

Chapter 2

Developing an Understanding of Cyberbullying: The Emotional Impact and Struggle to Define

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ABSTRACT

When considering ethical practice for educators in the 21st Century it is imperative that teacher educators, school counselors, and administration are knowledgeable in all aspects of bullying via technology that youth and young adults are experiencing on school campuses throughout the country. The exponential proliferation of technology and social media has brought traditional bullying into cyberspace. The purpose of this chapter is to enhance the reader's understanding of the incidents of cyberbullying, to provide knowledge of the challenges researchers face in operationalizing cyberbullying that will enable all professionals to assist victims, and to proffer techniques that may be implemented in the ethical practice of primary, secondary, or college educators as they work with Millennials and Neo-millennials in the 21st Century classroom.

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INTRODUCTION

Educators in the 21st Century face a new ethical dilemma when considering the use of technology for learning. The plethora of affordable technologies, used by Millennials and Neo-millennials, enhances the need for exploration into how they are used to bully others and the emotional toll that cyberbullying may take. The Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) enable scholars and educators to enhance their research and communication; however, when people are accessible on a 24/7 basis, via cell phones and the WWW, negative circumstances may also develop. All one has to do is read the newspaper or peruse the Web; cyberbullying events and the impact on today's youth and young adults is evident. Without prejudice between small towns or large city campuses, students are often susceptible to the unrelenting attacks, whether by strangers or those known to them.

In order to provide a comprehensive assessment of the events of cyberbullying that impact 21st Century youth and young adults in the United States, this chapter will evaluate literature associated with six main areas:

1. Bullying,
2. The influence of technology,
3. Cyberbullying and the student,
4. The struggle to define cyberbullying,
5. Proposals for cyberbullying education, and
6. Legal implications.

BACKGROUND

Traditional Face-to-Face Bullying

Historically considered an inherent part of childhood the idiom “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words may never hurt me” was often the method provided for youth to deal with schoolyard harassment. It was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that research into the aggressive behavior of bullying began, in Scandinavia. Bullying behavior was termed “*mobbing*” (Norway, Denmark) or “*mobbning*” (Sweden, Finland), and Dan Olweus was the first to apply empirical research to better understand the phenomenon (Olweus, 1993, p. 8).

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