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Adolescent Victims' Experiences With Cyberbullying: A Grounded Theory Study

Melvina S. Brandau

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ADOLESCENT VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES WITH CYBERBULLYING:
A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

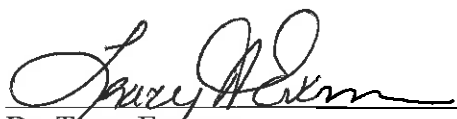
Doctor of Philosophy

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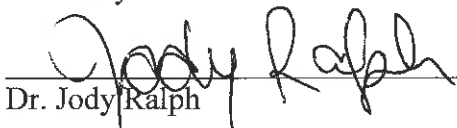
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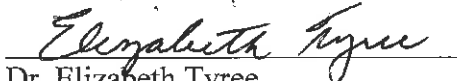
This dissertation, submitted by Melvina S. Brandau in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.



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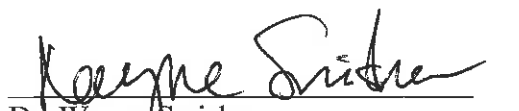


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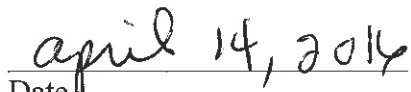


Dr. Roni Mayzer

This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.



Dr. Wayne Swisher
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies



Date

PERMISSION

Title Adolescent Victims' Experiences with Cyberbullying: A Grounded
Theory Study

Department College of Nursing and Professional Disciplines

Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Melvina S. Brandau
April 11, 2016

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to construct a Grounded Theory that explains the processes involved in cyberbullying from the perspectives of those who have been victimized. A Constructivist Grounded Theory approach was used to explain the processes that occur as cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends, as well as to determine the methods that adolescent victims use to cope, and the context in which cyberbullying occurs.

Cyberbullying is a pervasive public health issue, affecting an estimated 10-30% of youth. Cyberbullying, though closely related to traditional physical bullying, has qualities that make it distinctive. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying is relatively new in the literature and there are many elements of the phenomenon that we do not yet understand.

One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 adolescent victims of cyberbullying. As a result of those interviews, a Grounded Theory titled *Emerging from Cyberbullying* was constructed and a theoretical model was developed. From these findings, we see that the victim moves through various stages during his/her experience. From Being Targeted, the victim becomes enveloped into a cyberbullying cycle that includes Being Cyberbullied, Losing Oneself, and Attempting to Cope. When the cyberbullying ceases, or the victim is no longer actively affected by it, he/she moves into a stage of Resolving and finally, Finding Oneself.

The findings from this study give hope that cyberbullying victims can arise from a cyberbullying experience feeling stronger and empowered to help others cope with cyberbullying victimization. *Emerging from Cyberbullying* gives us greater insight into the phenomenon of cyberbullying from the victims' perspective and can be used to inform public health efforts aimed at preventing and intervening in cyberbullying behaviors.

Adolescent Victims' Experiences with Cyberbullying: A Grounded Theory Study

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

True Stories

In 2006, Megan Meier took her own life just prior to her 14th birthday. She had been dumped by a fictitious online boyfriend created by the mother of another teen. The mother, Lori Drew, orchestrated a “joke” to get back at Megan, who had a falling out with Drew’s teenage daughter (Maag, 2007; MeganMeierFoundation.org, n.d.). In 2010, Phoebe Prince, an Irish teen who had recently moved to a new school, was bullied online and at school before deciding to end her life at her home in Massachusetts (Kennedy, 2010). Rehtaeh Parsons, 15, allegedly sexually assaulted by four male classmates while passed out from alcohol intoxication, died a few days after attempting to hang herself in 2011; her suicide attempt was preceded by photos of the assault appearing online and relentless teasing and name-calling by her peers (Salek, 2011). Amanda Todd, a 15 year old teen from British Columbia, committed suicide by hanging in late 2012, after suffering from anxiety, depression, and multiple forms of bullying for three years. Todd, whose story began with a topless picture an unknown adult took from a web cam feed and shared online when she was 12, shared her story via YouTube just weeks before her death (Baur & Ninan, 2012). Without speaking a word, Todd presented her story via note cards as she silently sought for help with a card stating: “I have nobody. I need someone.” Todd’s experience included both traditional verbal bullying that was triggered by online events and cyberbullying.

Though physical and psychological bullying are not new, the scope and ease of dissemination, as well as the anonymity provided by cyberbullying, adds a crucial dimension to cyberbullying. The tragic stories shared above illuminate the most severe consequences that can occur when adolescents experience a fairly new phenomenon known as cyberbullying.

Problem Statement

While cyberbullying is relatively new, the range in the severity of the health consequences of cyberbullying (from emotional distress to suicide) make it an important youth health concern. The Cyberbullying Research Center (2013) reports that almost 50% of all adolescents have experienced cyberbullying. Additionally, there were more than 40 known cyberbullying-related suicide cases reported from 2003-2012 (American Academy of Pediatrics [AAP], 2012), and media reports of such cases continue to accumulate. Furthermore, the negative impact of cyberbullying on the overall social, mental, and physical wellbeing of adolescents is significant and will be further discussed in detail.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS, 2013) lists adolescent health, safety, and wellbeing as a priority goal of the Healthy People 2020 initiative. The initiative recognizes adolescence as a crucial transitional period from childhood to adulthood and notes the impact that negative experiences at this age can have on adolescent development, as well as progression into adulthood. Adolescence is an important developmental period that includes emotional and physical changes, as well as the need for adolescents to find their own identity and achieve psychosocial autonomy (Erikson, 1959; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Since little is known about the dynamics of cyberbullying and more knowledge is needed about the health consequences of cyberbullying, coping strategies used during cyberbullying, and effective

prevention and intervention techniques for cyberbullying, this study is essential to adolescent health.

The literature indicates that cyberbullying peaks during middle school when adolescents are most vulnerable to experiences affecting their personal identity development (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaïda, 2008; Gualdo, Hunter, Durkin, Arnaiz, & Maquilon, 2015; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Smith et al., 2008; Weir, 2001). Consequently, bullying victimization, whether by traditional bullying or cyberbullying, can have a significant impact on self-esteem, and social relationships, and lead to other mental and emotional disturbances such as anxiety, depression, panic attacks, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2012; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Sourander et al., 2007; Van der Wal et al., 2003). Those feelings of diminished self-worth can carry into adulthood, resulting in poor self-esteem and feelings of isolation (Aluede et al., 2008; American Psychological Association, 2002; Sourander et al., 2007). Physical signs and symptoms, which are not as easily directly attributed to victimization, may include frequent headaches, abdominal pain, skin problems, ulcers, palpitations, irritable bowel symptoms, muscle and joint pains, panic attacks, and insomnia (Aluede, 2006; Aluede et al., 2008; Sourander et al., 2010). Rates of school absenteeism and school dropouts have been reported higher among victims of bullying, as compared to their non-bullied peers (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Nansel et al., 2001).

Identification of effective management and coping methods for victims of cyberbullying can potentially reduce the prevalence and negative outcomes associated with cyberbullying victimization. However, identifying, preventing, and intervening in instances of cyberbullying

first requires a thorough understanding of the phenomenon. There is an abundance of quantitative literature available regarding the incidence, defining characteristics, and consequences associated with cyberbullying (AAP, 2012; Aluede, 2006; Aluede et al., 2008; Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2012; Cyberbullying Research Center, 2013; Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007; Nansel et al., 2001; Sourander et al., 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Sourander et al., 2007; Van der Wal et al., 2003; Williams and Guerra, 2007). These studies were conducted primarily through the use of surveys (close ended designs), which may not have captured the full experience of being cyberbullied. There are qualitative studies aimed at exploring perspectives of cyberbullying, but most sought to understand motivators for cyberbullying and the impact of the various methods used, or did not specifically focus on those involved in cyberbullying behaviors (Dooley, Pyzalski, & Cross, 2009; Menesini et al., 2012; Pronk, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2010; Vandebosch & Cleemput, 2008) Few descriptive qualitative studies have been conducted with adolescents who have experienced cyberbullying victimization firsthand, and there have been no studies describing the development and progression of cyberbullying from the victim's perspective. Thus, development of a theoretical framework to inform cyberbullying prevention efforts and promote adolescent coping has been impeded.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to develop a grounded theory that explains the processes involved in cyberbullying from the perspective of those who have been victimized.

Specific Aims

This study will:

- 1) Explain the processes that occur as adolescent cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends.
- 2) Identify antecedents and consequences of cyberbullying from the victim's perspective.
- 2) Describe the methods that victims use to attempt to cope with or manage being cyberbullied.
- 3) Describe the context in which adolescent cyberbullying occurs.

Approach

This study seeks to explore a relatively new phenomenon from the perspective of those directly impacted. Thus, a qualitative approach is appropriate. The goal of qualitative research is to gain understanding of actions, behaviors, and social processes (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011), with the researcher anticipating that each participant will have a dynamic and personal view of his or her experience. A quantitative survey is not appropriate for this study, as there is not enough known about the phenomenon to develop a reliable survey that would fully assess the victims' experiences. Additionally, a survey would limit the ability of the participant to share his or her story in the depth needed to explain the complex processes and dynamics of cyberbullying. Qualitative research goes beyond the explanation of the observed and the observable; the qualitative study seeks to "thoroughly explore day-to-day interactions, how things transpire, and the individual meanings of these events for the people involved" (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012, p. 8). Since little is known about the experience of being cyberbullied, an in-depth qualitative approach is essential in understanding the social processes,

interactions, and meanings associated with the phenomenon, as well as the phenomenon as a whole. Furthermore, a qualitative exploration seeks to examine reality as it is socially constructed, as well as the meaning of that reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It is the purpose of this research to understand the experience of cyberbullying from the perspective of adolescent victims and develop an explanatory theory. This is not a controllable or typically observable experience, and it would be unethical to intentionally reproduce such a potentially traumatic event for the purpose of research. As such, an exploratory qualitative study is warranted.

There are generally four major approaches that can be utilized in exploratory qualitative research: phenomenology; ethnography; case studies; and Grounded Theory. Phenomenological studies seek to find the meaning behind the lived experience and to define and conceptualize a phenomenon that is based upon that collective and diverse meaning (Polit & Beck, 2012). Phenomenology would be a useful approach for studying the meaning of cyberbullying for victims, but this study also seeks to explore the actual processes that occur throughout the experience and develop a theory that is grounded in the data; phenomenology would not fully capture the purpose and aims of this study. Ethnography most often seeks to explore culturally specific behavior, while seeking to understand the worldview, values and norms of the members of that culture (Polit & Beck, 2014). Cyberbullying is not limited to one culture. Moreover, the goal of this research is not to explore one specific culture or the tacit knowledge (information about a culture that is generally not shared with outsiders) of that cultural group, but rather to develop a broader understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying that reaches beyond a single culture. Similarly, case studies also seek to investigate the phenomenon in single entities, such as individuals, groups, and communities (Polit & Beck, 2014). Case studies are generally used to explore *why* the entity thinks or behaves in a certain manner. This information can be

used to develop hypotheses for future testing, or challenge generalizations. The purpose of this study is not to simply find meaning or define the phenomenon, examine a particular culture, or understand why a person behaves in a certain way. As such, phenomenology, ethnography, and case study research methods are not the most fitting approaches for this research endeavor.

Grounded Theory is the fourth major approach in qualitative research. Grounded Theory research is rooted in the constructivist position of Symbolic Interactionism. Symbolic Interactionism purports that meaning arises from interaction among people (Blumer, 1969). Thus, meaning is a social product that results from a process of self-interaction and interpretation by the person seeking to define meaning. As Blumer (1969) states, “The meaning of anything and everything has to be formed, learned, and transmitted through a process of indication—a process that is necessarily a social process” (p.12). To understand the meaning of cyberbullying from a victim’s perspective, we must seek to understand the social processes that occur during the experience that result in specific meaning to the victim. Grounded theory methods include flexible strategies that guide data collection and analysis with the purpose of constructing theory that is grounded in the data (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012).

Current efforts at reducing cyberbullying are focused primarily on awareness. Strategies for combating cyberbullying should be included in efforts to reduce victimization. In order to do this, we must have firm theoretical knowledge of the processes involved in cyberbullying so as to develop multiple intervention points. Previous studies aimed at defining the phenomenon, identifying motivators and risk factors, and documenting prevalence and health risks have contributed significantly to the literature on cyberbullying. However, what is missing from the extant literature is a theory for explaining cyberbullying, supporting future research, and guiding prevention and intervention efforts. Thus, a Grounded Theory design is the most fitting approach

to explore cyberbullying. This is an innovative approach to addressing the topic of cyberbullying. To date, no Grounded Theory studies exploring adolescent victims' experiences of cyberbullying with the goal of developing a theoretical framework to explain cyberbullying behaviors have been published.

