

Chapter 18

Understanding Cyberbullying and Where We Go From Here

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying has become a recent threat to the K-12 age group over the past couple of decades. Per the author, this chapter addresses ways to define cyberbullying, the history regarding when it emerged and current societal challenges, recognition and advancements of regulations, and the introduction of local laws, challenges with enforcing regulations, and recovery efforts to ensure students can move forward in a healthy and safe school environment. There are a few case studies throughout the chapter that demonstrate the dangers of cyberbullying and further exemplify the aforementioned points. Finally, the chapter offers information that allows readers to grasp the concept of cyberbullying, understand the current state of affairs and determine how each individual, including students, parents, school employees, and others, can play a role in recognizing, addressing, and preventing this issue.

INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying is a phenomenon that began to gain attention at the turn of the 21st century with online messaging programs. According to Hinduja and Patchin (2014), approximately 34% of students have reported the experience of cyberbullying. Additionally, 90% of students have found that cyberbullying is a common problem among young people (Hinduja, 2018a). Continued research has provided the understanding that cyberbullying is a behavior that mainly affects school-age individuals and therefore, will be the focus of this chapter. Although some adults experience cyberbullying, the research in that area is limited and workplace bullying is a stronger focus for adults rather than those under the age of 18 (Piotrowski & King, 2016). Unfortunately, bullying is another behavior that school-age individuals experience with nearly 1 in 5 (21%) students reporting this information (NCEC, 2018). Both bullying and cyberbullying can lead to increased anxiety, sleep difficulties, depression, lower grades, self-harm and suicide (Center for Disease Control, 2018). It is useful to clearly understand the differences between bullying and cyberbullying.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4912-4.ch018

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Although bullying and cyberbullying are topics that have both received increased attention over the past decade, both are different, and the distinction highlights how cyberbullying tends to impact youth more. There is a difference between what adults experience and how they are protected and what the youth are experiencing and how they are protected. Andrea Adams (1992), from Great Britain, was one of the first pioneers to address that bullying is a problem in the workplace and bring it to the forefront for the nation and world to notice. According to Adams (1992), bullying in the workplace has to do with repeated mistreatment that leads to psychological, emotional, and physical distress. Although workplace bullying has been defined differently by many researchers, after extensive research, it is defined here as repeated mistreatment of an employee that includes social exclusion, isolation, not greeting, ignoring the victim's presence, humiliation, demeaning, belittling, excessive deadlines, excessive monitoring of work, few or no tasks, threats, insults, and criticisms, all which may lead to high levels of stress and other health-endangering factors (Ricks, 2015). This definition does not include physical abuse, which includes behaviors that have escalated beyond workplace bullying and into workplace violence such as hitting, punching, shoving, and the like (Vickers, 2002). Although workplace bullying is a serious infraction that has been more widely researched since the turn of the 21st century, there has been even more attention focused on cyberbullying, which has been affecting school-age children and some adults in the workplace. Seeing as though cyberbullying impacts both youth and adults, the attention to this topic has received even greater attention.

Although, workplace bullying is not the focus of this chapter, this foundation provides the groundwork for how cyberbullying could also be threatening and dangerous to many. The remainder of this chapter will focus on these themes: 1) defining cyberbullying, 2) history, 3) the main focus of the chapter, 4) law, and 5) solutions, recommendations, and the future.

BACKGROUND

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a phenomenon that has taken many by surprise and has risen to public view rapidly based on the effect it has had on school-age individuals. The behavior was initially introduced in the United States in 2003 following the suicide of, 13-year old, Ryan Halligan (Raatma, 2013). Halligan's father, John P. Halligan, completed extensive research to determine what led his son to take his own life, given the fact no note was left behind (Halligan, 2009). He discovered homophobic instant messages that further led him to learn that his son was also being bullied in-person at school. Mr. Halligan has been advocating for the prevention of cyberbullying ever since and succeeded in lobbying for legislation in Vermont. Vermont officials have passed a Bullying Prevention Policy Law and a Suicide Prevention Law, in 2004 and 2005 respectively, that requires teachers and others to recognize and report what they see and hear regarding behaviors that could lead to cyberbullying and/or suicide (Connections eMagazine, 2009).

According to Mr. Halligan's findings, cyberbullying consists of negative messages sent via instant messaging (Halligan, 2009). He found that cyberbullying could lead to suggestions about suicide. Although Ryan spoke to his father about suicide regarding a bad report card, Mr. Halligan spoke against the idea and did not imagine his son would go through with such an act (Halligan, 2009).

Aside from this initial discovery of cyberbullying, many researchers have studied the issue and developed additional definitions. According to Koehler and Weber, (2018) cyberbullying concerns modern

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information and computer technologies (ICT) that allow bullies to manipulate targets with threats and insults and perceive the reality of the comments. Victim blaming is often attributed to the individual who reads comments online and sees the threat as real or coming to pass. Additionally, according to Hinduja and Patchin (2018b), cyberbullying is the use of electronic devices such as cell phones and computers to inflict harm repeatedly and willfully on another individual. However, similar in wording but, according to Tokunaga (2010), cyberbullying is, “any behavior performed through electronic digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others (p. 278).” In this case, there is a cybervictim who is bullied via internet or mobile phone and perceives the role of the cyberbully as intimidating and aggressive (Schultze-Krumbholz, Hess, Pfetsh, & Scheithauer, 2018).

Additionally, Dominguez-Hernandez, Bonell, and Matinez-Gonzalez (2018) completed a systemic literature review about the actions of bystanders regarding cyberbullying and the focus of cyberbullying highlighted those 20 years of age or younger. They defined cyberbullying in terms of repeated, electronic means of communication, text formatting, and received by an individual who is unable to provide defense for themselves. Furthermore, Batsche & Knoff (1994) added that these three elements are instrumental in defining cyberbullying: 1) intentional and harm-inflicting, 2) the presence of a power imbalance, and 3) repetition over a period of time. Finally, he asserted that cyberbullying demands intervention and prevention or things may continue to worsen in society.

