

**Crime Analyst's
Research Digest
Special Edition**

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Literature Reviews

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Introduction

Dear IACA Members,

We are pleased to bring you this special edition of the Crime Analyst's Research Digest, which provides literature reviews of two emerging topics in criminal justice. Both reviews, provided by Portland State University's online undergraduate Criminology and Criminal Justice program, were initially produced for the Portland Police Bureau. These reviews provide a brief overview of scientific literature on Hot Spot Policing and Cyberbullying. The Publications Committee hopes you find the reviews useful and would like to thank Portland State University for providing their work in compiling the reviews.

Some highlights of this issue include:

- A review of the Hot Spot policing literature, originally written in the Fall 2013 for distribution to officers of the Portland Police Bureau. This review includes sections on:
 - Defining Hot Spots
 - Identifying victims and offenders associated with Hot Spots
 - Hot Spot Practices used
 - Policy implications for this emerging practice

- A review of Cyberbullying, originally written in the Spring 2012 for distribution to officers of the Portland Police Bureau. This review includes sections on:
 - Defining Cyberbullying
 - Identifying victims and offenders associated with Cyberbullying
 - The Modus Operandi associated with Cyberbullying
 - Prevention Strategies for Cyberbullying

Another great resource to find more articles and practical application of these theories can be found at the [POP Center website](#). As always, enjoy the Digest, and we welcome any feedback at publications@iaca.net.

Greg Stewart
Guest Editor, Crime Analyst's Research Digest
IACA Publications Committee

Implementing Hot Spot Policing

Summary by:

Senior Capstone - Archiving Crime Prevention Class (Fall 2013):

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Supervised by: Dr Debra Lindberg, Portland State University

Introduction

Crime has the power to disrupt our communities in many ways. It unearths feelings of anger and fear, promotes vulnerability, and often results in effects that are felt long after the crime has been committed. Those enlisted to protect society attempt to target criminal acts before they occur, and may employ tactics that predict future criminal behavior. This compilation of research identifies many questions about the nature of crime and attempts to provide solutions for ongoing analysis and implementation of new policies. The following review focuses on the importance of crime mapping and hot spot policing, while better defining circumstances in which crime plagues a community, city, or country. Emphasis is placed on the definitions, offenders victims and best practices associated with Hot Spot Policing. Detailed examples highlight the varying factors that should be considered prior to adopting this strategy More importantly this review delves deeper than defining hot spot policing, and crime mapping; it aims at establishing a relationship between the distinguishing factors of crime and where government officials and the community can intervene.

Crime prevention requires that agencies understand the underlying issues of crime and act upon educated assumptions of those criminal characteristics. Upon examination there seems to be certain characteristics regarding offenders, including the locations that they choose to commit crimes, and the victims that they choose. Victims tend to show certain patterns within these hot spots that must also be noted and understood. Expanded research and knowledge of offenders, victims, locations, better practices, and policy implementation can be developed to make hot spot policing and crime mapping an even more effective policing tool for the future.

Definition and Prevalence

The idea of hot spots of crime is not a new invention. Reiss (1985) discussed the implications of clusters of crimes and calls for service. However, the formal application of hot spot policing strategies has been growing in popularity, often based on the support of experimental evaluations. There is a growing body of evidence that hot spot policing, e.g. focusing police resources on small areas of highly clustered crime, can aid police in reducing crime (Braga, Papachristos and Hureau,

2012).

Hot spot mapping is a tool utilized by law enforcement to monitor, predict, and prevent future crime. This is accomplished by identifying hot spots and directing additional resources to these areas. Results have varied depending on the area and type of crime. According to Kochel (2011) hot spot policing was conceived during a time of need due to high crime rates and alleged police misbehavior and has been presented as an empirically documented and effective crime tool. Though it did have the support of experimental evaluation, it did not take into consideration non-crime consequences of the hot spot policing (Kochel, 2011) such as its impact on community perceptions of the police. A concern associated with hot spot policing is displacement. When crime relocates to other areas the police-community relations can be effected. The authors examine whether the community notices displaced crime if it is short-term (Sorg, et al. 2013, pp. 72, 76-77).