Significance

Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon, becoming increasingly prevalent with the progression of computers, cellular phones, and other Internet-accessible devices over the past two decades. As such, we do not have extensive empirical knowledge or understanding of it. Cyberbullying is a significant public health concern, driven largely by technology, which drives communication patterns and behaviors among adolescents (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010). Unfortunately, these communications are not always positive and statistics indicate an upward trend in cyberbullying behaviors (Kamaron Institute, n.d.; Cyberbullying Research Center, 2012).

Cyberbullying has features of traditional bullying, but has unique characteristics that make it a distinctive phenomenon (such as anonymity, a change in the typical power imbalance, and the ability for the cyberbullying to cross barriers of time and place), and these will be addressed further in Chapter Two (Dooley, Pyzalski & Cross, 2009; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). The negative effects of cyberbullying victimization are substantial and may be even greater than that of traditional bullying. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying is not easily identifiable by visible physical altercation or confrontation, and it often goes unreported (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007; Mishna & MacFadden, 2008; O'Connell, Price, & Barrow, 2004). Current efforts at reducing adolescent violence are primarily focused on awareness of the problem, not on addressing ways to recognize cyberbullying

behaviors and victimization, or sharing effective management and coping strategies. Thus, it is of vital importance that research focuses on understanding the unique dynamics of cyberbullying, including social interaction, context, and social response processes, and identifying effective management and coping strategies for victims.

Just as advances in technology have not been made overnight, cyberbullying cannot be resolved overnight. With the pervasiveness of cyberbullying and the potentially deadly outcomes associated with being cyberbullied, this study provides an intimate view of cyberbullying presented from the victim's perspective, adding to current literature on the phenomenon. This research identifies social processes that are common among adolescents experiencing cyberbullying, some of which may either assist or hinder efforts to manage or cope with victimization. The findings of this study shed light on how teens attempt to cope with cyberbullying, paving the way for discovering which coping methods are most effective. The results of this study provide an explanatory theory and theoretical model for health care providers, parents, teachers, and others to use in understanding the dynamics of cyberbullying, in order to provide prevention, early identification, and intervention. The ultimate goal of this study is to inform and guide public health efforts at reducing adolescent violence.

Definition of Terms

Adolescent

An adolescent is generally defined as an individual in the stage of adolescence, which is defined as the time period between puberty and developmental maturity (Merriam-Webster.com, 2013). This definition, however, is somewhat vague in that developmental maturity can be assessed in multiple ways, and puberty can often begin quite early or much later,

dependent on each individual. For the purposes of this study, the use of the term adolescent refers to youth between the ages of 12-18 years.

Bully/Bullies

Bullies, for the purposes of this research, include active bullies (bullies, henchmen, and active supporters), because these individuals actively engage or promote the bullying behavior (Olweus, 1991). As described by bullying expert, Dan Olweus (1991), and discussed further in Chapter Two, bullies plan and actively participate in the act of bullying. Henchmen do not plan the bullying, but engage as active participants. Active supporters assist by encouraging the bully and the bullying behaviors, but do not actively participate in the actual bullying (Olweus, 1991).

Bullying

“Bullying is any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners, that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm” (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014, p. 7). In order to differentiate between bullying and cyberbullying specifically, the term “traditional bullying” will be utilized to indicate the broader phenomenon of bullying.

Cyberbullying

The literature does not support one clear definition of cyberbullying. For the purpose of this study, cyberbullying is defined as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or an individual, using electronic forms of contact” (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008, p. 376), to intimidate, harm, or harass. Electronic forms of contact include cell

phones, computers, and any other devices capable of email, texting, instant messaging, or providing Internet access.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a systematic and inductive process of conducting qualitative research, aimed at developing theory (Charmaz, 2006). “The term *Grounded Theory* denotes dual referents: (a) a *method* consisting of flexible methodological strategies and (b) the *products* of this type of inquiry” (McKinney, n.d., p. 1). For the purpose of this study, the term “grounded theory” will be used to denote the final product of this study—a grounded theory. “Grounded theory methods” will be used to refer to the approach used for data collection and analysis.

Assumptions

This study is not without assumptions. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) posit that assumptions, though rudimentary, must be acknowledged in order to conduct a research inquiry. The following assumptions were identified at the onset and guided the study: 1) Cyberbullying is a pervasive health problem that affects adolescents across the country; 2) Participants in the study will be (have been) victims of cyberbullying during adolescence; 3) Interviewees will answer questions honestly with the understanding that their identity will be kept confidential; 4) Individuals not meeting the inclusion criteria for the study will be not represented; 5) Participation in the study is voluntary, and 6) While findings will not include every representation of every adolescent who has experienced cyberbullying, the resulting theory will represent broader experiences and perspectives of victims.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of six parts: five chapters and an appendices section. Chapter One has presented an introduction to the problem of cyberbullying including the

research problem, study purpose, specific aims, and significance of the study. The second chapter is a comprehensive review of the extant literature, including a history of cyberbullying, current trends, prevalence, defining characteristics, types of cyberbullying and media used, and similarities and differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. Additionally, Chapter Two examines the evidence regarding motivators for cyberbullying, risk factors for victims and bullies, outcomes of cyberbullying victimization, and current methods of prevention and intervention. This literature review is key to understanding the current state of knowledge related to the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The literature review serves to identify gaps in the knowledge that exist related to this fairly new phenomenon and how the study addresses those gaps.

Chapter Three addresses study approach and methods and provides the rationale for a qualitative approach, an explanation of Constructivist Grounded Theory methods, sampling methods and inclusion and exclusion criteria, human subjects protection, data collection techniques and data management, methods for assessing trustworthiness, and limitations. Chapter Four reports the findings of the study, presents the theoretical model, and describes the Grounded Theory that emerged. Chapter Five includes a discussion of the findings, connections and comparisons to related research, implications, suggestions for future research, lessons learned, and final conclusions. The appendices contains recruitment materials, consent and assent forms for participation in the study and audiorecording of interviews, data collection tools, confidentiality statements, and any additional documents relevant to the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Cyberbullying is a relatively new form of bullying, which has only existed over the past few decades. As such, much less is known about the phenomenon of cyberbullying than traditional bullying as a whole. In order to understand cyberbullying, it is helpful to understand how it fits within the broader context of bullying. Therefore, this literature review will begin with a brief background of traditional bullying along with an exploration of the prevalence of bullying. This will be followed by an introduction to cyberbullying, its prevalence, and what is known of the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Studies related to cyberbullying victims and cyberbullies are presented and critiqued.

Traditional Bullying

Bullying is an aggressive behavior; in order to be considered bullying, the behavior must include three key elements: 1) behavior that is intended to harm; 2) the behavior is repeated or has the potential to be repeated; 3) there is an imbalance of power among the bully(ies) and victim(s) (Nansel et al., 2001). Generally thought to include physical attacks (hitting, pushing, kicking, etc), bullying can also be verbal (name calling, threatening, intimidation, slander or libel) or relational (social exclusion, making faces or gestures, spreading rumors) (Fekkes, Pijpers & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Nansel et al., 2001).

Prevalence

The prevalence of traditional bullying varies greatly based on studies conducted between 2001 and 2011. In a study conducted in the United States in 2001, Nansel et al. found that nearly 30% of adolescent study participants reported involvement in bullying, either as a bully (13%), a victim (10.6%), or as a bully/victim (6.3%); 75% of eight to eleven year olds reported the presence of teasing and bullying at their schools. Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster (2003) reported similar results with 22% of students being involved in bullying, 7% as bullies, 9% as victims, and 6% as bully/victim. In the same year, however, Demaray and Malecki (2003) reported a 10% prevalence of physical bullying victimization and up to a 50% prevalence of indirect bullying (name calling, gossiping, spreading rumors, etc.). Categorizing bullying behaviors into verbal, physical, and Internet bullying, Williams and Guerra (2007) shared self-reports of nearly 71% involvement in verbal bullying perpetration and 40% physical bullying perpetration among youth in grades 5th, 8th, and 11th. A study conducted between 2004 and 2008 found a 23% prevalence of bullying involvement among U.S. teens (Potera, 2011). Among these teens, 16% admitted to involvement in group fighting and nearly 8% reported physically attacking another with an intent to harm. A 2008 study conducted with more than twenty-thousand high schoolers in Massachusetts noted that nearly 26% of participants had been bullied (Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012). The National Institutes of Health (NIH) reported on Wang, Iannotti, and Nansel's 2009 study, indicating that nearly 21% of all adolescents had been physically bullied within the past two months; additionally, 53.6% of participants had been bullied verbally and 51.4% bullied socially (excluded or outcasted). As of 2013, the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) notes that nearly 50% of adolescents are bullied at some time during adolescence, with 10% being bullied on a regular basis.

Internationally, victimization is also widespread. Traditional bullying research pioneer Dan Olweus (1991) found a prevalence of bullying victimization among Norwegian youth of 11%, while British researchers (Whitney & Smith, 1993) noted a range of prevalence, with a high of 27% among victims. More than a decade later, Dutch researchers noted a prevalence of almost 29% victimization and more than 31% bullying perpetration among 9-12 year olds (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005). More recently, researchers found much greater prevalence of bullying among Swedish students, with 39% self-reporting victimization some time during childhood and adolescence; 28% admitted to bullying others and 13% reported they were involved as both bullies and victims (Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007). Thornberg and Knutsen's (2011) study of 9th grade Swedish students also indicates a high level of victimization at 25%; 19% of participants reported as bullying others and 11% reported as being bully-victims. Craig et al. (2009) conducted a cross-national study in 40 countries examining bullying perpetration and victimization among more than 200,000 youth, aged 11-15 years old. Their results indicated a wide prevalence range of 8.6% to 45.2% among boys, and 4.8% to 35.8% among girls across the various countries (Craig et al., 2009). It should be noted that it is likely that self-report surveys underestimate the true prevalence of the problem, due to respondents' potential reluctance to admit to bullying or victimization.

The widespread variation of the prevalence of bullying may be partly explained by the differences in ages and grade levels of the participants, as studies indicated that peer victimization is more prevalent just before middle school and tends to decrease with age (Craig et al., 2009; Guerra, Williams & Sadek, 2011; Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk, & Solomon, 2010). Additionally, studies included different racial and ethnic populations, without differentiating prevalence among groups. As such, the heterogeneity of some of the samples may

have impacted the reported prevalence. Finally, some studies explored prevalence among only one type of bullying, while others classified various types of bullying (direct, indirect, social, physical, etc.).

Why Bully?

No one can read into the mind of adolescents to truly know why they behave the way they do. However, there are many theories as to what would motivate an adolescent to bully a peer. Thornberg and Knutsen (2011) conducted a mixed methods study exploring teens' perceptions of why bullying occurs, with 176 ninth grade (15-16 year old) Swedish students, some of whom reported experiences with bullying as bullies, as victims, and as bystanders. Grounded Theory methods were used to analyze students' written responses to the questions: "How come bullying takes place at school? I think bullying takes place because ____?" (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011). Analysis indicated that a majority of participants attributed the cause of bullying to the bullies themselves, citing the bully's lack of self-esteem and self-confidence as key reasons why adolescents bully (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011). However, Chi-Square tests, to examine gender differences, were significant ($p=.013$) and revealed that 52% of boys (as compared to 33% of girls) attributed cases of bullying to the victim, not placing blame on the bully. Participants also indicated that they believed that youth bully because they want to improve or protect their social status or popularity, prove their toughness, or make themselves feel better (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011). Aluede et al. (2008) support this finding, noting that "bullies pick on others because they need a victim...or because they try to gain acceptance and feel more important, popular, or in control" (p. 152). When bullies gain approval from their peers for putting down others, they are more likely to continue engaging in that behavior (Aluede et al., 2008). Furthermore, participants indicated that bullies may also bully because they do not

have good influences or positive experiences at home (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2010); the bullies may use abusive behavior towards their peers as a way to deal with difficult situations at home, including his or her own abuse (Aluede et al., 2008). Additional reported reasons for bullying included reports that some adolescents bully because they are pressured by their peers to do so, because they are bored, or because there are not effective anti-bullying strategies in place (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011).

Thornberg, Rosenqvist, and Johansson (2012) replicated this study the next year, with older teens (aged 16-18 years), seeking to answer the same questions. Findings from this study similarly indicated that participants identified a bully's psychosocial flaws (lack of self-esteem, low self-confidence, and bad home life) as primary influences in his/her decision to bully (Thornberg, Rosenqvist, & Johansson). Participants again noted the bully's desire for social status, power, and jealousy as additional reasons for bullying. Additionally, this older group of teens reported "thoughtlessness" as a reason why adolescents bully. They described this as the bully's "inability to put him or herself into other people's situation" or "not thinking at all about what they are doing and why they are doing it; it just happens" (Thornberg, Rosenqvist, & Johansson, 2012, p. 333). Thornberg and colleagues' findings are comparable to reports from similar studies, but prior studies note that participants indicated the victims' differences in behavior, social status, or appearance as being cause for why those individuals were targeted (Aluede et al., 2008; Erling & Hwang, 2004; Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007).

Who Are the Bullies?

