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Principals' Perceptions of the Bully Busters Program in Combating Cyberbullying in Elementary Schools

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Abstract

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MA, Purdue University, 2005

BS, Indiana University, 2000

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Over time and with both the increasing ubiquitousness of the Internet and children's technological knowledge at young ages, cyberbullying has grown more widespread and acts of bullying have become more intense. However, little is known about the effectiveness of different antibullying programs for decreasing cyberbullying behaviors. This study addressed that gap in the literature by exploring one elementary school's use of the Bully Busters program for combating cyberbullying. The decision-making model was used as the conceptual framework for this qualitative interview study. Participants were 3 principals from 3 schools using the program. Data were gathered from the participants via interviews and classroom observations. NVivo software was used to organize the data analysis processes through open coding to identify themes and patterns. Principals indicated the Bully Busters program was effective for preventing bullying and believed it would be effective for combating cyberbullying; they also demonstrated clear plans for implementing the program more widely to combat cyberbullying. As noted during observations, the principals effectively implemented the Bully Busters program. Results of this study may contribute to positive social change by providing school principals with insight into how the Bully Busters program may be implemented to deter cyberbullying in their schools. Decreased rates of cyberbullying in schools may result in improved school experiences for all children.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my husband André, my daughters Alisha and NyAsia, my sister Vickie, my brothers Dan and Jerry, my father Herbert, and my mother Janie who have proven to be a tower of strength to me during this process. Your prayers and encouragement helped me understand the importance of finishing what I start. I hope this study will serve as an instrument of hope and guidance to all who read it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Bullying is a behavior that involves an exercise of power that adversely affects victims of the behavior (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Bullying is particularly widespread among children, occurs both in schools (Henry et al., 2014) and in the community (Ipsos, 2012; Juvonen & Graham, 2014), and can have a damaging impact on students' emotional well-being (Ybarra, Mitchell, & Espelage, 2012), and academic performance (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). The rising use of electronic means of communication has caused the emergence of a new form of bullying referred to as *cyberbullying*, which Li (2008) defined as "bullying via electronic communication tools such as email, cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), instant messaging, or the World Wide Web" (p. 224). Similarly, Smith et al. (2008) defined *cyberbullying* as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (p. 376). Various agencies and educational institutions have developed and implemented anti-bullying programs; however, little is known about how effective these programs are for combating cyberbullying (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015). This issue is the focus of this study. However, before extrapolating on the study problem and describing the other critical components of this study, I provide background information associated with bullying and cyberbullying.

Background

Although the term *bullying* has been defined differently by various agencies and institutions, even by some agencies that are interrelated, the underlying concepts are generally the same. For example, the Health Resources and Services Administration

(HRSA; 2010b) defined *bullying* as "aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Often, it is repeated over time and can take many forms" (para. 1), and the stopbullying.gov (n.d.a) program defined it as "unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance" (para. 1). The term *power imbalance* refers to differences among children based on their physical strength, access to information likely to embarrass another, affluence, or popularity (stopbullying.gov, n.d.a). This imbalance of power emboldens the bully to seek to control others perceived as inferior, powerless, or vulnerable (stopbullying.gov, n.d.a).

Typical bullying behaviors include deliberately making threats, spreading rumors, assaulting someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a social group (stopbullying.gov, n.d.a). Bullying behaviors that require the use of interpersonal communication with people other than the bully, such as spreading rumors or manipulating relationships, are considered indirect methods of bullying, while bullying behaviors that include immediate contact with the victim in some way, such as name calling or pushing, are considered direct methods of bullying (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). However, a solitary domineering deed does not constitute bullying; rather, it is the actual repetition, or the risk of repetition, of behavior that is deemed to constitute bullying (stopbullying.gov, n.d.a).

Estimates of the incidence of bullying have varied over the years but do show a history of this behavior. In a Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children report on bullying in 2005-2006, 11% of 12- to 18-year-old students in the United States reported being bullied two or more times while at school (Wang & Iannotti, 2012). By 2011,

incidences of bullying among this same age demographic had increased to 28% (Robers, Kemp, & Truman, 2013). Other researchers have presented incidence rates regarding specific types of bullying behaviors. For example, with respect to bullying related to sexually explicit communication in particular, Ybarra, Mitchell, and Espelage (2012) found that 18% of 10-15 year olds had experienced this type of bullying in school in the year prior to their participation in the study.

Cyberbullying, although similar to other forms of bullying, is distinguished by the fact that it takes place online and involves the use of cellular phones, emails, and the Internet (Ipsos, 2012; National Crime Prevention Council [NCPC], 2012). The cyberbully can be the victim's classmate, an online acquaintance, or an anonymous user (NCPC, 2012). The growing ubiquity of computers as well as access to the Internet and participation in social networking sites such as Facebook, has resulted in increased incidence of cyberbullying. In fact, cyberbullying in social networking cites increasingly has become an all too common extension of bullying in schools and is becoming an intrinsic part of the process of growing up in a technologically advanced society (Ipsos, 2012).

Although cyberbullying has been identified as one of the major antisocial and delinquent behaviors of adolescents (Ma, 2011), published rates of the incidence of cyberbullying vary. Reasons for these variations include differences in research designs and methods, sample sizes, demographics, control factors, and duration of the follow-up research period (Klomek, Sourander, & Gould, 2010). Despite differences in reported study results, that cyberbullying occurs and may occur to an alarming degree is clearly indicated in the literature both globally and nationally.

Based on a summary of literature, Tokunaga (2010) estimated that approximately 20–40% of all young people have been victims of cyberbullies. However, Hinduja and Patchin (2010) found that 11% of adolescents in their study admitted to cyberbullying using one or more forms of cyberbullying and doing so on at least two or more occasions during the previous 30 days. In addition, 20% admitted to cyberbullying others in their lifetimes (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013). Reported rates of cyberbullying by offenders were slightly lower in Gualdo, Hunter, Durkin, Arnaiz, and Maquilón's study, where 8% of the study sample cyberbullied their peers. On the other hand, results of the MTV and Associated Press (2011) study indicated that 56% of 14-24 year old reported having been cyberbullied. According to Hinduja and Patchin (2010), cyberbullies most often (23.1%) harassed others by posting comments about them online to elicit laughter from others. In a more recent study of 5,589 youths between the ages of 12 and 18 (51% male participants and 49% female participants), Barboza (2015) found four categories of victims. Of the victims, 3.1% were had been both bullied and cyberbullied (highly victimized); 11.6% had been victims of relational bullying, verbal bullying, and cyberbullying; 8% had been victims of relational bullying, verbal bullying, and physical bullying but not cyberbullying.

With regard to cyberbullying victims, in a global study of 18,687 parents from 24 countries, Ipsos (2012) found that 12% of the parents reported their child having been the victim of cyberbullying, 24% were aware of a cyberbullying victim in the community, and 60% said the cyberbullying events occurred over social media sites like MySpace and Facebook. The role of social media in the incidence of cyberbullying was underscored by a ConsumerReports.org (2011) survey on cyberbullying in the US which

indicated that in 2010, 1 million children had been cyberbullied on just the social networking site Facebook alone. According to ConsumerReports.org, cyberbullying occurs more commonly via social networking sites and Instant Messenger than via emails, chatrooms, or gaming sites.

In a study of 1,378 adolescences under the age of 18, Hinduja and Patchin (2008) found that over 32% of boys and over 36% of girls were victims of cyberbullying. However, in a review of cyberbullying articles in peer-reviewed journals, Patchin and Hinduja (2012) found that cyberbullying victimization rates ranged from 5.5% to 72%, with an average of 24.4%. With regard to teens who were cyberbullied in the 30 days prior to participating in the studies, the majority of studies included rates that ranged from 6% to 30% (Patchin & Hinduja, 2012). These findings from other studies were consistent with Patchin and Hinduja's own research in which they found that the percentage of youth who had experienced cyberbullying at some point in their lives ranged from 18.8% to 40.6%, with an average of 27.3%. Burgess-Proctor, Hinduja and Patchin (2010) also conducted a study on the incidence of cyberbullying. However, the 3,141 adolescent Internet users included in this research were all female and between the ages of 8 and 17. Of the participants, 38.3% reported being cyberbullied, 45.8 % reported being ignored by peers, 42.9% reported being disrespected, and 11.2% reported being threatened (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2010).

The Centers for Disease Control (Kann et al., 2013) reported that the incidence of cyberbullying victimization varies based on gender, ethnicity, and grade level. When compared to male students (8.5%), female students (21.0%) reported being cyberbullied at high rates (Kann et al., 2013). Cyberbullying victimization was highest among White

students (16.9%; Kann et al., 2013). Hispanic students (12.8%) were the next most victimized group, followed by Black students (8.7%; Kann et al., 2013). When gender was considered along with ethnicity, the order of victimization from the most victimized to the least victimized did not change. White male students (8.7%) and White female students (25.2%) were cyberbullied more than Hispanic male students (8.3%) and Hispanic female students (17.1%), who were cyberbullied more than Black male students (6.9%) and Black female students (10.5%; Kann et al., 2013). With regard to grade level, rates of cyberbullying victimization decreased between freshman (16.1%) and senior year (13.5%). Although this trend was similar for female students in particular (Grade 9, 22.8%; Grade 10, 21.9%; Grade 11, 20.6%; Grade 12, 18.3%), rates for male students did not decrease sequentially (Grade 9, 9.4%; Grade 10, 7.2%; Grade 11, 8.9%; Grade 12, 8.6%; Kann et al., 2013).

Like bullying, cyberbullying considerably and negatively impacts victims (Barboza, 2015; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). On the other hand, a positive school environment can negatively affect the incidence of bullying (Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013). This study is needed because it has the potential to uncover a means of combating cyberbullying using the Bully Busters program, a currently established, and easily accessible and implemented program.

Problem Statement

Over time and with both the increasing ubiquitousness of the Internet and children's technological knowledge at young ages, cyberbullying has grown more widespread and acts of bullying have become easier to perpetrate (Festl & Quandt, 2013). Although cyberbullying is proliferating in elementary schools (Verlinden et al., 2014),

little is known about the effectiveness of antibullying programs for decreasing cyberbullying behaviors. In particular, during the preliminary literature review conducted for this study, no studies were found in which researchers explored the efficacy of the Bully Busters program for reducing cyberbullying. (Although Brooks [2004] and Bell [2008] explored aspects of the Bully Busters program, the focus of each study was on bullying in general rather than cyberbullying.) This lack of literature on the efficacy of the Bully Busters program for reducing cyberbullying is problematic because school administrators could use insight about the program's efficacy (a) to make informed decisions about implementing antibullying programs at their schools and (b) to combat cyberbullying in their schools and communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the principals' perceptions of the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying in elementary schools. Although the Bully Busters program is designed to address bullying behavior in general, because of the growing incidence of cyberbullying in schools and communities nationwide, it is important to determine the potential for the Bully Busters program to deter cyberbullying as well. Also, Horne, Bartoloucci, and Newman-Carlson (2003) identified the Bully Busters program as one predicated on the implementation process and recognized this process as crucial to the success of the Bully Busters program. For this reason, a secondary purpose in this study was to identify strategies for implementing an antibullying program as a means of combating cyberbullying. This study is important because school administrators could use insight generated from this study about the efficacy of the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying (a) to make informed

decisions about implementing antibullying programs at their schools and (b) to combat cyberbullying in their schools and communities. In addition, results of this study will be a means of lessening the gap in the literature with regard to the effectiveness of the Bully Busters program for combating cyberbullying.

Research Questions

Two research questions were developed to reflect the purposes of this study. The central research question was: What are principals' perceptions with regard to the key factors of implementing the Bully Busters program as a means of combatting cyberbullying? The secondary research question was: How can principal knowledge, experience, and implementation of the Bully Busters program contribute to the effective use of the program to prevent/combat cyberbullying in schools?

Nature of the Study

Rather than to test theories or make generalizations about the Bully Busters program based on quantitative analyses, the exploration in this study was based on gaining thorough insight about conditions pertaining to the use of the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying. Research that is based on developing an in-depth understanding of a human or social phenomenon is best conducted using qualitative methods (Creswell, 2013). Thus, this study was designed to be qualitative in nature.

As described previously, the Bully Busters program is a comprehensive bullying intervention and prevention program. The purpose of the program is to teach children socially acceptable values that will help them understand how to treat others with dignity (Horne et al., 2003). The main focus of many of the strategies incorporated in the Bully

Busters program is improving self-awareness for both potential bullies and victims (Horne et al., 2003).

To gain insight into the principals' perceptions of the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying in elementary schools and identify strategies for implementing an antibullying program as a means of combating cyberbullying, the main and secondary purposes of this study, respectively, data were collected in one school district in northeastern Indiana from three principals who implemented the Bully Busters program in their schools. Specifically, data were collected through interviews and observations. Data were analyzed using NVivo software to categorize the data and identify patterns and themes.

Conceptual Framework

As the conceptual model for this study, I chose a model of decision-making. Decision-making described by Tarter and Hoy (1998) is "rational, deliberative, purposeful action, beginning with the development of a decision strategy and moving through implementation and appraisal of results" (p.214). According to Lunenburg (2010), there are two main types of decision-making models, the rational model and the bounded rationality model. In the rational model, multiple solutions are generated and evaluated; the best solution is then implemented (Lunenburg, 2010). If the implemented solution is not successful for any reason at any time, new solutions may be generated, evaluated, and implemented (Lunenburg, 2010). Although the rational model is logically sequential, it also is iterative such that previous decisions can be used to make future decisions (Lunenburg, 2010).

In comparison to the rational model, the bounded rationality model indicates a decision process based on incomplete information about the problem, the alternatives, or both (Lunenburg, 2010). Moreover, because of the deficit in available information, decisions made in the bounded rationality model are, at least in part, dependent on other less logical approaches (Lunenburg, 2010).

This model is appropriate to use in my study because it will provide a means of translating the participants' perspectives into action that may prompt change in the school with regard to practices for deterring cyberbullying. In particular, by calling attention to principles' perspectives regarding the value of the Bully Busters program to combat bullying in general and the potential capacity to implement the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying, I may initiate the generation of alternatives in the decision-making process with regard to options for deterring cyberbullying.

Definitions of Terms

*Bullying "*is any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014, p. 7). Although bullying can manifest in various forms such as hitting, kicking, threatening, teasing, or name-calling (HRSA, 2010b), verbal bullying consistently has been identified as the most common type of bullying among both girls and boys (Olweus, 1993; Roland, 1989; Smith & Sharp, 1994; HRSA, 2010b).

Cyberbullying is "the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others" (Belsey, 2005, p. 2) or embarrass them (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). It refers specifically to the ongoing use (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010) of cellular phones, emails, and the Internet to act aggressively toward another person (Ipsos, 2012; NCPC, 2012).

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into principals' perceptions of the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying in elementary schools. Thus, the scope of this study was limited to participants' perspectives regarding bullying, cyberbullying, and the Bully Busters program. The study was delimited to elementary school principals in one school district in Northeast Indiana who were instrumental in implementing the Bully Busters program at their schools and who actively were implementing the Bully Busters program in their schools at the time of this study.

Assumptions and Limitations

During the development of this study, I made two critical assumptions. First, I assumed that the principals included in this study were knowledgeable about the Bully Busters program and thus would be able to offer valuable insight that could be used to answer the research questions posed for this study. This assumption could have been limiting in my study because principals' lack of knowledge about the Bully Busters program would have hindered the collection of relevant data. To help ensure this was not the case, I chose principals who were instrumental in implementing the Bully Busters program in their respective schools and who were implementing the program at the time

of this study. Second, I assumed that the principals would be honest in their responses. It is possible that principals would not be completely forthcoming with their perspectives because they wished to help me be successful as a researcher and thus provide me with responses they felt would be most appropriate rather than responses that accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives. This condition could have been limiting in my study because my interpretations of the phenomenon under study would have been tainted by inaccurate data. To help minimize the chance of this occurring, I began the interview with demographic questions and two background questions that I anticipated would help participants relax so that when I asked questions about their perspectives pertaining to the Bully Busters program specifically, they would feel comfortable sharing with me honestly. In addition, it is likely that at the principal level, the participants understood the importance of providing honest responses and therefore did respond honestly to the interview questions.