One thing to be avoided in hot spot policing is the tendency to target areas that have been given sensationalized labels by the media. Wallace (2008) examines the relationship between the media's reporting of crime and how it effects society's perception of crime and where we believe crime occurs. "Dangerous places are marked through their constant invocation in crime stories. Buffalo, the Bronx, Detroit, Camden, and Newark... crime news serve to reinforce rather than impede presuppositions about these places" (Wallace, 2008).

The most efficient use of crime mapping results when maps are guided by crime theories. The U.S. Department of Justice stresses the importance of consistency in the relationship between crime theory, mapping and police actions (U.S. Department of Justice Programs, 2005). In 2008 the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) released a report focusing on violent crime in America. This report, using data from surveys of police agencies, found that many police agencies attributed reductions in violent crime to hot spot policing (Police Executive Research Forum, 2008).

Ultimately, police reform typically begins with a department attempting a new strategy to combat crime. It is through development of a strategy that solutions to rising crime rates become apparent (Kochel, 2011). Better understanding of a criminal situation, and implementation of hot spot strategies, help reduce the impact of future crime and lessens the probability of future victimization.

Victims

This review examined seven articles that contained information on victim characteristics in the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany. The majority of information centers on the geographical characteristics that lead to victimization.

Findings from a 2005 report released by the U.S. Department of Justice on crime mapping hot spots concluded that crime hot spots tend to be along routes where there may be "elevated risks of victimization" (U.S. Department of Justice Programs, 2005). These routes may be specific to an offender's everyday routine, such as convenience stores, gas stations, and other retail outlets. A person's chance of victimization increases when he or she intersects the offender along these nodes of routine. Crime mapping refers to these routes as "hot lines" because they usually occur along major thoroughfares (U.S. Department of Justice Programs, 2005).

One such business that increases a person's risk for victimization is the sexually oriented business (SOB). A study conducted by McCord and Tewksbury (2012) showed that the closer a person lives to an SOB, the higher his or her chances of becoming a victim of a violent, property, or disorder crime. These victims become targets as a result of potential criminals walking through the area on their way to the SOB (p. 1121). "SOBs located in or near residential neighborhoods are likely to draw crime (as well as criminally motivated offenders) to the neighborhood, perhaps facilitating criminal offenses by such offenders as they travel to the SOB" (McCord & Tewksbury, 2012, p. 1121). Another type of business along these hot line routes known for victimization is a check-cashing store. While these types of businesses are common throughout the U.S., it is known that robbers target illegal immigrants because they carry cash due to fear of exposure if they were to utilize bank services (Police Executive Research Forum, 2008).

Casinos are often thought to be hot spots for criminal activity and increased victimization due to the large tourist population they attract. In their study of casinos and crime, Barthe and Stitt (2007) stress the importance of assessing the entire "population at risk" when determining levels of criminal activity. The number of crimes in relation to the total number of people in the tourist setting should be used to acquire an accurate depiction of crime in tourist locations. This will allow police to determine the true crime rate and see if the tourist area is truly a hot spot (pp. 126-128, 130).

Multiple studies have shown certain demographic groups having higher rates of victimization and/or fear of victimization. A study conducted in the United Kingdom found that individuals living in public housing had higher levels of fear of crime than those who lived elsewhere (Gill, et al. 2007). Research also indicates young people are at high risk for victimization. In his study of crime in Germany, Frevel (2013) found young males, aged 16-21, to be the most abundant victims of robberies and assaults (p. 356). Gang activity also contributes to victimization rates. London gang violence resulted in 47 murders from 2007-2008, with the victims being mostly "young African Caribbean males in their teens and early twenties" (Hallsworth & Young, 2008, p. 175). In addition, the use of higher caliber assault rifles in gang shootings has not only resulted in a higher extent of injuries for the targeted victim, but also for the innocent bystander (Police Executive Research Forum, 2008). Better understanding of the locations and demographics that are targeted during acts of crime aid law enforcement in developing characteristics of their offenders.