From, yet, another perspective but quite detailed, Rodkin and Fisher (2012) define cyberbullying as:

(a) ubiquitous, in that one can be cyberbullied whenever an electronic device is on, 24/7; 12 (b) anonymous, in that the harasser may not have his or her actual identity revealed to the victim of harassment; 13 (c) extended in physical distance, as the cyberbully could conceivably be halfway across the globe from the victim of harassment; 14 (d) hard-to-detect, particularly by adults who may not be as technologically savvy as children and youth; 15 (e) of variable duration, because humiliating pictures or messages may stay on the Internet or be downloaded so that the cyberbullying event leaves an indelible trace; 16 and (f) in view of a potentially unknown, infinite audience, as the victim may never know who has or will witness the harassment that is experienced. (Rodkin & Fisher, 2012, p. 621)

Unfortunately, cyberbullying has increased with the prevalence of the advancements in technology today (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011). There is access to smart cell phones, electronic tablets, personal computers, laptops, smart watches, and more. Many of the teenagers and young adults of the 21st century utilize electronic devices daily from six to eight hours (Twenge, 2017). With this amount of use, young people are more physically isolated because their focus is on an electronic platform and most often consumed by social media outlets, which greatly determine how they feel about themselves, their friends, and others (Twenge, 2017). With this amount of exposure, it is clear to see how problems can emerge and be difficult to address. The young people in generations Y, Z, and A, also known as Millennials, the Internet Generation, and the Alpha Generation, respectively, have integrated electronics in their lives so much that the effects of cyberbullying have become worrisome and sometimes dangerous (Twenge, 2017).

This chapter will emphasize cyberbullying in the United States. However, Canada, the United Kingdom, and many other countries recognized the danger of cyberbullying before the United States and have implemented laws to protect citizens that align closely with harassment laws (Penza, 2018). Although there are many local laws and regulations, one challenge with creating a federal law to protect citizens from cyberbullying concerns agreeing on a definition for the phenomenon. However, once cre-

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ated, reviewed, and edited, a federal or universal cyberbullying law may help to decrease the behavior of cyberbullying across the globe. Also, the discussion of linking tort laws with the behaviors found in cyberbullying is another strategy for addressing the issue, even before federal laws are implemented, to address cyberbullying alone (Penza, 2018).

Finally, aside from determining a common definition, agreeing on the history, and determining if laws will be implemented, there are still many unknowns about cyberbullying. How do you describe the characteristics of a cyberbully and who they target? How can one defend themselves against cyberbully attacks? How do you hold someone to any action when there are no federal laws for protection? How can suicides from cyberbullying attacks be reduced? According to Ioannou, Blackburn, Stringhini, De Cristofaro, Kourtellis, and Sirivianos (2018), there are many more experiments needed to truly address the issues and determine the future of this problem. Ioannou et al. (2018) refer to cyberbullying as a social menace of the 21st century and find the literature discouraging regarding addressing and exploring this issue in much more detail across academic disciplines. Cyberbullying is more than a social science issue and can be addressed as a gap in the information technology, psychology, human-computer interaction, and computer science fields (Ioannou et al., 2018). Finally, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method experimental studies could help expose more information about this topic that would better increase deterring, preventing, or resolving the problem of cyberbullying.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Issues, Controversies, and Problems

The society of the 21st century has seen an increase in violence overall (United States Department of Justice, 2013) [USDOJ]. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) completed a longitudinal study that spanned the years of 2000 to 2013 to determine the frequency of mass active shooting incidents (USDOJ, 2013). Additionally, the federal definition of a mass shooting means that three individuals were killed at one location, not including the shooter. It was found that out of 160 total incidents over those years, the average of annual incidents increased from approximately 11% to 16%. Also, the USDOJ (2013) determined that 70% of the incidents occurred in a commerce/business environment or an educational setting. There were a total of 1,043 casualties where 486 were killed and 557 were wounded. One of the largest and well-known killings in this study includes the incident at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in Blacksburg, Virginia on April 16, 2007. There were 49 individuals shot including 32 killed and 17 wounded (CNN, 2019). This shooting required school officials to look at rules closer, such as how quickly to inform others that a major incident is occurring that may put them in jeopardy which is represented by the Clery Act (CNN, 2019). The Virginia Tech incident and others have forced many organizations to look closely at interactions in educational and business fields.

It is worth noting additional statistics from the FBI study. According to the USDOJ (2013) findings, each of the 160 shootings incidents had a single shooter except two. Also, in nine of the incidents, the shooter killed a family member before killing those in the community. Only six of the shooters in this study were female. Finally, in 64 incidents, the shooter committed suicide and 54 of those suicides were committed at the scene. This study has prompted more education and training for those who work in and utilize business and school settings (USDOJ, 2013). Many policies and procedures in organizations

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across the country have been updated and additional trainings have been added. Society has changed overall and to protect oneself and loved ones, changes had to be made.

Given the fact that society is already on higher alert with the influx of shootings in the United States, it is easier to understand why the emergence of cyberbullying and increase of teenage suicides has startled many. According to the Center for Disease Control (2017) [CDC], “suicide was the second leading cause of death in the United States among 10- to 17- year-olds in 2017” (p.1). Hinduja and Patchin (2018a), also found that the experience of cyberbullying increases the likelihood that an individual will consider suicide. Their research shows that the more severe the cyberbullying, the more severe force is used for the suicide attempt. These researchers break bullying into four categories: cyber, physical, relational, and verbal. Hinduja and Patchin (2018a) further found that the more bullying one experienced at school and in cyberworld, the more likely there were to be signs of health issues, such as anxiety, eating disorders, depression, and chronic illness. It was also more likely there would be emotional responses such as anger and rage displayed by victims. Although suicide is the greatest concern, the other health implications are serious and must be addressed as well to avoid the result of suicide. In the study Hinduja and Patchin (2018a) completed, there were over 2,670 students sampled from a middle and high school in the United States. It was found that approximately 22% of students reported having seen hurtful and mean comments posted about themselves online and approximately 16% of the total sample stated that cyberbullying made them feel unsafe at school and affected their ability to learn. These results, among others, from this study encouraged the researchers to ask that educators raise awareness, supplement formal school-wide programming, and create support groups for students struggling with bullying and suicide.

Increase in Suicide Attempts

Suicide ideation and attempts have increased over the past decade with the rise of cyberbullying in the United States. Suicide attempts are two times more likely for students who have experienced bullying or cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018a). According to statistics from the Center for Disease Control (2018), “suicide attempts and ideations have doubled since 2008” (p.3). The completion of a suicide attempt is approximately 1 in 20 adolescents per year (Megan Meier Foundation, 2018). According to the CDC (2017), suicide was the leading cause of death in the United States for young people between the ages of 10- and 17-years old. Additionally, over the past 20 years, the tragedies have become higher profile and have been linked to bullying and/or cyberbullying with rates up by 21% since the early 2000s (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018c). The increase of these stories has been troubling for families, friends of victims, and the public alike.