One additional limitation was identified in this study. Because this study was limited to one population (elementary school principals) and one geographic location (Northern Indiana), the findings are not generalizable and may not be transferrable beyond the immediate sample in this study. This means that results generated in this study may not apply to principals at the middle or high school levels or principals in other school districts in Indiana or other states.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it could lead to positive social change in the form of improved safety for school aged children but also the development of responsible and tolerate citizens. By conducting this study, I have generated data that may prompt school

administrators to consider (i.e., through a planned decision-making process) how they may use the Bully Busters program not only to combat traditional bullying in their schools but also cyberbullying. In a similar fashion, school administrators might be prompted to consider modifying aspects of the program to expand its impact, particularly in the home and community environments. By engaging parents and the community in the effort to educate students about bullying and cyberbullying, a greater impact may be recognized. In light of the increasingly evident incidence of cyberbullying in schools nationwide, the potential for this study to uncover a means of combating cyberbullying by using an already implemented antibullying program (Bully Busters) makes this study both valuable and significant.

Summary

Since the onset of the digital age, traditional bullying in schools has transformed into cyberbullying, bullying behaviors exhibited through various forms of digital communication, including mobile phones, emails, and the Internet. Bullying, in any form, can have adverse physical, mental, and emotional effects on students. One antibully program, the Bully Busters program, has been found to be effective in decreasing the incidence of bullying in elementary schools; however, little is known about the effectiveness of antibullying programs for decreasing cyberbullying behaviors. For this reason, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into the principals' perceptions of the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying in elementary schools. Based on this purpose, the conceptual framework for this study was a model of decision making, and research questions for this study were focused on principals' perceptions regarding the implementation of the Bully Busters program and its application to combat

cyberbullying. Data for this qualitative study were collected using face-to-face interviews and observations, and data were analyzed using NVivo software.

Two primary assumptions were made in this study: (a) that principals participating in this study were knowledgeable about the Bully Busters program, and (b) that participants would answer the interview questions honestly. Limitations of the study included the potential for participants to be poor sources of information regarding the phenomenon under study and that the results of this study are not generalizable to the larger population. The scope of the study was limited to aspects of bullying, cyberbullying, and the Bully Busters program, and the study was delimited to elementary principals in one school district in Northern Indiana. This significance of this study was based on the premise of the potential for social change through decreased incidents of cyberbullying resulting from the implementation of the Bully Busters program toward this end.

There are four remaining chapters in this study. Chapter 2 consists of literature related to bullying and cyberbullying. Chapter 3 includes the presentation of the study methodology. Chapter 4 contains the presentation of the study results. Chapter 5 is the discussion of the results and concluding remarks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

At the time of this study, the incidence of cyberbullying was proliferating in elementary schools; however, little was known about the effectiveness of antibullying programs for decreasing cyberbullying behaviors. In particular, I was not able to locate any studies in which researchers explored the efficacy of the Bully Busters program for reducing cyberbullying. Thus, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into the principals' perceptions of the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying in elementary schools.

It is evident that steps need to be taken to decrease the incidence of cyberbullying. With the ever-increasing availability of technological devices and the use of digital communication applications, the potential for the incidence of cyberbullying to increase is great. This condition is highly concerning considering the extent of the mental and emotional damage it can cause not only for cyberbully victims but for offenders and bystanders as well.

To conduct this literature review, I accessed sources through the Walden University library databases EBSCOhost and Education Research Complete. In addition, I used the Google search engine to access Google Scholar and the Questia Online Library. Using these search tools, I gathered scholarly peer-reviewed journals, books, and magazine articles relevant to this study. Key phrases in the search included: *Bully Busters, impact of Bully Busters, bullying prevention, and cyberbully prevention*. When possible, I limited the review to current sources. When I included older sources, I did so because they were seminal works, works by authors germane to the field of study,

appropriate for demonstrating patterns over time, or otherwise especially pertinent to the discussion.

Characteristics of the Bully and Bullying Victim

Bullies typically have the need to control their victims (Gualdo et al., 2015) and hold them themselves in high regard (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). They are motivated to act by public opinion, which often contributes to their perception that their bullying behavior is either less damaging to their victims than it truly is or in some cases, deserved (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). Bullies also may perceive the lack of response from victims as a form of agreement that the behavior is appropriate or warranted (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). In addition, bullies tend to receive special education services and lack the ability to engage in positive social behaviors (Swearer, Wang, Maag, Siebecker, & Frerichs, 2012). Based on numerous empirical studies, Wang and Ianotti (2012) suggested that bullies are more likely than their peers or bullying victims to be substance abusers and violent.

According to some researchers, gender is related to bullying behavior. For example, Gualdo et al. (2015) found that of the 161 12-20 year old students who participated in their study, boys were more likely than girls to be bullies (16, 57.1% vs. 12, 42.9%, respectively). With regard to more specific types of bullying, other researchers found similar results. In a study of 4,017 early elementary school children, Verlinden, Veenstra, et al. (2014) asked students to nominate their peers as bullies in five categories: verbal bullying, material bullying, physical bullying, relational bullying, and peer rejection. In all cases except for relational bullying in which boys and girls were nominated equally, boys were more often nominated as bullies than girls were. With

regard to the type of bullying behavior in which boys and girls engage, Connell, Schell-Busey, Pearce, and Negro (2013) found that boys were more likely to report engaging in direct bullying than girls were; 30.3% of boys reported having pushed, kicked, or hit someone else in the 3 months prior to data collection compared to 22.4% of girls.

Bullying victims often are targeted because of their sexual preference (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2012), because they have a disability of some sort (Blake, Lund, Zhou, Oi-man, & Benz, 2012; Son, Parish, & Peterson, 2012; Swearer et al., 2012), because they are experiencing early onset maturation (Reynolds & Juvonen, 2010), or because they are socially anxious (Pabian & Vandebosch, 2015). In addition, based on a review of literature, Juvonen and Grahajm (2014) also suggested that bullying victims tend to be underprivileged or members of ethnic minority groups. In other literature reviews, researchers have suggested that when compared to their peers and bullies, bullying victims are more likely to be depressed, lonely, and suicidal (Wang & Ianotti, 2012; Wang, Nansel, & Iannotti, 2011). With regard to gender and victimization, results in the literature are mixed. For example, Gualdo et al. (2015) found obvious differences among boys and girls. Of the 161 students ages 12-20 who participated in the study, 39 (36.1%) were boys compared to 69 (63.9%) who were girls (Gualdo et a., 2015). On the other hand, Verlinden, Tiemeier, et al. (2014) found that in general, boys and girls are bullied at similar rates (Verlinden, Tiemeier, et al., 2014). When specific bullying acts were considered, however, rates between the groups often varied (Verlinden, Veenstra, et al., 2014). While both genders were found to be victims of physical bullying at similar rates, when compared to boys, girls more often were found to be victims of verbal (36.7% vs. 40.8%), material (17.0% vs. 21.6%), and relational

bullying (33.5% vs. 43.5%). However, boys tend to be rejected by peers more often than girls (Verlinden, Veenstra, et al., 2014).

Characteristics of the Cyberbully and Cyberbullying Victim

Despite the high co-occurrence of fundamental characteristics associated with both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, these two forms are distinctive individual phenomena and involve different personality traits (Baroncelli & Ciucci, 2014). These traits have been discussed in the literature. O'Brien and Moules (2010) conducted a study in which the researchers focused on why bullies might cyberbully. Results of their study showed that factors that facilitate cyberbullying include the anonymity of the virtual world, the wider audience that the Internet enables, and the belief that the cyberbullies will not be held accountable for their wrongdoings (O'Brien & Moules, 2010). The anonymity of the virtual world may be especially influential with regard to cyberbullying behavior because cyberbullies tend to blindly assume that their victims are highly impacted by their actions and that as a result, their victims suffer from high levels of negative emotional responses to their behavior, in particular being frightened or offended (Gualdo et al., 2015). Although this condition may not be true (Gualdo et al. [2015] found that cyberbully victims actually reported being sad and rejected more than frightened or offended) or may be true to a lesser degree than what the cyberbully perceives, this typically misguided perception contributes to the cyberbully's impression that the behavior is affecting the victim, which further motives the cyberbully to continue with the behavior (Gualdo et al., 2015).

Cyberbullying participants are at a higher risk for depression, mental health problems, juvenile delinquency, suicidal ideation, and a variety of problems at school and

with family members (Sourander et al., 2010). They also are more likely to demonstrate aggressive behavior (Gradinger, Yanagida, Strohmeier, & Spiel, 2015; Fletcher et al., 2014;), show greater moral disengagement (Bussey, Fitzpatrick, & Raman, 2015; Wachs, 2012), struggle to regulate their emotions (Baroncelli & Ciucci, 2014), and have lower levels of self-esteem when compared to their peers who have not engaged in or been victims of cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Moreover, cyberbullies tend to be frequent uses of the Internet (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla & Daciuk, 2012).

When compared to victims of in-person bullying, victims of cyberbullying have reported feeling a greater emotional impact as a result of the bullying event (Corby et al., 2014). Specifically, when compared to victims of in-person bullying, victims of cyberbullying may experience far greater shame and embarrassment in the larger online environment (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). In addition, when compared to traditional bully victims, cybervictims are significantly more likely to suffer from social difficulties, higher levels of anxiety, depression (Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler, & Kift, 2012), and low levels of self-esteem (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010).

Despite the negative experiences associated with cyberbullying, victimized children often do not immediately tell adults about their experiences and at times try to hide their experience (Stavrinides, Nikiforou & Gerogiou, 2015). Reasons for this may vary but include the belief that the adult may not be able or willing to help (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011), embarrassment, or fear of retaliation from the bully (Stavrinides et al., 2015). Some victims view cyberbullying as something about which you should not communicate with others, such as parents or friends (Crosslin & Golman, 2014).

Other researchers have identified factors that predict a person's involvement in cyberbullying. These factors include (a) the time that a person spends using information and communication technology (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Smith et al., 2008), (b) the extent of a person's advanced Internet skills (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008), (c) engagement in a conflict between the child and the family or with the greater caregiver (Ybarra et al., 2007), (d) low levels of parental support (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009), (e) lack of communication between youths and their parents (Law et al., 2010), (f) paternal unemployment, in particular with regard to fathers who are unemployed, (g) being a child of a single parent, (h) being a cyberbullying victim (Arslan, Savaser, Hallett, & Balci, 2012), and (i) engaging in risky behavior (Roberto, Eden Savage, Ramos-Salazar, and Deiss (2014). Hinduja and Patchin (2013) also found a connection between bullying behavior and peer pressure. Specifically, 62% of adolescents who reported having cyberbullied a peer also reported that their friends had cuberbullied a peer (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013).

Study results regarding the effect of gender on cyberbullying behavior are mixed. While Connell et al. (2013) found that girls (16%) were more likely to engage in cyberbullying than were boys (10.5%), Gualdo et al. (2015) found that (80%) of boys engaged in cyberbullying behaviors compared to 20% of girls. In addition, other factors associated with cyberbullying have been found to be gender specific. Hinduja and Patchin (2013) found that the type of cyberbullying behavior in which adolescents engage is related to gender. Specifically, when compared to boys (6.3%), girls (7.4%) are more inclined to spread rumors, and when compared to girls (3.1%), boys (4.6%) are more likely to post obscene or hurtful pictures or videos online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013).

When considering past engagement in traditional bullying behaviors, Erdur-Baker (2010) found that when compared to girls (17.3%), boys (23.7%) who were traditional bullies were more likely to be cyberbullies as well. Moreover, level of academic achievement is a factor of boys' participation in cyberbullying, where boys with lower grades are more likely to be cyberbully offenders than their higher achieving peers; this relationship does not hold true for girls (Connell et al., 2013).

When compared to nonvictims, victims of cyberbullying are more likely to have received treatment from a mental health professional (5% vs. 14%, respectively) and more likely to have considered suicide during the previous year (5% vs. 20%, respectively; MTV and Associated Press, 2011). Also, when compared to nonvictims, victims of digital abuse also have a higher rate of engagement in negative behaviors, including smoking, drinking, illegal drugs, and sexual activity (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). The greatest differences between nonvictims and victims are evident for smoking (8% vs. 21%, respectively) and sexual activity (17% and 35%, respectively). Victims of cyberbullying also are more likely to have considered transferring schools (17%) or dropping out of school (10%) when compared to nonvictims (11% and 5%, respectively; MTV and Associated Press, 2011).

Study results regarding the effect of gender on patterns of victimization have been mixed. While Hinduja and Patchin (2010) failed to find significant differences between genders with regard to victims of cyberbullying, other researchers have found differences. According to Gualdo et al. (2015), girls (64.7%) are more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than boys (35.3%) are. Hinduja and Patchin (2013) found similar results: 25.1% of girls reported being victims of cyberbullying compared to 16.6 of boys.

Results from the Pew Research Center (2014) indicated that women ages 18-24 were more likely to experience certain types of bullying behavior, especially severe types. For instance, when compared to men, the women were more likely to have been stalked (7% vs. 26%, respectively) and sexually harassed (13% vs. 25%, respectively; Pew Research Center, 2014). Moreover, women (38%) have been found to be more likely than men (17%) to be very or extremely upset by their cyberbullying experience (Pew Research Center, 2014). Finally, over their lifetimes, girls are more likely report incidents of cyberbullying than are boys (21.3% vs. 17.5%, respectively; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is frequently defined by using some form of online technological criteria for bullying (Pieschl, Kuhlmann, & Porsch, 2015). Cyberbullying represents a virtual iteration of the physically aggressive and intimidating bullying that children encounter in their schools and neighborhoods (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Swartz, 2009). Both the traditional bully and the cyberbully trouble, threaten, and harm their victims, but some actions of the cyberbully are characteristically different from the actions of the traditional bully (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Cyberbullies typically harass and intimidate their victims by sending them (a) misleading or threatening emails, instant messages (IMs), and/or text messages or (b) embarrassing and lewd photos (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Other common forms of cyberbullying include circulating false rumors (Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011) and disclosing personal information that seeks to discredit and harm the victim (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Sourander et al., 2010). Cyberbullying also differs from traditional bullying with respect to the speed in which hurtful information

can be circulated (Rice et al., 2015), the eternalness of the hurtful material, and the accessibility of the victim (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015).

Cyberbullying may pose a greater societal risk than traditional bullying. Cyberbullying, to a certain degree, is dependent on the technological expertise of the cyberbully (Wade & Beran, 2011); but it can be especially damaging because it can occur through so many electronic mediums (Smith et al., 2008). Ongoing and rapid advances in technology and applications continuously provide cyberbullies with new methods for cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). For example, researchers specifically have identified online gaming sites (Mancilla-Caceres, Pu, Amir, & Espelage, 2012), Facebook, a social networking service (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015), and Twitter, a social messaging service (Calvin, Bellmore, Xu, & Zhu, 2015) as venues of growing import in the cyberbullying discussion. In addition to advances in technology and applications, young people continue to gain increased access to unsupervised online activities and media devices (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015). Despite the benefits afforded by the Internet (Lenhart & Purcell et al., 2010) the Internet has served as a negative venue for cyberbullying (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder & Lattanner, 2014) by supporting a variety of methods for electronically contacting, and bullying, others (Wingate, Minney, & Guadagno, 2013).

Although bully victimization traditionally has occurred on school grounds, a considerable amount of bully victimization now occurs away from the school (Turner, Finkelhor, Hamby, Shattuck, & Omrod, 2011). One reason for this may be that access to victims online is relatively unrestricted. While victims of traditional bullying typically are able remove themselves from the bullying situation, this condition is more difficult for

victims of cyberbullying (Slonje & Smith, 2008, p. 148). As a result, cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Crosslin & Golman, 2014) and can affect a person even when the person is alone (Wade & Beran, 2011). Also, cyberbullying messages and images post instantly and reach a wide audience in moments (Wade & Beran, 2011), which can be more impactful than traditional face-to-face bullying (Dooley, Pyazalski, & Cross, 2009). Moreover, deleting online messages or images is often difficult, and the negative impact that they have on victims can perhaps never be mitigated fully (Wade & Beran, 2011).