Offenders

To attain an understanding of the individual committing a crime, law enforcement must understand that offenders are inclined to take advantage of an opportunity crime. Victims often become exposed as targets in these hot zones simply by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Hot spot policing helps circumvent victimization, providing the offender less opportunity to successfully commit the crime. Street hot spots are areas of repeated victimization, often spanning within a relatively short distance of an offender's daily travel. Alternately "hot places" are specific locations, such as a particular business, which drive crime in an area. When analyzing hot spots it is important to avoid confusing actual high crime areas with places which victims go to for help (U.S. Department of Justice 2005).

The journey-to-crime patterns of delinquent youth were studied using data obtained from probation officers to help determine potential crime. It was determined that a youth's primary hangouts, when

not at home or school, along with methods of travel are all relevant variables to consider when assessing the potential crime routes of delinquent youth (Bichler, et al. 2011). Also identifying youth hot spots, an Ashton Estate study looked to focus on “anti-social behavior.” Patrols focused on groups of young people to observe in order to discourage this behavior. Residents felt that this area was being profiled: “most of the young people had a strong sense of being criminalized for living on Ashton, because of its strong reputation for drugs” (Sadler, 2008). Utilizing offender profiles, in conjunction with victim assessment and prevalence of crime, aids in establishing strategies that minimize the effects of future crime by predicting forthcoming behavior.

Hot spots of crime have criminogenic variables that often last over long periods of time. Essentially, past criminal incidents lay the foundation for future criminal activity to occur. Motivated offenders assess their own risks as well as their perceptions of features of the landscape that could help to facilitate new crimes (Caplan et al. 2013). For instance, a study on crime in Reno, NV showed that 22% of the city’s crime incidents occurred within 1,000 feet of casino venues (Barthe & Stitt, 2007). A majority of the city’s drug and liquor crimes, financial crimes, and prostitution/vice crimes occur in these areas (Barthe & Stitt, 2007). Intoxicated patrons leave the premises and fall victim to criminal activity or problematic individuals choose to engage in illegal behaviors outside the venue (Barthe & Stitt, 2007). Also, research shows sexually oriented businesses (SOB) act as gathering places, allowing offenders to prey upon “suitable targets.” Evidence concludes that SOB’s attract criminally motivated offenders (McCord & Tewksbury, 2012, p. 1121). “Providing a visible law enforcement presence in the immediate vicinity of such establishments is an obvious means for counteracting the effects of such businesses” (McCord & Tewksbury, 2012, p. 1121).

In a 2008 PERF research forum, then Los Angeles Police Department Deputy Chief Charlie Beck, attributed 55% of homicides to gang activity. Gang enforcement officers look closely at offenders to identify violent gang members. The officers analyze a specific gang member’s history and possible juvenile record, and link it to current activity. This allows officers to give the top 10 gangs their full attention to lower violent crimes (Police Executive Research Forum, 2008). Members at the PERF critical issue event discussed how exposing gang members pressured them to re-think their criminal involvement.

Better Practices

When focusing on better practices it is necessary to look at implementations that have been tested and proven to work. Better practices are not just a bright idea, but rather something that is tested and recognized as making a difference in policing efforts. “From a theoretical standpoint, environmental criminology suggests displacing crime to another location is likely to result in a reduction in offending as criminals are pushed to commit a crime in a less optimal site” (Ratcliffe, et al. 2011). Ratcliffe and the research team discovered that putting more officers on foot patrols in a known problematic area reduced violent crimes in that area. This pushes criminals to commit crimes in a place that is less ideal.

This research builds on prior experimental evaluations such as Sherman and Weisburd’s 1995 study of the effects of hot spot policing in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Braga, et. al. (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of the impact of over 25 tests of hot spot policing in 19 studies. While not all of these studies included the necessary data to conduct the analysis, the researchers found strong support for the

theory that hot spot policing can generate modest reductions in crime and that not only was crime not displaced, but adjoining areas experienced a “diffusion of benefits” from these programs. Importantly, interventions focusing on problem-oriented policing were found to be superior to those interventions which only focused on increasing police presence.

