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The Influence of Language Choice in Acceptable Use Polices On Students' Locus of Control

Stacy L. Lickteig
University of Nebraska at Omaha

THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE CHOICE IN ACCEPTABLE USE POLICES ON STUDENTS' LOCUS OF CONTROL

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Stacy L. Lickteig

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Supervisory Committee:

Rebecca J. Pasco, Ph. D

Melissa A. Cast-Brede, Ph.D.

Abstract

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Stacy L. Lickteig, Ed.D

University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2017

Advisor: Kay A. Keiser, Ed.D

One of the goals of education is for students to develop critical thinking skills. In order to build those skills, students must become critical and engaged users of information. Students become engaged and critical users of information when they have opportunities to explore and immerse themselves in information from different viewpoints and perspectives. Much of the information accessed by students today is located online. In many school districts, an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) details what type of access students have to information found online.

Using Rotter's Locus of Control Theory, this study seeks to answer the question of how language choice in AUPs influences students' Locus of Control. Previous studies on Locus of Control have demonstrated that students who identify with an external Locus of Control believe that powerful others control their lives. To answer the question, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was utilized to analyze AUPs from eighteen public school districts in the Midwest. CDA is a methodology used to study social inequality through the assertion of power in written communication. The AUPs were analyzed for word choice, frequency, presupposition, and nominalization. Results of the analysis demonstrated that language choices have the potential to influence students' Locus of

Control through the assertion of power. Thus, language in AUPs, which asserts power over students, has the potential to create a restrictive information environment for students. A more restrictive information environment will limit opportunities for students to access diverse information whereas a more open information environment will allow students to question and develop their critical thinking skills.

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Table of Contents

Abstract i

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents v

List of Tables ix

List of Figures xi

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

Problem Statement 5

Acceptable Use Policies 5

Access to Information 7

Skill Development 9

Conceptual Framework 11

Purpose Statement 13

Research Questions 13

Conclusion 14

Chapter 2 Review of Literature 15

Locus of Control 15

Powerful Others 20

Internet and Filtering in Schools 24

Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) 25

Court Challenges to CIPA 27

Effect of CIPA on Staff 29

Effect of CIPA on Students 32

Summary 34

Chapter 3 Methodology 35

Significance of Study 35

Research Design 35

Power 37

Assumptions and Delimitations 38

Research Questions 39

Sample 39

Data Analysis 43

Computer-Assisted Data Analysis 43

Word Choice 43

Frequency 44

Presupposition 45

Nominalization 46

Organization of Findings 48

Summary 48

Chapter 4 Results 49

Presentation of Lexical Analysis of AUPs 49

Word Choice 51

Progressive Language Choice 55

Formal Word Choice 57

Formal Language Word Choice in Sub-Categories 62

Summary 68

Frequency 68

Overlexicalisation 72

Overlexicalisation in Sub-Categories 74

Frequency in Sub-Categories 82

Summary 83

Presupposition 83

Summary 89

Nominalization 89

Summary 95

Conclusion 91

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions 97

Implications for Locus of Control 97

Language Choice 97

Access to Diverse Information 99

Student Achievement 103

Summary 103

Future Concerns 99

Conclusion 108

Suggestions for Future Research 110

References 111

Lists of Tables

Table 1 41

Public School District Demographic Data

Table 2 50

Sample Sub-Categories

Table 3 53

Word Choice – All AUPs

Table 4 56

Progressive Phrases in Word Choice

Table 5 59

Formal Language in Word Choice

Table 6 63

Formal Language Word Choice in Community Types

Table 7 64

Formal Language Word Choice in Membership

Table 8 65

Formal Language Word Choice in Race/Ethnicity

Table 9 66

Formal Language Word Choice in Free/Reduced Lunch Percentage

Table 10 67

Formal Language Word Choice in Special Education Percentage

Table 11 69

Frequency – Top 100 Words

Table 12 73

Frequency - Overlexicalisation

Table 13 76

Frequencies – 7 Access of Information Words

Table 14 77

Overlexicalisation – 7 Access of Information Words, Community Type

Table 15 78

Overlexicalisation – 7 Access of Information Words, Membership

Table 16 79

Overlexicalisaton – 7 Access of Information Words, Race/Ethnicity Percentage

Table 17 80

Overlexicalisation – 7 Access of Information Words, Free/Reduced Lunch

Table 18 81

Overlexicalisation – 7 Access of Information Words, Special Education Percentage

Table 19 84

Presupposition – All AUPs

Table 20 90

Nominalization – All AUPs

List of Figures

Figure 1 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Acceptable Use Policies 48

Figure 2 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Word Choice Characteristics 55

Figure 3 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Formal Language 62

Figure 4 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Presupposition 89

Figure 5 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Nominalization 95

Figure 6 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis 109

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Imagine a world where you have to be careful what you read, what you ask, what you look at. A world where all you seek is online and what you seek is open to everyone's scrutiny. What would the impact of that kind of scrutiny be on your questions, thoughts, and opinions? Would you forge ahead for answers or decide that some questions and knowledge are just not worth the risk?

The idea of big brother watching over the shoulder of average citizens as they explore, question, and access information online seems like the stuff of sci-fi novels. In reality, ongoing surveillance on average citizens is already occurring. The disclosure in June 2013 that the United States government was actively combing through millions of data points from major United States Internet providers sent shock waves through the country (Knickerbocker, 2013). The United States government claimed the surveillance was necessary to find links to terrorism and was only utilized when national security was threatened. Nevertheless, many citizens felt the vast amounts of data collected violated their privacy and set a dangerous precedent ("NSA Surveillance," 2013).

News stories regarding online surveillance unsettled many in the United States. The thought that somewhere an anonymous group of people had access to and might be examining online search history was troubling. Concern was expressed regarding the impact the government's surveillance could have on debate and free expression. In October 2013, a survey was compiled for the PEN American Center on the topic of human rights and free expression. Survey participants were American writers who often research and publish on topics that might be considered sensitive such as the Middle East

or military affairs. Of the 520 survey respondents, 27% indicated that they have practiced forms of self-censorship by not researching online or communicating electronically on topics they perceived to be controversial for fear of retribution (PEN America, 2013). Clearly, just the mere thought that online search history was being collected was enough to stifle curiosity and free expression for writers.

The argument could be made that national security and the process of keeping American citizens safe trumps the limiting of free expression in certain circumstances. While the argument does have some merit, democracy is based on the concept of free expression. Through free expression that society is able to examine ideas and perspectives and generate decisions that propel our country forward (Magi, 2011). The freedom to fully explore sensitive topics is imperative because it…"involves asking tough questions and entertaining all possible answers. To understand how others see the world entails a concerted effort to empathize as deeply as possible, take on other personas, and then write from those perspectives" (Ridout, 2014, para. 10). One could conclude, it is not possible to have an informed and robust democracy if members of said society feel they cannot ask tough questions or immerse themselves in other perspectives in order to understand issues facing our country and world. If writers do not feel comfortable researching and writing on sensitive topics, what does this mean for ordinary citizens? Society depends upon writers to bring ideas and topics to the surface, to provide context for complex issues so that society can move forward.

It might be reasonable to believe that authors who routinely research topics that might be considered sensitive like terrorism or religious wars would be concerned about government monitoring. What about the average citizen, the person who has questions

about topics they have seen in the news such as terrorism or dirty bombs. Should they be concerned about surveillance?

As it turns out, the average citizen is worried about surveillance. Marthews and Tucker (2015) examined data from Google Trends to see if a significant decline in search volume for specific search terms was apparent. The study examined the number of searches for 282 terms identified by Homeland Security concerning national security, Google's top 50 search terms and terms provided from a crowd-sourcing exercise that were considered embarrassing search terms. The data was collected for all of 2013, which includes the time before the revelation of government surveillance and the immediate time after. The data was limited to only search terms that were searched from inside the United States. The results showed a highly significant drop of 5% in overall search volume in the Google Trends search index for terms that correlated with national security terms from Homeland Security. This means the average citizen in the United States searched less for terms considered sensitive by Homeland Security after it was announced the government was compiling that type of data in June of 2013.

Going a step further from the Google Trends study is a study that examined access rates for specific articles in Wikipedia. Like the Google study, this study focused on a source of information that the average citizen accesses on a routine basis. A study by the PEW Research Center in 2011 found that 53% of adult Internet users utilized Wikipedia as their top source for information ("Wikipedia Users," 2011). Penney (2016) was curious to see if there would be a statistical significant decrease in the number of view counts on articles that match terms widely believed to be NSA "watch terms" in Wikipedia.

The study aggregated the article counts for 48 articles over a time period of January 2012 to August of 2014. At first glance, 48 articles seems like a small number to study, but these specific articles had over eighty one million page views in the United States during the course of the study. Clearly, these articles are ones that average citizens are utilizing to help themselves understand what is happening in the world around them. The results of the study were highly statistically significant; there was a 19.5% drop in article counts for the forty-eight articles after the revelation of the United States government surveillance in June of 2013. The design of the study also examined whether the overall article counts for Wikipedia were reduced during the same time. That was not the case as the article counts for all articles increased by nearly 114 million views per month (Penney, 2016). A 19% decrease is overwhelming evidence that the idea of surveillance is enough to result in ordinary citizens not exercising their freedom of expression or their right to information.

At this moment in time, the wealth of the world's information is at our fingertips. We have changed from a society where access to information was once only available to those with money and power to one where Internet access opens the door to unimaginable collections of knowledge. However, having access to unprecedented amounts of information and knowledge no longer matters if members of society feel they cannot freely access the information and knowledge. Not only do citizens need access to information and knowledge, access needs to be unfettered without surveillance. As the studies have shown, surveillance causes people to stop looking for information if they feel there might be repercussions for their actions. In research on intellectual privacy, Richards (2008) found it is essential to ensure intellectual curiosity because it is through

the creative thinking of others that individuals move forward in their own intellectual pursuits. If surveillance is the new norm, then what does this mean for the advancement of society?

Problem Statement

As an adult, the idea is of surveillance is unnerving. As research has shown, the mere idea of surveillance causes adults to limit what they are searching for because they fear potential consequences for accessing certain types of information. In public schools around the United States, students' access information online through school owned devices and through school monitored networks. Every school year, many students, parents and guardians in public schools sign an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in order for students to use school owned devices and to access the Internet through the school's network. School officials monitor all of those devices and networks according to the rules or guidelines in their AUPs. The intent of AUPs can run the gamut from encouraging students to be creative, to question and become critical users of information to situations that only allow students to access information that is considered acceptable in the eyes of the writers of the AUP.

Now, imagine a high school student has questions about the world. Would a school device and school network find answers? Most people would say schools are in the business of helping students to find answers. Knowing about the impact of online surveillance and adults, the answer might change.

Acceptable Use Policies

AUPs first came into practice at public schools with the advent of pagers and mobile phones. The thought was that mobile phones would disrupt class and that pagers

could be used to sell drugs in schools. As a result, policies were needed to govern where pagers and phones could and could not be used in schools. The first AUPs or Internet Safety Policies were simple documents created by principals or technology staff. Over the years, AUPs have evolved to cover the use by students for school owned devices and networks which provide access to the Internet within schools. Many AUPs are under the governance of local school boards. Most policies state not only what students can and cannot do while using a school owned device or while utilizing the school network, but they also cover disciplinary actions that can result if the policy is not followed (Cramer & Hayes, 2010).

There are legitimate reasons for an AUP and the surveillance they bring such as to…"shield students from harmful material and enabling access to beneficial internet resources" (Pierce, 2012, p. 38). The Internet fundamentally changed how we access information. Almost overnight, it became possible to access information within seconds from anywhere. The downside of this instant access was that the Internet was a wide-open space and there were no rules for what types of information could be housed there. For schools, this was a troubling predicament. The Internet has no gatekeeper to keep out items that were truly offensive and had no educational value, such as pornography. Concern was mounting in both schools and communities about what types of content students were being exposed to while using the Internet.

Congress responded to the concerns by enacting the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) in late 2000 (Menuey, 2009). CIPA mandated the use of filters by schools and public libraries. In order to ensure compliance with CIPA, federal money through the E-Rate program was tied to the use of filters ("E-Rate- School," n.d.). The intent of

filters was to stop images that are considered obscene or pornographic from being viewed by students in schools and public libraries. School districts were required to create AUPs that detailed student Internet access and detailed how students were protected from obscene or pornographic images ("Consumer Guide," n.d.).

Access to Information

Pierce (2012) found that many school districts were viewing the CIPA requirement of filters in a more heavy-handed manner. Instead of just filtering out obscene or pornographic images, filters were being used to significantly limit what students could access. As technology has advanced, filtering has changed from not only blocking content to actively tracking student activity. Depending upon the AUP, students might be in an environment where they are closely monitored and any deviation from accepted information could put the student in jeopardy of punishment. The American Civil Liberties Union reported that some students when searching for information on the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network were receiving messages with a stop sign and the statement that the site was blocked and that the student's Internet usage is being monitored and logged (Hampton, 2011).

In exploring the issue of school surveillance, Tucker and Vance (2016) wrote that schools must provide students a safe environment where they can take risks in order to be creative and inquisitive. Utilizing a strong visual sign like a stop sign and a message that Internet usage is being monitored and recorded does not create an environment open to exploration. Instead, it creates an environment with very clear lines of how far students are allowed to explore and question. Barbara Stripling, former president of the American

Library Association (ALA), highlighted the importance of intellectual freedom for students.

> Intellectual freedom incorporates the **freedom** to learn by discovering new ideas; the **freedom to converse** with others, both face-to-face and virtually; the **freedom to confront controversial issues** by seeking information from multiple perspectives and points of view; and the **freedom to participate actively** in a safe and supportive environment (Stripling, 2013, p. 9)

Clearly multiple experts believe that students need to have freedom to truly learn and grow. Why is it so important for students to have the opportunity to be creative and inquisitive?

America's founding fathers were very aware that accessible public education would be essential if the newly formed democracy was to survive and flourish. In a letter to George Wythe, Jefferson stated…"I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom, and happiness" (qtd. in Rayner, 1832, p. 174). Jefferson's words implied that every citizen must have access to information, as that is the basis of education. It is through citizens gaining knowledge to make crucial decisions that will ensure our democracy will stand the test of time. Gainer (2012) writes a "healthy and vibrant democracy requires an engaged citizenry who think critically, take positions on complicated issues, and work collaboratively to solve problems" (p. 14). Thinking critically is only possible when every citizen has access to information in order to make informed decisions. An education that encourages diversity of thought is only possible when information is available to all. Going further, Martin Luther King in an

interview about the purpose of education stated…"Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction" (King, 1947, para 3). Jefferson, Gainer, and King's version of education rests on the premise of access to information. In order to think critically and take positions on complicated issues, students must be able to wade into the messy world of information and find the truth, even when the information could be sensitive or controversial.