The experience of cyberbullying was all too much for Megan Meier who was found hanging in her closet by her mother, Tina, after committing suicide in 2006 (Pokin, 2007). According to her mother, (Pokin, 2007), Megan was 13 years old and was an average teenager with goals, looking for fun, and trying to maintain a satisfying life. Megan had had issues in the past with weight, she had an attention deficit disorder, and she battled depression. She mentioned suicide in the third grade and had seen a therapist since that time.

When Megan was entering the eighth grade, she was enrolled in the Fort Zumwalt School District and later moved to Immaculate Conception in Dardenne Prairie, MO to begin eighth grade (Pokin, 2007). She was a volleyball player and getting settled into the school. She used a MySpace online account to connect with others and was contacted by a 16-year old named Josh Evans. Although she had never met Josh, she gained her mother’s permission to add him as a friend on her MySpace account. According

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to Pokin (2007) for six weeks, while Tina observed, Megan engaged with Josh on MySpace. Megan's outlook on life had improved after having dealt with weight issues and depression, she now found a boy who seemed to like her and thought she was attractive.

However, Pokin (2007) asserted that on Sunday, October 15, 2006, Megan received a message from Josh that created confusion and questions. The message stated, "I don't want to be friends with you anymore because I've heard that you are not very nice to your friends" (Pokin, 2007, p. 2). Megan's parents shared this was a devastating blow to Megan, especially since she had given invitations to her birthday party to classmates the day prior (Pokin, 2007). Subsequently, Megan asked Josh about this assertion and asked her mother to check for a response when she came home. Megan realized that Josh may have been speaking to others who know her and that he may really have thought she was mean. According to Pokin (2007), Tina shared that her younger daughter had to be taken to the orthodontist so she did not have much time; thus, she asked Megan to sign off. However, Megan did not and received more unsettling message from Josh that upset her even more. Tina described that 15 minutes after she left, Megan called her to provide the update that a bulletin had been posted about her and that this bulletin was like a survey where others were calling her a "slut" and "fat". Megan was sobbing inconsolably and Tina was frustrated that Megan had not signed off as she had asked her to before and expressed her frustration to Megan. Megan told her mother she did not feel she was being a mom and on her side (Pokin, 2007).

According to Pokin (2007), Megan's father, Ron, was also home that day and after hearing about what was happening, he told her that things would be okay. By this time, Tina had returned home and she and Ron had begun to make dinner. According to Tina, twenty minutes passed and she had a bad feeling, she ran upstairs to Megan's room, and found her after she had committed suicide (Pokin, 2007). Ron looked at Megan's MySpace account to find one final message from Josh that essentially said, "Everybody in O'Fallon knows how you are. You are a bad person and everybody hates you. Have a shitty rest of your life. The world would be a better place without you." Megan's parents were saddened, upset, and felt tremendous loss following this incident. They saw a grief counselor for help. However, they were contacted by a neighbor, who lived on their street, six weeks following Megan's death. Pokin (2007) asserts that the Meiers were asked to meet at an O'Fallon counselor's office but not offered more details regarding the purpose of the meeting. Once they arrived, they also found their grief counselor and a Fort Zumwalt West Middle School counselor in attendance. During this meeting, they would learn that Josh Evans never actually existed.

The neighbor had a daughter that had been friends with Megan and at some point, the friendship dissolved. According to Tina and Ron (Pokin, 2007), they were told that the adults of a family within the neighborhood had created Josh Evans to retaliate against Megan for the dissolution of the friendship with their daughter. Essentially, the neighboring adult, the daughter, and a temporary employee who assisted in this endeavor, created a fake profile on MySpace to represent Josh Evans. They all had access to the profile and could pretend to be him to lure information from Megan about herself as well as others. The neighbor further elaborated that they felt less guilty about the incident because they learned at the funeral that Megan had attempted suicide before. Tina denied this allegation. Although the perpetrators apologized for the results of their actions in a letter, they declined any additional verbal communication (Pokin, 2007). Tina and Ron were distraught at the death of their daughter and even more disturbed at the announcement of this additional information. The Meiers further shared that Megan had appeared to be happy and satisfied with her life before the introduction of Josh Evans as she was planning for her 14th birthday party and she was planning to have her braces removed the day after she died (Pokin, 2007).

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Pokin (2007) contended that no criminal charges were filed against anyone connected to this incident because the FBI could not find any evidence from electronic files, including the message that Ron found. It was also reported there was no charge that was fit for the incident that had taken place and definitively say why Megan committed suicide. Although the Meiers did not file a civil suit, they want the laws addressed on a federal and state level and they would like for adults to be responsible for their role in cases like this, where what they do is considered a crime. According to Pokin (2007), following Megan's death, Tina and Ron divorced. Tina felt guilt that she did not monitor Megan's MySpace account more closely and Ron disagreed, supporting that Tina did all she could as a parent. Finally, Ron attests that what Megan did was ultimately her choice although it was as though "someone had handed her a loaded gun" (Pokin, 2007, p. 6). Although cyberbullying literature focuses on school-age individuals, adults have also been the victims of cyberbullying.

One cyberbullying case involving an adult that received national attention was the suicide of Nicole Clardy Mittendorff (Markley, 2017). According to Augenstein (2016), Nicole was last seen by her family, and specifically her husband, Steve Mittendorff, on April 15, 2016. Steve last remembers seeing his wife for dinner at Station 32, the local fire station. She was reported missing when she did not show up for work and a full, intense search was launched to find her. Nicole's sister, Jennifer Clardy Chalmers, created a Find Nicole Facebook page, which is what created national attention to this story. On, April 21, 2016, Nicole's body was found approximately one mile away from her Mini Cooper in Shenandoah National Park. Following an autopsy, it was revealed that Nicole's death resulted from a suicide-hanging and there was a suicide note left in the car (Augenstein, 2016; FireRescue 1, 2016). Although the note answered some questions for her husband, who was the only person to read the note, it also raised even more questions for him (Augenstein, 2016).