Increasing traffic stops, while potentially less effective than problem-oriented interventions, has also proven to decrease crime. Though difficult to implement, most of the agencies found that increasing traffic stops and staffing that fixated on certain crime types was appreciated by the public as long as they were not being stopped for minor traffic violations. When agencies did increase the amount of traffic stops, it also increased the amount of people arrested on drug charges (Koper, et al 2011). Similarly, members of the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) advocated for agencies to assess problematic areas and reacted accordingly.

The Dallas, Texas Police Department Disruption Unit has demonstrated success in the number of days they positioned officers in hot spot areas by also using more traffic stops. They focus on rotational saturation deployment and certain sectors that are part of their jurisdiction. They started by conducting traffic stops that resulted in numerous citations and arrests. These citations and arrests reduced disorderly conduct, prostitution and drug distribution (Jang, 2011).

The Prediction Accuracy Index (PAI) focuses on the likelihood of how many offenses a hot spot map can foresee. As a map is broken down into categories, such as percent and certain areas of crime, the PAI-forecasts the next location where crimes may occur. This PAI gives us the ability to compare hot spot mapping and crimes committed to predicting future crime locations (Chainey et al. 2008).

Taylor, et al. (2012) believe that violent offenders often commit crimes that are in close vicinities to their homes. “While these factors might make distant displacement of violence less likely, they may also increase the likelihood of displacement to very nearby areas, at least in the short run” (p. 174). The study showed that problem solving interventions alone caused a reduction in violent crimes by 20% and property crimes by 5% (pp. 173-178).

Additional research into the amount of time necessary to impact crime was conducted by Koper (1995) and experimentally validated by Telep, et al. (2012). This line of research suggests that as little as 11 to 15 minutes of police presence in hot spots can generate lasting reductions in crimes and calls for service.

These various practices have helped the criminal justice system lower rates of crime and keep the public safer. They are again proven to work and are being used by many law enforcement agencies all over the country. Technology, more staffing, and hot spot mapping are just a few of the better practices working in the justice system today. Implementation of effective strategies has the potential to improve and shape hot spot policing outcomes at individual, community, and societal levels.

Implications for Policy and Training

In a study of license plate recognition (LPR) technology, authors, Koper, et al. (2012) offer multiple suggestions for ways in which LPR systems can aid in crime reduction. For reduction of motor vehicle

thefts, the authors suggest having non-sworn officers manning the LPR systems and dispatching “hits” on stolen vehicles to patrol officers in proximity (p. 43). The value seems to come from the use of the cameras being displayed, rather than the identification and incapacitation of offenders. This implies that the visibility of the cameras was the deterrent while also creating a small decline in personal crimes and auto theft (Koper et al.2012).

A 2005 report by the U.S. Department of Justice suggests the combined use of statistical tools and human analysis in the identification of hot spot areas of criminal activity. Relying solely on human intuition or computer algorithms may not produce optimal results (p. 65). Identification of particular crime types (e.g. sexual assault, domestic violence, and robbery) within a crime hot spot is important because it allows police to allocate the appropriate resources to combat the particular crime prevalent in that area. Temporal factors of crime in a hot spot, such as time of day, day of the week, and month of the year must also be assessed prior to implementation (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). In order to determine if crime hot spots occur in high-risk places or in clusters, the authors suggest three steps to investigate. The first step is to use hot spot analysis to determine where crimes cluster spatially in the jurisdiction. Second is to model environmental risks by using the risk terrain model (RTM) to identify high-risk places. Third is to use near-repeat analysis to identify the spatial-temporal nature of hot spots in a jurisdiction (Caplan, et al. 2013).

Findings from the 2008 Police Executive Research Forum Violent Crime in America Critical Incident Series stress the importance of community involvement in combating violent crime. “[Police] Chiefs realize that they cannot be effective if they lack support within the community” (p. 29). Employment, recreation, and other opportunities often cease to exist in neighborhoods plagued by violent crime. It is also important that law enforcement agencies inform all members of the community the intentions of their increased presence (p. 30). Foot patrols show success in hot spot policing but there is a variable that seems to differ among the area being patrolled: time. Sorg et al. (2012) studied foot patrols as “certainty communicating devices” in the community but found that longer deployment time didn’t acquire better deterrence decay (p. 88). Additionally, proactive police presence has an impact on crime (Wells & Wu 2011).

