A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY TO EXAMINE THE MOTIVES OF TENTH GRADE STUDENTS PERPETRATING CYBERBULLYING

by

David Douglas Farkas

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the underlying cyberbullying motives for 10th grade students at a suburban high school in Southern California. The theory guiding this study is Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978) as it relates to the roles members of a community play in decision making. The study consisted of interviewing 14 sophomore students from a suburban high school in Southern California. At the conclusion of the interviews, six of these students were selected to participate in a focus group based on their identified actions as cyberbullies. Data was analyzed through Moustakas' seven steps approach. The results of this study produced six themes pertaining to the motives behind the perpetration of cyberbullying: Jealousy, entertainment, joking, revenge, broken relationships, and group affiliation. The findings indicated a strong influence of group affiliation leading to increased motivation to cyberbully. Further research is recommended that informs effective school policy and prevention programs, parental involvement, and the emotional health of both cybervictims and cyberbullies.

Keywords: phenomenological, cyberbullying, perpetrators, motives, platforms

Dedication/Acknowledgements

This research study is dedicated to all the victims of cyberbullying and all of those young people who are growing up in a world where communication can travel so quickly and so far with an audience that is never really known. It is so important to understand how impactful negative communication can be to other people. In the end, no human is perfect, so consider this when expressing ill feelings towards others. We never know what someone is going through. Compassion and forgiveness can make a huge difference and can be the best source of truly preventing cyberbullying.

To my wife, Denise and sons, Austin and Tanner, thank you for your support and flexibility these past years while I attempted to balance our lives around this dissertation study. Your love and understanding throughout these incredibly busy years is the main reason I was able to succeed. I love you all very much.

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List of Abbreviations

America Online, Inc. (AOL)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Researchers and educators have yet to reach a consensus on a definition of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can be perceived as harassment or even violence. Although there is yet to be a consensus on a definition, cyberbullying can be defined as any harassment made through electronic means (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012). The phenomenon of cyberbullying is becoming a growing problem with more incidents of perpetration becoming news (Morrow & Downey, 2013). According to Holfeld & Grabe (2012), a perpetrator is defined as someone who has committed a crime or harmful act and therefore, cyberbullies are perpetrators.

Research is now providing information which establishes a clear difference in perpetrators in regard to different types of bullying (Morrow & Downey, 2013). According to Kowalski et al. (2012), individuals who participate in verbal and relational bullying online are not always the same people who commit similar acts in a traditional setting. Because the cyberbullying phenomenon is still rather new and developing, there is little research on the specific characteristics of people who are considered to be cyberbullies (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). This chapter focuses on the background of literature behind this growing phenomenon, while explaining the problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of the study. The development of the five research questions and research plan are described with attention to delimitations of the study.

Background

Cyberbullying is a particularly troubling phenomenon for victims and the people with the greatest power to address the issue, parents and school officials, who are often ignorant of the problem or solutions (Agatston et al.; Grigg, 2012; Holfeld & Grabe;

Kowalski et al., 2012; Shariff, 2009). The perpetrators of cyberbullying tend to have higher levels of aggression and they are often using cyberbullying as a way of gaining power over the victim (Espelage et al., 2014). Bullies commonly do not understand the pain that is inflicted on the victim, and they do not empathize with victims (Thomas, 2012). Victims report feeling helpless against the cyberbullying attacks; most victims state that they do not or how to stop the bullying and that they fear reprisal from the aggressor if they were to seek help (Agatston et al.; Holfeld & Grabe). While both the perpetrator and the victim report higher levels of depression, most incidents of cyberbullying are not reported (Grigg, 2012). Parents and school officials are often unaware of cyberbullying and ignorant of effective strategies to address the issue when it has occurred (Grigg, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2012). Parents and school officials often ignore cyberbullying (Thomas, 2012). Presently, the negative impacts of cyberbullying are exacerbated by a sense of helplessness from victims and ignorance from parents and school officials as to how to address cyberbullying (Grigg, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2012).

Educating teenagers by using examples of cyberbullying through school-based prevention programs can assist in reducing cyberbullying (Shariff, 2009). Previous definitions of traditional bullying consisted of such terminology as repeated acts of aggression, intimidations, targeting a victim who is weaker in terms of physical size, psychological dependence, and social status, all of which can result in a power struggle between individuals (Espelage, Pigott, & Polanin, 2012). Traditional bullying has been within the school environment for many years, however, less is known about the more insidious and wide spanning form of bullying known as cyberbullying (Sakellariou, Carroll, & Houghton, 2012).

Boys are more likely than girls to believe they were cyberbullied because of race or disability (Kowalski, et al., 2012). In a 2010 study, researchers found that girls were more likely to believe they were cyberbullied when it affected their sexuality, gender, or appearance (Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk, & Solomon, 2010). In addition, findings indicated that students knew the perpetrator, and that they were often cyberbullied by someone they considered to be a friend (Mishna et al.). Based on theories such as Vygotsky's social development theory (1978) and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), the role of community and a sense of belongingness may be relevant in understanding what motivates a cyberbully to perpetrate.

Situation to Self

As a teenage boy, I was a victim of a few bullying incidents. Regretfully, I was not always innocent of having caused a friend to be negatively affected by something I intentionally did, even when it appeared to be harmless at the time. So, I too have been both bully and victim. There were many situations in my teenage years that I believe were just part of the process of being a teenager. Fortunately, these experiences were relatively short lived. In fact, by the time I entered the last two years of high school, they seemed like fading memories because my peers and I were becoming young adults.

Great harm can be done when a victim of bullying falls into a depressed state and feels that there is no way out or that the problem will never go away. Teens feel strongly about how others think and feel about them. When a teenager feels victimized or when friends take jokes too far, it can lead down a dangerous road where the victim's psyche can be seriously damaged.

The first two years of high school can be the most difficult to navigate based on one's self-esteem, ability to make friends, and the varying rates in which people mature. Therefore, I believe the best age group to study when seeking a deeper understanding of the motives behind bullying behavior, is from the ages of 14-16. When researching cyberbullying, this age group is crucial to target because they usually keep their weapon close to them 24 hours a day—the cell phone.

I am a father of two sons and have experienced both sons going through different challenges and difficult interactions with peers. One of my sons has had another boy talking about how much he hated him for no reason. This experience obviously affected my son and our family. My wife and I monitor our sons' computer and cell phone usage. Occasionally, we notice inappropriate language and cruel joking amongst our sons' friends. Our sons tell us that it is how many of their friends joke around on their cell phones.

As a high school principal, I share my expectations of how people ought to be treated. I notice students harassing others through verbal interactions. Often, these students don't understand how they sound to others nor do they feel that they are doing anything wrong because they consider the other person to be a friend.

I am interested in understanding what causes students who are not likely to bully in the traditional sense to participate in cyberbullying without hesitation. I sought to understand what motivates cyberbullies through an interpretivist paradigm. Relativist ontology assumes reality is constructed through understandings which are provided through social interaction and events (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This research served the targeted population by examining the motives behind high school sophomores

perpetrating cyberbullying against their peers. I admit the presence of bias based on my son being bullied and my past experience as a victim of bullying as discussed in the situation to self.

Problem Statement

Since the technologies that allow for social connections through electronic platforms have drastically expanded over the last ten years, educational institutions are struggling to address cyberbullying (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Sahin et al., 2012; Sakellariou et al., 2012). School professionals are seeking strategies which will contribute to effective preventive measures (Grigg, 2012; Shariff, 2009). This can lead to prevention and quicker intervention while providing necessary support to foster a positive school culture (Shariff, 2009). Additional research may assist the prevention of cyberbullying by focusing on perpetrators who view it as harmless (Shariff, 2009).

Technology now provides the opportunity for anyone to become a perpetrator. The problem is a cyberbully does not have to interact in a physical environment with peer victims; they can attack others from their computer or cell phone from anywhere at any time with countless bystanders viewing or even participating in the perpetration. While current research tends to focus on the cyberbullying victim, it often lacks information of the motives of a perpetrator (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Sahin, Aydina, & Sari, 2012; Sakellariou et al., 2012). To address this gap in the literature, further research is warranted.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological study was to examine the motives, feelings, and common characteristics of Southern California high school sophomore students who perpetrate cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can be defined as any harassment made through electronic means (Kowalski et al., 2012). Based on the theoretical framework set forth by Maslow (1943), Vygotsky (1978), and Zimbardo (1973), an individual's need to belong to a group as well as feel a sense of self-worth are essential to human development. Human needs may be indicators of the motives behind cyberbullying. The findings of this study offer an understanding of the motives behind cyberbullying as well as data to potentially inform the development of prevention measures which may assist in the reduction of cyberbullying incidents.

Significance of the Study

The study contributes to cyberbullying literature by exploring the motives of perpetrators through first person accounts. There is a paucity of information on why cyberbullies choose their victims (Miczek et al., 2007; Szpir, 1998; Van Erp & Miczek, 2000; Vaughn, Salas-Wright, DeLisi, & Perron, 2014; Zopito, 1999). The study sought to produce findings which could benefit the practical application of reducing cyberbullying through increased knowledge of the why perpetrators choose to target their victims.

Although cyberbullying is not new, it is growing and the majority of empirical data is based on cybervictims and quantitative statistics behind tragic events (Grigg, 2012; Shariff, 2009; Varjas et al., 2009). Few studies have sought to investigate the motivating factors that lie behind the actions of cyberbullies (Agatston et al., 2010;

Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Morrow & Downey, 2013). This study addressed the motives of cyberbullies and their feelings toward their victims. Furthermore, the link between cyberbullying and the theories behind power within groups was explored.

Research Questions

The research questions guided the study to elicit emotional responses from teenagers who have cyberbullied others. Based on the research questions, this study attempts to identify common characteristics of teenagers perpetrating cyberbullying. Specific motives behind cyberbullying became evident. The selection of a victim by a cyberbully was also a primary focus in this study. Using research to gain perspective on varying policy and consequences will serve as an educational guide as school districts develop staff training, parent awareness, and prevention programs (Shariff, 2009). The following research questions were designated to provide a deeper understanding of the issues**:**

Research Question 1: What are the underlying motives that lead cyberbullies to perpetrate?

Studies have found that access of technology and social pressure promoted cyberbullying (Asch, 1956; Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2012; Vygotsky, 1931). Although access and social pressure motivated some people to perpetrate cyberbullying, there are additional motives that lead teenagers to cyberbully. In a (2010) study, Mishna et al. determined that jealousy was a common motive for cyberbullying. This research question was developed to determine the most prevalent motives of cyberbullies.

Research Question 2: How do cyberbullies feel about their cyberbullying acts?

There may be a true lack of understanding from the cyberbully on the real and dangerous effects of these types of cyberacts. Seeking the perception of the cyberbully through research can contribute to a more universal understanding by all involved on the serious and potentially fatal effect of cyberbullying (Kowalski, et al., 2012).

Research Question 3: What are the cyberbullies' feelings towards those they cyberbully?

This research question was developed to further understand a cyberbully's feelings toward their victim. A perceived disconnect fosters more frequent cruel actions between people (Haney et al., 1973). Since cyberbullies have the luxury of remote access instead of face-to-face perpetration, their actions may be magnified due to a feeling of anonymity or a perspective that words don't hurt if they are not delivered face-to-face. A cyberbully's perspective towards their victim may sometimes be misunderstood as Holfeld and Grabe (2012) found cyberbullies to have positive feelings towards their victims.

Research Question 4: How do cyberbullies view their relationship with those they cyberbully?

Vygotsky (1978) determined that social norms change depending on environments. Environments in which teenagers interact frequently change from school to various social activities to home. While on the computer or cell phone, a cyberbully may choose to interact with peers differently than when they are face-to-face at school.

Studies have found relationships within cyberbullying were based on social status and frequent online interactions (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Mishna et al., 2010).

Research Question 5: What characteristics do cyberbullies have in common with each other?

Studies have found a common characteristic of cyberbullies based on victimization. Some cyberbullies have been victims of some type of bullying prior to their perpetration (Varjas et al., 2009). This finding is similar to evidence that traditional bullying is often based on a victim becoming a bully but characteristics between a cyberbully and a traditional bully may differ (Kowalski et al., 2012). Although there may be multiple motives behind cyberbullying, commonalities will contribute to cyberbullying literature by identifying relevant and current trends.

Research Plan

This qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological study was conducted with the use of surveys (Appendix A), interviews (Appendix B), and a focus group (Appendix C). These methodologies were correct for this study because qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological research involves studying a phenomenon or experiences of a group and therefore, will serve in identifying the nature of cyberbullying behaviors. It was effective to collect data by conducting surveys, interviews, and focus groups so that the participants had the opportunity to describe or explain what motivates them to cyberbully. A purposeful sampling strategy was used with deception to select the 14 sophomore interview participants from a suburban high school in Southern California. Deception relates to actions of a researcher in which information is gathered without the participants being made fully aware of the researcher's purpose in implementing the

study (Creswell, 2007). In this study, deception was necessary to retrieve data based on participants' honest responses. If participants knew they were being asked questions based on the premise that they may be considered cyberbullies, they may have hesitated or adjusted their responses to protect themselves.

The data collected through the surveys, interviews, and the focus group was analyzed through Moustakas' modification (1994) of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. This method was appropriate because it guided the analysis through the process of listing significant statements, coding key words and statements, grouping statements into meaningful units (clusters), organizing themes driven by data, and using textural, structural, and composite descriptions.

Delimitations

Delimitations describe the boundaries set for the study. The delimitations of this study consisted of the purposeful sampling of high school students who had experience with the perpetration of cyberbullying. The participants who took part in this study were high school sophomores in a suburban Southern California school district. The study was delimited to a high school in a socio-disadvantaged school district. The rationale for the delimitations includes the likelihood of the selected participants having multiple experiences with cyberbullying while enrolled at a high school with a high percentage of socio-disadvantaged students.

Definitions

1. *Cyberbullying* - Although there is yet to be a consensus on a definition, cyberbullying can be defined as any harassment made through electronic means (Kowalski et al., 2012).

2. *Perpetrator* - A person initiating an act of cyberbullying (Shariff, 2009).
3. *Bully* - A person who uses their power such as physical strength or access to information to control or harm others (Veenstra et al., 2011).
4. *Cybervictim* - A victim of various crimes or harassment via internet (Shariff, 2009).
5. *Self-actualization* - The achievement of a person's potential (Maslow, 1943).
6. *Platform* - A means of communicating through technology such as applications and websites (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).
7. *Cybertools* - Electronic devices used for communication through electronic platforms (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011).
8. *Self-worth* - The sense of someone's own value (Sahin et al., 2010.)

Summary

Research demonstrates differences in those perpetrating traditional bullying and those considered cyberbullies (Espelage et al., 2014). Regardless of the various perceptions and opinions of the millions of teenagers on social media daily, cyberbullying is a growing and alarming occurrence (Grigg, 2012; Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). Because the cyberbullying phenomenon is relatively new and developing, there is little research on the specific characteristics of people who are cyberbullies (Holfeld & Grabe).

As a teenager, I commonly encountered people who wanted to assert their sense of power to intimidate others. In a current technology-driven society, bullying through cyber-means can occur at any time of the day or night and it can reach far beyond school campuses. Even more troubling, cyberbullying can begin as a prank or joke but end as

something uncontrollable. This study sought to understand why sophomore cyberbullies commit these acts.

This qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological study explored the cyberbullying problem by gathering data based on the feelings and motives of cyberbullies. The study contributed to literature addressing the motives behind cyberacts. Research questions were based on a cyberbully's perception of their actions and common characteristics. Upon completion of the data collection, data acquired was analyzed through Moustakas' modification (1994) of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. The study then produced textural, structural, and composite descriptions of the motivations and characteristics of high school sophomores who have perpetrated acts of cyberbullying.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Although bullying is not new to American culture, cyberbullying is relatively new and growing. It particularly affects teenagers (Grigg, 2012). This chapter provides sections connected to theories and a review of literature that guide this study.

It is hypothesized that bullying behaviors can stem from poor self-esteem issues (Mishna et al., 2010). A theoretical link between self-esteem and power within groups can be investigated by exploring why individuals cyberbully. There are theories for motivations of behavior that might help in understanding how poor self-esteem could contribute to cyberbullying behaviors. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs theory focused on an individual's need to belong as being more fundamental than their self-esteem. If a teenager feels like they don't belong, they may engage in behavior they know is wrong to fit in with the group. After a person feels like they have a sense of belonging, they may hurt others because they harbor negative feelings of themselves.

A major focus when studying cyberbullying within groups is the unintended consequences that occur when teenagers participate within online groups by what is considered joking to achieve a sense of acceptance into a peer group (Grigg, 2012). Teenagers constantly seek interaction from friends or potential friends which often results in online conversations intended to simply share humorous photos or exchange comments most often in the form of joking about others (Grigg, 2012). While conflict stemming from joking turning into serious conflict within groups is not new, the development of numerous electronic platforms has extended the opportunities for teenagers to joke with each other at any time.

Interactions that occur online may not be observed by an adult. Devices or websites might be password protected limiting an adult's ability to check on their child's online activities. In absence of adult supervision, children can make comments that they might refrain from in the presence of an adult. A person who receives a negative comment might respond with a comment that is harsher than the one sent to them initially (Shariff, 2009). This could simply end after comments are exchanged online, or it could lead to in person confrontations. In some extreme circumstances, cyberbullying incidents have ended in suicide (Kowalski et al., 2012).

As young people mold their identity, some turn towards bullying in an attempt to improve their social status with select peer groups (Mishna et al., 2010). More than ever, teenagers are able to interact at any time of the day, providing opportunities for cyberbullies outside of school. There are multiple theories related to possible motives behind cyberbullying. The theoretical framework section expanded on potential theories related to perpetration. This chapter also identified studies related to literature addressing cyberbullying from the perspectives' of cyberbullies.

Today, there are many more opportunities to connect with peers through a variety of platforms. Traditional bullying could be intercepted during the school day with supervision close by. Outside of school, harassing telephone calls could be avoided by not answering the telephone or hanging up. The forum to bully is changing as social media platforms are invented with new capabilities. When the Internet began gaining popularity in the mid-1990s, the most common forum that allowed bystanders to witness cyberbullying was America Online, Inc. (AOL). In 1995, less than one percent of the world's population had access to the Internet; an estimated 29% of the world had access

to the World Wide Web in 2010 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). With the sudden increase in Internet usage and social media platforms, cyberbullying and witnesses to these events has also greatly increased (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013). By understanding the reasons teenagers make decisions to cyberbully, school leaders and parents can assist in preventing these harmful actions.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's social development theory (1978) stresses the role members of a community play in the decision making process. Vygotsky (1978) places great emphasis on culture affecting cognitive development and the variance across cultures. For instance, inside a school community, a student may respond to others based on the expectations and social norms within the school's environment. For this reason, Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes social factors contributing to cognitive development. According to Vygotsky (1978), cognitive functions affect beliefs, values, and tools of intellectual adaptation of the culture in which a person develops. As school-based prevention programs continue to develop, those responsible for the implementation may need to consider specific school cultures and Vygotsky's emphasis on cognitive development.

With proper mentoring cyberbullying can be reduced (Shariff, 2009). Vygotsky's principle of the more knowledgeable other (MKO) is based on someone who has a better understanding than the learner (Miller, 2011). A peer may be more knowledgeable or experienced and can assist a less experienced person in learning or developing essential skills. Vygotsky perceived interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies through the principle of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); the

ZDP is the difference between a learner's ability to perform a task with help and without help (Vygotsky, 1978). As schools develop programs to address bullying, the inclusion of a peer role model or mentor component will support appropriate social skills and strategies to reduce bullying (Miller, 2011).

The behaviorist would view cyberbullying as a behavior that may be repeated because it is reinforced. It could be positive reinforcement in the form of acceptance from peers, or motivated by the laughs and attention gain from making fun of a peer. Once behaviors have been formed, they will not subside until the reinforcers are removed and desired behaviors are more heavily reinforced (Skinner, 1955).

Maslow's theory focuses on the development of healthy individuals (Maslow, 1943). According to Maslow, self-esteem needs become increasingly important after physiological, safety, and belongingness needs have been fulfilled (Maslow, 1943). These include the need for things that reflect on self-esteem, personal worth, social recognition, and accomplishment. Bullying is known by many different characteristics. These characteristics directly relate to a young person's self-esteem (Maslow, 1943). Social exclusion and being hazed all have a direct impact on an individual's esteem needs (Maslow, 1943).

Self-actualizing needs are at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). Self-actualizing people are self-aware, concerned with personal growth, less concerned with the opinions of others, and interested in fulfilling their potential (Maslow, 1943). Self-actualization includes a concern for the desires of others instead of simply focusing on individualistic needs (Maslow). The basis of self-actualization is to view life through the lens of others and look out for fellow human beings even when they may not

be considerate (Maslow, 1943). Bullies may struggle in attaining the self-actualization step of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Understanding Maslow's hierarchy will assist researchers seeking to find effective programs to assist perpetrators. Maslow (1943) also referred to the principle of responsibility by explaining that people prefer responsibility to dependency and passivity. This tendency to prefer responsibility lessens when a person is frightened, anxious, or depressed (Maslow, Stephens, & Heil, 1988). While Maslow's hierarchy clarifies basic human desires, other researchers have explored how context will change behavior. Phillip Zimbardo studied how grouping in a simulated prison would change group behavior (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973).

Phillip Zimbardo explored the influence of expectations for prison guards and inmates in a simulated prison (Haney et al., 1973). Prisoners and guards were randomly selected and all participants were paid the same daily rate. Guards were given uniforms, mirrored glasses, and instructions of their daily duties. Prisoners were provided with uniforms and confined to a six foot by nine foot cell. The two-week long study ended eight days early due to the health risks it posed to the participants who were assigned to the prisoner group. The study was terminated after five of the participants were released due to extreme depression, rage, and anxiety. Another participant was released after being treated for a psychosomatic rash (Haney et al., 1973).

Zimbardo found that, "being a guard carried with it social status within the prison, a group identity (when wearing the uniform), and above all, the freedom to exercise an unprecedented degree of control over the lives of other human beings" (Haney et al., 1973, p. 9). The guards were instructed to implement prison procedures into the prison setting which included the retention of the prisoners (Haney et al., 1973). The guards

wore reflective glasses that did not allow anyone to see their eyes, and their creative cruelty and harassment may have been due to a feeling of disconnect from the other person that this created (Haney et al., 1973). This might have influenced the frequency and ferocity of the verbal harassment; researchers also noted that harassment increased when the guards thought that they were out of range from the microphones and cameras (Haney et al., 1973). Among the participants who were assigned the role of guard, most were considered to be tough but fair, however, some were deemed to go, "far beyond their roles to engage in creative cruelty and harassment" (Haney et al., 1973, p. 10). It seems that some individuals were more prone to aggressive behavior and others were willing to engage in control over another merely because it was expected.