Studies have found that there are personality traits and normative beliefs that are often predictive of adolescent bullies. It makes sense that those exhibiting aggressive behaviors towards others would have more aggressive attitudes overall (Aluede et al., 2008). Aggressive

children tend to increase normative beliefs among peers (leading peers to see aggressive behavior as the standard) thus making themselves role models and promoting aggressive behaviors towards others (Guerra, Williams & Sadek, 2011). Bullies are often driven by impulse. They display less empathy, friendliness, and guilt, and demonstrate higher levels of moral disengagement, neuroticism (negative temperament), extraversion, and callousness (Barry et al., 2000; Lazarus, Eiser, & Rodafinos, 2009). Shetgiri, Lin and Flores (2012), using data from the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), indicated that youth who were frequently involved in fighting, carrying weapons, and drinking alcohol and smoking were at greatest risk for being perpetrators of bullying. Those with above-average academic performance, with higher family affluence, and who were generally "bad-tempered" were also at risk for involvement in bullying behaviors (Shetgiri, Lin, & Flores, 2012). Additionally, adolescents who were exposed to child abuse or domestic violence, and those who had poor communication with parents, were at high risk for bullying perpetration (Shetgiri, Lin, & Flores, 2012).

Thornberg and colleagues' studies (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011; Thornberg, Rosenqvist, & Johansson, 2012), as well as those of their research peers (Aluede et al., 2008; Erling & Hwang, 2004; Frisen, Jonsson, Persson, 2007), and others, add much insight to the bullying literature as to adolescents' explanations of why traditional bullying occurs. Their analyses included perceptions from those with and without personal experiences with bullying, and from adolescents who have played varying roles in the traditional bullying experience. However, these studies only focused on traditional bullying and their findings cannot be generalized to experiences with cyberbullying. This indicates a need for further research on motivations specific to cyberbullying.

The Bullying Circle

Bullying is an experience that is not limited to bullies and victims; there are many ways for adolescents to be involved in bullying. Dan Olweus, a Swedish-born pioneer in bullying research, has spent more than 40 years conducting research on aggression and bullying behaviors. Through this research, Olweus has identified eight potential ways in which individuals can be involved in the act of bullying. Olweus provides this as a model he calls “The Bullying Circle” (1991). These include:

- 1) Bully/Bullies: Plan the bullying behavior and actively participate in continuance of the behavior.
- 2) Henchmen: Do not plan or start the bullying, but take an active role in the behavior.
- 3) Active Supporters: Potentiate the problem by encouraging the bully in hopes of social or material gain.
- 4) Passive Supporters: Silently enjoy the bullying.
- 5) Disengaged Onlookers: Observe the bullying but avoid becoming involved.
- 6) Potential Witnesses: Oppose the bullying, but do not act to stop it.
- 7) Resister, Defender, Witness: Actively tries to stop the bullying by stepping in and speaking out against the bullying.
- 8) Target: The victims of bullying.

As evidenced by The Bullying Circle, Olweus (1991) demonstrates that one can take part in bullying in many ways, some even passively (such as disengaged onlookers and potential witnesses).

Who are the Victims?

In addition to exploring some of the perceived characteristics and motivators of bullies, there has been some research in the literature about characteristics of bullying victims. Some of the participants in Thornberg and Knutsen's (2011) study attributed the bullying to the victims themselves, noting that those adolescents who looked, dressed, or behaved differently were generally the victims of bullying behavior, and these findings are heavily supported by other studies (Aluede et al., 2008; Erling & Hwang, 2004; Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007). In two studies, more than 40% of participants reported that some victims are bullied because they are physically or mentally weak or they "asked" to be bullied because they were mean or irritating to others (Aluede et al., 2008; Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011). Often times, victims are socially isolated youth (sometimes as a result of overly protective parents) who do not get the opportunity to interact socially with their peers, affecting their social skills and leading to peer exclusion (Diamanduros, Downs, & Jenkins, 2008). Whether or not the victims see themselves as possessing these characteristics or tendencies, however, has not been explored. Many of these commonly described attributes of victims may be, in fact, a *consequence* of victimization and not always a target attribute. For those who have been victims of bullying, depression and delinquency, among other health consequences, are common (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). However, a study conducted by Sapouna and Wolke (2013) found that some adolescents are more resilient to these after-effects of victimization. Those adolescents typically had higher self-esteem, were less socially isolated, and got along well with parents and siblings (Sapouna & Wolke). Internal resources, such as self-confidence and positive self-worth, were noted to be of key importance following victimization, as was peer and family support (Turner, Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 2010).

Reports on the consequences of being a victim of bullying are readily available in the extant literature. However, an exploration of the experiences of victims and the context of those experiences is warranted to truly understand what they go through as victims of bullying. Further, since the characteristics of resiliency and peer and family support may predict the likelihood of victimization in the first place, it would be important to explore these processes and interactions and consider incorporating these internal and external support systems into bullying prevention and intervention efforts. Having these characteristics of resiliency and peer and family support may predict the likelihood of victimization in the first place, and it would be important to further study this possibility.

Bully/Victim

The extant literature frequently uses the term “bully/victim” or “bully-victim” to describe individuals who have been involved in bullying as both a bully and as a victim (Li, 2006; Williams, 2010). Bully-victims often perform poorly in school and “act out” (Diamanduros, Downs, & Jenkins, 2008). Furthermore, bully-victims often demonstrate low self-esteem and insecurity, lack self-confidence, are socially isolated, and may display depressive symptoms (Diamanduros, Downs, & Jenkins, 2008). Williams (2010) notes that quite often bully/victims may overcompensate for a lack of control in one environment, by demanding control in another. For example, a child who is a victim at home may be a bully at school. Williams (2010) also contends that some victims may even target bullies for severe harm or death as revenge for their own victimization, including some high profile incidents such as the 1997 school shooting at Heath High School in Paducah, Kentucky that resulted in 3 deaths and at least 5 injuries, and the 1999 massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado that left 15 dead (including the two perpetrators) and 24 injured. Characteristics and personalities of bully-victims have not been

thoroughly examined. As a result, it is difficult to understand the role bully-victims play in the phenomenon of bullying and what truly motivates them to hurt others in the same manner in which they have been hurt.

Cyberbullying

As indicated previously, bullying as a whole is not a new phenomenon. Over the past 25 years, however, advances in technology have changed the dynamics of bullying. American adolescents today, often coined the “Internet Generation,” are highly intimate with technology. A report conducted by Pew Internet Project, published in 2009, found that 93% of teens (ages 12-17) had access to and use the Internet. The Pew Internet Research Center reported that 78% of all teens had cell phones (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013) and 88% of teens used text messaging for communication (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010). Carter and Wilson’s 2010-2011 study with nearly 400 adolescents aged 10-18 reported similar percentages, with 79% of participants reporting they owned a cell phone (Carter & Wilson, 2015). Almost 37% of teen cell phone users report owning smartphones, and 23% of teens have a tablet computer (Madden et al., 2013). Carter and Wilson’s study indicated that 92% of participants had access to computers and 82% utilized social networking accounts (Facebook, MySpace, etc.).

Smartphones and tablets give teens access to the Internet and social media sites, as well as text messaging, email, and the ability to make phone calls. Not surprisingly, text messaging has exploded as a primary form of communication among youth. Lenhart et al., (2010) reported that teen girls sent a reported 100+ text messages per day, while half of all teens admitted to sending 50 or more text messages daily. A study conducted in 2011 found similar texting patterns, with a median of 71 text messages sent per day (Carter & Wilson, 2015). “Text

messaging has become the primary way that teens reach their friends, surpassing face-to-face contact, email, instant messaging and voice calling as the go-to daily communication tool for this age group” (Lenhart et al., 2010, para. 2). It’s not surprising then, that youth have found a more inventive and convenient way to pursue and harass their peers.

Cyberbullying is often viewed within the framework of traditional bullying. However, defining cyberbullying as nothing more than an electronic medium of traditional bullying discounts the complexities of the phenomenon (Dooley, Pyzalski, & Cross, 2009). Researchers have generally accepted traditional bullying to require three key components: intent to harm, repetition, and power imbalance. Cyberbullying, as with all types of bullying, includes the intent to hurt (Dooley et al., 2009). However, debate continues on the requirement of repetition. In the case of cyberbullying, a single act of uploading or sharing a derogatory photo or creating a demeaning website can lead to widespread dissemination and humiliation and harm to the victim (Dooley et al., 2009). For example, in the case of Amanda Todd (15-year-old Canadian teen who committed suicide after sharing her story of cyberbullying via YouTube just weeks before), the harassment continues even after her death, as unsympathetic and cruel postings continue to flood the Internet (Baur & Ninan, 2012).

In contrast to traditional forms of bullying, cyberbullying may not always involve a classic power imbalance. Traditional bullying often involves a smaller or physically weaker individual being physically overpowered by a larger, more powerful individual. Online or “virtually”, physical size or strength is not a factor as anyone can engage in cyberbullying (Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse, 2012). The perceived “power imbalance” associated with cyberbullying is related to technological “know-how”, access to electronic devices and the Internet, and support from peers. As such, anyone has the potential to be cyberbullied.

With cyberbullying, technical knowledge, anonymity, and leaving the victim with limited options for avoiding the harassment can represent a significant power inequity (Sevcikova, Smahel, & Otavova, 2012). In fact, anonymity can have psychological consequences much different than that of traditional bullying. The victim may have no idea who the bully is and is left wondering if he or she knows the bully, or even if the bully is a “friend” (Sevcikova et al., 2012). This anonymity leaves the victim unable to effectively defend himself or herself against a faceless attacker. Additionally, the anonymity of cyberbullying provides less opportunity for intervention from bystanders or adults and leads to fear of an “invisible” attacker for the victim (Slonje & Smith, 2008). “When students think they can remain anonymous, they are less inhibited in saying things they never would say to a person face-to-face” (Beale & Hall, 2007, p. 8). Cyberbullying gives perpetrators the opportunity to blame others, insisting that someone else used their name, hacked his/her account, or used his or her phone (Beale & Hall, 2007). The fear of being caught is also diminished, which may embolden the perpetrator. Since cyberbullying can occur from a distance, the perpetrator is unable to see the immediate reaction of the victim, decreasing feelings of guilt or responsibility (Bauman, 2010). Additionally, cyberbullying has the potential to reach an audience much greater than that of traditional bullying and one hurtful message or posting can reach millions of people.

There are unique aspects of cyberbullying that make it a distinctive phenomenon. Cyberbullying victims, in contrast to physical, verbal, or relational (social exclusion, name calling, etc.) bullying victims, are not more or less likely to be chosen based on the number of friends they have (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Unlike traditional forms of bullying that occur in person, cyberbullying can invade areas in which victims are generally able to feel safe. With physical bullying, the victim can run away and physical wounds can heal. When “stalked

by someone online, even the strongest mind can break and there is no place to hide” (Huang & Chou, 2001, p. 1581). Slonje and Smith (2008) point out that cyberbullying can continue at home and almost anywhere the victim goes via text messages, email, and the Internet. The bully can reach the victim anywhere and at any time (Bauman, 2010).

Cyberbullying Terminology

Various terms are used to describe cyberbullying behaviors. Terms such as “e-bullying”, “cyberharassment”, “electronic victimization”, “electronic aggression” and “virtual” or “Internet bullying” are just a few, each with variations on definition. For example, Williams and Guerra (2007) discuss Internet bullying as bullying that occurs over the Internet and do not include bullying via cell phone as part of their definition. Cyber victimization is used to describe a type of bullying that occurs through the use of computers and cell phones (Slonje et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2009; Williams & Guerra, 2007), but is not clearly defined as being distinct from cyberbullying. Still yet, other terms associated with cyberbullying are viewed as distinct behaviors. Cyberstalking is an electronic extension of stalking that is “methodical, deliberate, and persistent. The communications, whether from someone known or unknown, do not stop even after the recipient has asked the sender to cease all contacts, and are often filled with inappropriate, and sometimes disturbing, content” (Marshall University, n.d., para. 1). Cyberharassment is generally seen as separate from cyberstalking, “in that it is generally defined as not involving a credible threat. Cyberharassment usually pertains to unconsented conduct such as threatening or harassing email messages, instant messages, or to blog entries or websites dedicated solely to tormenting an individual” (Michigan Technological University, n.d., para. 2). Yet many would argue that cyberharassment, cyberstalking, and cyberbullying are one in the

same, as they all include intent to harm, are repetitive, and include a real or perceived power imbalance.

Cyberbullying, more thoroughly defined, includes various forms of harmful behaviors, including flaming (online fights using angry and often vulgar language), harassment (repeated mean and insulting messages), denigrating (written postings or messages meant to damage one's reputation or friendships), impersonating (pretending to be someone else with the intent to affect that person or his/her relationships negatively), outing (sharing another person's secrets or embarrassing information), trickery (tricking someone into revealing embarrassing information online), and exclusion (intentionally excluding someone from an online group or site) (Willard, 2007).

There are many terms used to describe cyberbullying. Since the extant literature on cyberbullying offers various definitions for use, it is vital that researchers offer a clear definition to their participants and consumers of their research to limit confusion as to what was included in the study. For the purposes of this study, the term cyberbullying was chosen because it is a broader, more encompassing term than the others mentioned.