Conclusions

All of these implications have the same common goal: to aid law enforcement officials in improving their policies and training to better serve communities. Undergoing a thorough investigation, the authors of this review showed that hot spot policing and crime mapping are effective tools that can be utilized within the Portland Police Department. A number of studies have shown that these implemented tactics help decrease crime with positive results to help make a healthier community and improved police relations. Certain steps should be implemented in order to effectively apply and employ hot spot policing and crime mapping.

First, it is crucial to identify areas that show higher rates of criminal activity. Studies show that certain business (e.g. casinos, sexual orientated business, and even large tourist locations) cultivate a higher rate of criminal activity such as prostitution, robbery, property crimes, and drugs. Second, it is important to know the characteristics of the offenders, and the patterns of the victims, within the areas that have been identified as hot spot areas. Offenders realize that victims within these areas tend to develop every day pattern, and such opportunistic individuals take advantage of this

knowledge. Third, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) has conducted many surveys throughout the United States with police chiefs and law enforcement personnel, and their findings indicate that implementing hot spot policing correlates to a vast decrease in crime rates. Studies also indicate that community support becomes an integral part of the success of hot spot policing.

This research illustrates the necessity of efficient policing and management of crime control in order to ensure the safety of a community during law enforcement's daily battle to fight crime. Success of these officers in minimizing potential crime correlates to a safer community; a community that will be more inclined to support research of preventative measures.

In summary, agencies looking at hot spot policing may benefit from paying particular attention to the following items:

- Hot spot programs should attempt to link the empirical data used to identify hot spots to crime theory when possible. This should aid in developing solutions to the issues causing the hot spots.
- Hot spots should generally be discrete areas as opposed to larger geographic units and pay particular attention to ensure they do not misidentify locations due to issues with reported location versus the actual location of the crime or issues with geocoding.
- Identifying the particular issues (e.g. specific crimes) or locations (e.g. "hot places") driving hot spots is important because it will allow the appropriate resources to be direct at the problem.
- While activities such as increased traffic stops can help alleviate crime in hot spots, problem-solving interventions can produce significant reductions in crime.

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Prevention of Cyberbullying

Summary by:

Senior Capstone -: Archiving Crime Prevention Class (Spring 2012):

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Introduction

Cyberbullying has become a growing epidemic for our youth today. Bullying behavior, traditionally, has been centralized in schoolhouses and on playgrounds. However, due to the vast number of information and communication technologies available, this is no longer the case. Young people depend on the Internet for social interaction and the numbers of youths involved in this medium have expanded traditional bullying to include cyberbullying. Like traditional bullies, cyberbullies typically know their victim(s) and have explicit intent to hurt others online for pleasure or profit (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, p.152). The majority of the scholarly articles researched indicate the number one useful tool offenders have to commit their crimes is anonymity. We have derived some tips and advice to help prevent others from becoming victims of cyberbullying.

In an effort to learn more, the PSU CCJO Senior Capstone group reviewed recent literature pertinent to the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Students defined cyberbullying and discussed prevalence rates, identified characteristics and other factors associated with victims and offenders, elaborated on *modi operandi* (M.O.s), and gathered suggestions for strategies to prevent cyberbullying.

Definition and Prevalence

To be effective at prevention of cyberbullying, it is important to define it is and how often it occurs. Our team reviewed eight articles which included information on definitions of cyberbullying and its prevalence in society. The act of bullying has been defined as behavior designed to “impose psychological and physical harm to, and social isolation of, one or more victims,” and is generally committed repeatedly over time by one or more person(s) (Lee, 2010, p.155). This non-physical form of bullying can include teasing, harassment and exclusion (Almeida, Johnson, McNamara & Gupta, 2011, pp. 2660-2661). Cyberbullying attacks can occur via e-mail, personal blogs, websites, instant messages, cell phone text messages, multimedia messages, and social networking sites. It includes attempts to control or intimidate with the goal of attaching or defaming others. The wide variety of technological choices nowadays for cyberbullying provides multiple opportunities to expand the availability of potential targets, exponentially (Belsey 2008, p.3; Henson et al. 2011, p.260).