Just as guards may have been more prone to abuse their power because their uniforms made them feel like they were part of a group, cyberbullies may not take responsibility for their actions if these actions are performed while identifying themselves as a member of a group. In the Stanford simulated prison, the guards were disconnected from the prisoners with reflective glasses; in cyberbullying, the person acting as the bully may have increased ferocity due to feelings of disconnect from the perceived distance created in electronic platforms. Zimbardo found that guards and prisoners showed a marked tendency toward increased negativity of affect, and their overall outlook became increasingly negative (Haney et al., 1973). The participants in the prisoner group completed "self-evaluations that were more deprecating as the experience of the prison environment became internalized" (Haney et al., 1973, p. 9). The prison experiment not only suggests how a bully might be acting to fulfill perceived social norms, but it explains common tendencies of those in the prisoner or victim role.

After the prison experiment, all participants reported a devaluation of the self-worth; thus, even the prisoners viewed themselves more negatively (Haney et al., 1973). In like fashion, victims of cyberbullying could begin to devalue their worth, just as the prisoners devalued their self-worth after only six days. They could also suffer from similar mental effects as the prisoners. Prisoners in the prison experiment reported feelings of anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide. Not only did the prisoners report their individual hardships, but as the experiment progressed, they expressed intentions to do harm to others more frequently (Haney et al., 1973). These dramatic personal changes occurred within a relatively short period of time.

While the prison experiment was an intense, continuous stress to the participants in the prisoner group, those participants agreed to the experiment knowing that they would be financially compensated for a certain period. Victims of cyberbullying do not have compensation or knowledge of when negative actions might cease. A student who receives daily negative messages through social media or text messages may believe that they will receive these messages for the rest of their lives. While the stress maybe less intense than that of the prisoner subject group, the child's lack of power to stop it and ignorance of how long it may last could mean that the harm caused by cyberbullies may be as harmful or even more harmful if the abusive environment occurs over a longer period of time.

There are often witnesses to cyberbullying. The likelihood that a witness will intervene was explored by Darley and Latane (2011) in their bystander apathy experiment. In this experiment, participants were led into private rooms and told that they were there to discuss personal problems. The participants either thought they were

the only ones being interviewed or that they were a part of a six-person interview group. As the participants were interviewed, they would hear a person who sounded as though they were having a medical crisis calling out for help. When participants believed that they were part of a larger group, only 31% attempted to help. When participants believed that they were the only ones that could hear the plea for help, 85% of them volunteered to assist. This study suggested that believing that a person is part of a group will greatly decrease a person's likelihood to act (Fischer et al., 2011). People may believe that cyberbullying incidents are viewed by many witnesses. Based on the findings in the bystander apathy experiment, the understanding that there are many other witnesses to cyberbullying incidents could be a reason why incidents are not reported. While this may explain why a witness may not act, it does not account for witnesses who become cyberbullies after viewing an incident. Social psychologist, Solomon Asch, explored what might lead a person to engage in a behavior that they know is wrong.

Asch (1956) explored ideas of conformity in his experiment, in which participants were asked questions in a group setting. Only one member of the group was the actual subject of the study. The dependent variable was the number of people who answered incorrectly prior to this sole participant's response. Asch found that when only one person with one wrong answer spoke prior to the participant, it did not significantly affect the participant's response. However, when more than three people provided an incorrect answer, the participant responded with the same incorrect answer 33% of the time. The control group, the group with no people giving wrong answers, only missed one answer out of 35 responses. This effect was negated when participants were allowed to privately write their answer (Asch, 1956). Just like a participant in the experiment may feel

pressure to mimic an incorrect response, high school sophomores may be more apt to participate in cyberbullying if others have participated first. The teenage brain is wired differently from adults (Dickey, 2014). Additional research on how teenagers' view the need to socialize and the effect cyberbullying has on self-esteem may assist in developing strategies for teenagers affected by cyberbullying.

Related Literature

Cyberbullying has continued to increase and the impact is being felt throughout school communities. According to Sakellariou et al. (2012), further research is necessary, given that student access to new technologies is likely to increase in the future. Although parents may be able to prevent their children from cyberbullying, school officials are often the first adults to know about and deal with it. "Researchers have suggested bullying incidents tend to peak in middle school" (Varjas et al., 2009, p. 160). As more students entering high school are recruited in research pertaining to cyberbullying, information from the perpetrator's perspective as a prior middle school student and a current high school student will become available.

To better address the causes of cyberbullying, educators need to understand the reasons students engage in these behaviors. Of primary concern is the reason a young person is selected by perpetrators to become their victim. "Cyberbullying affects a large number of youths, therefore, researchers have been interested in identifying whether certain groups may be more susceptible targets than others" (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012, p. 397). Although access to technology used for cyberbullying are readily available and anonymity for perpetrators is enticing, the motivation is often unclear, misunderstood, or simply never addressed.

Technology Usage

Through technology, the dangers associated with cyberbullying are expanded to anywhere the technology is accessed (Holfeld, & Grabe, 2012; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Sahin et al., 2012; Sakellariou et al., 2012). While the cyberbully's motivations may be unclear, access to technology is the greatest factor in the prevalence of cyberbullying (Dickey, 2014; Sakellariou et al.). World-wide technology use has drastically changed in the last decade (ITU World Telecommunication, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Moreno, 2010). Mobile-cellular subscriptions have increased in developed nations from 992 million to almost 1.5 billion from 2005 to 2010 (ITU World Telecommunication). During the same time period, households with broadband subscriptions more than doubled in developed nations (ITU World Telecommunication). Mobile-broadband subscriptions were not tracked by the International Telecommunication Union until 2007(ITU World Telecommunication) and they increased over 400% from 225 million to over 1 billion in developed countries (ITU World Telecommunication).

Currently, there are mobile devices that not only access the Internet directly, but can use mobile broadband connections for the exchange of information through software commonly referred to as applications, or apps (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Moreno, 2010). The uses of these apps vary widely, and some are more prone to misuse (Moreno, 2010). Technology is changing so rapidly that it is difficult to find current data on the applications that adolescents use. The social media trend began with Geocities in 1994, but became much more popular with the advent of MySpace (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). MySpace was the dominant social media site among teenagers until they began using Facebook. While Facebook continues to dominate in social media subscriptions reaching

one billion users in October of 2012, Instagram is now more popular with middle and high school age children.

With the continuous change in social media applications and the rapid inventions of new online platforms designed for online interactions, it is increasingly difficult to detect cyberbullying. One example of a messaging service that is particularly difficult to monitor is SnapChat. Messages are automatically hidden after 1-10 seconds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). While the recipient takes a picture of the message, called a screen shot, the sender is informed if any screen shot is taken, so it is possible to obtain evidence of harassment only if the recipient knows how to capture the message and decides to act in less than ten seconds. Since this platform of communication is continually changing based on how people are able to access the Internet, the content that is available, and how they are able to interact, it is increasingly difficult to monitor and control. Parents and educators have become more dependent on children to bring instances of misuse to their attention (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). More detailed research is needed to explore the online platforms through which electronic bullying occurs, and the content and context in which the behavior takes place (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

Although perpetration through various platforms may be intended to be jokes, the effect on victims can be harmful (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). Holfeld and Grabe (2012) reported that incidents are often difficult to understand when the event is perceived and reported differently by the cyberbully and the victim. The stress to the victim may also be increased if he or she does not know who the bully is (Sakellariou et al., 2012). The idea of perpetrators perceiving their actions as harmless jokes requires further investigation of the varying intent behind cyberbullying.

There appears to be some relationship between the frequency of Internet use and the likelihood of youth perpetrating cyberbullying (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). With the opportunity for convenient access through cyberspace at all hours of the day, the victims are always available. Due to the far reaching opportunities of the Internet, there is a vast pool of potential victims who can become a target of cyberbullying (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). Often, these victims of cyberbullying are reluctant to tell others. According to a 2011 Pew study, 88% of American teens have witnessed cruelty on social networks, and 13% have felt nervous about going to school the next day because of what took place while online (Dickey, 2014).

Sakellariou et al. (2012) indicated that approximately 87% of students reported they had access to the Internet and Internet chat lines, with 77% reporting access to email and Internet. The Internet was the most common mode of cyberbullying with 11% of the participants having experienced it at some time during the school year. Currently, males are more interested in the Internet and computers (Sahin et al., 2012). This can be seen as an important factor contributing to cyberbullying among teenage males (Sahin et al., 2012).

Junior high school participants were victimized significantly more often than expected compared to the primary and senior high school students (Sakellariou et al., 2012). This information again points to a specific age group with more tendencies to harass others through cybertools. With a targeted age range and specific methods of cyberbullying, the issue can be addressed at schools and homes. Mark and Ratliffe (2011) found results suggesting that more Internet access leads to a greater potential for a student to become a cybervictim, cyberbully, or both.

Current School Prevention Programs

Schools vary widely in their approach to cyberbullying (Kowalski et al., 2012; Mishna et al., 2010). Schools that have the best outcomes in dealing with the issue are ones that plan for incidents before they occur. Schools that focus on education for the entire staff and students have lower incidents of cyberbullying (Mishna et al., 2010). The way that cyberbullying education is delivered varies. Most schools will utilize mass communication to spread awareness to staff and parents. This may come through school wide announcements, letters home, or e-mails. Small group instruction can take many different forms: Instructor led courses, instruction through video or websites, and peer groups (Mishna et al., 2010).

To address the complexities of the advancement in technology, schools have implemented a variety of strategies that range from a proactive approach to a reactive approach based on interventions or reporting incidents (Kowalski et al., 2012). Most proactive measures are primarily focused on student education (Mishna et al., 2010). Some schools are attempting to implement preventive measures such as teacher education programs that help teachers better understand what might motivate a child to engage in cyberbullying. This would provide teachers with knowledge that they could use when looking for students who might be engaging in cyberbullying. Recognition of signs of cyberbullying could lead to quicker intervention. As teachers become more involved in the process, they will be able to relate measures they deem to be most effective (Shariff, 2009). Programs that focus on prevention through training teachers are rare; most programs addressing cyberbullying are reactive (Kowalski et al., 2012). Reactive programs will often focus on collecting evidence of the event and use school policies and

procedures that were designed to address traditional bullying (Kowalski et al., 2012). While it is impossible to prevent all incidents of cyberbullying through proactive measures, schools that engage in proactive measures often find greater success than reactionary measures (Mishna et al., 2010). Research has indicated that the most effective prevention of cyberbullying occurs when schools use a variety of proactive measures and establish protocols to react to cyberbullying (Kowalski et al., 2012; Mishna et al., 2010).

The education of students in cyberbullying prevention is best served by including student input in regard to school policies and consequences (Shariff, 2009). Through student input, schools may identify new ways to reach at-risk students by developing programs and systems based on identified needs. By implementing these programs, schools will promote academic achievement for students who may be challenged with anxiety and depression (Shariff, 2009). This may assist in reducing the incidents of cyberbullying among students with these characteristics. As programs are developed, students will view the world through the eyes of peers and better empathize with their challenges. "Bullies perceive their worlds in very self-centered ways, and we need to offer them ways to see the world from others' perspectives" (Thomas, 2012, p. 53). While it may seem intuitive to focus on controls over the types of technology used in cyberbullying, the behavior of a bully is similar in traditional and cyberbullying and suggests that behavioral interventions would be more appropriate (Perren, Dooley, Shaw, & Cross, 2010).

Although students may be exposed to church, home, or primary school programs based on character development, it should not cease when students enter high school.

Schools now need to establish systematic interventions and prevention programs to reduce instances of cyberbullying. Thomas (2012) states, "because bullying is also a problem of values, having a well-developed character education program is also imperative to diminishing bullying" (p. 55). Although the victim needs and should have support from school staff, the bully also needs help (Thomas, 2012). By incorporating school policies based on zero tolerance for bullying on and off campus as well as developing intervention and prevention programs, incidents will be reduced (Thomas, 2012). To advance these programs and policies into implementation with fidelity, school administrators must be educated in understanding the motivation and goals of those perpetrating cyberbullying (Thomas, 2012). This may help professionals address the situation from both the victim's and cyberbully's perspective (Grigg, 2012).

In a study by Agatston et al. (2010), students suggested strategies for addressing cyberbullying. The students recommended blocking the sender rather than conducting any form of response which would only encourage the perpetrator (Agatston et al., 2010). Although it may be temporarily successful, simply blocking a sender may not be enough to stop a cyberbully. At home or after school hours, parents may direct their child to limit social media use or even block senders but schools can also support proactive cyberbullying prevention.

School districts allowing the use of cell phones throughout the school day should be proactive in policies and enforce the policies based on clear cell phone and cyberbullying expectations. During class and extracurricular activities, protocol for reporting incidents to school staff should be reinforced (Kowalski et al., 2012). When it comes to cyberbullying, conflict resolution is not a recommended strategy because such

programs typically assume that both parties are at least partly to blame (Kowalski et al., 2012). Some conflict resolutions strategies include taking the electronic device away from the victim so they will be spared from future bullying; this limits the victim's ability to communicate, and it can be viewed as a punishment for the victim (Kowalski et al., 2012). Some victims of cyberbullying have said that they did not report an incident for fear that their electronics might be taken from them (Kowalski et al., 2012).

Perceptions of the Definition

The dangers of cyberbullying are widely acknowledged, but many people have different beliefs of what constitutes cyberbullying (Grigg, 2012; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Varjas et al., 2009). The ability to compare findings from different studies may be complicated by criteria constituting cyberbullying (Grigg, 2012). Teenagers may perceive cyberbullying differently depending on their involvement and case by case situations. Often the bully may not be aware of the level of harm they are causing their victims (Grigg, 2012). With potential perpetrators understanding examples of cyberbullying through school-based intervention programs, cyberbullying can be reduced (Shariff, 2009). The challenge for educators and parents is to clearly identify differences and characteristics within the types of bullying (Shariff, 2009). Physical, verbal, and relational bullying may have many overlapping characteristics (Varjas et al., 2009). Grigg's study explored the acts that constitute cyberbullying to see how they are classified in lay terms. It is acknowledged that these two types of bullying—traditional and cyber—are different in the way the behaviors occur, but share certain criterion, primarily, the desire for the bully to impose power and control regardless of the platform.

Cyberbully specific research, from the perspective of victims, will help practitioners determine strategies for support and prevention. Gathering data from victims' experiences will assist researchers in understanding what specific perpetrator actions are acknowledged as cyberbullying (Morrow & Downey, 2013). Clarifying what cyberbullying entails will help researchers understand the effectiveness of preventative measures. Researchers can address negative Internet acts and shape how well preventative measures are disseminated (Grigg, 2012).

In order to clarify some of the key issues relating to cyberbullying, it should be studied as a distinct phenomenon without the confounding role of the traditional definition constructs (Grigg, 2012). It is also essential to identify the experiences of both cybervictims and cyberbullies in order to determine perceived differences between online and traditional bullying (Morrow & Downey, 2013). Through surveys, students can give details on their perceptions of the definition, misunderstandings of the definition, and characteristics involved in cyberbullying (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011).

Distinct Nature

There is a difference in the perpetration of the various types of bullying (Kowalski et al., 2012). Cyberbullying often goes unreported and the perpetrators often do not possess the same characteristics as a traditional bully (Kowalski et al., 2012). It has been discovered that nearly one out of every three bullying incidents are based on cyberbullying (Tokunaga, 2010). Because perpetrators vary based the type of bullying, additional research is needed to inform educators and parents on the traits and motivating factors behind the perpetration of cyberbullying.

In a 2010 study, victims of cyberbullying reported knowing the perpetrator and it was often someone they considered a friend (Mishna et al., 2010). Although the number of friends a student has directly relates to the number of traditional bullying incidents that student may encounter, this may not be the case in cyberbullying (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Sahin et al. (2012) suggest understanding cyberbullying in the context of perpetration within friendships can be beneficial in developing programs that focus on respectful behavior among peers and social skills development. Individuals who are exposed to cyberbullying may feel the need to defend themselves from a perceived threat and tension, or a need to gain acceptance within the group.

Cyberbullying may be more harmful than traditional bullying. Bullying in the traditional sense has existed for many decades but the fairly new, arguably more dangerous phenomenon, of cyberbullying is more difficult to address due to the vast difference in online platforms. Often, the cyberbully can be a recent cybervictim. Varjas et al. (2009) found cybervictimization and cyberbullying had a strong correlation with one another ($r = .89$). The large residual variances in cyberbullying and cybervictimization, and the strong correlation between the two residuals, suggest that electronic and online bullying and victimization are different in fundamental ways from other forms of bullying (Varjas et al., 2009). According to the results, it has been determined that there is a positive relationship between cybervictim and the level of interpersonal sensitiveness of students ($n = 299$, $r = 0.142$, $p < 0.05$). Sahin et al. (2012) determined that there is a positive relationship between cybervictim and level of anxiety. Cyberbullying has modestly higher effects than traditional bullying in regard to delinquency, self-harm, and suicidal ideation (Hay, Meldrum, & Mann, 2010).

Cyberbullying can become more difficult to report or address at schools with high enrollments. They may have even more of a challenge when detecting symptoms of students who may be victims of cyberbullying (Sahin et al., 2012). In order to appropriately address cyberbullying, it is necessary to understand that cyberbullying and traditional bullying is often perceived as a similar offense but they are far from the same. Mishna et al. (2010) examined the prevalence, impact, and differential experience of cyberbullying among a large and diverse sample of middle and high school students. A recent study examined the main effect of physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying in 7,508 students in grades six through ten (Sakellariou et al., 2012). Wang et al. (2009) surveyed the adolescents with the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire to place students in the one of four categories: bully, victim, bully–victim, and not involved. While boys were involved in more physical and verbal bullying, girls were more likely to engage in relational bullying. Also, boys were more likely to be cyberbullies, while girls were more likely to be cybervictims.

Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying provides a sense of anonymity due the distance between the cyberbully and the victim (Sakellariou et al., 2012). The distance between the two could lead to a perception of disconnect between the cyberbully and the victim. In Zimbardo's study, the harsh treatment of the prisoners by the guards led to a weakening of self-identity among the prisoners (Haney et al., 1973). "As they began to lose initiative and emotional responsivity, while acting ever more compliantly, indeed, the prisoners became de-individuated not only to the guards and the observers, but also to themselves" (Haney et al., 1973, p. 15). This loss of emotional responsivity could be a

cause of distance between a cyberbully and the cybervictim. This could heighten the frequency of the harassment and aggression by the cyberbully.

In some cases, the tendency of aggression within cyberbullying and traditional bullying may be similar. In both instances there may be similarities in the factors that lead toward aggressive behaviors in teenagers who commit these acts (Mustafa, Serkan, Sari, & Zekeriya, 2010; Perren et al., 2010). The increase in likelihood that the student who cyberbullies will be male is similar to the findings that traditional bullies tend to be male (Veenstra, Verhulst, Ormel, Jansen, & Reijneveld , 2011). The greatest factor in predicting if a person would engage in bullying was aggression; preschool children who were observed to have aggressive behavior were more likely to bully when they were between the ages of 10-14 (Veenstra et al., 2011).

The study also found that preschoolers with good motor functioning were more likely to engage in bullying behaviors as they became teenagers. Poor motor functioning as a child may lead to low feelings of self-worth, and higher motor functioning in childhood may lead to higher feelings of self-worth (Veenstra et al., 2011). It may seem that this would only be a factor in traditional bullying, but the similarity may hold true in the electronic medium. Sahin et al. (2010) found a negative correlation between perceived self-worth and incidents of bullying. People who engage in bullying behaviors are more likely to have had increased aggression as a child (ages 3-10), and increased motor skills as a child (Sahin et al., 2010). Many factors could contribute to a child who bullies, but a lack of limits on aggressive behavior and parents who use harsh and inconsistent punishment delivered in a corporeal, aggressive, and hostile manner are contributing factors to the likelihood that a child will engage in bullying behaviors (Sahin

et al., 2010). Even though cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon, the factors that contribute to who are likely to engage in victim and bully type behaviors remain the same.

Another similarity between cyberbullies and traditional bullies is found in a person's brain function, which may help to determine the likelihood that they will bully (Vaughn, Salas-Wright, DeLisi, & Perron, 2014). A study of data from Philadelphia and Phoenix juvenile correctional facilities noted that the youth in the correctional facilities had a significantly higher incurrence of traumatic brain injury (TBI) than youth outside of the correctional population (Vaughn et al., 2014). This study was limited by the population size of the juvenile detention centers, and it is unclear at what point the TBI occurred, but it does suggest that the brain of a young person incarcerated may be different than that of a young person who does not engage in at-risk behavior (Vaughn et al., 2014). Aggressive behavior can be linked to the physiology of the brain and cannot be fully understood by focusing solely on the person's environment (Volk, Camilleri, Dane, & Marini, 2012). When prescribing new cyberbullying prevention programs, developers should be aware that some people are predisposed to engage in bully type behavior due to physiological differences in the brain (Volk et al., 2014).

While bullying has been widely studied, cyberbullying is a relatively new topic. Further research is required to better understand the connection between the types of bullying (Sakellariou et al., 2012). Both the availability of cyberplatforms and the convenience of time provide access and opportunities to cyberbully as often as desired. This also increases the potential for peer involvement. Research suggests there may be more similarities than differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying

(Sakellariou et al., 2012). A cross-cultural study between Swiss and Australian students found that both cyberbullying and traditional bullying are similar because they both represent the same cluster of socially inappropriate behaviors (Perren et al., 2010). The researchers also discovered that all groups involved in bullying demonstrated increased depressive symptoms compared to students who had not been involved in bullying activities (Perren et al., 2010). The victims reported more depressive symptoms than the bullies (Perren et al., 2010). Similar to previous research on traditional bullying, cyberbullying had a negative relationship between all forms of bullying and mental health (Perren et al., 2010). The effects of the behaviors of cyberbullying and traditional bullying remained the same, but victims of cyberbullying had increased development of symptoms of depression (Perren et al., 2010).