Nicole was a 31-year old resident of Woodbridge, VA and she worked as a career firefighter and paramedic at the nearby Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (Augenstein, 2016). Although no one knows with 100% certainty why Nicole took her life, it has been speculated that cyberbullying played a role. According to a report by Golgowski (2016), it was found that a Fairfax Underground website had been created two years prior to Nicole's death and this online site was used to target female first emergency responders. Additionally, it was discovered these postings were made anonymously under a thread that was intended for Fairfax County firefighters. However, the moderator of the site, Cary Wiedemann, claimed that the site is open to the public and anyone could technically post, not only firefighters. Nonetheless, the postings consisted of remarks about female employees of Fairfax County and included, "making claims about their promiscuity, sharing their photos and judging their attractiveness. In one case, a woman's selection for a paramedic program is credited to 'the guys she regularly sleeps with, including her chief'" per Cary (Golgowski, 2016, p. 2). It is not clear how much Fairfax County leadership knew about this site and what they did to address it. However, Cary claims (Golgowski, 2016) that although the posts were anonymous, he retained the IP addresses and could determine where the posting originated if anyone ever wanted to "unmask the perpetrators of this abuse" (p. 2). Cary insisted that any user was able to report any misconduct from the site by using a link called "Report Abuse". However, based on Cary's report, no abuse allegations were made regarding the posts in question for this case. Nonetheless, there is no direct evidence that ties this website to Nicole's choice to take her life, but it is certainly one that is still being considered (Augenstein, 2016).

It was important to Nicole's husband and sister that some good come out of this tragedy. Along with the chief of the department, Richard Bowers, they created a taskforce to investigate the case and later started a suicide education and prevention program (FireRescue 1, 2016). Nicole's husband, Steve, was a

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Virginia State Police offered who served as First Sergeant/Area Office commander in the Bureau of Field Operations, and as her husband felt he should serve on the taskforce for this case (Augenstein, 2016). It was required that the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department undergo an organizational assessment by a third-party organization to determine the culture and communication within the Department and how the employees felt about working there (Barton, 2017). Chief Richard Bowers acknowledged that no fire department in the country is perfect but would accept that his Department has a lot of challenges, a long road ahead, and a lot of work to do (FireResuce 1, 2016). According to Barton (2017), the assessment consisted of 65 individual interviews, 33 employees in focus groups, and additional randomized one-on-one interviews. Based on the total employees at Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, 16 had previously filed complaints or grievances and eight participated in this assessment. According to Markley (2017), the organization reported not trusting leadership, having witnessed and experienced bullying and harassment, felt that discipline was not fair, and feared retribution. However, even with these concerns, it was evident that the members were loyal to their jobs and to the fire department. The five core themes found that represent the Department's culture include:

- Dedication which is highlighted by a low attrition rate
- Leadership which was indicative of “lack of trust and accountability as well as fear of retaliation” (Barton, 2017, p. 3)
- Bullying/harassment/discrimination which highlights the absence of discussion surrounding these topics and the denial they even exist in this organization
- Conflict management which again highlights the issues with not trusting leadership indicating the employees feel senior management does not understand and that discipline is not fair nor consistent
- Hiring/promotions which were highlighted as being unfair and inequitable because individuals who do not meet qualifications are hired and promoted

These themes emerged from online results and in-person interview results (Barton, 2017). Based on the assessment results, Chief Richard Bowers made the claim to,

form work groups to include representatives from various stakeholders, including employee groups, diverse department members, and partners such as the Department of Human Resources and the Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs, and develop an action plan for the Executive Review Committee by May 1, 2017. (Barton, 2017, p. 4)

Although Chief Richard Bowers created a step in the right direction for Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, he retired in April 2017. He has been replaced by Chief John S. Butler as of September 1, 2018 and he is committed to keep making improvements within the fire service by improving communication and ultimately improving the organizational culture (Fairfax County, 2018). Finally, while Nicole's family is still coming to grips with her absence, Steve hopes that the promise stands and that her legacy lives on (Augenstein, 2016). Steve stated, “I made the promise to many of her co-workers and family that 10, 15, 20 years from now, I want people to still know her name” (Augenstein, 2016, p. 7). As this incident indicates, cyberbullying can have impacts in the lives of children and adults. Unfortunately, recent studies have shown that suicide following cyberbullying is becoming more common and is typically found among adolescents.

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Significant Cyberbullying Studies

Hinduja and Patchin (2015) claim that cyberbullying inflicts harm while using technology. The National Crime Victimization Survey School Crime Supplement reports that 20.8% of students have been bullied at school and 11.5% of those assert that the bullying happened online or via text messaging (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). It has been found that boys most often bully in person and girls mainly bully via electronic means (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). No student is exempt, as “students from all racial backgrounds experience and participate in bullying, with no clear group consistently shown to be significantly more involved than the others” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018c, p. 2). Finally, in 2015 Kann (2016) reported that 17.7% of students have had suicide ideation, 14.6% have created a plan, 8.6% have actually attempted to commit suicide, and 2.8% attempted suicide but were able to be released from rehabilitative care to complete this survey within 12 months of the attempt.

There has been an increase in studies regarding cyberbullying and its relation to suicide among adolescents over recent years. In a study completed by Van Geel et al. (2014), a meta-analysis involving 34 studies and 66 independent effect sizes revealed that a student placed in the role of a victim was significant in leading to ideas of suicide ($OR = 2.23$; 95% CI [2.10-2.37]). Additionally, while examining nine studies and 13 independent effect sizes, it was found that students who are victims of peers were significantly more likely to attempt suicide ($OR = 2.55$; 95% CI [1.95 – 3.34]). This research has continued to expand over the years and ultimately, Hinduja and Patchin (2014) have concluded that cyberbullying victimization is indeed more likely to lead to suicidal ideation than school bullying victimization.

Another study completed by Hinduja and Patchin (2018c) called for a nationally representative sample in the United States of 12 - to 17- year old middle and high school students (median age = 14.5) to complete a survey about experiences with school bullying, cyberbullying, and other teen behaviors. The survey took approximately 23 minutes to complete and there was a diverse sample of respondents with 2,670 completed surveys. This resulted in a response rate of 15% after considering parental consent and child assent (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018c). There were 49.9% female respondents and 49.6% male respondents. Sixty-six percent of the sample was White/Caucasian, 12% were Black/African American, 11.9% were Hispanic, Latin America, and 10% were of another race. Closed-ended questions in the survey required a “yes” or “no” reply and ranking questions required a response of “never, once, a few times, and many times” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018c). For suicidal ideation and suicide attempt, the focus was on students who had attempted suicide on a scale of 0-4 ($M = 0.26$; $SD = 0.72$; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$). Factor analysis results indicated loadings ranging from .634 to .872 and eigenvalue of 2.60. For school bullying victimization, the experience was to be based on the previous 30 days and based on 10 forms of bullying such as “I was called mean names” or “I was threatened with a weapon”. These responses to the 10-item summary was measured on a scale of 0 to 30 ($M = 4.93$; $SD = 6.42$; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$). According to Hinduja and Patchin (2018c), factor analysis results indicated loadings ranging from .734 to .806 and a eigenvalue of 6.00. For additional analysis, SPSS and descriptive statistics were utilized and the review of results shows that 16.1% of respondents had experienced suicidal ideation and 2.1% attempted suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018c). In direct regard to cyberbullying, 6.7% to 22.1% frequently reported “Someone posted mean or hurtful comments about me online”. However, according to Hinduja and Patchin (2018c) students who experienced both forms of bullying were five times more likely to have suicide ideation. The significant results in these studies indicate that acknowledgment of cyberbullying and change is essential to improving the outcome. Fortunately, advancements within

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the legal system could make a difference and could prevent the chances of suicide attempts for young people in the foreseeable future.