Sourander et al. (2010) noted that the cyberbully is particularly emboldened by the relatively anonymous nature of the virtual environment where the cyberbully can operate without regard to location or time—often the cyberbully and victim are not even acquainted with each other. Essentially, cyberbullying is an indirect mode of bullying where the cyberbully is not face-to-face with his or her victim (Slonje & Smith, 2008). As a result, the cyberbully typically does not witness the victim's reaction and thus is less able to perceive the immediate impact on the victim (Slonje & Smith, 2008). In addition, there is less likelihood that the cyberbully will empathize with the victim and greater likelihood that the cyberbully will feel accountable for his or her actions (Sourander et al., 2010). This condition hints at the possibility that the motives for cyberbullying may be different from those associated with traditional bullying (Wade & Beran, 2011). Because the scope of the potential audience in cyberbullying is far greater than in traditional bullying, the intention of cyberbullies may be to cause extensive damage rather than to be momentarily hurtful (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Wade and Beran (2011) noted that there are a few factors that predict a person's involvement in cyberbullying. A person's involvement in traditional bullying and other antisocial behaviors is one such factor (Ybarra et al., 2007). Another important factor is the time the cyberbully spends using information and communication technology (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). According to Jäger, Amado, Matos, and Pessoa (2010), incidents of cyberbullying also may be related to inappropriate use of media devices as the result of poor media literacy. Similarly, Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009) suggested that a cyberbully's level of Internet skills also may contribute to involvement in cyberbullying behaviors.

The Role of Digital Abuse in Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying in close intimate relationships can become abusive (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). The abusive nature of cyberbullying is now coined as digital abuse. Digital abuse is seen in intimate relationships when one partner constantly calls, text, and/or use social network sites to bully, harass, stalk, or intimidate the other partner (Weathers & Hopson, 2015).

In the 21st century, children become knowledge users of digital technology at an early age, and adolescents are particularly enthusiastic Internet users (Jones & Fox, 2009). It is estimated that 93% of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 and 89% of emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 24 have access to the Internet (Jones & Fox, 2009). While younger Internet users predominantly use the Internet for social networking purposes, older users generally do so for informational, banking, or shopping purposes (Jones & Fox, 2009). About 80% of American adolescents are believed to use cellphones, primarily for the purposes of texting, instant messaging, or accessing social media (Jones

& Fox, 2009). Data indicate that over 200 texts a day are sent out by 15% of adolescents ages 12 to 17 and by 18% of emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 24 (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010).

Early knowledge of digital technology and access to the Internet can lead to abusive behavior. Prompted by this possibility, MTV and the Associated Press conducted a public service study on digital abuse among teens in 2009 and a follow up study in 2011 (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Study participants were recruited randomly from Knowledge Panel®, through Random-Digit Dial sampling, and by mail through Address-Based Sampling (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). The survey was conducted online for 2 weeks and involved interviews of 631 teen's ages 14-17 and 724 adults ages 18-24 (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Topics of interest in the study were the incidence of digital abuse, sexting and digital dating abuse, and digital discrimination.

Incidence of Digital Abuse

The occurrence of digital abuse is especially common among teens and young adults who are in general using technology frequently during their day-to-day lives and are in a dating relationship (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). More than half (56%) of the 14-24 year old youths said they had experienced abuse through social and digital media compared with 50% reporting these experiences in 2009. Over three quarters (76%) of youth viewed digital abuse as a serious problem but believed that intervention had increased in recent times (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). When compared to the responses from 2009, in 2011, more people were likely to intervene in cyberbullying incidents involving someone being mean (MTV & Associated Press, 2011).

The most common forms of digital harassment included people writing things online that were not true (26%), people writing things online that were mean (24%), and someone forwarding an instant message that was supposed to be kept private (20%; (MTV & Associated Press). Moreover, young adults were slightly more likely to have experienced digital abuse rather than teens (59% compared to 51%, respectively); however, for teens, the experiences were more recent than for the adults (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Just over 3 in 10 respondents said they had encountered unwanted digital behaviors at some point in the last 6 months, compared with 24% among those ages 18-24 (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Young women (82%) and non-Whites (80%) were more apt to regard digital abuse as a problem than were men (70%) or Whites (73%; MTV & Associated Press, 2011).

Sexting and Digital Dating Abuse

With regard to *sexting*, the sending and receiving of sexually explicit text messages, the survey results indicated that although 71% of the youth respondents were aware that sexting can have far-reaching consequences, 1 in 3 people in the 18-24 age bracket indicated having engaged in some form of sexting (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Many people indicated that they participated in sexting because of peer pressure (MTV & Associated Press, 2011).

Youths were more apt to receive nude photos or sexually explicit messages than they were to send them (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Of the youth surveyed, 15% had sent naked photos or videos of themselves to others, while 21% had received naked photos or videos from others (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). About half of those who had sent nude photos said they had been pressured to do so (MTV & Associated Press,

2011). In addition, 33% had received online messages or texts containing sexual words (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Study findings also indicated the sending of sexts is far more common among young adults (19%) when compared to teens (7%; MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Among those who had sexted, only 10% had done so with people with whom they were acquainted only online, representing a decline of 65.5% since 2009 (MTV & Associated Press, 2011).

Of those in relationships, 41% said they had experienced some form of digital dating abuse, with over 25% reporting pressure from their partner to constantly check in with her or him (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Almost 3 in 10 (27%) said their partner kept checking up on them several times a day to find out how they were, with whom they were, and what they were doing, as well as reading their text messages without seeking their permission (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). About a quarter (24%) reported being continually pressured by their partners to respond to their emails, instant messages, phone calls, or texts (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). With regard to social networking sites, 15% said their current partners had asked that they remove their former girlfriends or boyfriends from their friends or follower lists, and 13% said their partners had asked them to share their online passwords with them (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Of the youth surveyed, 5% said their partner had spread rumors about them in the digital world or used information found online to embarrass or harass them (MTV & Associated Press, 2011).

Digital Discrimination

Slurs are frequent in cyberspace, and the survey confirmed that 71% of respondents felt emboldened in the virtual world to use language that they would not use

in person (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Half of the participants reported regularly observing discriminatory language on the social networking sites (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). The groups that invited the most discriminating remarks were overweight (54%); lesbian, gay, and bisexual (51%); African-American (45%); female (44%); and immigrants (35%; MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Common discriminatory language used included words and phrases such as *that's so gay* (65%); *slut* (55%); *fag* (53%); and *nigger* (42%; MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Over three fourth of the youth (76%) agreed that using discriminatory language was undesirable, but they had varying perceptions of its gravity (MTV & Associated Press, 2011).

Responding to Digital Abuse in Cyberbullying

Overall, teens were found to be displaying smarter and safer behavior online than young adults and more likely to respond to acts of cyberbullying than they had been in the past (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). In 2009, 47% of young adults reported they would respond to mean acts online; in 2011, that number increased to 56% (MTV & Associated Press, 2011. Also, more than half (51%) of the young adults reported they would respond to discrimination on social networking sites (MTV & Associated Press, 2011).

Tactics the teens found effective in lessening the incidence of digital abuse included limiting the cyberbully's access to their social network accounts, contact details, or passwords (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). In addition, 47% found that merely asking the perpetrator to stop proved effective, whereas 14% said it made matters worse and 27% felt it made no difference either way (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). Other respondents said they changed passwords (80%); changed their email address, profile

name, or mobile number (67%); deleted a social networking profile altogether (59%); asked a friend for help (53%); complained to the police (50%), and told parents (49%; MTV & Associated Press, 2011).

Effects of Bullying and Cyberbullying

Typically, consequences of bullying and cyberbullying are most apparent for the victim. However, bullying and cyberbullying can have consequences for the bully/cyberbully as well as for bystanders of bullying/cyberbullying events. These consequences are negative and can have long-term implications.

Effects on the Victim

Bullying behavior may affect victims in multiple ways. These effects may be short- or long term (Jernigan, 2007) and affect the victim in different ways depending on the rate, duration, and extent of the occurrence (Tokunaga, 2010). According to data from the Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, 2014), 15% of cyberbullying victims said their reputations were affected by the experience. Most cases of digital abuse threaten the victims' mental health and thus lead to outcomes that are emotional in nature and (Weathers & Hopson, 2015). For example, the most typical effects of bullying on victims are low self-esteem, frequent migraine attacks (Limber, 2002); victims also may feel anxious (Tomşa, Jenaro, Campbell, & Neacşu, 2013), lonely (Schultze-Krumbholz, Jäkel, Schultze, & Scheithauer, 2012), depressed, suicidal (Wang & Iannotti, 2012), humiliated, insecure (Jernigan, 2007), sad, and rejected (Gualdo et al., 2015). Increased frequency of cyberbully victimization may directly contribute to the degree of depression a victim suffers (Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012). In addition, because victims may feel insulted, hurt, and helpless, they may develop a fear of going to school (Barboza, 2015),

may have difficulty making friends, and demonstrate hostile behavior toward their peers (Healy, Sanders, & Iyer, 2015). Victims of bullying also are at a greater risk of suffering from mental health problems such as schizophrenia, and, in extreme cases, victims may commit suicide (Ericson, 2001). Jenkins and Demaray (2015) found that bullying victims who had low academic self-concepts (engagement, interpersonal skills, motivation, and study skills) were more likely to have low levels of academic achievement when comparted to their peers who were bullied but who had high levels of academic self-concept.

Victims may be particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying behaviors because the anonymity of the cyberbully source puts the victims in a position in which they may fear for their safety without being able to identify the source of the threat (Sourander et al., 2010). According to the Pew Research Center (2014), when young people reported having experienced cyberbullying, 14% found it extremely upsetting, 14% found it very upsetting, 21% found it somewhat upsetting, 30% found it was a little upsetting, and 22% found it not at all upsetting. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) found that cybervictims most often reported being upset by emails they received from someone they knew. Victims of cyberbullying also may demonstrate more signs of depression and anxiety and exhibit lower levels of self-esteem than nonvictims (Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Kowalski, Limber, Limber, & Agatston, 2012).

Data from the Pew Research Center (2014) indicated that the degree to which cyberbullying has an effect on victims is gender dependent; women (38%) were more likely than men (17%) to describe their most recent incidents as extremely or very upsetting and (15%) of online harassment victims said their reputations were affected

(Pew Research Center, 2014). The degree to which cyberbullying has an effect on victims also is likely dependent on the type of cyberbullying behavior that a victim experiences (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). For example, as reported by MTV and Associated Press (2011), 56% of victims expressed being very upset by rumors spread on email, instant message, or mobile text messaging; 53% of victims expressed being very upset by mean remarks about them being posted on the Internet; 45% of victims expressed being very upset by false information being posted on the Internet; and 49% of victims expressed being very upset by the threat of their private information being shared publicly if they did not do something the cyberbully wanted them to do. In some cases, victims may be driven to suicide as the result of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). An instance of victim suicide influenced directly or indirectly by cyberbullying is referred to as *cyberbullicide* (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). According to Helweg-Larsen, Schütt, and Larsen (2012), the risk of becoming a cyberbully victim can be reduced considerably through parental supervision of adolescents' Internet use.

Effects on the Bully and Bystanders

Little research is available on the effects of bullying and cyberbullying on the bully. However, Olweus (1993) found that boys who bully others in middle school have a 4 times greater chance of being convicted of a criminal offence by the age of 24 than their other nonbullying peers. This statistic demonstrates that bullying behavior has long-range implications for the bully.

While some researchers have questioned the role bystanders play in bullying and cyberbullying events, others have considered how bystanders may be affected. For example, researchers have shown that bystanders can experience anxiety and guilt for not

taking action when they witness bullying (National Center for School Engagement [NCSE], 2012). Guilt can occur when people witness but do not respond to (a) a conflict between the child (victim) and the family or with the greater caregiver (aggressor; Ybarra, Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007); (b) lack of parental support of adolescents (Wang et al., 2009); or (c) lack of communication between parent and child (Law, Shapka, & Olson, 2010). When observing instances of bullying, bystanders may fail to inject themselves into situations because they (a) do not feel they are in a position of control, (b) fear for their own safety, or (c) fear that they may suffer long-term consequences as the result of involvement (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

A Recognized Need to Take Action Against Bullying and Cyberbulling

According to Olweus (2001), bullying is a cycle that could be disrupted by the indifferent majority if they cared to oppose it. This perspective underscores the need to take action against bullying and cyberbullying (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, & Daciuk, 2013). Yang and Salmivallie (2015) expressed the need to include the bully-victim in antibullying efforts, and Pugh and Chitiyo (2012) stressed the need to recognize bullying as a global problem.

The need to take action against bullying and cyberbullying is demonstrated in the literature. For example, in a global study, Ipsos (2012) found that 77% of citizens identified the need for paying special attention to cyberbullying, stressing the fact that methods for combatting traditional bullying were ineffective against cyberbullying. In other studies, over half (53%) of victims of cyberbullying who expressed being deeply upset by the experience also expressed that cyberbullying should not be dismissed as being of little consequence (MTV and Associated Press, 2011), and both cyberbullies and

cyberbully victims (20%) expressed the need for both preventive and therapeutic measures to an equal extent (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Other researchers have suggested that bystanders may represent an avenue for taking action against cyberbullying. Although online contact has been found to increase the likelihood of negative bystander behavior, which occurs more often in cyberspace than offline (Barlińska, Szuster, & Winiewski, 2013), the full role of bystanders in cyberbullying is complex and difficult to define (Slonje & Smith, 2008). However, Howard, Landau, and Pryor (2014) suggested that bullying behaviors are passively reinforced by nonvictimized peers who spend the majority of time (54%) watching bullying events occur, as opposed to intervening in them. In this way, passive bystanders may be partially responsible for the repeated negative acts that victims suffer (Howard, Landau, & Pryor, 2014; Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011).

In a study of bystanders of cyberbullying (aggressive remarks in an online chatroom), Dillion and Bushman (2015) found that although 67% (n = 150) of bystanders recognized the cyberbullying event, only 15% (n = 23) of bystanders took action to intervene in the situation. With regard to various distractions, little effect on the bystanders' (N = 150) ability to recognize a cyberbullying event was found among the participant groups; 75% (n = 30) of participants who had no distractions reported noticing the cyberbullying event compared to 64% (n = 32) of participants who experienced pop-up advertisements, 53% (n = 18) of participants listening to music, and 77% (n = 30) of participants under a presumed timed constraint (Dillon & Bushman, 2015). Dillon and Bushman (2015) suggested that cyberbystanders may not intervene when they observe cyberbullying events because they lack the knowledge necessary to directly help the

victim, a condition Nickerson, Aloe, Livingston, and Feeley (2014) suggested could be addressed through school-based bystander education.

Slovak and Singer (2011) suggested that school social workers are in a position to take action to prevent cyberbullying in schools. However, of the 399 social workers who participated in Slovak and Singer's study, 5.1% strongly disagreed and 38.3% disagreed with the statement "I believe that cyberbullying is something I feel equipped to deal with." This lack of efficacy with regard to combatting cyberbullying behaviors may be related to the ambivalence about intervening in cyberbullying events demonstrated by the majority of social workers (Slovak & Singer, 2011). Based on the study data, Slovak and Singer identified the need to develop guidelines for responding to cyberbullying and to train workers how to respond appropriately to cyberbullying events. In addition to the evidence in the literature, support for preventative action is evident at the executive level of the government.

White House Conference on Bullying

That the supreme executive branch of the United States government viewed bullying as a serious problem was indicated by the convening of the White House Conference on Bullying Prevention in March of 2011. President Obama's and First Lady Michelle Obama's remarks indicated the gravity of the problem of bullying. President Obama in particular stressed the need to change public opinion that bullying was a harmless and typical part of growing up and that all stakeholders needed to participate in the effort to combat bullying and ensure student safety in school (White House, 2011). First Lady Michelle Obama stressed the importance of parental involvement and the need to respond to acts of bullying (White House, 2011).

Although the conference was organized around the traditional concept of bullying and President Obama did not use the term *cyberbullying*, he did make comments with respect to cyberbullying behaviors. Specifically, he noted that bullying takes place not only in school but by means of technology when our children leave school (White House, 2011). The President underscored the need to be proactive by citing numerous negative outcomes associated with bullying behavior (White House, 2011).

Evolving Laws to Address Cyberbullying

Until 2009, there were no laws that specifically addressed the issue of cyberbullying (Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols, & Storch, 2009), and the responsibility for penalizing cyberbullying offenders generally had been left to the discretion of school officials (Gillespie, 2006). Since that time, however, legislators have begun to respond to the rising number of high-publicity cyberbullying incidents, a few of which have included tragic consequences for the victims (Dempsey et al., 2009). Occasionally, individuals suspected of cyberbullying have been prosecuted using existing laws, with criminal harassment statutes often providing a basis for initiating legal proceedings against cyberbullies (Findlaw, 2012).