Cyberbullying data may be difficult to decipher on a grand scale due to the dynamic nature of this phenomenon. While each case of cyberbullying is different, all cases seem to lead to greater feelings of hopelessness in the victim as the time span of the incident increases (Perren et al., 2010). Similarly, the attacks are often reportedly more vicious and the negative effects to the victim are more severe for incidents that occur over a longer period of (Perren et al., 2010). It may be unclear whether the bullying is occurring because the platform affords the opportunity or if the cyberbullying event is a continuation of a traditional bullying event (Perren et al., 2010).

Present Culture

While cyberbullying is prevalent, it is often deemphasized or misunderstood (Grigg, 2012; Sakellariou et al., 2012; Thomas, 2012). Approximately 22% of students enrolled in primary and secondary schools in Sydney and Brisbane did not find electronic

forms of bullying upsetting in comparison to face-to-face bullying (Sakellariou et al., 2012). However, approximately 15% of students reported finding cyberbullying more upsetting than face-to-face bullying (Sakellariou et al., 2012). Because the number of people viewing the circulated images is unknown, particularly if the images have been uploaded to a website, the true extent of the frequency of cyberbullying may be even less reliable (Sakellariou et al., 2012).

It is not surprising that 13-15 year olds receive significantly more bullying text messages than the other age groups because over 80% of 12-18 year olds own mobile devices and delinquent activity peaks between 13-16 years of age (Sakellariou et al., 2012). In a study of 145 special education students from eight different schools, 50 students reported being bullied at one time or another. Of these, eight reported themselves as being bullies. Seventy-four percent of those bullied reported feelings of low self-esteem; 68% of the victims reported bullying happening to them specific to middle school experiences; 24 % reported thoughts of suicide; and 50% of the incidents by bullies were based on not liking the other person even without understanding the victim's perspectives or feelings (Thomas, 2012).

The harmful effects of cyberbullying are serious and preventable (Grigg, 2012; Varjas et al., 2009). A culture of cyberbullying is created by students assuming or learning that bullying is either accepted, tolerated, or ignored by others (Varjas et al., 2009). Programs directed towards educating students about cyberbullying can change the culture of online activity on a high school campus. Schools that have plans as to how they will address cyberbullying before incidents occur also have greater success in preventing cyberbullying (Shariff, 2009).

While cyberbullying continues to be a problem, incidents of cyberbullying tend to go unreported. Although it is difficult to create surveys to capture trends in regard to the rapid changes in technology used for cyberbullying, 25% of victims have experienced cyberbullying by cell phone. Over 10% of victims have reported pictures posted of them without their consent. While it may be intuitive to consider the risk to victims, there are negative mental health issues for witnesses as well (Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurst, 2009). Approximately 95% of teens witnessing cyberbullying ignore the act instead of reporting it. Within the culture, more than half of victims never confide in their parents and a specific perpetrator is often difficult to identify because 10% are both a bully and a victim.

Reporting Incidents

Studies suggest that the rate of cyberbullying is significantly underreported, and there are many factors that would lead to a victim's reluctance to report incidents (Agatston et al., 2010; Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Morrow & Downey, 2013). Many of the fears associated with traditional bullying are also present in cyberbullying (Perren et al., 2010). In addition to the fear created as a result of the cyberbullying event, students may not report an incident because they do not know how or they fear they will receive negative consequences (Agatston et al., 2010; Holfeld & Grabe, 2012).

Traditionally victims of bullying are reluctant to tell others. Holfeld and Grabe (2012) documented approximately 64% of youth reported the incident when they were cyberbullied and 60% reported when they witnessed cyberbullying. Peers and parents were told most frequently while teachers were rarely informed. There can be many factors explaining why a victim may not report incidents of cyberbullying. Students may

fear continued or increased harassment if it is discovered that the incident was reported. Students have reported that they were less likely to report cyberbullying to parents for fear of losing their electronic devices (Agatston et al., 2010).

The best practices to reduce cyberbullying tend to be in the direction of providing student–victims multiple options for reporting and educating students about prevention (Thomas, 2012). Students can prevent cyberbullying by reporting questionable websites to parents, school administration or law enforcement. The concern is communicating to students how and when to report. Most students were unaware of simple strategies to defend against cyberbullying such as requesting the removal of the material from websites, as well as how to respond as helpful bystanders when witnessing cruel online behavior (Agatston et al., 2010). Cyberincidents happen more often outside of the school day, which may require schools to pursue discipline measures for off campus bullying based on student electronic agreements (Grigg, 2012). Through communicated policies and procedures, students can make informed decisions on how to effectively report cyberoffenses in a timely and specific manner.

Awareness

One of the earliest incidents of cyberbullying to increase national awareness led to Vermont's Bully Prevention Law and Suicide Prevention Law (Halligan, 2009). John and Kelly Halligan noticed that their son, Ryan, needed help with his speech and motor-skills when he was in pre-school (Halligan, 2009). They entered him in special education, and he was regularly a target for bullies in middle school. In February of 2003, a moment of harassment turned into a fight between Ryan and another boy. Ryan believed that this fight not only stopped the harassment, but that the bully was now his

friend. He confided in his new friend and told him personal information. The harassment at school now came in the form of a rumor that Ryan was "gay." The bullying continued online when a popular girl pretended to like him and sent messages to him through AOL's Instant Messenger. It was later discovered that the fake interest was used to gain more personal information to harass Ryan. Ryan hung himself in the bathroom. None of the cyberbullies were prosecuted, because they were said to have violated no law. Three years later, Vermont signed ACT 117 and 114, The Bully Prevention Law and Suicide Prevention Law respectively, to prevent cyberbullying and suicide (Halligan, 2009).

Another example of a fatal incident of cyberbullying that received national publicity ended in the prosecution and conviction of the cyberbullies by a federal court (Albin, 2012). When Missouri officials failed to press charges against the teens that harassed the victim, a court in Los Angeles proceeded with charges. The court claimed jurisdiction because MySpace was headquartered in Los Angeles (Albin, 2012). The victim, Megan Meier was a 13-year old neighbor of the cyberbully. According to prosecutors, Sarah Drew, her mother, and her mother's employee created a fake profile on MySpace with the name "Josh Evens." They befriended Megan Meier pretending to be a boy who was interested in a relationship. After weeks of engaging in a fake relationship, one of the girls posted the message, "the world would be a better place without you." That afternoon Megan hanged herself in her bedroom. Since the death of her daughter, Tina Meier created the Megan Meier Foundation and Missouri passed "Megan's Law" in the hopes of preventing future cyberbullying (Albin, 2012).

An additional nationally publicized incident of cyberbullying that led to the victim committing suicide and inspired state legislation involved an 18-year-old girl who sent a nude photo to her boyfriend (Celizic, 2009). Sending nude photos or provocative messages through text is referred to as sexting. In this case, Jessica Logan sent a topless photo to her boyfriend. After they broke up, he sent the photo to teens from multiple high schools in the Cincinnati area. Once the picture went viral, Jessica became the target of harassment every day at school (Celizic, 2009). She went on television to warn others about the dangers of sexting. Her mother described her daughter's treatment at school as "torture." In an interview with Matt Lauer, Cynthia Logan, Jessica's mother, claimed that school officials lied about offering to pursue prosecution for the parties involved (Celizic, 2009). While the students sending the picture could not be charged with disseminating child pornography, Jessica was 18 at the time of the photo, they could have been charged with disseminating pornography to a minor. Jessica told her mother not to speak to the perpetrators' parents for fear that the harassment would worsen (Celizic, 2009). She used to have perfect attendance, but she began skipping school. Her mother took away her car and began to drive her to school but Jessica was still skipping class to avoid harassment. When Jessica returned from the funeral of a friend who committed suicide, she hanged herself in her bedroom (Celizic, 2009).

Rutgers University was in headlines across the nation in 2010 when Tyler Clementi committed suicide after his roommate taped a homosexual encounter of him and posted it on the Internet (Wiener-Bronner, 2010). Tyler Clementi, entering his freshman year at Rutgers University was not open about being homosexual. His roommate, Dharun Ravi, used Molly Wei's laptop to record Tyler kissing another boy.

Ravi then posted the video to his Twitter feed. The posting of the video was devastating and on September 22, Tyler jumped off of the George Washington Bridge. Both Molly Wei and Dharun Ravi were charged with invasion of privacy. Molly Wei testified in exchange for immunity and Dharum was sentenced to 30 days in jail (Wiener-Bronner, 2010).

The hardship that Amanda Todd faced from cyberbullying was caused when she told her story through note cards in a video posted on YouTube in 2012 (Grenoble, 2012). A year earlier, Amanda Todd showed herself topless during a video chat. That photo, taken when she was 13-years old, was sent back to her a year later with the threat that the photo would be sent to "everyone" if she did not "put on a show." The person sending the photo knew her friends, her address, and where she went to school (Grenoble, 2012). The photo was forwarded to her peers in the Vancouver area, and Amanda's encounter of blackmail made her the target for bullying by her classmates. She transferred schools with the hope that she could escape the bullying at her school (Grenoble, 2012). The person who spread the picture of her the first time created a Facebook page with the photo of her topless as the profile picture. Amanda was quickly the target of traditional bullying at her new school. In her YouTube video she reported feelings of anxiety and depression. She also said that she used alcohol and drugs to cope with the pains of her torment. At the new school a group of girls beat her while another student filmed it. Amanda was so distraught that she drank bleach in an attempt to kill herself. Her family moved to a different city in an attempt to escape the bullying, but she continued to be harassed at her new school in Coquitlam (Grenoble, 2012). After Amanda committed suicide at the age of 15, a 35-year old man in the Netherlands was

charged with extortion, Internet luring, criminal harassment, and child pornography, according to Canadian police (Grenoble, 2012). After Amanda Todd's story aired nationally in Canada, legislatures began discussing a national anti-harassment law (Wiener-Bonner, 2014).

While awareness is rising, there needs to be an increase in understanding of what constitutes cyberbullying, how to prevent cyberbullying, and how to respond to incidents of cyberbullying (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Mishna et al., 2010; Sakellariou et al., 2012; Yang, Stewart, Kim, Shin, Dewey, & Yoon, 2013). Although there is a need for increased awareness, there is uncertainty of what groups and which demographics need the most attention. Public schools have demonstrated the highest frequency of cyberbullying with the second highest being private all-girls' schools (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). Although many students viewed cyberbullying as a serious problem, they were unsure about what parents and teachers could do to keep them safe (Sakellariou et al., 2012). When addressing the awareness around cyberbullying, further research is needed to identify effective strategies which prevent incidents as well as increase supervision measures in schools and at home (Sakellariou et al., 2012). Parent education and school policies should be at the forefront of this initiative.

Parents and students need to be better educated on how to prevent depression and anxiety that is associated with cyberbullying (Mishna et al., 2010). People should be aware of cyberbullying's negative effect on a person's affect. Lower academic achievement and lower self-esteem were associated with perpetration and victimization from cyberbullying. Higher anxiety was associated with cyberbullying (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). Awareness should increase between the connection of symptoms of depression

caused by cyberbullying and suicide. Adults must now recognize symptoms of depression as well as increase the supervision of their child's online activities to look for signs of cyberbullying or depression. Negative affect is not only increased in victims, some perpetrators are also depressed or have low self-esteem (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013). Depressive symptoms can be reduced in students who engage in cyberbullying by focusing on enhancing their self-esteem (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013). Once at-risk students have been identified at school, staff could implement interventions to prevent the student from becoming a future victim, thus decreasing the likelihood that they will develop depression or anxiety from being a victim of cyberbullying (Mishna et al., 2010).

While some cases of cyberbullying have achieved international awareness after they end in the victim killing themselves, understanding the emotional harm of cyberbullying is not adequately known (Kowalski et al., 2012). Greater focus should be placed on awareness of risk factors for perpetrators and victims of cyberbullying. Educational interventions need to increase awareness of the negative effect caused by cyberbullying including signs a student may hurt themselves.

Summary

This chapter presented literature fundamental to the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The theoretical and conceptual framework was developed with emphasis on the following theories: Vygotsky's social development theory (1978) and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943). The framework extends by addressing Asch's exploration of ideas of conformity (1956). Finally, Zimbardo's (1973) study involving group behavior provided extensive content to the framework of this literature review.

Although there have been qualitative research studies on the topic of cyberbullying, gaps remain within the literature in regard to this fairly new phenomenon (Grigg, 2012; Sakellariou et al., 2012). With no clear identification of the term cyberbullying and multiple methods for perpetrators, it is necessary to further investigate the background, current literature, and present day perspectives (Grigg, 2012). While a person's strong desire to feel that they belong is well researched, more research is needed to understand how individuals interact in online groups. It is well documented that the need to conform to the group often leads young people to change their behavior and model their actions to match those of the group, but researchers have not explored how online groups influence a young person's behaviors (Fischer et al., 2011). These behaviors are learned at a young age and reinforced over time (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). While many factors influence how a person interacts in a group, their connection to individual peers may be the most substantial factor (Fischer et al., 2011). This impacts an individual's feelings towards other members. If a person feels disconnected from another person or group, that individual may view the interaction as more severe than if they felt close to the other person or group (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). While social interactions have dramatically changed with technological advancement, research on the impacts of the behavior within online groups behavior is lacking (Fischer et al., 2011).

The expansion of capabilities and usage of technology for communication has fundamentally changed how people can interact. The electronic medium allows for instant communication over great distances. Some Internet sites allow for complete anonymity, and all social media platforms have a greater sense of disconnect than personal interactions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). While great efforts have been placed

on creating newer, more powerful social media platforms, the response by educators has lagged behind.

Most schools lack a comprehensive cyberbullying prevention strategy (Kowalski et al., 2012). Schools often address incidents of cyberbullying with rules or procedures structured to react more towards traditional bullying. These procedures were designed before the rapid expansion of technology use by teenagers and therefore, may be out dated or not specific enough for modern cyberbullying prevention (Agatston, et al., 2010). These interventions commonly occur after cyberbullying has taken place and can have a potentially adverse effect on the victim (Agatston et al., 2010). Many victims fear retribution for reporting to school officials and some victims fear that their use of social media will be reduced if they report an incident. These effects can cause future incidents to go unreported (Agatston et al., 2010). While many negative effects of cyberbullying are relatively brief, some victims experience lasting consequences.

Cyberbullying has serious and possible long-term consequences. Depression is more prevalent in victims and witnesses of cyberbullying (Varjas et al., 2009). Some cases of cyberbullying lead the victim to feel helpless and fear that the abuse will never stop. There is an identifiable gap in the literature in regard to why an individual is motivated to cyberbully. The differences in literature highlights the importance of understanding that while cyberbullying and traditional bullying may currently be perceived as similar offenses, they are far from the same (Sakellariou et al., 2012).

While people are becoming more aware of the frequency and dangers of cyberbullying, most people do not know how to address the issue or why teens engage in these behaviors (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). Examples of incidents ending tragically have

increasingly been published nationally and internationally over the past decade (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). Some of these publicized cases have led to new laws or prosecutions of individuals, but these reactions focus on punishment, not prevention.

It is important for school officials and parents to develop an understanding of the motivations of cyberbullies, so they are more informed on potential intervention strategies (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). With limited research specifying the characteristics and motives of perpetrators, this qualitative phenomenological study explored the motives behind cyberbullying and common characteristics of cyberbullies through the experiences of high school sophomore participants.

CHAPER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological study was to examine the motives of Southern California high school sophomore students who cyberbully. By examining the motives of cyberbullies, the study gleaned information that supports the need for further research and the development of additional cyberbullying prevention strategies. New insights on cyberbullying may assist school leaders in developing prevention programs within this relatively new phenomenon. In this chapter, the author describes the research design and procedures, which consist of the following (a) design; (b) research questions; (c) participants; (d) setting; (e) procedures; (f) researcher's role; (g) data collection; (h) data analysis; (i) trustworthiness; (j) ethical considerations.

Design

This qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological study was conducted to examine the motives of Southern California high school sophomore students who perpetrate cyberbullying. Miles and Hubermann (1994) describe qualitative research as "prolonged contacts with life situations that are reflective of everyday life of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations" (p. 6). Phenomenological research meanwhile, focuses on the descriptions of human experiences and how they were experienced (Patton, 2002). A phenomenological study can aid a researcher describing the experiences of individuals involved in a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Moustakas' (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher than on a description of the experiences of participants.

Methodologies included a 13-question student reflection survey, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group consisting of six participants selected from the interviews. In this study, high school perpetrators described their personal experiences of how they interact with others in social media communities. To protect the transcendental process, the researcher brackets out his or her personal experiences (Creswell, 2013). Data was collected using surveys, interviews, and a focus group which provided participants the opportunity to share the motivations behind their acts. The study concludes by describing the perceptions of perpetrators and their feelings in regard to their experiences.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the underlying motives that lead cyberbullies to perpetrate?

RQ2: How do the cyberbullies feel about the act of cyberbullying?

RQ3: What are the cyberbullies' feelings towards those they cyberbully?

RQ4: How do cyberbullies view their relationship with those they cyberbully?

RQ5: What characteristics do cyberbullies have in common with each other?

Setting

The study involved a suburban high school located within a large Southern California school district, led by one principal and three assistant principals. The location was chosen due to the diversity of the school's student population, which closely reflects the heterogeneous student population of Southern California schools. Prior to the study, the school district and the principal granted written permission to administer the study at the school during school hours. Pseudonyms were used throughout the study to maintain confidentiality of participants and the names of the district and school where the study occurred. The school is one of 24 comprehensive public high schools in a school district

with a total approximate enrollment of 131,000 students. The school district has a high percentage of socio-economically disadvantaged students with approximately 60% of students qualifying for the free/reduced meal program. The majority of students are identified in ethnic subgroupings consisting of the White and the Hispanic.

Participants

This study was conducted using 14, 10th grade students selected from a high school residing within the school district. The number of participants in a qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological research study should range from 10-20 participants (Creswell, 2013). When determining the appropriate number of participants for the interview process, Creswell (2013) recommends that the number lie between 5-25 participants.

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants based on their responses given on the survey. During purposeful sampling, the researcher selects individuals and sites for study specifically to recruit information about the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This type of sampling was appropriate as it aided in the selection of perpetrators. The participants were selected based on the feedback provided on the reflection survey.

The survey consisted of 13 questions regarding personal experiences with cyberbullying. A Cronbach's alpha was administered to ensure reliability of the survey. Approximately 120 high school sophomores in four English classes at this high school were provided the survey.

From the survey's responses, 14 participants, who indicated they had personal experiences with cyberbullying, were invited to be interviewed. Students who answered

survey questions consistent with cyberbully activity were extended the opportunity to participate in the interview phase. Potential perpetrators were interviewed one-on-one for 30 minutes or less. Responses were coded directly after the interviews. The responses most consistent with the perpetration of cyberbullying led to the final selection of the six focus group participants. The focus group consisted of four female and two male participants. The focus group session lasted 37 minutes.

Procedures

After applying for IRB approval, I waited for permission from the IRB and the school site to recruit sample candidates. After IRB approval (Appendix D) was awarded, I worked with the high school sophomore English course instructors to schedule a date to administer the survey. Prior to administering the surveys, I delivered the consent forms (Appendix E) to approximately 120 of the potential participants through their English teacher's classroom. Potential interview participants were asked to return the forms signed by themselves and their parent to their English teacher within three school days. After three days, I worked with the teacher to administer surveys to students who returned their signed consent forms and volunteered to participate in the survey. I administered the survey inside the classes for approximately 10 minutes per class. After each class completed the survey, I placed them in a labeled folder and took all surveys with me off of the school's campus. The survey was the first instrument used in this study. At the conclusion of the surveys, participants with multiple responses of "Yes" were selected as potential interview participants. Multiple responses of "Yes" demonstrated a participant's likelihood of participating in the perpetration of cyberbullying. After I selected the potential participants with the greatest number of

"Yes" responses, I scheduled interviews with those who chose to voluntarily continue participating in the study.

At the conclusion of the interviews, I analyzed the interview data through transcribing each interview to determine the best participants for the focus group. These participants were selected based on their responses such as frequent negative word choices, aggressive language, and multiple experiences related to the perpetration of cyberbullying. I then called the chosen participants to schedule a date for the focus group.

After the focus group session, the data was analyzed by horizontalization and clusters of meaning. By using multiple sources to provide common evidence, I established the themes (Creswell, 2013). To ensure triangulation, data was collected by using surveys, interviews, and the focus group. Triangulation is the technique a qualitative researcher uses to develop a rich and robust account of a study thus producing an understanding of a phenomenon (Schwandt, 2007). In this study, multiple methods assisted in facilitating a deeper understanding of the cyberbullying phenomenon and the experiences produced by the nature of the cyberbully's aggressive behavior. The data were analyzed to better understand the motives and feelings of high school students who cyberbully. In addition to findings related to the motives of a cyberbully, the information gathered from the study provided insight on why cyberbullies choose their victims and commonalities of cyberbullies.

The Researcher's Role

Based on the qualitative methodology of this study, I, as a human instrument, conducted all of the research and administered the data analysis. Patton (2002) states that

in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument, and "the credibility of the qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork" (p.14). I am a high school principal in a different school district and I do not work at the high school where the study took place. I have served as an educator for the past 18 years. Additionally, I am a father of two teenage sons. As a school administrator, I have been directly involved in school discipline policies for 10 years. During the past few years, I have observed both an increase in electronic communication and cyberbullying. Though this study took place at a high school, I did not utilize my school's resources or survey the students enrolled at my school.

Data Collection

The data collection procedures for this study were selected to effectively recruit participants who may have participated in cyberbullying. In order to accomplish both the recruitment of ideal participants and sequentially progress through the collection process with the most valuable participants, a specific system and sequence was followed. The study employed three methods for data collection. Using all three of these sources to collect, merge, and justify themes, triangulation of the data provided reliability and validity. Gribrich (2007) describes triangulation as the use of multiple separate reference points of data to create a rich collection of information that will increase the validity of the research.

First, a voluntary survey was administered to 10th grade students. The survey's scale measured the combined responses to a number of related survey items into one score in order to measure the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The survey was effective because it identified potential participants by enlisting student responses to questions

designed to identify those who had experience as cyberbullies. Once the surveys were completed, I calculated each survey's total score to identify the potential interview participants. Interviews were then scheduled and administered; responses were analyzed to determine participants for the final phase of data collection, the focus group. The participants most likely to be perpetrators were contacted for continued participation in the study. Six students were selected to participate in the focus group. The focus group format was explained to each participant and they were offered refreshments during the focus group session. The focus group allowed ample time for participants to express their views and feelings as they responded to the prescribed prompts. There were also opportunities for me to steer the group towards more detailed responses based on their willingness to respond to the prompts and responses from each other. The focus group session lasted 37 minutes due to the contributions of the participants. The focus group was ideal for the final step of the study, because participants seemed more comfortable sharing after hearing similar cyberbullying experiences from their peers.

