2012a) began to focus on how to become digitally wise rather than the crisis of the digital divide, he urged the older generation of digital immigrants to let go of mistrust, suspicion, and fear when dealing with technology (Prensky, 2012a). This is especially true for teachers. He urged individuals to ask these two questions, “Is this use of technology wise . . . are there wiser uses of this technology” (Prensky, 2012a, Chapter 2, “Gain Versus Wisdom,” para, 6). Teachers must first realize the need for teaching our students the importance of using technology positively and must always be on a continuous quest of digital wisdom as we teach our students how to use the technology tools to produce brain gain. Teachers are to coach students to use technology wisely, rather than hold them back (Prensky, 2012a).

Digitally-wise teachers allow technology to reposition them by becoming partners with the digital native students as co learners (McLeod & Henderson, 2005). Digitally-wise teachers and students together must be lucid on the end destination, but not lose on the expedition getting there (Block, 1996; McLeod & Henderson, 2005). That means in terms of awareness of cyberbullying and social technology use and misuse, both student and teacher, should be aware of what the end goal for safety is and teachers must be able to provide students will not only the assurance of teaching them how to get there, but provide students with different modes to reach their destination such as interactive
technology lessons, online Internet safety quizzes, role playing, and cyberbullying digital journaling. This quest to digital wisdom is a unifying quest where both native and immigrants are working together to become better, more skillful, and wiser (Prensky, 2012a).

**Digital natives as teachers.** “School often feels pretty much as if we’ve brought in a population of heavily accented, unintelligible, foreigners to lecture them, they often can’t understand what the Immigrants are saying” (Herther, 2009, p. 15). The answer, Herther (2009) said, is to not worry about the gap; but to bring in technological savvy teachers. Digital native teachers may be the answer to the gap (Herther, 2009; Lei, 2009) and be more capable to define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying cases that occur in the school environments, because of their strong background in technology use and their experience as a former digital native student.

Lei (2009) conducted a study with 70 digital native college students who were freshman and enrolled at a university in the northeastern part of the United States. The freshmen were enrolled in the university’s teacher education program. Data was collected through a survey on technology. The survey was pilot tested and given to the study participants to collect and analyze data on their amount of technology use, attitude towards technology, technology proficiency, and education experiences with technology. The results of the study rendered that the digital native college students who had grown up with technology were savvy technology users. However, the data suggested that in order to transition from being a digital native student to a teacher, further systematic technology training is needed to enable them to connect technology with teaching. This means that while digital native teachers may have utilized many of the same ICT devices
that today’s digital native students use, the digital native teachers still need training to be able to effectively teach their current students how to properly use technology safely and appropriately. Without further technology training even digital native teachers may not be able to effectively defined, prevented, recognized, and handled cyberbullying cases in their school environment, despite their strong background. For the purposes of this study, every digital native teacher in the site schools had received technology training and Internet safety usage classes and seminars sponsored by their county, specifically for teachers. Lei (2009) concurred that thorough research has not been conducted to find out how digital native teachers impact the classroom, use technology to teach and deal with issues that technology creates such as cyberbullying. This current research study addressed this gap in literature and examined digital native teachers’ perceptions on cyberbullying and how those perceptions affect how they define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying cases.

The dangers of the misuse of SNS by adolescents, has been underestimated by parents, school officials, teachers, and counselors (Haber & Haber, 2007; Herther, 2009; Li, 2006). Digital immigrant teachers have assumed the image of being unwilling and reluctant with utilizing new technology (Eteokleous, 2008; MacMillan, Liu, & Timmons, 1997), and they are less knowledgeable about technology and social networking than their students (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007). The hope is that the digital native teachers will not only be as knowledgeable about technology as their students, but also be more aware of cyberbullying.

A study conducted by Inman (2010) with preservice teachers who were digital native college students, purposively selected 38 students. The study’s goal was to
examine digital native undergraduate students’ level of comfort with digital technologies and used a mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative data). The preservice teachers were asked to complete a journal, three surveys, and two focus groups for the study. The preservice teachers explored the virtual world, Second Life, which had identified purposes for collaboration amongst students and encouraging brainstorming. However, the preservice teachers had issues with Second Life and were not willing at first to accept it as an educational tool. The researcher concluded, like Lei, (2009) that the common misperception that digital native as preservice teachers being more confident or skilled with newer technology is not true. Only 26% of participants at the end of the study said they would feel confident using Second Life in their own classrooms with students and only 18% stated being comfortable simply using virtual worlds in the future with students. There was a possibility for the study’s findings to show that the digitally-wise teachers were not familiar with all of the digital technologies and social networking sites, that today’s digital native students use. This showed how rapidly technology continues to change, and should encourage teachers and parents to stay abreast on the various types of technology that youth are using, so that adults are able to effectively define, prevent, recognize, and handle the misuse of social technology.

While the majority of preservice and inservice teachers understand the significant effects of cyberbullying on youth, these teachers do not see cyberbullying as a problem in schools (Ryan, Kariuiki, & Yilmaz, 2011). Ryan et al. (2011) examined Canadian and Turkish preservice teachers’ perceptions on cyberbullying. A web-based survey was taken by 163 Turkish preservice teachers and 241 Canadian preservice teachers who were enrolled in state universities in teacher preparation programs. The results of the study
showed that both samples of participants did not believe that their teacher preparation program was preparing them to handle cyberbullying. Canadian preservice teachers responded that they did not believe they could effectively identify or control cyberbullying, but reported that in their future classrooms they would try. Turkish preservice teachers reported that while they felt they could effectively identify cyberbullying, they were not confident that they could manage it.

The study conducted by Ryan et al., (2011), provided a strong rationale for the need of this current research study on digitally-wise teachers, as digital native preservice teachers undergo an intense period of studying instruction, policy, teaching, and curriculum, they frequently report feeling ill prepared to effectively manage a classroom and are unaware of the implications of cyberbullying in the school environment (Ryan et al., 2011).

At many schools in the U.S., school districts have provided students with lap-tops and this adds additional liability and concern for student Internet safety and the misuse of social technology (Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007). To be effective teachers for today’s digital native students and teachers must integrate ethics of conflict in their individual classrooms, model strategies for their students, and permit a small portion of the day to rehearse the strategies to handle conflict (Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007). In order to properly do this and to define, prevent, recognize, and handle bullying and victimization that often occurs with the misuse of social technology, teachers must be trained in how to use technology. This was the purpose of this study, to examine how teachers who have been properly trained in technology use perceive cyberbullying and how their perceptions influence how they define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying cases.
School’s Legal Liability with Cyberbullying

Government and court definitions of bullying and cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is often hard for school officials and parents to see and it often goes unnoticed until it is too late (Kelsey, 2007). Sadly, not all school officials see cyberbullying as a problem and often see bullying all together as a rite of passage (Anderson & Sturm, 2007). Despite what schools classify bullying via technological devices, cyberbullying is a problem that will not disappear, just like technology is not likely to disappear (Kelsey, 2007). The exercise of speech in the United States is protected under the First Amendment unless it creates a “clear and present danger” (Alexander & Alexander, 2002, p. 409). The clear and present danger test never has quite fit public schools and in the past when the Court did advance the test, public school attendance for students and families was a privilege, not a right (Alexander & Alexander, 2012). Thus, being suspended or expelled from school was a consequence of students violating the First Amendment and the Courts repressing student speech (Alexander & Alexander, 2012).

In regards to cyberbullying, Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District (1969) is a precedent case (described below) that is currently the balancing test where student speech is protected by the First Amendment until according to Tinker, the speech and expression causes a disruption in the school environment. When one student’s speech or expression disturbs the learning environment or safety of another student, school officials are warranted to discipline the bullying perpetrator without infringing on the perpetrator’s constitutional rights (Alexander & Alexander, 2012; Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District, 1969).
Currently, in the United States schools have a daunting responsibility and task of protecting students from the misuse of modern technology along with protecting the etiquette and report of the school. The outdated horse and buggy laws do not apply well to cases involving 21st century modern technology. The challenge schools often face is determining the manner, place, and time of a hard-copy, which is not applicable to cyberbullying via electronic communication. Also, there has to be proof that the electronic communication affected the school environment and the students’ welfare (Alexander & Alexander, 2012) before schools are considered liable for the cyberbullying.

There is no bullying law, yet there is jurisprudence within school law that “emanates from litigation involving students in civil and criminal actions that have transpired in recent years in the public schools” (Alexander & Alexander, 2012, p. 656). The civil law addresses bullying chiefly as intentional interference such as battery or attack and negligence of stakeholders (school districts, school officials, teachers, parents) (Alexander & Alexander, 2012).

A court in California, 2010, stated that cyberbullying was:

Online bullying, called cyberbullying, happens when teens use the Internet, cell phones, or other devices to send post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person . . . it can cause a variety of reactions in teens . . . report feeling angry, hurt, embarrassed, or scared, Children have killed each other and committed suicides. (Alexander & Alexander, 2012, p. 656).

Various state legislatures have recently enforced statues of antibullying to
prevent cyberbullying and bullying (Alexander & Alexander, 2012). There is a federal constitution law and statutory law that will hold the school liable based on Section 1983 of the Civil Rights Act of 1871, that is invoked if and when public schools are found to be deliberately indifferent to a victim and the school stakeholders have been found incompetent in preventing the injury (Alexander & Alexander, 2012).

School districts are not held liable for bullies’ actions unless the acts committed are seen as foreseeable by school officials. Foreseeable means that it was “specific, prior knowledge of the danger that caused the injury” (Alexander & Alexander, 2012, p. 658). School teachers and administrators are granted immunity from bullying situations where they are seen to have conditional or qualified privileges anti liability in regards to their discretionary acts. For example, in a Georgia Supreme Court case the court ruled that the state constitution impose no ministerial duty on school officials to develop and implement a safety ministerial plan from bullying, thus a teacher’s duties need only to be discretionary, not ministerial (Alexander & Alexander, 2012). An example of a discretionary act is supervision of children, and thus if a student being supervised is assaulted during class by another student, the teacher will not be held as negligent, but has immunity based on their discretionary act (Alexander & Alexander, 2012).

While cyberbullying does fall under the U.S. government’s definition of bullying, it is described as being carried out with pictures or words over the Internet, electronic devices, and email (Alexander & Alexander, 2012). Cyberbullying often is seen as speech that is protected constitutionally, unless found to “communicate a serious expression of intent to commit an act of unlawful violence to a particular individual or
group of individuals . . . not uttered in jest, idle talk . . . serious communication” (Alexander & Alexander, 2012, p. 656).

**Cyberbullying court cases and decisions.** The very lucid and present danger that cyberbullying brings into the lives of the students and into the school environment (Tokunga, 2010) has been noted by several court cases within the United States (Alexander & Alexander, 2012). *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District* (1969), was a landmark case in which the U.S. Supreme Court declared that students who attend public schools would not in essence shed their rights upheld by the constitution, pertaining to freedom of expression or speech (Alexander & Alexander, 2012; *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School Dist.*, 1969). This removed the judicial traditional view of public school attendance being a privilege, and now it was seen as a right (Alexander & Alexander, 2012). *Tinker* (1969) also established a balancing responsibility between students that states that students must respect individual obligations to the state and be respectful of the rights of other students, thus fulfilling obligations to their public school (Alexander & Alexander, 2012).

*Tinker* (1969) allowed school officials to discipline cyberbullying perpetrators, who have not been respectful of the rights of their school officials or peers and have caused a disruption in the learning environment. This is substantial in empowering school officials to properly handle cyberbullying cases in the school environment. The cases described below, give further examples how the precedent case of *Tinker* (1969), has empowered adult stakeholders, such as school officials to protect their students by properly deal with cyberbullying cases in their school environment.
A guidepost case dealing with the ever changing Internet law is *Wisniewski v. Board of Education of the Weedsport Central School District* (2007), where a student constructed a visual of a pistol shooting a person in the head with the words “Kill Mr. V”, who was an English teacher (Alexander & Alexander, p. 443). *Tinker* was invoked by the courts saying “off campus conduct can create a foreseeable risk of substantial disruption” (Alexander & Alexander, 2012, p. 444). The courts upheld the suspension of the student for using technological modes of communication to threaten a teacher with cyberbullying.

In the case *United States v. Lori Drew* (2009), a 13 year old girl was cyberbullied by a mother who created an alias on the SNS MySpace and pretended to be a teenage boy. Using MySpace communication tools, the mother pretending to be the teenage boy developed a flirtatious relationship with the girl, but after months of flirting, started to send mean messages. The cruel messages led to the 13 year old to committing suicide in 2006. The adult mother, Lasik Dew (pseudonym) was convicted of violating Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, and was indicted by the U. S. District Court in California, but later the case was acquitted (Alexander & Alexander, 2012). Despite the conclusion of the case, H.R. 1966 was sponsored by Representative Linda Sanchez that amended “Chapter 41 of title 18 of the United States Code to include a section on cyberbullying” (Meredith, 2010, p. 118). In the case, *JS v. Blue Mountain School District* (2008), two students were suspended 10 days, for creating a fake MySpace profile for their principal, Mr. X. The two students did not use his real name but included a picture of him and labeled him as a pedophile on the profile. The *Tinker* (1969) precedent was upheld in this case; the school was triumphant in court against the students, because the school used discipline due to
the coarse and offensive speech—even if it was off campus, (JS v. Blue Mountain School Dist. 2008) and did not have a “substantial disruption” (Alexander & Alexander, 2012, p. 409).

In the case Doninger v. Niehoff (2008), a student publicly posted a tasteless and rude message on a web blog (online communication tool) that was complaining about the school superintendent and principal for canceling a school event called Jam-Fest (Alexander & Alexander, 2012; Doninger v. Niehoff, 2008). The student was then disqualified from the school SCA elections, by the school as discipline for posting the blog. The Tinker (1969) precedent was used by the courts, and held that it was foreseeable that the off campus speech posted in on an online blog, by the student about the principal and superintendent, would cause a disruption (Alexander & Alexander, 2012; Doninger & Niehoff, 2008).

In the Coy v. Board of Education (2002), the court ruled against the school saying that the school was unable to prove that a student’s created website effected the school environment. The student had created a website which featured three peers’ pictures and labeled the peers as losers. The student even accessed the site during the school day on the premise.

In conclusion to all of these cases, educational malpractice and negligence is rarely charged to school districts and officials in cases of cyberbullying as long as the schools did not have foreseeability that the bullying would harm the potential victim or plaintiff. Also, in cases where the perpetrator conducted cyberbullying off of the school campus, the courts upheld the school’s suit, if the school could prove that the cyberbullying caused a disruption in the learning environment. All of these cases are
important in this research study, because school officials play a major role in the
deriving, preventing, recognizing, and handling of cyberbullying cases. If administrators,
teachers, and counselors do not properly handle cases of cyberbullying, the cyberbullying
victim and family can file a lawsuit against the school for negligence. Thus, with
teachers on the front line of defense in classrooms every day, this study hopefully helped
to examine how digitally-wise middle school teachers deal with cyberbullying and has
furthered the literature on teacher perceptions of cyberbullying.

Archival data in the form of school public records with information pertaining to
types and incidences of cyberbullying and bullying incidences was requested from the
county and/or site schools in the form of the county’s stakeholder survey which contained
the perceptions of teachers. This information was not available, but would have been
useful in providing background information on how digitally-wise teachers handle
cyberbullying. Research suggests that individuals’ perceptions of safety, being cared
about, and being knowledgeable of procedures, greatly impact how teachers handle
cyberbullying.

I collected information from the county of lesson plans utilized to prevent
cyberbullying by teaching lessons that teach their students how to define, recognize,
handle, or prevent cyberbullying. The lesson plans were from Rachel’s Challenge, PINK
and other guidance counseling lessons utilized in Hilltop County Middle Schools.
Finally, school environment perception archival data was collected each school year
through a countywide questionnaire sent home with each student in the county for parents
to fill out. Teachers and students are also given a questionnaire to fill out. The
questionnaire asks questions dealing with the safety of the school, parent and teacher
involvement, teacher-student relationships, and stakeholders’ perceptions of each other. This helped provide more background for the study and also revealed a glimpse of the perceptions of all stakeholders, including the students. The records also gave me information that can help shape the questions for the interview that will possibly help retrieve information from participants (Creswell, 2007).

Summary

It is very important to study the perceptions, realities, and knowledge about cyberbullying that digitally-wise middle school teachers hold, so that these perceptions can be understood and analyzed to help improve and create new proactive actions of adults and peer-mentors when dealing with cyberbullying, thereby providing new experiences for the students (Moustakas, 1994). This case study is very important to field of education, because cyberbullying truly is a new alarming worldwide pandemic of the 21st century (Li, 2006) that is exceedingly affecting the school officials, parents, and peer-mentors in the school environment (Tokunga, 2010). There is little to no research in the field on the perceptions of cyberbullying that digitally-wise middle school teachers hold and how they define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying cases in their school environment (Herther, 2009; Lei, 2009; McLeod & Henderson, 2005).

This research study on digitally-wise middle school teachers’ perceptions will help school officials and administrators identify whether further more technology experience and training actually helps teachers better respond to cyberbullying. This study helped to identify what digitally-wise middle school teachers found helpful and useful for combating cyberbullying, in their lived technology experiences and training. Lastly, the study also helped to identify what digitally-wise middle school teachers think
would better help them to respond to cyberbullying. A lack of knowledge about
cyberbullying and little knowledge on what best equips school officials to successfully
respond to cyberbullying, makes adults less capable of providing positive support (Cross
et al., 2010). By researching middle school digitally-wise teachers’ perceptions of
cyberbullying, educators and school administration will be able to utilize the research of
what these teachers feel works to better train their middle school teachers, and try new
methods to accurately respond and intervene in bullying cases. The research can also
assist the selected district to further critique their program and training to better equip
their staff and respond (handle) to students, to proactively prevent and recognize
cyberbullying.

Digitally-wise teachers have an advantage of knowing more about technology;
however, they must also be effective teachers in the classroom who can support as well as
maintain a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. This is often a challenge for
secondary teachers, because the brevity of contact they have each day with their students
(Sullivan et al., 2006). First an authoritative teacher must practice the morals that under
gird their school’s anti-bullying method. Teachers should be cognizant and ready to
handle adolescents’ ever changing behavior.

Other great traits of authoritative teachers are that they make their classroom a
sanctuary away from turbulent adolescent fluctuations, are aware of adolescences’
relationship with peers, role-model appropriate social behavior, and actively give support
their students. Authoritative teachers are in control and fair; they are aware of the
stresses that adolescents face, including types of bullying (Sullivan et al., 2006).
Ultimately, an authoritative, digitally-wise teacher realizes that safe classrooms will
create a superior learning situation, where students feel accepted and welcomed. They
will strive to effectively define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying cases when
they occur in their school environment.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the experiences of middle school, digitally-wise teachers regarding how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying as well as help-seeking behaviors in one school district located in Southern Virginia. Data collection consisted of an online questionnaire, interviews, and archival data. After gathering information and coding, corresponding patterns were made to create naturalistic generalizations for the readers of the study. This study was designed to help educators and professionals comprehend and understand the underpinning of their beliefs and views that influence their decisions when dealing with cyberbullying. Often teachers have assumptions about what characteristic overt bullying looks like; however, are more unlikely to recognize indirect or covert bullying. Understanding the actions Virginia digitally-wise, middle school teachers constituted as cyberbullying may help lessen cases of peer victimization amongst their students. This is important according to Mishna et al. (2005) because for teachers to recognize that how they understand and respond to bullying can have an effect on their students . . . to provide information to teachers on the factors that can influence individuals decisions . . . help them recognize discrepancies between espoused views and their reactions to bullying incidents (p. 732).

This chapter will cover the research design, the researcher’s role, participants, a description of the research site along with data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, trustworthiness and ethical issues will be discussed.
Design

The qualitative design for this research was a case study because the purpose was to grasp the perceptions of digitally-wise teachers regarding cyberbullying, a complex and intricate issue. The case study was an appropriate qualitative design because I wanted to better understand the phenomenon of cyberbullying. While analyzing how digitally-wise teachers defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying in their school environment, it was important to remember that the phenomena found in the study took its meaning and depended on the context or boundaries of the study. The boundary set in this study was the location of Hilltop County, Virginia. Hilltop County is different than many surrounding school systems because of their adopted 21st century laptop initiative, where every teacher and secondary student received a DELL Inc., laptop. Thus, the experiences of these Virginia teachers were bound within the context of their school environment and district.

Cases studies are geared toward emic inquiry. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) emic inquiry, is research that is “carried out with an inside perspective” (p. 27). This means that in emic inquiry, as a naturalistic inquirer, I tended toward the reconstruction of my participants’ constructions rather than toward a construction that I brought to the inquiry. Stake (1995) argued, that while as an inexperienced researcher I may have started off my study with etic issues, yet I allowed these issues to evolve to where they reflected the inquiry and issues of the actors or participants.

In choosing a case study to research, it was important that I narrow my study to a case for analysis. To keep my topic from being too broad I followed Stake’s (1995) suggestion of setting boundaries on the case. The following are recommendations of how
to successfully ensure that my study remains in scope—point in time and place (Creswell, 2003), point in time and activity (Stake, 1995), and meaning and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I tried to discover the perceptions of digitally-wise teachers with regard to how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying, and the case was bound by context of place within Hilltop County Public Schools at four site schools, time, and sample size of seven participants.

I used propositions (Yin, 2003) or issues (Stake, 1995) to assist in guiding my case. According to Stake (1995) “issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts . . . important in studying cases” (p. 17). The propositions or issues came from literature and personal/professional experience (Baxter & Jack, 2008). See Figure 1 for the case study propositions/issues. Only a few distinct propositions were used to help create the framework of the study and maintain the focus of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). The propositions used in this study developed and helped with data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995).
Potential Propositions/Issues (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984)

*These are only examples of literature and are not inclusive of the full literature review*

**Professional Experience and Literature**

- Bennett et al., 2008
- Eteokleous, 2008
- Herther, 2009
- Lei, 2009
- McLeod & Henderson, 2005
- Prensky, 2012a, 2012b
- Prensky, 2010
- Tapscott, 2009
- Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007

**Literature**

- Hinduja & Patchin, 2007
- Hinduja & Patchin, 2008
- Li, 2006
- Tokunga, 2006
- Yates & Smith, 1989
- Alexander & Alexander, 2012
- Cross et al., 2009
- Li, 2006
- Sasseroli & Ruggiero, 2005
- Williams & Cornel, 2006

Middle school students have the highest cases of cyberbullying, thus middle school teachers are more likely to deal with this new worldwide epidemic, thus need to know how to *prevent* and *recognize* cyberbullying.

Middle school teachers are often unable to recognize cyberbullying and unequipped with *strategies* to proactively *handle* help-seeking from students who experience cyberbullying.

The conceptual framework can (a) identify who will not and who will be a part of the research study; (b) collect constructs into organized bins; and (c) elaborate on relationships present in regards to experience, theory, and/or logic (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake 1995; Yin, 1984). My initial framework progressed and grew throughout the study and the final framework, after data analysis included all emerged themes and issues from the case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 1984). To ensure that my research did not become deductive, I kept a reflective journal and discussed with my peer reviewer during...
the study, to help ascertain whether or not my thinking in the study became overly driven by the framework (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 1984) and also assessed if I was allowing emic issues into the study (Stake, 1995).

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this research study was to examine and discover digitally-wise teachers’ perceptions relating to cyberbullying. The following questions were guiding questions for the study.

**Research Question 1**: How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers define, and recognize cyberbullying?