Skill Development

The National Center for Children in Poverty reports that 44% of children in the United States live in low-income families (Jiang, Ekono, & Skinner, 2016). It is important to understand that many times the only access low-income students have to the Internet is on school owned devices and through a school network. A study conducted in the winter of 2016 found that of families living below the poverty line, 53% have no home computer and 50% do not have Internet access (Rideout & Katz, 2016). Jefferson said it was crucial that all citizens have access to education for democracy to flourish. Now there is rising concern that meaningful access to information is not provided to all students because of where they access information. ALA issued a policy brief in 2014 that examined the impact of CIPA ten years after it was enacted. One of the findings of the investigation was that students of lower economic status were experiencing the most negative impacts from filtering (Batch, 2014).

Students who have access to the Internet outside of a school network have a greater opportunity to be exposed to information that presents multiple perspectives on issues that might be considered sensitive or controversial. In thinking about public

education…"it's about whether or not we're going to have a meaningful public education in this country and whether it's going to be accessible to large numbers of people who are not wealthy" (Galison, Navasky, Oceskes, Romero & Neier, 2010, p. 1041).

This means we have to ensure that policies that govern access of information for students are positioned to provide equal access for all regardless of income status. Wright and Slate (2015) found that middle school students in Texas, who were identified by the school district as being economically disadvantaged, scored statistically significantly lower in critical thinking skills than students who were not economically disadvantaged. The study examined the reading assessment scores of over one million 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. Of the students, 58.5 % were economically disadvantaged and 41.5% were not economically disadvantaged. A potential reason for this finding for economically disadvantaged students might be that they did not have enough exposure to diverse information. They did not have the skill set that comes with constantly working with different types of information because they might only have access to information on a filtered or monitored network. Students who are not economically disadvantaged most likely have the opportunity to access information outside of a school network and thus are exposed to a wider variety of information. As a result, they are better able to pull apart information and thus better able to support their opinions and thoughts.

In addition to supporting democracy, access to information is crucial for educating students to become creative and critical thinkers. Creative thinking in this case is defined as giving students opportunities to question issues and to come up with numerous solutions. Creativity is about exploring the unknown and trying to see it through multiple lenses (Stokoe, 2012). In order for students to find multiple solutions,

they have to be exposed to a diverse range of information. Clapham (2000) studied the concept of divergent thinking, which he explained as the kind of thinking that is all over the board but results in numerous possible solutions. To study the power of divergent thinking, Clapham devised a study consisting of four groups of students; each group was exposed to one out of four particular type of statements. The statement types were diverse information, emotionally positive, emotionally negative, or neutral statements. The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking was utilized to measure divergent thinking after the students heard the statements. The findings showed that students who were exposed to the diverse information statements scored higher on divergent thinking than the students in the other groups (Clapham, 2000). This study shows the skills students gain when they are exposed to a wide range of information. By having access to diverse perspectives and ideas, students become critical thinkers who are able to evaluate information and find new and unique solutions.

In order for students to become engaged members of society, they need the freedom and the access to explore ideas and issues from multiple perspectives. The learning environment has to be conducive to questioning and divergent thinking. When the only access for some students to information is not only filtered but also monitored, it becomes more challenging for students to become creative, inquisitive, and critical thinkers.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is Social Learning Theory and Locus of Control. Social Learning Theory states that individuals make choices about their behavior based upon the possible outcome of the behavior (Phares, 1976). Individuals

will chose to act in a certain way because of what they believe will happen as a result of their actions. In order to understand why people chose certain actions, we have to examine how much control individuals feel they have over their lives.

Locus of Control is the belief of how much control an individual believes they have in their life. Internal Locus of Control means that an individual believes that the actions that they take and the subsequent result of those actions is a direct result of themselves. It is because of how hard they studied, the knowledge that they learned, or how hard they worked. An individual who has internal Locus of Control ultimately believes they are responsible for their life. External Locus of Control means that individuals believe chance, fate, or powerful others are responsible for what happens in their lives. The actions that an external Locus of Control individual takes do not mean as much because someone else is always in control so the actions of the individual do not matter as much (Lefcout, 1982; Levenson, 1972; Phares, 1976; Rotter, 1966).

Locus of Control says that an individual with external Locus of Control believes they do not have control over their lives. Instead, they believe that chance, fate, or powerful others have control. In a school district, powerful others could be teachers, administrators, and school board members. School boards, attorneys, or technology leaders typically write AUPs and all could be considered powerful others. A student with an external Locus of Control could read an AUP and believe they have no control over what they might want to read or look at while using the school provided network because of the language choices in the AUP. Students, who rebel, risk significant consequences if caught looking for information considered inappropriate. Other students do not question

or pursue what they are interested in, instead they follow and accept what others have deemed is correct and appropriate for them.

To produce students, who will participate and uphold a democratic society, requires that they are able to question and find information that speaks to them. They have to have freedom to become creative, inquisitive, and critical thinkers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine AUPs from public schools in the Midwest to analyze how language choices in AUPs influence students' internal or external Locus of Control.

Research Questions

How Does the Language Choice in Acceptable Use Policies Influence Students' Locus of Control?

1. How does language vary in acceptable use policies for public school districts that provide network access for students?
    a. How do characteristics of the public school district impact the language choices in acceptable use policies?
2. How does language in acceptable use policies communicate/influence Locus of Control?

Conclusion

Providing access to information that is not overly monitored is essential in order for students to become critical and engaged users. Students become critical users of information when they have opportunities to explore and immerse themselves in different viewpoints and perspectives. By looking at the world through someone

else's eyes, students start to understand their world and their own beliefs. The type of environment in which students interact with information often times determines if students become critical and engaged users of information.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Locus of Control

From the start of time, people have been trying to understand and explain why people do the things that they do. Why do some students spend hours studying for tests and other students do not even think about studying? Why do some students keep trying and working even in the face of repeated failures where other students only seem to give a half-hearted attempt and lose interest after one failure? Julian Rotter explored the phenomenon of why people behave in certain ways. Because of his studies, he developed Social Learning Theory to explain the actions of individuals (Rotter, 1966).

Social Learning Theory asserts that people base their actions upon what they expect to receive or what will follow because of their actions. For instance, a student studies for a test and receives a good grade. Social Learning Theory says that the student who studied will be more likely to study for future tests because their expectation is that studying equals a good grade. As individuals experience both familiar and unfamiliar situations, they base their actions on what they expect to have happen as a result. When they receive what they expect, it is reinforced in their mind to do the same sort of action again when faced with a similar situation (Rotter, 1990).

Rotter understood that individuals based their actions on the reinforcement that they received because of their actions "…a reinforcement acts to strengthen an expectancy that a particular behavior or event will be followed by that reinforcement in the future" (Rotter, 1966, p. 2). What he did not yet understand was why individuals chose the type of action they did in response to a situation. Why did some individuals

seem to choose actions based on factors they controlled versus others who seemed to choose actions that did not reflect individual control? After much research, Rotter determined that each individual has a Locus of Control that determines the type of action an individual will select (Rotter, 1975).

Locus of Control asserts that an action of an individual is based upon their belief of how much control they have in their life. An individual can either view a situation with an internal or external Locus of Control orientation. An internal Locus of Control implies that the individual believes that they have control over their life. What happens in their life is a direct result of what they did, what they knew, or how they responded. A student who takes the action of studying for a test is displaying an internal locus of control. An external Locus of Control implies an individual who believes that things happen in their life based on chance, fate, or powerful others. Rotter (1966) found …"that a belief in external control or reinforcements is related to a general passivity" (p. 3). A student who chooses the action of not studying for a test might believe that it does not matter if they study for a test as all test questions are randomly chosen by their teacher. This means that the test questions in the student's eyes are left up to chance, which demonstrates the student has an external Locus of Control (Marks, 1998).

One of the criticisms of Locus of Control is that it is too broad in it categorization of external Locus of Control. An external Locus of Control orientation means an individual bases their actions on a belief in fate, chance, or powerful others. Potentially an individual's external locus behavior could be significantly different if it is based on fate versus a belief in powerful others (Levenson, 1974). It becomes much harder to predict behavior when one view is of an unordered world through fate or chance and one

view is of an ordered world that is controlled by powerful others. Rotter responded to words of criticism by expressing caution on how Locus of Control should be applied to predict behavior saying it was developed …"to allow for a low degree of prediction of behavior across a wide range of potential situations" (Rotter, 1975, p. 62).

Other researchers studying Locus of Control believed there was merit in creating additional scales to explore external Locus of Control further. One such researcher, Hanna Levenson, (1972b) developed a scale, Internality, Powerful Others, and Chance Scale (IPCS), that attempted to definitively decide between internal, powerful others and chance. Levenson believed there was a difference in behaviors between individuals who saw the world as unordered compared to those who saw order in powerful others, …"the reasoning that people who believe the world is unordered (chance) behave and think differently from people who believe the world is ordered but that powerful others are in control" (Levenson, 1973, p. 261). Her scale allowed her to probe a little deeper and go beyond a low degree of prediction to a higher degree of prediction.

Studies utilizing Locus of Control have had mixed results. A handful of studies found that the external Locus of Control powerful others was positive instead of negative. Levenson (1981) believed it was important to demonstrate that an individual could have an external orientation of powerful others and it could be positive as it demonstrated a belief in order versus a belief there is no control.

Johnson (2010) studied the relationship that exists between self-esteem, Locus of Control and the predisposition toward forgiveness in African American and Hispanic female college students. There were 202 participants in the study who completed a variety of scales including the IPC developed by Levenson. The results of the study

showed there was a relationship between the score of powerful others, esteem and forgiveness for African American women. Women who thought higher of themselves scored higher on the powerful others scale and the Heartland Forgiveness Scale. Based on these results, Johnson hypothesized that women who believe in themselves feel more control in their lives and see powerful others as also having more control in their lives. If you believe you have control in your life, it is easier to forgive.

Levenson & Miller (1976) examined the relationship between Locus of Control and social-political activism. She wanted to know if there was a difference between the activism behaviors of those who believed in conservative or liberal ideologies. She conducted three different studies, utilizing college students in all three studies. The first study was conducted with 98 men who completed a measure of conservatism-liberalism, Kerpelman's Activism scale, and Locus of Control scales. Levenson was trying to differentiate with the Locus of Control scales between those who believed in chance and those who believed in powerful others. The second and third study was conducted with 66 women who identified with either leftist political activities or feminist causes. The women all completed multidimensional Locus of Control scales

The results of the studies showed that conservatives' belief in powerful others translated to a belief that powerful others control outcomes. Therefore, it does not really matter what you do because someone else is deciding the outcome, there is no point in marching in the street as the powerful others will not even take notice. "When faced with situations in which powerful others are believed to control outcomes, the activism level of the conservative could be less because the expectancy for success would be low" (Levenson & Miller, 1976, p. 206). The opposite was found to be true for liberals in the

study, they viewed the control of powerful others as positive. The activism levels of liberals increased as result of their powerful others orientation because they saw a path to achieving their goals.

Mendel (1989) studied whether there was a relationship between school attendance and external Locus of Control. Like Levenson, he believed that behavior of individuals who identify with an external Locus of Control do not always behave the same way as if the external locus is a negative. He hypothesized that those who believed in powerful others would have behaviors that were more positive than those who believed in chance. To prove his theory, he developed seven hypotheses intended to separate chance and powerful others by examining attendance rates. His study subjects were 242 tenth grade students. Tenth grade students were chosen because it is the grade level when many students permanently leave school. Mendel reasoned that if students identified with an external Locus of Control, they might be more likely to leave school, as they did not feel in control compared to students who identified with an internal Locus of Control. However, he wondered if students who identified with an external Locus of Control and believed in powerful others might have fewer absences than those who identified with chance. "The recognition that there are others with more power could lead some individuals who have a powerful other expectance to act in a purposeful way to achieve a highly-valued goal" (Mendel, 1989, p. 83).

All seven hypotheses by Mendel were found not to be statistically significant. Some possible reasons for no significance include how powerful others were viewed by students was different that than what the researcher expected. Over 72% of the research subjects were female. Levenson (1976) found that males responded at a higher rate to

powerful others than to chance. Just having significantly more female participants could have skewed the results for Mendel's study. In addition, the particular term where attendance was tracked had the highest attendance rate for students in years.

Powerful Others. Individuals whose orientation is powerful others identify powerful others as a negative. Instead of seeing powerful others as someone who has demonstrated control, individuals see powerful others taking control away from themselves. In the above studies, the participants identified powerful others as something positive, something that they themselves could obtain. The opposite happens when powerful others are viewed as negative. Individuals do not see any chance of taking control, instead they are subjected to whatever the powerful others have put into place.

Woodbury (1997) explored whether Locus of Control was related to career indecision among African-American college students. She wanted to know if gender played a part in career indecision and if there was a relationship between hope, anxiety, and Locus of Control for career indecision. Two hundred forty-four freshmen and sophomores from historically African American colleges participated in the study. The students were given a Student Questionnaire, Career Decision Scale, Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and the Hope Scale. The results showed there was a significant difference between males and females, with males demonstrating more career indecision. Of those who demonstrated career indecision, powerful others emerged as the most likely cause of indecision. Woodbury theorized that African American students perceived powerful others as having control over the workplace and that any attempt on their own to determine their career would be wasted time as powerful others have already determined the path for their life.

Thakur (2010) studied the concept of Locus of Control and powerful others within a community of Mexican Americans. Thakur wanted to know how powerful others affects the parental multidimensional health Locus of Control and childhood obesity. In the United States, Hispanic children have the highest rate of childhood obesity. The study examined factors such as the parental Locus of Control, mother's age, mother's educational level, number of years living in the United States, treatment factors, and the child's gender and age. The questionnaires were given to seventy-four mothers whose children were being monitored by health professionals for obesity. The results found that the older the mother, the more likely for the mother to have a belief in powerful others. Thakur found in this particular case, powerful others were not doctors or nurses giving health or nutrition advice, rather family members and friends. In order to ensure that correct information about nutrition is being accepted and put into action by Hispanic mothers, health professionals will need to address the influence of the community on mothers.

Mulhern (2000) studied the concept of Locus of Control and powerful others in the context of basketball. Mulhern was curious specifically to see how captains and members of the team who were named all-conference players differed on the Locus of Control scale compared to the rest of the players on a team. The study involved 186 college students, the majority of whom where female and in their freshmen year of school. The players were given both a pre and a posttest Sport Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale as well as the Athlete Behavioral Perception Inventory. Results of the pretests showed that players who scored lower scores relating to powerful others did better on the basketball court than those who scored higher on powerful others. In

addition, captains on basketball teams were found to have lower powerful other scores as well. This study shows success on the basketball court is related to how much control the individual players feel they have over their lives. The players, who feel that they have control, do better on the court in terms of scoring and achieving recognition for their playing than those who do not feel in control of their lives.