Surveys

Prior to distributing surveys, consent forms were sent to each potential participant through their English teacher. I then communicated with the teachers to acquire the signed forms before preparing for the distribution of the surveys. Consent forms were signed by each participant and participant's parent/guardian giving permission for their child to be interviewed. A survey was then provided to 120 high school sophomores enrolled at the high school. The 120 students represented four class periods of the sophomore English classes. In a qualitative study, surveys can be used as a systematic method for gathering information from a sample of participants in order to construct

qualitative descriptors of attributes of a larger population (Jansen, 2010). Surveys for this study were appropriate because they identified potential cyberbullies based on their responses. This survey served as one of the means for triangulation because in a phenomenology study, participants are selected based on their experience with the topic of the study. The surveys enhanced the description of experiences of participants who cyberbullied.

I selected the survey from the 2013 dissertation *Pathways to cyberbullying from bystander to participant: Secondary school students' perspectives* (Siderman, 2013). The survey was developed with teachers to incorporate the features around cyberbullying. After a discussion and permission from Michele L. Siderman, Ph.D. (2013) to use the selected survey, I was confident the survey was credible and could accurately provide me with the information needed in my study. The design of the survey focused on determining those who bullied in the cyberform as opposed to those who have bullied in traditional forms or have been victims of bullying. The survey was used to specify those eligible to be a participant in the study and to identify those who have cyberbullying experiences related to the study's five research questions. The survey also provided information that aligned with the study's five research questions. Research questions were identified after each survey question. Survey questions 1-3 and 11-13 were used for the purpose of deception but were not used in the score to determine cyberbullies. A Cronbach's alpha was administered to ensure reliability of the survey. Cronbach's alpha is the most common measure of internal consistency of a test containing items that are not scored dichotomously (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The Cronbach's alpha provided the

overall reliability coefficient for the variables in this survey which will be reported in the study's results.

This survey was appropriate for the study because it was successfully used to identify cyberbullies in Siderman's 2013 study. The survey was useful because it employed key questions designed to gain the perspective of a cyberbully. Of the survey's 13 questions, only questions 4-10 were scored with the intention of detecting cyberbullying behaviors. It was these questions that resulted in a score to determine who was invited to be interviewed.

After approval by the school's administration, I scheduled a day to distribute the surveys. I administered the surveys to all sophomores through their current English course while the classroom teacher was present. This course was appropriate and feasible because all sophomores take the course. Students who were willing to participate completed the survey. When the students finished, I collected their survey. The students wrote their name at the top of the survey, so I could communicate with them if they were selected for the interview phase of the study.

The surveys were used to identify specific areas related to each participant's involvement and feelings towards cyberbullying. The surveys not only sought potential participants for the more detailed and thorough interview and focus group phases, but also contributed to answering the research questions labeled after each survey question. Survey questions are as follows:

Have you ever . . . (answer yes or no)

_____1. Physically intimidated a person by continuously hitting, bumping, or shoving them? (Deception)

_____2. Teased someone repeatedly to their face? (Deception)

_____3. Intentionally excluded someone to purposely make them feel bad? (Deception)

_____4. Forwarded an inappropriate picture or mean text about someone else without permission from the person who sent it to you? (RQ #5)

_____5. Posted pictures of someone online or forwarded by text without their permission? (RQ #1)

_____6. "Liked" or "Retweeted" someone else's rude or mean comments about another person on a social networking site? (RQ #5)

_____7. Posted a comment that was rude or threatening to or about someone else on a social networking site? (RQ #1)

_____8. Signed on to someone else's social networking account with the intention of teasing/intimidating another person? (RQ #3, #4, & #5)

_____9. Created an online poll or completed an online poll about someone without their permission? (RQ #1 & #5)

_____10. Posted lies/rumors about someone on a social networking site? (RQ #1 & #5)

_____11. Been a victim of physical bullying or intimidation to your face? (Deception)

_____12. Had someone else post a lie/rumor about you on a social networking site? (Deception)

_____13. Been a victim of ongoing rude, negative, or intimidating comments on a social networking site? (Deception)

Interviews

After the collection and analysis of the survey data was complete, semi-structured interviews were scheduled with 14 of the high school sophomores. Semi-structured

interviews are a means of gaining access to a participant's feelings or perceptions to an experience through probing which elicits stories based on experiences (Schwandt, 2007). Interview participants were selected based on their survey responses. Because the purpose of the survey was to determine a sophomore student's likelihood of having perpetrated cyberbullying, the criterion for selection was based on the total responses of "Yes" on the survey. Students responding with multiple "Yes" responses were considered for the interview phase of the study. Students scoring with minimal "Yes" responses were omitted based on the likelihood they did not have experience with perpetrating cyberbullying.

All interviews took place in the side area of the library where confidentiality and a comfortable setting were ensured. Students were offered donuts and drinks. Each interview was conducted in a one-on-one setting in view of the school's librarian. Each interview lasted less than 30 minutes.

Prior to interviewing participants, I piloted the interview questions with two students who work in the school's office at the current high school in which I work. These students had no participation in the actual study. The pilot test served to improve the interview questions and techniques. The pilot interview participants were high school sophomores who use technology to communicate daily with peers.

An iPhone served as the primary recording device during the interviews and a tape recorder served as the back-up device. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed. I utilized a semi-structured interview procedure with memoing to modify or add any necessary questions for the focus group. Memoing is the process which requires researchers to document their thoughts while analyzing data (Creswell, 2013). The

technique of memoing is the most critical technique in reaching an appropriate level of credibility (Creswell, 2013). Data collection via interviewing addressed all research questions. The survey, interview questions, and focus group questions all aligned to the study's research questions and addressed the motives behind the perpetrator's choice to cyberbully another person as well as determining their relationship with the victim, if any. Participants who responded with cyberbullying experiences based on the framework of the study's research questions and the coding process were selected for the focus group. The following are the interview questions along with the corresponding research questions:

1. Have you ever been a target of cyberbullying through online messaging or online conversations? (Deception)
2. Why do you think people choose to post negative online comments about others? (RQs #1 and #5)
3. How do you think people, who post negative online messages about others, feel about what they do? (RQs #2, #3, and #5)
4. How do you think people, who post negative online messages about others, feel about the person they are making comments about? (RQs #3-#5)
5. How do you think people, who post negative online messages about others, view their relationship with them? (is a friend, is kind of a friend, knows a little about them, never meet them, heard a rumor about them, dislikes them, hates them, used to be a friend to them, etc.) (RQs #3-#5)
6. What do you think these people, who post negative online messages about others, have in common with each other? (RQs #1-#5)

7. Why do you think these people, who post negative online messages about others choose that person to begin with? What are their reasons? (RQs #1, #3-#5)
8. What else would you like to mention about cyberbullying? (RQs #1-#5)

Focus Group

A focus group is defined as discussions that bring participants together to discuss a topic or issue (Schwandt, 2007). A focus group was a valuable technique to conclude the study's data collection because the group was comprised of participants who shared the most cyberbullying responses during the survey and interviews. Focus group participants discussed cyberbullying experiences with each other in a cooperative setting which maximized discussion opportunities within a short amount of time. Six of the interviewed students were asked to participate in the focus group. These participants were selected based on their responses during the interview process. Interview participants who provided responses contributing to the study's research questions were selected to participate in the focus group.

One week following the interviews, the focus group was scheduled. It was held in the English classroom which accommodated the participants in a comfortable and confidential setting. I contacted students and their parents to explain the focus group's purpose, the duration of the session, date, time, and location.

I recorded and then transcribed the focus group session. The room selected for the focus group was comfortable and conducive for discussion and students enjoyed a variety of refreshments. The room was furnished with a round table and chairs. Refreshments were served before the session to create a comfortable environment. An iPhone served as the primary recording device and a tape recorder served as the back-up

device. By utilizing a focus group, cyberbullies could share their feelings and motivations pertaining to their cyberbullying experiences. The focus group's responses provided rich, thick description.

The focus group discussion questions were available for adjustment or fine-tuning during the interview phase. Memoing during the interview phase informed the development of the focus group questions. Listed below are the focus group questions with the corresponding research questions used for the study:

1. What do you all see as the main reasons a person would post negative statements about another? (RQ #1-#5)
2. What is the most likely relationship with the person who gets statements made about them? (RQ #4)
3. Do you think cyberbullying is different than regular face-to-face bullying? (RQ #2) How? (RQ #1-#5) Is it less harmful or more harmful? (RQ #2) Why? (RQ #2)
4. About how many people add more to the negative comments after the first comment is posted? Tell me more of how the process usually goes. Do others add comments for a certain reason? (RQ#3 & #5)
5. Tell me more about what happens when you post comments and the reaction of the person receiving the negative comments. What are your thoughts when you add these comments? (RQ #1-#5) What about when you see each other at school? (RQ #4) How does the situation end or resolve itself? (RQ #4 & #5)
6. How often is the posting meant to be a joke? (RQ #1-#3) What happens if the person receiving the message responds with an inappropriate response? (RQ #5)

Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of bracketing, horizontalization, coding, and cluster of meanings (units). Moustakas (1994) defines bracketing as the process in which the researcher sets aside personal experiences to best understand the experiences of the participants in the study. This process consists of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from several participants having experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). I bracketed my experiences and feelings as a past victim of bullying, being a father of a son who has recently been affected by bullying, and as a principal who is constantly addressing harassment concerns. Bracketing is what Creswell (2013) refers to as separating a qualitative researcher's feelings and experiences so that those experiences do not influence the study.

Horizontalization is the process in which the researcher lists every relevant statement made by participants in relation to the topic with equal value placed on every statement (Moustakas, 1994). By using this coding strategy, data was categorized into segments. While coding, I categorized re-occurring words and phrases with specific identifying codes and colors. I bracketed the data using epoche. Epoche is the methodological attitude of phenomenology in which the researcher suspends their own presuppositions (Creswell, 2013). While interviewing and facilitating the focus group, I used memoing to record my thoughts as I attempted to gather information for potential units and themes. According to Schwandt (2007), memoing is a procedure for explaining or elaborating on the coded categories that a researcher uses in analyzing data.

Classifying

Data was then grouped into themes, for which Creswell (2013) refers as "broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a general idea" (p. 186). By classifying themes, relationships were identified. I classified the codes and themes to best represent the participants' experiences of the perpetration of cyberbullying.

Interpretation

Themes were then identified with purpose and in an order which best described the phenomenon. I used textural description and structural description to describe the cyberbully's involvement and how the cyberbully felt while perpetrating. I used rich, thick descriptions to share the feelings and contributions of the participants. In-depth descriptions are the foundation of qualitative reporting (Patton, 2002).

I developed themes from qualitative content elements to compare commonality. Commonality for the purpose of this study represents the common themes prominent in each categorical grouping. A textural and structural description was then developed to convey the overall essence of the perpetration of the cyberbullying experience. Textural description is defined as "what" the participants in the study experienced, while structural description is defined as "how" the experience happened (Creswell, 2013).

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness this qualitative study included credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability, or what Creswell (2013) refers to as *validation*. Each one of these validation strategies are commonly employed in qualitative

research. Various interpretations of the data were also analyzed. To strengthen the trustworthiness of this study, I enlisted multiple qualitative strategies.

Credibility

Schwandt (2007) describes credibility as part of the study's internal validity that provides assurances that the researcher will accurately report the participants' views of their life ways. It also ensures that the findings are credible to the people being studied, and to the readers (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, credibility was accomplished through description gathered through the data collection process. I focused on epoche to maintain credibility and contribute to the trustworthiness of this study. Recording and memoing along with member checking was practiced to reach credibility. The use of member checks supported credibility by having the participants review the data. Through member checks, the research was representative of the participants' experiences. Once complete, participants reviewed their interview transcripts for accuracy. The use of member checking assisted my research by taking data, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions back to my participants, so they were able to judge the accuracy and credibility of the account.

Triangulation aided to the study's credibility and trustworthiness. The data collection strategies provided triangulation through the effective use of surveys, interviews, and the focus group. Triangulation is achieved when the investigator collects data through three or more sources. Gathering data using one source can be inaccurate and biased. However, when an investigator collects information through a variety of techniques findings can be confirmed (Merriam, 1998). A Cronbach's alpha was administered to ensure the credibility of the reflection survey.

Dependability

In qualitative research, a key element to increase a study's dependability is to assure the maintenance of accurate records that have been gathered. Dependability describes the consistency and stability of the study's process across researchers and methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, dependability was attained through transcription and member checks throughout the interview process. Through peer review, an external check of the research process by an individual, keeps the researcher honest by having a peer ask questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations (Schwandt, 2007). As I prepared my study and collected data, I enlisted the assistance of colleagues. The peer review process provides feedback for the primary researcher from a different perspective (Creswell, 2013). When information is organized with concise procedures, dependability in qualitative studies is demonstrated (Schwandt, 2007). Dependability of the study was fostered through memoing and recording accurate data using a digital recording device and careful notetaking during the interview process. Participants were well represented through enumeration and quotations.

Confirmability

Through data triangulation and self-reflection, I intended to rule out potential personal biases. Confirmability is the qualitative term used to describe how evidence is proven through clear data analysis (Creswell, 2013). It refers to the degree to which the results of the data could be validated by others (Creswell, 2013). The researcher remains objective when analyzing how the data is interpreted. In other words confirmability was accomplished by aligning appropriate analysis with the data retrieved by counting the number of responses from each participant based on words and phrases they used.

Transferability

In a qualitative study, transferability describes the participants and setting of a study, and how readers can transfer that information to other settings (Creswell, 2013). It allows them to find connections between the study and their individual life experiences (Barnes, Conrad, Demont-Heinrich, Graziano, Kowalski, Neufeld, Palmquist, & Zamora, 2012). An elementary school teacher for example, may be able to apply elements from this study and create a lesson to prevent cyberbullying in her classroom. In this study, transferability has been established through detailed writing based on the findings from surveys, interviews, and a focus group. The information is presented and the readers can make decisions based on context, emotion, feelings, and actions. Thick, rich description provided readers the opportunity through details and descriptions to transfer the study's information to other settings and apply findings based on shared characteristics in both the study and the setting in which the information is transferred.

Ethical Considerations

My goal was to contribute to the literature in a growing and serious phenomenon within teenage society. I sought to gather vital data and results to provide information for future school initiatives and interventions to serve our young people. I completed the IRB approval applications and addressed necessary revisions. I then returned the revised application and was granted IRB approval to start the data collection process. The principal's permission provided me with access to the participants and appropriate locations to conduct the collect of data. Participant identities, school district, and high school names remained anonymous through the use of pseudonyms. Participants were requested to provide consent through the informed consent forms and phone contact.

Participants were informed through consent forms and face-to-face that the study was voluntary and they could remove themselves from the study at any time. All transcriptions and recordings were kept off the school campus in a locked filing cabinet at my home. The flash drive used to store electronic files was kept in a locked drawer at my home. All participants' parents signed their child's consent form. As previously noted, deception was used to gather authentic data throughout the study. Deception may involve masking the identity of the research, withholding important information about the purpose of the study, or gathering information secretively (Creswell, 2013). In order to ensure honest responses, some questions were added to deceive participants from feeling as though they were being identified as cyberbullies. Students were given the survey which addressed different aspects of bullying including a victim's perspective. This survey was selected as a deception tool designed for students to answer all survey questions honestly. However, only the specific questions based on the perpetration of cyberbullying were used to recruit participants for the interviews. Although the participants weren't specifically told they could be viewed as cyberbullies, they were informed of the study's purpose to investigate the perpetration of cyberbullying. This was conveyed to the participants prior to their selection in the interview process. As part of the deception, students were not informed that the basis for their participation may be that of perpetrators of cyberbullying.

Summary

In conclusion, I utilized Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to analyze data. First, I described my experiences with cyberbullying and bullying in general with the intention of bracketing out my feelings and personal

experiences. Next, I developed a list of significant and nonrepetitive statements from my participants in order to horizontalize the data. I then used the statements to cluster larger units representing themes. Once themes were established, I described through textural description the participants' cyberbullying experiences and feelings behind the perpetration. Following the textural description, I addressed the structural description explaining how the participants engaged in cyberbullying. Finally, I created a composite description of the participants' motivations when perpetrating cyberbullying.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings relevant to answering the study's five research questions. The intent of this qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological study is to examine the motives of Southern California high school students who cyberbully. This chapter includes a description of the participants, results applicable to the research questions demonstrated through themes, and a summary.

Participants

Fourteen 10th grade students were selected from a high school in a large Southern California school district. The school was located in a middle class neighborhood with an enrollment of over 2,000 students. The school qualifies as a Title 1 school, meaning that over 41% of the student population is considered low income and receives free or reduced meals. The school was selected based on the large enrollment and variety of socio-demographic groups. Pseudonyms were used for participants and the names of the district and school; actual names will remain anonymous.

In this study, 120 high school students in 10th grade participated in a cyberbullying survey and from those, 14 students whose responses indicated cyberbullying were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Creswell (2013) recommends that 10-20 participants should be obtained for a qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological research study. Subsequently, six of these interviewees were then selected to participate in the focus group.

By selecting high school sophomores who have cyberbullied, a homogenous group was formed from participants who identified themselves on the survey as a person

who acted as a cyberbully over the course of their early high school years. Creswell (2013) states that phenomenologists focus on describing the common experiences of participants regarding a particular phenomenon, which allows the researcher to capture and detail the nature or essence of the phenomenon. Of the 14 participants selected from the surveys to participate in the semi-structured interviews, 11 females were selected. The higher female-to-male ratio was due to more females than males responding "Yes" on survey questions, particularly questions five and six. These two questions addressed posting, forwarding, or "liking" rude comments or pictures without a person's permission. The terms "liking" or "liked" is used when someone on social media agrees with a comment or enjoys something another person has posted whether it be a message or a picture.

The following information about each participant is related to their use of social media and their level of involvement with school activities and peers. Pseudonyms are used to refer to the 14 participants. They are (a) Cathy; (b) Katie; (c) Kelly; (d) Sally; (e) Sara; (f) Keri; (g) Al; (h) Tia; (i) Stevie; (j) Mary; (k) Mike; (l) Lucy; (m) Kim; (n) Bobby.

Cathy

Cathy is a female who has lived in the Southern California area since she was born. She participates in multiple school activities and uses social media daily. She is primarily in advanced classes. She is a cheerleader who participates in most school events like dress up days and dances. She is rarely absent from school. Cathy believes negative messages are posted when someone feels intimidated by a person and the purpose is to make that person feel bad because they just like simply don't like them.

Katie

Katie is a female who is in her first year at the high school. Her freshmen year of high school was attended out of state. She uses social media through her cell phone. She is not involved in any sports or clubs. Katie has noticed online bullying can have many different manifestations, because in certain cases, people can "confront each other and get into a fight and it would become a big situation."

Kelly

Kelly is a female honors student at the high school who participates in multiple clubs. She has used social media since she was in sixth grade when she received her first cell phone. Kelly is proud to be a member of the color guard in junior Air Force ROTC program on campus. She is in two advanced placement courses and two other advanced classes. While on social media, she notices many instances where some people are friends but then there are other people you don't really know and they just start making rude comments or their just being disrespectful which then causes others to either join in or tell them to stop being mean.

Sally

Sally is a female involved in athletics at the youth level in the community. She also participates in many school activities, such as after-school events. While she does not participate in athletics at the high school, she is active in the Key Club. Sally is in three advanced courses and said that she plans on taking two advanced placement classes next year. She said she would like to play softball again, but she is worried that the time required in practice will hurt her grades. Over time, Sally has noticed that people online seem to go further by posting comments that they would otherwise not make face-to-face.

Sara

Sara is a female enjoying her sophomore year of high school. She has used online messaging for over four years. Sara remembers a time in the eighth grade when she was with a friend who was sending malicious messages to another student. Sara felt compelled to send similar electronic messages. Later, they both faced disciplinary action for cyberbullying. She is not affiliated with any sports or clubs on campus. She expressed interest in cheerleading, but she said that the girls were "mean" and she did not meet the grade requirements at the end of freshman year, so she could not join. Sara felt that bullying online can be either joking or more serious. She stated, "If [cyberbullies] feel like they hate someone or dislike someone they could do it to intentionally hurt their feelings. If someone was a target before then they will send something back for retaliation. They do it specifically because they know they will find out, like the targeted person would find out."

Keri

Keri is a female who uses technology for both school work and social interactions. She plays softball, and she says that she hopes to be able to play in college. She is currently listed as a freshman, because she failed four classes during her freshman year. She had to miss numerous days of school after suffering from two concussions. Keri has experienced more cyberbullying incidents among past friends. These friends have anger towards each other and typically express their feelings through online messages. Further, she explained how a person's intimate knowledge of another could provide them with more negative content to post than would be available for people who do not know them

as well. She stated that cyberbullying is easier than face-to-face bullying because "it's online and not in person—plus more people see it."

Al

Al is a male who enjoys online video gaming during his spare time. He described how negative comments are often a result of frustration. While online gaming, Al notices constant messaging between players. Al observed negative interactions online that often were initially benign, but as each person increased the intensity of responses, the interaction would clearly cross the threshold into cyberbullying. Additionally, he noted that some cyberbullies tend to have negative feelings about themselves, and that most cyberbullying occurs between friends. He plays football, but he says that video games should also be a sport on campus. Al is currently enrolled in three advanced classes, and he has maintained higher than a 3.0 for every semester at high school.

Tia

Tia is a female who has a low C average. She does not participate in any school activities but enjoys babysitting and often uses social media to communicate with friends from other schools. She said that she has not attended any school dances, but she hopes that her boyfriend asks her to the Homecoming Dance next year. She believed people choose to post negative online comments to degrade others through rumors and innuendo.

Stevie

Stevie is a female trumpet player in the school's band and has many friends in the band. She uses her laptop for school work and to communicate via social media with all of her friends. She is in honors English and history, but she said that she has always struggled in math. Stevie has noticed that online, friends can act differently than at

school. She explained that online, friends say whatever they feel but in real life they "don't care at all because they say that they care about you so much but then they go online and say mean comments to you."