Cyberbullying Prevalence

Cyberbullying research is still in its infancy; the prevalence of cyberbullying varies among studies. In a study conducted in the rural southwestern United States, Bauman (2010) found that roughly 13% of 5th-8th grade students (n=221) had been involved with cyberbullying; 1.5% were classified as bullies only, while 3% were victims only (8.6% were classified as bully-victims). However, Bauman's study includes surveys administered by school personnel, raising questions as to the honesty of student reports if anonymity was not assured. A study conducted among nearly 3800 middle school students in the southeastern and northwestern U. S. reported

cyberbullying victimization at 11% (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). An additional 7% of victims identified themselves as bully/victims and 4% as bullies only (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). In contrast to Bauman's (2010) study, Kowalski and Limber's research included a much larger population with geographical differences. However, the study included a fairly homogenous sample in terms of race and ethnicity, thus potentially limiting generalization to minority groups.

Williams and Guerra (2007) surveyed 3,339 Colorado students in the 5th, 8th, and 11th grades, with an average of 9.4% of respondents self-reporting as being involved in the perpetration of Internet bullying (4.5% of fifth graders, 12.9% of eighth graders, and 9.9% of 11th graders). However, this study limited "cyberbullying" to only include the Internet as a medium for perpetration, not considering the use of cell phones and text messages. Wang et al. (2010), utilizing data collected from a national sample of nearly 7500 students in grades six through ten, discovered a similar prevalence of cyberbullying (averaged across five subtypes of bullying) at nearly 10% for both male and female victims. The sample was nearly equal in terms of representation of gender. Roughly 42% of the sample was Caucasian Americans, but African-Americans and Hispanic Americans were also more widely represented at 18.7% and 26.4%, respectively.

Smith et al.'s (2008) mixed method study of 92 British adolescents (aged 11-16 years) revealed that 6.6% were bullied "often" (2-3 times per month) and 15.6% were bullied only once or twice. However, individual responses (n=47) from one focus group indicated that youth expected the findings to show that between 67-100% of adolescents had been victims of cyberbullying. When findings were shared with the focus group participants, the students were skeptical, stating "not many people would admit to it" (Smith et al., 2008, p. 378) for fear of retaliation. This data further supports concerns in the literature that self-reporting of

cyberbullying behaviors may not always be accurately reflected. In a follow-up study, Smith and colleagues' inquired as to how long ago participants (n=533) had been cyberbullied, with 5.3% reporting being cyberbullied within the last month, 5% during the current school term, and 3.7% within the last school year. Additionally, 11% had reported taking part in cyberbullying others sometime within the past school year (Smith et al., 2008). More recent studies have found a higher prevalence of cyberbullying. A study conducted with more than 20,000 New England high schoolers reported a prevalence of nearly 16% for cyberbullying victimization (Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012). Beran, Mishna, McInroy and Shariff's (2015) study with 1000 Canadian students aged 10-17 found that 14% of participants had been cyberbullied and more than one-third were involved as a bully in one other type of bullying. Carter and Wilson's (2015) study of more than 350 Midwestern American youth found a 17% prevalence of cyberbullying. Taking into consideration the differences in sample sizes, geographical locations, and race and ethnicity among these studies, as well as some differences in the researchers' definitions of cyberbullying, one can conclude that on average, studies have found approximately 10% of adolescents are involved (either as bully, victim, or both) in cyberbullying behaviors. More recently, however, Patchin and Hinduja (2015) reported a cyberbullying victimization rate of 26.3% averaged across nine different studies (across the United States) they conducted between 2007 and 2015.

Early research on gender as a risk factor for traditional bullying has indicated that boys are more likely to engage in traditional bullying (Olweus, 1991). Research on cyberbullying, however, has produced inconclusive results. Li's (2006) study reported that adolescent boys will be more involved in cyberbullying (as perpetrators and as victims), than their female counterparts. Conversely, many studies conclude that girls are more likely to be involved in

cyberbullying (as bullies and as victims) (Williams & Godfrey, 2011; Smith et al., 2008; Kowalski & Limber, 2007); these findings are consistent with the generalization that girls rely on more indirect forms of aggression. In other studies, there is no indication of significant gender differences in cyberbullying and cyberbullying victimization (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). As such, further exploration into gender differences in cyberbullying is necessary and future research should include both males and females.

Though bullying and cyberbullying tend to peak during middle school (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2001; Gualdo et al., 2015), it can occur at any age. The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) reported there were nearly 43 million youth, aged 10-19, in America in 2010. Based on the extant literature of cyberbullying, with a prevalence rate of roughly 10%, it can be estimated that nearly 4 million youth will be involved in cyberbullying during this age range. Thus, the potential negative impact of cyberbullying is considerable, and understanding cyberbullying is the first step in prevention, intervention, and resolution of the problem of cyberbullying.

Venues for Cyberbullying

With the great number of technological devices available for electronic communication and Internet access, cyberbullying can occur through many different venues. Smith et al. (2008) classify seven types of media of cyberbullying, including phone call, text message, email, picture or video clip, instant messaging, postings on websites, and chatrooms. Smith and colleagues completed two survey studies (n=92 and n=533) with supplemental focus groups with youth between the ages of 11-16 years old. The surveys explored the prevalence of cyberbullying, duration, the type of cyberbullying medium most often used, the perceived impact of the cyberbullying as compared to traditional bullying, and if and to whom the cyberbullying had been reported. After data analysis on the surveys were completed, focus groups were employed

to further explore what the participants expected the findings to be and their responses to the actual findings (Smith et al., 2008). They found that although picture or video clips are not as frequently used methods for cyberbullying, adolescents perceived them as having the most negative impact, likely because of the potential for a worldwide audience (Smith et al., 2008). Beale and Hall (2007) also noted Internet based voting booths and polling as potential vectors for cyberbullying. Applications such as “Hot or Not” (appearance rating application), Voto (allowing any user to vote on photos), “Ratings” (requesting ratings on Instagram and FourSquare photos and videos), and the new Instagram trend “TBR” (To Be Rude), are also growing in popularity. By posting a TBR request, Instagram users are asking followers for brutally honest, negative comments about the photo or video posted. One 13-year-old girl described TBR as “asking for negative comments on how to change your appearance or better your appearance so that people will like you, or like you more” (S. Brandau, personal communication, February 4, 2014). Unfortunately, these comments are often very critical and can ruin relationships and cause emotional distress.

Email is a convenient and efficient method for communication. As such, cyberbullies can send harassing and threatening messages quite effortlessly. Email settings can be changed to block or delete messages from unwelcome senders, but these settings can be limiting, as bullies can fabricate bogus email accounts or send emails from others’ accounts. Additionally, it can be difficult to track the owner of an abusive email account and even more difficult to determine who actually used the account to send the message (Beale & Hall, 2007).

Instant messaging (IM) is an even faster method of online communication and occurs in real time. IM can be used to send offensive messages or bully by exclusion, by refusing to allow a user to participate in online conversations and chat rooms (Beale & Hall, 2007). IMs can be

sent via social networking sites such as Facebook, or via new applications such as Snapchat (instant messaging using photos or videos with or without captions) and Instagram direct messaging. Snapchat is often a preferred method for IM.

I feel like Snapchat is a safer way to text because texts can be forwarded and shared with other people...but with a Snapchat, they disappear within one to ten seconds- depending on your settings. There is that one rare person, though, that can get a quick screenshot of your Snapchat and send it around, so you have to be careful because it really doesn't disappear (S. Brandau, personal communication, February 4, 2014).

Instant messaging, in contrast to email and text messaging, generally contains settings that limit contact between “friends” or “followers” of the user.

The Pew Internet Research Center reports that 75% of all teens have cell phones and nearly 90% of those teens use text messaging for communication (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010). SMS (short message system), also known simply as “texting” or “text messaging”, appears to be a preferred communication method for the technology-savvy adolescent (Lenhart et al., 2010). Texting is a way to quickly send a typed message, via cell phone or other mobile electronic device (iPad or tablet), to another person or group, often using abbreviated terminology for simplification (E.g.: IDK for “I don't know” or LOL for “laugh out loud”). New applications, such as Kik (text messaging from any Internet connected mobile device), are becoming more popular ways to send text-like messages because they add a bit of innovativeness to an otherwise mundane SMS message by allowing for picture sharing, group chats, and free connectivity (which is a way to communicate via messaging for those without cell phones). This communication is not limited to friendly messages and can be shared among groups of people quickly, thus making SMS a convenient method for cyberbullying. Smith et al.

(2008) report that SMS and IM, due to convenience and widespread use, are the most frequent media used for cyberbullying behaviors.

The Internet affords the opportunity for adolescents to create their own web pages. For cyberbullies, this can lead to the creation of “bash boards” or websites used to mock and downgrade others. Voting or polling booths, similar to Voto and Hot or Not, are sometimes used within these websites to allow participants to vote or rate individuals and post negative comments. The Internet can also be used to share offensive photos or videos of adolescents, resulting in repeated and widespread embarrassment. These postings can be difficult to completely eliminate as Internet users can download and repeatedly share pictures and videos (Mishna et al., 2010).

Social networking sites (SNS) are also worthy of discussion as they play a key role in communications among adolescents. According to a Pew Internet and American Life Project survey (2014), 80% of teens use social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook; 16% of teens use Twitter. Social networking sites, such as MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter, and the newer Ask.FM (users can anonymously ask personal questions), help to facilitate contact with family, friends and acquaintances, and even celebrities, by allowing individuals to share comments, stories, photos, and videos with those they are “connected” to via the site. In a society of over-sharing, however, these same features that allow us to stay in touch and connected with one another can be used with ill intentions (Kwan & Skoric, 2012). One well-known case of cyberbullying involves an adult female on MySpace who pretended to be a teenage boy. The fictional boy first befriended 13-year-old Megan Meier, to gain her confidence and trust, and then harassed and tormented her on the site and the Internet until she eventually committed suicide in late 2006 (meganmeierfoundation.org, n.d.).

Facebook, with more than one billion users (Goel & Somaiya, 2014), has recently been connected to cyberbullying with its own specific phenomenon, known as “Facebook bullying”. Kwan and Skoric (2012) conducted a study with more than 1650 secondary school students in Singapore. Of those who used Facebook, 59.4% reported experiencing “Facebook bullying” in the past year, and nearly 57% reported engaging in bullying via Facebook (Kwan & Skoric, 2012). Receiving harassing messages was the most common form of “Facebook bullying”, with other forms included being insulted on the site, being purposefully made fun of, being threatened, being excluded from Facebook groups, or being tricked into revealing secrets (Kwan & Skoric, 2012). Often used as a form of exclusion, 45.5% of participants “blocked” a user on Facebook at least once (Kwan & Skoric, 2012). Conversely, victims can also use this same approach as a means of protection.

Finally, with the development and evolution of the smart phone and other Internet accessible devices (such as iPods, iPads, and tablets), the market for creative applications (apps) has exploded. Popular apps, such as Vine, Mobli, YouTube, Keek, TBH (To Be Honest), Tango, OkHello, and Pinterest allow users to virtually post raw videos, pictures, and links to websites, with most application users having access to post unfiltered comments.

Undoubtedly, venues for cyberbullying are easy to access and are growing in number every day. It is important to identify the many ways in which cyberbullying can occur, recognize their potential for harm, and promote safe and productive use of such media among adolescents.

Psychosocial Development

There is evidence to support that cyberbullying peaks during middle school and declines in high school (Gualdo et al., 2015; Williams & Guerra, 2007). When examining psychosocial development across the lifespan, middle school (typically ages 11-13) is identified as a time of

intense development and changes for adolescents. Erik Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development explore the entire lifespan (see Table 1).

Table 1. Eriksonian Psychosocial Development

Stage	Developmental Level	Defining Characteristics
Infancy	Trust vs. Mistrust	Rely on caregivers for consistency.
Early Childhood	Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt	Increasing independence and ability to make own decisions.
Pre-school or Play age	Initiative vs. Guilt	Ability to approach wants and needs with energy and planning.
School age	Industry vs. Inferiority	Learning to be productive; learning to provide for self.
Adolescence	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Developing a sense of identity; very aware of how one is viewed by others.
Young Adulthood	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Committing to partnerships; sacrificing and compromising
Middle Adulthood	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Seeks to establish and guide future generations and preserve values.
Older Adulthood (Old Age)	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	Accepting one’s own life and finding one’s legacy.

(Erikson, 1959; Malone, Liu, Vaillant, Rentz, & Waldinger, 2015)

In these stages, Erikson indicates that younger adolescents are moving from stages of Industry versus Inferiority (ages 6-12) to Identity versus Role Confusion (ages 13-18) (Erikson, 1959). Industry versus Inferiority is the stage in which children seek to learn and hone skills, becoming more competent and seeking approval and praise for their accomplishments (Erikson, 1959). Failure to succeed in acquiring skills they see as valued by others, including social acceptance, can lead to low self-esteem and negative self-perception (Erikson, 1959). Unsuccessful completion of this stage may negatively impact development in the stage of Identity versus Role Confusion (McLeod, 2013).