**Research Question 2**: How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers currently prevent and handle cyberbullying and help-seeking behaviors from their middle school students?

**Participants**

A pool of seven participants was recruited (Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1989), and involved in the research study. The sample of participants were selected using purposive sampling, which works exceedingly well when the participants studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Purposive sampling focuses only on participants who meet set criteria and have experienced the phenomenon of having worked in a middle school setting and been trained technologically by HCPS. All participants were Virginia digitally-wise, middle school teachers who taught in Hilltop County (suburban Virginia) and had taught in the county for at least one full school year. There were six female participants selected, and one male participant selected. To determine eligible participants, a thorough selection
process utilizing online surveys and consent forms were used to identify possible candidates for the study. I delimited my sample to only digitally-wise middle school teachers who fit the given criteria, and were willing to share their perceptions on the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The criteria for digitally-wise teachers were as follows:

1. The teacher must be a quality controller in their own classroom, meaning that they must have received 21st century technology training on how to facilitate lessons with technology that allow students to access 21st century technology in the classroom and promote higher order thinking skills.

2. The teacher must have received training on ethical use of technology and must ethically train students on proper and wise use of technology.

3. The teacher must currently use multiple emerging human inventions that help and improve mankind’s capabilities, also known as 21st century technology tools.

In relation to this study these tools include applications on the district provided DELL Inc., laptop, Promethean Board, Activotes, ProScope, Skype, and Blogs are all considered 21st century technology tools.

Verification of the teachers occurred by the Research and Planning Department of HCPS, who used their employee database to select all possible participants and send the electronic interest flyer to at the four chosen schools. While the true need was to have teachers who showed an interest in this epidemic of cyberbullying and how they could positively relate to students, the first step was to assess the current perceptions of these teachers, which is where the gap in literature was before beginning this research study.

Snowballing was used because a larger pool of participants was needed and there was a low number of responses of interested participants. Also, to increase the number in
the participant pool snowballing occurred by word of mouth of the middle school teachers selected, with other teachers they knew who fit criteria and were interested in sharing on their own perceptions, experiences, and awareness of the phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During the study, seven digitally-wise middle school teachers were individually interviewed and given an online questionnaire to complete. Table 1 provides demographic information on each of the teachers involved in the study. The names of the participants were not used in the study. Rather, each participant had pseudonyms that were used to protect their identity.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Grades Taught Currently</th>
<th>Years Taught</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Miller</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Durham</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>6, 8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Davis</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Harris</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Richard</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Robinson</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. In the questionnaire teachers responded that they had taught the same grade they currently taught for the past 1-3 years.
Site

The site for the study was Hilltop County Public Schools at four of their western suburban middle schools—Shoreplain Middle School, Cloves Middle School, Fairflex Middle School and Copeplain Middle School (pseudonyms used). Four schools were selected in the county based on convenience for the study and were the schools where willing participants selected for the study worked, as snowballing occurred.

This county was chosen based on their current technology initiative. The Hilltop County Public Schools adopted a 1-1 laptop initiative that embraced technology. This laptop initiative provided DELL Inc. laptops for every middle and high school student in Hilltop County. Each laptop was equipped with Internet capabilities and was used actively throughout the school day. Elementary school students were also provided with Apple Computer Inc., classroom computers, but they were not individual computers and did not go home with them, as the middle and high school students’ did.

When the county first implemented this program, 2001, they had several problems and breaches of security, with students and their laptops; however, more recently took very proactive measures to maintain a safe learning atmosphere for students (Lemke & Martin, 2004). These measures included mandatory parent involvement and Internet Safety Conduct signatures from parents, students, teachers, and administrators. The county created several online educational videos to educate adults and students about cyberbullying, as well as having counselors teach all grades kindergarten through twelfth about cyberbullying. This research will benefit this county’s technology initiative by providing them useful information about how to help adjust and create more proactive
programs and further educate parents and school staff of how to effectively aide and intervene in cyberbullying and bullying cases.

The county’s 21st century technology goal is to educate and train students “to live, learn, and work successfully in an increasingly complex and information-rich society . . . use technology effectively” (VDOE, 2013c, p. 1). The county’s vision was to close the digital divide and this is done by providing usage of Internet access and computers to each enrolled student. This permitted students in Hilltop County Public Schools (HCPS) to have a direct route to diverse, rich, and up-to-date information that was not accessible in the pre-21st century classroom. The county included their staff in the initiatives, working with principals, teachers, and specialists within the county to help educate, implement, and identify digital and technological supports and resources that supported a solid learning environment for students in the classroom (VDOE, 2013c). Each of the stakeholders listed above were also provided with a laptop-Apple Computer Inc., at the elementary level and DELL Inc., at the middle and high school (secondary) school level.

The county and schools were chosen also for convenience and proximity, in addition to the 21st century laptop initiative. The county currently serves and educates a diverse population of approximately 48,981 students (see Table 2). The demographics of the county were all provided by the county through Research and Planning and depict how the demographics are varied from a range of various ethnicities, economic status, and genders. Hilltop County reported having an attendance rate of 96% of the children who lived within their school district boundary lines. This is compared to the state of Virginia’s attendance rate of 95%. Hilltop County reported that out of the 48,981 students who attend their schools, 97% of the students are promoted to the next grade the
following year. The county graduation rate reported was 88.3% and the county dropout rate was 6.86%.

Table 2

*Student Membership by Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multi-Racial</th>
<th>A. Indian</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>N. Hawaiian</th>
<th>TL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>4,124</td>
<td>17,844</td>
<td>3,491</td>
<td>21,649</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* TL-total number of students enrolled. A. Indian= American Indian or Alaska Native. N. Hawaiian= Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Pre-K enrollment excluded.

Hilltop County is a prestigious school division known for its outstanding educational endeavors and renowned academic program. In 2012, the Virginia state governor, Governor Bob McDonnell and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) awarded Hilltop County for being a high-performing school division (VDOE, 2013c). The county’s *good name* in the state is a direct reflection of their professional and educated staff.

Most academic core classes are taught by teachers who meet federal qualifications in that subject area with less than 1% in 2009-2010 who did not meet qualifications (VDOE, 2010h). An astounding 49% of the teachers in the county held a Master’s Degree and 1% held a Doctoral Degree (VDOE, 2010j). According to the VDOE (2010i), 6% of the county’s teachers were provisionally licensed.

The county’s outstanding staff vitae positively plays a role in the school’s accreditation history. Out of the 68 elementary, middle, and high school in the county, all but one school maintained full accreditation (VDOE, 2010a). For the particulars of this study, all of the middle schools were fully accredited. However, on a federal level
when speaking of the controversial No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the county did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) 2010-2011 school year (VDOE, 2010b). None of the middle schools met AYP. From a state view, the Commonwealth of Virginia as a whole did not meet AYP 2010-2011, either (VDOE, 2010b).

The school division’s safety played a role in the accreditation standards required by VDOE. The latest report available was the 2008-2009, safety category results. A total of 538 offenses (violations of HCPS Code of Conduct) were reported and documented as offenses against students and 251 offenses made against school staff (VDOE, 2010c). Around 481 technology offenses were documented, which was an increase of 193 offenses from the previous 2007-2008 school year (VDOE, 2010c). Other categories of reported safety violations were weapons offenses, other offenses against persons, alcohol, tobacco, and other drug offenses, property offenses, disorderly or disruptive behavior offenses, and all other offenses (VDOE, 2010c).

Copeplain Middle School is a public school with approximately 967 students and Fairflex Middle School is a public school as well, that serves approximately 1,095. Shoreplain Middle School serves approximately 990 students and Cloves Middle School serves 811 students. All four schools are located in the esteemed Hilltop County Public Schools, which is comprised of five adjoined school districts. The socioeconomics of the schools are approximately the same. The middle schools are diverse with ethnicities of Caucasians, African Americans, Asians, and Latinos, and are majority middle-upper class backgrounds. While the case was bounded to the entire school system, these four schools were selected in the county with permission from Research and Planning Department in Hilltop County, for convenience and location to the researcher. Also, to reach participant
saturation for the case study a plan to recruit a minimum of 10 participants was needed, however after few responses to several snowballing attempts on behalf of the researcher; seven participants were asked to participate in the study. Originally, the original recruitment email sent by Research and Planning in Hilltop County, was sent to a pool of approximately 200 teachers.

The county serves a very diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population that makes up its five adjoining school districts. All current statistics information was provided by Hilltop County. The current overall make-up of the county is currently 44% White, 36% Black, 8% Asian, and 7% Hispanic. However, the diversity differs between schools. Each of the schools involved in the study were located in the western part of the county which serves an affluent clientele. Each school has designated technology teachers at each location who assist with technology lessons and laptop issues.

Shoreplain Middle School serves a population of 990 students. The racial make-up of the school is approximately 10% Hispanic, 11% Asian, 18% Black, and 55% White. Cloves Middle School has a population of 811 students. The racial make-up of the school is approximately 4% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 4% Black, and 80% White. Fairflex Middle School has a population of 1095 students. The racial make-up of the school is approximately 9% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 13% Black, and 68% White. Copeplain Middle School has a population of 967 students. The racial make-up of the school is 6% Hispanic, 13% Asian, 25% Black, and 52% White.

During the research study, information on reported incidences of cyberbullying were requested from the county, however the county responded that they did not have specific data on cyberbullying. Thus, no archival data is included in the research study.
pertaining to cases of cyberbullying in Hilltop County. The county did however, provide a link to the results of the teacher’s perception of Hilltop County, which provided background information on how teachers define, prevent, handle, and recognize cyberbullying.

**Procedures**

Multiple data collection methods including questionnaires, archival data, and interviews were used in this case study. The chosen methods provided an enhanced understanding of how digitally-wise middle school teachers defined, prevented, recognized, and handled cyberbullying. I first secured Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before proceeding with research (see Appendix A). Upon gaining approval from Hilltop County Public Schools (see Appendix B), I received informed consent from participants (see Appendix C). All of the individual interviews were recorded and transcribed for review by the researcher.

**The Researcher’s Role**

I am a fourth grade teacher in Hilltop County Public Schools and graduated from Hilltop County Public Schools in 2003, and furthered my studies at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) where I pursued a Bachelor’s degree in general science and a Master’s degree in teaching. After graduating from VCU in 2009, I applied to Liberty University where I am pursuing a doctorate and recently earned an Educational Specialist degree in education for administration and supervision. I am also enrolled in the women’s leadership program at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

I have five years’ of teaching experience (pre-K to fifth grade). All personal biases such as working for the county, attending the Hilltop County Schools, and living in
the community relating to my own experiences were bracketed, so that I could view the phenomenon with a fresh perspective and be receptive when hearing the participants detailed their experiences with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Stake, 1995). This was necessary in order to launch the research study without prior knowledge, beliefs, or prior conceptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994) and give way to emic issues (Stake, 1995).

I adhered to a constructivist-interpretive view and used descriptive interpretation and categorical aggregation from the participants’ feedback to synthesize corresponding patterns (Stake, 1995). This constructivist viewpoint stems from Vygotsky’s social-constructivism that an individual’s beliefs and reality are constructed based on their own world experiences (Vygotsky, 1986). Thus, while investigating the experiences of the research participants, I used an interpretive unbiased view while setting aside my own preconceptions and prejudgments to truly uncover the essence of the researched case phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1985; Yin, 1984). As the researcher I conducted the research with a Christian worldview, seeing my participants as valuable, and making sure that they were informed participants not deceived as to what the study was about (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994).

**Data Collection**

Data for this case study was collected through multiple procedures to ensure triangulation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Stake 1995). Data collection started the same or following week that participants were selected. Before any research was carried out, permission from the IRB at Liberty University was received, as well as permission from Hilltop County School’s approval for research (see Appendix B). Once approval was
granted, an invitation recruitment flyer for the study was sent to the Hilltop County Research and Planning Department. They emailed all teachers at Shoreplain, Cloves, Copeplain and Fairflex Middle Schools, sent a recruitment flyer (see Appendix D) that I created. In the recruitment flyer, my contact information was included and since I am also an employee of Hilltop County Public Schools, I primarily used my Liberty University email for all electronic correspondence during this case study. In the recruitment flyer, there was a list of specifications of what a digitally wise teacher is according to literature from Prensky (2012a), and the form stated that interested participants who met the criteria were invited to participate (see Appendix D). A link to the consent form (see Appendix C) was included in the recruitment flyer, and allowed interested participants to volunteer to participate in the study by electronically signing their name. The consent forms contained a verification section that was used by the researcher, to verify that interested participants were digitally wise. Interested participants needed to respond to six verification questions, that I used to determine if they were digitally wise.

Also, the consent form verified that the participants were willing to have all interviews tape-recorded; data results published, and showed participants’ agreement to participate in the qualitative study (Fraelich, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 198;). Also, in the consent form I conveyed to the middle school teachers that I would share the information gathered from interviews with them, I would remove any identifying data such as their name, and site school name, and that they were able to leave or stop the study at any time (Fraelich, 1989). On the bottom of the consent form interested participants had the option of choosing a pseudonym, and were asked to provide contact information (phone
number, email address). I selected the first seven interested participants who met the criteria of being digitally wise and who electronically submitted their consent form to participate in research.

After I received all consent forms, if the participant listed their phone number, I attempted to personally contact them either by phone or in person each to thank them for volunteering to participate in the study. Some participants indicated that they would rather be contacted by email. I also scheduled a date and time for the individual interview during this phone call (see Appendix E). Immediately following the phone call I sent an acceptance email (see Appendix F) reflecting the agreed upon date and time for the interview, and a link to the Online Questionnaire (see Appendix G). The online questionnaire was created by me, and was posted by the survey website, SurveyMonkey. The online questionnaire was used to retrieve information and perceptions that the participants were willing to share, on the phenomenon of cyberbullying, that I was seeking to understand and generalize (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

The electronic questionnaire was organized in seven parts and was piloted with a teacher and school administrator before being used in the study. The questionnaire had 34 questions and inquired about the teachers’ personal information, technology background, technology training, awareness, knowledge and perceptions of cyberbullying, current and desired strategies used to combat cyberbullying, digital wisdom, and self-evaluation. There was an expiration date set for the online questionnaire for 1 week after it was sent to individual teachers, to ensure a timely completion of the questionnaire and study. Within 1 week after all participants have completed the questionnaire, the individual interviews took place.
Abridged lesson plans were collected from each participant in the study, but were not used for the triangulation of data in the research study. The mini-lesson plans that participants completed before starting the research study were utilized as a part of the verification section of the Consent Form, to ensure that teachers were truly digitally wise and teachers were asked to specify different types of technology tools they use to teach everyday lessons. However, while it was not planned to retrieve any lesson plans during the research study for triangulation of data, lesson plans were shared by some teachers as a way that they prevent cyberbullying. Thus, information on the lessons that teachers and guidance counselors in Hilltop County utilize are described below, see Table 3. The lesson plans were utilized by teachers in the classroom in a shared effort to prevent cyberbullying in their school environment by teaching students how to define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying in their own lives. Lessons are most often provided from guidance, and the lessons were included in the description, because the teacher participants all referenced the use of their school guidance department as a resource they use to deal with cyberbullying in their school environment. The lesson plans provided by Hilltop County guidance counselors were either given to teachers to teach, but were also taught by the counselors in the classroom to assist the teacher in effectively preventing cyberbullying in his or her classroom.
Table 3

*Cyberbullying Lesson Plans*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Teaches Students How To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is Cyberbullying.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Would You Do If?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel’s Challenge-Compassion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.I.N.K.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savvy Online Talk.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyberbullying: Who, me?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy – What’s the Big Deal?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Messaging Manners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questionnaires**

Once permission was granted by the county, I sent an electronic flyer (see Appendix D) to the Hilltop County Research and Planning Department and interested participants accepted the invitation to participate. Purposive sampling was used along with snowballing attempt to select 10 middle school teachers (Creswell, 2007). However, only seven teachers responded with interest of participating in the research study. The teachers were all digitally-wise teachers and had taught in Hilltop County one year.

To complete the online questionnaire (see Appendix G), participants needed to answer 34 questions divided into two main parts containing seven sections. Part 1
contained the first section where participants were asked if they were digitally wise. The questionnaire also asked them to identify their gender, age, grade they currently taught, total years in education, total years teaching middle school, total years in the district, and what type of bullying they witness the most in their school environment. For the second part and remaining sections, the questionnaire asked for information on the teachers’ technology background, technology training, awareness, knowledge and perceptions of cyberbullying, current and desired strategies used to combat cyberbullying, digital wisdom, and self-evaluation. The middle school teachers were able to access the online questionnaires using their county DELL Inc., laptop or any other Internet enabled computer device.

**Individual Interviews**

After all online research questionnaires were received, I scheduled individual interviews with the participants. The interviews were scheduled to be face-to-face interviews; however, participants were given the option of scheduling an interview to be conducted on Skype. All interviews were conducted individually with the use of an electronic recorder (Creswell, 2007).

Participants were ensured of confidentiality to protect their identities (Stake, 1995). A review of literature was used to prepare for the study to ensure that the topic and questions were connected. Moustakas (1994) suggested that anchoring qualitative studies in literature would allow the current researcher to determine what he or she is searching for and thereby can help to shape interview questions for research participants.

The interviews were face-to-face, not over the phone so that informal communication was not missed (Creswell, 2007) and were the primary data collection
method. Face-to-face interviews were the goal method of conducting interviews. The interviews lasted no longer than 45 to 60 minutes to be respectful of the participants’ time (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews took place after the school day and depended on the county school schedule. These times were between Monday-Friday, between 2:30 and 5:00 PM in the site school’s library, teacher’s classroom, or nearest community library to the site school. The time was dependent on what best suited the individual participant. This was done for convenience and safety. If the interviewees had not been able to schedule a convenient time for a face to face interview then I would have arranged for a teleconference interview through an online medium like Skype, so that the interview could be recorded. My priority and goal was to hold face-to-face interviews, and no interviews were conducted over a teleconference medium.

The interview questions were short, lucid, and in common vernacular (see Appendix H), so that the participants could easily understand the questions (Kvale, 1996). A “good contact is established by attentive listening, with the interviewer showing interest, understanding, and respect for what the subjects say” (Kvale, 1996, p. 148). Kvale (1996) also advised that researchers should clarify meanings of the interviewee’s responses to prevent misinterpretations. Thus throughout the interview, I repeated responses and posed questions like, “Is this what you meant?” to clarify understanding of responses during transcription (See Appendix I).

The interviews were a semistructured format to allow participants to engage more in the interview and allow the researcher to bend the interview to service the research interest (Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Palmer, 1928). While clarifying questions for participants was done, no additional questions were added to the interviews. The
Purpose of the interview questions pertaining to the perceptions of cyberbullying was to gather information from the participants about their individual, yet shared experiences as middle school teachers and how they define, prevent, handle, and recognize cyberbullying.
Table 4

*Standardized Open-Ended Interview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definitions of Bullying and Cyberbullying</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What is your definition of bullying? Please define.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is your definition of cyberbullying? Please define.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How are bullying and cyberbullying alike and how are they different?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past Bullying Experiences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In your own life have you ever experienced bullying (i.e. Cyberbullying, traditional, covert, overt)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Were you bullied as an adolescent (i.e., ages 11-18)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you think that your past experiences with bullying affect how you handle both unreported and reported bullying cases with your students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of What Constitutes as Cyberbullying</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How do you define social technology? Please define and give examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you know of or use any social networking sites? If so, name them please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Please give examples of cyberbullying. What actions constitute as cyberbullying?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher’s Perceptions of Dealing with Cyberbullying</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Have you dealt with bullying (i.e., traditional) cases before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) If so, give an estimate of approximately how many cases a week you handle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Specify type of bullying (i.e., fighting, name calling, eye rolling).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Have you dealt with cyberbullying before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) If so, give an estimate of approximately how many cases a week you handle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Specify type of social technology used in the bullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. If you have dealt with traditional or cyberbullying in the past, how do you think your actions influenced the students involved (i.e., relationships, future help-seeking, bullying reoccurrence)? Did you find your strategies effective?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training and Strategies for handling Cyberbullying</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do you feel adequately trained to handle cyberbullying with your students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Would you be interested in receiving further training on dealing with the new 21st century epidemic of cyberbullying?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. If you could rate your current awareness of the national, state, and local issues associated with cyberbullying and its detrimental effect on students on a scale of 1 to 10, how would yourself (i.e., number of students affected, number of suicides as a result, causes of cyberbullying, laws against cyberbullying, implications of teacher responsibility in relation to cyberbullying). 1= not knowledgeable 5= somewhat knowledgeable 10=very knowledgeable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions 1, 2, and 3 (see Appendix G) were developed to investigate the participants’ understanding and definitions of bullying and cyberbullying, which would affect the entire study based on their prior understanding (Bauman, 2008; Calmaestra et al., 2010; Grigg, 2010; Rigby, 2002; Tokunga, 2010; Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2008). By asking Questions 1 and 2, I hoped to retrieve their understanding of the different aspects of bullying from Question 1 such as name calling or pushing and compare it to their definition of cyberbullying in Question 2 such as cyberstalking, sexting, and IMing. One reason why adolescents do not report cyberbullying is often because they do not believe that adults truly understand the phenomenon (Williams & Cornwell, 2006). Mishna et al., (2005) found that teachers often lack understanding on bullying and Anderson and Strom (2007) found that teachers possess little knowledge about cyberbullying. The understanding and perceptions they hold influence their point of view and projected interventions, if any. In addition Question 3, was created in hopes to gain perspective on digitally-wise middle school teachers’ perceptions of how the two types of bullying are similar or different (Rigby, 2006).

Questions 4, 5, and 6 were created to inquire about the digitally-wise middle school teachers’ own past bullying experiences. Question 4 inquired about whether they were ever bullied in life and Question 5 asked more specifically the age they were bullied. Carney and Mitchell (2001) stated that peer victimization and bullying are typically between the ages of 9 to 15, and this justifies why adolescence is the focus age for the study (Pelligrini & Long, 2002). If teachers experienced bullying in their own lives, it plays a role in how they currently identify and handle bullying cases with their students now (Brown, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978).
Questions 7, 8, and 9 were written with the intent of discovering how digitally-wise middle school teachers identify different types of bullying. First in Question 7, the teachers were asked to define what social technology was along with give examples, so that I could gather more understanding on how they define social technology. Often the definitions and awareness of the use social technology to bully are not clearly known or understood by adults and teachers (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Trachtenbroit, 2011). Question 8 inquired about digitally wise middle school teacher’s understanding and awareness of the popularity of social networking sites as a social technology such as Facebook and MySpace (Cook, 2010). According to Cook (2010), adolescents highly use social networking sites, blogs, message boards on Facebook and MySpace as an arena for communication and they are a common place where cyberbullying occurs (Anderson & Sturm, 2004).

According to Anderson and Strom (2004) cyberbullying is much harder to stop than traditional face-to-face bullying. Therefore, teachers need to be trained and alert to what actions constitute cyberbullying so that they are aware of when it is occurring (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Cook 2010; Cross et al., 2010; Mishna et al., 2005). Question 9 sought to understand what teachers view as cyberbullying and what actions they believe are associated with it.