As of 2015, 49 of the 50 states have implemented some sort of bullying law; only Montana does not have specific legislation in this regard (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Depending on the state and applicable laws, sanctions for bullying can range from civil penalties, such as suspensions or expulsions implemented by school administrators, to jail terms implemented for criminal misdemeanors (Findlaw, 2012). Although any penal action imposed in response to bullying behavior is prudent, Albertson (2015) strongly

advocated criminal sanctions for such behavior on the grounds that the stronger the penalty the greater the effect.

Of the 49 states that have bullying laws, all require schools to have policies about cyberbullying even though only 22 states actually include cyberbullying in their bullying laws (an additional three states had laws proposed at the time of this study; Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Of those 22 states, seven include criminal sanctions for committing acts of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Of the 49 states that require schools to have a cyberbullying policy, 14 states include off campus behaviors in the requirement for school policies (an additional two states had laws proposed at the time of this study; Hinduja & Patchin, 2015).

No bullying law exists at the federal level; however, a cyberbullying law was proposed in 2009 (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Although the proposed law includes criminal sanctions for committing acts of cyberbullying, it does require a school policy for handling acts of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). As demonstrated by the various penalties enforced for bullying and the inconsistent attention to cyberbullying in current laws, laws meant to inhibit bullying and cyberbullying behaviors constitute a grey area and represent an evolving field of study (FindLaw, 2012).

In some states, schools also are required to account for incidents of cyberbullying. For example, based on shortcomings identified in House Bill 483, An Act Relative to the Prevention of Bullying, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed Senate Bill 2283, An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools (2010), which more directly addressed issues related to cyberbullying. Specifically, the law included a mandate that districts make annual reports of cyberbullying incidents available to the department of primary and

secondary education as well as the state legislature (An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, 2010).

Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention

According to the NCPC and BJA (2006), changing patterns of negative behaviors associated with bullying is imperative for achieving peace in the nation. Citizens ought not to adopt a tolerant or passive stance towards wrongdoings that they witness occurring around them, nor should students be encouraged to be fearful, damaged victims or passive bystanders as wrongs go unchallenged (NCPC & BJA, 2006). It is from this perspective that antibullying efforts have grown.

Typically, bullying and cyberbullying prevention efforts have been predicated on the need to educate offenders and victims, who, experts have suggested, lack the appropriate understanding of the phenomenon, in particular the motivation for the behavior. For example, bullies may think their actions are funny and use bullying behaviors to receive attention from peers (Guerra, Williams, & Sadek, 2011). Victims also may see bullying behavior as behavior that starts as a joke but gets out of hand (Guerra et al., 2011).

Cyberbullying is a relatively new problem, and intervention programs that deal specifically with cyberbullying are scarce (Slonje, Smith & Frisén, 2013). However, because cyberbullying is innately ambiguous and insidious in nature, both offenders and victims merit education and counseling (Betz, 2011). Therefore, it is import to educate, students, families, and the community about bullying and cyberbullying. At the class level, it is beneficial for the school to implement rules against bullying, hold regular class meetings with students, and get parents involved (Olweus, 2005). Betz (2011)

underscored the importance of providing parents with instructional material so that they too could help educate their children about cyberbullying and how best to handle incidents of cyberbullying they may experience.

At the individual level, attention needs to be focused on bullies and victims (Olweus, 2005). Jacobs, Völlink, Dehue, and Lechner (2014) recommended that cyberbully victims be taught to improve their psychological wellbeing in general. In particular, Betz (2011) stressed the importance of educating victims about strategies for responding to acts of cyberbullying, including blocking senders, deleting text messages, and reporting incidents of bullying. Like Betz, Siegle (2010) stressed the importance of parental involvement for educating children about bullying and cyberbullying; however, Siegle also pointed to teaches as sources of critical information. To educate students about bullying and cyberbullying, schools have implemented various programs (Wade & Beran, 2011).

Olweus Bullying Intervention Program

Some of the first comprehensive and systematic research on bullying behavior has been attributed to Dan Olweus who began researching the topic in the late 70s (Olweus Bully Prevention Program [OBPP], 2015). During the next 40 years, Olweus often focused on attempting to determine the prevalence of bullying, ascertain the veracity of myths about bullying and victimization, and identify the primary traits of bullies and victims (OBPP, 2015).

Following a request from the Norwegian Ministry of Education, Olweus (1991) developed and implemented an intervention to reduce bullying in 42 Norwegian schools, the Olweus Bullying Intervention Program. The major goal of the Olweus Bullying

Intervention Program was to decrease, and ultimately eradicate, bullying in schools (Olweus, 1993). Another goal of the program was to promote better peer relations at school and create conditions that enable the bullies and victims to function and get along better (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

To test the effectiveness of the program, Olweus (1994) conducted a 2-year longitudinal study of 2,500 students in Grades 4 through 7. Results of the study indicated that the intervention significantly lowered the incidence of bullying in schools by about 50% (Olweus, 1994). Olweus also noted that the impact of the program was more marked with the passage of time; that is, more obvious results were observed after 2 years as opposed to during the first year. Moreover, bullying behaviors were not displaced from the school grounds to other locations such as routes to and from the school, there was an improvement in the general climate of the classes, and students reported a greater degree of satisfaction with their school life (Olweus, 1994).

Bully Busters Program

The Bully Busters program was established in 1994 at the University of Georgia as a bully intervention program for middle school students (Horne et al., 2003). After school administrators requested an earlier intervention program for students, the program was modified, and in 2003, became a bully intervention program for elementary aged students (Horne et al., 2003). The Bully Busters program was developed to provide teachers and other school administrators with a systematic intervention to effectively target problems arising from aggression and bullying in schools (Newman-Carlson, Horne, & Bartolomucci, 2000). The main goals of the program were to enhance awareness about the prevalence of bullying in schools and to develop the skills required

for effectively managing incidents of bullying (Newman-Carlson et al., 2000). Another goal of the program was the prevention of bullying through proactive behavior on the part of both the educators and students (Newman-Carlson et al., 2000).

In particular, the program was structured so that children could be equipped as early as possible with the emotional tools they need to have positive interactions with each other (Horne et al., 2003). In addition, the program lessons were designed to help children learn to help themselves from becoming bullies and/or victims of bullying throughout their school years and into adulthood (Horne et al., 2003). The developers of the program intended to teach children socially acceptable values and improve self-awareness for both potential bullies and victims, conditions that would invariably lead to the building of human dignity so that the offender/victim dynamic is never allowed to develop and productive citizenship could be fostered (Horne et al., 2003). To achieve these objectives, the program included techniques and strategies that specifically addressed the emotional intelligence of the bully as well as the victim and helped develop and/or strengthen levels of self-confidence (Horne et al., 2003).

Research that has been conducted on the Bully Busters program has demonstrated its value in multiple capacities. For example, in a study of 15 third through fifth grade teachers and 220 of their students, Brooks (2004) found that the Bully Busters program was effective for (a) the general development of teachers, (b) the promotion of teacher skills in intervening in and preventing bullying incidents, and (c) the increase in teacher self-efficacy with regard to working with both bullies and victims of bullying. In addition, students self-reported a decrease in engagement in bullying behaviors (Brooks, 2004). However, the teachers reported an actual increase in perceived aggressive student

behaviors, and students self-reported that their engagement in fighting behaviors and experiences as victims of bullying had remained largely unchanged (Brooks, 2004). Brooks did acknowledge that teachers' failure to follow the recommended implementation plan for the program was a limitation in the study and may have contributed to the decreased effectiveness of the program in some capacities.

Newman-Carlson and Horne (2004) also implemented the Bully Busters program to evaluate its efficacy in lowering aggressive and bullying behaviors among students. The population for this study was middle school students (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). The results showed that the Bully Busters program raised teachers' awareness and understanding of bullying and promoted their self-efficacy in dealing effectively with incidents of bullying (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). In addition, as a result of the implementation of the Bully Busters program, the incidence of classroom bullying, as measured by the number of classroom disciplinary referrals, decreased (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). Similarly, Bell (2008) conducted research to explore the impact that an abbreviated version of the Bully Busters program had on teacher-efficacy, school climate, and bullying behaviors among students at the middle school level. Bell concluded that the program promoted teachers' self-efficacy in managing bullying behaviors but that it also increased the rates that students reported aggressive behavior they observed in the classroom (Bell, 2008). Bell suggested that improved rates of student reporting was not indicative of increased rates of aggressive behavior but rather students' ability to identify aggressive behavior and willingness to take action against it. In a later study, Bell, Raczynski, and Horne (2010) found similar results with regard to teacher efficacy: the Bully Busters program was associated with improved teacher efficacy with regard to

influencing student behavior and expectations for managing offender and victim behavior.

I Can Problem Solve for Schools

Based on the OBPP, the I Can Problem Solve for Schools (ICPS) program was designed for pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade students and was designed to help teachers successfully develop effective peer-mediation techniques to prevent bullying behaviors (Shure, 2012). The university-based peer-mediation techniques are used to teach children how to create suitable solutions to social issues, acknowledging the ideas, feelings, and motivators for actions as well as taking into consideration the ramifications of choices (Shure, 2012). The underlying premise of the program was that it is essential to teach children how to think rather than what to think, and that by doing so, children will begin to consider consequences of their actions, become more sensitive to the concerns of others, benefit from enhanced social adjustment and increased self-control, engage in prosocial behavior, avoid impulsivity, and be better able to solve problems they encounter (Shure, 2012).

The ICPS program lessons were designed so that teachers use pictures, role-playing, puppets, and group interactions to demonstrate scenarios where students are capable of engaging in problem solving (Shure, 2012). During the lessons, students learn to identify ideas as good or bad and to consider newer and better methods of solving the problems in their lives (Shure, 2012). The if-then model also was employed to help children recognize consequences of their actions (Shure, 2012).

Bully Proofing Your School

Similar to the OBPP, the Bully Proofing Your School program was a school-wide bully reduction and prevention program for students in kindergarten through the eighth grade (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilly, 2004b). The program was designed to exploit the expertise of adults who have the most influence in the lives of children, including school administrators, teachers, and staff, and to encourage those adults to build relationships with parents (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilly, 2004a). The Bully Proofing Your School program comprised three interrelated manuals. The first manual included lessons to teach students about what bullying is and its effects on victims (Garrity et al., 2004b). In this manual, the school staff was encouraged to develop appropriate school and classroom rules to stress that bullying will not be accepted (Garrity et al., 2004b). The second manual included lessons to teach students how they can minimize their chances of becoming victims of bullying as well as the ways that they can handle incidents of bullying (Garrity et al., 200b). The third manual included lessons to teach students the importance of being active bystanders in bullying situations by reporting the incidents to adults (Garrity et al., 2004b).

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies

The Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies program was designed for students in kindergarten through the sixth grade (or ages 5 – 12; Greenberg, Kusché, & Mihalic, 1998). The goals of the school-based program were to (a) promote healthy and harmonious modes of interactions, (b) curb aggressive tendencies and bullying behaviors, and (c) improve children's ability to discuss and understand their emotions (Greenberg et

al., 1998). According to Domitrovich, Cortes, and Greenberg (2007), the program was broader in scope than that I Can Problem Solve program.

Those who have evaluated the effectiveness of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies program among children in special needs and regular education classrooms have found that it helped children be more open with their feelings, better control their emotions, improve their problem solving skills with regard to social situations, and decrease incidents of depression and acting out (Childtrends.org, 2012). In some cases, changes were noted up to 2 years after a child had participated in the program (Childtrends.org, 2012). However, the program was not deemed effective for improving students' levels of social competence and results were mixed with regard to the effect of the program on students' emotional understanding (Childtrends.org, 2012).

Best Practices in Bullying Prevention

Based on key intervention practices and feedback received from educators, the HRSA (2010a) identified six concise steps to combat bullying. Those steps are to initiate intervention efforts, determine the level of bullying occurring in the school, promote participation by both students and parents, develop guidelines of expectations and outcomes, promote safety within the school, and educate both students and school personnel (HRSA, 2010a). The underlying philosophy used to develop these six steps is prevention rather than reaction (stopbullying.gov, n.d.).

According to Beebe (2014), however, in order to develop effective prevention programs and intervention strategies for decreasing bullying behaviors, it is critical that the developers of these prevention programs and intervention strategies understand the dynamics of bullying behavior (Beebe, 2014). In particular, Beebe pointed out that

bullying behavior is, in part, dependent on the bullies' relationships within their families, among their peers at school, and among members of their communities and society in general. Having an understanding of these relationships, Beebe argued, would allow for the development of programs and strategies focused on particular areas of concern, which would increase the chances that the programs and strategies would be successful for reducing rates of bullying behaviors.

A Thin Line

In an attempt to educate those who use electronic means of communication about the growing virtual threats of cyberbullying, MTV, a popular cable television channel that caters mainly to adolescents and young adults, launched a campaign called A Thin Line (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). The purpose of the campaign was to empower *netizens,* the term used to denote citizens of the Internet, to identify, respond to, and prevent digital abuse in their lives (MTV & Associated Press, 2011). As described in an executive summary of the campaign, goals of the campaign were to present the finer nuances of digital interactions and to highlight that there is only a thin line between being careless and risk of injury to oneself and between being passive and getting cyberbullied (MTV & Associated Press, 2011).

Summary

Results of research studies have demonstrated that bullies and cyberbullies can be characterized by certain traits such as negative attitudes, deviant and/or aggressive behavior, and low self-esteem. Similarly, bullying and cyberbullying victims tend to have specific personality traits, including the propensity to have mental health issues and to

engage in high-risk behaviors. Victims of bullying and cyberbullying also tend to be female.

The negative outcomes of bullying and cyberbullying can manifest physically, emotionally, behaviorally, socially, and academically. The negative outcomes of bullying and cyberbullying, however, are not limited to effects on the victims but can be evident for offenders and bystanders as well. Based on the overall potential for negative outcomes, the need to be proactive with regard to bullying and cyberbullying prevention has been recognized by cyberbullying offenders and victims as well as researchers and law makers. In response to this need, multiple antibullying programs have been developed, and ample research exists on the effectiveness of these established programs. However, little research exists with regard to how these programs may be used to effectively combat cyberbullying. It is in this capacity that this study has value. By conducting this study, I have generated new data about the potential for using an existing bully prevention program to combat cyberbullying. Chapter 3 contains an explanation of the methodology associated with the generation of this data.

Chapter 3: Research Method

As the ubiquitousness of the Internet has grown and children's technological knowledge at young ages has increased, cyberbullying has grown more widespread and acts of bullying have become more intense. This condition exists despite documentation showing the negative effects of cyberbullying on its victims and the implementation of programs to combat bullying in general. For this reason, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into the principals' perceptions of the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying in elementary schools and to identify strategies for implementing an antibullying program as a means of combating cyberbullying.

This section begins with a discussion of the study's research design and rationale and includes a section about the study population and sample. Also, the data collection and data analysis processes are discussed. Finally, issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and limitations associated with the study are discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

Two research questions were developed for this study. The central research question was: How do the principals' perceptions, knowledge, experience, and implementation of the Bully Busters program help make the program an effective process to prevent/combat cyberbullying in schools? The secondary question was: What are the key factors of implementing an antibullying program to combat cyberbullying? These questions reflect a need to better understand the effectiveness of the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying in elementary schools and to identify strategies for implementing an antibullying program as a means of combating cyberbullying.

To generate data for this study, I conducted a qualitative study. “Where quantitative researchers seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). In addition, “a qualitative mode of inquiry will help to facilitate the understanding of a social or human problem more effectively than a quantitative mode – a method that relies more on testing theories related to human problems” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). Because the purpose of my study was to gain insight about conditions pertaining to the use of the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying rather than to test theories or make generalizations about the program based on quantitative analyses, a qualitative design was most appropriate for my study.

Also, the quantitative method is relevant for research where the issues are clear and quantifiable and measurement of specific variables is involved. In comparison, Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative scientific studies are best suited for investigating a human or social problem when the researcher does not know the associated variables but wants to develop a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon. The present study did not involve any clear variable that might be measured but rather a complex social issue about which insights was sought. In addition, cyberbullying is a human problem with various facets and the effectiveness of using the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying in one northeastern Indiana school district was unknown. Thus, the use of the qualitative method allowed for an in-depth exploration that could be used to generate a holistic depiction of the social issue and how the Bully Busters program could be used as a deterrent in the school district. The conclusions that emerged from this qualitative

study offer rich insights and may be applicable to other groups with characteristics similar to those of the group studied in this research. Ultimately, studies in which the researcher essentially seeks answers, clarity, and insight are better undertaken through qualitative methods. It was for these reasons that the qualitative method of inquiry was determined most appropriate for this study.