One difference between traditional bullying and cyberbullying is the size of the audience. Traditional bullying has an audience comprised of those in the immediate physical vicinity, while cyberbullying has a virtually limitless audience, constrained only by the number of people with access to a computer or electronic device (Slonje & Smith 2008, p.148). Access to a larger audience, in

combination with the anonymity afforded by the Internet, can act as a “force multiplier” when it comes to heaping ridicule and scorn on another human being in what can be a brutally effective fashion. Li (2007) found as much as 40% of survey respondents, who were victimized, indicated not knowing the person harassing them (p.1782).

The lack of physical presence does not make cyberbullying less significant than the physical form of bullying. In a traditional bully/victim scenario, the intended target is often able walk away in order to avoid the situation. With cyberbullying, the bully can continuously subject the victim to public scorn regardless of the victim’s physical location. Grasping the importance of how prevalent cyberbullying is may aid law enforcement personnel in combating all forms of interpersonal violence, as studies show those who engage in non-physical bullying are more likely to engage in future interpersonal (i.e., physical) violence (Almeida et al. 2011, pp.2660-2661; Reyns et al. 2011, p.1152).

Research conducted in the United Kingdom found just over 20% of students surveyed reported being victims of cyberbullying. Another study found more than 25% of students surveyed had personally been victims of cyberbullying and more than half of those individuals knew someone who had been a victim. In terms of statistics, 20-25% is a significant percentage with regard to victimization and it is likely the numbers will continue to grow as the use of technology expands (Smith, et al. 2006, p.2; Li 2007, p.1786).

From the research results, one could infer cyberbullying is even more prevalent than current research reveals, because fewer than 9% of students admit alerting adults of adults the incidents. This raises concerns of under-reporting, as a whole. Lack of reporting can account for the lower rates of cyber-type bullying as compared to traditional bullying and thereby increases the level of difficulty in addressing the problem. By combining the number of people directly and indirectly affected, the prevalence of cyberbullying is estimated to be up to two times greater than statistics reflect (Patchin & Hinduja 2006, p.161).

Victims

In continuing the evaluation of available research pertaining to cyberbullying, we examined some of the specific characteristics of victims. Several factors are associated with a higher risk of becoming a victim, such as gender, online habits/activities, self-esteem, parental relations, and school performance.

Gender has been found to play a role. Reyns, et al. (2011, p.1162) found that while both males and females can be victims of cyberbullying, being female doubles the risk for both unwanted contact and harassment victimization. Females are at triple the risk for sexual advances and the odds of being stalked online (cyber-stalked) is increased 1.8 times over the risk to males. In addition, males who utilize instant messaging or chat room forums report a higher frequency of nonsexual harassment, while females who make personal information available within their online profiles are at increased risk for nonsexual harassment (Hinduja & Patchin 2008, p.148; Marcum et al. 2010, p.420).

Even though females are more likely to be victims, both male and female victims of cyberbullying share certain characteristics. Being creatures of habit, in terms of online routines, will also put individuals at higher risk of becoming victims. Van Wilsem (2011) found this to be the case, especially

if ones online habits involve activities requiring social interactions, such as chatting, buying products, or visiting Internet communities (p.117). Those who are likely to become repeat victims are unlikely to seek assistance from adults or authority figures. Many victims choose, instead to confide in peers and online friends the majority of the time. Li's (2006) research revealed victims who were cyberbullied, or knew someone being harassed in this manner, preferred to stay quiet rather than to inform adults. The reluctance to seek help from adults stems from the belief that adults are incapable of helping. Additionally, the possible loss of access to social media, once the cyberbullying was discovered, made victims reluctant to seek help from parents (Li 2006, p.166).