Questions 10, 11, and 12 were written with the intent of understanding how digitally-wise middle school teachers currently and in the past have dealt with cyberbullying. Questions 10 and 11 were posed to allow digitally-wise middle school teachers the opportunity to share what types of bullying they encounter or deal with weekly. Bullying is no longer seen as a rite of passage and is not just one part of growing
up (Anderson & Sturm, 2007), it is a worldwide epidemic (Li, 2006) that is heavily effecting the students academically, socially, emotionally, and psychologically (Grigg, 2010; Jager et al., 2010; Tokunga, 2010). Question 12 was posed to understand how digitally-wise teachers perceive their own effectiveness, when dealing with either traditional or cyberbullying. Teachers interact with our nation’s adolescents daily and can play a major role in reducing the occurrences of bullying like traditional and cyberbullying (Anderson & Sturm, 2007), yet many teachers report not feeling equipped or educated in the area of properly handling bullying (Atlas & Peper, 1998; Mishna, 2005; Townsend-Wiggins, 2001). Also, teachers’ reactions to bullying cases can affect students’ future help-seeking actions (Cross et al., 2010; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Unnever & Cornell, 2004; Wiliams & Cornell, 2006).

Questions 13, 14, and 15 were written and placed at the end of the interview to find out from digitally-wise, middle school teachers how adequate they felt trained in the area of combating bullying caused by social technology as professionals and what future training they would find helpful. Questions 13 and 14 were written to encourage digitally-wise middle school teachers to reflect and gauge how adequate they felt in handling cyberbullying cases in the past and future and also to honestly reply with any suggestions of training they would find helpful to be more equipped in the future. Teacher preparation is important when handling cyberbullying cases (Anderson & Sturm, 2007).

Despite the many responsibilities middle school teachers may feel they have in the classroom (Mishna et al., 2005) teachers must be able to efficiently identify signs and prevalence of cyberbullying (Mishna et al., 2005) in their classes such as in action or
symptoms because they are responsible for teaching students how to responsibly use social technology (Antona, Kevorkian, & Russom, 2010). Teachers can make a difference in combating this epidemic (Anderson & Sturm, 2007).

Question 15 was asked to allow digitally–wise, middle school teachers to reflect and honestly evaluate their current knowledge base of the importance of understanding the cyberbullying epidemic. It is important for teachers to understand the implications of cyberbullying and to be aware of the effects it is having on our nation and world (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Li, 2006; Mishna et al., 2005; Tokunga, 2010), because teachers can be positively influential in preventing and educating students about cyberbullying in the classroom if they are adequately trained (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007). Also, Question 15 mentioned the involvement of the law and teacher responsibility according the law, so that teachers could reflect and respond on the responsibility that they have been given by not only their own school system but the state and federal law implications as well (Alexander & Alexander, 2012; Trachtenbroit, 2011).

**School Public Records**

School public records with information pertaining to types and incidences of cyberbullying and bullying incidences was requested from the county and/or site schools. I also collected lesson plans from teachers before starting the study to use as verification information for the participants to verify that they were digitally-wise teachers.

Bullying perception archival was requested but not provided by the county. Teachers (see Appendix J) were also given a questionnaire to fill out. The questionnaire asks questions dealing with the safety of the school, parent and teacher involvement,
teacher-student relationships, and stakeholders’ perceptions of each other. The results of this questionnaire are made public each year on the county’s website. This helped provide more background for the study and also revealed a glimpse of the perceptions of teachers. The records also gave me information that helped shape the questions for the interview that helped retrieve information from participants (Creswell, 2007).

**Data Analysis**

To analyze this case study data from all methods of data collection (archival, questionnaires, and interviews) I followed Stake’s (1995) case study analysis format. According to Stake (1995) there is no precise moment when analysis should start to occur, thus analysis will start at the beginning of data collection. A detailed and thorough description of the setting and the case is given in Chapter 4. I used direct interpretation to look into my case if there is only one instance that occurs in the case and then draw meaning (Stake, 1995). Direct interpretation is a set of steps in which the researcher pulls data apart only to put it together again in a significant way (Stake, 1995). During my analysis of the case, using direct interpretation, I sought to make sense of the observations that I have made of the case by watching and thinking deeply. This process was purely subjective (Stake, 1995).

However, in my case study where there was more than one occurrence that was found in the case, I used categorical aggregation where I searched for emerging relevant meanings from the collection of instances occurring in the data (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Categorical aggregation was used to help understand the phenomena of the case and therefore I gave less attention to the case’s complexity and focus on the identified relationships from my research questions (Stake, 1995).
Through this process, I created corresponding patterns amongst the categories (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Patterns were made in a search for meaning and correspondence will be searched for to find consistency in distinct conditions (Stake, 1995). An example of this could be, “Absenteeism is related to gender, talk of need for school uniform is related to gang aggression” (Stake, 1995, p. 78). I started to look for corresponding patterns at the beginning of the study in data, observations, and interviews and will continue throughout the study. I also recorded correspondence of data in a table in order to show data from the instrumental case and accent categories in a framework (see Appendix K). I was then able to search for both differences and similarities in the case (Creswell, 2007). I coded data and aggregated the frequencies of occurrence in collected data to find patterns based on my current etic issues ($\delta$):

$\delta_1$ Prevention of Cyberbullying

$\delta_2$ Recognizing Cyberbullying

$\delta_3$ Handling/Strategies Cyberbullying

$\delta_4$ Defining Cyberbullying

As Stake (1995) stated, these issues may have changed and additional emic issues may have been added to the case study, based on the perceptions and interests of the participants. Table 5 was used for each interview.
Table 5

*Repetition of Categorical Data in Digitally-wise Teacher #4 Interview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>(\delta_1)</th>
<th>(\delta_2)</th>
<th>(\delta_3)</th>
<th>(\delta_4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(\delta\) stands for etic issues. \(\delta_1\) Prevention of Cyberbullying, \(\delta_2\) Recognizing Cyberbullying, \(\delta_3\) Handling/Strategies Cyberbullying, \(\delta_4\) Defining Cyberbullying.

During this case study, I kept in mind that it was the case and phenomena that I was trying to understand, and therefore episodes and data materials were analyzed with the logic of correspondence. The episodes and categories were important to the case, and thus, I reflected repeatedly, remained skeptical of my own impressions, and triangulated data to challenge myself in regards to the adequacy of my assertions of the data. Additionally, I charted the correspondence between issues, similar to the repetition tables, was done for interviews (See Appendix L).

Creswell (2007) added to Stake’s (1995) analysis by recommending a panoramic view of the case and presenting the facts. I strived to provide from the case data, personal descriptives and sensory details and accounts of participants, as well as personalistic descriptions along with emphasizes on location and time. All of these ingredients provide a lush variety of components in the case description that will allow
readers to have a vicarious experience (Stake, 1995). The reader will also take my assertions from the study to compare with their current propositional knowledge and thereby adjust existing generalizations they may currently have on the topic (Stake, 1995). This is all called naturalistic generalization, where, as the researcher I fulfill the obligation to give my readers high-quality description of study data to help readers attain a superior quality of understanding. Naturalistic generalizations are achieved by well-constructed lifelike experiences and conclusions are made by the reader’s engagement of their own life’s affairs with the text from the case.

Stake (1995) gave six clear steps for researchers to use to validate readers’ already created generalizations, thus assisting readers’ achieve naturalistic generalization. They are as follows: include accounts that readers are familiar with to allow readers to discern accuracy, provide raw data to allow readers to interpret alternative conclusions of the researcher’s, use common vernacular to describe case research methods, make information about researcher and input sources available, provide other data source accounts and potential reader reactions for the reader, and be sure to emphasize that the validity of the study is based not on the observer’s perspective, but on replication and if the events reported were visible or not visible (Stake, 1995).

Data analysis was a continuous process that was started at the first piece of collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used case propositions also known as issues from the beginning and throughout the case (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) during analysis. By returning to the issues, my analysis process was focused, and I did not step outside the range of my research questions (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). By acknowledging issues in
the study I was less likely to create an alternative phenomenon explanation and accepting and rejecting propositions increases confidence in the case results (Yin, 2003).

All data was coded by the researcher and all interviews were transcribed by the researcher. To ensure that all research data collected was analyzed thoroughly, I analyzed the data using the steps, described above, provided by Stake (1995). To synthesize meanings and essences from each participant in the case into one generalization, I wrote a description, clung to issues while allowing for participant added issues, and use descriptive interpretation, categorical aggression to create corresponding patterns. After completing corresponding patterns were created, ten themes emerged and are discussed thoroughly in Chapter 4.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness includes credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness for the study was set through triangulation, member checks, peer review, pilot studies, audit trails, and a thick description, following Lincoln and Guba (1985). Trustworthiness was a concern so, in order to judge the quality of my case study and to ensure that the case is significant and complete, I considered alternate perspectives, displayed thorough evidence, and wrote results in a written in an engaging manner.

To ensure that this qualitative study was well grounded and supported by research, I integrated the use of five questions given by Polkinghorne (1989) and adapted by Creswell (2007) to check the quality of interweaving all three method findings while maintaining different attributes of validity (See Appendix M). The questions provided by Polkinghorne (1989) pertained to the interviewer’s description of participants being
accurately reflected, accurate transcribing and analysis, as well as specific structural
description accuracy. This step assisted me in being sure that my study was trustworthy
in reflecting accurate information collected and that I did not interpose biases of my own
into the study.

**Member Checks**

Member checks were done to establish credibility and it was the process where
data, interpretations, themes, analytic categories, and conclusions were tested by
participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Both informal and formal member checks were
conducted during the study to check for accuracy. Immediate, informal checks were
conducted immediately after an interview and continuously during the study (Lincoln &
Guba, 1985). Informal member checks were found helpful because they present the
occasion to assess intentionality, allow the participant/respondent to correct or clarify
errors of misperceived wrong interpretations, gives the participants/respondents a chance
to volunteer supplementary information, creates a record of the actor or respondent
agreeing to having said particular things and minimizes the chance for recants or claimed
investigator error later, summarizing opportunity, and the participant or respondent could
assess the adequacy overall and confirm individual data.

Formal member checks were conducted after the interviews with participants,
one I had developed patterns from the collected data. Member checks were scheduled
individually and took place over several afternoons to conduct checks for all seven
participants. Checks were conducted at the participants’ site school in their classroom,
telephone, and Skype after school is out at 3:30 PM during a weekday. Before holding
the member checks, I provided a transcription of the interview to the participant by email
to allow them to verify accurate transcription. This was done to ensure that transcripts and themes in the interview were reflective of what was said and intended to ensure reliability, as well.

The participants of the study conducted member checks and were given copies of the inquiry report, to allow them to make notes on things they may disagree with. While I was not bound to honor each criticism of participants, I was bound to hear each concern and consider its meaningfulness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Only criticisms that alerted me of a conflict with the naturalistic position of the study were reconstructed. It was important for me to remember that member checks were not aimed at the “judgment of the accuracy of specific data items . . . member checking is directed at a judgment of overall credibility . . . with respect to constructions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 315-316).

**Peer Debrief**

Peer debriefing or peer review was used as a technique to establish credibility. In this process I exposed myself to a peer who was not associated with the study, with the purpose of exploring dynamics of the research that I may have overlooked (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There are numerous benefits and purposes of debriefing- (a) keeps the researcher honest; (b) debriefing offers a time to test hypotheses that need clarification or closure; (c) allots the opportunity to further synthesize and test subsequent steps in the procedural design; and (d) provides time for the researcher to clear their mind that may inhibit good judgment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The reviewer was a fellow teacher colleague in Hilltop County, who is peer of mine and not a junior or senior, lest I disregarded input or viewed input as mandates
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, the reviewer was not a superior or an authority figure in relation to me such as my research committee members. The reviewer taught elementary school in the county for 5 years, and had a Master’s Degree. The reviewer seriously regarded their role and played devil’s advocate, without too much criticism, to aid me in my advancement, query, and judgments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For each encounter or meeting that took place between me and the reviewer, we both kept written records for the audit trail.

**Audit Trail**

The trail ensures that gathered and recorded information is kept on record (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Yin (1984) and Stake (1995), both case study research experts strongly emphasize the use of organizational databases to keep track of key documents, notes, and audio files. The audit trail also ensured precise and clear records were maintained in order to keep an accurate record. Audit trails were done to make sure that dependability was established through accurate codes, conclusions, and categories. I followed Halpern’s date audit trail categorical system as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described Halpern’s six audit trail categories inclusive of:

- **Raw data:** this includes (a) all electronically recorded and stored materials (i.e., videotapes); (b) written field notes; (c) survey results; and (d) documents, physical traces, and records.
- **Data reduction/ Analysis products:** this includes (a) field notes; (b) summaries of notes; (c) unitized information; and (d) theoretical notes.
• Data reconstruction/Synthesis products: this includes (a) category structures; (b) interpretations, findings, inferences, and conclusions; and a (c) final report.

• Process notes: this includes methodological notes (i.e., procedures, strategies, designs, rationale); (b) notes on trustworthiness; and (c) notes on the audit trail.

• Intention and disposition related materials: this includes (a) proposal of inquiry; (b) reflexive notes/personal notes; and (c) expectations.

• Information on instrument development: this includes (a) pilot forms and schedules; (b) formats of observations; (c) surveys.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation of data was utilized to ensure that themes from data collected were derived in multiple ways, such as online questionnaires, individual interviews, and archival data. During this research study, I followed the recommendations from Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Stake (1995) and utilized multiple data collected sources to ensure consistent themes and corresponding patterns, in order to better understand the phenomenon. “Steps should be taken to validate each against at least one other source . . . no single item of information . . . should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 283).

**Thick Description**

A thick description can also be compared to writing verdantly (Goffman, 1989) and according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) using a thick description means presenting details, emotion, and context, in a way that evokes self-feeling for the voices of individuals who experienced the phenomenon and were heard. Thus a thick description
is provided in this research study, and is a thorough description of how the research was carried out, so that other researchers may replicate the study and assess the level of transferability (Stake, 1995). The benefit of a thick description that describes the participants and the setting with lucid details is that it allows the reader(s) to make choices about transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability refers to, the ability for readers to shift or apply information from the study to other settings and decide if the findings are capable of being transferred due to common characteristics (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Field Journal**

As the investigator, I maintained a reflective log (see Appendix N) that documented daily research logistics and schedule, personal diary, and methodological log. The logistics log contained daily research study activities. The log was kept separate from other data, and consisted of field notes for later analysis from interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The daily research log was kept in a calendar manner notating dates and times, that research is held, along with any pertinent notes. The second type of field journal that was kept was a personal that allowed me to document reflective thoughts on the research such as personal biases and expectations, and questions, predictions, and anxieties in regards to the research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the third type of journal was a procedural log where decisions and rationales are recorded and documented as needed throughout the study.
Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken while conducting this study to ensure the safety of the participants. Shared experiences during interviews were disregarded to stay objective as the researcher, so that I did not interpret data based on my own experiences as an educator and did not allow participants to shape my views that interpreted other participants’ experiences. As the researcher, personal bias was exposed, through the use of a personal diary and sessions with a peer debriefer. This helped to combat the challenge of being transparent. Moustakas (1994) stated that by being transparent with others I am transparent with myself and capable of retaining information from participants as mere phenomena; with all biases put aside (Husserl, 1977). To establish and maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were given or chosen by the county, schools, and all participants, and peer reviewer involved, to protect their identities. The participants did have any relation to me and were not family or students. This was done to establish a no power over participants rule (Moustakas, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). No research began prior to Liberty University IRB approval and Hilltop County Public School’s approval of the study. Participant consent forms were administered, before any research took place or participants participated in the research study. Anonymity was established through the use of pseudonyms.

All collected data, digital audio, and transcriptions of interviews were kept secure by being stored in a file cabinet at my home office. All electronic data from questionnaires, journals of both the participants and me were stored electronically online and saved on my computer for 3 years and kept safe with an encrypted password. As required by IRB all electronic data will be destroyed and removed after that time period.
has ended. My participants were treated respectfully with the intent of gathering information to assist, aide, and further the research in the area of educating teachers and school officials of the 21st century epidemic of cyberbullying and how to define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying peer-victimization amongst middle school students. In conclusion, this research study was conducted through triangulation to establish validity, transferability, and reliability, using questionnaires, interviews, and archival data. Trustworthiness of the study will be achieved through member checks, peer debriefing, audit trail, thick description and researcher journaling. Chapter 4 will discuss the data analysis and discuss the findings of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of middle school digitally-wise teachers concerning how they defined, prevented, recognized, and handled incidences of cyberbullying as well as help-seeking behaviors in Hilltop County Public Schools, a school district located in Southern Virginia. This case study was conducted because there is little research on the awareness and perceptions of digitally-wise middle school teachers in relation to social technology and its impact on students (Prensky, 2012a). After numerous hours of listening to interview recordings and rereading interview transcripts, reviewing questionnaire and archival data, themes emerged and were developed. Reading and rereading of the transcriptions from the interview was done in an effort to understand and analyze responses, as well as find correspondences in the data (Stake, 1995).

Chapter 4 will report research findings and data analysis. Data sources were triangulated through individual interviews, questionnaires, and archival data and then data was aggregated. Categorical aggregation was used through coding, finding repetition between coded data and forming patterns to help understand the phenomena of the case. As recommended by Stake (1995), naturalistic generalizations were then formed from the corresponding patterns and were recorded in this chapter to allow the reader to engage in the case study data through a vicarious experience, making them feel as though it has happened to them. Chapter 4 records a cumulative naturalistic generalization from the triangulation of data and describes for the reader the perceptions and experiences of the seven participants.
The following research questions guided this case study:

1. How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers define, and recognize cyberbullying?

2. How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers currently prevent and handle cyberbullying and help-seeking behaviors from their middle school students?

Participants’ responses to interviews and questionnaires, along with archival data are organized in this chapter, first according to data sources, and then according to research questions. The themes that were identified in Chapter 2, defining, recognizing, preventing and handling cyberbullying are identified in the related research question. The interviews were conducted individually at the participant’s site school or local library. The questionnaires were administered online, and participants were able to complete the questionnaires in the privacy of their home, or a place of their choice. Hilltop County archival data was retrieved from county and Virginia Department of Education websites, as the information was available to the public. Also, archival data, guidance counselor lesson plans, were made available by the individual schools and Research and Planning in Hilltop County.

**Findings and Results**

**Research Question 1**

To explore the question regarding how Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers defined, and recognized cyberbullying, I first administered an online questionnaire and then interviewed seven participants. The responses from the participants or actors, as Stake (1995) referred to them, revealed several similarities and
differences. I coded and aggregated the frequencies of occurrence in collected data to find patterns based on my current etic issues (δ):

\[ \delta_1 \text{ Defining Cyberbullying} \]

\[ \delta_2 \text{ Recognizing Cyberbullying} \]

\[ \delta_3 \text{ Handling/Strategies Cyberbullying} \]

\[ \delta_4 \text{ Preventing Cyberbullying} \]

Questions 7, 16, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26 and 28 on the questionnaire aligned to how teachers recognized and defined cyberbullying. Table 6 reveals the results of the questions on the questionnaire that were designed to glean data on how teachers defined and recognized cyberbullying.
Table 6

*Participant Responses to Online Questionnaire Related to Teacher Definitions and Recognition of Cyberbullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>No.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q7  Type of bullying witnessed the most.</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16 Percentage of students cyberbullied nationwide.</td>
<td>11-25%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21 Percentage of students who reported cyberbullying 1 to 2 times a month last school year.</td>
<td>0-5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22 Perceived cyberbullying actions.</td>
<td>Texting vulgar messages.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24  Perceive that you are well equipped to effectively define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25 Strategies that would be helpful to define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying.</td>
<td>How to recognize.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26  I can effectively handle cyberbullying.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28  I am ethically and legally responsible for proactively handling cyberbullying.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The years of working in the county varied from teacher to teacher, however in regards to technology background, the majority of the teachers considered themselves expert teachers and utilized technology five or more times a week. The participant teachers reported receiving a varying amount of technology training from HCPS over the past year; however, 6 out of the 7 teachers agreed that they perceived that the training did not help them to effectively defined, prevented, recognized, or handled cyberbullying. When asked about the awareness of cyberbullying in their own school environment that transpired each week and monthly, most teachers said that 0 to 5% of their students reported. However, two teachers shared that 6 to 10% of their students reported cases of cyberbullying to them monthly.

Digitally-wise middle school teachers in the study shared the same perceptions of what actions consist of cyberbullying, such as posting fake MySpace messages or texting vulgar messages. When asked about current strategies in dealing with cyberbullying most teachers shared that they directed the case to an administrator, yet they responded differently about desired strategies for handling cyberbullying. Most teacher participants shared that they perceived that they were able to handle cyberbullying effectively, but most shared that they felt that they were not able to prevent and recognize cyberbullying effectively.

While triangulating data, results from the individual interviews were also analyzed. Interview Question numbers 1, 2, and 3 focused on teacher definitions of traditional bullying and cyberbullying. All of the teachers described traditional bullying and cyberbullying as acts of aggression or victimization, using words such as, “humiliate,” “disrespect,” “intimidates,” “violent,” and “demeaning.” While the teachers
articulated similarities in the intent of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, they
distinguished cyberbullying from bullying, explaining that cyberbullying involved “using
different media . . . social media.”

Interview Questions 4-6 asked teachers about their past experiences with bullying. The seven teachers voiced having different backgrounds when it came to bullying during their adolescent years. Four of the teachers, Ms. Robinson, Ms. Smith, Mr. Richard, and Ms. Durham, all shared that they did not experience bullying as adolescents. However, the remaining three participants, Ms. Harris, Ms. Davis, and Ms. Miller, shared the contrary, saying that as adolescents they were “left out,” and were “more sympathetic” to their students who are victims of bullying now. Interview Questions 7-8 focused on teacher perceptions of what constituted cyberbullying. When discussing what actions constituted as cyberbullying the teachers echoed each other’s perceptions, saying that cyberbullying could be “posting something untrue” on “Facebook” and then “sending it out as anonymous from someone else’s computer,” or even using “Google Docs . . . [to] send little mean notes about each other.”

**Defining cyberbullying.** The sections below will discuss results from the individual interviews and online questionnaires to reveal the consensus of how digitally-wise middle school teachers define cyberbullying.

**Definition of bullying.** The first question of the interview to digitally-wise middle school teachers asked them to define bullying. Ms. Smith, Mr. Richard, Ms. Durham, and Ms. Miller, all replied that bullying is something that is repetitive. A “consistent . . . pattern” is how Ms. Miller defined it. The repetitive action of bullying in the teachers’ definitions included both physical and non-physical actions. Ms. Robinson
shared that traditional bullying can range from, “More serious issues [physical bullying] to just ‘Stop picking on that person’.” Ms. Harris summed up bullying as, “The intentional hurt or threatening . . . someone else, either through words, physical altercations or . . . just intentional behaviors that are premeditated . . . that are intended to hurt someone else.”

Mr. Richard included that traditional bullying can be not only “Verbal. . .but could be like physical.” Ms. Miller shared Mr. Richard’s thoughts by saying, “Either verbally or through actual touching . . . punching.” “Bullying,” Ms. Smith shared, “can be more physical . . . sometimes it can be physically violent.” Six out of seven teachers shared in the interview that they handled traditional bullying cases more at their school than cyberbullying. This may be as Ms. Miller shared because, teachers can “witness a bully event” because, “it’s easier to spot.”

Traditional bullying Ms. Davis shared is, “face to face,” and is used to make, “Another student feels inadequate.” The middle school digitally-wise teachers used words like “gossiping,” “teasing,” “excluding,” and “name-calling,” “humiliate,” and “scare,” to describe actions they all felt were apart of traditional bullying. While it was not discussed in great depths, Ms. Miller mentioned that “mean girls” were responsible for most “mental challenges” or emotional bullying, where boys she said are mainly apart of physical bullying. Ms. Davis, Mr. Richard, and Ms. Harris all concurred with this phenomenon of girls being the culprits of emotional bullying while boys in their middle school environment, they shared, were more likely to physically bully. Ms. Robinson echoed, “just girls are always bullying each other at some point in middle school.” While
this was not a prevalent theme that emerged during the research study, it was noted during interviews.