Mary

Mary is a female who is on "everything online." She says that she is "addicted" to Instagram and Snapchat. Mary noted that most of her friends post messages and enjoy using social media on public sites. However, many have deleted their accounts on these sites as a method of reducing future exposure to negative comments posted by others. Mary communicates with many of her friends through online websites. She has noticed that online, friends "really show their true colors." She explained that online, people act differently than in person. She said she was never involved in extracurricular until she joined the Associated Student Body. She currently is taking ASB as an elective, and she said that she wants to be the vice president of ASB next year.

Mike

Mike is a male athlete who played varsity baseball as a freshman. He has played baseball as long as he can remember. He uses social media when he is not busy with baseball or for entertainment when he is traveling on the bus. He doesn't post comments very often but he does enjoy reading all of the funny and dramatic interactions. He said that everybody is online, but it doesn't mean that if you're messaging someone that they're your friend, it just means that they're online.

Lucy

Lucy is a female who reported having a cell phone since she was in fourth grade. She has two older sisters at the school and usually spends time socially with them and

some of their friends after school. She does not participate in any school activities but she is on social media every day. She also views many negative posts almost every time she is on social media.

Kim

Kim is a female who has experienced many online interactions. She described herself as shy, but she said that she felt like she can be her real self when she is online. She said that she usually does not eat lunch, because she spends her time in the library reading or on her phone connected to social media. Kim has seen online posts become fights. Kim explained of the two people in an argument, "They could also be just talking about each other and trying to redeem themselves and make them seem like they were the right person in a disagreement."

Bobby

Bobby is a male who has experience on many social media sites. He is not involved in any extracurricular activities. He said that the school "sucks" and that most of the people here are "fake." Bobby has also noticed that some comments seem to disappear, while other online comments will become popular. He explained that after a message is displayed on someone's social media feed, "One person comments on it then all of us see all kinds of comments. If it goes for like a day or two and nobody comments on it, then it's just dead."

Results

This study was designed to identify 10th grade students who perpetrate cyberbullying and to explore their motivations. Tenth grade students were selected from an English class to complete a survey. The survey had a reliability coefficient of 0.77.

Of the 10th grade students who completed the survey, those 14 who produced the highest total score on the survey items that related to personal experiences with cyberbullying, were selected for individual interviews.

These 14 participants scoring the highest number of "Yes" responses to survey questions 4-10 were selected for individual semi-structured interviews. The survey questions were relevant because they specifically enlisted responses most common to the perpetration of cyberbullying offenses by teenagers. Of these 14 participants, the six who shared the most frequent experiences in regard to cyberbullying behavior based on the coding and data analysis process aligned to the study's research questions were selected to participate in a focus group.

Table 1 depicts the students' survey responses to the seven relevant cyberbullying questions which served as a basis for interview selection. The table is constructed to demonstrate the participants' survey numbers, genders, and responses to each of relevant survey questions.

Table 1

Survey Responses of Participants Chosen for Interviews

Participant Survey # Name Gender	Ques. #4 Forwarded pictures or texts	Ques.#5 Posted pictures	Ques. #6 "Liked" rude comments	Ques. #7 Posted rude comments	Ques. #8 Signed on to intimidate	Ques. #9 Poll created or completed	Ques. #10 Posted lies or rumors
#2 Keri Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
#3 Stevie Female	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
#5 Sara Female	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
#6 Tia Female	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
#7 Katie Female	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
#8 Kelly Female	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
#9 Mike Male	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
#13 Al Male	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
#15 Cathy Female	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
#96 Mary Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
#112 Lucy Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
#133 Sally Female	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
#94 Bobby Male	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
#146 Kim Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

Fourteen of the participants answered "Yes" to at least two of the seven survey questions. The three male participants answered "Yes" to 33% of the seven key survey questions, and "No" to 67% of the key survey questions. The 11 female participants answered "Yes" to 44% of the seven key survey questions and "No" to 56% of these questions.

Table 2 displays the total numbers of "Yes" and "No" responses based on gender for survey questions 4-10.

Table 2

Average Survey Responses Based on Gender

Gender Response	Ques. #4 Forwarded pictures or texts	Ques.#5 Posted pictures	Ques. #6 Liked rude comments	Ques. #7 Posted rude comments	Ques. #8 Signed on to intimidate	Ques. #9 Poll created or completed	Ques. #10 Posted lies or rumors
Total %							
Male "Yes" 33%	0	3	1	0	1	2	0
Male "No" 67%	3	0	2	3	2	1	3
Female "Yes" 44%	6	7	10	7	2	0	2
Female "No" 56%	5	4	1	4	9	11	9

Based solely on the survey responses, it appeared that females in the study engaged in more forms of cyberbullying than males. However, the data from the interviews did not match the self-report data acquired from the surveys. While the two males selected for the focus group only answered "Yes" to two of the survey questions, they described behaviors in their interviews that would also warrant a "Yes" response for questions 6, 7, and 8 (i.e., "liking" rude comments, posting rude comments, and signing on to intimidate). The females who responded seemed to be more aware than males that their behaviors constituted cyberbullying. The females also seemed to have a better understanding of the possible effects of their behaviors than the males, so their surveys more closely matched the experiences they shared in the interview. Mike, Cathy, and Tia

falsely claimed that they had engaged in cyberbullying activities. While all three deemed their actions to be hurtful, and they viewed the behavior as cyberbullying, they did not engage with the intent of harming the recipient. Thus, their lack of intent precludes them from being considered cyberbullies according to the definition of cyberbullying adopted in this research.

Table 3 presents an overview of each participant according to their assigned number, pseudonym, involvement in the study, and gender. Of the 14 participants, the six who reported the most frequent cyberbullying activities aligned to the study's research questions were asked to participate in the focus group.

Table 3

Participants Selected for Interview

Number Assigned	Pseudonym	Participation	Gender
1	Cathy	Interview	Female
2	Katie	Interview	Female
3	Kelly	Interview	Female
4	Sally	Interview	Female
5	Sara	Interview/Focus Group	Female
6	Keri	Interview/Focus Group	Female
7	Al	Interview/Focus Group	Male
8	Tia	Interview	Female
9	Stevie	Interview	Female
10	Mary	Interview/Focus Group	Female
11	Mike	Interview	Male
12	Lucy	Interview	Female
13	Kim	Interview/Focus Group	Female
14	Bobby	Interview/Focus Group	Male

The pattern of response on the completed surveys suggested that some males seemed to view their online behavior as normal. This finding was evident from the low number of survey responses that self-identify cyberbullying behaviors and the high number of cyberbullying behavior shared in the interviews by the male participants.

Specifically, the two males who were selected for the focus group both answered "Yes" to survey questions five and nine (that they posted pictures of other people and created or completed a poll about other people), while also reporting that they had never engaged in other cyberbullying behavior. Both males shared experiences of accessing online platforms to intimidate others, "liking" hurtful comments, and posting rude comments on social media. It is possible that some males did not accurately respond to the survey due to a lack of awareness that their behavior constituted cyberbullying. This might account for the disproportionately low number of males who were selected. During the interviews, however, they described regularly engaging in a variety of behaviors that constitute cyberbullying like signing on to intimidate others, "liking" hurtful comments, and posting rude comments on social media. Thus, the low scores from the surveys of male participants did not necessarily mean that they were not engaging in cyberbullying rather that they may have been unaware that their behaviors constituted cyberbullying.

Of the 10 females interviewed, four with the most responses aligned with the study's research questions were selected to participate in the focus group. All four females claimed that they forwarded pictures or text messages of someone else and "liked" rude comments. Three of the four females selected for the focus group posted rude comments on social media and posted pictures of other people.

Overview of Themes

At the completion of the interviews, all interview recordings were transcribed and member checking followed. As each transcription was reviewed, key words and phrases were coded for potential clustering into units. Table 4 identifies the number of reported cyberbullying incidents per participant corresponding to motivations for cyberbullying.

These behaviors constitute the six themes identified in the analysis of the data. Upon analysis of data generated from the interviews, six themes emerged and are described in a manner clarifying the method by which participants' responses were classified.

Jealousy. Jealousy was deemed to occur in participant responses that described negative messages posted because a person desired to perpetrate cyberbullying based on the victim's status, characteristics, personality, or abilities. These types of responses were considered to be part of the theme jealousy.

Entertainment. The theme, entertainment is based on the multiple responses during the interview process where participants related experiences that influenced them to deliberately post negative responses because they enjoyed the response of the recipient.

Joking. Participants' statements about posted messages that were deemed funny without awareness of the harm that negative messages caused were considered to fall under the theme joking.

Revenge. The theme, revenge derived from participant responses that relate to experiences with posting of hurtful messages based on hurt feelings or anger towards a specific person. They felt hurt or slighted by a person, not as a result of a failed relationship, but rather a specific face-to-face or online interaction.

Broken relationships. The theme, broken relationships was developed to encapsulate the experiences of participants who were motivated to send hurtful messages to a specific individual because a relationship dissolved or ended abruptly.

Group affiliation. The final theme, group affiliation, emerged from responses about past experiences where other people were also involved in the social media

communication. The participants who described experiences consistent with this theme did not stand alone with their posts, but instead, believed they were just adding to what was already being stated by others in their group. This theme was also considered to capture the experiences of some participants who believed they may be speaking up to support their friends or social group.

The 14 interview participants' contributions to each theme are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant Interview Responses by Theme

Participant	Jealousy	Entertainment	Joking	Revenge	Broken Relationships	Group Affiliation	Total
Cathy	2	0	0	1	1	0	4
Katie	1	0	1	2	0	2	6
Kelly	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
Sally	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Sara	2	2	2	2	0	3	11
Keri	0	0	0	3	2	2	7
Al	2	0	2	2	1	3	10
Tia	1	0	0	1	1	0	3
Stevie	2	1	0	0	0	2	5
Mary	3	0	0	2	3	0	8
Mike	2	1	0	0	0	2	5
Lucy	1	0	0	0	2	2	5
Kim	2	3	2	3	1	3	14
Bobby	0	2	1	4	0	4	11
Total	20	9	10	20	12	23	94

Interview participants' responses to the interview questions more frequently contributed to the themes (a) jealousy; (b) revenge; (c) group affiliation. Participants' experiences of cyberbullying motivated by entertainment, joking, and broken relationships were shared approximately half as frequently as the previously mentioned themes. Based on the interviews, the six participants with the most responses that related

to any of the six themes were selected to participate in the focus group. The following section presents a detailed analysis of the experiences of each student who participated in the focus group.

Analysis of Participants' Responses

This section provides rich descriptions of the focus group participants' experiences with cyberbullying and was used to develop the six themes.

Sara. When asked why people choose to post negative online comments about others, Sara stated, **"**It makes them feel better about themselves." She continued to explain how a person with low self-confidence will make fun of other people to boost himself or herself to create a feeling of superiority because they are usually jealous of that person for some reason. Sara recalled when chatting with numerous people online, "It wasn't intentionally supposed to be cyberbullying, but one word or one thing was said, then something else was said, so it became a group of rude comments." She continued to explain how she once joined in to a group chat to support one of her friends who was being attacked by a girl online.

Sara explained that most people who post negative online messages consider the comments to be humorous, and that the messages do not usually cause harm because it is "a joke or not serious." She expressed, "People shouldn't take it serious because it's a joke so it doesn't really hurt anyone; it's just fun and games."

Sara explained that anonymity is one reason that people engage in cyberbullying. She said, "Cyberbullying is easier because you don't have to worry about the person knowing . . . so you can continue to pretend to be friends with them and find out more of their secrets and just put them out to other people." Sara continued to explain how it's

"better to not say anything to someone's face when you can just have it online because you don't have to worry about confronting them." She believed it is much more difficult for someone to confront another person face-to-face about a message that was posted online.

Sara described the relative ease of cyberbullying by explaining the experiences as: "Not really thinking you're doing it, but then if someone else was to view it, it could seem worse than what you might have thought it was." She described indirect cyberbullying as being the "easiest, but even though it's indirect, the person that you're saying it to might still know that it is about them, so they might just start more arguments and more tension."

Sara had the most diverse experiences in cyberbullying of all the participants. She personally experienced cyberbullying based on friends attempting to joke and make fun of each other. She also cited the indirect nature of the bullying as a common facilitator for cyberbullying. Her awareness of cyberbullying events was evident from her survey responses as well as her comments in the interview and focus group. She noted that some people seem to be aware of the harm that can result from their actions, while others appear to lack understanding of the consequences of their actions.

Sara's responses throughout the interview and focus group contributed to the themes (a) jealousy; (b) entertainment; (c) joking; (d) revenge; (e) group affiliation. She was a major contributor to the themes (a) revenge; (b) group affiliation, with multiple responses towards both themes in the interview and focus group settings. Sara's responses were identified through the coding process to total 18 responses towards

themes which was the third most among participants who participated in the study through the focus group.

Keri. Keri once chose to post negative online comments to degrade someone by starting a rumor because that person had been talking about her. Keri stated, "A negative message is posted when someone feels intimidated by a person and the purpose is to make that person feel bad because they just like simply don't like them." She also mentioned that she often saw people engage in behaviors like this.

Keri explained that all the individuals in a group often do not like one person, and "the same group has the same friends, so they all want to get back at that person. Especially if a person says something about a friend from that group, then the entire group wants to get back at that person." Keri had personal experiences with cyberbullying that were motivated by revenge and group affiliation. She recounted how inclusion in a group led her to feel obligated to "stand up for" and "protect" others in the group. She said that some cyberbullying events were continuations of incidents that began prior to interacting online. Keri believed that once a conflict occurs online, members of a social group are much more likely to become involved.

Although Keri only contributed to three of the six the themes (a) revenge; (b) broken relationships; (c) group affiliation, her most significant contribution to the emergence of themes was her consistency in both the interview and focus group. Keri provided six total responses towards the second most popular cyberbullying theme, revenge.

Al. Al spoke in detail about the video gaming community. He said, "People ain't always the nicest when you destroy them, and it's easy for people to get on your nerves.

They can just be competitive while you're playing, then they say something, so you get back at them". Al continued to explain the forum of online gaming. Al said, "They think they are posting entertaining stuff but it's not really funny." He shared how cyberbullying can engender empowerment: "I'm destroying this dude. He probably doesn't even know what's hitting him right now." Al then finds it hard to stop sending these messages because it can become increasingly hurtful and feel personal.

Al described how negative comments can more frequently occur between friends. He said, "The stuff that I do, I could be doing stuff to help other people that someone else doesn't like or you could just not like the way I act or talk, so you just want to find an outlet." Al expressed that there are many reasons why he engages in cyberbullying activities. Sometimes he goes online with the intent of posting harmful messages. Other times, his harsh comments occur in response to other Internet users' comments to his posts. He explained how his group of friends can exchange harsher comments than people who are less familiar with one another, because "they know the most about me." He went on to state that interactions initiated in person can continue online when a friend "just want[s] to release their anger through another outlet because they obviously can't do it to your face, because they still want to be friends." Al explained that after "stuff" is said from one person to another, the severity of the comments determines whether a simple apology will be adequate for resolution, or if the comments are more hurtful, "he can just end [his] relationship with the bully right then and there."

Al believes a motivating factor for cyberbullying is the bully's self-concept. He stated, "Cyberbullies feel lower when compared to other people." He expressed how a cyberbully feels inferior to others: "That's why there is cyberbullying, because they can't

really express how they feel. You can pick that person because you may know a lot about them so it might be easier to target their weaknesses." He continued, "Then you can just build on that and it will hurt them more and more and make you feel better about yourself." Al's numerous responses led to the emergence of the themes (a) jealousy; (b) joking; (c) revenge; (d) broken relationships; (e) group affiliation. He responded more frequently to the theme group affiliation but consistently contributed to five of the six themes throughout the study.

Mary. Mary explained that cyberbullies are insecure and unhappy, so they try to "drag other people down" because they feel better knowing that they've succeeded in making others feel worse. She indicated that cyberbullies are indifferent to the potential ramifications of negative comments because a cyberbully does not care about others' feelings, but instead seeks satisfaction from negative reactions to his or her comments. Mary described often seeing individuals targeted maliciously on Twitter through sub-tweeting (tweets that do not directly name a person but are obviously about that person). A tweet is a short message posted to communicate on the Twitter social network. She believed that those posting negative comments anticipate no threat because they feel protected by the imagined barrier of the computer screen. She most frequently witnessed girl-on-girl online fights based on jealousy and their "egos." Mary stated, "Their ego, as in their cockiness, makes them feel big, but really they're small."

Mary shared that cyberbullies target victims whom they can negatively affect with little or no consequences to the cyberbully. A common example is when two females seek the attention of the same male. The two females can attack each other's character and reputation out of their mutual jealousy. Mary shared how she has personally grown

from a year ago when she was more involved in cyberbullying, stating, “I was bullying them for bullying me, so I wanted to get back at them and that justified my actions to myself. I then learned to maintain that now, and so I think that I’ve definitely learned to reduce that anger inside of me.” Mary felt most comfortable responding to face-to-face disrespect indirectly through social media. Mary identified that her responses came from “anger inside.” Although she clearly felt remorse for her actions, she did not articulate how she might currently handle the situation differently than she had in the past.

Mary shared her conviction that cyberbullying is more malicious than bullying in person, because “you can actually lie more without having the evidence, and they also don't know it's you if it's anonymous.” Mary experienced more opportunities for cyberbullying in the evening, because “a lot of kids go on social media during the night.” Further, she suspected that more teenagers are active online after their parents go to sleep.

Mary noticed that when an individual posts a comment first, he or she will likely defend their post to those who disagree. This is true even if the individual’s comments were harmful to someone, because everyone “wants to be right in their own way.” According to Mary, when someone sends a hurtful comment to the person who posted first, the first person feels the need to retaliate in defense.

Mary also expressed how she has noticed people “roasting” each other, pointing out one another’s flaws in an attempt to be humorous on social media. She added that she participated in a few “roasts” about someone she didn’t like but did not post anything too mean, just humorous stuff. This type of cyberbullying encourages others to join in the activity of posting negative comments, producing an online mob-like mentality. She

sees “a lot on Vine” and a few other websites where “people take videos of weird, freaky people, and they hate on them and make them feel bad about themselves because it makes other people laugh.” According to Mary, Vine is a social media application that allows users to post short video clips and respond with comments. She stated that many of the videos on Vine are used to make fun of a person for entertainment value.

Mary recounted how jealousy, revenge, and broken relationships were the primary motivators for people who post hurtful content online. Throughout her interview, she provided examples in which online platforms facilitated the increased likelihood and severity of cyberbullying events because online platforms provided the opportunity to be indirect. Mary only contributed to three of the six themes but her multiple responses to the themes (a) jealousy; (b) revenge; (c) broken relationships provided great insight into these three distinct themes. She led the entire group in the number of responses for the theme broken relationships in both the interview and the focus group.

Kim. Kim explained that, at times, people choose to post negative online comments about one another because of a history of mutual dislike, jealousy, or just because it is fun to see what they will say when they read my post. In such cases, both individuals attempt to negatively impact the other. Kim stated, “It really helps—pissing them off. You know you're pissing them off, which makes you happy seeing that they’re mad, so getting a reaction is good.” She stated that online bullying can have many different manifestations, because in certain cases, people can “confront each other and get into a fight and it would become a big situation.”

Kim knew friends who have committed cyberbullying towards her, resulting in the end of long-term friendships. She asserted that she and the other person were initially

friends and had a positive relationship before they began to post negative messages about each other. Two friends, according to Kim, "might have a misunderstanding or just some joking around, with one person saying something really mean and the other friend responding." Kim continued to explain, "This could start a cycle of talking bad about their so-called friend and then the other friend got mad and responded with the intention of revenge." Subsequently, other friends tell the person, "If you hit her or punch her you're going to have to face a lot of other people." A cyberbully has a group, with which he or she is affiliated, potentially resulting in a large scale conflict between groups. If the other person has no friends or alliances, however, then the cyberbully "wins." Kim also claimed these incidents can happen with other types of relationships besides friendships, such as with ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends.

Kim's experiences with cyberbullying were mostly motivated by group affiliation. She noted that either a conflict online might be a continuation of a prior conflict, or a conflict could originate online and continue in person. She stated that members of a group will frequently become involved in online conflicts and that some arguments lead to threats of violence. She claimed that the person who is affiliated with the more intimidating group will "win."

Kim was probably the most valuable participant in the study. She was the only participant to contribute to all six of the themes in both the interview and focus group. She also had the most total responses contributing to the themes. Kim had 14 total interview responses identified to contribute to the six themes and 9 total responses in the focus group.

Bobby. Bobby shared an incident in which he engaged in cyberbullying in order to defend a friend. When he discovered that the girlfriend of his friend was flirting with other guys on Facebook, he began "posting stuff and tagging [his friend]," so she could see it. This led to other people adding disparaging remarks. Bobby felt that his friend's girlfriend was not being respectful to his friend, and he hoped that his negative posts would shame her into not speaking with other males. Bobby did not believe that the postings constituted cyberbullying, because he believed he was helping his friend by getting back at his friend's girlfriend.

Bobby claimed that whether posting messages about other people constitutes cyberbullying is based on the situation and the person. He stated, "Sometimes it [involves] your friends and you're joking, but sometimes it [involves] people that you don't want to be talking to but they're on your Instagram." Bobby went on to express further doubts that his behaviors constituted cyberbullying. He asserted, "I don't think it's that much, like, it's not like its bullying. It's not like it's a problem, you know what I mean? Just sometimes I might say 'hey that's wack,' like 'why you posting that'." He went on to state that his critiques of others should not be taken literally or personally: "It's not like I meant like they're gay or anything, I meant like stupid so don't be posting that. Take down that stupid stuff. It's not like it's a big deal."

He said that, "They'll just get really into it and if you ever talk to the person after [the interaction], they'll pretend like they're not saying it or they'll act like it's not a big deal." Bobby believed that people would never express most messages posted online to someone's face because of fear of conflict, "so they hide behind their phone." On Twitter, someone responded to one of Bobby's post in such a manner that he felt

compelled to confront the person face-to-face. Over time, Bobby has noticed that people "talking trash" online seem to go further by posting comments that they would otherwise not make face-to-face. He went on to note, "If a message begins with a person saying something funny then, you know, you're going to say something funnier and it will go on further." His observation reveals that the number of people who become involved in a cyberbullying event may be determined by when the initial message is posted, with evening hours producing more activity.

Bobby denied the existence of cyberbullying several times and seemed indifferent to the effects of his actions. He explained that most negative comments are posted as a joke or for entertainment. He shared personal experiences of posting hurtful comments to help a friend. He also noted that some people post negative messages online because it is safer to do so than confronting the target of the messages in person. He also believed that the timing of a post can be a factor in determining whether the message will continue.