Creswell, (2013) identified five qualitative approaches. These approaches are "narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies" (Creswell, 2013, p. 2). Of the five, the case study approach was most applicable for this study. The purpose of case study research is to provide a detailed understanding of a particular case (Creswell, 2013). To do this, researchers use multiple sources of data, which can be used to understand how real-life program interventions may result in particular effects (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Also, Yin (2014) explained that the case study method is suitable for generating knowledge about a social phenomenon: "the essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what results" (p. 13).

Based on these descriptions of the case study, the case study was an appropriate approach to data collection in this study. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to generate detailed information about principals' perceptions with regard to the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying, a social phenomenon, in one particular school district. In addition, a secondary purpose of the study was to identify strategies for implementing an antibullying program as a means of combating cyberbullying, in other words, to explore decisions with regard to the implementation of a program and the

outcome of that implementation. These purposes for conducting this study align with the descriptions associated with uses of the case the study.

To collect data in this study, I used interviews and observations. The interview is a good method for collecting data in qualitative studies because the personal nature of face-to-face meetings can evoke more varied, expressive, and insightful answers from interviewees than might be possible through a questionnaire (Gratton & Jones, 2010; Yin, 2014). One reason for this is that open-ended interview questions typically are less restrictive than written questions with predetermined options for participants to choose (Creswell, 2013).

In addition, according to Rubin and Babbie (2010), interviews can be time consuming to conduct but have four advantages over other data collection methods. Specifically, interviews allow the researcher (a) to clarify questions the participant may not understand, (b) to control participant responses so that participants are unable to skip questions, (c) to observe participants' body language, and (d) probe for additional information when participant responses are vague or incomplete (Rubin & Babbie, 2010).

Although (a) being able to clarify questions for participants can help ensure that accurate and appropriate data are collected, (b) observing body language may provide researchers' insight about participants' affective conditions, and (c) being able to probe for additional information can help ensure that the needed quantity of quality data are collected, conducting interviews may not necessarily be more advantageous than other forms of data collection with regard to participants' ability to skip questions. For example, when a researcher uses the online survey tool SurveyMonkey, he or she may format the survey so that participants may not skip over questions.

Also, in the informed consent, a researcher may not specify that interview participants must answer all the interview questions, in which case participants may feel justified in excusing themselves from answering particular questions. Ultimately then, interviews may not be more advantageous for collecting data than other methods with regard to control over participant responses. Nonetheless, interviews do provide a valuable means of collecting quality data in qualitative studies and, therefore, using interviews to collect data in my qualitative study was appropriate.

The observation also is a good method for collecting data in qualitative studies Yin (2014) suggested that data collected through observations can add depth of understanding to the topic being studied. Because I wanted to collect in-depth data that would help me thoroughly understand the principals' perceptions of the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying in elementary schools, using observations to collect data was a logical part of my data collection plan.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, my role was that of primary researcher. This means that I was responsible for all aspects of participant recruitment as well as the generation and analysis of all data. My role as the researcher in this study in no way compromised the voluntary nature of this study. Although I work in the field of education like the study participants, I work in higher education and the participants worked at the elementary school level. Also, I was not affiliated with the school district in which the participants worked and the participants were not subordinate to me in any way. As a results of these conditions, it is highly unlikely that the principals felt pressured to participate in my study.

To reduce bias in a study, Creswell (2013) suggested that researchers make themselves aware of potential biases that they may hold toward their participants or the phenomenon under study. In addition, because a person's life experiences and personal characteristics inherently will impact one's perspective, Creswell suggested that researchers include in their discussions how these experiences may influence or contribute to their interpretation of the data and how their interpretation of the findings may be shaped by their gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. By doing so, researchers may acknowledge the potential for bias and act consciously to limit its influence on their interpretations of the data.

In this study, I took steps to reduce the potential for researcher bias. First, I actively acknowledged that the potential for bias existed so that I would be more likely to recognize its presence in my study and take action to reduce its potential impact on my analyses. Next, I considered my personal experiences and characteristics to identify any obvious sources of researcher bias. Although I am an educator, I teach at the college level and do not have experience at the elementary school level. Also, although I am a parent, my children have not been victims of bullying not do I have any preconceived notions about the capacity for the Bully Busters program to be used to combat cyberbullying. Based on these preliminary considerations, I anticipate that I will be able to objectively collect and analyze the data for my study.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was principals in a northeastern Indiana school district. This population was chosen because principals are the primary decision makers with regard to the implementation of programs in their respective elementary schools. In

addition, principals are responsible for the allocation and reporting of all disciplinary actions in their respective schools, of which disciplinary actions associated with bullying and cyberbullying would be included. Also, principals have personal knowledge of the implementation process with regard to the Bully Busters program.

When conducting a study, a reseacher must bear in mind the importance of sampling (Creswell, 2013). As Creswell (2013) observed, unlike in quantitative research were researchers methodically identify participants through random sampling, in qualitative research, researchers identify participants using purposeful sampling. With purposeful sampling, researchers choose participants that may best provide insight about the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013). Because the population in this study was specific, namely principals in a northeastern Indiana school district who implemented the Bully Busters program in their schools, purposeful sampling was most appropriate to recruit participants for this study.

Participants who were invited to participate in this study had to be:

- principals in the northeastern Indiana school district of focus in this study,
- have implemented the Bully Busters Program in their elementary schools,
- willing to provide data demonstrating incidents of bullying and cyberbulling at their schools, and
- willing to be observed while presenting a Bully Busters worksheet lesson to students in their schools.

That the principal participants met the inclusion criteria initially was determined based on participant acknowledgement of the criteria and acceptance of study participation. That the principal participants met the inclusion criteria was confirmed during the interview

process. Any participant who did not meet the inclusion criteria would not have been able to provide answers to the interview questions about the Bully Busters program.

The sample for this study was made up of three principals. I choose this number because this was the number of principals in the focus school district who implemented the Bully Busters program in their schools. Participant names and contact information were provided by the school district communication specialist.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to collect data in this study. One was an interview protocol (Appendix A) and the other was an observation checklist (Appendix B). In both cases, I developed the instruments for this study.

Interviews

The interview protocol consisted of two sets of interview questions and a request for the prior and current school year data with regard to incident reports involving bullying and cyberbullying (a request to which the principals previously agreed when they accepted the terms of the consent to participate in this study). The first set of questions ($N = 5$) was demographic in nature and was focused on participants' experience and knowledge. The second set of questions ($N = 10$) was made up of two background questions and eight questions about the Bully Busters program dived into four subject categories: its implementation in the school ($n = 3$), advantages of the program ($n = 2$), shortcoming of the program ($n = 2$), and perceptions of the program's effectiveness against cyberbullying ($n = 1$). I also provided participants with the opportunity to add anything else they felt pertinent to the discussion.

To ensure that I developed useful interview questions that would generate data I could use to answer the research questions for this study, for each question I developed, I asked myself the self-check questions outlined by Key (1997):

- Is the question necessary?
- What answers will it provide? How will the answers be tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted?
- Are several questions needed instead of one?
- Do the respondents possess the requisite information or experience necessary to answer the questions?
- Is the question clear?
- Is the question loaded in one direction, biased, or emotionally toned?
- Will the respondents be able to answer the question honestly?
- Will the respondents be willing to answer the question?
- Is the question misleading because of certain unstated assumptions?
- Is the best type of answer solicited?
- Is the wording of the question likely to be objectionable to any of the respondents?
- Is a direct or indirect question more suited?
- Is the answer to a question likely to be influenced by preceding questions?
- Are the questions in proper sequential–and psychological-order? (Evaluation of a Questionnaire or Interview Script section)

Based on my answers to each of the self-check questions, I reworded the question as necessary to make it appropriate or I deleted it and replaced it with another more appropriate question.

Classroom Observation Checklist Form

The Classroom Observation Checklist Form I used to collect data during observation of the principals was developed by Linse (2006), who based it on a model developed by Chism (1999). The original instrument was made up of 23 behaviors divided into three main behavior categories: variety and pacing of instruction (n = 13), organization (n = 11), and presentation skills (n = 11). One question was inadvertently left out of the items on organization, and I divided one question from the presentation of skills section into two questions to distinguish between two distinct ideas that were originally grouped together. Because one item was left out and one item was divided into two items, the final observation checklist I used still contained 23 behavior items (see Appendix B). If I observed a particular behavior, I indicated this with a check mark next to the behavior on the checklist. I did not indicate multiple instances of any behavior. In addition, I afforded myself room to record examples of particular behaviors that supported the behaviors I indicated that I observed.

Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection Procedures

To recruit participants for my study, I first contacted the focus school district's communication department to acquire the names and contact information of principals in the school district who had implemented the Bully Busters program in their schools. Then, I sent the principals, via e-mail, an invitation to participate in my study along with a copy of the informed consent so that the principals would understand the expectations

of participation. Those who agreed to participate in the study according to the terms expressed on the consent form emailed or phoned me to express their willingness to do so. Once I had recruited my participants, data were collected in four phases. Prior to collecting any data, however, I confirmed the principals had read and agreed to the terms of participation in this study as outlined in the consent form (see Appendix C). The first step of the data collection process involved interviews via telephone to collect demographic data from the participants. All demographic data were collected at one time (one call per participant)—each phone call lasted approximately 5 minutes. All data collected during the phone call portion of the interview process were recorded by hand on the interview protocol (see Appendix A).

The second step of the data collection process involved face-to-face interviews to collect data about principals' backgrounds, their implementation of the Bully Busters program, the advantages and shortcomings of the Bully Busters program, and the use of the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying. Interviews were conducted in each participant's office, and each interview lasted approximately 80 minutes. All data collected during the face-to-face interview portion of the interview process were collected at one time (one face-to-face interview per participant) and were recorded by hand on the interview protocol.

The third step in the data collection process involved observations of the principals teaching a Bully Busters lesson to a classroom of students. In this focus school district, principals not only are responsible for implementing the program at the administrative level (in the sense that they introduce the program to the school setting) but also for implementing the actual elements of the program at the classroom level. One

observation was conducted for each participant, and each observation lasted for approximately 40minutes. All data collected during the observations were recorded on the Classroom Observation Checklist Form (see Appendix B).

The fourth and final step in the data collection process involved follow-up calls to principals to collect data about incidents of bullying in the schools. One phone call was made for each participant, and each phone call lasted approximately 3 minutes. All data collected during the follow-up phone calls were recorded on the interview protocol.

In all instances, I collected data myself from the school principals or through direct observation of the principals. When collecting the data, I followed Eisner and Peskin's (1990) guidelines for collecting data:

- Be a good listener: The subject of qualitative research merits that the researcher heed and correctly interpret their responses.
- Record accurately: The researcher should maintain all records accurately by way of detailed notes or electronic recordings.
- Initiate writing early: It helps if the researcher prepares a rough draft of the study before commencing the work of data collection.
- Include the primary data in the final report: The primary data should be included in the final report so that the reader may understand the exact basis upon which the researcher has arrived at her conclusions. "In short, it is better to include too much detail than too little."
- Include all data in the final report: The researcher should include the entire data in the final report so that the reader may be enabled his own interpretation of the data gathered.

- Be candid: The researcher should be candid and not bother unduly with hiding her own feelings and personal reactions in the study.
- Seek feedback: The researcher should welcome colleagues to offer their feedback on the research manuscript.
- Write accurately: The researcher should not allow incorrect grammar, or statement inconsistency to jeopardize the validity of an otherwise good study. (p. 127)

Participants officially exited the study after they gathered their respective bullying incident report data and shared it with me during the follow-up phone call interviews. However, all participants did agree to provide feedback on my preliminary analysis of the data. The process of requesting feedback from participants with regard to preliminary analyses of data is referred to as member checking (Creswell, 2013). This process involves providing study participants with a copy of a researcher's preliminary data analyses and requesting feedback with regard to its overall accuracy (Creswell, 2013). After participants provide feedback, the researcher uses this feedback to make adjustments to the analyses, thereby improving their accuracy and value (Creswell, 2013). However, in this study, all participants agreed with my preliminary analyses of the data and did not provide suggestions for change. As such, I considered the results of my data analyses to be accurate.

Data Analysis Plan

To answer the research question: How can principal knowledge, experience, and implementation of the Bully Busters program contribute to the effective use of the program to prevent/combat cyberbullying in schools? I collected qualitative data using

both interviews and observations. These data were analyzed using NVivo (Version 10), a qualitative data analysis software. To analyze the interview data, I first had to transcribe it verbatim. Then, I imported the transcript data to the NVivo program, which grouped sentences into categories by common topics/terms and then organized the categories by patterns and presented the data thematically. For comparative purposes, I then coded the data manually using the program. First I coded at the sentences level, then I grouped sentences into categories. Finally, I identified patterns in those categories (subthemes) and developed overarching themes for the data. I compared my themes to the NVivo themes and found similar results. No discrepant data were identified and only minor changes were made to my themes based on the NVivo output with regard to the identified themes and subthemes.

To analyze the data from the observations, I input each observed activity or principal characteristic from the checklist as well as my additional comments for each of the three checklist categories into the NVivo software program. The remainder of the analysis process for the observation data was identical to the analysis process for the data collected during the interviews.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Because qualitative research differs from quantitative research with respect to the depth of human experiences that are explored, characteristics that typically apply to quantitative research are inappropriate for discussing qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), rather than addressing internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity with regard to a study's trustworthiness, the aspects of credibility, fittingness, auditability, and confirmability are

more appropriate and of consequence (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). More currently, Trochim (2006b) renamed these concepts to better express their described meanings: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the truth or accuracy of collected data and interpretations based on that data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). To ensure credibility in my study, I have collected data using two types of strategies, interviews and observations. Arriving at similar themes using two types of data demonstrated the accuracy of my interpretations. Also, I used a form of iterative questioning to ensure the accuracy of the information shared by the participants. According to Shenton (2004), iterative questioning occurs when a "researcher returns to matters previously raised by an informant and extracts related data through rephrased questions " (p. 67). By asking participants to describe their perceptions of both the strengths and weaknesses of the Bully Busters program in addition to their perceptions about the effectiveness of using the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying, I established a means by which to uncover conflicting statements that might indicate participants were not being truthful in their responses, in which case I could make an informed decision as to whether or not to include the data in my analyses.

In addition, I ensured credibility by conducting member checking. According to Creswell (2003), "member checking is used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (p. 196). To conduct member checking in my study, I e-mailed to the principals the preliminary thematic descriptions and draft of my discussion and asked them to review

my interpretations and provide feedback as to whether or not they believed I had accurately described the overall conditions and perspectives associated with the Bully Busters program in their schools. In particular, I asked those who disagreed with my interpretations to provide feedback describing aspects of my perspective they felt were inaccurate. Because I did not receive any responses from the principals, I understood this to mean that they agreed with my preliminary interpretation of the data.

Although results of a qualitative study cannot be transferred (generalized) to other populations, Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggested that results can be discussed in terms of fittingness in similar contexts with similar populations. The potential to discuss how results from one population may fit with another population is contingent upon the extent of knowledge the researcher has with the original context, which can be established by developing thick and rich descriptions of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). In my study, I established the potential to discuss my results in other contexts by providing rich thick descriptions of my data.

Dependability refers to a researcher's ability to navigate changing settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). This condition warrants consideration in qualitative research because the data are based on the personal perspectives of participants, which cannot be exactly replicated (Trochim, 2006b). In qualitative research, dependability can be established by clearly identifying the steps in the research process and implementing a means by which to ensure the quality of data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). In this study, I established dependability by describing, in depth, my process for gathering and analyzing my data (see previous sections on data collection and analysis in Section 3). Also, I incorporated into the research plan feedback from my committee members, which helped ensure I

collected quality data. In addition, I collected data using two methods: interviews and observations. Collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources helped ensure the conclusions I drew from the data were accurate, that is, dependable.