THE LAW

Current Laws in the United States

According to a cyberbullying study completed by Privitera and Campbell (2009), cyberbullying is just as prevalent as in-person bullying. However, in-person bullying has no federal laws or regulations that protect the target (Georgakopoulos et al., 2011; Martin & Lavan, 2010). Although there are no federal laws to protect targets from cyberbullying, all 50 states have developed state and local laws to protect citizens primarily at the grade school age (Stopbullying.gov, 2020).

The study conducted by Privitera and Campbell (2009) consisted of 145 questionnaires that sought information about negative acts via electronic means in the workplace. The negative acts included having opinions ignored, excessive monitoring of work, being humiliated, having key tasks and responsibilities removed, and excessive teasing. Privitera and Campbell (2009) found that each participant had experienced at least one of the aforementioned behaviors. There were no details provided about what types of organizations the participants worked for or exactly how much bullying they experienced. However, this study introduced the relevance of cyberbullying and the idea of these behaviors being psychological abuse. Furthermore, Yildiz (2007) asserted that psychological abuse is only one issue, but there are many other health-endangering issues that must be considered after any extended period of dealing with bullying, such as heart palpitations, headaches, sleep apnea, panic attacks, suicidal thoughts, lowered self-esteem, depression, food disorders, lack of motivation, and more. Essentially, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) considers this behavior and response representative of an unsafe environment. Therefore, if adults are experiencing this behavior in the workplace and responding in these negative ways, it is clear to see how children and young adults at a grade school level could also have a negative response to such behavior.

To address and protect those who are victims of cyberbullying at the grade school level, many schools have opted to introduce surveillance authority under current cyberbullying laws (Suski, 2014). According to Suski (2014), many of the state laws that have been passed prohibit cyberbullying, known as any form of bullying by electronic means, and allows schools to discipline students as they see fit. California was one of the first states to establish this law in 2008 and since, the other states have followed suit to try to ensure safety and rectification for those targets of cyberbullying. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (2017) declares that all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories are responding to bullying in different ways. Although there is no federal law, each jurisdiction has created state and local laws, policies, and regulations. The definitions and common characteristics identified in bullying and cyberbullying incidents have been revamped and changed over time. Here are some examples of what is being offered in different states (DHHS, 2017): Northern Mariana Islands have established policies against bullying and cyberbullying; Arizona, Colorado, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, Hawaii, and the American Samoa have all established laws against bullying and cyberbullying; and all of the remaining states have established both policies and laws against bullying and cyberbullying that occur on school campuses. There are some exceptions for incidents that do not occur at school. For example, Alaska offers anti-bullying laws and regulations that affects a student on

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school property (DHHS, 2017). However, according to the United States DHHS (2017), school districts are not required to train teachers or additional staff members on how to respond to bullying situations but the Alaskan Department of Education and Early Development try to encourage employees to read materials about bullying and cyberbullying and remain abreast of the literature surrounding it.

States with Stronger Protections

Following an incident like Nicole Mittendorff's it is helpful to know that Virginia has implemented both anti-bullying laws and regulations (DHHS, 2017). However, this legislation only applies to school-age individuals. Adults do not have federal or state laws that protect them against bullying and/or cyberbullying unless they can combine the claim with a tort law already in establishment (Martin & Lavan, 2010). At this time, Virginia requires school districts to create character education programs that address issues surrounding bullying (DHHS, 2017). According to the DHHS (2017), teachers, staff, and administrators are also required to have training on how to identify and respond to students who may be targets of bullying or cyberbullying. Finally, the school must report to the student's parent or guardian if they have potentially been involved in any case dealing with bullying and/or cyberbullying within a five-day window.

California is another state with an extensive list of anti-bullying laws and policies (DHHS, 2017). The lawmakers in California are careful to separate the definitions of bullying and cyberbullying and placing them in two distinct categories. Bullying includes cyberbullying, however, cyberbullying has an extended definition. Bullying is described as

any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a pupil or group of pupils as defined in Section 48900.2, 48900.3, or 48900.4, directed toward one or more pupils that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- (A) Placing a reasonable pupil or pupils in fear of harm to that pupil's or those pupils' person or property.*
- (B) Causing a reasonable pupil to experience a substantially detrimental effect on his or her physical or mental health.*
- (C) Causing a reasonable pupil to experience substantial interference with his or her academic performance.*
- (D) Causing a reasonable pupil to experience substantial interference with his or her ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school. [Cal Ed Code § 48900 (2016)]*

The California lawmakers essentially described cyberbullying as an "electronic act" that may originate on- or off-campus and places students in the same dangers as described by the bullying definition above [Cal Ed Code § 48900 (2016)]. Additionally, lawmakers extend the definitions to cover cyber sexual bullying defined as,

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means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraphs (A) to (D), inclusive, of paragraph (1). A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.

(III) For purposes of this clause, “cyber sexual bullying” does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities. [Cal Ed Code § 48900 (2016)]

The anti-bullying laws and regulations in California protect students’ on- and off-campus (DHHS, 2017). The California school districts encourage online bullying training modules for teachers and staff to complete. Students are recommended to meet with school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, child welfare agencies, and the like in the event a teacher or staff member finds it necessary (DHHS, 2017). Finally, the schools in the California are required to alert parents and legal guardians if their children are a part of any harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyber sexual bullying incident.