**Definition of cyberbullying.** When asked how they would define cyberbullying, Ms. Miller said it was, “Using any kind of social media to intimidate, [and] threaten . . . another person.” Ms. Durham added that cyberbullying could be, “Intentionally or unintentional.” All the digitally-wise middle school teachers included in their definition that cyberbullying brought harm or pain on another person and affected them in a negative way. “The intent is harm,” Ms. Miller shared. “Using different media or social media,” Mr. Richard said. The thought that cyberbullying includes new words and new modes of harassment was shared by teachers. “They’re [students] inventing new words as it is . . . [they’re] going to invent new ways to pick on each other and be mean,” Ms. Davis added. While some teachers considered cyberbullying to be under the umbrella of traditional bullying, other teachers compared it to greater degrees of crime. “With cyberbullying, I see that again as . . . planned . . . it’s like premeditated . . . manslaughter,” Ms. Miller concluded.

Along with deciding what degree of insult cyberbullying is characterized as, teachers mentioned that cyberbullying is different from other types of bullying because students can send out rumors or threats anonymously. In addition to sending out anonymous messages that “intent is harm,” as Ms. Miller described it, Ms. Durham agreed that by sending cyberbullying messages anonymously, “No one sees them doing it . . . they think they can get away with it . . . and no one even knows.” Why would students want to create messages anonymously? Ms. Robinson believed it is because
“it’s easier to do because you aren’t faced with that person’s response . . . [do] not have to think about or feel the consequences of what you said.”

While it is shared anonymously, Ms. Smith who uses Facebook twice a day, shared that cyberbullying comments are, “Pretty much out there [Internet] for the world,” for everyone to see. These “out there” cyberbullying comments, can be as Ms. Miller added, “malicious gossip,” that starts rumors amongst the students. “Somehow it’s [gossip] going to get back, the rumors will start, and then most of the time with cyberbullying,” Mr. Richard stated. These rumors some teachers believe have a lasting impact. Ms. Davis added, “They don’t necessarily sometimes understand how one bad phrase or something that they’ve said mean can really impact . . . So they don’t see the big idea of how it really does hurt somebody and can hurt for a long time.” The fact that once the rumors or negative comments are typed, she attested that students, “Don’t understand that once it’s in print- they can’t take it back.” Ms. Davis believed that cyberbullying can be attributed to the students’ age, lack of maturity, wanting to be humorous and, “being popular.”

*Differences between bullying and cyberbullying.* The digitally-wise middle school teachers held distinct perceptions regarding the definition of cyberbullying and bullying. During the interviews and on the online questionnaire participants were asked to define and identify examples of cyberbullying and traditional bullying. Often teachers saw cyberbullying as a part of traditional bullying. “I just feel it’s a broader umbrella,” Ms. Davis said about traditional bullying. Ms. Robinson described cyberbullying and traditional bullying as, “I think they are alike as in cyberbullying is a new aspect of bullying, a new way to bully.” Because many teachers see cyberbullying as a part of
bullying, it was important for teachers to define how they saw both traditional bullying and cyberbullying. This section will report the responses of how digitally-wise middle school teachers defined both cyberbullying and traditional bullying.

**Recognizing Cyberbullying**

**Recognizing 21st century tools students used to cyberbully.** Digitally-wise middle school teachers perceived that certain 21st century technology tools were used by their middle school students to cyberbully. When taking the online questionnaire, six of the seven participants (Ms. Durham, Mr. Richard, Ms. Miller, Ms. Davis, Ms. Robinson, and Ms. Harris) all agreed that texting vulgar messages, posting false Facebook messages, and anonymously sending hate mail were all examples of cyberbullying.

In the definitions of cyberbullying, Ms. Miller stated that it was “Using any kind of social media to intimidate,” and Mr. Richard said cyberbullying tools were “social media websites, like Facebook, and Twitter.” Mr. Richard also included sending “nasty email [s]” or “text messages” as examples of tools for cyberbullying.

During the interview, to discover teachers’ background knowledge of social technology they were asked to provide a definition and also give examples. This was necessary, to discover whether teachers were able to define key tools that are used by adolescents in cyberbullying. Thus, it helped to understand how teachers define and recognize cyberbullying. When asked to define social technology, all seven teachers included Facebook in their definitions of social technology and cyberbullying tools. Ms. Durham, Ms. Davis, Ms. Miller, Ms. Smith, Mr. Richard, and Ms. Harris, included Twitter as a tool of cyberbullying. Ms. Harris and Ms. Durham also mentioned Instagram as a tool used by middle school students to cyberbully and Ms. Durham stated
that they can use Instagram to take “terrible pictures.” Instagram is an online SNS, that allows users to upload pictures and share photographs.

Ms. Harris went further to describe a scenario that had occurred at her middle school where the social networking site Instagram was used for cyberbullying:

Um, just the other day, one of my kids told me that another student made a fake Instagram . . . of her and um called it ‘Nobody.’ So whenever she put ‘Likes It,’ it would say ‘Nobody Likes It.’ And, she was afraid to actually get a real Instagram after that because she was afraid the person would find her.

The well-known, MySpace social networking, site must have been popular by middle school students before, as Mr. Richard pondered, “that’s that one we used to use, they used to use, and they don’t use it anymore. MySpace.” Ms. Davis also articulated possible dangers with the use of MySpace by the students when she stated, “MySpace is another one [cyberbullying tool] . . . I never used MySpace . . . I’ve heard too many horrible things about that one.”

In addition to social networking sites being used as tools for cyberbullying Ms. Davis, Mr. Richard, Ms. Miller, Ms. Durham, Ms. Robinson, and Ms. Harris discussed how cellphones are used as tools for cyberbullying, for example through “texting” or as Ms. Miller stated “by sending a picture . . . by phone. You know, on your phone to your friends. It would be embarrassing to someone.”

Lastly, all of the participant teachers mentioned in their interviews how the computer and Internet, in general, can be used as a tool for cyberbullying. Mr. Richard articulated that students may report once in while that, “So and so did this on the computer.” Ms. Davis expressed that:
I also think that this age level [middle school adolescents]. . .especially in Hilltop (pseudonym) we give them a computer in the sixth grade to take home. And sometimes I feel that that just opens the door a little bit more, because they. . .they have access to the Internet. Lots of times parents aren’t home when they get home. . .so they have free Internet time. And that can always be a dangerous thing. . .when they aren’t supervised.

Ms. Robinson and Ms. Harris asserted that now students have several applications downloaded on their laptops provided by the county. Ms. Harris stated, “They have the whole Adobe Suite, they’ve got PhotoShop, they’ve got Sound Booth. I mean…they’ve got more on it. . .They’ve got all their Google account. They can make as many sites as they want.” Ms. Robinson echoed:

A lot of them use Google Docs now because they can get on it at school. They can. . . if you set up a Google Doc . . . you can share it with the people that you want to share it with. You can like type stuff and like send it back and forth. I mean it’s good for school. I mean it’s good for sharing projects and stuff - But it’s also opens up another realm of sharing. Including cyberbullying, because they can send little mean notes about each other. Or talk about someone with their friends! And then send it to them!

Ms. Harris agreed with Ms. Robinson that while they have a plethora of applications on their Hilltop County laptops, the applications are “good for school” and Ms. Harris said that she still uses the applications in class with her students because, “They [students] just need to know how to use it correctly.”
Perceived prevalence of cyberbullying. Middle school teachers were unsure of the real prevalence of cyberbullying in their middle school environment. This perception was clear in their responses to the questionnaire and interviews. On the online questionnaire, all of the digitally-wise middle school teachers except for Ms. Davis and Ms. Robinson indicated that they believed the nationwide percentage of adolescents who had experienced cyberbullying was higher than the percentage of students at their middle school who had experienced cyberbullying. When asked about which type of bullying the teachers handled the most in their schools, six out of the seven (all except Ms. Harris) voiced that they handled traditional bullying cases more than cyberbullying.

Their reasons behind their perceptions of cyberbullying prevalence differed and this was seen in their interview responses as well. When asked about the prevalence of cyberbullying in her school environment, Ms. Davis shared in the interview is not a “rare occurrence anymore,” however, Ms. Davis also shared in the interview that while she handled approximately 5 to 10 traditional bullying cases she only handled approximately 1 to 2 cyberbullying cases a school year. Ms. Harris shared that she did not necessarily handle a lot of cyberbullying cases, because administration normally dealt with them, “But I would say weekly I hear about it [cyberbullying] . . . something.”

While each of the digitally-wise teachers’ middle schools have websites or blogs where students can report cyberbullying and any type of bullying, it was only “administration [who] has access to that [reported bullying] and they can go in . . . and I believe the guidance does as well,” Ms. Davis shared in her interview. However, none of the teachers acknowledged that they knew the specifics on what types of bullying were
reported or how many students were self-reporting. Ms. Robinson stated, “They [administration or guidance] haven’t like given that information.”

Ms. Morris felt that the reason she handled traditional bullying cases more than cyberbullying cases is because, “I think that there’s not a lot of it [cyberbullying]. I think that our kids would report it.” She then added that she wasn’t quite sure, “But I don’t know. You know again, that’s- that’s one of those pull up the rug and see!”

Mr. Richard also shared that he handles less than five traditional bullying cases a year and about one or two cyberbullying cases a year. However, on the contrary to what Ms. Morris expressed, Mr. Richard articulated “I’m sure there’s more, a lot more [bullying cases] of that we don’t know of.” Also, although he doesn’t directly handle many cyberbullying cases, he stated, “But it’s [cyberbullying] out there,” he believes, despite the low number of cases he directly handles. After all, “the kids aren’t going to tell,” Ms. Smith attested in regards to finding out more about cyberbullying cases.

Furthermore, Ms. Davis shared her thoughts on why she believes she handles less cyberbullying cases a school year by explaining, “Because it’s not something we see very easily . . . I can’t go into anybody’s cellphone. I can’t go into anybody’s Facebook or MySpace account and see what they’re doing. I have to wait for them to bring it to the adult.”

Two digitally-wise middle school teachers, Ms. Durham and Ms. Harris, shared that currently a well-known television show had a new story line with cyberbullying as a “main theme right now.” Ms. Durham articulated the show’s current theme:

The one girl Abby, who’s a teen . . . but they’re cyberbullying another teen, and sending him anonymous text messages. And he’s trying to figure out whose
sending him these text messages and it’s like, ‘You’re a loser, I wish you would just drop dead.’ And she’s like, ‘Who sent you that,’ and he’s like, ‘I don’t know.’ That says something about social media . . . The fact that they did a whole line about it right now as the main theme tells you how popular it [cyberbullying] is.

In addition to sharing that she felt that cyberbullying must be a “popular” thing right now with adolescents, Ms. Durham also asserted that not only do adolescents cyberbully, their parents cyberbully as well. “They [parents] say one thing to me on email and they get here in person and it’s like a different [story].” Ms. Robinson also shared, “I know there was some parent cyberbullying going on last year.” “Cyberbullying,” Ms. Durham shared, “becomes very easy for people. It’s very passive aggressive.”

Self-reporting enables teachers to recognize cyberbullying. Digitally-wise middle school teachers use self-reporting to recognize cyberbullying cases amongst their students. According to Ms. Robinson, Mr. Richard, Ms. Davis, and Ms. Harris, they had students come to them and report being cyberbullied, while Ms. Durham, Ms. Miller, and Ms. Smith did not share having students self-report cyberbullying to them. “So and so sent this nasty email or text message,” Mr. Richard stated that students come and share cyberbullying in this way not very often but once in a while.

Ms. Harris mentioned that while she hasn’t had to turn in a lot of cyberbullying cases, because they have already been handled by her administration, her students “tell me about them [cyberbullying cases].” Ms. Harris attributes her students being comfortable to report the unwise use of technology to her, “I think it’s because the amount of technology I use. They know I’m with it.” Ms. Harris says she allows her
students to use several different 21st century technology tools in class to promote learning. Being a digitally-wise teacher, Ms. Harris says that the students, “just have to use it [21st century technology tools] the right way,” and she models it for them in class. “So I think that’s why they’ll tell me.”

Middle school students switch classes during the day, and Ms. Davis shared that the students, “don’t have time to necessarily sometimes come and talk to that teacher…even though they feel comfortable, know that that teacher would help them.” Ms. Durham echoed this by saying, “Because we [teachers] don’t have the kids all the time. I may alert guidance, ‘Hey there’s an issue here’.” Thus as Ms. Davis, Ms. Durham, Ms. Robinson, and Ms. Smith, discussed during their interviews how students often report cases of bullying to guidance rather than the teacher. Even when teachers are told about cyberbullying, all of the digitally-wise middle school teachers discussed not directly handling the self-reported cases, but reporting the cases to their administrator or guidance counselor. Ms. Robinson expressed that in a case when cyberbullying was directly reported to her by a student she, “told the guidance counselors . . . that’s kinda their domain. They just say if that happens, then, ‘Tell us’.”

The digitally-wise middle school teachers all shared their knowledge that there is a possibility that the students do not report everything to teachers, the guidance counselors or administration. Reflecting on the sad reality that students do not report cyberbullying, Ms. Davis added, “They [students] wanna think they’re adults and sometimes can handle it on their own. And when they think they can handle it on their own, usually in their eyes that means ‘I’m gonna punch you’.”
For this reason all of the digitally-wise middle teachers’ schools had a self-reporting website that students can use to anonymously report cyberbullying. “The students do not have to call it [anonymous website], they don’t have to worry about anyone hearing them. They can go online at home, in the safety of their own house,” Ms. Davis shared. Each of the schools has a link to the school website or blog, that students can access through their laptops anonymously and on the website or blog Ms. Davis stated:

They feel like they want somebody to talk, they can simply tell us the situation they are going through or talk about a situation they’ve seen, heard about, um the administration has access to that [anonymous website] and they can go in…and I believe the guidance does as well.

Ms. Harris, Ms. Robinson, and Mr. Richard shared that they believed that they had positively affected self-reported bullying cases of their students. Mr. Richard attested that, “You know, I don’t see them coming to me again, saying, ‘Hey, this is still going on. Every once in a while, but not . . . in the last two years.” Ms. Robinson stated that one of her students that had self-reported bullying, “came back to me and confided to me just other life stuff. So she felt comfortable after.”

Ms. Davis and Ms. Smith shared that they hoped their actions positively influenced their students’ situations and made them more likely to report other incidences of cyberbullying or traditional bullying in the future. Ms. Davis articulated, “I would like to think that my students can come talk to me about anything and feel that they could.” Ms. Smith shared that in regards to proactive actions to end the bullying her student reported, “I’m not confident that it did [put an end to it], but I would hope that it did.”
Ms. Miller shared that her main goal in assisting a student who has reported
cyberbullying or traditional bullying, is to show the victim that the she isn’t “going to
drop the ball.” She said she assists in bullying cases by reporting it to the administration
or guidance.

According to Ms. Robinson, “most students don’t really come to the teacher
necessarily about it [cyberbullying]. Unless they have a particular connection. They
usually go to guidance or they post on . . . [the] blog.” Ms. Davis also echoed this and
said that students normally report to someone, “that they feel comfortable with.” In
conclusion, the middle school students at each of the site schools have the option of
reporting cyberbullying to a teacher, guidance, administration, or on the anonymous
websites or blogs. As Ms. Davis stated, “we want to make sure we protect them.” This
was a shared theme between all of the participants and was evident from data collected
from interviews, questionnaires, and archival data.

**Perceptions of what constitutes cyberbullying.** The digitally-wise teachers
were asked in this section to explain what actions they believed constituted cyberbullying
in the interviews and online questionnaire. They were asked to give examples of social
technology. When giving examples of social technology all of the digitally-wise middle
school teachers named “cell phones,” “email,” “blog forums,” “instant messaging,” and
such social networking sites as Facebook, MySpace, Instagram, and Twitter. Each of the
teachers shared that they used various types of social technology in their own lives
including SNS except for Ms. Miller. Ms. Miller shared that she did not “have time” for
SNS. The most used social networking site that six of the participants shared that they
used was Facebook. Ms. Smith shared that she uses Facebook “twice a day.” Ms. Davis
even shared that she saw social technology as “popular” with the students and a way “students can interact.”

When describing what actions constituted as cyberbullying, the participants shared different ways social technology is misused. Ms. Durham, Ms. Miller, Ms. Robinson, Mr. Richard and Ms. Davis all articulated that cyberbullying can be carried out through the use of phone, for instance through “sending mean text messages” or even sending “terrible pictures.” “Sexting,” where students send out provocative or “inappropriate” messages or pictures of others or themselves via cell phones, was mentioned as an action that could be categorized as cyberbullying by Ms. Davis and Ms. Durham.

Social networking sites (SNS) were also mentioned as a mode of cyberbullying by Ms. Miller, Mr. Richard, Ms. Robinson, Ms. Davis, Ms. Harris, and Ms. Durham. Ms. Harris gave the example of students making “fake Instagram” accounts and then harassing fellow students. Five teachers echoed her in saying how typing “rumors” about a person on Facebook, can be cyberbullying as well as sending “out a tweet” through Twitter.

Ms. Durham, Mr. Richard, Ms. Robinson, and Ms. Smith asserted the same sentiment and referred to students “posting” false things on the Internet, whether on SNS or blog forums, as a form of cyberbullying. Ms. Smith articulated cyberbullying could occur when a student is “posting something untrue, a bad rumor to…degrade or to ruin” another person’s reputation. Even posting “gossip” whether true or untrue these teachers shared was cyberbullying. Ms. Durham went further to say that even if it was an “intentional or unintentional” action to harm, it was still perceived as cyberbullying.
Lastly, the issue of anonymous actions through social technology, being constituted as cyberbullying was discussed by a few teachers. Ms. Robinson, Ms. Miller, and Mr. Richard, shared how they perceived creating “fake email” accounts or sending “anonymous messages” were constituted as cyberbullying. When middle school adolescents “make up their own” fake accounts, they can do it “anonymously and no one even knows,” because “no one sees them doing it.”

**Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 focused on how Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers prevented and handled cyberbullying and help-seeking behaviors from their middle school students. I coded data and aggregated the frequencies of occurrence in collected data to find patterns based on my current etic issues ($\delta$):

- $\delta_3$ Handling/Strategies Cyberbullying
- $\delta_4$ Preventing Cyberbullying

Data from the questionnaire, and interviews were used to answer the research question. Questions 14, 15, 16, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 on the questionnaire aligned to how teachers prevented and handled cyberbullying. Table 7 outlines the questions on the questionnaire that were designed to glean data on how teachers prevented and handled cyberbullying.
Table 7

*Participant Responses to Online Questionnaire Related to Teacher Prevention and Handling of Cyberbullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>No.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q14 Did technology training prepare you to teach students proper use</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15 Technology trainings helped you define, prevent, recognize, and handle.</td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16 Percentage of students cyberbullied nationwide</td>
<td>11-25%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26-50%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76-100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20 Percentage of students who reported cyberbullying 1 to 2 times a week last school year</td>
<td>0-5%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21 Percentage of students who reported cyberbullying 1 to 2 times a month last school year</td>
<td>0-5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22 Perceived cyberbullying actions</td>
<td>Texting</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vulgar messages</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forwarding</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cell phones pictures</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posting false Facebook messages</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating a fake MySpace page of your friend</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anonymously sending a hate email</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a fake Online identity to Find out more about the new girl at school</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Question numbers 10, 11, and 12 focused on teacher perceptions of dealing with cyberbullying. There was a resounding unified voice from the teachers that they all handled cyberbullying less often than traditional bullying which sometimes has to be “address[ed] . . . daily” when reminding students to be “nice” to each other. However, the teachers said that most serious cases are handled less than five times a school year. While out of the seven teachers, two of the teachers, Ms. Miller, and Ms. Smith shared that they had not handled cyberbullying directly in the past, yet each of the
seven teachers reported not handling cyberbullying cases on their “own” but by “notifying guidance,” and “turn[ing] [cases] into administration.” Questions 13-15 focused on training and strategies teachers needed and used for handling cyberbullying. The participants responded that on their own they did not feel adequately trained by Hilltop County Public schools to effectively handle cyberbullying cases in their school environment, and each participant shared that they would like to receive further training from the county on how to effectively handle cyberbullying. Lastly, the participants were asked to rate themselves according to their current knowledge on cyberbullying on a scale of 1 to 10, and altogether the teachers rated themselves average on their understanding causes and effects of cyberbullying, cyberbullying laws, and implications of teacher responsibility.

**Teachers’ perceptions of handling cyberbullying.** Individual interview questions numbers 9 and 10, asked participants whether they had handled traditional bullying or cyberbullying cases before and if so, what the frequency of handling the cases was. All of the participant teachers identified that they had dealt with traditional cases of bullying and the teachers shared that they dealt with traditional bullying cases more each school year than cyberbullying. Ms. Miller and Ms. Smith, mentioned that they had not directly handled or dealt with cyberbullying cases before, whereas the other five participant teachers shared that while they had experienced dealing with cyberbullying in past, the frequency of cases each school year was very rare; most teachers reported dealing with less than two cyberbullying cases a school year.

All of the teachers explained that the reason they may not deal with as many cyberbullying cases could be for one of three reasons:
the students normally “go to guidance [school guidance counselors]”
-the students usually post on the school’s “anonymous bullying blog” and
-the “students don’t tell.”

Furthermore, in dealing with this very “passive aggressive” form of electronic bullying, Ms. Durham and Mr. Richard shared how students “think they can get away with it” and voiced that it “probably” occurs in their school environment more than adults “would think.”

**Past bullying experiences.** This portion of the individual interview was used to find out how digitally-wise middle school teachers perceived their past bullying experiences to influence how they currently perceive and handle cyberbullying cases with their middle school students. The responses to this section of the interview varied.

Ms. Miller, Ms. Harris, and Ms. Davis all shared that they had been bullied as adolescents and that they perceived that their experiences with being bullied helped them to be “more sympathetic, more understanding” when dealing with bullying. Ms. Miller echoed this sentiment in saying that due to being bullied as an adolescent she does not have “a lot of patience with a bully.” However, Ms. Robinson, Mr. Richard, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Durham shared that they were not bullied as adolescents. Ms. Robinson and Mr. Richard expressed that they suppose that if they were bullied they would “know what the feeling is like for someone” who is a victim of bulling, whether it be traditional bullying or cyberbullying. Ms. Smith and Ms. Davis noted that they had both regrettably been bullies before in their adolescence and thus understood “what the people, who are bullying are going through.” Understanding the syndrome of “if I can’t feel good, then
you can’t feel good either” helps these two teachers when handling bullying cases in their school environment.

Lastly, the teachers were asked about their perceptions of how their past actions in handling bulling or cyberbullying had impacted the students involved in the bullying cases. The seven participant teachers, expressed three different perceptions of outcomes of their past interventions with traditional and cyberbullying. They shared that when reflecting on the effectiveness of their intervention,

- they “would hope that it[their intervening] made it [bullying] stop,”
- they were “not confident” and unsure,
- and they “don’t think so.”

**Training and strategies for handling cyberbullying.** The last questions in the individual interviews and questionnaires inquired about participant teachers’ perceptions on their current training and strategies for handling cyberbullying in their school environment. When teachers were asked whether they felt as though they were adequately trained by Hilltop County to handle cyberbullying with their students Ms. Smith, Ms. Robinson, Mr. Richard, Ms. Davis, and Ms. Harris all reported that they did not feel adequately trained by HCPS. While Ms. Durham and Ms. Miller expressed mixed responses that showed that they were unsure of whether they were adequately trained to truly handle cyberbullying.