Confirmability refers to a researcher's ability to corroborate study outcomes by considering the research process in which the original researcher engaged (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Researchers can provide other researchers the opportunity to confirm their work by keeping it free of researcher bias and by reporting their research methods clearly, thoroughly, and accurately (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). In this way, researchers can consider the conditions under which the original researcher arrived at his or her conclusions and thus make a determination about the value of the study and the reported outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). To provide other researchers the opportunity to confirm my study results, I have clearly, thoroughly, and accurately reported my research methods. I addition, I addressed the potential for researcher bias in my study and the steps I took to reduce its impact on my work.

Ethical Procedures

During all aspects of my research, I considered the ethical implications of my work. For example, before beginning any data collection, I requested and was granted permission to conduct my study by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (#03-14-14-0154711). Also, at all times during my study, I considered the ethical treatment of my participants. According to Silverman (2011), "Research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research, and the right to withdraw at any time" (p. 418). This information can and should be communicated with participants using a consent form (Silverman, 2011). In

this study, I provided the participants a consent form that included general information about the study but also information regarding expectations of participants and their rights as participants, including the right to exit the study at any time without penalty or repercussion. In addition, I did proceed with data collection until the participants had agreed to the terms indicated on the consent form.

Ethical treatment of participants also includes the maintenance of participant confidentiality, which can be accomplished by protecting the identity of their participants (Silverman, 2011). Throughout all stages of data collection and analysis, I maintained participant confidentiality. In particular, I kept a master list of participant names along with participant numbers I assigned arbitrarily to each participant. This was necessary because I collected data over time and used two different methods. Because the data were deidentified, I needed to be able to identify which participant was associated with each set of data I collected so that I could group the multiple data sets by participant. I kept the master list of participants and cross-referenced participant numbers in a locked filing cabinet in my office. When I had completed the member checking process, I shredded the master list. Also, I kept all I will keep all raw data for 5 years as required by Walden University, after which time I will destroy it.

Summary

This qualitative study was conducted to answer two research questions: How do the principals' perceptions, knowledge, experience, and implementation of the Bully Busters program help make the program an effective process to prevent/combat cyberbullying in schools? What are the key factors of implementing an antibullying program to combat cyberbullying? The principals who participated in this study were

from one school district in northeastern Indiana, and I recruited them using purposive sampling. As the primary researcher in this study, I was responsible for all aspects of data collection and analysis.

To collect data, I conducted interviews and observations. Then I used NVivo software to categorize the data and identify patterns and themes. Into my data collection and analysis plans, I infused measures to ensure trustworthiness of the study. In particular, I addressed the trustworthiness aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Finally, I took measures to ensure that I conducted my study following only ethical standards for research.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the principals' perceptions of the Bully Busters program in combating cyberbullying in elementary schools. A secondary purpose in this study was to identify strategies for implementing the Bully Busters program as a means of combating cyberbullying. Two research questions were developed to reflect the purposes of this study. The central research question was: What are principals' perceptions with regard to the key factors of implementing the Bully Busters program as a means of combatting cyberbullying? The secondary research question was: How can principal knowledge, experience, and implementation of the Bully Busters program contribute to the effective use of the program to prevent/combat cyberbullying in schools? In this section, I present a discussion of the potential for the setting to affect the interpretation of the data and a summary of the participant demographics and the data collection and analysis processes. Next I present evidence of trustworthiness. Finally, I present the results of this data analysis and a chapter summary.

Setting

To my knowledge, no large-scale changes had been implemented in any participant's school which would have influenced their experiences, responses, or attitudes expressed in their responses to the interview questions. In addition, all participants had been in their current position as principal for several years prior to the interview, and had several years of experience in implementing and using the Bully Busters program. Although I am unaware of any personal conditions that may have affected participants at the time of data collection for this study, it is reasonable to conclude that principals would not have agreed to participate in my study if they were

experiencing undue personal (or organizational) stress at the time of recruitment. Therefore, it was assumed that the data were unaffected by extenuating circumstances, and no additional considerations were made when interpreting the data.

Demographics

The interviewed sample included three elementary school principals; two of the participants were female and one was male. The participants were between 40 and 50 years of age; one participant was Black and 2 participants were White. The number of years they served as principals at the elementary school level ranged from 8 to 20, with an average of 13.33 years. The number of years they served as principals at their respective schools ranged from 4 to 10 years, with an average of 7.67. Participant 1 had knowledge of the Bully Busters program for 3 years, Participant 2 had 10 years of knowledge regarding the program, and Participant 3 had 5 years of knowledge ($M = 6$ years). Each participant's school had been using the Bully Busters program for 2 or 3 years.

Data Collection

I collected data through interviews and observations. These data collection processes were used to collect data from all three participants equally. There were no variations in the data collection processes described in Chapter 3, and no unusual circumstances occurred during the data collection period. Interview data were collected via two phone interviews (one preliminary and one follow up) and one face-to-face interview per participant. The phone interviews lasted approximately 5 minutes each and the face-to-face interviews lasted approximately 80 minutes each. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in each principal's office. Observation data were collected

during classroom observations in which the principals taught a Bully Busters lesson. I observed each principal one time for approximately 40 minutes. All data were recorded by hand.

Data Analysis

As described in Chapter 3, I used the NVivo software program to aid in my data analysis. After I imported the transcript data to the NVivo program, the program grouped sentences into categories by common topics/terms and then organized the categories by patterns and presented the data thematically. For comparative purposes, I then used the program to code the data manually. During this manual coding process, I first coded the data at the sentences level. Then I grouped sentences into categories. Finally, I identified patterns in those categories (subthemes) and developed overarching themes for the data.

For example, I used the code *home environment* for statements in which participants referred to students' home environment and grouped them into the category Unable to effect change in home environment. The following four statements were appropriate for this category:

- "I feel that the program is designed for the average student . . . not students that have issues. When I say issues, I mean students that are not average, two parent, white middle class, loving family home." (Participant 1)
- "It is hard to get this program in every home . . . virtually impossible."
- "I would say the biggest weakness of the program would be the lack of transferability to the home environment." (Participant 2)
- "This program is geared for schools . . . and most problems stem from the home environment." (Participant 3)

I used the code *cost* for statements in which participants referred to monetary aspects of implementing the program and grouped them into the category Expensive. The following three statements were appropriate for this category:

- "The expense to get a book into every teacher's hand and train each teacher on all the applications of the program." (Participant 1)
- "Another weakness is the expense to get a book into every teacher's and parent's hand and train each and every one about all the applications of the program." (Participant 2)
- "Boy would that be expensive . . . a cost from a district that is already strapped for funds!" (Participant 3)

Finally, I combined the two categories Unable to affect home environment and Expensive to create the theme Shortcomings. Other derived themes included Participants are knowledgeable about cyberbullying, Participants supported broader application of the program, Participants need to be proactive, These themes are discussed in the subsequent Presentation of Results section.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

No adjustments were made to the plan for ensuring trustworthiness of the data by demonstrating credibility, fittingness, dependability, and confirmability. I collected data using two types of strategies and having arrived at similar themes through both automated and manual analyses, I demonstrated credibility in my study. In addition, results of the member checking process help demonstrate credibility of my initial analyses. Participant 1 thanked me for sharing the data and stated, "I agree with the findings that you want to report." Participant 2 expressed gratitude for being included in

the study and stated, “The data you composed is very interesting, and I agree with it.” Participant 3 also expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be a part of the study and stated, “your findings appear to be exactly as we discussed during the collection process.” The statements made by the participants indicated that they agreed with my initial interpretations of the data, and thus demonstrated credibility of the data and analyses.

In my study, I established the potential to discuss my results in other contexts (fittingness) by providing rich thick descriptions of my data. I demonstrated dependability in my study by describing, in depth, my process for gathering and analyzing my data and by not deviating from that plan during its implementation. Also, that both types of data (interview and observation) contributed to the development of single themes suggested the data were dependable. As a result, other researchers may apply these results to their own studies as they determine them to be applicable. So that other researchers might have the opportunity to confirm my study results, I have clearly, thoroughly, and accurately reported my research methods, and I avoided researcher bias in both my data collection and analysis processes by acknowledging the potential for researcher bias and considering my personal experiences that may have contributed to bias in my study. I did not identify any such experiences nor did I discover any predetermined expectations for the study outcomes.

Results

In this section, I address the research questions. For each research question, I discuss the applicable themes generated during the data analysis process. There are no discrepant data to report.

Central Research Question

In this section, I discuss themes generated during the data analysis process applicable to the Central Research Question: What are principals' perceptions with regard to the key factors of implementing the Bully Busters program as a means of combatting cyberbullying? Four themes were generated from the data: Shortcomings of the Bully Busters Program, Bully Busters Program is Highly Effective, Participants Supported Broader Application of the Program, and Participants Need to be Proactive. The first two themes, although not directly related to cyberbullying, support this research question because they demonstrate an underlying understanding of the strengths and weakness of the Bully Busters program. Because the principals have demonstrated such understanding, it is feasible that they could successfully implement the Bully Busters program as a method for combating cyberbullying.

Theme 1A: Shortcomings and Drawbacks of the Bully Busters Program

Although participants perceived the Bully Busters program to be highly effective (discussed in a subsequent theme), participants also noted shortcomings and drawbacks of the Bully Busters program. Associated subthemes were the inability to effect change in the home environment and expenses associated with implementing the program were limitations. Evidence to support these subthemes are presented here thematically.

Unable to affect home environment. Both Participants 1 and 2 cited the program's inability to address bullying behaviors that are either promoted or not deterred in the home environment as a shortcoming of the program. For example, Participant 2 stated:

> I feel that the program is designed for the average student . . . not students that have issues. When I say issues, I mean students that are not average: two parent, white middle class, loving family home. It is not designed . . . I feel, to deal with individuals . . . it is more whole group settings.

Similarly, Participant 1 indicated that the Bully Busters program could not effectively address issues related to bullying that occur in the home environment, as evident in the following statement:

> I would say the biggest weakness of the program would be the environment. This program is geared for schools . . . and most problems stem from the home environment. It is hard to get this program in every home . . . virtually impossible.

Expensive. Two participants cited the cost of implementing the Bully Busters program as a drawback. Participants 1 and 3 indicated that the program is expensive to implement fully and both referenced the program booklets specifically. Participant 1 stated:

> Another weakness is the expense to get a book into every teacher and parents hand and train each and every one about all the applications of the program. Boy would that be expensive . . . a cost from a district that is already strapped for funds! Don't see it happening.

Participant 3 stated, "The expense to get a book into every teacher's hand and train each teacher on all the applications of the program." Participant 3 also indirectly referred to cost when the participant stated, "Besides, with our lack of funds, we really did not have the money to present the, I mean implement, the program in each classroom via the team approach." Participant 2 indirectly addressed the cost of the program: "Because of budget

cuts, we elected the individual approach" (as opposed to a team approach to implementing the program).

Participants did not provide suggestions to remedy the identified shortcoming and drawback but simply stated that administrators should take these considerations into account when choosing to implement the program. In their schools, the principals addressed the cost of the program by keeping school copies of the program booklets in lieu of purchasing copies to distribute to the entire student body.

Theme 1B: The Bully Busters Program Is Highly Effective

All three participants indicated that the program was highly effective. Participant 1 responded, "I feel that this program is very effective. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the best and 1 being the worse [*sic*], I would rate it at the least 9.5" and also that "The program really works!" Participant 2 responded, "I would rate it [the program] high in its ability to help make a difference. I know that this program has helped in our school." Participant 3 stated,

> The Bully Busters program is such a great addition to what works to help reduce bully behavior in the school. We are better because we utilize it. . . . I would rate this program high in its effectiveness with reducing bully behaviors.

Two participants gave specific examples of demonstrated change resulting from the implementation of the Bully Busters program. Participant 2 stated, "I have really seen positive behaviors in the students. They really strive to be positive citizens." Participant 3 provided this anecdotal example:

> When we first started using the program, we had unfortunately at least one or two incidents of bullying a week and sometimes more. Now, since we have used the program, we have maybe one or two every other month or even less!

In the form of program strengths, participants also gave reasons they perceived the program to be effective. The common strength identified among the three participants was awareness. Participant 1 stated, "I think the major strength of the program is the increase of awareness for both the answer to what a bully is and what a victim is." Participant 2 stated, "Awareness!! That is the biggest strength of this program in my opinion, the vast amounts of awareness that you encounter with this program. They do a great job helping you to identify and 'call out' the bullies." Participant 2 also emphasized the value of increasing such awareness during the formative years of students' lives when it is possible to instill in them the values associated with rejecting bullying and victim behaviors. Similarly, Participant 3 stated, "One of the biggest strengths is that it helped to shine the light on the need to be aware of what we can do to help reduce bullies and aware of how we cannot be victims of bullies." The same participant also said, "You have to make everyone aware that bullies exist and that NOONE needs to be a victim or bully! This program is excellent at helping us be aware of this and what to do about it."

Theme 1C: Participants Supported Broader Application of the Program

All three participants indicated that the Bully Busters program could be used in a broader application of the program, specifically to prevent cyberbullying. With regard to using the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying within the entire school district (as opposed the participant's particular school), Participant 1 stated, "I think that the program would work well with the prevention of cyberbully behaviors as well as it does

on bully behavior. It would not hurt to try." Participant 2 responded, "I think this program is already effective as a cyberbully intervention program." Participant 3 responded:

> The program can easily be geared towards ANY bully. The bully can be a playground bully; a classroom bully; a bus bully; a bathroom bully; or even a cyberbully. I use the same approach in dealing with the bully and victim. You have to make everyone aware that bullies exist and that *no one* needs to be a victim or bully! This program is excellent at helping us be aware of this . . . and what to do about it. With all that said . . . yes, I think this program would be an effective choice as a cyberbully prevention program.

All three participants also suggested that they already had applied the program to cyberbullying in their respective schools. Participant 3 reported "speaking from first-hand knowledge," which suggested that the participant had applied the Bully Busters program in this manner. Participant 2 was more direct: "For the last 3 years, I have addressed both forms of bullying behavior in my activities with the students. We talk openly about both . . . bullies and cyberbullies." Participant 1 responded in a similar fashion: "I have used it [the Bully Busters program] to address both [bullying and cyberbullying] and it works. . . . It worked for my school." Of the three participants, only Participant 1 provided an explanation for how the Bully Busters program could be applied to combat cyberbullying: "I think it would work by adding the language of cyberbully from just bully."

Theme 1D: Participants Need To Be Proactive

Two participants indicated that participants need to be proactive with regard to combatting bullying and cyberbullying and specifically mentioned being proactive at the district level. Participant 3 responded:

> We have seen really good results here at our school. I want the district to really think long and hard about the prevailing threats of cyberbullying and any other type of bullying that can lead to drastic means. It is best to do preventative efforts then [*sic*] to wait until it becomes an epidemic.

Participant 1 expressed a similar perspective:

> I love the Bully Busters program, and I would like to see it offered to all the schools across the district. Because we are constantly seeing an increase in this form of bully behavior . . . cyberbullying . . . but we as a district are unprepared to deal with it . . . I really feel that teachers having the knowledge of how to recognize bully characteristics . . . they can better handle the prevention of bully behaviors.

Participant 2 did not make a direct statement about being proactive. However, the participant did express the intent to make a personal effort to do more:

> This interview has enlightened me to want to do more . . . work harder with the individual students to both address and replace the negative with the positive attitude and behaviors . . . I really am going to work harder to help the bully know that they need to replace the negative with something positive and to not be aggressive; to work with the victim and teach them to be assertive; and finally to work with the by-stander to not be afraid to take a stand.

These comments can be interpreted as an interest in being proactive with regard to decreasing the incidence of bullying and cyberbullying.

Secondary Research Question

In this section, I discuss themes generated during the data analysis process applicable to the Secondary Research Question: How can principal knowledge, experience, and implementation of the Bully Busters program contribute to the effective use of the program to prevent/combat cyberbullying in schools? Four themes were generated from the data: Participants are Knowledgeable about Bullying and Cyberbullying, Participants are Knowledgeable about the Bully Busters Program, Participants Have Experience With the Program, and Principals Properly Implement the Bully Busters Program.