Bobby's responses were consistent throughout the interview and focus group. Although Bobby's 20 total identified responses added to the themes (a) entertainment; (b) joking; (c) revenge; (d) group affiliation, it was his 14 responses that contributed specifically towards the emergence of the themes (a) revenge; (b) group affiliation. Bobby was the most unique of all six participants completing the study because his contributions were specific only to four of the themes with no response at any time recognizing the popular theme of jealousy and the theme broken relationships.

The following section details the development of six core themes. These themes encapsulated the participants' experiences with perpetration. Within the analysis of themes participants also describe how the cyberbullying occurred.

Analysis of Themes

At the conclusion of data collection, I organized invariant constituents into clusters related to one another. I made judgements about which comments from the participants expressed similar or distinct thoughts and perceptions of their cyberbullying experiences. Furthermore, similarities in cyberbullying characteristics were clustered into categories. Through the clustering process, core themes emerged that represented the common experiences of the participants. These themes are described in this section.

The experiences of the 14 participants revealed that a primary motivator for cyberbullying is the acquisition of power and control over others. Further, most participants mentioned that the frequency and level of cruelty of cyberbullying comments depended on how well the individuals knew each other. Participants shared that cyberbullies most often have more personal material to use when they target someone with whom they are very familiar. All participants described the anonymity in online contexts as a reason that people felt comfortable posting negative comments online, and they stated they either would not have made these comments or would have lessened the severity if the interaction was not online.

While all of the participants' reported negative interactions occurred online, conflicts differed depending on the platform used by the cyberbully. Although there are many online platforms that allow for personal interaction, the participants in this study primarily used Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Xbox Live. Facebook is a social media platform founded in 2004 and originally designed to share experiences through photos and messages known as posts. It has become much more diverse in the way that it lets users share information. Facebook now allows users to publicly post

textual messages, pictures, recorded video, live video, articles, and other Internet links. Instagram is a platform that was created by Facebook Corporation six years after the Facebook was founded. While it primarily has the same capabilities as Facebook, it has a younger user base. Twitter is unique among social media platforms, because it is primarily textual and limits its users to 140 characters per post called tweets. Messages can be resent, so that a person can share other messages to their followers, which is called a retweet. Messages can also be searched if a pound sign is typed before the word, which are called hashtags. If many people are using the same hashtag, people will describe the topic as "trending." Snapchat is a messaging platform that is generally popular with younger users. The ghost emblem that is the icon for the application is a reference to the feature that deletes messages 10 seconds after the recipient opens them. Pictures that are sent through the Snapchat must be taken while using the application. Finally, Xbox Live is a platform that allows video game players to play with or against each other. They have the option of typing messages to other users while they play the game connected through a headset that allows them to speak with other users.

The participants used a variety of platforms, but Facebook, Twitter, Intagram, Snapchat, and Xbox Live were the most common. Some participants believed that the negative messages posted online were benign, merely entertaining, or based on a person trying to joke or make fun of someone. Other interactions were understood to be more malicious. For example, individuals were motivated by their jealousy of others; desire to seek retribution for one-time interaction, or revenge sought for a dissolved relationship.

Although power and anonymity were frequently referenced by the participants as playing a role in cyberbullying, analysis of the experiences of the participants revealed

six different motivations for cyberbullying. Of the cyberbully events explored, participants identified the following motivations for cyberbullying (a) jealousy; (b) entertainment; (c) joking; (d) revenge; (e) broken relationships; (f) group affiliation. These motives are categorized as themes and described in detail in the following subsections.

Table 5 provides information from the 14 participants' interviews that relate to each of the six themes. If a participant shared a personal experience of cyberbullying that was motivated by one of the themes, the cell associated with that theme and participant contains "Yes." If the participant did not share a personal experience of cyberbullying that was motivated by one of the themes, "No" is marked in the corresponding cell.

Table 5

Participants' Endorsement of Motivation

Participant	Jealousy	Entertainment	Joking	Revenge	Broken relationships	Group affiliation
Cathy	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Katie	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Kelly	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Sally	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Sara	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Keri	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Al	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tia	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Stevie	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Mary	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Mike	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Lucy	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Kim	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bobby	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Of the 14 participants, 12 had personal experiences with cyberbullying that were motivated by jealousy. Nine of the 14 participants shared experiences that were inspired by revenge, and another nine participants had cyberbullying experiences related to group affiliation. Eight participants related that broken relationships were driven to post hurtful material. Only six of the 14 stated that they have experienced cyberbullying committed

because they were viewed as joking. Cyberbullying motivated by entertainment had the fewest participants with personal experiences, with only five.

Jealousy. Jealousy emerged as one of the most prominent themes in the data relevant to motivation for cyberbullying. Many participants expressed that there is a sense of admiration or desire for the possessions or characteristics of another person that leads to cyberbullying. This poses one answer to research question one (underlying motives for cyberbullying). Teenagers who send harmful messages may either envy or admire that person. Additionally, this theme lends understanding to research question three (cyberbullies' feelings towards those they bully).

During her interview, Kelly related that the bully may experience jealousy for the person to whom the message is delivered: "They target someone smarter or more athletic." Sara expressed similar views in the focus group session, stating, "[Cyberbullies] feel better about themselves [when they bully another person], because it feels like the person might be better than them." Cyberbullies' positive appraisal of others could result in attempts to destroy that person's public image. The interviews also generated strong statements pertaining to jealousy. Cathy went as far as to state, "They think the person is perfect and want to ruin them." Al also shared the same view of cyberbullying due to jealousy. He expressed that the intent is for the person to feel better about themselves by targeting another person.

The jealousy a cyberbully feels could also result from his or her negative self-concept. Kelly expressed that a bully may make negative comments about others when he or she "feels down about themselves." Mary expressed a similar view of a cyberbully's motivation, explaining, "They want to drag other people down so it feels

like others have it worse because of them." Sally explained that people who cyberbully are engaging in this behavior because "it gives them satisfaction and makes them feel superior." This also helps understand research question five (common characteristics of cyberbullies), because the cyberbullying event might be motivated by feelings of inferiority and jealousy.

Entertainment. The participants' tendency to gain pleasure from the suffering of their victims contributes to understanding the answers for research questions (a) one (underlying motives for cyberbullying); (b) three (cyberbullies' feelings towards those they bully); (c) five (common characteristics of cyberbullies). Teenage cyberbullies can be indifferent about the feelings of those about whom they post hurtful messages. Both in the interview and throughout the focus group, Bobby repeatedly expressed indifference towards the people he cyberbullied, and he also seemed to fail to understand the pain they potentially suffered. This reveals a common characteristic of cyberbullies, and thus, one answer to research question five. Teenagers who engage in cyberbullying appear to have a deficit of empathy toward their victims; they seem to lack full understanding of the effects of their actions.

Bobby, Stevie, Katie, Kim, Sara, and Kelly all observed cyberbullying that were motivated simply by the desire to see the victim's reaction. Bobby minimized the harm of posting negative comments for entertainment, stating that posting these comments is merely *trolling*. Trolling is a term that refers to a person who posts incendiary comments to get a reaction from online users. Sara acknowledged to the entire focus group that she commonly witnessed people posting negative messages, and she stated that "you just have to ignore it." While during the focus group discussion, Bobby seemed to be

unaware of the potential harm caused by his actions, Kim was aware of the harm but unwilling to change her behaviors. They both viewed their hurtful communications as normal behavior.

The interviews revealed interesting perspectives in regard to cyberbullying for entertainment. Stevie expressed frustration with people who are entertained by cyberbullying, stating that they are "starting drama for no reason" so she responds to put them in their place. Kelly also expressed that other people find cyberbullying humorous, and Katie said that, "It's funny." Kim thought that "[cyberbullies] do it to get a reaction," and that it typically occurs with a person "they have a past with." She said, "People think it's funny to see people get mad . . . [they're] happy to see others mad." In these instances, it is clear that one motive is based on taking amusement in the anger or hurt of peers.

Joking. Many participants described their motivation for posting inappropriate messages as joking or banter between friends. Sara, Kelly, Katie, Kim, Al, and Bobby all recounted how they have observed cyberbullying intended to be a joke. Sara expressed during the focus group, a belief that many hurtful comments are acceptable because "it's just fun and games." She further explained that when more people publicly contribute to the initial bullying, "It's okay because it's just jokes and adding on to it makes it funnier." Similarly, Kelly stated in her interview that the interactions occur between friends: "It's just making a joke and mostly friends joking around. It's what friends do." Bobby's understanding of negative comments between friends was similar to Sara's. Bobby shared his opinion during the focus group by saying, "I'm gonna try to say something funnier. It starts with jokes then sending back." While Al personally did not

think that harsh messages were entertaining, he expressed that his peers considered negative messages to be amusing, explaining, "They think it's a joke." These comments suggest that people who engage in cyberbullying may minimize the impact on the person to whom they send them.

This theme suggests that cyberbullies may not believe they are harming the recipient, and they may harbor no malice or ill intent toward that person. Rather, some engaging in cyberbullying view their actions as benign. This theme contributes to answering research questions (a) one (underlying motives for cyberbullying); (b) two (how cyberbullies feel about their cyberbullying). It appears that some people who send negative messages do not have strong feelings about the behaviors they engage in online, and instead may regard them casually or flippantly. The theme of joking contributes to understanding research question five (common characteristics of cyberbullies), since some cyberbullies may not realize the implications of their actions.

Revenge. The data from both the interviews and the focus group also revealed that cyberbullying can be motivated by the desire to seek revenge for a feeling of being slighted or harmed. Nine out of the 14 participants experienced or observed hurtful messages that were posted for revenge. Cathy, Mary, Keri, Bobby, Kim, Al, Katie, Sara, and Tia all have either posted negative messages designed to seek retribution or observed someone else that appeared to cyberbully based on this motivation.

Cathy stated in her interview that people might cyberbully if "they had an argument" with someone else. If a person feels offended by someone else, Mary believed that the person might engage in cyberbullying because "they want [the offending person] to realize how they offended them." Responding to Mary's belief during the focus group

session, Keri added: “They wanted to get back at them, and they think [about] how the person is going to feel about the comment.” While these responses suggest that revenge could motivate a person to act, other participants viewed acts of revenge as justified.

Many participants believed that negative comments posted online constituted expected and reasonable responses. Bobby stated, “Someone sends something you don’t like, so you post back.” Kim and Al both depicted retaliation as a natural response. Al expressed, “It’s because of something that they’ve done,” and Kim stated that if a person “did something mean,” the other person would “want revenge.” Katie and Sara both viewed that the desire for revenge was more likely to be experienced by people who had been bullied in the past. During the focus group session, Sara said that a person may seek revenge if “[he or she has] been a victim before.” Katie stated that a person would want revenge when “they were hurt by someone.” Each of the participants who shared experiences of cyberbullying motivated by revenge shared a sense of justification and satisfaction in their actions. They recounted how their intimate knowledge of the other person allowed them to craft more hurtful attacks. Although some people who cyberbully are unaware of the harm of their actions, others are purposefully harsh in their posts online, as indicated by this theme. The implication this carries for answering research question two (how cyberbullies feel about their cyberbullying) is in stark contrast to the responses of participants who viewed their actions as a joke. The theme of revenge also contributes to understanding the answers for research questions (a) one (underlying motives for cyberbullying); (b) five (common characteristics of cyberbullies), because some people understand and work to create more hurtful responses in an attempt to hurt a person whom they feel has hurt them.

Broken relationships. All participants noted that the most severe incidents of cyberbullying occur between people who were previously friends or partners. After the positive relationship dissolves, the victim is viewed as an enemy in the context of committing cyberbullying behaviors. Although this theme also involves the desire for revenge, it is distinct from the previous theme, because broken relationships seemed to capture a phenomenologically different motivation than revenge, which was motivated by a single event or offense. The motivation of retribution sought for broken relationships, which often involved examples that were more malicious than those for the previous theme, revenge, contributed to answering research questions (a) one (underlying motives for cyberbullying); (b) three (cyberbullies' feelings toward victims); (c) four (cyberbullies' view of relationship with victim).

Participants claimed that the harshest incidents of bullying tended to be motivated by broken relationships—relationships where a person felt betrayed or disappointed. Cathy, Al, Tia, Mary, Sally, Kim, Keri, and Lucy all recounted cyberbullying events that were motivated by broken relationships, which involved more frequent and intense attacks than other forms of cyberbullying. Sally described in her interview that this form of bullying as occurring between someone who "had a rough past with [another] person. They were friends who drifted apart and aren't friends anymore." Kim stated it more simply, saying, "They are enemies." While this motivation seems similar to revenge, cyberbullying events that were motivated by broken relationships were not designed to achieve retribution from a single prior offense; instead, they were characterized by severely malicious attacks in a relentless attempt to hurt the individual. As the focus group participants shared responses, Keri recounted how the attacks can be more hurtful

than other forms of bullying, stating that, "They are past friends who know about each other." This underscores the tendency for once intimate friends to use personal details about the other person in a way designed to maximize hurt. In her interview, Lucy believed that retribution based on a soured friendship was more common than any other type of revenge. Al stated that most cyberbullying is done by friends. The theme of broken relationships aids in understanding the answer for research question five (common characteristics of cyberbullies), since cyberbullies may be acting due to a broken relationship.

Group affiliation. Data revealed that social influence has a clear influence on how the teenagers participating in this study felt about the cyberbullying events in which they have engaged. If a person witnesses friends engaging in cyberbullying, they are more likely to view the act as normal and justified. When one group posted messages about another person or group, participants expressed a shared animosity towards that person. This theme contributes to answering research questions (a) one (underlying motives for cyberbullying); (b) two (cyberbullies' feelings about their actions), because they felt like they were justified in their actions because they were protecting a friend or the group. It also helped answer research question four (cyberbullies' view of relationships with victims), because they either expressed animosity toward the person they cyberbullied or indifference. The theme of group affiliation also contributes to answering research question five (common characteristics of cyberbullies), because teenagers may engage in cyberbullying solely based on group affiliation.

A person's group affiliation could lead them to cyberbullying in an attempt to either conform to group norms or defend group members. Katie, Stevie, Mike, Lucy, Al,

Bobby, Kim, Sara, and Keri all observed or engaged in cyberbullying because of group affiliation. Bobby expressed a similar view throughout the interview and focus group, although he referred to the effect of social influence in his examples of posting negative comments in response to others' posts: "I see a post and it's one of my friends so I respond. People are just on your Instagram. You have to check someone back if they are being messed up." Both participants related, through these examples, how the electronic platforms in which they interact influence potential cyberbullying. After Bobby finished his responses to the focus group, Kim expanded upon this idea, stating that conflicts typically occur between "a group of people versus another group of people." Sara explained how one person might be motivated to attack another if they believe that "a bully hurt one of their friend[s]." Sometimes, cyberbullying forms the foundation of a new friendship or group. Sara recounted incidents in which "somebody else is kinda already doing it, and both people don't like a person, so they join in together. Not liking a person and sharing being mean to them is how some people become friends." Similar to Sara, Keri stated that people share the "same personalities and same group of friends." Thus, group affiliation can motivate cyberbullying when it supports group norms that legitimize cyberbullying or when people cyberbully others as a means of defending their friends or fellow group members.

The following table illustrates the responses of the six focus group participants. The participants' responses in the focus group were coded for theme development using the same criteria that were used for the individual interviews. These responses are specific to the focus group questions and prompts. These responses continue to build upon the contributions to the development of each theme.

Table 6

Focus Group Participant Responses by Theme

Participant	Jealousy	Entertainment	Joking	Revenge	Broken relationships	Group affiliation	Total
Sara	1	1	1	2	0	2	7
Keri	0	0	0	3	1	2	6
Al	1	0	2	1	1	1	6
Mary	2	0	0	1	3	0	6
Kim	1	1	2	2	1	2	9
Bobby	0	2	1	3	0	3	9
Total	5	4	6	12	6	10	43

Similar to the findings from the individual interviews (Table 4), the focus group had the most responses coded for the themes revenge and group affiliation. The lower frequency of responses coded towards the themes of entertainment, joking, and broken relationships were consistent with the frequency of responses in the individual interviews. The theme of jealousy proportionally had fewer responses in the focus group than in the individual interviews.

Invariant Description

The textural descriptions listed in his chapter provide a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences relevant to the phenomenon of the perpetration of cyberbullying. Structurally, the participants shared that often the perpetration of cyberbullying happens after school hours, especially at night, when peers are most active on social media. The participants also explained that most communication constituting cyberbullying occurs through their cell phones while they are at home. Students generally have their cell phones with them during hours in which school is in session, but they rarely used them to communicate through social media during those hours. Although rare, face-to-face interactions during school hours that stem from cyberbullying

are most often the result of social media interactions occurring the previous night. Before the data collection process, I predicted that more cyberbullying incidents would occur during the school day, especially at the lunch hour and immediately after school. Data disconfirmed this hypothesis, as participants indicated that most cyberbullying happens late at night and in the privacy of their own home.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research question one: What are the underlying motives that lead cyberbullies to perpetrate? Many participants reported various motives behind their actions when engaging in or observing cyberbullying. Some interview participants expressed that often the intention is to joke or have fun at another person's expense. The participants within the focus group also identified multiple cyberbullying offenses deriving from the desire to hurt another person in order to seek revenge based on either a disagreement or failed relationship. In cases where there were no strong feelings in a relationship, the interview participants suggested that cyberbullies are motivated to target peers because of jealousy for the victim or poor self-confidence of the cyberbully. Finally, the focus group participants complimented the examples produced in the interviews by expanding on the motives of cyberbullying, providing examples of defending a friend or moderating or controlling the social media platforms by expressing harsh rebukes designed to limit future negative exchanges.

The answer to research question one is informed by each of the themes and the corresponding motivation for cyberbullying. The themes identified three types of cyberbullies (a) people who are unaware of the harm of their actions; (b) people who intentionally use harmful actions for their own personal agenda; (c) people who engage in

harmful actions in order to belong to a group. People who engaged in hurtful behaviors online for entertainment purposes or because they were joking, all minimized the effect of their actions on the recipient. Perpetrators who acted out of jealousy, revenge, or broken relationships attempted to cyberbully in order to meet some individual need or agenda. Lastly, many participants in both the interviews and focus group engaged in cyberbullying because it was common and expected in their social group.

Research question two: How do cyberbullies feel about their cyberbullying acts? Although more than a few of the interview participants expressed a dislike for cyberbullying, participants selected for the focus group refuted the interview participants' responses and claimed to experience satisfaction when cyberbullying. Most often, this feeling was due to a sense of vindication when retaliating for something another person posted about them and a feeling of triumph for having defended oneself. Some of the focus group participants stated that they intended the actions to be jokes. There were mixed responses from participants in regard to other feelings. Some participants within the interview phase asserted that they were indifferent to the feelings of the other person, while the focus group participants expressed a need to retaliate for revenge on a person who they felt deserved it. Some participants during their interviews shared the experience of a sense of regret after a heated exchange during online chatting or posts. The majority of the focus group participants refuted feelings that online cyberbullying provides protection and amnesty from any consequences that one would ordinarily face if one were to make malicious comments face-to-face. One focus group participant claimed "talking trash" can proceed more intensely and deeply online with the accompanied sense that one is ultimately causing less harm than one would in a face-to-face interaction.

Another focus group participant minimized any consequences of cyberbullying because of how commonplace it is, believing that most people were desensitized to it.

To answer research question two, data from both interview and focus group participants could also be organized into three themes (a) joking; (b) revenge; (c) group affiliation. Through interview and focus group data, it became apparent that cyberbullies who were motivated by the pursuit of joking seemed to be neutral in their view of their actions. However, participants from the focus group who engaged in cyberbullying for revenge or group affiliation appeared to be proud of their actions.

Research question three: What are the cyberbullies' feelings towards those they cyberbully? The majority of participants contributing in both the interview and focus group expressed feelings of dislike or a lack of respect for those cyberbullied. Often, participants believed that a cyberbully feels a strong sense of jealousy towards the victim, resulting in cyberbullying that person regardless of whether the person is aware of it. One focus group participant stated that he sent negative messages, because he wanted the person to realize how he felt hurt and offended based on their relationship. In some cases, the focus group participants looked for a convenient person to play the role of target for fun, with no specific feeling towards that person. To support the focus group data, a few interview participants mentioned a feeling of anger associated with the cyberbully perceiving that he or she was directly disrespected based through online posts about a friendship or relationship. Participants from both the interviews and focus group who were motivated by the theme entertainment seemed to harbor no conscious ill will toward the people to whom they sent harsh messages, however participants, including

some of those mentioned as motivated by entertainment, had great animosity towards the people they cyberbullied when they were motivated by the theme broken relationships.

Research question four: How do cyberbullies view their relationship with those they cyberbully? Most of the participants in this study viewed the cyberbully and victim relationship as a previous friendship or special relationship that ended. A few focus group participants expanded on the interview data by explaining the relationship as one in which the cyberbully encounters an acquaintance posting content with which the person disagrees, so they respond with the intention of correcting the acquaintance. One focus group participant further complimented the data from the interviews when he explained the relationship between a cyberbully and a victim as one that begins with the cyberbully hearing something about a potential target, which makes them seek out the opportunity to post comments about that person. Participants from both the interviews and focus group both identified that a relationship is often different between in-person and online contact. For example, a participant during the focus group explained how someone might pretend to be friends with someone face-to-face, but then post negative comments online about that alleged friend. One participant shared that the most common cyberbully relationship was between classmates who encountered one another in person on a daily basis and always acted respectfully. However, while online in the evenings they posted malicious messages about each other. Participants from both the interviews and focus group who were motivated by the theme broken relationships, often described the relationship in past tense, stating that the person used to be their friend. The participants who were motivated by the theme group affiliation provided data refuting the

feelings of past friendship by generally describing the target of their messages as someone who they did not know or as acquaintances.

Research question five: What characteristics do cyberbullies have in common with each other? The participants identified several commonalities of cyberbullies. Most cyberbullies used joking content or tone to disguise negative postings about specific victims. One participant stated in the focus group that usually someone else is already posting humorous messages about someone, so the challenge is to post a funnier message about that person. However, another participant explained how posting humorous messages for all to read, can lead to a person feeling targeted. They then respond with the intent to seek revenge on the person posting the message about them. Participants in the focus group shared a similar perspective with those from the interview group in regard to cyberbullies finding camaraderie in joining together to cyberbully. These cyberbullies become online allies through mutual dislike of a specific person. Hence, sharing opportunities for cruelty toward a person is a method cyberbullies use to make friends. One interview participant matched the focus group data by stating that cyberbullies have similar personalities and the same friends. Participants from both interviews and the focus group also expressed the observation that cyberbullies lack both self-confidence and an internal filter that would otherwise prevent them from making negative comments. The focus group participants expanded on the interview data by reporting that cyberbullies most often targeted someone they know well or a person about whom they have specific information. One participant explained that it is common that a failed relationship leads to retaliation through negative posts. The entire focus group nodded their heads as that participant shared which then generated more support.