Victims of traditional bullying are also more likely to be bullied online and the character traits for both forms are similar: low self-esteem, poor parental relations, and school difficulties. The psychological impacts of victims' experiences can be extremely negative and troublesome over the long-term. Some may be chosen for victimization because they are perceived to be weaker and therefore, easy targets (Katzner, et al. 2009, p.32). Research also indicates children who are bullied in school may attempt to retaliate against their bullies through technological means, which means victims who have been bullied may eventually become bullies themselves. Guardianship (i.e., supervision) also plays a role in who will become victims (and offenders) of cyberbullying. Adults may be in the practice of monitoring their children during daytime and evening hours, but remain unaware of victimizations occurring late at night (Beran & Li 2007, p.18; Patchin & Hinduja 2006, p.162; Belsey, 2008, p.3; Reyns et al., 2011, p.1152; Marcum et al., 2010, p.413).

The number of hours spent online per week is also associated with becoming victims of cyberbullying and the likelihood of cyberbullying victimization increases as Internet activity does. Most victims are youths in junior high school (12 to 15 years old) who spend an average of 18 hours per week online, mainly engaging in activities such as interacting in chat room forums and using text messaging to communicate. Students in this age range account for 15.2% of all cases of cyberbullying, versus only 2.7% who are in high school (16-19 years old) (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008, pp.141).

Offenders

We also reviewed at several studies describing characteristics of online offenders. Cyberbullies are defined as people who have explicit intentions to harm others online for pleasure or profit. They repeatedly pursue their victims via the Internet and other electronic devices with Internet capabilities and cannot be seen, and do not have face-to-face confrontations (Patchin & Hinduja 2006, p.152; Reyns et al., 2011).

Traditional bullies and cyberbullies are both typically male, but online offenders tend to be older than their schoolyard counterparts. Li (2007) concluded males are two times more likely than females to harass others online, while Smith, et al. (2008) and Slonje and Smith (2008) found males to be the offenders 24% to 36% of the time and females were offenders in 12% to 21.4% of documented cases. Traditional bullying can begin in kindergarten and continue through the 12th grade. Cyberbullying tends to increase at 11-16 years of age, which may be related to an increase in the use of technology as children mature (Smith et al., 2008).

While those who bully in a face-to-face fashion receive instant gratification by harassing their victims in person, cyberbullies enjoy the anonymity of online harassment and the ability vigilantly to plot

their attacks. In addition, this anonymity affords online bullies a position of strength in being protected, after a fashion, from victims exacting revenge (Beran & Li 2007).

While some report they use the Internet for bullying purely for its entertainment value, others state they do so because they dislike the victims, are bored, or just want to demonstrate their technological talents. Some bullies were once victims, themselves, and are now resorting to employing the Internet to retaliate and feel vindicated. Research has shown 75% of cyberbullies have been victims of some form of cyberbullying compared to 25% who were never victims. There is also evidence suggesting those who are bullies in school are five times more likely to be bullies online, as well. Race does not play much role in determining who is likely to be an offender (Beran & Li 2007; Patchin & Hinduja 2006, p.162; Vandebosh & Van Cleemput 2008, p.501).

In conclusion, offenders utilize most common modes of technologies with Internet capabilities to complete their objectives. Cyberbullies are typically male, ranging from in age from 11 to 16 years old and are sometimes victims of some type of bullying in the past. Offenders and victims can easily trade places depending on the motive for the assault and it is important to remember the line between victim and bully is often blurred and crosses frequently.

Modus Operandi

Technology, itself, has created a perfect platform for cyberbullies. They victimize others through texts and instant messages, emails, chat rooms, and social networking sites. Some offenders have also learned to hack into personal email accounts to change usernames and passwords, alter victims' contacts, or send their contacts obscene or offensive messages. Attacks from cyberbullies can occur at any time, but violations are most common during school hours. It is an offender's skill with electronic communications devices which allows him/her to operate anonymously in a virtual environment, bullying others with little fear of anyone ever learning his/her true identity. Common methods of victimization include: sending threatening emails, creating humiliating websites, sending harassing text messages, posting derogatory remarks to personal profile pages, posting altered pictures of victims, or harassing via chat room forums. Online harassment and account takeovers may continue and include unwanted sexual advances, threats, and posts of inappropriate or embarrassing pictures or messages (Smith et al., 2008, p.376; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008, p.501).