In examining studies of Locus of Control and powerful others, a trend emerged showing a connection between the score for powerful others and education levels. Long (2006) studied the relationship been health Locus of Control and oral health experience and value. The study consisted of 279 individuals, some from a state university and some from the community surrounding the university. The study participants took the Multidimensional Health Locus of Control which includes a powerful others assessment. The results found that participants whom had less education were more likely to have a higher score for powerful others. Long theorized that those individuals who scored higher on powerful others would be less likely to address their oral health as they believe they do not have control over their health. Instead of being proactive, they would be more likely to wait until the issue was taken out of their hands and someone else made the decision as to what need to be addressed.

Holeman (1986) examined academic achievement of nursing school students as achievement related to Locus of Control. The study consisted of 146 students in six nursing programs in Georgia and Alabama. Academic achievement was measured by the students' cumulative grade point average and Levenson's Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale measured Locus of Control. Results of the study showed that students who scored higher on the powerful others scale had a lower grade point average than students

who scored lower on powerful others. Students who do not feel in control of their lives have a harder time putting in the studying time and do not develop a sense of resilience when life does not go their way because they believe they do not have any control.

Ruzicki (1983) studied the connection between Locus of Control and diabetes education. The study consisted of eighty-nine patients who took the Wallston Multidimensional Health Locus of Control Scale and the Participation/Prescription Preference Rating. The study results indicated that patients who scored higher on the powerful others scale were less likely to enroll in education class about diabetes education. While there could be several explanations for not enrolling in the classes, there is certainly precedent from other Locus of Control studies to imply that patients did not enroll because they felt that education did not matter. Health professionals who are identified as powerful others are the ones who have control over their medical lives and no amount of education on their patient's part is going to change that fact.

The various studies of Locus of Control and powerful others have clearly demonstrated that individuals that identify with external Locus of Control and powerful others believe they have varying degrees of control in their lives. For some, an orientation in powerful others can be positive as it is an indication that control does exist in the world. Powerful others have demonstrated control and thus control is obtainable for others. On the other side, studies have demonstrated that an orientation of external Locus of Control and powerful others can also mean the belief that one can never have control over their own life. These individuals believe that those in control, powerful others, will not surrender the power and therefore it does not matter what type of education or resilience is demonstrated because there is no opportunity for control.

Internet and Filtering in Schools

In the year 2000, the Internet was still relatively new and access to information via the Internet was just starting to take off in schools. With the advent of the Internet, access to information was no longer bound to a physical location. Schools, which at one time could control the information their students encountered, were suddenly thrust into a world where they had no control. With the click of a finger all kinds of information could be found online including content that was questionable in nature. Concern grew within the public as to the nature of some of the information children could access via the Internet. A debate began around the country as to what the government could do to protect students. Soon the issue was pushed to Congress who responded by enacting the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) in late 2000 ("Title XVII," 2000). The goal of CIPA was to alleviate the public's concern as to what materials children could access while using the Internet away from the guidance of a parent or guardian.

Even though the intent of CIPA was to protect children, many groups across the United States came forward to examine the law critically and voice their concerns. Instead of protecting students, many groups such as the American Library Association and the American Civil Liberties Union found the law to be in violation of student's First Amendment Rights. They feared that what was intended to protect would instead cause more harm (Caldwell-Stone, 2013; Finsness, 2008). Unfortunately, their fear has been realized as teachers and students express frustration with the filtering they encounter everyday as they attempt to learn 21st Century skills. In a recent survey compiled by the American Association of School Librarians, 52% of the 4,299 responses reported filtering interferes with student learning (American Library Association, 2012).

Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). The intent of CIPA is to block or filter access by minors to visual depictions which are considered obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors. The first category, obscene, is defined as "…depicting sexual conduct that appeals only to prurient interests, is offensive to community standards, and lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value" (Jaeger & Zheng, 2009, p. 7). Essentially, content is considered obscene if it has no value at all and thus has no context within the educational system (Obscene Visual, n.d.). What makes obscene hard to define and as a result hard to filter is the statement of being offensive to community standards. Every community has different beliefs and ethics and the potential to take the statement of being offensive to community standards and apply the narrowest framework is a distinct possibility. Recently, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Rhode Island published a report examining the question of whether filtering in public education harms students. The report concluded that students in Rhode Island are being denied access to information that is not deemed unacceptable by CIPA standards, but rather found unacceptable by school administrators or officials. The ACLU claimed that Rhode Island schools have filters that are not "viewpoint neutral" as established by *Bradburn v. The North Central Regional Library District (2010)*. This is not a case of the information being found offensive to the community, but rather a small group of individuals making decisions in regards to access of information and which the decisions are not transparent to the community in which they serve (Access Denied, 2013).

Child pornography is defined as "…depicting any form of sexual conduct or lewd exhibitionism involving minors" (Jaeger & Zheng, 2009, p. 7). This definition is clear

and leaves no question as to what content should be filtered. The third category, harmful to minors, is also very clear in its definition. Harmful to minors is anything related to a sexual nature. The standard of what is harmful to minors is applied to what would be harmful to a 17-year-old and not to all minors. In addition, something cannot be considered harmful if there is any serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value when the whole item is considered (146 Cong. Rec. H12100, 2000).

The intent of CIPA is to block images that are considered obscene or pornographic and not to block text or information that can be considered controversial or unorthodox. However, in many cases, filters running on school networks are blocking excessive amounts of text information that is not regulated under CIPA (Caldwell-Stone, 2013; Chmara, 2010). A study conducted in Minnesota looked at whether or not filters block information, which is required in order to; complete some of the Minnesota Academic Standards. The research found excessive filtering and cases where students were unable to access primary sources on topics such as the Ku Klux Klan, which was required by the academic standards in order to show understanding of different perspectives (Fuchs, 2012).

In order to make compliance to CIPA guidelines more attractive to schools, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) tied CIPA to the E-rate program (Federal Communication Commission, n.d. b). E-rate gives schools substantial discounts on Internet access provided they are CIPA certified ("Subpart F- Universal," 2012). Schools must filter or block images as outlined in CIPA and monitor online activity of minors as well as provide education for minors. The certification must be obtained every year by submitting forms to the FCC documenting how minors were monitored, how content was

filtered, and what education about online behavior was taught. As of July 1, 2012, schools must also show they meet the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act (2012) by showing how they educate children about social networking, chat rooms, and cyberbullying (Federal Communication Commission, n.d. a). Ironically, many of the requirements of the 21st Century Act are the very same sites that many schools filter. The American Association of School Libraries found four types of content which are most heavily blocked are social networking sites: IM/online chat, online games, and video services such as YouTube ("Filtering in Schools," 2012). Clearly, there is a disconnect between the intent of the law and the actual implementation in school districts across the United States.

The stakes are high in terms of financial responsibility for school leaders when dealing with CIPA, E-rate, and the FCC. Many school districts would not be able to provide the Internet access they have without E-rate discounts. As a result, many schools are vigilant in making sure they receive CIPA certification every funding year. If a school does not meet certification, they can lose the discount provided by E-rate until they prove compliance. For school districts that knowingly fail to place filters on their computers, the penalty is to pay back any discounts they received during that certification period (146 Cong. Rec. H12100, 2000). Additional research into E-rate penalties paid by schools and libraries revealed that since CIPA was enacted in 2000, not a single school or library has been found to be out of compliance with CIPA (Caldwell-Stone, 2013).

Court Challenges to CIPA. CIPA and the interpretation of it by school districts have not faced many challenges in the court system. However, as technology improves, the ability to filter what CIPA requires without blocking huge chunks of information at

the same time is starting to be expected by the courts. For example, in *Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays v. Camdenton School District* (2012), United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri, Central Division, the court found issue with the filter used by the school district. Camdenton had been using a filter called URBlacklist to be compliant with CIPA. The filter worked by putting information into categories and then blocking certain categories of information such as the category of sexuality. Any information having to do with lesbians or gays was put into the category of sexuality and was blocked by the filter. Information that was considered antigay was put into the category of religion and was not blocked by the filter. The ACLU first brought the issue of blocking pro lesbian and gay sites to the attention of the Missouri school district. A formal written request was made by the ACLU requesting Camdenton to alter its filtering so that pro lesbian or gay sites were not filtered. The district declined to make changes and claimed that it was not preventing students from obtaining information as students had the right to request certain URLs to be unblocked.

After hearing both sides of the argument, the court ruled in the favor of the plaintiffs. One of the reasons stated by the court to rule against Camdenton was "…some students will likely perceive Camdenton's unblocking process as not anonymous and be deterred from using it for that reason. Thus, even if Camdenton's process for requesting that a website be opened is, in fact, anonymous, it still stigmatizes" (*Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc. v. Camdenton R-III School District,* 2012). For students to request a site to be unblocked, they have to know about the site first. Pat Scales of ALA stated that filters are no different from book burning, however, filtering "…is much more subtle and harder to identify" (Winerip, 2012, p. 11). The truth of the

matter is that it is very easy to block information if no one is aware the information exists in the first place. In the trial's closing statement, the judge concluded that Camdenton by continuing to use their filter even after the ACLU made them aware of what they were mistakenly blocking, demonstrated a desire to discriminate (Winerip, 2012). When CIPA was first conceived, there was limited technology to subtly filter content. Now that technology is available, school districts need to be aware of the Missouri court decision to ensure their filters are not unnecessarily blocking categories of information.

Camdenton was not the only school district the ACLU identified with a filter in place that blocked access to pro lesbian and gay sites, Governor Mifflin School District in Pennsylvania has also been notified that they will face legal action if they do not change their filtering policies (Walczak, Block, Roper, & Dunsmoor, 2013). Many school districts have fiercely defended their filtering policies with the argument that they will lose funding if they do not have strict filters in place although not a single library or school district has ever lost funding over what they did not filter. Camdenton is the first school district that has had fines leveled against them because of what they did filter. The court required Camdenton to pay $125,000 in attorneys' fees and in addition, they had to submit to monitoring for 18 months. Clearly, the argument that there is "no harm" in having a strict filtering policy is starting to develop cracks.

Effect of CIPA on Staff. The intent of CIPA is to protect minors from images that are obscene, harmful, or constitute child pornography. To do so, school districts have put filters on their networks, which are designed to block the content outlined by CIPA. There are several different ways in which schools can apply filters, the most common include blocking key words, categories, topics, or URL addresses. In many

cases, technology staff oversee the filtering software, which might not be aware of the curriculum taught. All school districts must provide a way for staff and students to request a website to be unblocked. A few studies have found that staff and students do not request many sites to be unblocked (Fuchs, 2012; Holzhauer, 2009; Vicks, 2013). At first glance, it would seem like the filter must be doing a good job and everyone is content with the information they are able to access. However, when given an opportunity to discuss filtering, many teachers indicated they had given up on the whole process because they felt their opinions did not matter (Finsness, 2008; Holzhauer, 2009; Rodgers, 2012).

The very nature of filters causes content to be blocked that is not offensive and not required to be filtered by CIPA. Chmara found filters "…restrict access to vast amounts of material that would be deemed educationally suitable for minors and could not be categorized as pervasively vulgar, obscene, harmful to minors, or child pornography" (2010, p. 17). Holzhauer (2009) found in many cases filters are stopping teachers from even attempting certain types of assignments when they know that the information students need to have access to cannot be retrieved at school due to filtering. The question of access to information is one raised by teachers and students as they compare what resources they have available in the filtered school environment as compared to the unfiltered environment outside of school. The new digital divide we live in is not dependent on access to devices, but rather dependent upon access to an unfiltered Internet. Batch (2014) in a brief on the impact of CIPA after ten years found "…in schools, over-blocking content to manage classrooms, limit exposure to complex

and challenging websites, or curtail the use of interactive platforms has numerous unintended consequences for students" (p. 28).

CIPA guidelines state that both children and adults must be protected from images that are obscene as well as from child pornography. In addition, minors must also be protected from harmful material. However, a supervisor has the authority to "…disable the technology protection measure concerned, during use by an adult, to enable access for bona fide research or other lawful purpose" (Federal Communications Commission, 2012). Although the requirement is to always have a filter running for obscene or pornographic content, there is no requirement stating that staff members must always have Internet access that is filtered at the same level as students. Many school districts utilize just one level for filtering regardless of whether it is an adult or a child accessing the Internet. In some cases, this can mean that staff members do not have access to valuable educational content based upon how CIPA is interpreted at their district or school level.

Karen Cator, a former Director of Education Technology for the Department of Education, was interviewed as to the rights teachers have under CIPA. One of the common questions she often hears is whether blocking YouTube is a requirement for compliance with CIPA. Her answer was that YouTube does not need to be blocked and it should be available as it is a great tool for teachers. Another question relating to a common misconception of CIPA is that if a school district unblocks appropriate websites, which are otherwise filtered, will they will lose E-rate. Cator replied that she is not aware of any districts losing funding by unblocking appropriate sites (Baresghian, 2011). Clearly, there is a need for some clarification and perhaps re-teaching by the FCC as to

the intent of CIPA and its relation to E-rate. The fear of losing funding for Internet access may be prompting some school districts to enact policies that are not aligned with the intention of the FCC.

Effect of CIPA on Students. One of the leading reasons for enacting CIPA was to ensure the safety of students in an online world. Yan (2008) examined whether high school students who were online in a CIPA restricted environment had a better understanding of Internet safety as compared to college students who were in an unrestricted online environment. The study found that there was no significant difference between the Internet safety knowledge of high school students as compared to college students. Simply put, high school students were still accessing all kinds of materials just not at school on a restricted environment. Therefore, the filtering put in place, simply meant that students learned to circumvent the restricted environment and find access elsewhere.

Not all school districts have taken the blanket approach to filtering. Some, such as White Oak Independent School District in Texas, have approached the idea of CIPA compliance with a different point of view. They filter all of the content required by CIPA, but they stop there. Instead of the technology department making decisions of what content should be filtered, the decisions are left to the staff and, in a sense, the community. "What is blocked and unblocked should be shaped by the expressed, not perceived, needs of the users. I look first to the teachers, then to administrators. They have the connections to the community at large, whose values we must reflect" (Adams, 2010, p. 36). In many cases, it is the teachers who are the experts in their curriculum who have the best grasp on what educational content should be utilized in a school setting.

The problem with filtering first and then allowing teachers to request sites to be unblocked is that teachers might only have access to the internet at school and therefore not know what educational content they might be missing. White Oak also uses the argument that intensive filtering causes students to find information elsewhere and as a result, they are potentially missing the piece of how to sort through information to find what is appropriate. The belief in White Oak is that students need to experience an Internet which is not heavily filtered and that through teaching, students will learn appropriate online behavior. White Oak is keeping true to the intent of the law set by the *Board of Education v. Pico* (1982), which said that students--just like adults--must have access to materials of varying perspectives and biases in order to prepare for life beyond school. By keeping the technology department under the supervision of Curriculum and Learning, White Oak also sends a strong message that the educational needs of students are their first priority rather than technology.