Theme 2A: Participants Are Knowledgeable About Bullying and Cyberbullying

Participants in this study demonstrated knowledge about bullying and cyberbullying in multiple regards, specifically with regard to the definition of bullying and cyberbullying, the unique dangers posed by cyberbullying, and the incidence of bullying and cyberbullying in the school district. All three of the participants indicated that they perceived bullying to be a form of intentional intimidation or overpowering of others. Participant 2 defined bullying as "a systemic consistent overpowering ability of one individual of another person's weakness." Participant 3 suggested that this "form of intimidation [bullying] does not have a reason, though the bully will often say that they had a reason." Participant 1 described bullying as "a form of intimidation that is intentional and done indiscreetly" and ultimately "prevents others from feeling safe." Participant 3 also maintained that bullying involves "a person that intentionally . . . picks

on another person without cause or reason." These participants provided definitions that matched with the general understanding of bullying, as described by Hinduja and Patchin (2009), as a behavior that involves an exercise of power that affects its victim adversely

One participant also demonstrated knowledge of bullying concepts through his implementation action plan. Participant 1 demonstrated knowledge of bullying through his discretion while implementing the program. In particular, Participant 1 encouraged students to communicate their concerns with him, but, realizing the potential for students to be targeted and potentially bullied for sharing those concerns, Participant 1 arranged for the students to report their concerns discreetly by using a drop box.

Participants in this study also demonstrated knowledge about cyberbullying. Participants tended to agree that any time bullying, as they previously defined it, occurs over an electronic media, it may be considered cyberbullying. Participant 1 offered the following explanation:

> I see cyberbullying as any cyber-communication or publication posted or sent by someone online, by instant message, e-mail, website, diary site, online profile, interactive game, handheld device, cell phone, game device, digital camera or video, webcam or the use of any interactive digital device with the intent to . . . is intended to frighten, embarrass, harass, hurt, set up, cause harm to, extort, or otherwise target another person.

Participant 2 provided a similar response, describing cyberbullying as "the use of social media to systematically overtly threaten with electronic genres." These responses were congruent with Li's (2008) definition of cyberbullying as "bullying via electronic communication tools such as email, cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), instant

messaging, or the World Wide Web" (p. 224). Finally, Participant 3 suggested that cyberbullying "would be classified as using any electronic device for the intension of causing embarrassment and or harm to another person." The same Participant also shared the school district's definition of cyberbullying: "any electronically generated material that conveys an offensive or obscene message meant to harm or intimidate another student or staff member."

Both Participants 1 and 2 demonstrated an understanding of the unique nature of cyberbullying. Participant 2 stated, "I think that this form of bullying [cyberbullying] is by far the most dangerous!" Participant 2 went on to explain that what makes it especially dangerous is that "the cyberbully actually targets the victim. . . . it is like they take the time to study their victim." Participant 1 indicated that cyberbullying is especially problematic because "it is easier for the bully to hide."

Only one participant made note of the incidence of bullying and cyberbullying. Participant 1 stated that the school district has experienced an increase in all types of bullying, including peer bullying and student bullying of teachers. No participants made note of increases of bullying or cyberbullying at their respective schools. This is likely because the participants indicated that the Bully Busters program was working in their schools.

Theme 2B: Participants Have Experience with the Bully Busters Program

One inclusion criterion for this study was that participants had to have implemented the Bully Busters Program in their elementary schools. Therefore, all participants in this study had experience with the Bully Busters program. With regard to this criterion, Participant 1 reported having 2 years of experience, and Participants 2 and

3 each reported having 3 years of experience. In addition to stating their level of experience with the Bully Busters program, participant responses to interview questions demonstrated that the participants had experience with the Bully Busters program.

Participant 1 reported presenting the program material daily when the program was first implemented and then weekly thereafter. Participant 1 stated, "We decided to follow the individual approach and appointed myself as the individual that would present the material and lessons to the students. . . . I am the main individual that presents the material." Participant 1 also stated that "I sometimes have to skip classrooms scheduled for a visit because another classroom my need more attention." This statement also demonstrated Participant 1 had experience with the Bully Busters program because without such experience, the participant likely would have kept to the predetermined schedule of lessons assigned to classrooms and not modified the schedule based on interpreted need.

Participant 2 reported visiting classrooms once a week for 6 weeks at the start of the school year and again for 6 weeks at the end of the school year. The participant explained, "It is a systematic approach. Week 1 I present to the Kindergartners; Week 2 Grade 1; Week 3 Grade 2; Week 4 Grade 3; Week 5 Grade 4; and Week 6 Grade 5." Like Participant 1, Participant 2 also indicated the occasional need to revisit problem classrooms: "Occasionally, I need to revisit a classroom if there are problems that need to be addressed." Again, acknowledging that some classrooms need additional attention and feeling comfortable enough to modify the lesson schedule demonstrates a certain level of experience implementing the program.

Like Participant 1, Participant 3 also presented lessons at least once a week. Exceptions included weeks in which testing occurred, weeks during which holidays fell, and the last week of school. The principal acknowledged that "during those times the attention spans are so low it would be ineffective. They [the students] do not want to hear from me . . . they have party times on their minds." Also, Participant 3 presented lessons twice in a week if the need presented itself: "When we see a rise in bullying . . . Yes, that's when we have a need to do some reminders, and, as Barney Fife would say, 'Nip it in the bud.'"

Finally, participants demonstrated that they had experience with the Bully Busters program during the observation phase of the data collection process. Each participant presented a Bully Busters lesson to a classroom of students. In each case, the participant appeared comfortable with the content. I accepted this observation as evidence that the participants had experience with the Bully Busters program.

Theme 2C: Participants Are Knowledgeable About the Bully Busters Program

As described in the demographics section of this chapter, Participants 1, 2, and 3 reported having known about the Bully Busters program for 3, 10, and 5 years, respectively. In addition, it was assumed that participants in this study had at least some level of knowledge about the Bully Busters program because one of the inclusion criteria was that participants had implemented the program at their school. Therefore, if the participant had implemented the program him/herself, he/she would have to have some knowledge about how the program works.

Participant responses to interview questions also demonstrated that the participants were knowledge about various aspects of the program and its potential for

most effectively changing student behaviors. For example, Participants 1 and 3 implemented a whole class approach to the Bully Busters program wherein the entire class would be part of the educational process. Participant 1 was observed using this approach.

Participant 3 suggested that in this way, even if the bully is in the classroom, they are not (in some ways) signaled out as the villain but as part of the class working to make things better. I have found that this method is successful because it allows everyone to work together to make the problem better.

Also, participants indicated that they either placed or needed to place emphasis on increasing awareness of what a bully is, and how to prevent one's self from being a victim through this increased awareness and understanding.

Participant 1 reported, "When I present the material I start with increasing the awareness of what a bully is and how we can prevent ourselves from being a victim. We focus on why bullies do what they do and what bullying is."

Participant 2 stated,

> We really have to work more with all three individuals, the bully/cyberbully, the victim, and the bystander . . . to help the bully know that they need to replace the negative with something positive and to not be aggressive; to work with the victim and teach them to be assertive; and finally to work with the by-stander to not be afraid to take a stand.

Finally, Participant 3 stated, "You have to make everyone aware that bullies exist and that no one needs to be a victim or bully!" Although this statement was not a direct claim that the participant focused on student awareness during the implementation of the

Bully Busters program at the participant's school, the use of the second person pronoun *you* can be interpreted to mean that the participant was speaking from experience, in which case, the participant likely did focus on student awareness. In all cases, this emphasis on awareness demonstrated that the participants were knowledgeable about the underlying tenants of the Bully Busters program.

Theme 2D: Principals Properly Implement the Bully Busters Program

The final theme that emerged in this study was that participants properly implemented the Bully Busters program. This theme was derived from two subthemes: followed the program guidelines and demonstrated characteristics conducive to effective teaching. Proper implementation of the program was considered to be demonstrated not only by statements participants made about how they implemented the program according to the program guidelines but also through observations of (a) how the participants demonstrated variety and pacing of instruction, (b) were well organized, and (c) demonstrated presentation skills (that support the development of instructor/student rapport). Because it stands to reason that by varying and pacing instruction , being well organized, and having strong presentation skills (which can help develop instructor/student rapport), could improve teaching effectiveness in an educational setting, and because the implementation of the Bully Busters program in essence constitutes the translation of information in an educational setting (i.e., teaching), it also stands to reason that these same participant characteristics could be considered characteristics that support the proper implementation of the Bully Busters program.

Followed the program guidelines. Participant 1 made a direct statement regarding following program guidelines. The participant stated, "We also focus on the

effects of the bully behavior as the program recommends." All three participants indirectly suggested that they followed the Bully Busters program guidelines when they stated that they used the individual approach to implement the program. Using the individual approach, a single individual is selected to present the Bully Busters program lessons to the students as opposed to a team of teachers/staff/administrators. With regard to the individual approach, Participant 1 stated, "We decided to follow the individual approach and appointed myself as the individual that would present the material and lessons to the students." Similarly, Participant 2 indicated that the individual approach was chosen but also provided and explanation for doing so: "Because of budget cuts, we elected the individual approach." Participant 3 also indicated that the individual approach was chosen and explained why:

> We definitely followed the individual approach and chose not to follow the team approach. The reason we chose this form to implementation is because (at the time) we were short staffed and I played the role of teacher/instructor. With that in mind, since we choose the individual method, tag, I was the individual! Besides, with our lack of funds, we really did not have the money to present the, I mean implement, the program in each classroom via the team approach.

Although Participants 2 and 3 clearly stated that they followed the individual approach for implementing the Bully Busters program, both participants also reported that several staff members were selected as a support team during the implementation process.

Demonstrated characteristics conducive to effective teaching. Three categories of characteristics made up this subtheme. The first characteristic conducive to effective teaching that became evident during the observations was that the principals

varied and paced instruction. All participants used more than one form (variety) of instructional material. Participant 1 used a PowerPoint presentation, lecture with whole class discussion, whole class activity, and handouts. Participant 2 used whole class discussion, whole class activity, and a handout. Participant 3 used transparencies, whole class discussion, and a handout. All participants used instructional material that appeared suitable for the age of the students and the lesson objective. All the participants appropriately paced the material in order to complete the lesson during the scheduled class period (approximately 38 minutes). All participants used additional pacing practices such as pausing after asking questions, allowing students time to respond to questions, actively engaging students in activities/discussions, guiding the length of discussions, providing explicit directions for active learning tasks (rationale), and communicating the reasoning process behind the concepts.

The second characteristic conducive to effective teaching that became evident during the observations was that the principals were well organized. All participants arrived on time to the classroom and with the materials and equipment needed for the lesson. All participants were able to keep the students participating in an organized fashion by asking them to raise their hands to participate. Additionally, all participants provided me with an outline of the goals and objectives for the class session, followed the provided outline, and were able to complete the lesson within the time frame.

The third characteristic conducive to effective teaching that became evident during the observations was that the principals demonstrated presentation skills and built instructor/student rapport. All the participants demonstrated good presentation skills by using speech that was clear and audible from the back of the classroom. Also, all the

participants used appropriate visual aids that supported the lesson, maintained eye contact with the students, and engaged students in classroom discussion. Instructor/student rapport was evident in the students' motivation and eagerness to participate in the classroom activities. Also, Participant 1 called each student by name to participate. Participant 2 gave each student an opportunity to try the activity and would say, "Good try (student name)" after each student participated in the activity. Lastly, Participant 3 appeared supportive of discussions and asked the students to express their decisions in a quitter manner. Participant 3 said, "I love hearing from all of you, but let's talk one at a time. There are 25 of you, and only one of me." The students laughed and responded positively by raising their hands to participate.

Summary

There was one central research question for this study and a secondary question. The central research question was: What are principals' perceptions with regard to the key factors of implementing the Bully Busters program as a means of combatting cyberbullying? Overall, although the principals identified shortcomings and drawbacks of the Bully Busters program, they also indicated that it was effective for preventing bullying. Because they perceived the program to be effective and because they indicated the program's focus could easily be changed from traditional bullying to cyberbully by changing the terminology used and modifying the examples, the principals all suggested that the Bully Busters program would be effective for combating cyberbullying.

The secondary question was: How can principal knowledge, experience, and implementation of the Bully Busters program contribute to the effective use of the program to prevent/combat cyberbullying in schools? Principals demonstrated that they

(a) were knowledgeable about bullying and cyberbully, (b) had experience with the Bully Busters program, and (c) were knowledgeable about the Bully Busters program. Because of their knowledge and experience with these concepts and the Bully Busters program, the principals were easily able to demonstrate clear plans for using the program to combat cyberbullying. Principals' knowledge of bullying and cyberbullying allowed the principals to make connections between the two behaviors and their experience implementing the Bully Busters program allowed them to identify how program lessons could be adapted from traditional bullying to cyberbullying. The results of this study as they pertain to the research questions are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This qualitative study was conducted to examine principals' perceptions with regard to implementing the Bully Busters program as an effective measure to combat cyberbullying in elementary schools. This study was needed because insufficient attention had been given to the possibility of using an effective antibullying program as a means of decreasing cyberbullying behaviors. By conducting this study, this gap in the literature has been lessened.

The data I gathered for this study were collected using semistructured interviews and observations. Data collected using the interview protocol represent the perspectives of three elementary school principals who had implemented the Bully Busters program in their schools prior to this study. Demographic data were reported and responses to the primary interview questions were analyzed using NVivo software. From the resulting themes that emerged, several key concepts were noted. Principals all were knowledgeable about bullying and cyberbullying, and had experience with, were knowledgeable about, and properly implemented the Bully Busters program. In addition, although the principals noted shortcomings and drawbacks of the Bully Busters program, they all indicated that it was effective in reducing incidents of bullying and had implemented the program, to some degree or another, to combat cyberbullying as well. With regard to implementing the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying, the principals noted the need to be proactive rather than reactive.

This chapter includes four sections followed by concluding remarks. First, an interpretation of the study findings is presented. Second, the limitations of the study are

discussed. Third, recommendations for action and further study are provided. Finally, implications of the study results are considered.

Interpretation of the Findings

Four key themes were generated during the data analysis process applicable to the Central Research Question: What are principals' perceptions with regard to the key factors of implementing the Bully Busters program as a means of combating cyberbullying? Those themes were (a) shortcomings and drawbacks of the Bully Busters program, (b) Bully Busters program is highly effective, (c) participants supported broader application of the program, and (d) participants need to be proactive.

With regard to Theme 1A, shortcomings and drawbacks of the Bully Busters program, participants indicated that the Bully Busters program was imperfect. Specifically, participants pointed to the study's immutability with regard to environmental impact. The Bully Busters program, the principals stated, was not easily transferred to the home environment. This perspective is supported in the literature. For example, Brooks (2004) found that exposing students to the Bully Busters program in the school environment was not sufficient enough to impact the student's behavior in other environments and suggested that the program be extended to additional environments. Additionally, Hahn et al. (2007) noted the importance of including parent skills and community intervention in antibullying programs.

Participants also indicated that the cost of the Bully Busters program was a drawback. With regard to the effectiveness of the Bully Busters program, Bell (2008) concluded that it could be considered effective because of the outcome to cost ratio, citing the program as relatively inexpensive. However, the cost incurred with the

purchase of the Bully Busters program is associated with the number of manuals purchased and whether the program is implemented using an individual approach or a team approach. It is possible that in Bell's study, the schools implemented an individual approach and thus incurred a lower cost for implementing the program because only one manual needed to be purchased to implement the program.

Also, it should be considered that perspective of cost may be related to the particular characteristics of any individual school. Because all schools are subjected to budget constraints and the cost of the Bully Busters program would be the same regardless of who purchased it, it is likely that other principals and school administrators would agree that the program is costly, as demonstrated in this study. On the other hand, because school budgets may differ drastically based on socioeconomic conditions within the community, principals in school districts with strong socioeconomic standings may consider the cost of the Bully Busters program to be acceptable.

Theme 1B, the Bully Busters program is highly effective, emerged from the data because all the participants agreed that the Bully Busters program was suitable for combating both traditional bullying as well as cyberbullying in their schools. As mentioned previously, Bell (2008) concluded that the Bully Busters program can be considered effective when considering the outcome to cost ratio. This conclusion was based on inconsistent results indicating increases in teacher efficacy, decreases in incidents of bullying behavior as reported by the teacher participants, and both decreases and increases in bullying behaviors as reported by the student participants (Bell, 2008). Although Bell's conclusion that the Bully Busters program is effective is tenuous based on the study results, it is possible that no significant trends among decreased levels of

bullying behavior were found because the school staff did not implement the Bully Busters program as it was intended to be implemented but rather an abbreviated version of the program.