Another state with extensive anti-bullying laws and regulations is Massachusetts (DHHS, 2017). According to the United States DHHS (2017), Massachusetts lawmakers have determined that bullying is repeated written, verbal, electronic, or physical acts and gestures that create a hostile and fearful environment for another student and impacts their ability to receive an education. Cyberbullying is defined as using technological or electronic communications to create a web page or blog as themselves or impersonating someone else in order to elicit any of the responses described by the bullying description [ALM GL ch. 71, § 37O (2014)]. The lawmakers of Massachusetts anti-bullying laws and regulations have determined that students are protected on- and off-campus (DHHS, 2017). Additionally, the Massachusetts school districts have required that bullying prevention program curricula be updated and applied to each grade level to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. There are also safeguards and mental health support provided for those students who find themselves victims of bullying. According to the United States DHHS (2017), the purpose of the interventions are to ensure students feel safe and to maintain protection for the student. It is also helpful to that, “each bullying prevention and intervention plan must also include a strategy for providing counseling and referral to appropriate services to perpetrators and victims and their family members” (p. 3). The teachers, school staff, administrators, law enforcement agencies, volunteers in the community, parents, and guardians are all encouraged to work together for consultation with the perpetrator and the victim. As incidents are investigated and resolved, the bullying curriculum is updated accordingly (DHHS, 2017). These elevated measures of protection for the students in Massachusetts were made more comprehensive following the highly publicized suicide of Phoebe Prince in 2010 (Lee, 2016).

States with Minimal Protections

While some states offer stronger protections, there are others that have minimal protections. Wyoming does not offer a law or regulation that protects students’ off-campus (DHHS, 2017). The Wyoming school district encourages employees to participate in bullying prevention programs and to involve community members in such events. Training is provided to teachers and those with significant contact with

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students. According to the DHHS (2017), the state of West Virginia is another location where bullying and cyberbullying only protects students on school property. The school district policy requires that a report is filed for bullying and cyberbullying incidents and that a strategy is shared regarding how to protect the victim moving forward.

Each jurisdiction has created definitions and characteristics that define what bullying and cyberbullying actually is and what to do to address it (DHHS, 2017). DHHS (2017) provides that the state of Washington describes anti-bullying laws as harassment, intimidation, and bullying and further states,

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying” means any intentionally written message or image—including those that are electronically transmitted—verbal, or physical act, including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, including gender expression or identity, mental or physical disability or other distinguishing characteristics, when an act:

- *Physically harms a student or damages the student’s property.*
- *Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student’s education.*
- *Is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment.*
- *Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school. [Rev. Code Wash. (ARCW) § 28A.300.285 (2013)]*

These laws also only apply to incidents that occur on-campus and not off-campus (DHHS, 2017). However, the state of Washington seeks partnerships with local officials, such as law enforcement and families, in order to best train and protect students. Furthermore, Indiana is a state *with a slightly different definition of bullying and described as:*

“Bullying” means overt, unwanted, repeated acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications or images transmitted in any manner (including digitally or electronically), physical acts committed, aggression, or any other behaviors, that are committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the targeted student and create for the targeted student an objectively hostile school environment that:

- (1) places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to the targeted student’s person or property;*
- (2) has a substantially detrimental effect on the targeted student’s physical or mental health;*
- (3) has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student’s academic performance; or*
- (4) has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, and privileges provided by the school. [Indiana General Assembly: Burns Ind. Code Ann. § 20-33-8-0.2 (2013)]*

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Both descriptions are detailed and describe bullying and cyberbullying but use a different vernacular. The definition in Indiana does not specify harassment and intimidation. However, according to the DHHS (2017), the Indiana anti-bullying laws protect students who are off-campus. The laws apply when those students involved as the bully (bullies) and the target(s) all are apart of the same school corporation and disciplinary action is necessary to avoid disruption in the learning environment and the peace of others. Indiana lawmakers have created a list of written disciplinary rules to address bullying, such as: bullying is prohibited, there is a list of procedures for reporting and investigating, false reports will be followed by discipline, and specific policies concern how the disciplinary measures will be communicated and publicized throughout the district to ensure everyone is aware (DHHS, 2017). Indiana is not the only state with protections for students' off-campus.

How Law Affects Change

The Phoebe Prince suicide received national and international attention because Phoebe had relocated, with her family, from a small town in Ireland to become a freshman at South Hadley High School in Massachusetts (Lee, 2016). Additionally, Lee (2016) described Phoebe as having experienced bullying and cyberbullying, which Hinduja and Patchin (2014) have described as a dangerous combination. Phoebe was born, Phoebe Nora Mary Prince on November 24, 1994, in England and had moved with her family to Ireland at two years old (Crimaldi, 2010). The Prince family immigrated to the United States in the fall of 2009, including her mother and four siblings, while her father remained in Ireland (Drew, 2010). Phoebe had only been attending South Hadley High School, with 700 students, for less than a year when the tormenting began. According to Webley (2011), Phoebe dated a boy, Sean Mulveyhill, shortly after her enrollment at the high school and their relationship was brief. However, Sean had a girlfriend, Kayla Narey, and the pair began to bully Phoebe because of the relationship. Furthermore, four additional students, Ashley Longe, Sharon Velasquez, Flannery Mullins, and Austin Renaud also taunted Phoebe as the new girl from Ireland. For three months, both groups of students submitted to bullying Phoebe by relentless taunting at school and cyberbullying on the Internet via social networking sites while the students were out of school (Eckholm & Zezima, 2010). According to Constantine (2010), on January 14, 2010, three of the original six tormentors were excessively relentless by allegedly harassing Phoebe in the school library and the school auditorium. One of the accused also followed her home from school and threw an empty can at her while shouting an insult to her. The last text that Phoebe is recorded to have sent stated "I can't take much more..." (Webley, 2011, p. 2). Following this final day of torment, Phoebe took her own life by hanging herself in a stairwell of her family's apartment building and was found by her 12-year old sister. In the aftermath of Phoebe's death, crude remarks were made on her Facebook memorial page, however they have since been removed. The Prince family had Phoebe buried back in Ireland (Constantine, 2010). This is one of the few cases where the perpetrators faced felony indictments because of their actions (Eckholm & Zezima, 2010).

Although Massachusetts had regulations in place, lawmakers had to decide speedily to pass anti-bullying legislation, which would be signed, into law on May 3, 2010 (Bierman, 2010). According to Eckholm and Zezima (2010), one of the disturbing elements of this incident is that it is alleged that there were teachers, administrators, and other staff members aware of the harassment in the school and did nothing to acknowledge or address the issue. Phoebe had reported to her mother that she was being harassed at school and Mrs. Prince spoke to two school staff members, but the issue was not addressed (Constantine, 2010). There were bystanders who reported that at least four students and two teachers

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tried to intervene when the harassment was occurring, but without understanding harassment or how to address it, there was not much they could do. Therefore, due to the lack of laws, there were no charges to be filed against those who watched this harassment occur and did nothing (Crimaldi, 2010). Following Phoebe's death the school initiated an anti-bullying taskforce while lawmakers worked tirelessly to form ways to prevent incidents like this in the future. According to the United States DHHS (2017), Massachusetts school districts now requires schools to provide "age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the curriculum" (p. 3). Additionally, teachers, staff, and administrators now have a means for how to identify, report, and address if a student is being harassed, bullied, or cyberbullied.