The teachers went on to share their perceptions by rating their current awareness of the prevalence of cyberbullying, laws on cyberbullying, and on their knowledge of the causes and effects of cyberbullying in the online questionnaire. While the responses in rating differed, all of the teachers answered, “Yes,” when questioned on whether they
would be interested in receiving further training from Hilltop County on how to handle cyberbullying in their school environment.

**Preventing cyberbullying.** Digitally-wise middle school teachers perceived that preventative measures are a must in creating a safe and cohesive school environment. The next section will delve further into what current preventive strategies and resources are in place at each of the digitally-wise teachers’ middle schools. The data in this section is triangulated with data from interviews, questionnaires, and archival data provided by the teachers and county guidance counselors.

**Confidence to effectively prevent cyberbullying.** On the online questionnaire there was a section on teachers’ current and desired strategies. When teachers were asked to state whether they felt they could effectively prevent cyberbullying in their school environment, there were varying responses. Ms. Davis, Ms. Smith, Ms. Miller, Mr. Richard, and Ms. Durham stated that they did not feel that they could effectively prevent cyberbullying in their schools. Ms. Harris stated that she did in fact feel that she could effectively prevent cyberbullying in her school environment. Furthermore, Ms. Robinson stated:

> Not necessarily. As teachers, we have very few ways to monitor the cyber worlds students are on other than watching over their shoulders while they are working at school and making sure cell phones are not in use during the school day.

The same remorse was shared during interviews, where teachers in regards to their confidence in preventing cyberbullying said that they couldn’t “really think of any . . . training that we’ve had.”
**Teaching digital wisdom.** Digitally-wise middle school teachers were asked to participate in this research study because I regarded them as being knowledgeable of 21st century technology and possessing the proper skills to use the technology wisely. Prensky (2012a) defines wisdom as “the ability to find, practical, creative, contextually appropriate, and emotionally satisfying solutions to complicated human problems.” He identifies teachers as digitally wise, as those who incorporate 21st century technology into their present thinking and decisive processes, by executing it wisely and sharing the results with their students (Prensky, 2012a).

Thus, on the research questionnaire, I asked teachers if they had been trained on how to teach their students to be digitally wise and use 21st century technology wisely. Ms. Smith, Ms. Davis, Ms. Durham, Ms. Robinson, and Ms. Harris, all concurred that they felt that they had been trained by Hilltop County “a little.” Mr. Richard honestly shared that he did not feel that the county had trained him to teach his students digital wisdom. Ms. Miller expressed that she felt that she had been trained “a lot.” Further, I inquired on the online questionnaire regarding their most recent technology trainings and asked them to specify the amount of Hilltop County professional technology training seminars they had attended in the past school year.

Despite the differing consensus on the amount of training received by the county on how to teach their own students digital wisdom, teachers shared on their questionnaires that they understood that they were each ethically and legally responsible for dealing with cyberbullying in their classrooms. Some of the teachers shared specific ways during their interview that they teach their students (regardless of their perceived lack of training by the county) how to be digitally wise.
Ms. Smith and Ms. Miller shared during interviews, that they created a technology project on cyberbullying with their students and submitted it to the county for a technology contest. “In fact just last [school] year they [students] did a BRIM project where they [students] had to do a piece on cyberbullying,” Ms. Miller shared in her interview. The two teachers used the project to teach students about not only the misuse of technology that often causes cyberbullying, but also about traditional bullying. Students then created artifacts that included stories and videos that were submitted along with Ms. Smith’s and Ms. Miller’s lesson plans on antibullying and cyberbullying. Ms. Miller expressed that this digitally wise project helped ensure that, “they’re [students] trained to know what it [cyberbullying] is and that they’re not supposed to do it.” This preventative project is discussed more in the following section.

As another digitally-wise middle school teacher, Ms. Harris shared about how she recently taught a technology lesson on how to be digitally wise to her students:

I think it’s because the amount of technology I use. Like ‘follow’ *The Outsiders* (ISBN 0670532576). We [Ms. Harris and the students] tweeted the whole time we were reading. We did Instagram pictures . . . You know like I kinda like… I don’t tell them its [tweeting] wrong. [I] Try to make sure . . . I tell them if they do it [tweet] . . . its okay. You just have to [use it] the right way.

This technology inspired unit where students were allowed to use Twitter and Instagram, was successful in teaching the students not only the required Virginia Standards of Learning for that class, but also taught the students the correct and proper ways to communicate their thoughts and responses to the book they were reading in class, *The Outsiders* (ISBN 0670532576). Then rather than discouraging the use of 21st century
technology in the lesson, “I don’t tell them it’s wrong,” Ms. Harris stated, instead she used her digital wisdom to teach her students the proper and wisest use of the 21st century technology tool.

Ms. Harris shared that if she has a student that has not used the 21st century technology tool in the correct way another student might say, “So and so’s Instagram,” and her response is to “use the language” and ask the student why they failed to be wise with the technology. For example if a student hasn’t set proper safety and private settings, she may ask, “Why isn’t it private?” These precautions and prompts are done in her classroom to teach and encourage the use of 21st century technology and to discourage the unwise use of it.

Teachers along with guidance also provided lesson plans used in the classroom that incorporated the same lesson Ms. Harris expressed, of teaching and modeling safe and correct (digital wise) technology use for their students (see Table 2). Lessons such as *Good Messaging Manners* is a lesson used by teachers to teach their students digital wisdom.

*Preventing cyberbullying involves a team of stakeholders.* During the individual interviews the participant teachers articulated and shared several different resources, and stakeholders that all played a role in how they prevent cyberbullying in their middle school environment. These resources and stakeholders all supported and had an impact on how effectively the teachers perceived that they prevented cyberbullying and are described below.

*Hilltop County laptop training.* At the commence of the school year, Hilltop County requires every middle school parent and middle school student to attend laptop
training each year as a requirement for the middle school student being able to receive a DELL Inc., laptop from the county. The parents’ training is held at each middle school at the beginning of the school year; however, parents have the choice of completing this training online as well. The students are provided with laptop training at school with their teachers. The lessons at school are provided on the same county website source that parents can go to complete their training. These lessons are on proper use and misuse of the DELL Inc., laptops, including discussion of cyberbullying. The online videos also discuss the consequences associated with the misuse of the DELL Inc., laptops. Both parents and students watch a series of Internet and technology safety videos, then they are prompted to complete online quizzes and parents must fill out an online form. This yearly training serves as the county’s way to proactively form a connection between home and school—between the parents and the county, on what the students’ responsibilities are with having a school provided laptop. The website training also helps educate parents and students about how to keep students safe while using the diverse 21st century technology applications on the DELL Inc., laptops. The training videos include clips on the proper use of the 21st century technology applications in order to prevent cyberbullying, as well information defining cyberbullying and tips on how to recognize and report it.

Breaking Ranks in the Middle (BRIM). This national program is headed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and is geared towards engaging, “the middle level community – staff, students, parents and community members – as they work together to create an academically rigorous, personalized learning environment that leads to improved student performance” (National Association of Secondary School
Principals, 2013, p.1). Even more specifically, BRIM was created so that secondary students, both middle and high school, would, have a “sense of belonging at the school” (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2013, p.1). According to digitally wise middle school teacher, Ms. Smith the program is used in her classroom to effectively teach “anti-bullying, leadership, sportsmanship, team building.” Ms. Miller shared that this program is, “all about…really concentrating on the unique situation that middle school… offers kids. You know, uniquely wonderful and uniquely terrible.”

Last school year the two participant teachers used BRIM in their classrooms to teach students about cyberbullying as a preventative tool to educate students on “what it is and that they’re not supposed to do it,” Ms. Miller asserted. She also shared that, “In fact last year they [students] did a BRIM project where they had to do a piece on cyberbullying.” This 21st century technology project was submitted to Hilltop County for their Hilltop Tech Initiative (pseudonym used). The Hilltop Tech Initiative is where teachers at any grade level are able each school year to submit one 21st century technology project that they complete with their students. The project submission includes the teacher’s lesson along with student artifacts created for the project and are posted on the county website.

The title of their 21st century technology project was Anti-Bullying and Peer-Mentoring Initiative (pseudonym used for part of the title). The project that was submitted focused on antibullying and students created a video, PowerPoint, puppet show, word search, poster, digital book, and song, all on the causes and effects of different types of bullying. The project was initiated from the BRIM lessons the students received from Ms. Smith and Ms. Miller throughout the school year and then based on
questions that the students in each class had on bullying and cyberbullying. The students then used a Google document to record and submit their initial questions they had on cyberbullying and traditional bullying to either Ms. Smith or Ms. Miller, depending on who their teacher was. Collaborative student groups, based on their inquiries about cyberbullying and bullying, were then created. Students were taught by Ms. Miller and Ms. Smith how to wisely choose reliable and trustworthy web sites to research the answers to their questions. Students were also shown how to use a variety of 21st century technology tools to present their findings which included use of BrainPop, ActivInspire, Google Docs, GoAnimate, and Prezi, to create their antibullying projects while working collaboratively in student groups to create their artifacts. Once the projects were finished a few of the projects were selected and shared with the entire sixth grade class to teach their classmates about cyberbullying and traditional bullying and furthermore some of the projects were shared with younger students at a local elementary school.

These digitally-wise teachers not only taught their own students how to be digitally wise by showing them how to evaluate online resources for accuracy, bias, and trustworthiness, but the participant teachers showed the students how to correctly use 21st century technology tools, and they also allowed the students to share their new knowledge with peers and younger students on the proper use of 21st century technology and how dangerous the misuse of the technology can be.

*Project PINK and Rachel’s Challenge.* In addition to the county technology training to prevent cyberbullying, Ms. Harris’ school started a school wide program entitled PINK or Promote Individuality and Nice Kindness (pseudonym used for part of the title). More recently they have started doing a project entitled *Rachel’s Challenge.*
However, Project PINK and Rachel’s Challenge both have the same intent. Its purpose is to empower students to be able to define, prevent, recognize, and handle all types of bullying, including cyberbullying. The teachers at Ms. Harris’ school each complete Rachel’s Challenge lesson plans with their students starting at the beginning of the school year. The lessons include a variety of activities on defining two different types of bullying, direct (overt) bullying and indirect (covert) bullying, such as the *What Would You Do If* card game where students are provided with a cyberbullying scenario and have to brainstorm and discuss the proper steps to take to effectively handle the cyberbullying situation. Lessons also include reflection time for students where they respond in writing, to quotes by others and make a mental connection to how the quote influences their actions with bullying and cyberbullying.

Rachel’s Challenge was started by her parents after Rachel was murdered at her high school in Colorado a number of years ago. However, her parents continue her legacy by inspiring other young adolescents with a challenge to ponder what bullying and cyberbullying are and how they can prevent such bullying from occurring in their own school environment. Speakers also visit Ms. Harris’ school during the school year to speak to the students. Ms. Harris shared this about the program:

Her family travels around . . . and they brought someone here last year. They did a very emotional, meaningful [presentation] . . . and it just talk[ed] about her life and how they found behind her dresser a note that talks about [how] she was going to change the world. So they tell her story about how nice she was to people…and how she cared about people and . . . it really breaks the kids down. A lot of them cried.
Therefore, Ms. Harris shared, “Like since then [the visit last school year] we do Rachel’s Challenge, like every couple of weeks we’ll do an activity about bullying and cyberbullying."

Guidance provided lessons. In Hilltop County the middle school guidance counselors also focus on providing lessons for the students on cyberbullying in an effort to prevent cyberbullying in their middle school environment. The proactive cyberbullying lessons are conducted in the classrooms with the goal to prevent cyberbullying amongst the middle school students. During the interviews, the middle school teachers mentioned several times that guidance often handled cyberbullying cases. Thus when following up with guidance, archival documents in the form of lesson plans were kindly provided by the guidance counselor at Ms. Davis’ and Mr. Richard’s school. Some of the preventative lessons shared include objectives such as: learning and using privacy online, exploring concepts of privacy in cyberspace, reviewing the privacy policy, giving examples of good manners specifically in regards to email, blogs, IM (instant messaging), and identifying situations where sexual talk is risky. These wonderful lessons provide students with the resources to be prepared to prevent cyberbullying in their own lives when at school using their DELL Inc., laptops and also when at home.

Schools encouraging self-reporting. Each of the participants’ middle schools encourage self-reporting of cyberbullying cases through an online school reporting website or blog. Ms. Robinson articulated that at her school the students are encouraged to use the:
Peacock Post (pseudonym), because that’s our mascot, but I think . . . [it’s] something different now. It’s a Google Doc actually . . . it’s a Google form. They can go on, it’s totally anonymous and they submit and the guidance counselors check it.

By letting students know that they have a place to report cyberbullying, it can curb cyberbullies from bullying in fear of being caught. Ms. Durham explained this exact phenomenon that “[a] kid… could do it [cyberbully] anonymously . . . and no one even knows.” However, now if students report it on the anonymous blog “they [cyberbully victims] don’t have to worry about anyone hearing them,” Ms. Davis stated, they “can go online at home, in the safety of their own house.” However, after cyberbullying is reported the administrators and guidance counselors are able to follow up with the students who are cyberbullying victims and also potentially find the cyberbully.

Expressing this sentiment Ms. Miller stated:

There’s more to it [discipline] than just . . . the report. Then you [schools/county] have to do some investigation and that would be Jude Skate (pseudonym). Who would be our um, discipline person. Working with it [cyberbullying case] and it might become an issue of legality, too. Because once it goes cyber . . . there’s more to it than just um, one kid versus another kid.

The factor of anonymity of self-reporting online allows students to feel safe and not shy away because “they don’t want the kid [cyberbully] to find out . . . whose doing it,” Mr. Richard mentioned. This newfound boldness that occurs by encouraging students to self-report the various types of cyberbullying and bullying also empowers the county to be more equipped and much more aware of how to be proactive in preventing
cyberbullying from happening in the middle school environment. In this way students become stakeholders in the school community and play a pivotal role in their own well-being and feeling safe at school.

*Savvy online talk and messaging.* This part of the theme was not as apparent or mentioned by every digitally wise middle school teacher included in the research study, but emerged from different things shared throughout the study including the interviews and archival data. The digitally-wise middle school teachers’ consensus that they understood that cyberbullying was a real issue in today’s culture was heard in interviews and seen in different preventative projects and guidance provided lessons.

Ms. Miller and Ms. Smith both worked towards teaching their students about the consequences of rude talking and messaging and this was displayed by the students’ created book artifact, entitled, *How Bullying Affects People.* Ms. Miller expressed:

> The saying of malicious gossip kinds of things, where you send it out in mass mail outs through Facebook . . . the telephone . . . it [cyberbullying] can certainly do a lot of damage. So they’re [students] trained to know what it is and that they’re not supposed to do it [cyberbully].

Ms. Davis echoed Ms. Miller’s concern about the middle school students’ malicious words by expressing this sentiment:

> They’re inventing new words as it is. I would have to sit there and say, ‘What word is that you just said’ . . . and some of these [inappropriate] statements especially on the Internet . . . think I would still blush if I even thought of doing that.
This issue of the students misusing their words online and on social networking sites was also addressed in some of the archival documents provided to me by Ms. Davis’ and Mr. Richard’s guidance counselor. A few of the provided lessons were created to assist students in discovering the benefits of using proper communication online when messaging or blogging, good manners when messaging, and also presented various scenarios where online communication was not used properly like sexting, and presented situations where students may feel uncomfortable and included proper ways to respond.

The suggestions that students needed to also be trained in how to communicate using online tools in order to prevent cyberbullying, was apparent when Ms. Harris described how she properly taught her students during a Language Arts lesson how to use Twitter wisely. She asserted to her class “You wanna chat about how great commas are, then we can chat about that.” She reinforced their correct messaging use on the social networking site, too, when she reminded her students, “You can chat, but I have your [online communication] history.” Based on the data explained above that was retrieved during this research study, middle school students play a role in preventing cyberbullying and need to be trained on how to speak properly and use good manners when communicating online at school and at home.

**Handling cyberbullying.** In this research study the main intent was to discover the perceptions that digitally-wise middle school teachers shared regarding their roles as teachers in dealing with cyberbullying. The participant teachers expressed during their interviews and questionnaires that they viewed their role in handling cyberbullying, to report all cyberbullying and all other bullying to their administration or guidance. Ms.
Miller worded it this way, “I am trained to then [after student reported cyberbullying] go to the next level up.”

Ms. Davis shared that, as a teacher, she felt it was her role to establish a “barrier” between she and her students when it came to communicating outside of school on social networking sites:

But another reason I’ve gotten away from Facebook . . . is . . . Facebook has allowed students of younger ages to make um, posts and they can make their own profiles now and I get a lot of friend requests from my students. And I feel like that is a major barrier that I don’t want to cross. Um, so I always click no or ignore or whatever. Usually the kid comes up to me, ‘You didn’t want to be my friend,’ and we have the conversation of what is appropriate. Because they don’t understand sometimes that I’m an adult and even though I do have the social media network . . . I am still the teacher.

In addition to describing her role as a teacher, Ms. Davis continued by sharing, “We [adult stakeholders] want them to feel safe regardless of where they are.” To establish this precedent in her class, Ms. Davis shared that:

At the beginning of the year, you know we’re doing all of the Code Blue drills, Tornado Drills, and the Fire Drills instantly that I’m wanting to protect each of them [students] and I think all teachers have that you know just built into their wiring. So I tell them [students] that, you know I tell them that I want to know where you are. Then they may hate to say, ‘I need to use the restroom; I have to get a pass signed.’ But that if ‘so and so’ is in the restroom, I need to know so that I have to go back into the building to get them. And I think that’s helped a
lot…before I get to know them, before I even get to know all of their names…they know that I instantly care and want to be there for them.

This she says has attributed to her students not only knowing that she cares for them but the students who need to talk, Ms. Davis said frequently, “have come to me over other teachers.”

Ms. Davis and Ms. Durham shared the sentiment of not being able to always help their students with cyberbullying. Ms. Davis shared that she is not able to “go into anybody’s cellphone . . . Facebook, or MySpace.” Ms. Durham expressed that in situations of being notified of cyberbullying situations, she does not “directly . . . insert” herself, but notifies “guidance, who in turn [notifies] parents.” However, Ms. Durham then explained her reason why she does not “insert” herself into situations involving the misuse of technology:

Well, I do think teachers should be active in reporting it. Um, it becomes a very fine line, especially out here in Hilltop County (pseudonym) as to how much access you can get to teach your students technology [proper use]. Looking at their [students] cell phones…and you know you have someone [parent] saying you know, ‘That’s a violation of their [students] privacy.’ And then it becomes, ‘Well, what right do you have as a teacher to look at their stuff?’ If it was someone being mean [cyberbullying], you’d [parent] want to know why we [teachers] didn’t . . . but anyway! So, implications . . . implications are two sided.

Mr. Richard discussed his views on the role as a teacher when dealing with cyberbullying. When his students are being bullied and it is reported:
I pull out each student separately and I talk to them, you know-one on one. The person that’s doing the bullying, I explain you know, ‘What are your actions? Do you know what you’re doing?’ And a lot of them say they don’t know. I try to get them to understand what you’re doing, why it is wrong. You know, ‘What are you going to do to stop that?’ And I always let the other student know, who was being bullied, let me know if it continues.

Mr. Richard also encouraged his students to use the website for anonymous cyberbullying reporting. In cases of specific cyberbullying Mr. Richard shared that he advises his students to:

- Print off the email, copy and paste it and show it to your [students’] parents.
- Print it [cyberbullying message] and bring it to school and show it to the principal and you know they’ll definitely take care of it. Don’t be afraid to share it with somebody, because it’s not going to stop. It’s not just going to go away.

However, Mr. Richard acknowledged that without a student reporting the cyberbullying, “I don’t think teachers really know how to [deal with] . . . unless a kid comes up to you.”

Ms. Smith shared that she had done a lot of reading about cyberbullying on her own, to learn about it, since there had not been much training by the county. Ms. Miller articulated how as a teacher she had a “zero tolerance” for any type of bullying. As a teacher, she noted that she also took special regard for the “kiddo that’s doing it [bullying] to develop some empathy and you know what’s wrong with that child that they’ve resorted to…that kind of behavior.” Thus, she voiced that as a teacher when assisting the bullied child; the teacher must take a “broad based look at both the kid that’s
being bullied and the bullier,” and acknowledge that the bullier is not the “most awful unredeemable child.”

Perceived confidence in handling cyberbullying. In the online questionnaire digitally-wise middle school teachers were asked if they felt confident in handling cyberbullying cases in their middle school environments and the majority of the teachers reported that they did. Ms. Smith however, responded that she did not feel confident in handling cyberbullying in her environment.

The digitally-wise middle school teachers voiced areas that they were confident in and areas that they would like further training on because of perceived weaknesses. The teachers were asked during the questionnaire and interviews about their knowledge of cyberbullying laws, to see if they understood the legality of the cyberbullying issue and implications for students who cyberbully. Ms. Miller, Ms. Durham, Ms. Davis, Ms. Robinson, and Ms. Smith all concurred that they felt they were somewhat knowledgeable. Ms. Davis further admitted that “I know there are laws out there . . . I couldn’t tell you what they specifically entail. I couldn’t specifically say, ‘What you [cyberbullying student] have done is breaking the law.” Mr. Richard expressed that he was not knowledgeable of the cyberbullying laws, “I don’t think there are laws, but I’m sure there are . . . you don’t hear about them a lot.”

Ms. Durham echoed Mr. Richard, and shared, “I don’t know what the actual laws are.” Thus when her students cyberbully or report cases of cyberbullying, she asserted that “I’m not sure if it’s really breaking . . . laws. I’m not sure someone would be charged with anything, unless it resulted in . . . unfortunately more significant harm
directly of someone.” Ms. Harris said that she felt she was very knowledgeable of the laws on cyberbullying.

The participants rated themselves “somewhat knowledgeable” to just “knowledgeable” on the causes and detrimental effects of cyberbullying. Ms. Davis felt that after being bullied and being the perpetrator in past experiences as an adolescent, “being that I have been on both ends, I would say I’m fairly knowledgeable.”

Teachers were also asked about their confidence in the amount of training they had received from their county on cyberbullying. Ms. Robinson, Mr. Richard, Ms. Harris, and Ms. Smith asserted that they did not feel the county had adequately trained them on how to handle with cyberbullying. Mr. Richard shared that:

There’s so many trainings on everything . . . why not throw in cyberbullying. Something that’s affecting schools. You know every year, how many kids are killed because of bullying? They [Hilltop County] bring these things up, but I honestly can’t remember when I was ever trained in it.

Ms. Miller echoed in her interview that she was trained to follow “protocol” but if she were “left alone to deal with it” she “would not” know how to deal with it. Ms. Davis also explained her feelings that the county “needs to do a little bit more training” and remind teachers “of those signs and . . . what to look for. Because . . . not every child exhibits the same behavior.”

Ms. Robinson voiced her opinion that she felt that she had trained herself because as a digital native it hadn’t “been too long since I went through school and it [cyberbullying] was kinda coming into force while I was . . . in school. I don’t think the county really knows how to handle it yet.”
After sharing, the teachers were asked if they would be interested in receiving further training from the county on cyberbullying and each of the participants agreed unanimously “yes.” Ms. Smith expressed that she would be interested in further training:

As long as it [training] just wasn’t the basic that we already know intuitively. If it would really give me some strategies of how to recognize it [cyberbullying]; how to realize that this is happening and then be more aware of it. And to be able to pick up on cues that would indicate, because the kids aren’t going to tell.