Another participant explained that the person who may have been most hurt by the failed relationship can express his or her anger or feelings of rejection by posting comments. Other participants throughout the interviews and focus group explained how some cyberbullies, when they are bored, find entertainment in making others angry. A participant stated in the focus group, "Once a victim counters with a response, that person becomes the primary target." Lastly, another common characteristic participants identified was that many cyberbullies have a history of being bullied by others and low self-esteem.

Overall, there was variety in the characteristics of each person who engaged in cyberbullying. The most common similarities among cyberbullies were that they are most often motivated by the themes (a) jealousy; (b) group affiliation. Every participant who was motivated to post negative messages due to jealousy had experiences of negative emotions associated with their feelings and actions. Another commonality was that those who were motivated to engage in cyberbullying behaviors based on group affiliation regarded their actions as normal.

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological research study described the responses of participants who shared their experiences with cyberbullying through a survey, a semi-structured individual interview, and a focus group. Based on these three sources of data, six themes emerged (a) jealousy; (b) entertainment; (c) joking; (d) revenge; (e) broken relationships; (f) group affiliation. These six themes contributed to understanding the answers for the five research questions.

The results of the data were organized by research questions, and using Moustakas' (1994) Seven Step Process. The participants' data were analyzed to form six themes guided by the study's five research questions. Research question one (underlying motives of cyberbullies) was answered by all six of the themes. Research question two (how cyberbullies feel about their cyberbullying) consisted of the themes (a) joking; (b) revenge; (c) group affiliation. Research question three (cyberbullies' feelings towards those they cyberbully) encompassed the themes (a) jealousy; (b) entertainment; (c) broken relationships. Research question four (how cyberbullies view their relationship with those they cyberbully) was answered through the themes (a) broken relationships; (b) group affiliation. Finally, research question five (commonalities of cyberbullies), similar to research question one, was answered by all of the study's six themes.

To conclude, the data demonstrated an essence of the phenomenon of cyberbullying from the perspective of a cyberbully. The participants expressed their motives to cyberbully and their multiple cyberbullying experiences. These participants shared that most perpetration occurs after school hours and rarely continues into the next school day in the form of face-to-face confrontation. Although participants sometimes

preferred to cyberbully anonymously, many were comfortable with their perpetration based on the identified motives.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological study was to examine the motives of Southern California high school sophomore students who perpetrate cyberbullying. The problem is a cyberbully, unlike a traditional bully, does not have to interact in a physical environment with their victims; they can perpetrate from a variety of cybertools at any time of the day from any location with countless bystanders viewing or even participating. In this chapter, a brief summary of the findings is initially provided. Subsequently, the findings of this study are compared and integrated with existing literature, and organized by the study's five research questions. Implications and limitations of the study are followed by recommendations for future research and a final summary. This chapter synthesizes the findings of the study with the existing literature to present an understanding of the motives behind cyberbullying and specific recommendations for continued cyberbullying research.

Summary of Findings

Many teenagers use technology to interact with people by posting videos, pictures, and messages online through various social media platforms. Just as face-to-face social interactions between friends or acquaintances can lead to conflict, social interactions online can lead to the perpetration of harmful actions. This study contributes to the existing research in the field of cyberbullying. The data suggested that all of the participants in this study had experience with a variety of motives leading to cyberbullying. Participants illustrated these motives through numerous examples, which provided particular support for cyberbullying motivated by jealousy and the desire for

revenge. Other cyberbullying events were perceived to occur in the context of interactions involving joking or the pursuit of entertainment. Many participants stated that the online format of these interactions provided opportunities to communicate with others without having to directly engage with them. This form of communication enables cyberbullies to indirectly confront others without the consequences of face-to-face conflict. These online environments contributed to the perception of distance between the person posting hurtful messages and the recipient.

Further, some participants cyberbullied based on the desire to hurt someone who used to be a friend or romantic partner in order to seek revenge after their relationship ended. Finally, a commonly cited motivator or facilitator of cyberbullying was group affiliation. Online forums provide opportunities for groups of participants to form common bonds. This can include targeting others and/or protecting one another from perceived perpetration from those outside the group. This allows participants to form new friendships on the basis of developing a common enemy or target.

Research Question One: What Are the Underlying Motives That Lead Cyberbullies to Perpetrate?

Research question one was developed to identify the primary motives that lead cyberbullies to perpetrate cyberoffenses towards another person. Throughout the data analysis process, themes specific to answering this research question emerged. All six of the study's themes were derived from motives to perpetrate cyberbullying: Jealousy, entertainment, joking, revenge, broken relationships, and group affiliation. These themes are summarized in this section, and are then compared to and integrated with existing literature and theory in the next section.

Jealousy. Participants overwhelmingly identified jealousy as a primary motivation for cyberbullying. The majority of the 14 participants had a personal account of negative messages based one's jealousy of the victim. Many participants noted that a victim might be selected because they are in some way viewed as having social acceptance that the cyberbully desires. Cyberbullies who felt a thwarted need to belong or lack of self-esteem were motivated to post negative message out of jealousy of others. As teenagers seek to belong to a group or garner respect as unique individuals, they may attack others who they perceive to have the level of belonging and self-esteem they desire. The harmful effects of cyberbullying can be heightened when the source is unknown; victims may feel greater anxiety when they are unable to discern who is posting messages about them.

Entertainment. Entertainment was a theme that emerged as a motivation for teenagers who engage in cyberbullying behaviors. Five participants related experiences that suggested cyberbullies derive pleasure from hurting or exercising power over others. Participants' statements pertaining to posting messages they are certain will hurt others supports previous studies. This is detailed in the next section, as well as findings that some individuals perpetuate cyberbullying because they are entertained by victims' and bystanders' reactions.

Joking. The theme joking emerged from participants suggesting that cyberbullies may not believe they are harming anyone. Participants who sent negative messages did not have strong feelings about their online behaviors. They regarded their online posts towards others as more of a casual interaction amongst people online "messing around."

The theme of joking emerged from multiple participant responses and implied some cyberbullies may not realize the implications of their actions.

Revenge. Many participants shared experiences about retaliating against others for a perceived hurtful message. Some teenagers post negative messages as retribution because they feel they have been harmed by the other person whom they then target. In some instances, the motive of revenge began with interactions expressed from someone upset by another person. However, once the interactions began, they intensified and escalated to levels intended to harm.

Broken relationships. While similar to revenge, the theme broken relationships was distinct because the exchanges were often more intense and prolonged than cyberbullying incidents motivated by revenge for a single perceived hurt. The participants noted that cyberbullying interactions motivated by a broken or distressed relationship often derived from anger about a relationship that ended with a friend or romantic partner. These are relationships in which positive emotions in the context of a relationship turn to anger and the desire to harm. As teenagers partake in video games online with anyone connected to the Internet, most of these online gaming platforms have text and audio messaging enabling a person to send messages to others. These messages may start out as comments about an opponent, but when conflicts within a video game escalate, comments can become personal and affect relationships outside of the gaming world. The relationship then becomes strained by an incident that originates online.

Group affiliation. Conflicts commonly occur or escalate due to group affiliation, as teenagers engage in behavior that they know is wrong in order to conform to a group. Teenagers may post harsh messages because they want to experience a sense of

belonging in the group, or they may feel justified in retaliating in order to protect a member of the group. Members of the group who know that the messages are immoral or harmful are likely to ignore the messages or respond in a similar manner out of conformity. Compounding the issue, teenagers are often unaware of who is viewing posted material. This ambiguity may lead some teenagers to perceive the group as larger than it actually is. Judging the group as large then can create a greater perceived pressure to conform. The data revealed teenagers are motivated to engage in cyberbullying based on pressures within group affiliation.

Research Question Two: How Do Cyberbullies Feel About Their Cyberbullying Acts?

Research question two was developed to determine how cyberbullies feel about their actions before, during, or after the perpetration. Participants in this study primarily shared that they felt satisfied when sending messages to a person when the intent of the message was based on retaliation or revenge. While a few participants expressed remorse for the times they have engaged in cyberbullying actions, the majority of participants were apathetic regarding the pain they may have caused, and some participants were even proud of their actions. Many participants stated their actions were intended to be jokes with friends that were taken out of context or exaggerated within the groups of people viewing the posts. It appears that males in this study viewed their behavior as normal because they did not have an accurate view or complete understanding of their behavior.

Research Question Three: What Are the Cyberbullies' Feelings Towards Those They Cyberbully?

Research question three explores how a cyberbully feels about the person they cyberbully. The participants of this study expressed a wide range of feelings towards those they cyberbullied: Some participants were jealous of the person to whom they were sending messages, while other participants were sending messages to people for fun and entertainment. Still others had negative feelings towards people connected to them through a relationship that was broken or ended badly.

Research Question Four: How Do Cyberbullies View Their Relationship With Those They Cyberbully?

Research question four expands on the perceived relationships cyberbullies have with their victims. This question was designed to determine whether the cyberbully actually knows and cares about their victim, or whether the cyberbully considers it a relatively anonymous and casual relationship. Some participants in this study stated that they once valued the relationship and considered it meaningful, but after ending on bad terms, they described their new relationship as a cyberbully and victim relationship. Often a person who was previously considered a friend or romantic partner will be the target of cyberbullying when they no longer associate with the group or end their romantic relationship. One member of the relationship may feel hurt when it ends and post something hurtful about the other person that in retaliation. In other cases, the victim was currently thought of as a friend, and the cyberbully thought that their perpetration was entertaining or just a joke. Participants stated during the focus group

that the more intimate the relationship between two people online, the harsher the postings could be in a cyberbullying event.

Research Question Five: What Characteristics Do Cyberbullies Have in Common With Each Other?

Research question five was created to further investigate the characteristics most common amongst cyberbullies. This potentially extends the bullying literature by contrasting these cyberbully characteristics with those of traditional bullies. One characteristic most of the cyberbullies in this study shared was having previously been victims of cyberbullying themselves. Other than that common underlying factor, cyberbullies fit into one of three groups: Those that cyberbully independent of peer influence or prior incident (e.g., jealousy, entertainment, joking), those that cyberbully in response to feeling slighted (e.g., revenge, broken relationships), and those that cyberbully due to group affiliation.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological study was to examine the motives of Southern California high school students who perpetrated cyberbullying. The following discussion reviews the study's findings in light of the theoretical framework and compares the results of this study guided by the research questions with previous empirical literature. Throughout this section, the following research questions drive the discussion on how this study contributes to the academic field in regard to the perpetration of cyberbullying.

Research Question One: What Are the Underlying Motives That Lead Cyberbullies to Perpetrate?

The motivations detailed as themes designed to answer research question one expand upon Asch's (1956) research on conformity. The group platforms where cyberbullying occurs can provide a sense of pressure to interact for the sake of conformity. In some instances, joking and entertaining banter is a norm for these social media platforms. This social pressure to conform to group behaviors was initially empirically validated in Asch's study. Asch's research supported the notion of group conformity. He found that requiring answers within a group setting resulted in a high rate of participants conforming to one another's answers, even when clearly inaccurate. While participants in Asch's study conformed to benign incorrect behaviors, participants in this study conformed to malicious behaviors they knew were harmful or morally wrong. Similar to Asch's participants, the participants in the current study also demonstrated that malicious behavior is more likely to occur when others are engaging in the behavior because it can be perceived as normal and acceptable by the group (Asch, 1956; Kowalski et al., 2012; Vygotsky, 1931).

The current study also supports existing research in regard to how technology can facilitate cyberbullying research. Data revealed that the electronic medium provided advantages that appeal to a teenager acting out of one of a variety of motivations. For example, a teenager seeking revenge could use an electronic platform to have easy access to a victim's profile without time or geographic limitations. A relationship that ends or becomes hostile now can become a public experience if a person expresses their feelings about the other person in the broken relationship. This finding supported the conclusion

of a previous study supporting a correlation between access to technology and cyberbullying (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012). Holfeld and Grabe (2012) also found that teenagers are much less likely to be punished for their actions online as opposed to inappropriate conduct in a physical school setting. Many participants in this current study expressed indifference toward any potential consequences when cyberbullying. This was best explained when Al stated, "People just have to deal with it, you know, just ignore it." Similarly, Holfeld and Grabe (2012) concluded that there were extremely low numbers of victims reporting abuse, suggesting that minimization of ramifications or indifference plays a role in reducing the likelihood of reporting. Mishna et al. (2010) found that jealousy is a common motivation in cyberbullies. In the current study, almost all of the participants eluded to jealousy as a primary motive to perpetrate cyberbullying.

Research Question Two: How Do Cyberbullies Feel About Their Cyberbullying Acts?

Although some participants of the current study admitted to feeling regretful at times, most related a sense of indifference to their actions. This finding expands upon the Zimbardo (1973) prison study's findings. When the simulated prison guards remained behind dark sunglasses for an extended period of time, they found themselves detached from the mock prisoners (Haney et al., 1973). The participants serving as prisoners experienced profound negative effects from the behavior of the prison guards, to the point that the study had to be ended prematurely (after a few days). The participants in this current study, in contrast, shared examples that occurred over a much longer period—they appeared to develop pervasive behavior patterns as they filled the role of cyberbully. Similar to the participants in the prison guard group, the participants in this study viewed

their behavior as normal. The opportunity to post comments based on joking with friends online is now common practice with teenagers. Participants in the study felt as if their joking was not meant to hurt anyone. Participants may have felt disconnected from the victim, because they were unable to see the reactions of the recipients when they posted messages. Participant responses also indicated that jokes can be taken too far or expanded upon by others without any monitoring or repercussions. One of the participants directly shared that most people were desensitized to cyberbullying due to the prevalence of this behavior and the feeling of disconnection engendered by the indirect interactions. While the lack of monitoring leading to abuse was similar to Zimbardo's findings, the participants' expression of remorse for their abusive behaviors was not reported in the prison experiment. Similarly, the Zimbardo prison experiment explored how perceived disconnect (mirrored sunglasses on the prison guards), anonymity (uniforms), and expectations of a role, influence a person's behavior. Similar to the findings of Zimbardo's prison experiment, participants noted that anonymous comments were the harshest and most mean-spirited.

The findings of the current study suggested that people who hide their identity when cyberbullying may experience reduced inhibitions because they are less connected to their recipient/victim. They may also be motivated to post harsher messages because of their belief that they will not be punished for their behaviors and therefore, can lash out or seek revenge. These results support Kowalski et al. (2012) findings that anonymous postings can encourage other users to engage in cyberbullying. Data from the current study and from Kowalski et al. (2012) research both support the finding that

anonymity reduces inhibitions and leads people to act without thinking about their actions or concern for their victim.

Research Question Three: What Are the Cyberbullies' Feelings Towards Those They Cyberbully?

Similar to the Zimbardo study, data from this study indicated cyberbullies' feel disconnected between themselves and their victims. Some participants recounted confrontations online that would not occur face-to-face. This expands upon the findings of Zimbardo's prison experiment. In Zimbardo's study, the prison guard group was given mirrored sunglasses in order to foster a perceived disconnect between the guards and prisoners. The results of the Zimbardo study indicated that when there is perceived disconnect between abuser and victim, the frequency of cruel actions greatly increased (Haney et al., 1973). The current study found that the indirectness fostered by the Internet functioned in a similar fashion. Many participants posted messages based on jealousy intended to negatively affect another person. Furthermore, interactions in which the cyberbully was anonymous tended to be much crueler than those in which the identity of the cyberbully was known. Holfeld and Grabe (2012) found that cyberbullies can have positive feelings towards their victims, however most of the participants in this study shared indifference in their experiences of harming a victim. The participants in this study contributed multiple examples of ill intent on those with whom they had a past relationship. This led to the theme broken relationships. In contrast to the current study, Holfeld and Grabe (2012) found that people who engage in cyberbullying may have positive, friendly feelings towards the people who they post hurtful messages to online. Zimbardo found that while participants in the guard group seemed to enjoy their control

over others, they demonstrated little to no emotion towards the people whom they were harming (Haney et al., 1973). This was also evident when participants in this study shared experiences of cyberbullying based on entertainment at the expense of others.

Research Question Four: How Do Cyberbullies View Their Relationship With Those They Cyberbully?

Zimbardo's research in the Stanford prison experiment found that the participants acting as prison guards seemed to enjoy opportunities to exercise power over the participants acting as prisoners. However, a unique finding of this study was that most of the cyberbullies stated that often their relationships are only negative on social media. When those involved in cyberbullying meet face-to-face at school, the relationship might not be warm and welcoming, but it is rarely overtly confrontational. However, while Holfeld and Grabe (2012) investigated multiple cyberbullying incidents in which a perpetrator claims to be friends with their victim, they did not find evidence that their face-to-face and online relationships were different, as this current study suggests. This social norm of addressing one another with respect in a face-to-face interaction is associated with Vygotsky's social development theory (1978). In this study, a finding that the interaction varied according to whether it was face-to-face or online reflects Vygotsky's social development theory by illustrating how a group or specific relationship may develop social norms that change depending on the environment in which the interaction takes place.

Participants in this study related that cyberbullies most often target someone they know well or a person about whom they have specific information. Similar to prior research findings (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Mishna et al., 2010), cyberbullies in this study

reported that some cyberbullying incidents are fueled by failed or broken relationships. These relationships are often based on social status based on teenagers attempting to gain popularity and acceptance within select peer groups (Mishna et al., 2010). This also supported existing findings that the victims of cyberbullying and the perpetrators consider each other to be friends at the time of the perpetration (Holfeld & Grabe; Mishna et al.).

Prior research has found that cyberbullies consider those they post messages about to be friends (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Mishna et al., 2010). Vygotsky (1978) proposed in his social development theory that a person's thought process is the result of their experiences within social interactions. Similarly, the participants in the current study indicated that many cyberbullies seem to enjoy the sense of power they feel from directing cruelty toward their victims.

Research Question Five: What Characteristics Do Cyberbullies Have in Common With Each Other?

Prior research has discovered commonalities in cyberbullies. One common characteristic of cyberbullies is that they have been the victim of bullying (Varjas et al., 2009). This study found that a common characteristic of cyberbullies was that participants identified having past experiences of being victims of some form of bullying. Cyberbullies in this study reported having some experiences as a victim of either traditional bullying or cyberbullying and, in turn, retaliated by posting their own messages about others. These findings support research that Varjas et al. conducted, which addressed fundamental differences between forms of bullying. These authors reported a correlation between cybervictimization and perpetration of cyberbullying (r =

.89). The strength of this correlation demonstrates that there is a strong link between being a victim of cyberbullying and becoming a cyberbully, which was supported by the descriptions of several participants in the current study.

One distinct type of cyberbullying behavior that emerged from the data was minors who acted independent of peer influence or prior incident. Kowalski et al. (2012) and Mishna et al. (2010) conducted research that focused on commonalities in cyberbullying incidents. Both researchers discuss jealousy as a characteristic of people who engage in cyberbullying. The data from this current study supported the findings of prior research suggesting that jealousy was a common factor among teenagers who engage in cyberbullying.

Another category of motivations for cyberbullying found in the literature was retribution or retaliation (Kowalski et al., 2012). Similar to the abuse of power that Zimbardo (1973) discovered when college students became prison guards, teenagers' hurtful comments online were used to hurt people for revenge. The data from this study revealed that participants used social media platforms to exert control over others much like the prison guard group exerted control over the prisoner population. While previous literature has more often found cyberbullying occurring between friends, revenge as a consequence of broken relationships also appears to be a significant motivator of cyberbullying (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Kowalski, et al., 2012). Data from this current study supported those findings; Sara and Al both expressed that a person's intimate knowledge of a former friend or partner gives that person an ability to use that knowledge to torment the other person online. Participants also related that the more intimate the relationship between two people online, the harsher the postings could be. This supports

findings by Kowalski et al. (2012) in describing a difference in relationships between a cyberbully and victim as opposed to a traditional bully and victim. Emotional connections and knowledge based on a long standing friendship and history with a victim contributes to the likelihood of a cyberbully choosing a victim. Participants' responses also revealed that cyberbullies may post hurtful messages out of the pain of the loss of a friendship. This aligns with Maslow's (1943) principle of responsibility by explaining that people prefer responsibility to dependency and passivity. The data from this study suggests that someone who was previously socially connected through a relationship will decide to compensate for the loss or dependency of a relationship and act out through cyberbullying.

The final category of motivations of those committing cyberbullying found in the data was group affiliation. Many cyberbullies in this study used joking as a pretext when posting negative comments about others. Although joking was categorized as a separate theme in the analysis of the results, joking often occurred in the context of group affiliation. These posts are a foundation for cyberbullying. They bring perpetrators together and to form friendships. The data from this study suggest that a person's group affiliation has a significant impact on their behavior. Once a teenager has identified with and been accepted by a group, they have a desire to conform to the group to continue to feel that sense of belonging. This tendency to conform expands upon Maslow's (1943) need hierarchy theory, by offering empirical support for the process of engaging in cyberbullying to create the feeling of belonging to a group. The findings of the current study that group affiliation motivates teenagers to cyberbully also expands Zimbardo's (1973) research by establishing that social influence can also apply to an electronic

environment. Many participants noticed that conflicts online would often occur between groups. The conflict may begin between two individuals, but as Sara noted, when one member of a group is attacked, the affiliated group members will retaliate against the offending person or group. She noted that the threatening messages would continue until it was deemed that one group was more powerful than the other. If the intimidation was not sufficient over online media, the conflict may continue in person.

While Sara's experiences of exchanging threatening messages eventually escalating into physical violence were the most extreme of all the participants, it supported previous research in group conformity. In the group setting of the simulated prison experiment, as the experiment progressed in duration and intensity, participants expressed increased anxiety and intentions to do harm to others more frequently (Haney et al., 1973). These findings also offered an explanation of previous research by Wang et al. (2009) that initially seemed paradoxical in that the number of friends a student had was directly related to the number of traditional bullying occurrences. Cyberbullying may actually occur more often when a person has many friends, because they may be more inclined to engage in cyberbullying behavior due to group affiliation.