When CIPA was first enacted in 2000, not many people could have predicted the world we live in today and how connected we are to technology. Many school districts are now moving toward the concept of one-to-one computers for students. The computers go home with students and, in some cases, might be the only access an entire family has to a computer. CIPA was enacted as a way to alleviate concerns for parents and guardians as their children accessed the Internet away from their guidance. Should the same rules and thus the same filters be placed on the student and their family when the computer goes home with the student and the parent or guardian is present? Currently there is not a specific answer from the FCC except for "…if schools are paying for 3G connectivity on these devices, then yes, CIPA applies. Otherwise 'it's a gray

area'" (When School Web Filtering, 2012). The issue is not really about compliance to CIPA, but rather the interpretation of CIPA by the school district and the resulting level of filtering software on the computer. If students are only able to access information on a heavily filtered network, the student is only exposed to viewpoints, which might be limited and slanted towards a specific perspective as illustrated by the Camdenton School District and their filtering software.

Summary

There is no doubt that CIPA is necessary in schools to protect children from content, which is obscene, pornographic, or harmful to minors. However, there is fine line between protecting children from specific content and blocking access to information just on the idea that there could be something inappropriate within the content. As more of the world's knowledge shifts to existing only in the virtual world, we must protect access to information even as we protect our children from certain types of information.

Locus of Control provides a way to understand why individuals chose to act in a particular manner. By diving further into Locus of Control through the examination of the belief of powerful others, it becomes possible to see how actions of individuals are influenced by the concept of power

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this CDA research study was to examine Acceptable Use Policies from public schools in the Midwest that provide network access for students to see how the language varies in the policies. The language was analyzed to determine its influence on students' internal or external Locus of Control.

Significance of Study

Access to information is crucial in order for students to become engaged critical users of information. This study will demonstrate that in order for students to become critical users of information they have to know and understand that they have both the opportunity and the freedom to access and explore information. The language choices in AUPs can communicate to a student either that the information environment is open or that it is restrictive.

Research Design

CDA is a methodology used to study social inequality through the examination of written, spoken, or visual forms of communication. "In the most general terms, the purpose of analyzing a text is to explain the impact that it makes: why it means what it does, and why it gives the particular impression that it does" (Halliday, 2004, p. 658). CDA can be used to examine and critically analyze any form of communication such as a newspaper article, policy, textbook, or even a televised political speech. The methodology of CDA provides a means for researchers to examine the opaqueness of language in order to look beyond what at first glance seems simple and transparent (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 1993).

CDA traces its history back to scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun Van Diijk, and Ruth Wodak. These scholars believe that language is a social phenomena (Bloome & Talwalkar, 1997). This means that not only does language shape society but also language in turn is shaped by society (Fairclough, 1992; Van Diijk, 1997; Wodak, 2009). CDA examines this relationship between language and society by uncovering ideologies that are hidden in all types of communication formats (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Ideology is defined as the views individuals have as to how society should be organized (Machin & Mayr, 2015). In other words, ideology influences how individuals believe other individuals should believe and act within society.

Ideology is rooted in power. Fairclough (2001) states, "…the exercise of power, in modern society, is increasingly achieved through ideology and more particularly through the ideological workings of language" (2). CDA attempts to identify instances of dominance, which is the exercise of social power by elites, institutions, or groups that result in social inequality for others. Social inequality refers to socially defined categories of people based on aspects such as gender, age, or race and their access to social goods such as education, jobs, income, or information (Van Dijk, 2008). Social power occurs when certain privileged elites, groups, or institutions have access to socially valued resources like income, jobs, education, and information. When those with social power use their access to resources to deny or limit others access to resources, social inequality occurs.

CDA researchers examine the use of power within communication through a critical lens. In CDA methodology, the term critical means to identify discourses within communication. Discourses are things like participants, values, ideas, settings, or a

sequence of activities (Machin & Mayr, 2015). Researchers identify within a communication where assumptions are made, complex ideas are simplified to reduce resistance or where responsibility for actions is not clear (Gee, 2014b; Wodak, 1999).

Power. By identifying and critically examining specific discourses, it becomes transparent how power is exercised and extended through the use of language. Power is not only about denying something or someone but also about what is allowed to grow. Foucault (1980) found that power is pervasive in society not because of power itself, but because of what it creates. "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (p. 119). Simply put, power is an invasive part of society that, if not carefully restricted and monitored, takes over everything until it becomes the normal landscape. As a result, social inequality becomes the normality for the majority and the majority of the population with social power continues to communicate in ways to ensure their dominance.

The intent of CDA is to direct light and attention upon communication that enables social inequality. CDA research also endeavors to bring about change. "These dimensions are the object of moral and political evaluation and analyzing them should have effects in society: empowering the powerless, giving voices to the voiceless, exposing power abuse, and mobilizing people to remedy social wrongs" (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 449). CDA tries to change the world through careful examination of how power is exercised through communication. By utilizing a CDA methodology, the

research will not only identify areas of dominance but also provide ways in which the issue analyzed can be remedied.

Kendall (2007) in an interview with Ruth Wodak discussed the fact that CDA has no specific methodology. Wodak believes that all CDA studies have their own unique methodology and tools that are utilized in order to uncover social inequality and power. As a result, the researcher must carefully balance the line between what they believe and what they are analyzing.

Thus, CDA requires a constant balancing between theory and empirical phenomena. Analyses should neither be purely inductive nor deductive, but abductive, in which analysts are explicit about what they are actually doing. This means that members of a culture (including researchers) will work to understand their own culture and, rather than pronouncing truths, propose interpretations and solutions to perceived problems (Wodak, 1999, p. 186)

Assumptions and Delimitations

Creswell (2014) states the researcher must explicitly explain their background and past experiences in order to help the reader understand both the researcher and the study. Expanding further, Savin-Badin and Major (2013) instruct the researcher that they must clearly acknowledge their biases and values to the reader. The researcher for this study is a white female who grew up with opportunities and privileges. She was raised with the belief that questioning is not only a part of the learning process, but that questioning is essential to moving society forward. This researcher acknowledges that her bias is the fundamental belief that knowledge should be accessible to all. As an educator, she works in a filtered world where there is constant tension to protect students from obscene,

pornographic, or harmful images while also providing an environment that allows students to question and take age appropriate risks while online.

This study is limited because AUPs were only analyzed from 18 public school districts in the Midwest. As the AUPs were taken directly from the websites for each school district, there is the possibility that the posted AUP is not current and or not a policy that is adhered to by the school district currently. Another potential limitation is that the researcher was unable to discern from the AUPs whether the school district had a 1:1 device environment for students or if Internet access for students at school was only in traditional lab settings.

Research Questions

How Does the Language Choice in Acceptable Use Policies Influence Students' Locus of Control?

1. How does language vary in acceptable use policies for public school districts that provide network access for students?
    a. How do characteristics of the public school district impact the language choices in acceptable use policies?
2. How does language in acceptable use policies communicate/influence Locus of Control?

Sample

The sample for this research study is from public school districts in the Midwest. The school districts were selected by their geographic proximity and or their similarities in student population size, race, and ethnicity. Demographic data for the public school

districts was gathered from a State Department of Education website. The data provided is from the 2014-2015 school year.

Student populations in the public school districts range from 836 to over 52,000 students. Two of the 18 school districts are in urban areas, seven are in suburban areas, and nine are in rural areas. In terms of geographic proximity, eight of the school districts are located within 30 miles of each other. The remaining ten other school districts are dispersed across the Midwest with the furthest school district located over two hundred miles from the cluster of the eight school districts.

The school districts range in percentage of Free or Reduced Lunch Rates from a low of 6.91% to a high of 76.59%. All of the school districts serve special education populations ranging from 8.40% to 16.95% of their total student populations. Race and ethnicity for the three largest reported categories is included in the below table. Of the eighteen public school districts, fourteen have a majority of White students and four have a majority of Hispanic students.

Table 1

Public School District Demographic Data

Public School District	Membership	Race/Ethnicity Percentage	Free/Reduced Lunch Percentage	Special Education Percentage
1	10,076	Black – 8.91 Hispanic – 11.18 White – 71.84	37.81	16.99
2	2,995	Black – 5.8 Hispanic – 74.0 White – 16.16	73.72	10.31
3	4,280	Black – 1.17 Hispanic – 14.28 White – 80.16	45.58	16.06
4	836	Black – 2.39 Hispanic – 4.90 White – 89.11	32.42	13.72
5	7,553	Black – 1.32 Hispanic – 3.40 White – 89.34	6.91	8.40
6	3,953	Black – 1.14 Hispanic – 2.07 White – 94.38	9.16	11.48
7	23,702	Black – 3.10 Hispanic – 7.29 White – 80.54	17.99	12.94
8	51,928	Black – 25.54 Hispanic – 33.30 White – 30.05	73.26	16.95
9	11,404	Black – 5.10 Hispanic – 7.60 White – 80.84	19.95	11.51
10	3,179	Black – 7.23 Hispanic – 27.71 White – 58.00	54.04	16.81
11	6,106	Black – 8.88 Hispanic – 6.34 White – 75.00	31.90	15.55

12	39,034	Black – 6.30 Hispanic – 13.05 White – 67.71	42.60	14.69
13	4,754	Black – 1.43 Hispanic – 27.28 White – 69.14	60.45	18.32
14	2,329	Black – 1.20 Hispanic – 4.04 White – 91.84	24.09	13.06
15	1,961	Black – 1.48 Hispanic – 81.94 White – 15.40	76.59	9.14
16	9,553	Black – 3.97 Hispanic – 48.53 White – 44.36	65.53	13.57
17	5,374	Black – 1.49 Hispanic – 12.88 White – 82.47	39.06	13.59
18	3,740	Black – 0.91 Hispanic – 36.98 White – 58.90	50.45	15.81

Data Analysis

For this study, Acceptable Use Policies (AUP) was obtained from each of the eighteen public school districts. As the documents are policy, they are available to the general public. As such, the AUPs for each school district can be found on their respective webpages. The researcher located and download each AUP to a secure server on the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus. Each school district was assigned a number, which was only known to the researcher. To ensure confidentiality, demographic data and the specific AUP for each school district was given a matching number that was only known to the researcher.

Computer-Assisted Data Analysis. CDA research requires careful lexical analysis of text by the researcher. In order to ensure accuracy while examining items like word frequency, the researcher will utilize a text analysis software program. MAXQDA allows the researcher to accurately examine single or word combination frequencies. The text of the AUPs for each school district will be loaded into MAXQDA to allow a lexical examination of each document separately as well as providing an overall analysis of all of the AUPs.

Word Choice. Lexical analysis is the process of examining word choice in communication. Communication encompasses spoken, written, and visual formats. Word choice can be as simple as examining a word for its meaning. Word choice can also mean to scrutinize whether a word or a combination of words are perceived as formal or informal. A formal word implies a sense of power or authority by the speaker over the receiver of the communication. An informal word implies a sense of connection or the speaker and the receiver of the communication being on the same level. An

example of a formal word choice is endeavor versus an informal choice of try. Both words have the same meaning, but endeavor carries a sense of importance and implies only a select group could endeavor to do something. The word try is language at its most simple and humble form and thus accessible to all members of society. Fairclough (1995) believes that formal language is one way for an institution to remain distanced from the people that it serves.

An example of formal language from an AUP could be something similar to this statement: Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes. In the above statement, the words bona fide could be considered formal. The accepted meaning of bona fide is made with good intent, earnest intent or genuine ("Bona Fide," n.d.). By using the wording bona fide research instead of teacher assigned research, the author of the statement is trying to create an impression of a very formal situation. Technology protection measures will only be minimized if the research is considered to be genuine, with good intent. That statement implies there is a rigorous process for determining if the research meets the "bona fide" test to qualify as research. As referenced by Fairclough (1995) formal language helps to create a distance between an institution and those whom it serves. Informal language like teacher assigned research imply a cooperative relationship between those who provide access to technology and those provide instruction.

Frequency. Word choice can also be examined by the frequency that a word appears in a communication. The higher the word count of a particular word, the more emphasis the author is placing upon that word (Gee, 2014a). Another way to look at

frequency is to examine overlexicalisation, which is the use of a particular word and its synonyms in order to persuade. "Overlexicalisation gives a sense of over-persuasion and is normally evidence that something is problematic or of ideological contention" (Machin & Mayr, 2015, p. 37). By examining the frequency of word choice, the examination can show hidden power that lies behind the word choice.

An example of overlexicalisation within an AUP could be the number of times that the word punishment shows up in the text. An AUP where the word punishment shows up frequently indicates a policy where power is clearly held and enacted through those who have control over the access to technology. On the other side, if the frequency for words like engaged, curiosity or critical thinking skills was high, then the policy might be considered power neutral.

Presupposition. Another way to examine communication is by looking for language that makes assumptions of the beliefs of the reader. The author takes the position that beliefs expressed in the communication are already accepted. As such, the language utilized might gloss over issues and try to reduce them in significance in order to ensure that the reader does not question what is presented. The action of implying certain ideas as already accepted is referred to as presupposition. While there might be instances where presupposition could be viewed as innocent, there are also times where it is considered manipulative. Similar to overlexicalisation, presupposition carries the weight of ideology. "But presuppositions can also have ideological functions, when what they assume has the character of 'common sense in the service of power'"(Fairclough, 2001, p. 128). By using specific phrases and word placement, an author can subtly convince individuals that they agree with the author and thus the author has power over

the individuals. Going further, Fairclough stated, "Presuppositions are effective ways to manipulate people, because they are often difficult to challenge" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 121). Since the language implies shared beliefs by the author and the audience, it becomes difficult to show that the author is not representing everyone's beliefs in the communication.

The following statement is an example of a presupposition in an AUP: *Unauthorized use of District computers in an attempt to gain access to inappropriate or unsanctioned material.* It is not clear from the statement what 'unsanctioned material' might mean. By writing the statement with undefined words, the author is making the assumption that the audience agrees that unauthorized use of computers is when a student tries to access materials that are unsanctioned. Making the category of unsanctioned assumes there is a community agreement as to what is acceptable or not for students to access while using school resources. A community does not determine acceptable or not acceptable content in most cases.

Nominalization. In addition to looking at word choice and presupposition, language can also be examined for nominalization. Nominalization occurs when an author changes a verb process into a noun construction. By making the verb passive, it is easier for the author to hide who or what is responsible for an action. Halliday (2004) found that the use of nominalization in communication is one way in which to demonstrate a level of power and prestige. In addition, nominalization can be used to give the impression that events just happen and are not the direct result of individuals taking specific action. By removing the connection of action away from individuals, it makes it much harder to identify and question what is happening since it appears the

action happened as a result of fate or something and not by a specific individual or group of individuals.

Nominalization is also a way to generalize and provide a way to present an action or a series of events in an abstract way. The action of nominalization was first utilized in scientific and technical writing and it eventually came to be utilized in government or institutional communication like policies. Nominalization can make very complex issues, solutions seem straightforward, and something that everyone would agree upon. However, "…such generalization and abstraction, for instance in the genres of governance, can erase or even suppress difference. It can also obfuscate agency, and therefore responsibility, and social divisions" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 144). They can be used to make arguments more believable or to delegitimize other arguments. Nominalization is one way in which power can be enacted by institutions upon individuals in a way that is not visible except through critical analysis.