Ms. Davis echoed the need for further training and the willingness to participate in the training:

I think especially like sexting . . . and things like that become more of an occurrence we need more training on that. Because I didn’t even know that existed. As the kids become more knowledgeable, I think we [teachers] need more training to stay one step ahead. We need to be more in tune to it…how to spot it and how to fix it.

In conclusion Mr. Richard stressed the importance of further training on the 21st century epidemic of cyberbullying:

Since 21st century learning is so important, I think it [cyberbullying training] would be important . . . I think there’s a lot of teachers who know what the technology [is] out there . . . cyberbullying, you know where it comes from. As far as handling it and what to do with it or how to detect it . . . I don’t think teachers really know how to.

*Training on how to effectively handle cyberbullying.* Digitally-wise teachers, according to responses on interviews and questionnaires, perceived a need for further
training on how to effectively handle cyberbullying with students. As the researcher, while I was exploring the perceptions of how digitally-wise middle school teachers define, recognize, handle, and prevent cyberbullying, I inquired about teachers’ confidence in their knowledge of cyberbullying. I wanted to grasp their level of confidence as I believed that their confidence would affect how they tried to handle cyberbullying cases presently with their students and in the future.

**Past bullying and cyberbullying experiences.** During the individual interviews, participants were asked about their own past experiences with bullying to explore how these experiences may impact how they currently handle bullying with their own students now. Ms. Harris, Ms Miller, and Ms. Davis shared that they had been bullied when in their adolescence. Ms. Davis mentioned, “I was always the quiet one that wanted to do their work . . . always wore glasses . . . the big, you know, the big framed glasses back in the 90s.” Ms. Harris also shared her experience with being bullied as an adolescent:

I moved a lot. I was always a new student. For example, girls would say, ‘Oh we’re all going to wear a skirt today’ . . . and then I would come and they all didn’t have a skirt. It was like intentional like ways to embarrass or hurt.

When asked if they think their experiences of being bullied affecting how they handle cyberbullying and traditional bullying with their students, Ms. Harris and Ms. Davis said “yes.” Ms. Davis asserted that it enabled her to be, “more sympathetic . . . understanding what the child that’s being bullied is going through . . . and how emotionally . . . um unstable they can be.” Ms. Davis also presented the thought that:

Lots of times you have those cases [bullying] where a student has been bullied and turns around and bullies others . . . I unfortunately did that, too. You know, it
was one of those, ‘If I can’t feel good, then you can’t feel good either.’ And so I understand what the people, who are bullying are going through. Usually they have a low self-esteem.

However, Ms. Miller who was also a victim of bullying as an adolescent, when asked if her prior bullying experiences affected how she handles cyberbullying or traditional bullying, said, “I really don’t know. I don’t know that . . . [but] I don’t have a lot of patience with a bully.”

Ms. Durham, Mr. Richard and Ms. Robinson shared that they did not feel they had been bullied as an adolescent, excluding one instance in her youth of students being mean, Ms. Durham shared, and except for maybe one “hazing” incident as Mr. Richard described it, or as Ms. Robinson expressed experiencing “passing disagreements with people.” Mr. Richard reflected on how his lack of experiencing bullying as an adolescent affected how he presently handles cyberbullying and traditional bullying and identified that:

If I experienced it [bullying] myself, I would know what the feeling is like for someone. And, but you really and truly don’t know what it’s like. You can guide them [bullied victims] towards what to do, how to stop it, prevent it . . . With that I would say not having that experience it’s harder to give them the right answers.

Ms. Robinson echoed the thought of it being “harder to give them the right answers” as Mr. Richard stated, but expressed that she thought she was “a fairly empathetic and observant person . . . I feel like I can see those things. But I would definitely be able to recognize them [bullying cases] more,” if she had experienced bullying herself. Ms. Durham shared that she had to really think to find an example of being bullied as a child
to remember the one incident, and thus does not think that her experience or lack of experience with bullying in her adolescence influences how she handles cyberbullying or traditional bullying now.

Ms. Smith noted that she had not been the victim of bullying in adolescence, but had bullied another female student in her class. Ms. Smith shared that she was in the seventh grade and:

I didn’t think about it at the time. It wasn’t labeled bullying. [She] liked our math class to be quiet, so we would just make it not so quiet. You know whisper things and just pick at her, just in that way. We didn’t call her names, or do any physical harm to her.

Ms. Smith expressed remorse about her actions in the past, “so I feel bad now, that I was even a part of her misery when I could’ve befriended her.” Now when she hears of any traditional bullying or cyberbullying cases, she reports them to her “administrator or guidance, or both.”

**Discipline measures for cyberbullying.** Each of the seven digitally-wise middle school teachers shared that when cyberbullying cases are reported to them they refer these cases to their guidance counselor or administration. Archival data, such as the Code of Conduct also described thoroughly Hilltop County’s discipline measures for cyberbullying. Ms. Robertson shared that guidance has deemed cyberbullying cases “their domain.” Ms. Davis expressed how well supported she felt by her school’s administration and guidance department and how she appreciated how well they communicated “exactly what our [teacher] responsibilities are.” Thus, Ms. Davis shared because of this clear communication she knew “when to let them
For example, a student may sometimes need to just come and talk and it may not be a cyberbullying issue. This clear-cut communication she said leaves teachers with a lucid understanding about what the protocol is at their school when students share a bullying issue:

I think that is one of the really awesome [things] Shoreplain School (pseudonym) does… I don’t think there’s a teacher here that would have to sit there and say, ‘Is this something that needs to go to somebody higher than me’?

Ms. Smith expressed that she “always report[s] it [cyberbullying] to an administrator . . . I really don’t try to handle it on my own . . . I feel like it should be handled by someone with a little more expertise . . . a counselor or administrator.”

The confidence that the teachers expressed in passing reported cyberbullying cases to administration or guidance is due in part to them being aware of the Hilltop County Code of Conduct. At the beginning of the school year every teacher is asked to review the Code of Conduct to be aware of the county guidelines, and discipline policy for inappropriate student behavior. Every school employee, including school administrators and guidance counselors, is required to abide by the Code of Conduct when handling cyberbullying cases. Ms. Durham expressed this sentiment when she shared that she may not be sure when dealing with cyberbullying cases, whether it is breaking the law, but “I would imagine it would break our Code of Conduct here at school.” With such clear and lucid guidelines and discipline outcomes outlined, teachers in Hilltop County are given the confidence that inappropriate behavior will not be overlooked but handled in a suitable manner.
Discipline for cyberbullying. This theme emerged from the individual interviews and archival documents. While none of the teachers mentioned any specific order of steps that would follow after a student was caught cyberbullying or misusing technology, Ms. Robinson mentioned that if a student is caught misusing technology on a student DELL Inc., laptop at school, the county Internet security monitoring administrator at the school will freeze the laptop screen, so the students can’t close any of the browsers or windows. Ms. Miller did note that “We usually take kids’ computers.” After this she said that once students are discovered cyberbullying and it is handed over to their discipline administrator, “it becomes an issue of legality, too.”

Ms. Davis mentioned that when reporting the bullying and the students involved are identified, guidance will try to mediate the students and if that does not work, the teachers, administrators, and guidance will possibly “even go so far as to get them away from each other as best we can, with changing classes if they’re together.”

The theme of discipline for cyberbullying truly emerged from the one of the archival documents, the Code of the Conduct. The Code of Conduct (COC) as described at the beginning of this chapter outlines for school stakeholders, including students, behavior standards set by Hilltop County for enrolled students. The COC defines proper student conduct and supplies a menu of alternatives or consequences to be utilized by governing school administrators for properly handling situations where individual students are not exhibiting the proper behavior. The COC discusses a myriad of indiscretions students can commit in regards to such things as trespassing, vandalism, substance abuse, firearms, dress code, and integrity. Most importantly, for the purposes
of this research study, it discusses cell phones, technology and Internet use and cyberbullying.

The COC of Hilltop County applies not only to students when they are on school grounds, but when they are traveling to or from school in addition to waiting at school bus stops. The COC also applies to students when they are at any school sponsored event, such as a school dance, or football game. When a parent and student signs the COC each school year, they are giving permission to Hilltop County to search the student’s property, which includes their cellphones and computers. The student is also agreeing to “report to a school staff member any information concerning threats or disruptions involving the safety of students, staff, or the school environment” (VDOE, 2013a, p. 2). The following paragraphs will specify guidelines applying to middle school students in regards to cell phones, technology and Internet use, and cyberbullying, along with the COC recommended dispositions.

*Code of Conduct.* This archival document was not planned on being collected, but was mentioned during the interviews and made available by the county. Middle school students who have a cell phone according to the COC must make sure that the cellphone is not visible or used at any point of the school day once they enter the school bus in the morning until the time they leave the bus in the evening. For students who do not ride the bus the same rule of no cell phone usage during the school day applies to them. Students are allowed to use cell phones if they are attending school events after school where the cell phone is not a distraction (VDOE, 2013a). However, students may not use their cell phones after school when attending tutoring, make up work sessions, or
homework help with teachers. Violations of the COC guidelines for cell phone use are the following:

*First Offense* - Confiscation of phone, parent contacted by person confiscating the phone, verbal warning, parent must retrieve the phone,

*Second Offense* - Confiscation of phone, parent contacted by the administrator, parent must retrieve the phone, detention, or In-School Suspension,

*Third Offense* - Insubordination disciplinary consequence,

*Fourth Offense* - Contact the Director of Secondary Education to discuss further consequence. (VDOE, 2013a, p. 5)

Technology and Internet use are discussed in the COC as well and outlines the general terms and conditions of student use. The terms and conditions of use discuss how Hilltop County provides students’ DELL Inc., laptops with wireless access to the Internet during the school day for educational purposes only. The COC technology and Internet use section, also mentions the use of a commercial filtering system in response to the Children’s Internet Protection Act. Students are asked to also remember that the DELL Inc., laptops are property of Hilltop County and must be turned in at the request of a teacher or administrator or when leaving the school for summer or due to relocating. If students have written authorization they may bring to school and use their own laptops or tablets and connect them to Hilltop County’s wireless network, however all COC technology and Internet guidelines will still apply. Next the section reminds students about acceptable 21st century technology use and Internet Safety such as respecting rights and privacy of other laptop users, obeying and operating their DELL laptop within the established Hilltop county security and filtering environment, being responsible and
having integrity while using technology, and following all COC standards of conduct when communicating with technology such as not bullying, or verbally assaulting others.

The last two sections of the technology and Internet COC section discuss what 21st century technology tools students may use with teacher or administrator approval such as a chat room or email, and also forbidden things for students such as downloading or uploading material that may spur or promote violent behavior. Failure of students to honor the above COC guidelines of behavior have the recommended consequences and can result in losing all Internet and technology privileges. The recommended consequences are (in order as listed in COC) student conference, parent contact, conference with parent, removal of unauthorized files and folders, detention, alternative school program, suspension, school resource officer/law enforcement agencies, court referral, restitution, community service, revocation of computer access and use, and recommendation to the school board for expulsion.

The section on bullying outlines bullying as either verbal, written, or physical and includes exclusion name-calling, and any comments regarding race, religion, gender, and physical abilities. This section also encompasses cyberbullying. The COC defines cyberbullying as “abusive behavior including . . . threatening, intimidating perpetrated with computers, cellular phones, internet websites, and/or any other electronic devices” (VDOE, 2013, p. 37). The section on bullying outlines what bullying with technology includes:

Electronic bullying and/ cyber bullying related activity of any nature and that which is obscene, pornographic, threatening, or otherwise inappropriate, including (but not limited to) email, instant messaging, web pages, and use of hardware
and/or software which substantially disrupts or interferes with the safety and welfare of the school and its students, are strictly prohibited, even if such uses/actions take place off school property (VDOE, 2013a, p. 33).

Recommended consequences for student cyberbullying and bullying (listed as they appear in COC) student conference, parent contact, conference with parent, instructional support services intervention, detention, alternative school program, suspension-required mediation/conflict resolution training, school resource officer/ law enforcement agencies, court referral, community services, and recommendation to the school board for expulsion.

While each of the three major components pertaining to cyberbullying in the COC had clear outlined guidelines and consequences for misuse of technology, the superintendent’s message that appears on the first page of the COC, states:

Schools must be among the safest places in the community. To establish a standard of student behavior, each school principal is required to recommend a student’s expulsion when the student…becomes a habitual offender of any component of the [Code of Conduct] (VDOE, 2013a, p. 1).

Therefore, despite the many steps listed in the technology and Internet use and bullying consequence section, whenever a student continuously violates any part of the COC including but not limited to the technology and Internet use, cell phone use, or bullying section, they must be recommended by their school principal for expulsion from Hilltop County Public Schools.
Summary

This chapter featured the results from the triangulation of interviews, an online questionnaire, and archival data. The data collected yielded several themes relating to how digitally-wise middle school teachers define, recognize, handle, and prevent cyberbullying in their middle school environments. The experiences of digitally-wise middle school teachers were shared and described in this chapter. Through the analysis of the teachers’ perceptions relating to cyberbullying, 10 main themes emerged from the data. First, digitally-wise middle school teachers hold distinct perceptions regarding characteristics of cyberbullying and bullying. Digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive that certain 21st century technology tools are used by their students to cyberbully. Digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive that cyberbullying in their middle school environment is not prevalent. Fourth, digitally-wise middle school teachers use self-reporting to recognize cyberbullying cases amongst their students. The fifth theme was, digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive that preventative measures are a must in creating a safe and cohesive school environment. Another theme was, preventing cyberbullying involves a team of stakeholders. Next, digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive a need for further training on how to effectively handle cyberbullying with students. Eighth, digitally-wise middle school teachers past experiences with bullying and cyberbullying affect how they handle cyberbullying now. Ninth, digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive they have key role in handling cyberbullying. Lastly, clear discipline measures for cyberbullying are pertinent.

The function of the data shared from digitally-wise middle school teachers’ perceptions is not simply to outline results from the study, but as Stake (1995) stated to
share certain digitally-wise teacher perceptions and provide a thick naturalistic generalization for the reader to then have an experiential understanding of the phenomenon experienced by the actors or participants. Chapter 5 will provide a brief summary and discussion of these findings along with implications for practice and future research.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Cyberbullying is an aggressive form of bullying using technology tools that has become prevalent in the 21st century. Ford (2009) defined cyberbullying as intentional harm utilizing information and communication tools of technology to support “deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group” (p. 535). As social technology has advanced, communicating electronically has increased and unfortunately, cyberbullying through the misuse of rather helpful social technology and misuse of that technology has surfaced in school environments. Cyberbullying has not only affected adolescents, but presents an insurmountable issue for school stakeholders who try to create safe school environments.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this case study was to examine how digitally-wise middle school teachers defined, recognized, handled, and prevented cyberbullying in one county in southern Virginia. Two main research questions were examined- (a) How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers define and recognize cyberbullying and (b) How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers currently prevent and handle cyberbullying and help-seeking behaviors from their middle school students?

Multiple themes relating to how digitally-wise middle school teachers define, recognize, handle, and prevent cyberbullying, emerged as a result of the participant responses. A total of 10 main findings that corresponded with the research questions were discovered during this research study. The first research question dealt with how
digitally-wise middle school teachers define and recognize cyberbullying and the following was discovered: (a) digitally-wise middle school teachers hold distinct perceptions regarding characteristics of cyberbullying and bullying; (b) digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive that certain 21st century technology tools are used by their students to cyberbully; (c) digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive that cyberbullying in their middle school environment is not prevalent; and (d) digitally-wise middle school teachers use self-reporting to recognize cyberbullying cases amongst their students.

When examining the second research question encompassing how participants prevent and handle cyberbullying the following findings were discovered: (a) digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive that preventative measures are a must in creating a safe and cohesive school environment; (b) preventing cyberbullying involves a team of stakeholders; (c) digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive a need for further training on how to effectively handle cyberbullying with students; (d) digitally-wise middle school teachers past experiences with bullying and cyberbullying affect how they handle cyberbullying now; (e) digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive they have key role in handling cyberbullying; and participants expressed that (f) clear discipline measures for cyberbullying are pertinent.

**Findings and Implications**

There were 10 key findings or subthemes pertaining to how digitally-wise middle school teachers’ defined, recognized, handled, and prevented cyberbullying in their middle school environment. The subsequent sections will present each of the findings along with implications in regards to the research literature. The following sections are
organized by topics of the two research questions for this research study, because the findings provide answers to the research questions.

Findings

Research question 1. The first research question asked, “How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers define and recognize cyberbullying?” After reviewing data from this case study, four main findings or subthemes were revealed pertaining to how digitally-wise middle school teachers define and recognize cyberbullying.

Defining cyberbullying. The first finding revealed how digitally-wise middle school teachers defined cyberbullying. The participant teachers shared accurate definitions of cyberbullying, saying that cyberbullying “occurs on some form of an electronic device, whether its phone, text messages, or over social media networks on the Internet . . . where they’re [perpetrators] addressing one another in not a positive manner making fun of each other.” Participant teachers shared that they perceived that cyberbullying and traditional bullying were alike because they both had the intent to harm others; however each participant acknowledged that cyberbullying differed from traditional bullying, in that cyberbullying was, “using any kind of social media to intimidate, threaten” and that cyberbullying was not face to face like traditional bullying. While there was no preexisting research on how digitally-wise middle school teachers defined cyberbullying, existing research completed by Boulton (1997), Beran and Stewart (2008), Peters (2012), and Townsend-Wiggin (2001) discussed teachers’ misconceptions of defining covert bullying that is not as visible traditional physical bullying. The implications of digitally-wise middle school teachers being able to correctly define
traditional bullying and cyberbullying distinctly implies that because they can accurately define cyberbullying, and acknowledge the mode and type of harassment, they are more likely to acknowledge that cyberbullying is a problem amongst today’s adolescents and more inclined to look out for it in their middle school environment (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b). According to Mishna et al., (2009) the way teachers understand and define various types of bullying greatly impacts their students. Digitally-wise teachers’ correct definitions of cyberbullying allow them to understand that it is a real problem amongst adolescents and not just see cyberbullying as a rite of passage for adolescents or just apart of growing up (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Beran and Stewart, 2008; Peters, 2012).

The second finding pertaining to the theme of defining cyberbullying, revealed that digitally-wise middle school teachers perceived that certain 21st century technology tools are used by their students to cyberbully. The participant teachers were very knowledgeable of the different 21st century technology tools and online social networking sites that middle school students use to cyberbully and participant teachers referenced several tools such as cellphones, blogs, Facebook, MySpace, Instagram, and Twitter. This finding was consistent with Prensky (2010, 2012b), who asserted that digitally-wise teachers have a high level of understanding and experience with 21st century technology. Digital wisdom according to Prensky (2010, 2012b) involves incorporating 21st century technology into one’s present thinking, decision-making processes, and being able to train others in the proper use of technology. Participant teachers shared that they perceived that because of their knowledge of the 21st century technology tools their students report and “tell about them [cyberbullying cases]” because their students “know [teachers are] with it,” and understand what 21st century technology tools are.
While there is no preexisting research on how digitally-wise middle school teachers define 21st century technology, existing research completed by Woodward (2011) stated that a teacher’s knowledge of technology largely influences how he teaches his students, and also affects how he perceives cyberbullying, thus determining if he is able to recognize what cyberbullying is, when it occurs, and understand the negative impact that it can have on students. Thus, with the digitally-wise middle school teachers having a greater knowledge of 21st century technology and knowing how to properly use the tools, along with correctly defining cyberbullying, they are more capable of teaching their students how to be wise users of technology. Thus according to Tosolt (2008) students perceive their teachers perceptions and expectations of 21st technology usage and students are more likely to correctly utilize technology, as well as report cyberbullying incidents with their digitally-wise teachers (Tosolt, 2008).

**Recognizing cyberbullying.** The third subtheme emerged under the theme of recognizing cyberbullying and revealed that digitally-wise middle school teachers are unsure of the exact prevalence of cyberbullying in their middle school environment. It was important to know whether teachers understood the prevalence of cyberbullying in their own school environment, because it ties into being able to effectively prevent cyberbullying. If teachers have a lower estimation of the number of cases, they can have a misguided understanding of their effectiveness at preventing cyberbullying.

While all participant teachers shared that they turned in all reported bullying cases, including cyberbullying to administration, as teachers were asked not to directly deal with resolving cases they also shared the perception that cyberbullying is an epidemic in the 21st century. However, there was a mixed response about precisely how
much of an issue cyberbullying really was at their individual site school due to the fact that teachers shared that the administration did not provide results of the amount of cyberbullying cases were reported per school year, and also, because teachers believe more cyberbullying occurs than they are told about by students. Past research that has been conducted on the prevalence of cyberbullying reports a wide range. According to past research studies by Hinduja and Patchin (2010b) and Siegle (2010) between 10% and 40% of adolescent students have at one time been a victim of cyberbullying. If digitally-wise middle school teachers are uncertain of the prevalence of cyberbullying cases at their site school, it is possible that they could not be addressing the cyberbullying issue to the accurate extent in which it may need to be addressed.

The fourth finding was a subtheme of recognizing cyberbullying, and revealed that digitally-wise middle school teachers used self-reporting to recognize cyberbullying cases amongst their students. While students have an anonymous school blog or website where they can report cyberbullying to administration and guidance counselors, many of the participant teachers shared that often their students will come report a case to them. This self-reporting indicates that the students trust their teachers and perceive them as willing to help (Tosolt, 2008), and then the teachers are able to instruct the students on how to properly go about handling the cyberbullying case and report it to the administration.

Often students share that they do not seek help, such as aid, support, or backing, because they do not deem the teachers or other school stakeholders as willing to assist them (Williams & Cornell, 2006). The fact that many participant teachers shared that some of their students do report cyberbullying and other bullying cases to them ratifies
Tolsolt (2008) research that states that students’ perceptions are formed by the relationships and circumstances that they experience in the school classroom. Thus if there are students who are truly reporting cyberbullying to the teachers, as the participants shared, then according to Tolsolt (2008) the teachers have created a classroom environment that is favorable to students and promotes an open and trusting environment, that encourages some of their students to self-report bullying. In cases where students do not report, Tolsolt (2008) also stated that many times students may not report cyberbullying because they do not deem their teachers recognizing bullying in the school environment as a true concern and see their teachers as not caring, unwilling to help, or do not want their technology devices taken from them as a consequence for being involved.

The issue of teachers not being able to recognize cyberbullying is presented as one of the main reasons why cyberbullying is not properly handled in school environments today and literature suggests that teachers and school officials must be able to recognize cyberbullying in order to effectively prevent and handle it, thus saving lives and helping students (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010a; Jager et al., 2010). The teachers did share that they deal with less cyberbullying cases than traditional bullying cases in regards to help-seeking and self-reporting; it may be that students just are not sharing or are reluctant to share as many cyberbullying cases with the teachers as they are other types of bullying. This is supported in research by Cross et al., (2010), Smith et al., (2008), and Stauffer et al., (2012) that explains that students are less likely to self-report cyberbullying cases to teachers than traditional bullying cases, making it harder for teachers to recognize cyberbullying and without being able to effectively recognize the
cases of cyberbullying teachers are not able to effectively intervene on students’ behalf. Research states that students can not report cyberbullying for various reasons, such as fear of the students that their technology devices may be taken from them or some belief that their school does not view cyberbullying as a problem (Sasseroli & Ruggiero, 2005; Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Williams & Cornell, 2006).