Identity versus Role Confusion is Erikson's fifth stage of development. It is within this stage that children become more independent and transition from more a primarily dependent child to a more independent teenager and/or young adult (Erikson, 1959). Adolescents in this stage struggle to determine who they are and who they want to become (Erikson, 1959). Negative influences at this stage can be detrimental to one's confidence and this poor self-esteem can carry over into adulthood (McLeod, 2013).

Motivators for Cyberbullying

Traditional bullying has been explored extensively; however, researchers have only recently begun to explore motivations for cyberbullying. Varjas, Talley, Meyers, Parris, and Cutts (2010), following 20 semi-structured interviews with high school students (aged 15-19 years), identified both internal and external motivations for cyberbullying, and categorized the findings using grounded theory methods. Internal motivators are influenced by the bully's emotional state and include making themselves feel better, boredom, jealousy, revenge, seeking approval, and instigation among others. External motivators include the bully feeling as though there are no consequences to his/her behavior, a lack of confrontation, and targeting a victim because he/she is viewed as "different" (Varjas et al., 2010). Participants from this study indicated that internal motivators are much more common than external motivators in producing cyberbullying behaviors. However, inclusion criteria for this study did not specifically require involvement with cyberbullying, but only that the participants be enrolled in high school and have experience with technology. Consequently, perceived motivators for cyberbullying may be different for those who have been directly involved with cyberbullying. The proposed study will explore first hand experiences with cyberbullying and may provide better insight into the perceptions of victims as to why they were cyberbullied.

Cyberbullying Victims

Anyone can be cyberbullied. However, there are a few studies that suggest risk factors for cyberbullying victimization. Middle school seems to be the peak time for involvement with cyberbullying, either as a bully or victim (Glew, Rivara, & Feudtner, 2000; Gualdo et al., 2015; Weir, 2001). Wang et al. (2009) analyzed findings from the 2005 Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Survey (HBSC). The HBSC is a nationally representative sample of grades six through ten and includes diversity in terms of age, race, ethnicity, and geographical location. Participants self-reported as Caucasian (46%), African-American (19%), Hispanic (24%) and other (11%) (Wang et al., 2009). Analysis indicated that non-Caucasian adolescents are most likely to be victims of cyberbullying, though it is not clear as to who the bullies were in these cases. Caucasian youth were the least likely to be cyberbullies or cybervictims; African-American adolescents were reportedly the most likely to be involved in cyberbullying as bullies (Wang et al.). From a socioeconomic standpoint, adolescents from affluent families were more likely to be cyber victims, but less likely to be physical victims of traditional bullying than those from a lower socioeconomic status (Wang et al., 2009). No rationale is provided for this specific finding, but it can be theorized that adolescents from more affluent families are likely to have easier access to technology and the Internet, thus increasing their chances of being involved with cyberbullying.

Aside from the generalized data provided from studies such as the HBSC, few studies that explore characteristics of cyberbullying victims have been conducted. It is often assumed that adolescent victims of cyberbullying are likely the same “type” of adolescents that are victims of traditional bullying (small size, passive, poor self-esteem, poor social skills, etc.). However, the unique characteristics of cyberbullying make it possible for anyone to be a victim

or a bully. As such, future research should further explore the characteristics of cyberbullying victims and perpetrators to identify any risk factors.

Health Consequences of Victimization

There are numerous negative health outcomes associated with traditional bullying and cyberbullying victimization. The health consequences associated with traditional bullying have been thoroughly documented and include anxiety and depression, moodiness, fear, anger, nightmares, insomnia, bedwetting, and self-harm, as well as severe depression, suicidal ideation and attempted suicide (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2012; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Klomek et al., 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Sourander et al., 2007). Similar health consequences have been found with cyberbullying victimization, including depression and anxiety, fear, low self-esteem, persistent worry, moodiness, persistent and explosive anger, self-harm, suicidal ideation and attempted suicide (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2012; Beran et al., 2015; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Tokunaga, 2010; Van der Wal, de Wit, & Hirasing, 2003; Ybarra, 2004).

As a result of many of these effects, bullied and cyberbullied adolescents may withdraw from extracurricular events and teams, isolate themselves from friends and family, suffer academically and socially, and turn to drug or alcohol abuse to cope (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2012; Goebert, Else, Matsu, Chung-Do, & Chang, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Schneider et al., 2012; Sourander et al., 2007). Victims can also detach from others, displace anger and hostility, and demonstrate delinquency at home and at school (Tokunaga, 2010).

Substance abuse is of great concern for some victimized populations. Goebert et al. (2010) explored the effect of cyberbullying on mental health and substance use among 677 diverse high school students in Hawaii. Study participants were primarily of Filipino descent (45.7%), but also included Native Hawaiians (22.3%), Samoan (4.7%), Caucasian (4.2%) and

other ethnicities (23.1%). Nearly 45% of respondents qualified for free or reduced lunch, indicating a low socioeconomic status (Goebert et al., 2010). Goebert and colleagues (2010) found that alcohol and marijuana use was more than two times as common among those adolescents who were victimized, as compared to those who were not. Furthermore, cyberbullying victimization was associated with an increased likelihood of depression and suicide attempts among respondents. This study increases awareness of the impact of cyberbullying among multi-ethnic high school students; however, the study is limited by self-reporting and does not provide measures of observed behavior. Additionally, logistic regression does not allow for a causal relationship between cyberbullying and mental health problems and/or substance use to be made (Goebert et al., 2010).

A cross-sectional study of nearly 2,800 elementary school students noted fatigue, nervousness, bedwetting, insomnia, headaches and abdominal pain as common physical complaints associated with bullying victimization (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005). The study did not explore psychosomatic complaints in older adolescents and was specific to traditional bullying victimization. However, the researchers hypothesize that “being bullied leads to a higher number of health complaints, because bullying victimization is likely to be a considerable source of stress” (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2006, p. 20). Thus, considering the similar emotional and mental consequences between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, it is conceivable that cyberbullying victims could have comparable physical complaints. The findings from Sourander et al.’s (2010) study of more than 2000 Finnish adolescent victims of cyberbullying further supports these consequences. The adolescents who reported as cyberbullying victims experienced psychosomatic problems including headaches, abdominal pain, and insomnia. Unfortunately, these physical symptoms are very vague and can

easily be related to another cause or ignored, failing to acknowledge the possible presence of psychosomatic symptoms as a result of victimization of any kind.

Bullies may also be impacted by their participation in victimization. Sourander and colleagues (2007) also conducted a long-term study in Finland to examine the early adulthood outcome of boys who had bullied or been traditionally bullied at age eight. Those who engaged in frequent bullying behaviors during youth were likely to demonstrate characteristics of antisocial personality, substance abuse, and anxiety and depression in young adulthood. A study published in 2013 (Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello) supports these findings, purporting that participants who were bullied as children were at a four to five times increased risk of suffering from psychiatric disorders such as anxiety and panic attacks in adulthood. For those who had bullied others and been victimized (bully/victim), there was a five times increased risk for depression, 10 times increased risk for suicidality, and a nearly 15% increased risk for panic attacks, as compared to those who had not been bullied (Copeland et al., 2013). These studies are specific to traditional bullying, as the relationship between being a cyberbully and other social problems have not been studied. However, with the similarities of health consequences between traditional bullying and cyberbullying victims, it is likely that the social and health related consequences associated with being a traditional bully may be relevant to cyberbullies as well.

Reporting Cyberbullying

Early detection of cyberbullying behavior and victimization can lead to prompt intervention to combat the problem. Some findings suggest youth indicated talking to a peer or adult as being the most helpful action they took after being victimized (Davis & Nixon, 2011). However, Bauman (2010) found that a mere 12% of students stated they would report cyberbullying behavior; only 9% indicated they would tell a parent. These results are similar to

Mishna and MacFadden's (2008) report in which only 11% of students who were cyberbullied indicated they had reported it to an adult. DePaolis and Williford's more recent study with 660 third through fifth graders indicated that only half of their cyberbullied participants reported the experience to an adult (2015). Participants of this study, however, were younger than those in the previously noted studies, which may correlate with the increased number of victims who reported the incident to an adult. Interestingly, Li (2011) found that only 15% of youth who reported being cyberbullied noted that the situation improved, and 6% stated the victimization worsened after reporting it. Regardless, studies show that most adolescents do not report cyberbullying to anyone and rarely to adults (O'Connell, Price, & Barrow, 2004; Agatston et al., 2007). Eighty-four percent of parents, however, thought that their children would bring cyberbullying to their attention (Mishna & MacFadden, 2008). Perhaps adults expect youth to report this type of behavior because it is not easily recognizable otherwise. Students argued that there is a "greater chance for adults to notice these kinds of cyberbullying, because of available proof" (Slonje & Smith, 2008, p. 153), which implies that youth believe there is a trail left by electronic bullies. Unfortunately, adults may not be aware of this or may not know what to look for in identifying this type of behavior. Caring adults are essential to effective intervention against cyberbullying, but first must acknowledge its presence and understand that teens are not likely to report victimization. This may require more work for adults if adolescents are not willing to report cyberbullying. Regardless, recognizing the presence of cyberbullying is crucial to resolving the problem.

Parental Influence

The majority of the extant cyberbullying literature indicates that adolescents are reluctant to report cyberbullying victimization to adults (Agatston et al., 2007; Bauman, 2010; Huang &

Chou, 2010; Li, 2007; Mishna & MacFadden, 2008; O'Connell, Price, & Barrow, 2004; Slonje & Smith, 2008). However, the literature also supports the importance of adults in combating cyberbullying behavior through awareness, monitoring, education, and frequent communication with adolescents (Beale & Hall, 2007; Fekkes, Pijpers & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Huang & Chou, 2010; Mesch, 2009; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Parents have strong influences upon the behaviors of their children; even without direct supervision, the shared values between parent and child can protect youth from delinquent behaviors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013). Associations between bullying and family relationships have been explored across race and ethnicity, though not extensively. Parental communication was associated with traditional bullying among white, African-American, and Hispanic adolescents, indicating that those adolescents who reported easy communication with parents were less likely to be involved in bullying behaviors (Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel, & Haynie, 2007). The study findings also demonstrated a relationship between bullying and parental school involvement among white and African-American students, with less bullying victimization among those students whose parents took an active interest in their school life (Spriggs et al., 2007). A study conducted by Hinduja and Patchin (2013) supported the idea that a positive relationship with parents can deter children from participating in delinquent behavior, specifically, cyberbullying. Youth who have discussed values and appropriate behaviors with their parents were less likely to participate in inappropriate behaviors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013). This information, though rudimentary, may be helpful in demonstrating the importance of parental support and involvement in negating various bullying behavior (including cyberbullying). Keeping open lines of communication with adolescents, even when parents think the child is not listening, may help to deter the child's participation in cyberbullying behaviors.

Finally, researchers stress the importance of parents and educators in recognizing the role that technology plays in the lives of adolescents (Mishna et al., 2010). They encourage adults to be aware of the technological skills of today's youth, acknowledging both the positives and negatives associated with cell phones, Internet access, and other forms of technology. "Underestimating children's almost ubiquitous use of technology and its significant meaning for them can produce a gap in knowledge...resulting in adults' inability to protect children and youth from the potential dangers of this technology" (Mishna et al., 2010, p. 372).

Summary of the Literature

Cyberbullying, with the increasing and extensive use of technology, is not likely to disappear soon or without intervention. Researchers have begun to explore this new and significant adolescent health problem, but much is still left to discover. Traditional bullying generally includes three key elements: 1) intent to harm; 2) repetitiveness; and 3) a power imbalance (usually physical). Cyberbullying is a unique phenomenon, distinct from traditional bullying. Unlike traditional bullying, the details of repetitiveness and the power imbalance may not be the same as that in traditional bullying. Cyberbullying can be anonymous and can reach beyond the boundaries of time and space. Cyberbullies can hide, but without ceasing all electronic forms of communication, cybervictims often cannot escape. In the extant literature, cyberbullying has yet to be universally defined and the varying definitions may be impacting study findings. Additionally, the unique processes that take place as cyberbullying occurs from the perspective of those who are victimized has yet to be explicated.

The existing body of literature has examined the prevalence of cyberbullying among youth across the globe. Studies have been conducted with students in elementary school through high school, with cyberbullying behaviors at their peak in middle school (grades 6th through 8th)

(Glew, Rivara, & Feudtner, 2000; Gualdo et al., 2015; Weir, 2001). All of the prevalence studies reviewed indicated that cyberbullying impacts roughly 10% -25% of all adolescents, with some variances based on race, ethnicity, gender, geographical location, and socioeconomic status. Victims are not easily identified and risk factors are not clearly delineated-anyone can be a victim of cyberbullying. The current literature contains few studies that focus solely on victims as participants. Most of the research on cyberbullying was conducted among general populations of youth without requiring that they have any experience with cyberbullying. This study provides a firsthand account of cyberbullying victimization, offering a new understanding of the phenomenon.