Nominalization could look like this statement in an AUP*: In accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act, the District will monitor computer usage and employ technology protection measures. The District may inspect, copy, review, transfer, and store, at any time and without prior notice, and all usage of the district's computers, computer network, Internet access and any and all information transmitted or received (including e-mail).* This statement shows a school district using the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) as a shield. It makes it appear that the school district is only acting as an agent for CIPA and it is because of CIPA that the district has to monitor computer usage. As a result, it appears that any filtering or limiting of access is the result of CIPA and not because of decisions made at a district level.

Organization of Findings

The findings of the study will be organized in a manner that represents the AUPs on a spectrum from restrictive to open access. By examining word choice, frequency, presupposition, and nominalization, it will be possible to determine if the language choices prompt an open or restrictive information environment.

Figure 1 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Acceptable Use Policies

Developed by Stacy Lickteig, 2017

Summary

CDA allows the researcher to closely examine communication in order to identify social inequality and the disbursement of power. By critically analyzing AUPs from public school districts in the Midwest, the researcher hopes to provide evidence that language choice is critical. The following chapter will present the data analysis of the current study.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Presentation of Lexical Analysis of AUPs

Chapter 4 presents the lexical analysis of the AUPs. The purpose of this study was to analyze how language choice in AUPs influences students' internal or external Locus of Control. For this study, AUPs were obtained from eighteen public school districts in the Midwest. The public school districts were selected by their geographic proximity and or their similarities in community type, student membership size, race and ethnicity, free and or reduced lunch percentage, and special education percentage. The AUPs were analyzed by the researcher through the lens of CDA by examining word choice, frequency, presupposition, and nominalization. The results of the research are presented for each category of lexical analysis by first presenting the results for all eighteen AUPs and then by presenting the results by the sub-categories within the sample. The following table presents the sub-categories.

Table 2

Sample Sub-Categories

Community Type	**Membership**	**Race/Ethnicity Percentage**	**Free/Reduced Lunch Percentage**	**Special Education Percentage**
Rural	Under 5,000	Non-White Majority	Under 10%	Under 12%
Suburban	5,000 to 20,000	White Majority	Between 10% and 50%	Over 12%
Urban	Over 20,000		Over 50%	

This study demonstrates that in order for students to become critical users of information they have to know and understand that they have both the opportunity and the freedom to access and explore information. The language choices in AUPs can either communicate to a student that the information environment is open or that it is restrictive. Research was based on the following questions:

1. How does language vary in acceptable use policies for public school districts that provide network access for students?
    a. How do characteristics of the public school district impact the language choices in acceptable use policies?
2. How does language in acceptable use policies communicate/influence Locus of Control?

Word Choice

The first step in the lexical analysis is to examine word choice. To do that, the researcher uploaded the AUPs into MAXQDA which is a text analysis software. The software generated a list of all the words found within the documents. The eighteen documents contained 18,234 words of which 2,061 were unique. By examining the list of unique words, the researcher was able to identify and analysis the language choices made by the school districts within the various AUPs. Next, the researcher narrowed the list of words by selecting only words or phrases in relation to the concepts of access, choice, and authority. Phrases were included because the researcher determined that only considering single words would not fully capture the nuances of the language choices. Eighty-eight words and or phrases were identified as relating to access, choice, and authority. The resulting language choices found by the researcher provided answers for

question one by demonstrating the variety of word choice found within the AUPs.

Table 3
Word Choice – All AUPs

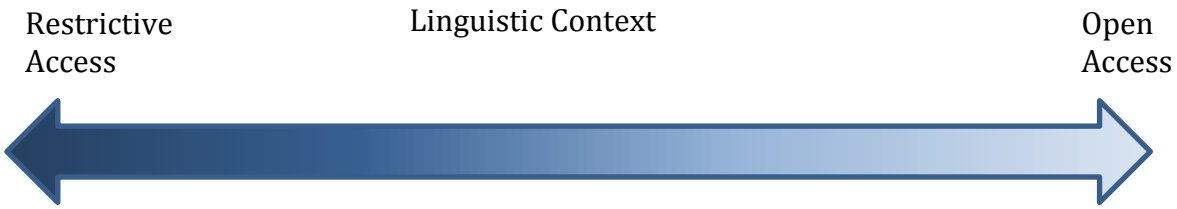
21st Century Learning	Filtering	promote higher level thinking skills
acceptable	Filters	prosecuted
access	Forbidden	protected
accordance	Harm	protecting
adult content	Harmful	protection
age appropriate technology	Illegal	referral
anywhere/anytime educational opportunities	Improper	regulations
appropriate	inappropriate	research
approved	Law	responsibility
authorize	law enforcement	responsible and ethical digital citizens
awareness and responsibilities of each user	Lawful	restrict
behavior	lawful purposes	restriction
block	Legal	restrictions
blocking	Legitimate	safe
blocks	Lewd	safety
bona fide research	Limitations	sanctions
can	Limited	security
comply	maximize opportunities, minimize barriers	shall not
connect class work with experiences beyond the classroom	Monitor	suitable
consequences	Monitored	supervise
controversial	Monitoring	supervision
disabled	Normal	suspension
disciplinary	Not	unacceptable
discipline	Offensive	unauthorized
enforce	Permission	unethical
ensure academic success for all students	Prevent	unlawful
ethical	Privilege	violation
expectations	Privileges	violations
expulsion	Prohibited	
filter	Promote	

Word choice was analyzed to examine the language choices in the AUPs. In the eighteen AUPs, there were 18, 234 words, of which 2,061 were unique. When examining the words and phrases, it was interesting to note how many of the words and phrases related to the concept of access, choice, and authority. When writing policy, school districts have a duty to explain the intent of the policy, the reason behind the policy, and the resulting actions if the policy is not followed. Therefore, word choice plays a very important role. By analyzing the language choices, it can be determined whether the intent of the policy is to create a restrictive or open information environment.

At first glance, some of the words that stand out in the AUPs are the words that refer to authority. Rather, the actions the authority will take if the policy is not followed. Words like *expulsion, law enforcement, prosecuted, suspension* and *sanctions*. These words immediately conjure up images of police cars and courtrooms. They certainly hint at a policy intent on creating a restrictive information environment. Another phrase that stands out is *shall not*. Using the phrase *shall not* instead of *will not* which is more commonly heard by students, immediately implies a sense of power and authority. It places students in a position where they really cannot explore information or question outside of what is implicitly stated in the AUP that they can access. While the phrase *will not* means the same as *shall not*, students hear and see the phrase *will not* all the time while at school and thus it is part of their everyday vocabulary. Because *will not* is so familiar it does not carry the same weight of power or authority as *shall not*. The phrase *shall not* appeared 112 times in the AUPs, *will not* only appeared six times. Words like *acceptable, access* and *expectations* are in the middle of the spectrum because depending upon the linguistic context, those words could either describe a restrictive information

environment, an open information environment, or an environment somewhere in the middle.

Figure 2 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Word Choice Characteristics



Bona fide research	Acceptable	21st Century Learning
Controversial	Access	Age appropriate technology
Expulsion	Consequences	Anywhere/anytime educational opportunities
Forbidden	Expectations	Can
Harmful	Filters	Minimize barriers, maximize opportunities
Illegal	Limitations	Promote higher level thinking skills
Monitor	Restrict	Responsible and ethical digital citizens
Privilege	Safety	
Prosecuted	Security	
Referral	Supervision	
Shall not		
Unethical		
Unlawful		

Progressive Language Choice. The interesting finding in word choice for sub-categories was the inclusion of progressive phrases. The researcher defined progressive phrases to be those that indicate the concept of access to information and the furthering of education of students. Three AUPs included phrases that indicate a more open information environment. All three school districts with progressive language were in the AUPs are in the sub-category of Non-White majority. The following table lists the progressive words phrases found in the three AUPs.

Table 4
Progressive Phrases in Word Choice

21st Century Learning
anywhere/anytime educational opportunities
connect class work with experiences beyond the classroom
ensure academic success for all students
expand academic resources beyond the classroom and school
exposed to age appropriate technology in the classroom.
higher level thinking skills
minimize barriers and maximize opportunities
promote awareness and responsibilities of each user
recognizing that the community, nation, and world can serve as a laboratory for learning, encourages the legal and ethical use of global electronic media
responsible and ethical digital citizens

Some of the progressive phrases found include; *21st Century Learning, Age appropriate technology, Minimize barriers, maximize opportunities, Promote higher level thinking skills and Responsible and ethical digital citizens.* These phrases clearly demonstrate policies written with the intent of creating an open environment where students can explore and grow. While they still describe an environment that has limitations such as, *Age appropriate technology* and *Minimize barriers, maximize opportunities* it is clear that students have some wiggle room within the limitations. *Age appropriate technology* indicates to students that kindergartens will have different access to the Internet than seniors in high schools. These words acknowledge that all students are at different levels and that their informational needs are different as a result. Progressive language creates an entirely different information environment. An open information environment allows students the opportunity to grow and explore as naturally mature instead of forcing students to have one level of access regardless of their age or needs.

It is interesting to note that the three school districts with progressive language in their AUPs all belong to the sub-category of Non-White majority. It is impossible to know exactly how it happened that those three school districts included progressive language and the other school districts did not. It could be that their more diverse student populations, which are a reflection of their diverse communities, prompted the inclusion of language that speaks to a broader acceptance of different types of information.

Formal Word Choice. Word choice can also be analyzed by the use of formal phrases. Formal words can imply a sense of power or authority by the writer over the receiver of the communication. An informal word implies a sense of connection or the

speaker and the receiver of the communication being on the same level. Analyzing the use of formal language in AUPs provides data to answer questions 1, 1a, and 2.

Table 5

Formal Language in Word Choice

all users adhere
bona fide research or other lawful purposes
commensurate thereto
completed District training on proper disabling circumstances and procedures
complex association
condone student access to unsuitable materials
dissemination of personal identification information of minors
govern the use of the Internet
if any portion of this regulation or any section, sentence or word is held invalid for any reasons, the remainder shall not be affected thereby
in order to rescind the agreement
information stored therein or thereon are the property
inhibit unauthorized access and other unlawful activities by students and staff online
occasional use that the Superintendent or designee determines to ultimately facilitate the mission of the District is not prohibited by this provision
personal financial gain other than in accordance with prescribed constitutional, statutory and regulatory procedures, other than compensation provided by law
pervasively vulgar
prevent unauthorized online disclosure
propagate
remote access thereto through school accounts
revocation
same criterion of educational suitability
stored therein, thereon, linked thereto
technology resources shall not be used in any manner which impairs its effective operations or the rights of other technology users
the data stored thereon
the District shall obtain verifiable parental consent prior to students providing or otherwise disclosing personal information online
the District does not imply or expressly warrant that any information access will be valuable or fit for a particular purpose or that the system will operate error free
the intentional spreading of imbedded messages

the technology resources are not a public forum
the technology resources are to be used for the limited purpose of advancing the District's mission
the technology resources are to be used, in general, for educational purposes, meaning activities that are integral, immediate, and proximate to the education of students as defined in the E-rate program regulations
to the extent practicable
use that is unethical may be reported to the Commissioner of Education
will be dealt with

The most commonly found formal language phrase was *bona fide research or other lawful purposes*. This phrase was found twenty times in nine different AUPs. The first response to that phrase has to be one that questions what it even means. What exactly is *bona fide research* and who decides what research is classified as *bona fide research*? This is clearly an example of formal language used to imply power and authority. Students are not going to understand what that phrase means. When the rest of the phrase is analyzed, the impact of power and authority becomes greater. *Other lawful purposes* takes the benign task of research and with it the natural inclination of questioning and makes it into something very serious. The word *lawful* instantly creates the image of police cars and courtrooms. Policies with the phrase *bona fide research or other lawful purposes* are intentionally creating an information environment where students are given the impression that research or simply looking for information on a topic that they find interesting is only allowed when someone with power and authority deems it is appropriate.

Figure 3 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Formal Language

3	16	11
17	5	10
4	8	13
9	12	14
18	2	1
6	15	7

The above Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Formal Language in AUPs displays how the sample school districts appear in the continuum from restrictive to open. The numbers listed in the above table correspond to the number each school district was assigned in Table 1, *Public School District Demographic Data*. The school districts on the left side of the figure contained significantly more formal language in their AUPs than the school districts that appear on the right side of the figure.

Formal Language Word Choice in Sub-Categories

Table 6

Formal Language Word Choice in Community Types

Category	Number of School Districts	Frequency
Rural	9	23 words/phrases
Suburban	7	9 words/phrases
Urban	2	8 words/phrases

Rural school districts have more instances of formal language.

Table 7

Formal Language Word Choice in Membership

Category	Number of School Districts	Frequency
Membership Below 5,000	9	23 words/phrases
Membership Between 5,000-15,000	6	18 words/phrases
Membership 20,000 plus	3	9 words/phrases

The smaller the membership, the higher the number of formal language instances.

Table 8

Formal Language Word Choice in Race/Ethnicity

Category	Number of School Districts	Frequency
Race - Non-White Majority	4	14 words/phrases
White Majority	14	22 words/phrases

White majority school districts have more instances of formal language.

Table 9

Formal Language Word Choice in Free/Reduced Lunch Percentage

Category	Number of School Districts	Frequency
FRL Below 10 %	2	12 words/phrases
FRL Between 10% and 50 %	9	16 words/phrases
FRL Above 50%	7	21 words/phrases

The higher the Free/Reduced Lunch percentage, the higher the instances of formal language.

Table 10

Formal Language Word Choice in Special Education Percentage

Category	Number of School Districts	Frequency
Special Education Below 12 %	5	19 words/phrases
Special Education Above 12%	13	26 words/phrases

The higher the percentage of special education students, the higher the number of instances of formal language.

Summary

When analyzing word choice in the eighteen AUPs, it is clear, that word choice has impact. Word choice in policy is one factor in determining the type of information environment the policy creates. School districts that choose to utilize progressive language create informational environments that are open and which invite students to explore and question. Word choice that is more punitive in nature or more formal tends to create information environments that are more restrictive with rigid boundaries.

Frequency

The next lexical analysis completed by the researcher was frequency. Frequency refers to the number of times a word and or phrase appears in a text. The more often a word and or phrase appear the more emphasis the author is placing upon that word and or phrase. The following table presents the top 100 frequently used words in the AUPs. The words that are bolded, are words that relate to the concept of access to information.