In conclusion, the way that a teacher recognizes cyberbullying is important because it reflects the teacher’s view of cyberbullying as a problem which is perceived by their students (Tosolt, 2008). Teachers being able to effectively recognize cyberbullying as a problem in their school environment empowers the whole school community in effectively dealing with cyberbullying because it can influence if the school officials adopt prevention programs and how they choose to handle cyberbullying. Recognizing cyberbullying as a problem brings awareness, which is crucial and leads to being able to effectively prevent and handle cyberbullying (Jager et al., 2010; Peters, 2012). However, teachers first must be able to recognize it!

**Research question 2.** The second research question was, “How do Virginian Hilltop County digitally-wise middle school teachers currently prevent and handle cyberbullying and help-seeking behaviors from their middle school students?” and is answered with the fifth through tenth findings. The findings or subthemes answer the question of how digitally-wise middle school teachers prevent and handle cyberbullying and help-seeking behaviors in their middle school environment.

*Preventing cyberbullying.* The fifth finding showed that digitally-wise middle school teachers utilize and perceive that their schools’ preventative measures are a must in creating a safe and cohesive school environment. Digitally-wise middle school
teachers in this research study shared numerous ways that Hilltop County stakeholders proactively try to prevent cyberbullying in their middle school environment such as guidance provided cyberbullying lessons, laptop training for parents and students, administrators and guidance counselors encouraging students to report all types of bullying, including cyberbullying, on the school self-report website or blog, and school wide anti-cyberbullying and bullying programs. The teachers discussed that they each felt these measures were proactively preventative of cyberbullying in their school environment, because it empowered the teachers to effectively prevent cyberbullying as a team with other school stakeholders (Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007; Yilmaz, 2010).

Participants also shared that further training on how they could be more confident in their role, would be helpful in teaching digital wisdom to their students (Prensky, 2012; Pusey & Sadera, 2011).

The participant teachers regarded preventative measures as very important to creating a safe and cohesive environment for the students and they shared wanting more training on how to teach their students to use 21st century technology wisely and felt that this was missing from the county’s training for teachers. There is no research specifically on digitally-wise middle school teachers preventing cyberbullying. However, the desire and need teachers expressed in the study for more training on preventing cyberbullying, is supported by literature as a necessary component of fostering a supportive school community that is able to effectively deal with cyberbullying (Pusey & Sadera, 2011). According to Yilmaz (2010), digitally-wise teachers, even though they are tech savvy, often report feeling unprepared in preventing cyberbullying and need training with open discussions and collaboration about cyberbullying order to feel confident in their role
(Pusey & Sadera, 2011). Pusey and Sadera (2011) and Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler (2007) stated that prevention strategies utilized in the classroom by teachers, such as modeling conflict resolution, class meetings on cyberbullying effects, and classroom pledges for cybersafety or cyberethics, can all initiate positive changes in the culture of the school, however teachers must first be confident in their role of preventing.

The sixth finding emerged as a subtheme under preventing cyberbullying and shed light on the fact that preventing cyberbullying involves a team of stakeholders. Within this research study when examining archival documents, reading interview transcriptions, and reviewing questionnaires, digitally-wise teachers were not the only stakeholders trying to prevent cyberbullying in Hilltop County Public Schools. The team of stakeholders included several individuals from the parents, teachers, guidance counselors, administrators all the way to the school superintendent. Research studies discuss the benefits of utilizing a team approach when trying to prevent cyberbullying (Stauffer, Heath, Coyne, and Ferrin, 2012).

Welker’s (2010) finding that teachers as well as administrators in school systems view cyberbullying as a 21st century problem and suggested why administrators would be involved in preventing cyberbullying with teachers. Furthermore, according to research conducted by Feinberg and Robey (2008), cyberbullying affects the entire school and thus should be at the attention of not only the teacher, but all other adult stakeholders in the school. This team approach in preventing cyberbullying is important in ensuring that the teacher feels supported in their role of preventing cyberbullying and not left alone. Peckham (2007), and Taylor (2008), agree that cyberbullying affects the entire school system and because of the wide-spread negative effects amongst the school environment,
it takes a united team to effectively deal with cyberbullying. This team approach, Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler (2007) say involves teachers who can model appropriate cyber use in class, administrators who set appropriate consequences for cyberbullying, and parents who provide filters and security at home for their students. It takes a team (Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007).

Handling. The seventh finding or subtheme of the study emerged under the theme of handling cyberbullying and revealed that digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive a need for further training on how to effectively handle cyberbullying with students. All of the digitally-wise middle school teachers attested that they would like to receive further training on how to effectively handle cyberbullying in their school environment. Most teachers shared that they did not feel adequately trained by the county to handle cyberbullying. This idea that teachers often do not feel trained to handle cyberbullying is confirmed in past research (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b, Mishna et al., 2005; Ryan, Kariuiki, & Yilmaz, 2011). A strong rationale for the need of this current research study on digitally-wise teachers, was found in the research studies conducted by Herther (2009) and Ryan et al. (2011). Research by Herther (2009) suggests that technology usage, including misuse with cyberbullying, is changing 21st century adolescents, indicating that training for teachers on handling this epidemic would be very beneficial. Ryan et al. (2011), found that digital native preservice teachers undergo an intense period of studying instruction, policy, teaching, and curriculum, yet the researchers found that preservice teachers frequently report feeling ill-prepared to effectively manage a classroom and are unaware of the implications of handling cyberbullying in the school environment.
Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler (2007) suggested that for teachers to effectively handle cyberbullying, a small portion of a teacher’s day should be comprised of rehearsing the strategies to handle conflict in the classroom with students out of concern for the misuse of social-technology. Yet, in order for teacher to effectively handle and train others on cyberbullying they must first be trained themselves. With more in depth training on how to effectively handle cyberbullying, teachers can be empowered to teach strategies to their students (Stomfay-Stitz-Wheeler, 2007).

The eighth finding emerged under the theme of handling cyberbullying, and showed that digitally-wise middle school teachers’ past experiences with bullying and cyberbullying affect how they handle cyberbullying now. While the majority of digitally-wise middle school teachers responded that they had not been cyberbullied, they all shared how either their experience or lack of experience with bullying influenced how they currently handle traditional bullying and cyberbullying with their students. While there is no current research on the past experiences of digitally-wise middle school teachers with bullying (cyberbullying and traditional), there is research on how bullying affects students long after the bullying has ceased. Research conducted by Peckham (2007) shared that bullied students are more likely to be depressed, insecure and anxious, along with various other long term mental, physical, and social effects according to research conducted by Ttofi and Farrington (2008). Research studies conducted by Hinduja and Patchin (2008), stated that bullies and cyberbullies have higher suicidal ideation and possess resentment, desperation and can in return target others by bullying in the future. Hoff and Mitchell (2009) also found that cyberbully victims can become
emotionally traumatized, develop a low-self-esteem and a sense of powerlessness that causes them often to in-turn cyberbully others.

The ninth finding or subtheme emerged under handling cyberbullying and revealed that digitally-wise middle school teachers perceived they have a key role in handling cyberbullying. This finding differs, where as there is no literature on how digitally-wise teachers handle cyberbullying, most research on middle school teachers according to Stomfay-Stitz and Wheetler (2007) found that teachers do not view cyberbullying as a problem and do not see themselves as having a role in handling it. Stauffer et al. (2012) found that teachers in their research study did not view handling cyberbullying as a part of their role and a significant percentage of teachers did not see cyberbullying as a problem in their school environment.

Digitally-wise middle school teachers in this research study shared that they each perceived that they played a key role in handling cyberbullying. They shared how they spoke with students and encouraged them to print off the cyberbullying comments and bring a copy to school, and they shared about how they educate the students about cyberbullying. However, one of the key ways the teachers all shared about handling cyberbullying was by letting an administrator or guidance counselor know about it. This seemed to be a pertinent part of the team approach to handling cyberbullying, and seemed to play a major role in the team approach within Hilltop County with dealing with cyberbullying. However, the question arises if this form of handling is just teachers handing off cyberbullying to the administrators to handle? Also, what does a digitally wise middle school teacher do if they perceive that after informing the administration about the cyberbullying, nothing is done to resolve the issue?
Research literature by Williams and Cornell (2006) suggested that students perceive school officials to be unhelpful when it comes to addressing cyberbullying and therefore do not report cyberbullying to them. The research literature also suggested that teachers and school personnel advise students to tell an adult if they are bullied, yet research shows that students do not (Cross et al., 2010; Bauman & Pero, 2011). While self-reporting directly affects how teachers are able to recognize cyberbullying, it indirectly affects how they are able to handle cyberbullying because, it presents a discrepancy between how the digitally-wise middle school teachers view their role of handling cyberbullying cases (by turning it into administration) and how effective their students may perceive their teachers’ role to be (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009b; Misna et al., 2005; Moore-Thomas & Lent, 2007; Tosolt, 2008).

The tenth finding or subtheme emerged under the theme of handling cyberbullying, and revealed that clear discipline measures for cyberbullying are pertinent when teachers are handling cyberbullying. In Hilltop County very clear guidelines are set for proper use of technology and Internet, as well as consequences for misuse. These are both set and clearly communicated in multiple ways such as through the Code of Conduct (COC), laptop training, and in classroom training.

Research literature by Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler (2007) and Williams and Cornell (2006), asserted that the discipline for cyberbullying amongst adolescents can be a determiner in the amount of cyberbullying cases a school has with its students. The researchers suggested that because teachers and school officials often are uniformed about the seriousness and prevalence of cyberbullying there are little or no set consequences for the crime, and adolescents dole out derogatory threats and fearless
messages using 21st century technology tools, undetected and if caught, often receive little to no consequences.

According to research by Hinduja and Patchin (2010b) school systems are not only called to be more aware, but more importantly should create mandatory guidelines that make students cognizant that cyberbullying is unacceptable and will result in discipline, such as detention, suspension, and expulsion. Hilltop County has all of these consequences specified in the COC and also requires all parents and students to sign it at the beginning of each school year. Not only are Hilltop County’s lucid guidelines and consequences empowering to all school stakeholders, they are also bound by law. According to Alexander and Alexander (2012) discipline for cyberbullying is warranted by the law as it disturbs the learning environment and infringes on the safety of others.

**Implications**

Based on the findings of the study, the digitally-wise teachers were able to effectively define cyberbullying and expressed confidence in this area, so three recommendations for practice have been formulated to enable digitally-wise teachers to more effectively recognize, prevent, and handle cyberbullying: provide faculty training and development in the area of cyberbullying, conduct a survey school-wide utilizing a cyberbullying assessment, and provide an online method for teachers to have access to cyberbullying and bullying school data and resources.

First, to assist teachers in recognizing cyberbullying, it is recommended that the schools administer a school-wide cyberbullying survey to grasp a better understanding of cyberbullying prevalence at their site school. While the administration may have information in regards to self-reported cyberbullying, it would be helpful to assess the
perceptions of students and teachers and then compare the results to the actual amount handled by the administration. By sharing the results at a staff meeting with teachers, principals can review the implications of the results with their staff (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009b; Stomfay & Stitz, 2007). This would help to address digitally-wise middle school teachers’ mixed perceptions on the prevalence of cyberbullying in their school environment and the discrepancy presented by research that students perceive that there are higher cases of cyberbullying than school officials perceive (Tosolt, 2008). An assessment tool administrators may want to use is called the Cyberbullying Report Card by Hinduja and Patchin (2009b) that will assess teacher knowledge of the prevalence of cyberbullying. The administration can either create their own short student cyberbullying assessment where they ask students to indicate whether they have ever been cyberbullied or been a perpetrator of cyberbullying or they can request an assessment from Hinduja and Patchin (2009b, 2010b) by using their website at cyberbullying.us.

The results from the assessments should then be used to guide further training for teachers in the area of handling cyberbullying. Increased training on cyberbullying to empower classroom teachers to effectively handle cyberbullying is backed by research conducted by Ryan et al. (2011). Ryan et al. (2011) found that teachers needed further training on handling cyberbullying, because teachers reported that they had received training during their teacher preparation programs on policies, curriculum, and instruction, yet reported feeling unprepared in handling cyberbullying effectively in their classroom. Most participant teachers reported in this study that they had not been well trained by the county on how to teach their students digital wisdom (Tosolt, 2008) and that they would like to receive further training from the county on how to effectively
handle cyberbullying. This further training could take place on staff development days each month. On these staff development days, the staff could host cyberbullying speakers to come and educate the whole staff about how to effectively teach students about the wise use of 21st century technology tools and also further train teachers on how to handle cyberbullying. Teacher workshops could center on books like *From Digital Native to Digital Wisdom* (ISBN 1452230099), Prensky (2012b), where teachers could work through the book together in collaborative groups and share ideas for effectively teaching digital wisdom to their students. In Hilltop County the teachers have an online sharing system called *Virtual Share*, where teachers normally can share everything from lesson plans to creative interactive flipcharts. In this system, the site schools could create a Cyberbullying share folder on the Virtual Share system, where all middle school teachers at that site school can share techniques and resources they may find that have helped them to handle cyberbullying.

The last implication is for each of the site schools to start a website or provide access where the teachers can go online and receive a concise up to date report on the amount of cyberbullying cases that were reported by students in the last month using the anonymous school website or blog. This is in response as well to teachers not quite having a clear and accurate understanding of the prevalence of cyberbullying in relation to preventing cyberbullying, in their school environment. Hinduja and Patchin (2009) also encouraged keeping track of the amount of self-reported and non-self-reported cases of cyberbullying. To also encourage teachers in their role of handling cyberbullying, teachers could also start to use the Cyberbullying Incident Tracking Form created by Hinduja and Patchin (2009).
With this form, teachers would have an accurate record of the amount of cyberbullying cases they have turned in to administration or guidance and this can be shared during staff meetings or individual conferences with administration, to discuss the outcome of the referral and to get an understanding of how it was handled. The results from this teacher kept record could be reported each month, compiled in the schools’ annual results of cyberbullying and could be kept as specific archival data on cyberbullying for each individual site school.

All of these measures could further assist the county and site school in creating more proactive measures to define, recognize, prevent, and handle cyberbullying. The theoretical concepts of Vygotsky (1986) and Piaget (1954) were also supported by the results of the research study. Vygotsky’s social cultural theory, based on the belief that the behavior of humans is not properly analyzed separate from the person’s background or surrounding, was upheld in this study by digitally-wise teachers. This study did not seek to understand solely the participant teachers for their behavior or perceptions alone, but analyzed their perceptions of cyberbullying in the context of their individual cultural background with 21st century technology. Vygotsky’s (1986) social cultural subtheory of enculturation was also upheld in this research study where digitally-wise teachers relayed that cyberbullying was an outcome of a high technology culture that we live in today and students use the various 21st century technology tools to cyberbully.

Piaget’s (1954) cognitive theory consists of assimilation and accommodation which were also both upheld by the results of this study, because the digitally-wise teachers who were former digital immigrants and digital natives not only assimilated the
new knowledge of 21st century technology, but accommodated the information. Thus, because the digitally-wise teachers accommodated the new information and skills, they restructured their skills and beliefs to be able to teach their digital native students on how to be digitally wise.

**Limitations and Recommendations**

Delimitations of the study included the fact that only digitally-wise middle school teachers from one suburban county named Hilltop County were included in the study and the study researched only perceptions on cyberbullying. The findings from this research study were possibly impacted by multiple limitations. One limitation was that there was no precise determination in regards to prior known cases of cyberbullying on the four middle school campuses, prior to beginning the case study. The schools were selected because they are a part of a district that had implemented a 1-1 laptop initiative in middle and high schools to encourage 21st century technology use in every classroom around the county, while also trying to provide safe technology and Internet access to their students. While inferred by the anti-cyberbullying and bullying programs in the county, there was no predetermination of specific cyberbullying incidences on any of the middle school sites and it was unknown whether it was a problem at the selected schools. Thus, during the research study it was slightly difficult to determine from participant teachers’ perceptions whether their perceptions on the amount of cyberbullying occurring was actually taking place at their middle school.

For further research it is suggested that other researchers conduct a research study with administrators and guidance counselors in Hilltop County to explore not only their perceptions of how they defined, recognized, handled, and prevented cyberbullying, but
also to discover an accurate account of the number of cyberbullying cases their school handles each school year. This would be beneficial for the field of digital wisdom and cyberbullying research and would provide a more accurate perception of the prevalence of cyberbullying in a 21st century technology saturated county like Hilltop County. This knowledge would help researchers be able to make more informed conclusions from data and possibly assist in creating anti-cyberbullying programs for schools and stakeholders.

A second limitation to the research study was its sample size. The original intent for the research study was to recruit at least 10 digitally-wise middle school teachers; however, only seven teachers volunteered to participate in the study. As the researcher, I made supplementary attempts to recruit volunteers by snowballing, recommendations from colleagues, yet to no avail. However, despite the low number of participants a plethora of insights from each recruited participant gave a meaningful and diverse perspective of cyberbullying and how they defined, recognized, handled, and prevented cyberbullying in their school environment. In addition, the recruited participants all worked in suburban middle schools located in Hilltop County, and this study only reflected the perceptions from this population of teachers in the county. There is a possibility of digitally-wise middle school teachers in the urban areas of Hilltop County as well, because all middle school teachers receive the same technology training and have the same technology available to them in their school for use.

Further research is recommended to examine the perceptions of digitally-wise middle school teachers in other districts within Hilltop County that are not on the western part of the county in the suburbs. By examining more perceptions of digitally-wise middle school teachers, a more coherent and accurate conclusion regarding digitally-wise
middle school teachers could be reached by researchers. Also, it is suggested that research be conducted including middle school teachers that are not digitally wise within Hilltop County to compare and see if there are differences and similarities in the perceptions of cyberbullying between them and the digitally-wise middle school teachers. Also, the examination of digitally-wise teachers who teach high school should also be examined as high school students in Hilltop County also are provided with DELL Inc., laptops.

Another limitation was that this case study may not be generalizable to counties that are not similar philosophically, demographically, or geographically, to the county selected for this case study (Hilltop County). Despite this, other researchers can use the methodology used in this case study to guide them when conducting future research in other school counties and districts. I would suggest further research be conducted in other middle schools outside of Hilltop County to examine the perceptions of participant teachers who teach in schools that may hold different ideologies than Hilltop County and be different in terms of technology philosophy, teacher and student demographics, and geography.

An additional limitation of this research study pertained to the fact that the researcher is a teacher in the same county. Each of the participants was aware of this fact, and this could have benefited the study and caused digitally-wise middle school teachers to feel more comfortable and open up in sharing their perspectives. However, this bias could have also hindered their feedback and caused them to respond with less openness making participant teachers reluctant to share their true perceptions making them give answers that they felt were expected of them or were politically correct. As a
teacher and graduate of Hilltop County, I possessed a great deal of knowledge on the county, teacher trainings, and technology usage. Bias could have existed and teachers may have felt coerced to participate and respond in a certain way.

It is necessary for more research to be conducted on digitally-wise middle school teachers within the county, and further research should also be conducted by a researcher who is not as familiar with the county may keep research bias low and offer additional conclusions and views on the topic.

Despite this research study being a case study, I did elect as the researcher to focus solely on middle school teachers and their perceptions of cyberbullying. Thus, I did not include multiple perspectives such as those of the parents, students, administrators, and guidance counselors. I would recommend that in the future the study be replicated with administrators and guidance counselors to discover their perceptions on how they define, recognize, prevent, and handle cyberbullying in their school environment. In addition I would recommend that Hilltop County provide training on cyberbullying for the parents of their students on how to define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying in their home environment.

Lastly, another recommendation for future research comes from the fact that this study was that was qualitative in nature and a future study that involves quantitative data would be beneficial. Distributing a questionnaire using Likert scale items to digitally-wise middle school teachers, based on the findings of this research study could help further research on cyberbullying and digitally wise middle school teacher perceptions. Also, a future study involving multiple statistical analyses may add to qualitative research
studies about digitally-wise middle school teachers and cyberbullying across numerous variables.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this case study was to examine the perceptions of digitally-wise middle school teachers and how they defined, recognized, handled, and prevented cyberbullying in their middle school environments. The findings revealed that digitally-wise middle school teachers held distinct perceptions regarding characteristics of cyberbullying and bullying, perceive that certain 21st century technology tools are used by their students to cyberbully, perceive they have a key role in handling cyberbullying and they use self-reporting to recognize cyberbullying cases amongst their students. In addition, digitally-wise middle school teachers are a part of a team of stakeholder in Hilltop County who work as a team to prevent cyberbullying in the schools. Also, digitally-wise teachers perceive that their past experiences with bullying affect how they handle cyberbullying with their students. Another finding from the study was that digitally-wise teachers are empowered by Hilltop County to discipline their students for the misuse of 21st century technology tools, with the provision of clear discipline measures which are perceived as pertinent to maintain a safe environment for all students.

Based on the findings of this study, three main implications were suggested: provide faculty training and development in the area of cyberbullying, conduct a survey school-wide utilizing a cyberbullying assessment, and provide an online method for teachers to have access to cyberbullying and bullying school data and resources. It is my hope as the researcher that through the suggested mediations, digitally-wise middle
school teachers, as well as the entire school community may be able to better define, recognize, handle, and prevent cyberbullying in their school environment

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APPENDICIES
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APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter

November 19, 2012

Tiffany Graves  
IRB Approval 1443.111912: Bridging the Divide: Digitally Wise Teachers’ Perceptions of Cyberbullying

Dear Tiffany,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.  
Professor, IRB Chair  
Counseling  
(434) 592-4054

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APPENDIX B: District Approval

August 20, 2012

Ms. Tiffany Graves  
4805 Round Top Road  
Glen Allen VA 23060

Dear Ms. Graves:

The Department of Research and Planning has reviewed and approved your research study entitled “Bridging the Divide: Tech Savvy Teachers’ Perceptions of Middle School Cyberbullying”. Your study was approved by the review committee with the following revisions and/or conditions:

- None.

Although your study has been approved, participation by individuals and schools is completely voluntary. Reports and publications generated from this study should not identify the individuals, schools, or the division and all research materials should accurately represent the party conducting the study. If there are changes to the methods or materials that you plan to use, you must submit the changes to our office for review prior to proceeding. If you are affiliated with an organization with an Institutional Review Board (IRB), an IRB approval letter must be on file in our office prior to beginning the study. It is our expectation that you will submit a final report upon completion of the study to the Department of Research and Planning.

Please contact Helen Whitehurst at hwhitehurst@henrico.k12.va.us or (804) 652-3831 who will assist you in the process of beginning your research studies in the schools or offices that you have requested.

Thank you for your interest in Henrico County Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Tiffany Hinton, Ph.D.  
Director of Research and Planning  
Henrico County Public Schools

Helen Whitehurst  
Educational Specialist - Research  
Henrico County Public Schools
APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form

Consent Form
Bridging the Divide: Digitally-wise teachers’ Perceptions of
Middle School Cyberbullying
Doctoral Dissertation
Tiffany Graves
Liberty University
School of Education

Consent Form for Teacher
Dear [insert name here],

My name is Tiffany Graves, and I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University in the Education Department, in Lynchburg, Virginia. Presently I am conducting research on the perceptions of *digitally-wise middle school teachers* and how they prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying incidences in their school environment. Your school has been selected to be a possible participant for this study. You will be asked to complete a 34 question survey about your cyberbullying perceptions and may be invited to participate in a face to face interview lasting no longer than 45 to 60 minutes. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Your identity will be protected and your real identity will not be revealed.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided in the recruitment email and agree to participate in the study entitled “Bridging the Divide: Digitally-wise teachers’ Perceptions of Middle School Cyberbullying” that will be conducted between the dates of October ___, 2012 and October ___, 2012.