In contrast to traditional bullying, in which boys are the most common participants, gender issues have not been clearly identified within the cyberbullying literature. Girls are often thought to be more likely to participate in cyberbullying behaviors, but there are conflicting research findings, even among similar studies with the same primary researcher(s) (as in the case of Smith and colleagues, [2008]). Conflicting findings related to gender issues in cyberbullying have not been clearly examined and are not easily explained. However, differences in the definition of cyberbullying, as well as the venues included, may account for some of these discrepancies. Additionally, it can be speculated that bullying behaviors change as youth progress through different developmental levels, impacting the prevalence of certain types of victimization among genders and grade level. Since the literature does not support a clear distinction between cyberbullying among males and females, future research on cyberbullying should include both genders. Finally, because cyberbullying behaviors often go unnoticed and unreported, researchers must rely on self-reported data that may be skewed based on perceived anonymity, fear of retaliation, misunderstanding questions, etc. This study provides male and

female participants with anonymity (as legally allowed), a clear explanation of the risks and benefits of participating, and direct access to the researcher in the form of face-to-face meetings (to limit misunderstanding and promote effective communication).

The literature has provided a detailed list of the technology venues most commonly used for cyberbullying, including cell phones, email, and social networking sites. However, these venues are ever-expanding as new applications and new technologies are developed. Recently, a new phenomenon was identified within cyberbullying—a phenomenon known as “Facebook bullying”. By exploring adolescents’ firsthand experiences with cyberbullying, this study identifies venues and methods used in victimization that may not have been previously detected.

The literature indicates that cyberbullying generally goes unreported, especially to adults. However, the literature also indicates that communication with parents and other parental and adult influence is often successful in reducing delinquent behavior. Consequently, it can be conjectured that adults are an important factor in an adolescent’s ability to prevent, cope with, or stop cyberbullying victimization. This study, in contrast to previous studies, examines the processes that occur during cyberbullying, including interaction with peers and adults, ways in which the adolescents attempted to manage or cope with the cyberbullying, and if and how they reported the cyberbullying. This study may also help adults in recognizing common behaviors or social patterns that take place when adolescents are being cyberbullied, allowing for earlier recognition and intervention.

Few qualitative studies are available exploring cyberbullying from the perspective of victims; no grounded theory studies have been found that explore the social processes that take place during cyberbullying. It is the purpose of this research project to develop a grounded theory that explains the processes involved in cyberbullying from the perspective of those who

have been victimized. Thus, many of the gaps in knowledge that have been identified are addressed by this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was conducted using Constructivist Grounded Theory methods as described by Dr. Kathy Charmaz (2006). This chapter begins with a brief background of qualitative research as a whole, narrowing in focus to the use of grounded theory as a research approach. A basic discussion of symbolic interactionism as a supporting theory is provided. Justification for the use of grounded theory is offered, as well as an explanation for the decision to specifically utilize Constructivist Grounded Theory. Details related to data collection, data analysis, and human subjects protection are also described.

Qualitative Research

Streubert and Carpenter (2011) postulate that “In a human enterprise such as nursing, it is imperative that nurses accept the utility of a research tradition that provides for the most meaningful way to describe and understand human experiences” (p. 4). Science has long been accustomed to more Positivist ways of knowing (such as only researching areas that can be observed and measured). This rational view of knowing is credited to French philosopher and mathematician, Rene Descartes, who aimed to defeat skepticism by considering any belief that offers the slightest doubt to be considered false (Skirry, 2008). Descartes’ view of knowing, which supports the quantitative and objective approach to science, has prevailed for some time.

Eighteenth Century Prussian philosopher, Immanuel Kant, is attributed with being the first to openly question traditional, clearly objectivist views of knowing. For Kant, reality is not always objective (as cited in Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Kant proposed that perception, which varies greatly among individuals, can influence reason and reality (as cited in Streubert & Carpenter, 2011; The European Graduate School, 2012). We all hold varying beliefs, shaped by our values, what we have learned, and our personal experiences. Thus, to study what cannot be objectified, predicted, or controlled, a different approach to science emerged: qualitative research.

Qualitative research is not strictly defined; Denzin and Lincoln (2005), however, offer a generic definition. “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). Qualitative research goes beyond the explanation of the observed and the observable. A qualitative exploration seeks to examine reality as it is socially constructed, as well as the meaning of that reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Why choose qualitative research? Corbin and Strauss (2008) hold that a principal reason to conduct qualitative analysis is “the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge” (p. 16). It is the goal of this study to step into the shoes of adolescents who have been (or are currently being) cyberbullied. This is not a controllable experience, and it would be unethical to intentionally reproduce such a potentially traumatic event for the purpose of research. Thus, in order to understand the perspective of the victim, and explore the psychosocial processes that take place during cyberbullying (from the victims’ perspective), a qualitative approach is warranted. Additionally, cyberbullying is a fairly

new phenomenon and little is known about the social processes involved and how the phenomenon presents itself. From a research standpoint, it would be illogical to move to a level of intervention testing before conducting detailed fact-finding research. Thus, an exploratory design is warranted and appropriate.

As noted previously, qualitative research encompasses various methods and approaches to the study of science and provides some flexibility for the researcher. Contrary to the linear progression of quantitative research, the qualitative approach takes on a more circular flow of activities, with the researcher collecting and analyzing data simultaneously, and continuously making decisions on how to proceed with the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Qualitative research is inductive, with researchers beginning with specific details of experiences and events and moving towards a better understanding of the phenomenon or process under study (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). However, there is not one prescriptive list of tasks to follow with qualitative research methods; this is evident by the many diverse approaches to qualitative inquiry as discussed in Chapter One. The approach deemed most appropriate for this study is grounded theory, a qualitative approach derived from the perspective of symbolic interactionism.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, as a theoretical perspective, holds that people construct their reality through their social interactions (Charmaz, 2006). Reality, in a sense, is relative to context, personal values and beliefs, and experience (Charmaz, 2006). Symbolic interactionism is founded on the philosophy of pragmatism. Pragmatism views experience as “the ongoing transaction of organism and environment” (Audi, 1999, p. 730). As such, symbolic interactionism holds that meaning emerges through action and influences action. Truth then, is

not infallible, and experiences, values, and interests guide knowledge (Audi, 1999). Accordingly, one's truth can change based on new experiences and interactions.

Symbolic interactionism maintains that people are unique, active, and reflective and it is through active interaction and reflection that individuals find meaning (Blumer, 1969). Blumer (1969) indicates that there are three key principles of symbolic interactionism: 1) "Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (p. 2). As such, individuals are unique in their worldviews and it is necessary to consider this subjective reality when attempting to make generalizations about an entire population; 2) The meaning of such things is derived from the social interaction one has with others (Blumer, 1969). Life experiences, interactions, etc., play a role in developing a person's perspective and as a result, in influencing their responses and behaviors. We cannot expect each person to respond to a situation in the same manner and we must consider his/her past experiences and exchanges in predicting their response; and 3) "These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (p. 2). Perspective and meaning can change with each experience and interaction. Thus, we have the potential to influence meaning for others, as they may influence meaning for us, through a self-reflective, interpretive process.

The first premise deals not only with "things" (as in physical objects), but also interactions with other individuals or groups, institutions, guiding ideals, etc. (Blumer, 1969). Going along with the second premise, symbolic interactionism views meaning as resulting from the process of interaction between people. How one acts towards another person influences that act or behavior and gives it meaning and vice versa for the other individual. For example, a person who has never witnessed or been involved in cyberbullying may not give it much thought. However,

when that individual becomes a victim, or when his/her friend becomes a victim or bully, the connection between those individuals will influence the meaning of cyberbullying for both of them. Their experiences with the processes and interactions related to cyberbullying give it unique meaning to them. This personal “truth” has its basis in pragmatic philosophy. Truths (meanings) are developed and solidified through experience; thus, meaning can vary among individuals and be reconsidered with each experience (Audi, 1999).

Though they may not readily recognize it, individuals develop personal meaning by working through a process of interpretation. As Blumer (1969) puts it, the individual “selects, checks, suspends, regroup, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action” (p. 5). Consequently, meaning is viewed as a social product for symbolic interactionists. Nonetheless, not every interaction leads to the process of self-interaction and interpretation. For example, in the case of physical bullying, the individual who is being physically assaulted may use his or her hands and arms as a shield to protect his or her face. This type of response is automatic and requires no conscious thought on the part of the individual. Symbolic interaction requires the individual to *interpret* the action that is taking place. With this understanding, social interaction forms human conduct; simply put, humans take into consideration the actions or potential actions of others in the formation of their own actions or responses. By understanding the processes involved in cyberbullying and how the victim’s response shapes those processes, one could argue that the victim and others may be able to develop a response to the behavior that would discourage further acts of cyberbullying from taking place, or help victims cope with the experience more effectively.

By understanding the experiences of cyberbullying victims, we may be able to explore actions that will be effective in preventing further victimization as well as uncovering actions by

others that may have prompted the cyberbullying. This information can be used to educate adolescents and adults on ways to respond to cyberbullying behaviors and stop it from occurring.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is one approach to qualitative inquiry and was first introduced by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the late 1960s. Classic Grounded Theory emerged through the desire to bridge the gap between theory and research. Glaser and Strauss reported that theory was often viewed as “grand” and general in nature. As such, researchers were finding these theories irrelevant to their research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss proposed an innovative approach to theory development: allowing the theory to emerge from (or be grounded in) the data itself. Grounded theory is based on the idea that research can be conducted with the goal of generating theory that is specific to the topic being studied. The goal of grounded theory research, then, is not to develop or create theory, but to discover it. Grounded theory can be used to predict and explain behaviors, provide a foundation for theoretical advancement, and be used to guide practice and future research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Working with vulnerable populations provides nurses with the opportunity to get close to those individuals, listen to their experiences, and allows them to share their stories. De Chesnay (2008) reports that in her experiences with participants, “trust in their self-knowing engenders self-trust” and “our mutual dialogue facilitates both of us knowing each other and ourselves with growing awareness” (p. 23). Our interactions with this population will indeed affect the way they view the world, and likely, the meaning and value they give to research. They may also influence our views and alter meanings that we previously held to be true. A grounded theory approach to research with adolescents, with an underpinning of symbolic interactionism, supports De

Chesnay's perspective and what we can accomplish through building trust and engaging in mutual dialogue.

Kathy Charmaz defines the grounded theory method as “an inductive, iterative, and comparative method geared toward theory construction” (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012, p. 41). Grounded theory methods are generally used to explain, describe, or predict social and/or organizational processes, as well as human behavior and meaning, taking context into consideration (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012). Using symbolic interactionism for theoretical guidance, grounded theory researchers can study participants under the assumptions that each is a unique being that actively and reflectively takes part in interpreting psychosocial processes and developing meaning about the world around them.

Grounded theory methods offer “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). Through continuous and simultaneous data collection and analysis, theory about the social processes and meaning associated with the phenomenon of interest freely emerges (Charmaz, 2006; Hunter, Murphy, Grealish, Casey, & Keady, 2011a). Since the researcher begins grounded theory research without identifying specific hypotheses, grounded theory methods are an especially good fit for studying a phenomenon in which little is known about the social processes that take place (Hunter, Murphy, Grealish, Casey, & Keady, 2011b). Thus, the researcher begins the study with an open-mind, trusting that theory will readily emerge.

Methodological Split

Glaser and Strauss introduced the “original” or Classic Grounded Theory with the publication of *Awareness of Dying* in 1965; they published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967. However, Strauss had a change of heart in his beliefs about the approach to analysis of

data in Grounded Theory, which was evident in *Qualitative Analysis for Social Sciences* (1987), and published *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (1990) with Juliet Corbin. Meanwhile, Glaser held tight to the concepts and approaches described in Classic Grounded Theory and this approach is known as Glaserian Grounded Theory.

Glaserian Grounded Theory. Barney Glaser, in *The Grounded Theory Perspective* (2001), purports that in Grounded Theory, “all is data”. Glaser (2001) clarifies,

It means exactly what is going on in the research scene is the data, whatever the source, whether interview, observations, documents, in whatever combination. It is not only what is being told, how it is being told and the conditions of its being told, but also all the data surrounding what is being told. It means what is going on must be figured out exactly what it is to be used for, that is conceptualization, not for accurate description. Data is always as good as far as it goes, and there is always more data to keep correcting the categories with more relevant properties (p. 145).

Glaser holds that data are what the researcher collects and thus, not limited in what it can be.