Table 11

Frequency – Top 100 Words

Word	Frequency	Documents	Document %
use	384	18	100.00
internet	336	18	100.00
shall	311	18	100.00
technology	294	17	94.44
access	284	18	100.00
district	273	18	100.00
that	259	18	100.00
not	253	16	88.89
students	214	18	100.00
other	196	18	100.00
school	175	17	94.44
with	174	18	100.00
computer	168	18	100.00
policy	156	17	94.44
resources	149	13	72.22
may	140	16	88.89
are	139	17	94.44
minors	135	18	100.00
electronic	130	18	100.00
information	130	18	100.00
protection	121	18	100.00
schools	118	14	77.78
public	115	15	83.33
will	112	18	100.00
network	111	18	100.00
student	111	17	94.44
this	107	18	100.00
such	103	17	94.44
users	103	15	83.33
all	99	17	94.44
material	99	17	94.44
staff	98	18	100.00
personal	94	18	100.00
online	93	17	94.44

inappropriate	82	18	100.00
including	82	18	100.00
superintendent	80	14	77.78
used	78	16	88.89
computers	77	17	94.44
system	75	13	72.22
safety	74	15	83.33
unauthorized	74	16	88.89
software	73	13	72.22
appropriate	69	18	100.00
act	68	16	88.89
communications	64	15	83.33
educational	58	15	83.33
measures	58	14	77.78
activities	57	17	94.44
user	56	14	77.78
purposes	55	16	88.89
procedures	54	15	83.33
social	53	14	77.78
using	53	15	83.33
forms	52	16	88.89
community	51	11	61.11
without	51	12	66.67
guidelines	49	13	72.22
rules	49	14	77.78
have	47	15	83.33
acceptable	46	12	66.67
authorized	46	13	72.22
district’s	46	11	61.11
harmful	46	18	100.00
their	46	11	61.11
engage	45	9	50.00
subject	45	17	94.44
e-mail	44	11	61.11
time	43	13	72.22
member	42	8	44.44
which	42	12	66.67
from	41	14	77.78
materials	41	15	83.33

regulations	41	13	72.22
when	40	14	77.78
chat	39	15	83.33
child	39	14	77.78
following	39	17	94.44
law	39	15	83.33
otherwise	39	14	77.78
provided	39	14	77.78
designee	38	11	61.11
mail	38	18	100.00
privacy	38	16	88.89
related	38	15	83.33
security	38	17	94.44
cipa	37	9	50.00
obscene	37	17	94.44
rooms	37	15	83.33
direct	36	17	94.44
education	36	15	83.33
file	36	16	88.89
prevent	36	11	61.11
sexual	36	10	55.56
children’s	35	13	72.22
equipment	35	17	94.44
filters	35	9	50.00
limited	35	15	83.33
measure	35	13	72.22
unlawful	35	13	72.22

Overlexicalisation. The first analysis the researcher completed was to examine trends of overlexicalisation. Overlexicalisation is utilized by writers to persuade readers by using particular words and their synonyms in a text. The below table presents overlexicalisation found with the eighteen AUPs. The numbers in the table represent the number of times the word and its synonyms were located in the AUPs. The words are listed in the table by higher frequency listed first in each column.

Table 12

Frequency – Overlexicalisation

113	113	82	73	44	43	38
safety	appropriate	harmful	monitoring	permission	unlawful	violation
security	right	offensive	supervision	authority	improper	offense
	proper	abusive	monitor	approval		
		damaging	supervise	authorization		

The above table shows how many times a word and its synonyms were found in the eighteen AUPs analyzed.

When analyzing the AUPs, the word *safety* and its synonym *security* are found 113 times. The words *safety* and *security* are utilized to persuade readers that the policy is designed to keep students safe. The writer is attempting to convince students, parents, and guardians that safety is the most important aspect of the policy. While it is clear that school districts must follow CIPA and provide filters that prevent images that are pornographic or lewd, CIPA does not instruct school districts to utilize filters or policies that prevent students from accessing texts or images that are not pornographic or lewd. The use of the word *safety* and its synonym *security* create a hyper-vigilant environment where parents, guardians, and students are more accepting of the limitations imposed by the policies because they feel the limitations are being implemented to protect them. Instead, the policies are being implemented to prevent access to information that might present different perspectives or viewpoints than those in authority accept.

Unlawful and its synonym *improper* are found forty-three times in the AUPs. In this instance, the writer is trying to persuade the reader that any access to information outside of what is implicitly stated in the policy is wrong. Using the words *unlawful* and *improper* create an information environment that is not based on curiosity and questioning. Rather, they create an environment of extremes. Students are safe and good if they follow the policy, but if they are curious or go too far, then they are *unlawful* or *improper*.

Overlexicalisation in Sub-Categories. Next, the researcher examined words related to the concept of access to information. Six words were identified in the top 100 list of unique words for the eighteen AUPs. These words also appeared in the top forty-

five words within the sub-categories. A seventh word, *disciplinary*, was identified as relating to the concept of access to information. *Disciplinary* only appeared within the top forty-five words within the sub-categories. The numbers presented in the tables are the average times each word would appear in an AUP. When the cell is shaded, the word did not appear in the top forty-five words in the sub-category.

Table 13

Frequencies – 7 Access of Information Words

Word	
appropriate	1.56
disciplinary	
inappropriate	2.34
not	31.62
protection	5.76
safety	1.8
unauthorized	1.8

The above table lists the average number of times the seven selected words from the top 100 most frequently utilized were found in the eighteen AUPs analyzed. On average, the word *not* was utilized 31 times in each AUP.

Table 14

Frequencies – 7 Access of Information Words, Community Type

Word	Rural	Urban	Suburban
appropriate	4.7		3.14
disciplinary			
inappropriate	4.6		4.42
not	16.88	11.5	15.6
protection	8.1	6.69	5.2
safety	6.8		3.83
unauthorized			3.85

On average, rural communities utilize word frequencies in AUPs that indicate a more restrictive information environment due to the increased frequency of the word *not.*

Table 15

Frequencies – 7 Access of Information Words, Membership

Word	Membership below 5,000	Membership between 5,000 & 15,000	Membership over 20,000
appropriate	5.22		
disciplinary			4
inappropriate	4.88	4.5	
not	20.88	10	8.33
protection	7.22	7.33	
safety	6.83	4.5	
unauthorized		4	5.33

On average, school district membership below 5,000 utilize word frequencies in AUPs that indicate a more restrictive information environment due to the increased frequency of the word *not*.

Table 16

Frequencies – 7 Access of Information Words, Race/Ethnicity Percentage

Word	Race Non-White Majority	Race White Majority
appropriate	3.75	
disciplinary		
inappropriate	3.75	4.78
not	5.75	19.16
protection	4.75	7.28
safety	5	4.91
unauthorized	5.33	4.46

On average, school districts with a majority of White students utilize word frequencies in AUPs that indicate a more restrictive information environment due to an increased frequency of the word *not.*

Table 17

Frequencies – 7 Access of Information Words, Free/Reduced Lunch

Word	FRL Below 10	FRL Below 50	FRL Above 50
appropriate			
disciplinary			
inappropriate	6	4.55	4.14
not	28	15	15
protection	10	7.22	5.14
safety		4.33	
unauthorized		4.33	

On average, school districts with a FRL under 10% utilize word frequencies in AUPs that indicate a more restrictive information environment due to the increased frequency of the word *not*.

Table 18

Frequencies – 7 Access of Information Words, Special Education Percentage

Word	Special Ed Below 12%	Special Ed above 12 %
appropriate	3.4	4
disciplinary		
inappropriate	1.46	4.6
not	11.5	17.25
protection	2.26	6.69
safety	6	
unauthorized	4	4.8

On average, school districts with a percentage of special education students over 12% utilize word frequencies in AUPs that indicate a more restrictive information environment.

Frequency in Sub-Categories. When examining frequency within the sub-categories, the researcher identified seven words that related to the concept of access to information. These six words; *appropriate, inappropriate, not, protection, safety* and *unauthorized*, were all found within the top forty-five words when the AUPs were analyzed by sub-categories. The seventh word, *disciplinary* was found within the top forty-five words but only in one sub-category, membership over 20,000. It is interesting that it was only in the larger school districts were the word *disciplinary* was found within the top forty-five words. It could be that within larger school districts the staff for both technology support and teaching is spread thinner, so any deviation from the AUPs on a student's part results in disciplinary action.

The sub-category that had the most frequencies from the list of the seven words was the community type. Rural communities had more instances of the words *appropriate, inappropriate, not, protection* and *safety* than suburban and urban. This means that those school districts have informational environments that are far more on the restrictive side than those school districts that included progressive language. Restrictive AUPs are written with the intent of keeping students safe and ensuring that students are always asking permission when they want to access information. This type of restrictive information environment is the complete opposite of an AUP that is written with language like *promote higher level thinking skills*. An open information environment provides students with opportunities to explore the world around them and to form their opinions based on diverse information they have gathered from different perspectives. A restrictive information environment controls what students can access and forces them to ask for permission when they have questions and want to explore the

world around them.

Summary. Frequency is one way that power and authority are demonstrated in policies. The more frequently utilized words and their synonyms are the words the writer wants the reader to see and to understand. By examining the use of overlexicalisation it becomes clear that polices that frequently utilize the words, *safety* and *security* are trying to persuade students that the most import part of the policy is keeping them safe. The frequency patterns of the AUPs by sub-category show rural school districts are more likely to utilize words that allude to a more restrictive environment.

Presupposition

Presupposition is when the author uses language to make assumptions about the beliefs of the reader. The author takes the position that beliefs expressed in the communication are already accepted. By using specific phrases and word placement, an author can subtly convince individuals that they agree with the author and thus the author has power over the individual. Twenty-seven presupposition phrases were identified. Analysis of presupposition quotes in the eighteen AUPs will provide data to answer all of the research questions. The following table contains the presupposition phrases. The table also lists the frequency of the phrases and which school district AUPs contained the phrases.

Table 19

Presupposition – All AUPs

Phrase	**Frequency**	**School Districts**
Adult Content	1	2
The reliability of this network is dependent upon proper conduct of the end users.	1	2
Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled; or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.	1	6
To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users of the District's online computer network when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications.	5	18,17,3,4,6
Procedures for the disabling or otherwise modifying any technology protection measures shall be the responsibility of the Superintendent and the Superintendent's designees.	5	18,17,3,4,6
Use of the District technology resources is a privilege and not a right.	5	18,11,17,3,4,6
The technology resources are not a public forum.	6	18,11,17,3,4,6
The technology resources are to be used for the limited purpose of advancing the District's mission.	5	18,17,3,4,6
The technology resources are to be used, in general, for educational purposes, meaning activities that are integral, immediate, and proximate to the education of students as defined in the E-rate program regulations.	4	17,3,4,6
Technology resources shall not be used for any purpose contrary to any District policy, any school rules to which a student user is subject, or any applicable law.	4	17,3,4,6
Without limitation, this means that technology resources may not be used: to access any material contrary to the Internet Safety Policy; or to create or generate any such material.	1	6
In addition to blocks and/or filters, the District may also use other technology protection measures or procedures as deemed appropriate.	4	17,3,4,6

The District reserves the right to restrict any communications and to remove communications that have been posted.	5	18,11,17,3,4
Technology resources shall not be used, and no person shall authorize its use, for personal matters.	4	17,3,4,6
Students are expected to use computers and the Internet as an educational resource.	1	13
Students may use the Internet for any other appropriate educational purpose including electronic mail, specifically g-mail and district authorized and provided g-mail accounts.	1	13
Students shall not use school computers to access material that is obscene, pornographic, "harmful to minors," or otherwise inappropriate for educational uses.	1	13
The system administrator may override the technology protection measure for the student to access a site with legitimate educational value that is wrongly blocked.	1	13
Monitor students' use of the Internet through direct supervision and by monitoring Internet use history to ensure enforcement of the policy.	1	13
Access to the school's computer system and to the Internet is a privilege and not a right.	1	13
Users who fail to abide by district Network Usage Agreement procedures shall be subject to disciplinary action, possible revocation of the user account, and legal action as appropriate.	1	16
The Board of Education encourages and supports the use of electronic technology in instructional programs and activities within legal and ethical parameters.	1	14
Adopts and shall enforce a policy of making technology resources available only to advance educational goals and objectives, supplement instruction and further school purposes.	1	12
Students are expected to use the Internet and information technology assets as an educational resource only.	1	10
Students shall not use School District-provided information technology assets to gain access to material that is obscene, pornographic, harmful to minors, or otherwise inappropriate for educational uses	3	10
Students may use the Internet to access information about current events.	1	13

While these technologies are beneficial to educational advancement, they can also be used to conduct illegal, unethical or inappropriate activities. Students are expected to use the Internet and information technology assets as an educational resource only.	1	10
The District reserves the right to restrict any communications and to remove communications that have been posted.	5	18,11,17,3,4
Technology resources shall not be used, and no person shall authorize its use, for personal matters.	4	17,3,4,6
Students are expected to use computers and the Internet as an educational resource.	1	13
Students may use the Internet for any other appropriate educational purpose including electronic mail, specifically g-mail and district authorized and provided g-mail accounts.	1	13
Students shall not use school computers to access material that is obscene, pornographic, "harmful to minors," or otherwise inappropriate for educational uses.	1	13

Presupposition is the use of words or phrases that give the impression that the reader already agrees with what is stated in the policy. The technique of presupposition is used by writers to push ideology past readers without them noticing. In the eighteen AUPs analyzed, presupposition was also utilized to gloss over decisions made by the school districts to limit access to information.

The first presupposition phrase analyzed was *categories that are blocked, adult content*. This phrase is a presupposition phrase because it assumes that the reader agrees with the writer of the policy in that *adult content* is not appropriate for students and should be blocked. What exactly is *adult content*? It is true there is some adult content that is pornographic or lewd content that is not appropriate for students. However, some content such as health information or LGBT information might be classified as *adult content* and but still be appropriate for some students. There is also the issue of age restrictions presented in this presupposition phrase. The phrase *categories that are blocked, adult content*, makes the assumption that the reader agrees that content should be blocked the same for kindergartens and high school students. There is a multitude of information that might be classified as *adult content* that would not only be appropriate but educationally necessary for high school students. Restricting students from *adult content* is one way to push an ideology that is focused only on a certain perspective or type of information being appropriate.