Participants in this study noted that opportunities for anonymous confrontation assisted them in facilitating cyberbullying. This finding is supported by Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) research in regard to some Internet sites allowing for complete anonymity. Participants provided further insight into their motives to access social media platforms based on their preference and the convenience of this perceived disconnect between personal interactions. The data from this study provides an understanding of the role that social influences can play in cyberbullying. The tendency for conformity in

cyberbullying interactions expands upon research by Asch (1956). While many participants in this study identified that they knew their actions were morally objectionable, their behavior revealed a lack of consideration for the person about whom they were posting. The notion that people will engage in behaviors that they view as bad or wrong as long as someone else is also participating in them supports prior research (Asch). Further, Asch (1956) did not examine conformity in the context of actions that participants believed were morally objectionable, but the findings of this current study support that conformity continues to play a strong influence on people's behavior in these cases.

Similarly, Maslow's (1943) research supports the current study's findings that negative actions towards others can be motivated by a teenager's desire to belong to a group. A teenager's cyberbullying furthers the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), given that cyberbullying can be motivated by the desire to feel a sense of belonging. Just as Maslow (1943) theorized that people will be motivated by a need to belong, participants shared experiences of engaging in cyberbullying behaviors to fit in with a group. Members of the group could be attempting to conform to perceived group norms when they engage in cyberbullying in order to gain a sense of belonging. Participants depicted most cyberbullies as more concerned with reinforcement garnered from their peers' responses than with any emotional harm caused to the recipient.

Another study found that the more friends a person has, the greater the correlation with cyberbullying (Wang et al., 2009). Existing within the themes entertainment, joking, and group affiliation, the correlation of the number of friends and the likelihood of increased cyberbullying incidents may exist. This study's participants shared

numerous responses related to interactions within groups interacting constantly online in multiple ways. The interactions were described as a normal method of communication, socialization, and entertainment. While studies focus directly on cyberbullying, other research depicting more general principles of human motivation and behavior facilitate the understanding of common characteristics of cyberbullies. For example, Maslow's (1943) research focused on how behavior can be influenced by a person's needs, with the need to belong being a strong motivation for behavior. Asch's (1956) research on conformity supported the observation that an individual is more likely to respond with an answer that they know is incorrect if they see other people respond that way first. Additionally, Zimbardo's prison experiment found that power, group identification, and anonymity were all powerful factors that influenced an individual's behavior (Fischer et al., 2011).

There are many different motivations for teenagers to perpetrate cyberbullying; ultimately, cyberbullying occurs in the context of an individual who is seeking revenge, an individual retaliating towards another, or an individual acting as a result of their group affiliation. While previous research has focused on aspects of individual incidents of cyberbullying and various characteristics of victims and perpetrators, studies that explore group influences on cyberbullying are limited (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012; Mishna et al., 2010). Incidents in this study varied, but participants revealed a common characteristic of perpetrating cyberbullying based on ease of connection and opportunities to choose to remain anonymous. These characteristics revealed that cyberbullying is a systemic problem due to lack of

consequences, convenience, and the ability to remain anonymous within social media platforms.

Implications

While participants used a variety of platforms to interact online, it was evident that each participant viewed the virtual interactions to be equally meaningful as experiences not online. Moreover, data from this study suggested that online activity is predominately unsupervised. Implications in regard to this study involve the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders such as: Future cyberbullies and victims, school staff and parents, and social media companies.

Implications for Future Cyberbullies and Victims

The majority of harmful or negative experiences shared in this study were not reported, and in almost every case, cyberbullying events occurred without the knowledge of adults. All of the participants' responses conveyed a sense of inevitability or apathy in regard to addressing cyberbullying. These interactions as well as the sense of apathy are examples of how a teenager may make decisions inside a community. In this case, the community is accessible through online platforms which contribute to an engaging and consistent network. These social factors align with Vygotsky's social development theory (1978) in regard to the effect cognitive functions have on values, tools, and the culture in which a young person socializes and develops. Additionally, all participants who posted negative comments minimized the impact that their acts had on their victims. Some participants did not view their harsh comments as cyberbullying, and other participants engaged in cyberbullying because they believed that their actions were justified or would not have consequences. These insensitive decisions relate to Maslow's

hierarchy of needs (1943). Within the hierarchy of needs is the need for self-actualization. People reaching self-actualization are self-aware and do not require social recognition. A cyberbully's actions to post negative messages about others as well as their insensitivity and accountability for their actions, demonstrate a void in self-actualization. In order to prevent an increase in cyberbullying, victims must have access to reporting systems in which they are free of retaliation from their perpetrator. In addition, perpetrators demonstrating any cyberbullying behavior must be identified at early ages and provided with in depth intervention with periodic follow-up to eliminate the behavior.

When analyzing the motivations of teenagers who engaged in cyberbullying, three general categories of incidents emerged: Individuals who create conflicts on their own, individuals in a friendship creating conflict between one another, and members of groups who are experiencing conflict. Considering these three general categories, the following sections provide suggestions for school staff and social media companies who are attempting to prevent cyberbullying.

Implications for School Staff and Parents

Currently, school officials are challenged with deciding when and how to appropriately respond to off-campus cyberbullying. School officials can consider advocating that conflict occurring online between students may cause disruption on the school campus (Shariff & Johnny, 2007). The use of school computers and personal cell phones during the school day are significantly easier to supervise than off-campus access to these cybertools. Teachers and counselors are typically the staff members who are most knowledgeable with the behaviors and issues facing student populations. As many

of these staff members will not be aware of cyberbullying due to the extremely low report rate of cyberbullying incidents, staff members should approach and engage students in meaningful dialogue when they notice any changes in their students' behavior. When a student shares information regarding a cyberbullying incident, staff members should consider which of the three categories the incident falls under when determining the best course of action.

This study's data demonstrate that teenagers who cyberbully without the context of a preexisting interaction or a relationship often are disconnected from the feelings of their victims. Thus, for incidents that involve a student who is engaging in cyberbullying out of desire for entertainment, the justification of joking, or jealousy, staff needs to speak with the student who engaged in the behavior and his or her parent(s) directly. The negative impact of the cyberbullying on the victim needs to be clearly articulated to the student's parents and they then should be advised as to how they can better monitor their child's online activity.

If the incident of cyberbullying is known to be motivated by revenge, then a school administrator is advised to speak directly with all of the students involved, as well as their parents. The school counseling staff should then guide the students involved in cyberbullying through a clearly defined conflict resolution program. Even if the cyberbullying incident appears to be isolated, cyberbullying that is motivated by retaliation for a perceived slight or revenge may continue either online or on campus. It is important that students are guided through a process of conflict resolution and educated about appropriate methods to resolve interpersonal issues. Parents need to be made aware of their child's behavior online and provided with effective strategies to better

monitor their child's online activities. Recruiting more parent involvement with their child's social media behavior as well as the parent's own social media habits, along with their support when their child is identified as a cyberbully would contribute to parent education programs focused on cyberbullying prevention.

Potentially the most difficult types of cyberbullying cases to address are those that are motivated or facilitated by group affiliation. It could be the case that many people are involved, as groups can become large and complex, and a particular incident may include people who are not students enrolled in the school. Identifying the people involved in the cyberbullying may be insurmountably difficult, and some of the students engaging in the cyberbullying may not seem like students who would typically perpetrate these kinds of behaviors. If staff members on a campus discover that there are students who are engaging in cyberbullying as a group, efforts should be made to attempt to change the culture of the school campus. Teachers need to be educated about common signs of cyberbullying and encouraged to speak with individual students who they may suspect are victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying. Public service announcements may be insufficient to prevent teenagers from engaging in cyberbullying, which is supported by the data suggesting that the participants in the study were already aware that cyberbullying was wrong and harmful. It is likely that, in cases such as these, increasing the monitoring of teenagers' online activities, providing effective education, and delivering appropriate consequences for misbehavior will improve teenagers' online behaviors and reduce cyberbullying.

Students should also be informed of appropriate individuals at school to whom they can disclose cyberbullying incidents, such as a trusted teacher, administrator, or

counselor. Parents also need to be informed about the importance of monitoring their child's Internet use, common signs of cyberbullying, and actions they can take if they suspect that their child is the target or the perpetrator of cyberbullying. Ultimately, schools and parents must educate young people at an early age to set expectations and consequences for cyberbullying. Through early education a shift in the culture of online communities will facilitate change and may reduce the frequency of cyberbullying, particularly incidents involving group affiliation.

Implications for Social Media Companies

The majority of the data in this study reflected minimal reporting of cyberbullying incidents by participants. Just as minors are routinely monitored when they gather in social situations, they would also benefit from having their electronic social interactions supervised. Further, websites or applications that provide opportunities for social interaction need to have visible and accessible options to report cyberbullying. A young victim of cyberbullying may be more likely to report an offensive comment if there is a clearly visible platform on the same screen where the comments are posted. Given that data indicate many or most instances of cyberbullying are unreported, it is important for social media site managers to take responsibility for the content that they allow people to post. While current public service announcements have effectively communicated that cyberbullying is wrong and dangerous, they often fail to provide specific actions a person can take when they have been targeted online. Increasing specific announcements based on actions to report cyberbullying to site companies could prevent the frequency of incidents and improve the monitoring of cyberbullying on social media sites.

Limitations

Limitations are influences that the researcher cannot control. This qualitative phenomenological research design had limitations in the areas of geographical range, age of participants, diversity of participants, and overall sample size. The possible limitations in this study were the small sample size of approximately 14 participants, the specific age group of sophomore students, and the geographical location of the school site. The findings of this study could be interpreted in different ways based on others reviewing the same data. This study was focused specifically on high school sophomores in Southern California. The physical geography was considered to be a limitation because the focus of the study was on participants perpetrating via technology and social media, which occurs nationwide and internationally. The study was restricted to a setting within one school with a relatively homogenous sample size. This limited the capacity to generalize the findings of the study to high school sophomores in other schools and geographic locations.

This study was also limited by the purposeful selection of research participants who were all high school sophomores at the same school site. The age group was selected because these participants were hypothesized to have sufficiently acclimated to their high school setting as well as garnered several years of experience with social media networking.

The study also was limited regarding the diversity of participants. The interview and focus group participants consisted of students of Asian and Caucasian descent. A potentially more diverse sample of participants could allow the results to extend to other

cultural or ethnic groups that may have different norms for the culture of social media networking.

My personal bias was also a limitation. I followed Moustakas' (1994) recommendation to set aside biases prior to selecting participants, collecting data, and coding the data. Although I did not know any of the participants and I have never been a victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying, as a high school principal, I have been involved in the discipline process of a few students enrolled at my school who have cyberbullied. This experience, along with my own son being a victim of cyberbullying, may have implicitly affected my data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although there have been numerous studies on victimization associated with both bullying and cyberbullying, few researchers have studied the motives behind the perpetration of cyberbullying. Originally the study was going to be designed to recruit high school freshmen or middle school participants because the cyberbullying phenomenon reaches into ages earlier than high school sophomores. However, to ensure access to participants with more than a few years of experience with online communication, participants in their second year of high school were selected. Future researchers may discover valuable information about the early stages of perpetration by conducting studies that occur in early teenage or pre-teen years, where perhaps online culture and norms conducive of cyberbullying become first established.

An additional recommendation for future research is to conduct experiments that manipulate electronic social environments to better understand specific variables relevant to users' behavior. These environments include video gaming forums, where consistent

communication occurs while games are being played. Many gaming platforms are popular because they connect users through the Internet. The question of whether communicating through these gaming platforms or chat rooms is distinct from other online formats should be empirically investigated.

Often, responses that relate to social media are made with the understanding that an unknown number of people are viewing the comment or posting. Many social media applications have clearly defined social groups that identify "followers" or "friends." As discussed throughout this study, it is unclear how the perception of the size of a group influences a teenager's Internet behavior. Teenagers' perceptions of the number of viewers and the number of people in their group have been insufficiently studied.

Additionally, it is imperative to have systems in place to not only facilitate the reporting of cyberbullying, but also treat the victims and assist in their healing process. Future studies may compare how schools and school districts are addressing or responding to cyberbullying, specifically, methods or systems most effective in prevention and intervention. The focus on development of intervention and prevention methods specific to the motives of cyberbullying, as depicted by the themes that emerged in the current study, may assist school officials in developing cyberbullying programs and policies.

When cyberbullying escalates without being addressed, and victims feel helpless to confront or stop the abuse, the victim may respond in various ways. Victims might also feel helpless when they are uncertain how or where to report the abuse. A cybervictim could quickly assume the role as a cyberbully as a way of gaining mastery over their feelings of victimization; this potential trajectory is worthy of additional

research. Further, if mental health issues, especially depressive disorders, affect both cyberbullies and cybervictims, a future study may seek to evaluate rates of symptoms of depression in cyberbullies and cybervictims. It would be useful to gain a deeper understanding into cybervictims' experiences to study symptoms of depression and anxiety in this population at different time periods during cyberbullying. Further, future researchers may gather additional evidence from a public health standpoint for the importance of preventing cybervictimization by studying the mental health outcomes of cybervictims and investigating the link between cybervictimization and risk signs of suicide. Lastly, researchers may also consider exploring the association between cybervictimization and ways in which victims make meaning of and manage the emotional impact of the abuse perpetrated against them.

There is minimal research on the effects of relationships between cyberbullies and victims in regard to cyberbullying on school campuses. Future research may include studying the relationship between cyberbullying and violent acts on high school and college campuses. If cell phones are used as a primary instrument for the perpetration of cyberbullying, schools may benefit from information that supports the development of policies in effect during the school day. Researching the frequency of cyberbullying incidents in various high schools with different cell phone policies could lead to useful knowledge that may support cyberbullying prevention. Specifically, this may entail comparing schools in which cell phones are allowed during the school day with schools in which cell phone use is not permitted during the school day. Furthermore, forbidding cell phone use during the school day may affect school culture in the cases when students block another Internet user after school hours. If the cyberbully becomes upset with the

victim's decision to block the cyberbully from communication, they may choose to retaliate face-to-face during school hours instead, potentially increasing the likelihood of violence between students.

As online platforms continue to increase in number and people all over the world utilize convenient social media platforms, it would be useful for researchers to work toward an understanding of cyberbullying on a wider regional or national scale. Regional or national studies may provide the opportunity to explore in greater nuance and depth, racial and gender influences on cyberbullying. Additionally, researchers may find it useful to investigate similarities in traits of parents of cyberbullies. Studying parents' involvement with their child's social media behavior, parents' level of support when their child is identified as a cyberbully, and the parents' own social media habits would likely contribute to the development of parent education programs focused on cyberbullying prevention.

Summary

The goal of this study was to examine the motives of 10th grade students perpetrating cyberbullying. Currently, there are few existing studies related to the perpetration of cyberbullying. This study was designed to investigate motives behind the perpetration of teenage cyberbullies.

As data were analyzed, coding produced reoccurring units that merged into six themes. Multiple participants expressed motives related to group affiliation. Within those groups, participants often shared their perspective that their actions constituted joking with other people and seeking entertainment at someone else's expense. The participants dismissed their actions and eschewed responsibility when identifying joking

or the pursuit of entertainment as motives. Additionally, multiple participants identified other motives to be jealousy and the pursuit of revenge. Participants overwhelmingly identified jealousy as a primary motivation for cyberbullying. Broken relationships and revenge for perceived slights were also repeatedly identified as motivating factors for cyberbullying, and participants noted that cyberbullying incidents motivated by broken relationships often constituted the most intense and prolonged interactions.

The implications of this study involve school staff responsible for implementing interventions designed to increase empathy, enhance conflict resolution, and developing policy to alter a culture that tolerates cyberbullying. Additionally, a key implication is the recommendation to social media companies to develop their social media sites in ways that facilitate the reporting of cyberbullying when the targeted audience consists of teenagers. The implications of cyberbullying reach from school campuses to homes, and thus, parental education regarding appropriate monitoring of online activity is another recommendation based on the findings. I recommend that school staff work with parents to communicate an understanding of cyberbullying and create proactive systems that establish a culture that conveys zero tolerance for cyberbullying. In order to inform adults responsible for teaching and monitoring the social media habits of teenagers, additional research should be conducted that may inform effective school policy and prevention programs, parental involvement, and the emotional health of both cybervictims and cyberbullies.

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APPENDIX A

Student Reflection Survey "Reproduced with permission"

Name_____

Please complete the survey below which will allow you to reflect on your experiences with bullying. Your honesty is critical in making this survey meaningful.

Have you ever . . . (answer yes or no)

_____1. Physically intimidated a person by continuously hitting, bumping or shoving them? (D)

_____2. Teased someone repeatedly to their face? (D)

_____3. Intentionally excluded someone to purposely make them feel bad? (D)

_____4. Forwarded an inappropriate picture or mean text about someone else without permission from the person who sent it to you? (RQ #5)

_____5. Posted pictures of someone online or by text without their permission? (RQ #1)

_____6. "Liked" or "Retweeted" someone else's rude or mean comments about another person on a social networking site? (RQ #5)

_____7. Posted a comment that was rude or threatening to or about someone else on a social networking site? (RQ #1)

_____8. Signed on to someone else's social networking account with the intention of teasing/intimidating another person? (RQ #3–#5)

_____9. Created an online poll or completed an online poll about someone without their permission? (RQ #1 & #5)

_____10. Posted lies/rumors about someone on a social networking site? (RQ #1 & #5)

_____11. Been a victim of physical bullying or intimidation to your face? (D)

_____12. Had someone else post a lie/rumor about you on a social networking site? (D)

_____13. Been a victim of ongoing rude, negative, or intimidating comments on a social networking site? (D)

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APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. Have you ever been a target of cyberbullying through online messaging or online conversations? (Deception)
2. Why do you think people choose to post negative online comments about others? (RQ #1 & #5)
3. How do you think people, who post negative online messages about others, feel about what they do? (RQ #2, #3, & #5)
4. How do you think people, who post negative online messages about others, feel about the person they are making comments about? (RQ #3–#5)
5. How do you think people, who post negative online messages about others, view their relationship with them? (is a friend, is kind of a friend, knows a little about them, never meet them, heard a rumor about them, dislikes them, hates them, used to be a friend to them, etc.) (RQ #3–#5)
6. What do you think these people, who post negative online messages about others, have in common with each other? (RQ #1–#5)
7. Why do you think these people, who post negative online messages about others choose that person to begin with? What are their reasons? (RQ #1, #3, #4, & #5)
8. What else would you like to mention about cyberbullying? (RQ #1–#5)

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Questions

1. What do you all see as the main reasons a person would post negative statements about another? (RQ #1–#5)
2. What is the most likely relationship with the person who gets statements made about them? (RQ #4)
3. Do you think cyberbullying is different than regular face-to-face bullying? (RQ #2) How? (RQ #1–#5) Is it less harmful or more harmful? (RQ #2) Why? (RQ #2)
4. About how many people add more to the negative comments after the first comment is posted? Tell me more of how the process usually goes. Do others add comments for a certain reason? (RQ#3 & #5)
5. Tell me more about what happens when you post comments and the reaction of the person receiving the negative comments. What are your thoughts when you add these comments? (RQ #1–#5) What about when you see each other at school? (RQ #4) How does the situation end or resolve itself? (RQ #4 & #5)
6. How often is the posting meant to be a joke? (RQ #1–#3) What happens if the person receiving the message responds with an inappropriate response? (RQ #5)

APPENDIX D

Institutional Review Board Approval

From: IRB, IRB
Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2015 11:00 AM
To: Farkas, Dave
Cc: Duryea, John R (School of Education); IRB, IRB
Subject: IRB Approval 2327.111915: A Phenomenological Study to Examine the Motives of Tenth-Grade Students Perpetrating Cyber-Bullying

Dear Dave,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases are attached to your approval email.

Your IRB-approved, stamped consent form is also attached. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

Title of study: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY TO EXAMINE THE MOTIVES OF TENTH-GRADE STUDENTS PERPETRATING CYBERBULLYING

Principal investigator's name: Dave Farkas
Liberty University
School of Education

Your child is invited to be in a research study of cyberbullying. Your child was selected as a possible participant because he/she has some experience in this subject and can provide valuable knowledge based on those experiences. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow your child to be in the study. Dave Farkas, a doctoral candidate for the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to examine the motives of Southern California high school students who perpetrate cyberbullying.

Procedures:
If you agree that your child can participate in this study, he or she will be asked to do the following things: Participate in the completion of a voluntary survey, possibly be selected to participate in a voluntary one-on-one interview, and possibly take part in a focus group. Both the interview and the focus group will be recorded by iPhone and recorder. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and the focus group about one hour. Surveys will last approximately 10 minutes in class.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:
Risks involved in this study are no more than your child would encounter in daily life. During the study, although unlikely, participants may have varying reactions to question about cyberbullying. If stress occurs, your child does not have to answer the question and can, at any time, decide to end the interview or be excused from the focus group. Participants will receive no direct benefits.

Compensation:
Compensation will not be included; however participants will receive refreshments at both the interview and focus group.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. At the conclusion of the research study, data will be retained for three years in a locked filing cabinet inside the PI's home before being deleted or shredded. All data recorded will be used to develop a final dissertation, which will inform educators in the area of cyberbullying. Although participants of the focus group will meet together, all participants will be asked to keep the names of other participants' anonymous. This cannot be assured but will be asked of all participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect his/her current or future relations with Liberty University or your school. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he/she is free to not answer any question.

How to Withdraw from the Study:
Participants may withdraw at any time. If your child decides to withdraw from the study at any time, he/she can simply notify the researcher by phone, written notification, email, or in person.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Dave Farkas. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at dfarkas@liberty.edu or his advisor, Dr. Duryea, at jduryea@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read and understood the above information. I have received answers to any questions that I asked. I consent for my child to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

€ The researcher has my permission to audio-record my child as part of his/her participation in this study.

Signature of minor: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent or guardian: _____ Date: _____ (If minors are involved)

Phone number _____ Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F

Recruitment Script

Hello. My name is Dave Farkas and I'm a doctoral student at Liberty University. I'm currently in the process of initiating a study on cyberbullying which I hope will provide information which may help educators, students, and parents address the growing effects of this type of bullying. I have successfully completed the survey and interview phases and I am now seeking assistance from students to participate in a focus group. The focus group will be held at the student's school and will not affect their current classes. Students will receive refreshments and the opportunity to contribute to a study which hopefully may help teenagers in the near future. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at (---) --- ----. Participation in the focus group is strictly voluntary.

Thank you.