Two key features of Glaserian Grounded Theory are: 1) the idea that theory is generated and does not need to be verified based on existing theories; and 2) researchers should begin work on grounded theory without a guiding theoretical framework and a priori assumptions of what they will find (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). As part of this, Glaser advocates that researchers should not conduct a preliminary review of the literature. Data should be collected and analyzed simultaneously through the use of constant comparison, a method that is simply defined as making comparisons of pieces of data (Hood, 2007). Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe constant comparison in four stages: 1) “comparing incidents applicable to each category”; 2) “integrating

categories and their properties”; 3) identifying and delineating the theory, and 4) “writing the theory” (p. 105). This process begins with the researcher coding incidents into many categories as they emerge, and then placing data into existing categories as it fits. The researcher will record memos, as he/she moves along in the process, to reflect on his/her thoughts and theoretical ideas (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As coding continues, constant comparison strategies change from comparing incident with incident to comparing incident with properties of an emergent category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The next stage of constant comparison is delimiting the theory. This process involves fully defining the categories and their properties, ensuring that each future comparison fits into a clearly articulated category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Through this method, the number of categories will likely be reduced as one is integrated into another, further focusing and conceptualizing the theory. Finally, when the researcher has determined that he/she has a “systematic substantive theory” that is a “reasonably accurate statement of the matters studied” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 113), and will serve useful for others, the researcher uses the coded data and collection of memos to write the theory. The end product, Glaser (2001) reasons, will be a theory that is used to conceptualize (gain an understanding of all of the parts of the whole phenomenon), not describe, the topic of study.

Straussian Grounded Theory. Straussian Grounded Theory is the name generally used to specify the grounded theory approach as described by Juliet Corbin, and Glaser’s partner in the origination of Classic Grounded Theory, Anselm Strauss. Corbin and Strauss (1998) uphold many elements of Classic Grounded Theory. However, data analysis is very loosely explained in the original book and Corbin and Strauss attempt to explicate this process. Glaser accused Strauss of straying from Classic Grounded Theory and suggested that Strauss and Corbin’s

approach was a completely different method of approaching qualitative study (Cooney, 2010). Glaser criticized Strauss and Corbin's process for data analysis as being forced and claimed that their proposed process resulted in conceptual description, not theory (Glaser, 1992); Strauss accepts that grounded theory may not always produce formal theory, but may provide useful descriptions (Cooney, 2010). As such, Corbin and Strauss supported their method of data analysis, but in the second edition of their book, suggested that the coding practices were guidelines and not a prescriptive process for data analysis. They stress that researchers should not get caught up in worrying about one *right* way of doing grounded theory methods, but rather trust their own instincts and allow the theory to emerge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

In addition to a conflict in the way to approach data analysis, Straussian Grounded Theory supports deduction as being essential to grounded theory; Glaser maintains that grounded theory is exclusively inductive (Cooney, 2010). Corbin and Strauss (1998) further hold that deduction should be followed by validation, which they define as comparing concepts and their relationships to and against the data, with the insight of the participants, during the research process (as cited in Cooney, 2010). In qualitative research, this is generally accomplished by member-checking with participants (confirming that findings are interpreted similarly among the researcher and the participants) to ensure that the researcher's interpretations are truthful reflections of the participants' experiences.

Straussian Grounded Theory also considers the importance of context in understanding the participants' experiences. Corbin and Strauss clearly point out that events and interactions that occur in life are not just merely background material; rather, this context affects how an individual will respond during and reflect upon an experience (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This is

contrary to Glaser's view that datum is what it is and is abstract from people, time, and place (Glaser, 2002).

Constructivist Grounded Theory. Building upon Corbin and Strauss' more contextual view of Grounded Theory, Dr. Kathy Charmaz introduced a relativist view of grounded theory method, which is often referred to as Constructivist Grounded Theory. In Constructivist Grounded Theory, the researcher is an active part of the research process. Realities are not objective, but co-constructed by the participants and the researcher. Personal values and beliefs influence how meaning is interpreted, including that explored within the research (Charmaz, 2006).

Theory developed from grounded theory methods is interpretive. Interpretive theory is an imaginative understanding of the phenomenon under study; interpretive theory assumes "emergent, multiple realities...facts and values as inextricably linked; truth as provisional; and social life as processual" (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 126-127).

Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006) summarize that "we are all influenced by our history and cultural context, which, in turn, shape our view of the world, the forces of creation, and the meaning of truth...Constructivism is a research paradigm that denies the existence of an objective reality" (p. 2). Simply put, context and experience have developed a world that includes multiple individual realities (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). Fittingly, Charmaz (2006) holds that researchers are not merely idle observers, but must become part of the research by identifying and acknowledging their personal values, beliefs, and experiences as part of the theoretical outcome. Contrary to Glaser's position, this includes conducting an initial review of the literature and reflecting on one's presuppositions prior to data collection. Thornberg and Charmaz (2012) question the need to reinvent the wheel or repeat others' mistakes by neglecting the preexisting

body of literature, and encourage researchers to use their current knowledge and the literature to “enhance sensitivity to subtle nuances in the data, provide a source of concepts for making comparisons... and stimulate questions during analysis” (p. 63).

In order to take part in the co-construction of knowledge that occurs in Constructivist Grounded Theory, the researcher must acknowledge him/herself as a research instrument. Essentially, the researcher must begin with an awareness of what he/she brings to the study, including personal experiences, values, beliefs, and presuppositions about the phenomenon. Contrary to quantitative approaches, in which participants function independently of the researcher, qualitative research depends on the involvement of the researcher; data is mediated through the human research instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Simon, 2011). Data are not simply the information collected as part of an interview or observation. Data in Constructivist Grounded Theory are a collection of participant narratives, participant observations during the interview (field notes), and an analysis of the researcher’s thoughts and interpretations (memos) before, during, and after the interviews. Data may also include written documents, such as reflective journals, diaries, etc. This analysis of multiple sources of data allows the researcher to assimilate an explanation of the phenomenon with the insight of the participants, creating a “constructed” or Constructivist Grounded Theory. Founded upon the idea that realities are co-constructed by the participants and the researcher, member checking is utilized to validate the findings and ensure the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretation.

Of the three primary grounded theory approaches, Constructivist Grounded Theory was chosen for this study based on the notions that: 1) realities are not objective but are influenced by social interaction and the meaning individuals find in those interactions; 2) context is essential in understanding social processes; 3) knowledge is co-constructed. Constructivist Grounded Theory

methods allow for visualization of similarities in patterns, processes, and meanings of cyberbullying among adolescent victims and offers an interpretive theoretical understanding of the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006).

Theoretical Sampling

A key element of grounded theory, beginning with Glaser and Strauss' initial description of the approach, is theoretical sampling. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe theoretical sampling as collecting data for theory development while simultaneously coding and analyzing that data. Through this process, the researcher makes decisions on what data to collect next, and where to find that data, in order to fully develop the framework or theory as it continues to emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Charmaz (2006) theoretical sampling is a unique element of grounded theory research that can allow the researcher to elaborate on the meaning and defining characteristics of categories, leading to discoveries of differences and identification of gaps. Theoretical sampling guides the researcher on where to go to find data that is crucial to “fill gaps and to saturate categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 103). Thus, “the process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45), and the researcher will seek out participants that will help to fully develop the characteristics of the categories and demonstrate the relationships between those categories. Therefore, it is difficult to determine exact sample size a priori in a grounded theory study. Typically the sample begins with general recruitment for the phenomenon of study, but as categories and concepts of the theory emerge, additional participants that can expand upon the meaning of these categories and concepts are then recruited.

Theoretical Saturation

In their initial presentation of Grounded Theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that the researcher cannot predict the number of participants they will need to sample for completion of the study and development of the theory. Streubert and Carpenter (2011) further support this, stating that with Grounded Theory research, “participants should be chosen based on their experience with the social process under investigation...” and that “sample size is determined by the data generated and their analysis” (p. 131). Similarly, Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that a researcher begin with a target population, continue to sample from that group, and then move forward as needed with theoretical sampling until no new properties or categories have emerged. The point in which the researcher is no longer finding new categories or characteristics of those categories is called theoretical saturation (Holton, 2007). Theoretical saturation is essential to theoretical sampling and Grounded Theory development. When theoretical saturation is reached in one category, the researcher will move on and attempt to saturate the remaining categories (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Holton, 2007).

Charmaz (2006) also expresses the importance of theoretical saturation in Constructivist Grounded Theory. Saturation, however, is not discovering the same pattern repeatedly. Saturation occurs when new data “no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 103). The key here is to fully describe and define categories until it becomes seemingly impossible to identify any additional distinctive categories.

Grounded Theory Methods

Recruitment

Population. Adolescents between the ages of 12-23 were recruited for participation into the study. Initially, the age range was set at 13-16, but recruitment solely within this age range proved challenging without significant help from local schools (which is further discussed in Chapter Five). The Pew Internet Research Center indicates that most teens get a cell phone at ages 12-13 (46%) when they transition into middle school (Lenhart, 2010), thus providing an increased risk for those teens to become involved in cyberbullying. Furthermore, the literature indicates that cyberbullying peaks during middle school (Aleude et al., 2008; Gualdo et al., 2015; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Weir, 2001), and tapers off during high school (Gualdo et al., 2015; Williams & Guerra, 2007). In an attempt to stay as close to the cyberbullying experience as possible, participants between the ages of 12-23 who had experienced (or are experiencing) cyberbullying were selected as the target population. In order to participate in the study, adult participants, aged 18-23, had to have experienced the cyberbullying as an adolescent, and within the past 6 years.

Setting. A four-county area in Central and Southern Ohio was chosen for initial recruitment. Athens, Ross, Jackson and Vinton Counties, with a total population of 188,650 (US Census Bureau, 2014) were targeted for distribution of fliers. An average of 21.4% of the people in these counties were under the age of 18 (US Census Bureau, 2014). Additionally, there were 16 public middle schools in the recruitment area: 5 in Athens County; 3 in Jackson County; 7 in Ross County; and 1 county-wide school in rural Vinton County. There were also the same number of high schools, per county, in the recruitment area. These counties were chosen because of their proximity to the researcher, their diversity in terms of population size, and a large

number of middle and high schools in a small geographical range. In total, these 16 middle schools served more than 5,700 students in grades 6, 7, and 8 (Ohio Department of Education, 2013). The 16 high schools served an estimated 6,900 students in grades 9 through 12 (Public School Review, 2016). There were also two universities and one college in the recruitment area, which also offered access to older participants. There were additional potential participants between the ages of 12-18 who attended private schools, were home-schooled or not currently enrolled in school, thus an adequate pool of potential participants was available within this four-county geographic region.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. In addition to inclusion criteria based on age, participants had to have been (or currently were) targeted for cyberbullying victimization during adolescence. Participants and their parents were required to be able to read, write, and speak in English, as translators were not available for this study. Also, if any participants had demonstrated evidence of severe emotional distress or voiced significant concern about retribution for their participation, they would have been excluded from the study (this was not found to be of concern with any participants). Interviews would have been stopped immediately for any participants who exhibited significant emotional distress (uncontrollable crying, yelling, nausea/vomiting, sudden headache, dizziness, etc.) during the interview, but this was not experienced before, during, or after any interview conducted. Had the interview been stopped, the nurse PI would have made attempts to console the interviewee, contacted his/her parents (for adolescent participants), and contacted local mental health resources as needed.

Sample Size. It was anticipated that approximately 20 participants would be recruited. However, as previously discussed, it is difficult to determine an exact sample size a priori in a grounded theory study. The sample was expected to be primarily Caucasian based on the limited

diversity in the Appalachian region in which the research was conducted. However, the researcher was committed to obtaining a 15% diversity rate, comparable to that of the entire state of Ohio, which was 83% Caucasian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Recruitment Methods. Recruitment was conducted in the community and online. Fliers describing the study were developed by the researcher and were aimed to attract the attention of young adults and parents or legal adult guardians of adolescents who had experienced (or were currently experiencing) cyberbullying (See Appendix A). Since adult consent was required prior to adolescent assent, fliers were distributed in areas of the community where adolescents and his/her parents frequent, such as libraries, sporting and community centers, churches, health centers, and gyms. Efforts were also made to recruit those who are often underrepresented, by hanging fliers in areas where those potential participants and/or their parents may visit or pass through (e.g.: laundromats, community clinics and health centers, temporary or unemployment agencies, and homeless shelters). Recruitment materials avoided the use of the term “victim”, as that term may have been offensive to potential participants. However, the flier indicated that the researcher requested to interview those young adults and adolescents who had been targeted by cyberbullying behavior.

After more than six months of solely community recruitment, 32 middle and high schools within the initial recruitment area were contacted to display recruitment fliers. Additionally, with IRB approval obtained, fliers were also displayed at a four-year public university in the recruitment area. Although multiple attempts were made to contact each of the schools identified as middle or high schools, only four schools responded and agreed to hang recruitment fliers within their facilities. One school responded with a “no” and voiced concern about the audio-recording of participants. No responses were received from the other schools.

As a supplement to community and school recruitment methods, a website was dedicated to sharing information about the study. The link to the website (see Appendix C) was shared on the community fliers to help to gain additional interest in the research and to spread awareness of the problem of cyberbullying. The site shared information about the research study and also offered links to other websites dedicated to the prevention and reduction of cyberbullying.