Findings from Brooks (2004) minimally support this theme. Although Brooks found the Bully Busters program was effective for increasing teachers' knowledge about how to use bullying prevention and intervention measures to combat bullying, less effect was noted for students. Specifically, although Brooks found that students' self-reported levels of participation in bullying behavior decreased, the students' scores of bullying behavior as measured by the Behavior Assessment System for Children-Child Version indicated no changes in scores between pre- and posttests.

With regard to Theme 1C, participants supported a broader application of the program, with all three participants indicated that the Bully Busters program could be used in a broader application, specifically to prevent cyberbullying. At the time of this study, no literature existed on the use of the Bully Busters program for combating cyberbullying. However, the participants in this study suggested that for general education purposes, the Bully Busters program lessons could be easily modified by exchanging the term *bully* with *cyberbully* and *bullying* with *cyberbullying*. Considering the proliferation in cyberbullying events associated with the rising use of electronic means of communication in the 21st century and accepting the premise that school principals are knowledgeable about current events and conditions that might affect the safety of students in their schools, it is highly probable that principals who have implemented the Bully Busters program in their schools have made the connection

between the use of the program to combat bullying and the potential for program modification to address the issue of cyberbullying.

Although no connection has been made specifically between the use of the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying, researchers have suggested that traditional bullying programs may be effective for combatting cyberbullying. For example, in a study of 2,042 students divided into a control group (n = 665) and an intervention group (n = 1,377), Gradinger, Yanagida, Strohmeier, and Spiel (2015) examined the effects on cyberbullying of a traditional antibullying program with no cyberbullying content. Results of analyses indicated that the traditional antibullying program was effective against cyberbullying and cyberbullying victimization when controlling for both traditional bully behaviors and traditional victimization (Gradinger et al., 2015).

Theme 1D, participants need to be proactive, emerged from the data based on responses from all three participants. Two of the three participants indicated the need to be proactive at the school district level, while one participant expressed the desire to do more within the participant's own school. In his speech at the White House Conference on Bullying Prevention (White House, 2011), President Obama expressed a similar sentiment. The president called for all citizens in the nation to be proactive and to do something to help create a bully free environment. Olweus (2012) called upon schools to direct their antibullying efforts not only to counteract traditional bullying but to help reduce the prevalence of cyberbullying as well. Additionally, laws are being established to mandate the proactive involvement of school administrators, district leaders, and state legislators in taking action against bullies and cyberbullies (FindLaw, 2012). Albertson

(2015) has advocated in particular for laws that include criminal sanctions for those who bully others.

Four themes were also generated applicable to the secondary research question: How can principals' knowledge, experience, and implementation of the Bully Busters program contribute to the effective use of the program to prevent/combat cyberbullying in schools? Those themes were (a) participants are knowledgeable about bullying and cyberbullying, (b) participants are knowledgeable about the Bully Busters program, (c) participants have experience with the Bully Busters program, and (d) principals properly implement the Bully Busters program.

With regard to the Theme 2A, participants are knowledgeable about bullying and cyberbullying, all three participants demonstrated being knowledgeable about bullying and cyberbullying. All of the participants provided definitions of bullying and cyberbullying that were congruent with definitions of the terms found in the literature (see Hinduja & Patchin [2009] and Li [2008] respectively). In particular, the participants' definition of bullying behavior included an understanding that bullying involves an exercise of power that affects its victim adversely as suggested by Hinduja and Patchin (2009). Also, the participants' definition of cyberbullying behavior included an understanding that cyberbullying involves bullying using electronic means of communication as suggested by Li (2008).

For Theme 2B, participants are knowledgeable about the Bully Busters program, all three participants demonstrated having knowledge about the Bully Busters program. Specifically, all three participants reported having at least 3 years of knowledge about the program. The need for educators to have knowledge about the Bully Busters program was

expressed by Brooks (2004). In particular, Brooks noted the connection between educators' knowledge of the Bully Busters program and the successful reduction of bullying events in the educational setting.

With regard to Theme 2C, participants have experience with the Bully Busters program, all three participants demonstrated having experience with the Bully Busters program. Brooks (2004) noted the importance of educator experience for the proper implementation of the program. Specifically, Brooks noted that educators need proper skills and tools to educate students about the Bully Busters program, both of which can come from having personal experience with the program. The value of having experience with the Bully Busters program also was demonstrated by the participants in this study through their capacity to make modifications to the program so that it could be used to combat cyberbullying. These adaptations were made after the program was first implemented as it was intended: to combat bullying. This condition demonstrates that the principals' experience implementing the program as it was intended was a precursor to their modification of the program in order to combat cyberbullying and thus, principals' experiences made a valuable contribution to their efforts to combat cyberbullying.

For Theme 2D, principals properly implement the Bully Busters program, all three participants demonstrated proper implementation of the Bully Busters program in two ways. First, the participants indicated they implemented the program using the individual approach. The individual approach is one approach discussed in the Bully Busters program manual (Horne et al., 2003). Second, the participants demonstrated characteristics conducive to effective teaching. Specifically, the principals varied and paced instruction, were well organized, and demonstrated presentation skills and built

instructor/student rapport. These characteristics, either directly or indirectly, all promote student engagement, a condition on which high importance is placed in the Bully Busters manual according to (Horne et al., 2003).

Limitations of the Study

Limitations recognized in this study are related to data collection and the study sample. The first limitation noted in this study is related to the process used to generate and capture data. To collect data in this study, I conducted interviews using a semistructured interview protocol. Although this data collection method was appropriate for the type of study and the protocol prompts were appropriate for generating data related to the topic, I did not follow up on participant responses. In hindsight, it would have been appropriate to prompt participants to give more details when they gave vague or incomplete responses and to clarify their perspectives when their responses were unclear. This lack of follow up may have kept me from generating additional valuable data for analysis. In addition, although I worked diligently to accurately capture participant responses by hand, digitally recording the interviews would have ensured that I both fully and accurately captured participant responses.

The second limitation is related to the small sample size. Various perspectives have been posed in the literature regarding appropriate sample sizes for qualitative research. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), after considering suggestions from multiple researchers, concluded that ideal sample sizes in qualitative studies vary depending on the type of study being conducted. However, in general, the sample size should not be too small so that thick rich descriptions cannot be extracted from the data but also that the sample sizes should not be so big that as to make it impossible for the researcher to

achieve saturation in the data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also cited saturation as a good indication for determining sample size, while Marshall (1996) and Merriam (2003) suggested that the sample be large enough to generate sufficient data to answer the research questions or questions posed in the study's purpose statement. Unlike these more ambiguous suggestions, Creswell (2008) explicitly stated that four or five participants could be enough to generate themes to describe a phenomenon. With these perspectives in mind, it is possible that I could have generated additional valuable data by moderately increasing the sample size.

The third limitation is related to the narrow scope of the study population. Participants in this study represented only elementary school principals from one school district in northeastern Indiana. By limiting the participants in school level and geographic location, I may have limited the range of data I generated from participants. Although the results of this study would not have been generalizable to a larger population regardless of any increase in sample diversity, by diversifying the sample, I may have generated additional and insightful perspectives that may have added to the depth of understanding with regard to the study topic.

Recommendations for Future Research

After completing this study and with consideration of the noted study limitations, I have two recommendations for future study. The first recommendation is related to the study design. This study was qualitative in nature and was appropriate for exploring the perspectives of principals with regard to the applicability of the Bully Busters program for combating cyberbullying. However, a quantitative study design also could be beneficial for exploring this topic. This idea is supported in the literature. According to

Trochim (2006a), qualitative research can serve as a useful way of conducting a preliminary investigation of a topic prior to conducting quantitative research. By using random sampling to conduct a quantitative study on the applicability of the Bully Busters program for combating cyberbullying, it would be possible to generate data that could be generalized to the larger population. The ability to generalize the study results would allow for the direct application of study results in more settings, thereby increasing the potential for a large-scale decrease in the incidence of cyberbullying using the Bully Busters program.

The second recommendation is that research be conducted to determine the most effective ways of modifying the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying. The participants in this study indicated the most notable adaptation they made to the implementation of the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying was to replace the term *bullying* with the term *cyberbullying*. However, the dynamics associated with cyberbullying differ from those associated with bullying, specifically with regard to the mode of transmission and the setting. Therefore, it is likely that in some situations, the mere exchange of terminology will not be sufficient enough to render the Bully Busters lessons applicable to cyberbullying. In these cases, it would be helpful to have more information about effective methods for adapting the Bully Busters program to cyberbullying.

Implications

In the digital age of social networking, the incidence of cyberbullying has become an intrinsic part of growing up in a technologically advanced society (Ipsos, 2012). This condition is problematic because cyberbullying, like bullying, can have a negative effect

not only the victim (Weathers & Hopson, 2015) but on perpetrators (Gualdo et al., 2015; Olweus, 1993) and bystanders as well (Dillon & Bushman, 2015; Law et al., 2010, NCSE, 2012). To combat bullying in schools, administrators and other school staff have implemented the Bully Busters program with great success (Bell, 2008; Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). Results of this study indicated the potential for the Bully Busters program to be used as means of combatting cyberbullying as well. This program has the potential to create social change by helping reduce the incidence of cyberbullying, as Beebe (2014) suggested is possible with well-developed prevention programs.

The three principals who participated in this study indicated that they already use the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying in their schools. However, by participating in this study, it is likely that they have become more cognizant of the extent to which the Bully Busters program may be used as a means of combating cyberbullying and thereby be prompted to more comprehensively implement the program in that capacity. In addition, it is possible that because the shortcomings and drawbacks of the program were called to their attention, the principals may be motivated to find solutions for overcoming those shortcomings and drawbacks. By increasing efforts to combat cyberbullying in these ways, it is likely that the incidence of cyberbullying in these schools will decrease.

Results of this study may be applicable to other populations as well. Although these results are not generalizable to larger populations beyond the three schools involved in this study, other principals in schools in the district may determine for themselves that conditions in their schools are similar to those in this study. Based on that perspective, the principals may decide to implement the Bully Busters program in their school and use

it to combat both bullying and cyberbulling. This scenario represents an example of a decision made within the bounded rationality model of decision making, where decisions are made based on incomplete information about the problem, the alternatives, or both, and are, at least in part, dependent on other less logical approaches (see Lunenburg, 2010). In this model, the Bully Busters program may become an alternative for principals who are striving to combat bullying and cyberbullying but who may not have the time to investigate numerous options or who may have to make a decision quickly. Although the principals may not be able to determine with certainty that the Bully Busters program will be effective for combatting bullying and cyberbullying in their schools, this option may at least appear to be a more logical choice than others. In this way, it is possible that principals in other schools in the district may implement the Bully Busters program to combat cyberbullying, thereby decreasing the incidence of cyberbullying in their schools.

Conclusion

In the digital age of social networking, the incidence of cyberbullying has become an intrinsic part of growing up in a technologically advanced society (Ipsos, 2012). This condition is problematic because cyberbullying, like bullying, can have a negative effect not only the victim (Weathers & Hopson, 2015) but on perpetrators (Gualdo et al., 2015, Olweus, 1993) and bystanders as well (Dillon & Bushman, 2015; Law et al., 2010; NCSE, 2012). Therefore, it is important that attention be paid to ways in which antibcyberbulling efforts may be implemented.

School administrators often are constrained by limited resources, especially time and money. For this reason, they may be forced to make decisions based on limited information. With respect to antibullying and anticyberbullying programs, results of this

study may serve as a source of information. In addition, because purchasing multiple programs could be costly, the use of the Bully Busters program to combat both traditional and cyberbullying is a feasible and appealing option. By reducing the incidence of cyberbullying, children who are bullied may be spared the destructive emotional and psychological effects associated with being a victim of cyberbullying and children who bully may grow to be more well-rounded and responsible citizens.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Preliminary Interview Questions (Telephone)

Date of interview:	
Interview start time:	**Interview end time:**
Participant number:	

Demographic Information

1. Years working at the elementary school level?

2. Years at this school?

3. Years of experience as lead principle of this school?

4. Years with knowledge of the *Bully Busters* program?

5. Years using the *Bully Busters* program at your school?

Primary Interview Questions (Face-to-Face)

Date of interview:	
Interview start time:	**Interview end time:**
Participant number:	

Background questions:

1. How do you define bullying?

2. How do you define cyberbullying?

Implementation:

3. When you implemented the Bully Busters program, what procedure(s) did you follow?
4. How often do present the material to the classrooms?
5. What steps do you follow when presenting the material?

Advantages:

6. What do you feel are the strengths of the program?
7. How would you rate this program in its effectiveness with bully behavior?

Shortcomings and Drawbacks:

8. What do you feel are the weaknesses of the program?
9. What suggestions do you have to make this program better?

Effectiveness Against Cyberbullying:

10. What are your perceptions of the Bully Busters program that would make it effective (or not) as a program to prevent cyberbullying?

Incident reports

11. When I invited you to participate in my study, you agreed to provide for me a summary of incident reports for the prior and current school year in particular with regard to bullying and cyberbullying. Are you still willing to share that information with me now?

Appendix B: Principal Observation Checklist

Observation Checklist

Participant #: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____
No. Students: _____ Grade level: _____
Bully Busters Lesson
Title:_____

Variety and Pacing of Instruction
The instructor:
_____uses more than one form of instruction
_____pauses after asking questions
_____accepts students responses
_____draws non-participating students into activities/discussions
_____prevents specific students from dominating activities/discussions
_____helps students extend their responses
_____guides the direction of discussion
_____mediates conflict or differences of opinion
_____demonstrates active listening
_____provides explicit directions for active learning tasks (rationale)
_____duration (allows sufficient time to complete tasks such as group work)
_____specifies how learning tasks will be evaluated (if at all)
_____provides opportunities and time for students to practice

Examples of instructor actions or behaviors that support the ratings above.

Organization
The instructor:
_____arrives on time
_____ provides students with goals or objectives for the class session
_____provides an outline or organization for the class session
_____knows how to use the educational technology needed for the class
_____locates class materials as needed
_____makes transitional statements between class segments
_____follows the stated structure
_____conveys the purpose of class activity or assignment
_____completes the scheduled topics
_____summarizes at the end of class (or prompts students to do so)

Examples of instructor actions or behaviors that support the ratings above.

Presentation Skills

The instructor:
_____is audible to all students
_____articulates words so that they are understandable to students, and/or
_____visually represents words that might be difficult for students to hear
_____varies the tone and pitch of voice for emphasis and interest
_____speaks at a pace that permits students to understand and take notes
_____establishes and maintains eye contact
_____avoids over-reliance on reading content from notes, slides, or texts
_____avoids distracting mannerisms
_____uses visual aids effectively (when appropriate to reinforce a concept)
_____effectively uses the classroom space

Examples of instructor actions or behaviors that support the ratings above.

Appendix C: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study titled *"Principals Perceptions of the Bully Busters Program in Combating Cyberbullying in Elementary Schools"*. The researcher is inviting you because you meet two qualifications: (1) You are an elementary school principal; (2) You are currently utilizing the Bully Busters program in your school. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" which allows you to understand this study before deciding to participate. A researcher named Sheila Cuffy, who is a doctoral student at Walden University, is conducting this study.

Background Information
The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the principals' perceptions of the Bully Busters program in elementary schools that utilize this program for its effectiveness (or lack of) in combating cyberbullying.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in:
(1) 15 minute phone interview

(1) 1 to 2 hour personal interview

(1) 1 to 2 hour personal observation while presenting the Bully Busters program to students

(1) 1 to 2 hours preparing data from previous incident reports on bully/cyberbully incidents that occurred in your school

Here are some sample questions:
How do you address cyberbullying when it occurs at your school?
What do you feel are the strengths of the Bully Busters program?

Voluntary Nature of the Study
This study is purely voluntary in nature. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study
Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress, or becoming upset. However, being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. The benefits of this study are that it is likely to yield useful insights into effective cyberbullying prevention techniques utilizing the Bully Busters program that facilitate in combating cyberbullying.

Payment
No payments, gifts, or reimbursements will be given to participants in this research study.

Privacy
Any information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure in a locked file cabinet that the researcher has sole possession of. Data will be kept for a period of at least five years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone @ (xxx) xxx-xxxx and/or email xxxxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-xxx-xxx-xxxx. The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep. Walden University's approval number for this study is 03-14-14-0154711 and it expires on March 13, 2015.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed name of Participant _____

Date of consent _____

Participants Signature _____

Researchers Signature _____