With an increased number of youths having access to cell phones, cyberbullying is likely to increase, as well. The bullying can last for a few weeks, a few months or even a number of years. While just over half of cyberbullying incidents are limited to a week or two, 10.1% are reported to last several years, according to Smith, et al. (2008, p.381). In addition, the online proximity to motivated offenders directly impacts the possibility of being bullied, wherein offenders will identify a potential victims based on whether or not they (the victims) have allowed strangers access to their profiles, information, and online friends (Reyns et al., 2011, pp.1152, 1158).

It is clear cyberbullying can occur any day, at any time, any location, depending on Internet availability. Cyberbullies are able quickly and efficiently to harass or threaten others for a variety of reasons. Remaining anonymous is important to cyberbullies because it minimizes the chances of being caught.

Prevention Strategies

Hinduja and Patchin (2008) say preventing cyberbullying will require effort from all stakeholders, including children, parents, teachers, law enforcement and others who have a vested interest in preventing this form of harassment. The most effective protection against cyberbullying is limiting the amount of personal information available online, when engaged in online chatting or interacting on other social networking sites, such as Facebook and MySpace. Users are advised to set their pages to “private” and avoid sharing the status of “single” (Marcum et al. 2010, p.124; Henson et al. 2011).

Other research suggests that strategies such as identifying and intervening with traditional bullies, minimizing the chance they will transition in to cyberbullies. It is further recommended parents and other responsible adults understand students’ coping strategies, saying this is paramount, as is teaching them how efficiently to respond to cyberbullies: blocking, ignoring or rejecting communications, as well as reporting abuses to police, parents, and school officials. The most popular way to stop cyberbullying (among students) is simply to ignore the offender, who, it is hoped, will lose interest, if denied a reaction. It may also be effective to start an awareness campaign to inform cyberbullies there could be legal consequences for their actions. Campaigning will also increase awareness in the community of the seriousness of the issue (Smith et al. 2008; Hinduja & Patchin 2008).

Pujazon-Zazik and Park (2010, p.83) advocate calling on children’s healthcare providers to discuss with patients and parents how safely to use the Internet and its potential risks. They also propose placing home computers in a visible area and increasing parental involvement in discussing online risks and how to report abusive or inappropriate behavior to authorities.

Keith and Martin (2005, p.227) recommend victims report every incident to a trusted adult. Once someone has been victimized, he/she should preserve electronic evidence and take further action such as “blocking” the offender, preventing him/her from having the ability to further contact the victim. They also say it is important for parents to be familiar with technology and the capabilities of the Internet so they can utilize effective safety and filtering software to protect their children. Schools can help, too, by setting proper policies with respect to Internet use in conjunction with efforts to educate students and parents.

In the event these prevention strategies fail to stop the harassment, legal action can be taken, although in some instances even legal action may fail to protect victims. At this point victims can make use of tort laws, in addition to their legal actions. This is especially helpful when prosecutors are unable to penalize or otherwise deter people from committing online crimes. Tort laws allow juries to punish offenders financially for their social crimes (Koenig & Rustad 2007, pp.310, 313).

Conclusion

Cyberbullying has become a serious problem. Our literature review has identified cyberbullying as the harassment and threatening of another through electronic means. When narrowed down to a specific type of victim, the literature indicates females, in their teens or early twenties are at greatest risk, but like offenders, anyone using an electronic device is subject to victimization. It is also

important to note that the research suggests those who engage in the riskiest behaviors online are most prone to becoming victims of cyberbullying.

It is safe to say the majority of offenders are teenage males, though anyone who operates an electronic device has the potential to become a cyberbully. Offenders typically use texting and emails to violate their victims, who may also receive messages threatening serious physical harm or death, and sexual harassment. The first step in preventing this crime is to recognize the problem. Proactive methods suggested by the literature are parents and teachers educating children about the dangers of cyberbullying, ignoring the harassment, and reducing exposure to social networking outlets (which includes privatizing personal accounts associated with Facebook, MySpace, etc. so potential offenders cannot access profiles). It is logical to assume anyone has the potential to become a cyberbully and it is therefore, just as logical to assume anyone can and should have an impact on its prevention.

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