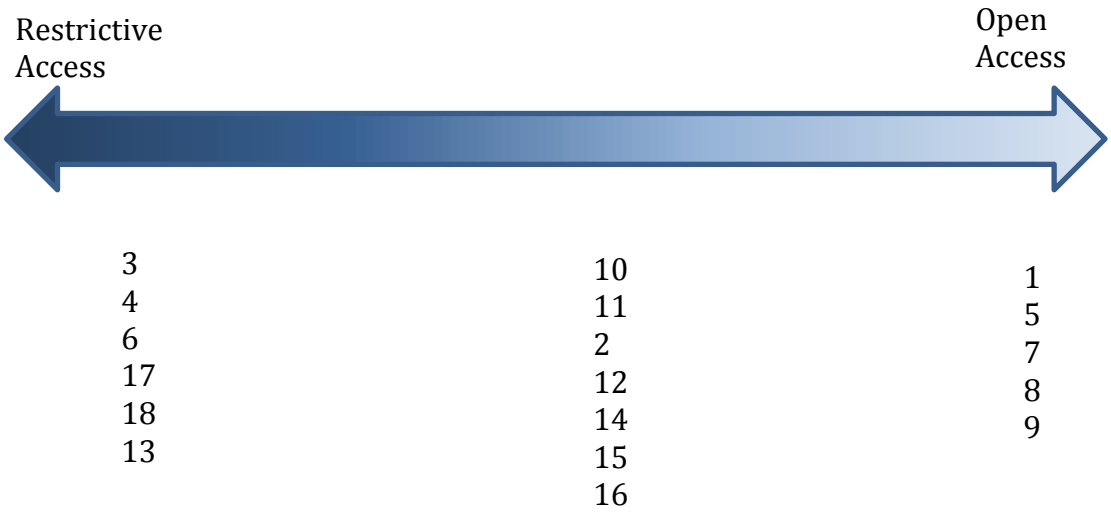
The next statement analyzed was *technology resources are to be used, in general, for educational purposes, meaning activities that are integral, immediate, and proximate to the education of students as defined in the E-rate program regulations*. This phrase makes the assumption that the only access to information that students need is access

related directly to what is being taught in class. It narrowly defines *educational purposes* as only related to curriculum. It creates a restrictive information environment where students are not encouraged to ask questions or to go beyond what is being taught in their classrooms. This presupposition phrase also completely disregards those students whose only access to the Internet is at school. By saying *technology resources are to be used in ,general, for educational purposes* a clear message is sent to students that those in power and authority are making very specific decisions about what is appropriate information for students to access.

Another presupposition phrase analyzed was *in addition to blocks and/or filters, the District may also use other technology protection measures or procedures as deemed appropriate*. This phrase makes the assumption that the reader agrees that additional *protection measures or procedures* are needed to control access to information. This phrase assumes that readers need protection above and beyond what is already provided by the filters put in place to meet the requirements of CIPA. Again, an assumption is made that the reader agrees that they need protection from information. The phrase also assumes that the reader agrees that they do not need to have identified what the other measures or procedures are that can be put into place.

The below figure shows the spectrum from restrictive to open when considering the number of presupposition phrases found within each school district AUP. The numbers listed in the figure correspond to the identifying number for each school district.

Figure 4 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Presupposition



Summary. Presupposition is one-way writers can systematically push ideology in a way that is hard to refute. By writing policy so that it appears to represents community norms, instead of the opinions of people in power, results in a policy that is difficult to criticize and challenging to change.

Nominalization

The final lexical analysis completed by the researcher was nominalization. Nominalization is a way to generalize and provide a way to present a series of events in an abstract way. The use of nominalization in communication is one way to demonstrate a level of power and prestige. Nineteen instances of nominalization were identified. Nominalization analysis on the eighteen AUPs will provide data to answer all of the research questions. The below table presents the nominalization phrases found within the AUPs. The table also lists the frequency of the phrases and which school district AUPs contained the phrases.

Table 20
Nominalization – All AUPs

Phrase	Frequency	School District
The reliability of this network is dependent upon proper conduct of the end users.	1	2
The technology resources are to be used for the limited purpose of advancing the District's mission. The technology resources are to be used, in general, for educational purposes, meaning activities that are integral, immediate, and proximate to the education of students as defined in the E-rate program regulations.	4	17,3,4,6
The technology protection measure that blocks and/or filters Internet access may be disabled only by an authorized staff member for bona fide research or educational purposes: a) who has successfully completed District training on proper disabling circumstances and procedures, b)with permission of the immediate supervisor of the staff member requesting said disabling, or with the permission of the Superintendent. An authorized staff member may override the technology protection measure that blocks and/or filters Internet access for a minor to access a site for bona fide research or other lawful purposes provided the minor is monitored directly by an authorized staff member.	1	6
Use that is unethical may be reported to the Commissioner of Education. Use that is unlawful may be reported to the law enforcement authorities. Users shall be responsible for damages caused and injuries sustained by improper or non-permitted use.	4	17,3,4,6
It is the primary responsibility of the parent(s) and guardian(s) to establish and convey the standards that their student should follow. In support of parent(s) and guardian(s) the Public Schools will enforce the minimum appropriate computer use standards set out below. If a student uses a computer or the Internet inappropriately, he or she will be subject to the disciplinary actions stated above.	1	8
Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.	5	18,17,3, 4,5

"Inappropriate material" for purposes of this policy includes material that is obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors. The term "harmful to minors" means any picture, image, graphic image file, or other visual depiction that: (1) taken as a whole and with respect to minors, appeals to a prurient interest in nudity, sex, or excretion; (2) depicts, describes, or represents, in a patently offensive way with respect to what is suitable for minors, an actual or simulated sexual act or sexual contact, actual or simulated normal or perverted sexual acts, or a lewd exhibition of the genitals; and (3) taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value as to minors.	4	18,17,3, 4
Specifically, as required by the CIPA, blocking shall be applied to visual depictions of material deemed obscene or child pornography, or to any material deemed harmful to minors. Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.	4	18,17,3, 4
Personal Matters: Technology resources shall not be used, and no person shall authorize its use, for personal matters.	4	17,3,4,6
Other Policies and Laws: Technology resources shall not be used for any purpose contrary to any District policy, any school rules to which a student user is subject, or any applicable law. Without limitation, this means that technology resources may not be used: 1. to access any material contrary to the Internet Safety Policy; or to create or generate any such material.	5	18,17,3, 4,6
Implement measures designed to restrict minors' access to materials (visual or non-visual) that are harmful to minors.	1	16
Technology resources of the district shall not be used for personal use unless the user has entered into an agreement with the district that makes such use compliant with the law.	1	15
Adopts and shall enforce a policy of making technology resources available only to advance educational goals and objectives, supplement instruction and further school purposes.	1	12
The implementation of this policy shall include technology protection measures with respect to computers with Internet access, consistent with district standards, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, Children's Internet Protection Act and other law.	1	12

To educate students in the proper and safe usage of the Internet and information technology assets, all students will be required to review and accept the guidelines governing use of the system and shall agree in writing to allow monitoring of their use and to comply with such guidelines.	1	10
Students may use the Internet and information technology assets for appropriate educational purposes.	1	10
Students shall not use School District-provided information technology assets to gain access to material that is obscene, pornographic, harmful to minors, or otherwise inappropriate for educational uses.	1	10
The District shall certify, to the appropriate agencies, that it has adopted policies and rules commensurate thereto, including the monitoring of online activities by minors. The District shall certify, to the appropriate agencies, that it has adopted and implemented an Internet safety policy to address other issues, such as the unauthorized access to inappropriate matter by minors online, the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communication; unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities by minors online; unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors; and measures designed to restrict minors' access to material harmful to minors.	1	7

Nominalization is one way a writer can hide who is responsible for an action. By hiding who is responsible, it becomes harder to question an action, as it appears to just have happened and not be the result of a specific reasoned act. An example of this type of nominalization in the AUPs states: *implementation of this policy shall include technology protection measures with respect to computers with Internet access, consistent with district standards, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, Children's Internet Protection Act and other law*. In this phrase, all of the laws governing students and Internet access are named. However, at the end of the phrase are the words *and other law*. By saying *and other law*, it gives the school district wiggle room to place limitations on access. Since *and other law* is not defined or named, it can become whatever the school district needs it to be to justify their actions in limiting access. It is hard to fight against something that is not named or defined as it can change to meet the needs of whoever has power.

Another type of nominalization is the process of making a complex process seem simple and straightforward. By making a process seem straightforward, it also appears that everyone agrees with the process. An example from the AUPs states: *it is the primary responsibility of the parent(s) and guardian(s) to establish and convey the standards that their student should follow. In support of parent(s) and guardian(s) the Public Schools will enforce the minimum appropriate computer use standards set out below. If a student uses a computer or the Internet inappropriately, he or she will be subject to the disciplinary actions stated above.* In this phrase, the complex issue reduced to simple terms is *the primary responsibility of the parent(s) and guardian(s) to establish and convey the standards that their student should follow*. This phrase makes it appear as

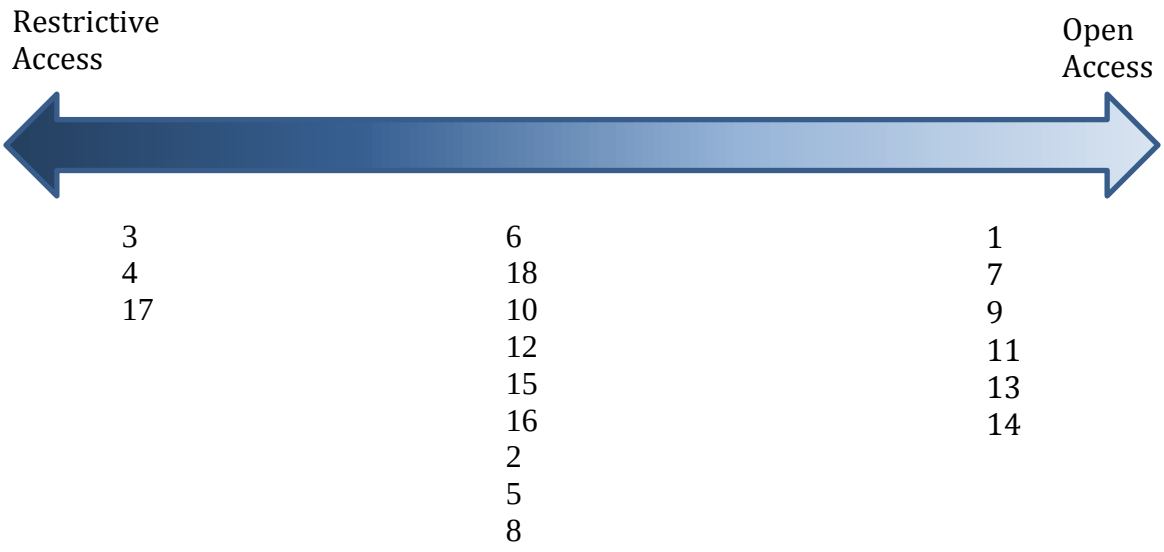
if it is the moral values of the parents and or guardians who determines what access to information their children should have. This is not probable; the AUP itself is a complex document that lays out specific types of information that students are prohibited from accessing. Individual student access to information is not based upon individual value systems; rather filtering is applied consistently across the board to limit access to information. In some cases, Boards of Education do have a say in the language in AUPs, however, the majority of AUPs are not written with community or parent/guardian values as the deciding factor for information access.

Another phrase that again tries to reduce complexity is *the reliability of this network is dependent upon proper conduct of the end users.* This phrase makes it seem like the entire functionality of the network is dependent upon student's proper behavior of only accessing information that is deemed appropriate according to the AUP. If a student as much as questions or tries to find information that is outside of the scope of the AUP guidelines, potentially the whole network could crash. Networks, especially those accessed by numerous devices, are complex and their reliability can be compromised by a multitude of factors beyond *proper conduct by end users.* By making it seem that the reliability of the network is entirely dependent on student conduct, an information environment is created where if students choose to question or find information outside of what is deemed appropriate they are made responsible for the functionality of the whole network. Reducing the complexity of the network to making it seem as if student conduct is wholly responsible is one way to assert power over students.

The below figure shows the spectrum from restrictive to open when considering the number of nominalization phrases found within each school district AUP. The numbers

listed in the figure correspond to the identifying number for each school district.

Figure 5 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis of Nominalization



Summary. Nominalization is one technique utilized in policies by writers either to divert the reader's attention from what is really happening or to reduce complex issues as a way to assert power over the reader. The higher the frequency of nominalization phrases, the more restrictive the information environment.

Conclusion

When examining the data from the lexical analysis, three trends became apparent. The first was word choice, which played heavily into presupposition. When the word choice was progressive, there were few if any presupposition words or phrases in the AUPs. On the other hand, when the language was more controlling and limiting in nature such as the phrases *shall not* or *bona fide research for lawful purposes* there were significantly more presupposition words and or phrases identified in the AUPs.

The more formal the language utilized in the AUPs, the more likely the AUP

contains words or phrases that can be identified as nominalization. Examples includes phrases such as *adopts and shall enforce a policy of making technology resources available only to advance educational goals*. As well as, *the District shall certify, to the appropriate agencies, that it has adopted polices and rules commensurate thereto*. The use of formal language makes it easier to divert a reader's attention away from what is being stated and thus easier to enact power and authority over the reader.

Finally, the more presupposition words and or phrases in an AUP, the more likely the AUP will also have words or phrases identified as nominalization. Both presupposition and nominalization are techniques utilized to assert power through either quietly pushing ideology into a text or by reducing complexity in order to silently slip important content past readers.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusions

This research study was devised to critically examine how language choices in AUPs influence students' Locus of Control**.** The purpose of this study was to analyze how language choice in AUPs influences students' internal or external Locus of Control. The researcher applied a critical lens of CDA as the methodology in order to identify language patterns within eighteen AUPs from public school districts in the Midwest. The data gathered by the study demonstrated a clear connection between language choices in the AUPs and the assertion of power.

Implications for Locus of Control

Locus of Control states that the actions of an individual are based on their belief of how much control they have over their lives (Rotter, 1966). If an individual believes that their actions are a result of their hard work and the choices they made, they have an internal Locus of Control. Individuals who believe that things just happen to them as a result of chance, fate, or powerful others have an external Locus of Control (Rotter, 1975). Researching further into Locus of Control, Levenson (1974) found that within external Locus of Control there are individuals who believe not in fate or chance, but rather that their life is determined by the actions of powerful others. This group of individuals believes that life is ordered, but powerful others control all aspects of their life. In examining, previous studies on Locus of Control and powerful others; a pattern was discovered by the researcher in the existing research that helps to frame the results from the current study.

Language Choice. Woodbury (1997) found that students in college who

identified with a belief of powerful others had a harder time deciding on a career path than students who scored lower on the scale of powerful others. The results from the Woodbury study correlate with pieces of data found within the current study. When examining language choice in the AUPs, several examples were identified that clearly demonstrated a strong sense of power being asserted over students.

First and foremost was the use of the word privilege. This was the most surprising word choice in the AUPs. Privilege is defined as something that is granted or given ("Privilege", n.d.). The word *privilege* was found in thirteen of the eighteen AUPs. It seems unbelievable in today's world that a school district would have a policy in place stating that access to the Internet is a privilege. As more content, that is educational moves online and as more school districts implement technology plans where each student has a school issued device, access to the Internet cannot be a privilege.

In today's world, providing access to the Internet is the same as providing access to information. Historically, access to information came through textbooks and physical books in the library. Today, vast amounts of information are only accessible online. Access to the Internet is an educational necessity, not a privilege. This belief of the Internet as a necessity is reinforced by examining national education standards, where it becomes abundantly clear that access to the Internet is a nonnegotiable right of 21st Century students. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) in their seven standards for students addresses the concept of technology and access to the Internet. Standard Three, Knowledge Constructor, states…" students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful experiences for themselves and others" (International Society for

Technology in Education, n.d., para 3). Students can only curate a variety of resources if they are given the opportunity and the ability to do so. If that opportunity is classified as a privilege, it can be taken away at any time for any reason.