Pseudonyms will be used for all participants, as well as for locations of the study, to protect your identity. You are able to choose a pseudonym for the purposes of concealing your identity. If you would like to choose your pseudonym you may type it below, otherwise I will assign you a pseudonym. The information gathered in the study will become a part of data for the dissertation and may be published and used for presentations. While there are no foreseen risks or inconveniences in this study if you participate, you may withdraw at any time from the study if you should choose to discontinue participation.

*Please feel free to contact me* with any questions regarding the study by email at tgraves@liberty.edu or 804-665-4356. You may also contact Dr. Cristie McClendon regarding the study at cjmclendon@liberty.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

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How to leave the study: If participants would like to leave the study and not complete participation, the participant should contact me at my email with the heading of “Exiting the Study” at tgraves@liberty.edu. The participant is not required to give a reason, but may if they would like to in the email.

Thank you,

Tiffany N. Graves, Ed. S

1. Have you been trained on how to use 21st century technology to facilitate lessons in your classroom and how to provide opportunities for students to access 21st century technology in the classroom in order to promote higher order thinking skills? A. Yes B. No

2. Have you received training on the ethical use of technology and do you teach your students about how to use technology in an ethical manner? A. Yes B. No

3. Do you currently use 21st century technology tools for professional teaching? Select one. A. Daily B. Frequently C. Sometimes D. Rarely E. Not at all

4. Please list at least three 21st century technology tools or applications that you use in your classroom.

**Mini Lesson Plans.** Please complete the section below and detail how you have or would incorporate technology to teach the Virginia Standards of Learning in your classroom.

5. Mini Technology Lesson Plan I.
   a. Identify one specific Virginia Standard of Learning (SOL) that you are required to teach your students.

   b. A 21st century technology tool is defined as emerging human inventions that help and improve mankind’s capabilities, such as blogs, iPads, eReaders, YouTube. List a 21st century technology tool or application you would use to teach the listed SOL above.

   c. How will you use the technology identified above in the lesson to teach the skill?

6. Mini Technology Lesson Plan II
   a. List one specific Virginia Standard of Learning (SOL) that you are required to teach your students.

   b. A 21st century technology tool is defined as emerging human inventions that help and improve mankind’s capabilities, such as blogs, iPads, eReaders, YouTube. List what 21st
century technology tool or application you would (please list a different technology tool than the one used in Mini Technology Lesson Plan I).

c. How will you use the technology identified above in the lesson to teach the skill?

**Selection of Pseudonym:** If you have selected to participate in the study please type your email address and phone number below, the school you work at, along with your real first and last name. Also, if you wish to select a pseudonym for the study please type it in all CAPS.
Example: (real name) Jane Doe
(school) Island of the Blue Middle School
(email address) jdoe@gXXXX.com
(pseudonym) ALICE WALLS

____________________________________________________

**Signature of Participant**

☐ I consent to being audio recorded for the study.

☐ Yes, I would like to participate in this study. I have read and understood all of the above information. I have asked needed questions and had them answered. I consent to participate in this study.

Please type your first and last name here along with the date as your Electronic Signature.
Example: Jane Doe 7/25/2012

Electronic Signature __________________________ Date ____________________

Signature of Investigator/Researcher __________________________ Date ______

**IRB Code Numbers:** (After a study is approved, the IRB code number pertaining to the study should be added here.)

**IRB Expiration Date:** (After a study is approved, the expiration date (one year from date of approval) assigned to a study at initial or continuing review should be added. Periodic checks on the current status of consent forms may occur as part of continuing review mandates from the federal regulators.)
APPENDIX D: Recruitment Email

To the Teacher(s) at [site school name inserted here]

My name is Tiffany Graves, and I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. Presently I am conducting research for a dissertation on the perceptions of digitally-wise middle school teachers and how they define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying incidents in their school environment. I am exploring the experiences of digitally-wise teachers in 2 middle schools in your county, who are wise and effective users of technology. I will explore how digitally-wise middle school teachers perceive cyberbullying in an effort to better understand how their perceptions influence how they define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying in their school environment.

In collecting data for this study, I will interview 10 digitally-wise middle school teachers from 2 middle schools in your county. Digitally-wise middle school teachers are teachers who: are quality controllers in their classroom and have been trained on how to use 21st century technology in their lessons in a way that allows students to access 21st century technology in the classroom to promote higher order thinking skills; they must currently use 21st century technology for professional teaching; they must have been trained on how to use 21st century technology in an ethical manner and must currently train their students on the ethical uses of technology; they must currently use multiple emerging human inventions that help and improve mankind’s capabilities (21st century technology tools) that include DELL Inc., laptops, Promethean boards, Blogs, ProScopes, and Internet research, among a few examples of 21st century technology.

The definitions being used in this study come from research completed by Prensky (2012) on digitally-wise teachers. Prensky (2012) defines wisdom as “the ability to find, practical, creative, contextually appropriate, and emotionally satisfying solutions to complicated human problems.” He identifies teachers as digitally wise as those who incorporate 21st century technology into their present thinking and decisive processes, by executing it wisely and sharing the results with their students. He believes that becoming digitally wise is never completely accomplished, because technology continues to progress, and thus becoming digitally wise is a process and an ongoing quest (Prensky, 2012).

If you choose to participate in this study, your participation would last approximately three (3) weeks. I will ask that you respond to an online questionnaire with 34 questions that should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. You will be asked to complete a scheduled individual interview that will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The individual interview will be held at your school or the community library nearest your school. If you are not able to meet for a face-to-face interview, we can schedule a teleconference via Skype. At the end of the study I will send you a transcript of the recorded interview, via email, to allow you read what was gathered from the interview I
will hold member checks that can be completed via Skype or on the phone to ensure validity of the recorded transcripts.

I appreciate your participation in this study. I completely understand that 3 weeks is a time of commitment on your part, however, data collected from this case study will greatly profit school stakeholders including principals, researchers, teachers, parents, and students who are trying to effectively define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying incidents.

Here are the qualifications to be able to participate in the study:
- Must be a teacher in HCPS
- Must be identified as a digitally wise teacher:

  The criteria for being a digitally wise teacher is as follows:
  1. The teacher must be a quality controller in their own classroom, meaning that they must have received 21st century technology training on how to facilitate lessons with technology that allow students to access 21st century technology in the classroom and promote higher order thinking skills.
  2. The teacher must have received training on ethical use of technology and must ethically train students on proper and wise use of technology.
  3. The teacher must currently use 21st century technology tools for professional teaching use.
  4. The teacher must currently use multiple emerging human inventions that help and improve mankind’s capabilities, also known as 21st century technology tools. In relation to this study these tools include applications on the district provided DELL laptop, Promethean Board, Activotes, ProScope, Skype, and Blogs are all considered 21st century technology tools.
- You have taught a general subject in HCPS for at least 1 full school year.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and is in no way affiliated with your school district. If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the Consent Form at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CZV2PJC and submit it electronically. As soon as I receive this from you I will contact you by phone to schedule an interview. You may contact me if you have any questions or concerns via email at tgraves@liberty.edu or my cell phone at 804-665-4356.

Sincerely,

Tiffany N. Graves, Ed. S.

Doctoral Candidate Student, Liberty University
APPENDIX E: Script of Scheduling the Interview with Participants

Once recruitment is complete the individual interviews will be scheduled over the phone. Here is a script of what will be said by the Principal Investigator to the participants.

Principal Investigator: Hello, this is Tiffany Graves, the researcher who is completing the study entitled Bridging the Divide: Digitally-wise teachers’ Perceptions of Middle School Cyberbullying. How are you?

Participant: [Response]

Principal Investigator: I was just calling to say thank you for participating in the study and submitting your Consent Form. I also wanted to ask you about what day next week you may be available to meet for the interview.

_In the following section, fill in the name, day, and time._

If participant is able to meet at their home school in the library:

Principal Investigator: Okay we can meet ___(day)____ at __:___ in the school library. You do not need to bring anything, and light snacks will be provided. I will send you a confirmation email of this appointment and I look forward to seeing you then. Thanks so much for your time.

If the participant is NOT able to meet at their home school in the library:

Principal Investigator: I understand that your schedule does not permit you to meet this week. We will schedule an online interview using Skype. We can meet online ____ (day)___ at __:___. The research Skype Forum name is DIGITALLYWISETEACHERS. What is your information for Skype?

Participant: [Response]

Principal Investigator: That sounds great. I will store this information on my research forum account for DIGITALLYWISETEACHERS so that I can contact you on ____ (day)___ at __:____. I will also email you a confirmation of this appointment and I look forward to speaking with you then. Thanks so much for your time!

_Part B:_

Principal Investigator: I will send you an email right now with the date and time for our interview meeting. Also, in this email will be the link for the Online Questionnaire, for you to complete. Please remember that once I send the link to the questionnaire there is a 48 hour time limit for its completion and submission online. Do you have any questions?

Participant: [Response]
Principal Investigator: If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at tgraves@liberty.edu or by phone at 804-665-4356. Thank you again. I will send the email now. Have a good day.
APPENDIX F: Acceptance Email

Dear [insert Teacher’s name here],

Thank you so much for your interest in participating in my dissertation study entitled *Bridging the Divide: Digitally-wise teachers’ Perceptions of Middle School Cyberbullying*. You have been selected as a participant for the study and your school administrators are aware that you are taking part in this study. In this study you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire, and participate in an individual interview that will last about 45 to 60 minutes during the study. Your scheduled interview is ________________. At no point in time will these responses be used for evaluation purposes. The link for the research questionnaire is below. Please complete the survey within 1 week.

Your participation in this dissertation research study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Please remember that if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me via email at tgraves@liberty.edu or my cell phone at 804-665-4356.

This is the link for the research questionnaire. Please complete the questionnaire within 1 week. http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7L25FFF

Thank you,

Tiffany Graves, Ed. S.

Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
APPENDIX G: Digitally-wise teachers’ Cyberbullying Questionnaire

Middle School Digitally-wise teachers’ Perception Survey- This survey will be piloted before using in the study to ensure validity. The survey was created by the researcher. Available at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/76XBTH2

A. Individual Information. Please read each question below and respond by clicking or typing the answer that best describes you.

1. What is your gender? Select one.
   - Male
   - Female

2. What is your age and race? __________________ (Please type here)
   Examples: 34 years, Caucasian; 24 years, African American

3. As a middle school teacher, what grade do you teach? Select as many as apply.
   - 6th
   - 7th
   - 8th

4. How many years have you been in the field of education? ________________ (Please type here).

5. How many years total have you taught middle school in the state of Virginia? ________________ (Please type here).

6. How many years have you taught middle school in this school district/county? ________________ (Please type here).

7. What type of bullying do you witness or deal with the most at your school? Select one.
   - Cyberbullying
   - Traditional bullying

Part II. Technology Background. Please read each question and select the answer(s) that best describes you.

1. How would you describe your technology skills? Select one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert: I use technology daily and know how to use multiple digital devices and would feel confident teaching others. I am always looking for new technological ways to communicate, work, and collaborate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competent: I have experience and utilize technology daily. I can use a few various digital devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient: I am a beginner. I am not confident in my technology skills, and am doing well if I can send an email successfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent: I have very little experience with technology and would prefer not to use it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. What are your feelings about 21st century Technology? Select all that apply. “I . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Want to learn more positive uses for 21st century technology.”</td>
<td>“Use 21st century technology to make life easier and solve everyday human problems.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Agree that a knowledge of how to properly and efficiently 21st century technology is necessary and needed today to accomplish tasks.”</td>
<td>“Teach my students about the dangers of misuse of 21st century technology.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Not only teach with the Promethean Board, I allow my students to use the board during class lessons as well.”</td>
<td>“Am an advocate for new technology tools being introduced in the classroom.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How many times a week do you utilize 21st century technology in your lessons to teach your students? Select one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>5 times or more</th>
<th>3-4 times</th>
<th>1-2 times</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. What types of 21st century technology or applications do you use in your classroom to teach? Select as many as apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology Type</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Blogs</td>
<td>Microsoft applications</td>
<td>i Applications (iMovie, iPhoto, iWeb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Worlds</td>
<td>Microsoft applications</td>
<td>i Applications (iMovie, iPhoto, iWeb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking Sites</td>
<td>Microsoft applications</td>
<td>i Applications (iMovie, iPhoto, iWeb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProScope</td>
<td>Microsoft applications</td>
<td>i Applications (iMovie, iPhoto, iWeb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promethean Board</td>
<td>Internet Research</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Research</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you clicked “other”, please specify here.

5. What types of 21st century technology or applications do you use in your own personal life outside of work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology Type</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Blogs</td>
<td>Microsoft applications</td>
<td>i Applications (iMovie, iPhoto, iWeb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Worlds</td>
<td>Microsoft applications</td>
<td>i Applications (iMovie, iPhoto, iWeb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking Sites</td>
<td>Microsoft applications</td>
<td>i Applications (iMovie, iPhoto, iWeb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP3 players</td>
<td>Microsoft applications</td>
<td>i Applications (iMovie, iPhoto, iWeb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Research</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Smart Phones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you clicked ‘other’, please specify here. ________________________________.

Technology Training. Please read each question below and select the best answer(s) that describes you.

6. How many technology training sessions or workshops have you attended with in the last year? Select only one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Frequency</th>
<th>5 or more times</th>
<th>3-4 times</th>
<th>1-2 times</th>
<th>0 times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. When you received your DELL Inc., laptop from your school approximately how many technology training sessions did you attend within that school year? Select only one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Frequency</th>
<th>5 or more sessions</th>
<th>3-4 sessions</th>
<th>1-2 sessions</th>
<th>0 sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
8. Do you feel that the technology training sessions better equipped you to be able to utilize technology effectively in your classroom and to properly teach students about proper technology use? Select only one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, a lot</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. In your technology training sessions, did you receive training on how to prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying? Select only one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, a lot</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

C. Perceptions of Cyberbullying. This portion of the survey will pose questions that inquire about how you define, prevent, and recognize cyberbullying. Please read the questions below and select an answer (s).

10. What percentage of adolescents has cyberbullying affected nationwide? Choose a range.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0-5%</th>
<th>6-10%</th>
<th>11-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. What percentage of adolescents who experience cyberbullying actually report cyberbullying to an adult according to nationwide statistics? Choose a range.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0-5%</th>
<th>6-10%</th>
<th>11-25%</th>
<th>6-50%</th>
<th>1-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. How many more times are students who have been cyberbullied likely to carry a weapon to school according to nationwide statistics? Choose a range.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0-5x’s</th>
<th>6-7x’s</th>
<th>8-9x’s</th>
<th>10x’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. What percentage of your students do you perceive to have been affected by cyberbullying this school year 2011-2012?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0-5%</th>
<th>6-10%</th>
<th>11-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
14. What percentage of your students during school year 2011-2012 reported cyberbullying incidents at least 1-2 times per week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>0-5%</th>
<th>6-10%</th>
<th>11-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. What percentage of your students from 2011-2012 school year, reported cyberbullying incidents at least 1-2 times a month?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>0-5%</th>
<th>6-10%</th>
<th>11-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. What actions do you perceive to be cyberbullying? Select as many as apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Description</th>
<th>Texting vulgar messages</th>
<th>Forwarding cell phone pictures without permission</th>
<th>Kicking someone</th>
<th>Posting false Facebook messages</th>
<th>Teasing face to face</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating a fake MySpace page of your friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymously sending a hate email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a fake online identity to find out more about the new girl at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitting Someone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Current and Desired Strategies. In this section of the questionnaire, you will be asked to type responses to the questions below.

17. What current strategies do you use to handle cyberbullying incidents that occur in your school environment? Type below.

18. Do you perceive that you are well equipped to effectively define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying incidences in your school environment? Type below.

19. What strategies or training do you perceive would be helpful to more effectively train teachers on how to define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying incidences in their school environment? Type below.
E. Self- Evaluation. Please read the following statements and select the answer that best fits how you would evaluate yourself.

20. I am able to effectively handle cyberbullying incidents that happen in my school environment with my students. Select one.

| True | False |

21. I am able to effectively prevent cyberbullying incidents from occurring in my school environment.

| True | False |

22. I am able to effectively recognize cyberbullying incidences that occur in my school environment amongst the students.

| True | False |

23. I am ethically and legally responsible for proactively handling cyberbullying.

| True | False |

Thank you for your time!
Digitally-wise teachers’ Cyberbullying Perception Questionnaire

Questions Only

1. What is your gender? Select one.
2. What is your age and race?
3. As a middle school teacher, what grade do you teach? Select as many as apply.
4. How many years have you been in the field of education?
5. How many years total have you taught middle school in the state of Virginia?
6. How many years have you taught middle school in this school district/county?
7. What type of bullying do you witness or deal with the most at your school?
8. How would you describe your technology skills?
9. What are your feelings about 21st century Technology?
10. How many times a week do you utilize 21st century technology in your lessons to teach your students?
11. What types of 21st century technology or applications do you use in your classroom to teach? (Research Question 1)
12. What types of 21st century technology or applications do you use in your own personal life outside of work? (Research Question 1)
13. How many technology training sessions or workshops have you attended within the last year? (Research Question 1)
14. When you received your DELL Inc., laptop from your school approximately how many technology training sessions did you attend within that school year?
15. Do you feel that the technology training sessions better equipped you to be able to utilize technology effectively in your classroom and to properly teach students about proper technology use? (Research Question 2)
16. In your technology training sessions, did you receive training on how to define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying? (Research Question 1 and 2)
17. What percentage of adolescents has cyberbullying affected nationwide? (Disregarded)
18. What percentage of adolescents who experience cyberbullying actually report cyberbullying to an adult according to nationwide statistics? (Disregarded)
19. How many more times are students who have been cyberbullied likely to carry a weapon to school according to nationwide statistics? (Disregarded)
20. What percentage of your students do you perceive to have been affected by cyberbullying this school year 2011-2012? (Disregarded)
21. What percentage of your students during school year 2011-2012 reported cyberbullying incidents at least 1-2 times per week? (Research Question 1)
22. What actions do you perceive to be cyberbullying? (Research Question 1)
23. What current strategies do you use to handle cyberbullying incidents that occur in your school environment? (Research Question 2)
24. Do you perceive that you are well equipped to effectively define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying incidences in your school environment? (Research Question 1 and 2)
25. What strategies or training do you perceive would be helpful to more effectively train teachers on how to define, prevent, recognize, and handle cyberbullying incidences in their school environment? (Research Question 1 and 2)
26. I am able to effectively handle cyberbullying incidents that happen in my school environment with my students. (Research Question 2)
27. I am able to effectively prevent cyberbullying incidents from occurring in my school environment. (Research Question 2)
28. I am able to effectively recognize cyberbullying incidences that occur in my school environment amongst the students. (Research Question 1)
APPENDIX H: Structured Interview Questions

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

Definitions of Bullying and Cyberbullying

1. What is your definition of bullying? Please define.

2. What is your definition of cyberbullying? Please define.

3. How are bullying and cyberbullying alike and how are they different?

Past Bullying Experiences

4. In your own life have you ever experienced bullying (i.e., cyberbullying, traditional, covert, overt)?

5. Were you bullied as an adolescent (i.e., ages 11-18)?

6. Do you think that your past experiences with bullying affect how you handle both unreported and reported bullying cases with your students?

Perceptions of what constitutes as cyberbullying

7. How do you define social technology? Please define and give examples.

8. Do you know of or use any social networking sites? If so, name them please.

9. Please give examples of cyberbullying. What actions constitute as cyberbullying?

Teacher’s Perceptions of Dealing with Cyberbullying

10. Have you dealt with bullying (i.e., traditional) cases before?

   (a) If so, give an estimate of approximately how many cases a week you handle

   (b) specify type of bullying (i.e., fighting, name calling, eye rolling).

11. Have you dealt with cyberbullying before?

   (a) If so, give an estimate of approximately how many cases a week you handle

   (b) specify type of social technology used in the bullying.
12. If you have dealt with traditional or cyberbullying in the past, how do you think your actions influenced the students involved (i.e., relationships, future help-seeking, bullying reoccurrence)? Did you find your strategies effective?

*Training and Strategies for handling Cyberbullying*

13. Do you feel adequately trained to handle cyberbullying with your students?

14. Would you be interested in receiving further training on dealing with the new 21st century epidemic of cyberbullying?

15. If you could rate your current awareness of the national, state, and local issues associated with cyberbullying and its detrimental effect on students on a scale of 1 to 10, how would yourself (i.e., number of students affected, number of suicides as a result, causes of cyberbullying, laws against cyberbullying, implications of teacher responsibility in relation to cyberbullying). 1= not knowledgeable 5= somewhat knowledgeable 10=very knowledgeable.
APPENDIX I: Interview Protocol Tips

(Adapted from Washington Just for Kids Effective Practices Study)

*begin each interview with a declaration ensuring confidentiality

*Interview approximately 5-10 interested participants

*Use criterion sampling to select participants

*Each participant should be interviewed for 30 minutes and no longer than one hour)

*When writing observations, include numbers and percentages of participants’ responses (i.e., 4 out of 6 teachers interviewed, 66%, felt there were several cyberbullying training conferences offered)

*Be sure to ask lucid, clear questions in common vernacular to ensure participants’ understanding of the questions.

*Ask open-ended questions

*Conduct interviews with at least 2-3 open-ended questions to start

*Develop specific questions (i.e., 5-9 interview questions) that pinpoint attributes of the study and phenomenon

*Do not change questions at different sites. Use the same questions at each site.

*Probe during interviews (ask follow up questions, ask for clarification).
APPENDIX J: District Archival Data

*Middle School Teacher Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>*FR %</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My school meets my needs</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m kept up to date on school procedures</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m given information to perform my job effectively</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff meeting times are productive</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline is parent supported</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important information is shared with me</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are a part of student learning</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel safe at work</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m encouraged to try new ways of doing things</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what is expected of me</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student needs are highest priority</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m well prepared to meet student needs</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust school leadership</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership does as they say</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership is accessible</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1,025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *FR%* = Favorable Teacher Responses. Adapted from, *Staff School Climate and Satisfaction Survey.* Retrieved from Hilltop County Public Schools.
**APPENDIX K: Correspondence between Issues**

Table X  
*Correspondence between Prevention and Recognizing of Cyberbullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Prevention” Mentioned</th>
<th>“Prevention” Not Mentioned</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Recognizing” Mentioned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Recognizing” Mentioned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table X  
*Correspondence between Prevention and Handling/Strategies of Cyberbullying*

<table>
<thead>
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Table X  
*Correspondence between Handling/Strategies and Recognizing of Cyberbullying*

<table>
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APPENDIX L: Repetition of Categorical Data

Repetition of Categorical Data in *Digitally wise* Teacher #1 Interview

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(numbers will be added as needed)
APPENDIX M: Different Attributes of Validity

(a) Did the interviewer influence the contents of the participants’ descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the participants’ actual experience?

(b) Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview?

(c) In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified these alternatives?

(d) Is it possible to go from the general structural description of the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?

(e) Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations?” (Creswell, 2007, p. 215).
APPENDIX N: Researcher’s Reflective Journal

(A) Calendar

December 2012-Research Activities

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NOTES:

*Note.* This calendar format will be used to electronically keep a daily schedule for all research activities. Respective month calendars will be made for each month that I am conducting research.

(B) Methodological Log

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<thead>
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*Note.* This methodological log will be kept to record any logistics from the study and will keep a list of decisions made during the study and reflect corresponding dates. Log will be expanded as needed.