The six teenagers introduced in this section were all facing multiple felony indictments at the initiation of this investigation (Eckholm & Zezima, 2010). Ashley, who prosecutors considered the "ringleader" in this case based on the fact that she greatly tormented her on the day Phoebe took her own life, was sentenced to 100 hours of community service (Webley, 2011). She initially faced more serious charges, including assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, criminal harassment, disturbing a school assembly, and a civil rights violation with a bodily injury resulting, which could have carried a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. Ashley was not indicted for these charges. Webley (2011) also attests that Sharon would be placed on probation for approximately a year based on a disparaging remark she made about Phoebe. Flannery was also given an approximate year probation for a civil rights violation without bodily injury and disturbing a school assembly. Sean, the guy Phoebe dated, was sentenced to a harassment charge and given one year of probation and 100 hours of community service. Kayla, which was Sean's girlfriend at the time of Phoebe's suicide, was also given a year of probation and 100 hours of community service. Kayla was moved by Phoebe's death and offered a public apology while addressing the judge by saying,

Phoebe ... I'm sorry," she said. "I'm sorry for the unkind words I said about you. I'm sorry for what I wrote on my Facebook page. Most of all I'm sorry for Jan. 14, in the library and in the hallway, when I laughed when someone was shouting humiliating things about you. I am immensely ashamed of myself. (Webley, 2011, p.2)

These five teenagers agreed to a plea deal with prosecution and plead guilty to misdemeanor charges of harassment and the additional charges were dropped (Webley, 2011). Finally, Austin was not accused of bullying but was being accused of statutory rape because he had sex with Phoebe while she was 15 years old and he was 18 years old. All charges against Austin and the other five teenagers were dropped when Mrs. Prince settled with the town of South Hadley in October of 2010 for \$225,000 and the agreement solidified she would not sue in the future or further discuss the case after the settlement (Cramer, 2011). Although Mrs. Prince shared that she would always have the permanent weight of Phoebe's death on her, she would move on. This case raised awareness surrounding bullying and cyberbullying and gave hope to survivors that laws can be changed and/or implemented to protect targets of bullying and cyberbullying. Although Massachusetts was said to have been one of the states with the best anti-bullying law (Bazelon, 2010), many other states have been addressing legislation and are rising to the challenge to improve schools in jurisdictions across the country.

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Issues Concerning the Regulation of Cyberbullying

Following the suicide of Phoebe Prince, many states began to tighten the policies and create laws about anti-bullying and cyberbullying to protect school-age individuals (Lee, 2016). Hinduja and Patchin (2014), in Lee (2016), argue that it is essential to look at the distinctions between the two actions, bullying and cyberbullying:

- When someone says or does something unintentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's *rude*.
- When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's *mean*.
- When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they keep doing it – even when you tell them to stop or show them that you're upset – that's *bullying* (p. 832).

Lee (2016) posits that cyberbullying is similar except it involves the use of electronic equipment and communication. The researcher further attests that cyberbullying is more dangerous than traditional bullying and this is why schools are seeking to regulate it more. However, the issue has become how much addressing cyberbullying affects First Amendment rights.

The First Amendment states that an individual has the right to “freedom of speech, press assembly, and petition” (Institute for Free Speech, 2020). Does this mean that students can harass other students via electronic means using hateful word selections against someone they perceive to be less powerful than them or less likely to respond due to a passive nature? Lee (2016) affirms that cyberbullying regulations are simply necessary to protect students during school and non-school hours to combat the serious dangers that too often result from cyberbullying. This researcher also asserts that cyberbullying can be regulated without violating First Amendment rights. The reason to monitor and regulate this cyberbullying speech is described by Lee (2016) as being necessary because it elicits a type of harm that is unique, there are few legal ramifications to protect victims, and schools are one of the best organizations to protect their students. Lee (2016) postulates that cyberbullying is uniquely harmful because, unlike in-person bullying, the target can be attacked 24/7 and has no recourse to the situation. The victim can be reached at any place and time and by any technological means. Additionally, the speed in which the communication reaches the target and the public is harmful. Even if a post can be deleted, there is no way to determine how many people have seen the bad posting before it is removed. This could simply create a more severe thread of harmful words, threats, insults, and the like from multiple individuals. Also, social media can be visited repeatedly and there could be multiple bullies on a single platform. Finally, social media posts can be found after they have been removed or re-posted which could initiate the torment all over again (Lee, 2016). These characteristics make cyberbullying all the more harmful and dangerous for victims.

Lee (2016) asserted that a simple test could help determine whether an online post could cause the consequences of cyberbullying. This test is the “Tinker test” and based off of a court case in which high schools students in Iowa were suspended for violating a school policy by wearing black armbands to school to protest a conflict in Vietnam. The First Amendment right was used to defend these students and the court could not find issue with these students wearing these armbands. However, the case questioned when there may be an issue that causes substantial disruption such as cyberbullying. A new expression emerged in order to determine if an act causes substantial disruption and the schools must prove that the expression “would substantially interfere with the work of the school or impinge upon the rights of other students” (Lee, 2016, p. 835). The second Tinker test would concern the involvement of the court

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system in determining which regulations and legislation have been offended. Besides the Tinker test, some schools have also decided to take a step further and begin monitoring and surveilling the electronic devices of students to find cyberbullying.

Suski (2014) attested that following a Supreme Court ruling in June 2014 between *Riley v. California*, where some argued that a police officer could seize and search a suspect's cell phone without a warrant or probable cause, it was ruled that police searches do require a warrant due to the privacy related. This brings into question how much surveillance schools can apply to students. There was no official ruling on what limits there were to school surveillance authority (Suski, 2014). In 2010, Pennsylvania is one state that launched the surveillance of electronic devices of their students. According to Suski (2014), this surveillance was promoted to prevent the chance of cyberbullying that would lead to suicidal ideation and attempts. However, it was determined that surveillance was taking place while students were away from school and even at home in their bedrooms. This amount of surveillance had been overlooked by authorities initially and it was determined this amount of overview and lack of privacy was questionable. There was a need to review the legislation and limit exactly how much surveillance was necessary and essentially limit this overview to school electronic devices. The surveillance would be during school hours and the review of school owned electronic devices only (Suski, 2014). Each state still is determining which regulations best suit their jurisdictions and how to handle issues with cyberbullying (DHHS, 2017). Despite the responsibility of the local leaders and state lawmakers, there is more that can be done at home and individually.

SOLUTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, & FUTURE RESEACH DIRECTIONS

The next step in addressing cyberbullying is to determine how to function with it in society, recover from the infractions, and move on with life. According to Raatma (2013), cyberbullying has increased as advances in technology have become more innovative in recent decades. In 2011 alone, text message usage rose to 7 trillion sent worldwide (Raatma, 2013). Additionally, Raatma (2013) postulated that 50% of teens and preteens are bullied online and 75% have visited a website that criticized another child. Finally, digital media offers a platform for hackers, identify theft, and the like, therefore these negative behaviors can evolve into cyberbullying as has been seen more during the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 (Zoom, 2020). Unfortunately, more online classes and meetings are experiencing interference from hackers, which can be perceived as cyberbullying (Zoom, 2020). This offers an opportunity for educators to make an impact on decreasing cyberbullying. This also offers an opportunity for researchers to study how classes being taught remotely aligns with the potential for cyberbullying to occur.

Although the lawmakers must protect the citizens of the United States, each individual and family also must teach children how to respond to others at school. Hinduja and Patchin (2018b) assert that one in every five middle and high school students are affected by cyberbullying. Unfortunately, many are unaware of how to respond and rarely share with others what they have experienced. Therefore, Hinduja and Patchin (2018b) created a list of how children might respond to cyberbullying and how observant parents and guardians can notice the signs to address the issues. The list includes:

- Unexpectedly stops using their device
- Appears nervous or jumpy when using their device(s)
- Appears uneasy about going to school or outside in general

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- Becomes abnormally withdrawn from friends and family members
- Seems regularly depressed
- Makes passing statements about suicide or the meaninglessness of life
- Loses interest in the things that matter to them the most
- Becomes unusually secretive, especially with online activities (p.1)

This could lead to more research concerning what works best and which suggestions may not work as well. Additionally, it is important to notice, as a parent or guardian, if the child you see at home could also be a bully or cyberbully towards other students. There are also signs that Hinduja and Patchin (2018b) point out that can identify this cyberbully:

- Quickly switches screens or hides their device when you are close by
- Uses their device(s) at all hours of the night
- Gets unusually upset if they can't use their device(s)
- Laughs excessively while using their device(s) and won't show you what is so funny
- Avoids discussion about what they are doing online
- Is increasingly withdrawn or isolated from family
- Appears overly concerned with popularity or continued presence in a particular social circle or status
- Hangs out with the "wrong" crowd
- Demonstrates violent tendencies
- Appears overly conceited as to their technological skills and abilities (p.1)

More research regarding characteristics of cyberbullies could further solidify and add to this list. Upon identifying these traits in children, it is important that the family members respond to these signs which may require seeking help outside of the home. There may be a need to see a counselor, a social worker, a therapist, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, or otherwise. Finally, for students to cope in this world of technology, it is also useful if there are tips that can be followed to address cyberbullying.

Hinduja and Patchin (2018c) also created a list for students who are victims of cyberbullying. To best respond to cyberbullying, teens should talk about it to others, ignore the bully because they seek a response, do not retaliate because this could lead to perpetual violence, tell them to stop if ignoring does not work, laugh it off, save any evidence, block the cyberbully online, report to the content provider, call the police if they sense they are in danger, and avoid becoming apart of the problem by passing messages and photos the cyberbully may post. These responses can help deter or stop the cyberbully altogether. If the cyberbullying still does not subside, the child must tell a parent, guardian, and school official, such as a teacher, guidance counselor, and/or the principal of the school. Each school should have its designated protocol and chain of command for how to respond to such situations. Although technology offers great returns, it can also result in tragedy as those described in this chapter. This is why the upcoming generation must become educated on the topic, stay vigilant, learn how to protect themselves, and learn who to turn to when they feel they are being threatened or may bring harm to themselves and/or others. The future will consist of more research, more recommendations, and hopefully more answers to how to fully rectify and resolve cyberbullying.

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CONCLUSION

This chapter emphasizes the impact of cyberbullying in the United States. The many definitions that researchers have assigned to cyberbullying are reviewed. The chapter also includes detailed accounts of studies that have revealed in-depth findings about cyberbullying, there are case study presentations of individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon, and an overview of the laws that pertain to cyberbullying are introduced as well as the lack thereof on a federal level. There is a review of how law effects change regarding cyberbullying and difficulties concerning the regulation of it. There are recommendations for future research. Finally, there are tips provided concerning how to recover from this issue and successfully move forward in a society free from cyberbullying.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Cyber Sexual Bullying: When one student sends another student a photograph via electronic means that depicts one student in the nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit. This photograph causes the receiving student to feel fear and/or physical or mental health impacts and affects their academic performance at school.

Cyberbully: An individual who targets someone via electronic communication and directs aggressive, negative, demeaning, and belittling comments towards another individual that creates a hostile and intimidating online experience.

Cyberbullying: The use of electronic communication, such as web pages, blogs, social networking, texting, and emailing, via electronic devices, such as personal computers, lap tops, tablets, and cell phones to repeatedly harass and torment an individual which may lead to health endangering factors, such as depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and potentially suicide attempts.

Cybervictim: An individual on the receiving end of a cyberbully who is directing aggressive, intimidating, and hostile behavior and cannot stop the cyberbully or comfortably enjoy engaging in social means via electronic communication.

Cyberworld: This is a supposed “place” an individual perceives as online and one may view negative things occur such as cyberbullying.

Mass Shooting: Three individuals were killed at one location, not including the shooter.

School Bullying: This is when an individual, bully, who targets someone at school in person and makes this target the core of jokes, excessive teasing, belittlement, humiliation, makes mean statements and calls the target names, and engages in other negative and mean behaviors.

Suicide Ideation: This is the thought of committing suicide, by making a mental plan, considering how to execute it, and repeatedly ruminates the idea into a considerable reality.

Target: This is used interchangeably with victim to mean an individual on the receiving end of bullying or cyberbullying who is unable or unwilling to defend oneself.

Victim Blaming: Assigning blame and responsibility to the individual on the receiving end of cyberbullying who becomes disengaged as a result.