Stating that access to the Internet is a privilege is a power play by those in authority. This language choice creates a restrictive information environment where students do not have the opportunity to have autonomy. The word *privilege* tells students that access to information has only been granted to them on a temporary basis. If students make one wrong move, their *privilege* can be revoked. For students who believe that powerful others control their life, this word choice creates an environment where they will not question or explore the world around them. Instead of learning how to critically think and to sort through a multitude of diverse information from multiple perspectives, these students will only know how to follow a predesigned path. Levenson (1974) found that individuals who believe in an ordered world controlled by powerful others would not act to change their outcome, they just followed along. When the time comes for these students to make important decisions like who to vote for in presidential elections, they will wait for others to make decisions for them. Allowing others in power to make critical decisions has in the past and will continue in the future to have a devastating impact upon our society. Democracy only works if every individual has access to information, the skills to understand the information and the belief that their voice matters.

Access to Diverse Information. Additional language choices that were characterized as restrictive were also identified in the AUPs in the current study. Restrictive language creates information environments where students are only allowed

to access information that is specifically stated as acceptable in the AUP. Any instance beyond what is specifically stated requires students to ask for permission. In addition, students are closely monitored while online so they run the risk of disciplinary action if they try to access information that is not considered acceptable. An assertion of power based on a narrow definition of what is considered acceptable information causes students who believe in powerful others to blindly follow. These students do not believe they have control over their lives so why should they even try. They clearly see that choosing to question what is acceptable or to explore topics that are not considered mainstream in their school district will result in disciplinary action against them. It is easier and safer for these students to allow the powerful others who wrote the AUP to continue to have power.

These same students then go on to college or the workforce and find themselves in a world where they are expected to navigate information from different perspectives in order to make informed decisions. Just like in Woodbury's study found, these students will struggle to make decisions because they have existed in a narrow world where they were not given the opportunity to make decisions.

Wright and Slate (2015) studied critical thinking skills in middle school students. Their study found that students who were identified as being economically disadvantaged scored statistically significantly lower in critical thinking skills than students who were not economically disadvantaged. The researchers theorized that one reason economically disadvantaged students scored lower was that they did not have enough exposure to diverse information. Exposure to diverse information causes students to look at the world in different ways and to realize there are multiple perspectives on every issue.

The students in the middle school study scored lower perhaps because they did not have enough exposure to diverse information. Limited exposure can result in students only being able to access a narrow range of information that might represent only one perspective. It is challenging for students to learn critical thinking skills when they are given access to information that only represents one perspective. Fuchs (2012) found that in many cases students were not able to access primary sources for topics considered controversial like LGBT rights. As Fuchs found, students were only given access to information that generally described the issue but access to primary information from the groups themselves was blocked. Batch (2014) in examining the impact of CIPA after it had been in place for a decade, found numerous teachers who reported they felt powerless in trying to decrease the level of filtering their students encountered at school. Part of leaning critical thinking skills is the ability to take apart information from multiple perspectives and be able to make sense of it.

The current study found several examples of language choices that would result in a restrictive information environment. It is no stretch of imagination to believe that a restrictive information environment would not include access to diverse information. It is important to also remember that many students who are economically disadvantaged only have access to the Internet at school (Rideout & Katz, 2016). It becomes even more critical that students have access to diverse information at school if school access is the only access to the Internet that they have. Even if school districts reduce the digital divide by providing devices to all students, they will not eliminate the divide if they still have unequal access for students to information through restrictive information environments for some students. If school districts want to produce students with critical

thinking skills, they will have to ensure that all students have access to diverse information in order to develop those skills.

The researcher identified numerous examples in the current study where access to information was defined by whether the request for information met the definition of bona fide research or other lawful purposes. The concern with the phrase bona fide research or other lawful purposes is that powerful others are determining what legitimate research questions are and what types of information can be accessed by students. When the ability to determine what is legitimate to research is tightly held by only individuals with power, society as a whole is impacted. A restrictive information environment can be created by language choices in AUP and compounded by filters that overly block. Several studies on filters have shown that in a highly-filtered environment, teachers stop requesting the filter be unblocked (Finsness, 2008; Holzhauer, 2009; Rodgers, 2012). When staff or students feel like they do not have the right to explore and question information, the learning process breaks down.

A recent study by Irwin (2017) examined the perceptions of student research and filtering. Irwin interviewed nine teachers from two different school districts in Colorado. He asked the nine teachers a series of questions to determine if filtering interfered with student research. His results showed the nine teachers did not believe filtering negatively impacted student research. It is important to note that the Irwin study only examined the perception of filtering from a teacher's viewpoint. In this study, the assumption can be made that the teachers are the ones who are determining what topics are appropriate. The argument can be made that the teachers in Irwin's study are the powerful others and as result do not feel that the information environment they work within is restrictive.

Student Achievement. Holeman (1986) found that nursing students who had a higher powerful others score had a lower grade point average than students who had a lower powerful others score. Students who feel that powerful others control their lives do not necessarily put in the time to study or go beyond the basic standard of what is required in class. The current study identified only three AUPs out of the eighteen that included progressive language. Progressive language was defined by the researcher as language that gives an indication of the importance of access to information and its relationship to student achievement. The majority of the AUPs were written with language that asserts power over students.

The informational environments created as a result of power over students do not provide opportunities for students to question or to engage in diverse information. This is especially true for students with a belief in powerful others. Progressive language creates an information environment where students are encouraged to explore, to question, to find diverse information and to go beyond what is expected. Students in an open information environment feel that they have a say in their learning and a sense of control over their lives. If school districts want to increase student achievement, they have to ensure that policies, which concern access to information, are not written in a manner where power is asserted over students.

Summary. Although there are not an abundance of case studies on Locus of Control and the impact of powerful others, what there is demonstrated a clear pattern. Students who believe in powerful others struggle to make decisions, score lower on critical thinking skills and have a lower grade point average. The researcher in the current study found several instances where language choice in AUPs has the potential to

influence students' Locus of Control. Based on the previous studies and the language choices found within the current study of AUPs, it is reasonable to expect that students in public schools in the Midwest who believe in powerful others would also struggle to make decisions, have lower critical thinking skills, and lower grade point averages. The language in AUPs must be carefully chosen by school districts to ensure a limited influence upon a students' Locus of Control.

Future Concerns

In the current study, all eighteen school districts referenced CIPA and E-Rate compliance as the main reason for limiting Internet access as well as for the strict guidelines for what is determined as appropriate information for students to access. CIPA came into being in 2000 to protect students from online content that was truly offensive and had no educational value. At the time, there were no effective ways to ensure that students were not exposed to things like pornography. The passing of CIPA required that school districts that wanted to utilize E-Rate funds had to have a filter and monitor students as they accessed the Internet.

The language utilized in CIPA was very specific as to what types of content needed to be blocked or filtered. Essentially CIPA was only intended to block or filter images. However, the language in the Act left a little wiggle room for school districts to determine what is considered obscene. As a result, many school districts went beyond filtering images to filtering both images and text based in part on the premise of individual community values for what is considered obscene. The prevailing idea presented by school districts was that limiting access to information was to protect students. However, the current study demonstrated that many language choices in the

eighteen AUPs clearly showed language choices that were based more on the assertion of power than safety for students.

Many AUPs were originally written when school districts were grappling with the explosion of information that access to the Internet provided. In the following years, many AUPs have only been minimally updated. The ongoing thought was that once technology caught up, filters would only be utilized to block the truly offensive materials like pornography and that content filtering would be based on student age and or grade level. AUPs would then be rewritten to reflect the Internet and the access to information it provided as essential educational tools and all students would benefit from the availability of diverse information from multiple perspectives. On a larger scale, the great hope with the Internet was that it would provide an easy and financially attainable way for everyone in society to access information and that schools could lead the way. The belief was that by opening up information to everyone, the silos of information would cease to exist and society as a whole would benefit from the effortless exchange of information.

The hope of the Internet as a societal equalizer has not been realized. Today's world climate though is one of increased polarization with growing information silos. Instead of embracing other cultures and perspectives, there has been an increasing focus upon the perceived negatives of other cultures, lifestyles, and perspectives. Internet analysts have raised concerns about the Internet and the increasing polarizing types of content found online…"as well as concerns about whether civil discourse is becoming so poisoned as to make rational governance based on actual facts impossible" (Rainie, Anderson & Albright, 2017, p. 17).

If experts on the Internet are concerned enough about the quality of the content found within the Internet that they do not believe individuals are able to access truthful information in order to make decisions that affect the running of the government, what does this mean for school districts and students? Tim Berners-Lee, the creator of the Internet, has expressed concern about how toxic the Internet has become and what that means for breaking down silos of information. Although Berners-Lee worries about the negative trend of current content, he still strongly believes that the Internet has the potential to raise everyone up through the power of knowledge (Khalid, 2017).

Comments about the potential hateful or inaccurate information found online as the ones above from experts have the potential to cause alarm among parents, guardians, and school district authorities. If the creator of the Internet and Internet analysts are raising red flags about content found online, it is not a stretch to imagine school districts ratcheting down access in order to keep students safe. In a world of online polarization with increasing hateful and inaccurate information added hourly, the only safe choice seems to be isolation and the continuation of protected information environments for students. The current study demonstrated that the existing language in AUPs already has the potential to influence students' Locus of Control, imagine what a policy based on the fear of polarized content could cause.

There are real reasons to be concerned that the national climate of polarization might cause school districts to continue creating or upholding restrictive information environments. In addition to experts speaking out, there are also signs that our society is not as inclusive as we might have hoped. While we might want to believe that society has progressed and that all individuals regardless of their skin color, religion, or sexual

orientation are accepted, the reality is a little bleaker. In the most recent report of challenged materials in libraries across America, ALA reported that nine out of the top ten most challenged books in 2016 were written by or about diverse populations (American Library Association, 2017). The act of challenging books is one way that individuals attempt to limit access to information for others by declaring the challenged material to be unfit because it does not match their personal beliefs. The report of challenged books clearly shows that acceptance of diverse populations is still a work in progress across the country. It is only through exposure to diverse information from multiple perspectives that students can start to understand the global world that they live within while also building their critical thinking skills. Limiting students exposure to ideas that are different from what is accepted in their own communities through restrictive information environments will only result in students that will struggle in a high-paced world where the ability to process vast amounts of information from multiple perspectives is a necessity.

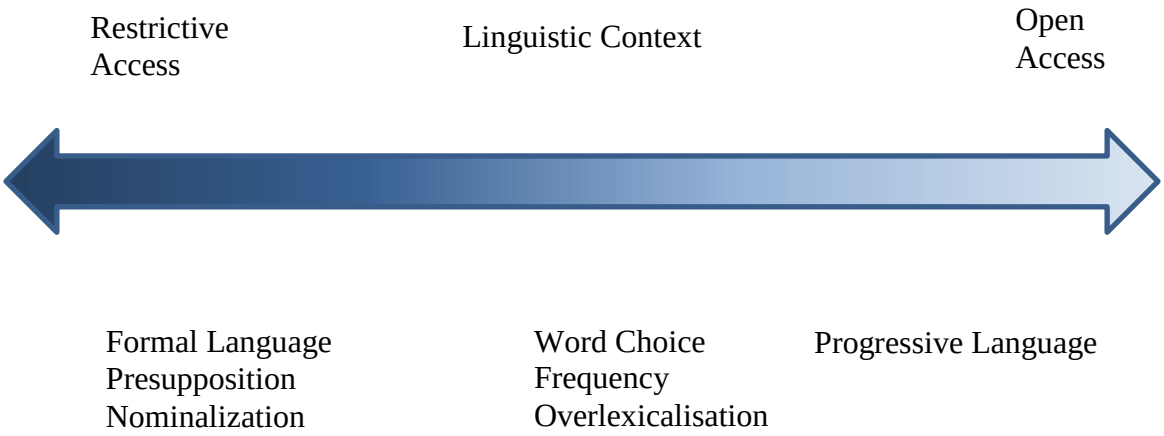
Many school districts still make the claim that information environments that might seem restrictive are only that way to protect students. The current study found the word *protection* shows up on an average of 5.76 times in each AUP. This clearly demonstrates an overriding sense of measures being taken to keep students safe from information. A recent study in the United Kingdom examined whether filtering effectively shields students from adverse online content (Przybylski & Nash, 2017). The United Kingdom is unique in that each household has the option to have a filter applied to their Internet as the Internet is accessed in the home. Adverse content was quantified into seven statements ranging from seeing something sexual in nature online to receiving or

seeing something online, that made the adolescent feel afraid. Researchers conducted 1,030 interviews with 515 adolescents and determined that those who had a filter for their Internet access experienced as many instances of adverse content as those who did not have filtered access. Clearly, in this study, filtering is not protecting adolescents from adverse content.

Conclusion

After analyzing the different lexical techniques, it is now apparent where each technique resides on the Spectrum of Lexical Analysis. The techniques that created information environments where power and authority were asserted fell more on the restrictive side of the spectrum. Progressive language, which created environments that provided opportunities for questioning and critical thinking, fell on the open information environment side of the spectrum. Word choice, frequency, and overlexicalisation fell in the middle as they potentially depending on their linguistic context could be found within the restrictive or the open side of the spectrum. The figure below displays the various techniques on the spectrum.

Figure 6 Spectrum of Lexical Analysis



The question now becomes is a restrictive information environment causing more harm than good? There are certainly valid reasons for preventing students from accessing content that has zero educational value like pornography. However, the current study clearly showed numerous examples where language choices were more indicative of the assertion of power than student safety. There is a clear difference between creating an open information environment with age appropriate scaffolding and creating a restrictive information environment that is just an extension of personal ideologies of individuals in positions of power. The current study demonstrated language choice in AUPs has the potential to influence students' Locus of Control. Now is the time for school districts to critically assess the language choices in their AUPs to ensure that they are creating open information environments where all students can explore, question, and ultimately become educated citizens who will move our democratic society forward.

Suggestions for Future Research

While this study clearly demonstrated that language choice has the potential to influence students' Locus of Control, there are still plenty of areas to research within the topic. One area the researcher did not investigate was sentiment analysis. Hutto & Gilbert (2014) devised a rule-based model for sentiment analysis. Their model allows individuals to analysis text based on the sentiment intensity associated with each word. The words are analyzed for positivity or negativity. The current study identified the assertion of power through specific language choices but did not delve into the concept of sentiment intensity. It would be very interesting to compare AUPs not only based on language choice for power assertion but also for how positive or negative the language choices are within the AUPs. Do AUPs that fall within the open information environment also contain a higher percentage of positive words than AUPs that fall within the restrictive information environment?

A larger scale of the current study would be worthwhile. It would be interesting to see how different areas of the United States compare to the reported results for the Midwest. Additionally, an expanded study that analyzed language choices in AUPs from school districts that have a one to one environment as compared to school districts that have a bring your own device environment could shed much light on language choice within AUPs.

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