Fliers and the research website include information about the study, that the participants would be given a \$10 gift card for their participation in the study, and a telephone number and email contact for the researcher (See Appendices A and C). Fliers (and the website) indicated that the researcher was seeking the participation of both boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 23, who had experienced cyberbullying as an adolescent (adolescent participants may currently be experiencing cyberbullying). A toll-free, confidential telephone number, as well as an email address, was provided. Young adults and parents/legal guardians of adolescents were asked to call the number and a detailed informational message was provided (See Appendix D). Participants and their guardians could also email the researcher to express interest in participating.

Parents/guardians of the potential adolescent participants were asked to discuss the study with the adolescent and inquire about their willingness to participate in the study. The Principal Investigator (PI) was available via telephone, email, and face-to-face for questions about the study. Those who believed the adolescent would be interested in participating were asked to share their contact information (telephone number or email). The PI then contacted the adult participant, or the potential adolescent participant and their parent(s), to set up an initial screening interview, which was conducted via telephone or face to face. For potential adult participants, communication occurred directly between the PI and the potential participant.

Screening

To determine eligibility, as well as to obtain initial consent and assent, screening interviews were held with each interested participant, and in the case of adolescents, his/her parent or legal guardian. The screening interviews were held either via telephone or in a safe and convenient location for the participants, which offered privacy. Four screening interviews were held face-to-face: one at a local restaurant, two at a local church, and one in a public park out of hearing range of others. For the safety of the researcher, screenings and interviews did not take place in isolated areas. Verbal parental consent and adolescent assent was obtained for the screening interview.

Screening interviews were used to exclude those candidates who may have been experiencing emotions or situations that would make participation risky (acute emotional distress, anxiety or depression, suicidal or homicidal ideation, substance abuse, or fear of retaliation for participating). See potential participant screening script in Appendix E. Community resource lists were available for any potential participants who were excluded from the study. However, all candidates completing the screening interview were found to be eligible for inclusion. Any information obtained during the screening interviews that would have indicated child abuse or neglect would have been reported to Children and Family Services, per Ohio mandatory reporting law (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, n.d.); such reporting requirements were clearly outlined in the parent and adult consent/child assent form (See Appendices F, G, and H). No such information was indicated, thus no reporting was required. Any information related to self-harm or potential for harm towards others would have been reported to parents of the participants. There were no participants in this study that showed any indication of current self-harm or the desire to harm themselves or others. At the conclusion

of the screening interview, for those participants deemed eligible, face-to-face interview appointments were set up between the PI and participants in a safe and convenient location for the participant.

Data Collection

Demographic Data

Demographic data was obtained prior to beginning the initial recorded interview (See Appendix I for demographic data collection tool developed by the PI for this study). Participants were asked to provide their current age and age at the time of the cyberbullying event, race and ethnicity, gender, and school grade level (current and at the time the cyberbullying occurred, if they were different); the participant code assigned by the researcher was used for identifying the participant completing the form. Names were only provided on consent/assent forms. All demographic data was reported in aggregate form to preserve individual anonymity. This information was collected to allow the researcher to provide a general description about the sample for transferability purposes, to demonstrate that participants met inclusion criteria for age, and to establish diversity within the sample. The participant was coded alpha-numerically (A1, A2, etc.) after completion of each interview and demographic forms contain the code, not the participant's name; this information will be secured for three years after the completion of the study and then destroyed.

Interviews

For those participants deemed eligible, and for whom consent/assent was obtained, an appointment was scheduled for a face-to-face, semi-structured interview. One-on-one interviews, lasting between 25 and 70 minutes, were conducted with participants who had been (or were currently being) cyberbullied as adolescents. The average length of time for an interview was 40

minutes. Three interviews took place at a local church in a large office that provided privacy. Four interviews took place at a private office at the local fire department. Two interviews took place at the PI's home office (with permission from the parent and participant), one interview was conducted in the back corner of a local restaurant, and one interview was conducted in a private office at the parent's place of employment. The remaining four interviews, with adult participants, occurred at the participant's work office.

Parents and other adults or children were not permitted in the room during the interviews, to protect participant confidentiality and to encourage open communication with the interviewer. This information was clearly outlined in the consent/assent forms (See Appendices F, G, and H). Verbal assent was again obtained from participants prior to the beginning of each interview, in addition to the previously submitted written consent and assent, to help ensure that the participant was not being forced or coerced into participation.

The researcher began the interview by providing participants a brief summary of the purpose of the research. Participants were informed that the researcher was interested in understanding their experiences with cyberbullying (exploring the processes of cyberbullying and context), how they coped with or managed that cyberbullying, and how it has affected their lives (antecedents and consequences). Participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions they had related to the research. The researcher asked for verbal confirmation that the participant was voluntarily participating, without coercion, and written assent from the adolescent was obtained (in addition to the previously obtained written parental consent), and written consent only was obtained from adult participants, aged 18 and over. No participants indicated that they had been pressured or coerced into participating, or that they were uncomfortable sharing their experience. All interviews were audio-recorded, as indicated on the

consent/assent forms, as refusal to consent to audio recording would have resulted in exclusion from the study.

Experienced researchers note that open-ended interviews are important in qualitative studies as they provide a guide for dialogue, but also afford the participant the opportunity for storytelling in their own words (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). As such, participants were asked to share a story of their personal experience with cyberbullying, including their feelings during the experience, how others responded to their experience, how they attempted to deal with the cyberbullying, when and how they shared their experience with an adult or peer, and how the experience may have affected their relationships with others. Questions were primarily open-ended, with some close-ended questions to clarify participants' narratives.

Interviews began with the prompt: "I understand that you have been cyberbullied. Please tell me about your experience with cyberbullying." Additional questions were used to inquire about antecedents and consequences to the cyberbullying and strategies used to manage or cope with cyberbullying (including what was effective and what was not), if this information was not spontaneously shared. Participants had the opportunity to share any additional comments about the experience at the conclusion of the interview, with the question: "Is there any additional information that I may have missed or did not ask you about that you would like to share?" The interview guide, with primary questions and prompts can be found in Appendix J.

Constructivist Grounded Theory methods involve participants in the generation of theory (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, second interviews were conducted to further define the identified categories, provide the participant with the chance to share any additional information, and provide the opportunity for the researcher and participants to co-construct the emerging theory. Second interviews (for member-checking purposes) were conducted with three participants, one

female adult and two adolescents (one male and one female). These three participants were selected for member-checking based on the richness of description provided in their interviews. These participants provided detailed accounts of their experiences and it was expected that these participants would likely understand the terminology within the theory, and be able to provide strong insights into construction and further development of the theory. An interview guide was not used during the second interview as only two broad, open-ended questions were asked and the participants were then able to lead discussion of the model and theory based on their thoughts about it. The interviews were audio-recorded, but they were not transcribed as the interviews were brief and transcription costs had exceeded the Primary Investigator's personal budget. Instead, the PI took notes when interviewing the participants and listened to the audio files multiple times, taking additional notes. During the second interview, participants were given the visual representation (i.e. a diagrammed model) of the theoretical model that emerged from the analysis, and the PI then explained each element of the model. A brief description of each of the processes within the theory was provided and the participants were then asked, "What are your thoughts on this model as described to you?" and "Do you think this model helps to describe your experience with cyberbullying?" These second interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, with an average of 23 minutes among the three interviews. All three of the participants indicated that the model was representative of their experience with cyberbullying, and only minor modifications in wording of the theoretical concepts were recommended by the participants.

Field Notes

Field notes, as Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe, are written in the field and are detailed observational notes, sometimes offering analytic remarks, but not attempting to provide

a profound analysis of the data. Field notes can assist with more detailed memo-writing later, by providing a visual reminder of the interview or observational event. Throughout the study, I made notes at the completion of each interview reflecting on the interview and providing additional thoughts or insight related to the interview and the participant, as well as any relevant observations and notable non-verbal behaviors. Figure 1 provides an example of a field note from the study.

Interview XX was conducted with a participant that I know personally. She was very willing to speak with me about her experiences, but had a hard time expressing many of her feelings. She did not appear nervous, but I needed to prompt her more to get her responses in depth. Since this was my first interview as a novice researcher, I tried to pinpoint the questions that elicited a more detailed response and make a mental note for future interviews.

Figure 1. Example of Field Note

Memos

Memos are generally much longer and more comprehensive than field notes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Charmaz places significant importance on memo-writing in grounded theory research. Memo-writing, Charmaz posits, is “the pivotal intermediate step... between data collection and writing drafts of papers” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 188). During coding and analysis, I documented thoughts about the emerging data, acknowledged new questions, and identified direction for the course of the study. Memo-writing began from the initiation of the research process and I continued writing successive memos throughout the research process to assist in staying connected to the data and involved in the continued analysis.

Charmaz (2006) suggests using casual and unofficial language during memo-writing; the goal is to get the ideas and thoughts down on paper. Early memos began as short, simple notes answering basic questions such as “what is going on in the interview accounts?” and “what are people doing?”. Questions exploring processes can also be examined: “What process is occurring

here?” and “What are the antecedents and consequences of the process?” Figure 2 provides an example of a memo of this type.

In all described instances of CB, the victim repeatedly implied that the acts were random. There was no perceived “prompt” or rationale behind the behavior. In all of the cases, the victim did not know the bully on a “personal” level-in some cases the bully was “known”, but only via the Internet or indirectly.

Figure 2. Example of an Early Memo

As the research continued, memos became more intellectual, moving the analysis from description of codes, to deeper analysis, and finally to conceptualization of categories (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012). Advanced memos describe how codes and categories have emerged, make comparisons among codes and categories, people, and context, and identify the beliefs that support development of the category (Charmaz, 2006). See Figure 3 for an example of this type of later memo.

After completing the first 3 interviews I am getting an initial feeling of “empowerment” after the cyberbullying (CB) is resolved. All 3 victims have indicated that they feel more mature, stronger, and better able to manage such situations as a result of what they went through. “Empowered” or “Empowering” may be a category of note and is worth considering in future interviews.

Figure 3. Example of Later Memo

In a sense, memo-writing forces the researcher to stop and fully engage with a code or category. Through memos, the researcher can “compare categories, explore relationships between categories, and search for patterns and meanings in order to build up a grounded theory” (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012, p. 59). Consequently, memos are an essential part of developing grounded theory and were utilized throughout this research study. These were documented after each interview and when a new question, direction, or connection emerged. Memos were kept in a Word file and were reflected upon throughout the course of the study and data analysis.

Researcher as an Instrument

In Constructivist Grounded Theory, knowledge is co-constructed among the researcher and the participants. Consequently, the researcher, like each participant, is an instrument of data collection. In order to allow data to freely emerge in Constructivist Grounded Theory research, however, the researcher must reflect upon his/her experiences and acknowledge his/her assumptions about the topic under study. Failure to do so will lead to bias in development of the theory.

As a PhD student, and as the principal investigator (PI) of this study, I have spent more than four years reviewing the literature and identifying gaps in knowledge on the topic of cyberbullying. As a result, I have comprehensive knowledge of the defining characteristics of the phenomenon, prevalence, risk factors for involvement in cyberbullying, relevant gender issues, associated terminology, venues for cyberbullying, and the consequences of being involved in cyberbullying as a victim, as a bully, and as a bully-victim. I am also familiar with suggested techniques for coping with and managing cyberbullying, as well as prevention and intervention programs.

Cyberbullying has only become a recognized phenomenon within the last 20-25 years. As such, I have not had the personal experience of being cyberbullied as an adolescent. However, I do have experience with cyberbullying from a parent's perspective. My adolescent daughter has been a victim of traditional bullying, as well as cyberbullying. With this personal experience comes assumptions about the type of teens who cyberbully and the type of teens who are victims, as well as personal beliefs about why teens cyberbully and why teen victims "allow" it to occur. I also confess to having strong personal beliefs about the attitudes and perspectives of teens today,

which I believe play a major role in the decision to cyberbully, and the decision to attempt to deal with the cyberbullying independently instead of reporting it to an adult.

Comprehensive reflections of my personal experiences as a parent of a cyberbullying victim, as well as my personal assumptions of the dynamics and impact of cyberbullying, were noted in depth before undertaking this study and were documented in a reflective memo. I acknowledge seeing cyberbullying as similar to a military attack, in which the weakest person is sought out, hunted relentlessly, bombarded with assaults, and rendered defenseless or severely wounded. As I found out through my interview with the participants, this was not necessarily an accurate perception of cyberbullying as victims are not weak and no one is immune to being a cyberbullying victim. Victims were not always who we might expect them to be and neither are the bullies. I also found that victims are not always defenseless and though they may be wounded for a time, those wounds are not always severe and they are not always permanent. Ultimately, the victim can survive and thrive, after the attack.

Data Analysis

Charmaz' constructivist approach to grounded theory "seeks to bring about mutual understanding through collaboration between researcher and participant" (Hunter et al., 2011, p. 8). Charmaz (2006) strives to do this through constant co-construction and reconstruction of data. Charmaz posits that researchers can define ideas and interpret data through close study, comparison, and memo writing. Thus, this study followed Charmaz' approach of data collection, coding, analysis, and reflection. The process isn't as linear as this in reality; all of these processes are occurring simultaneously as the researcher continues to collect data until the point of saturation, constantly comparing and analyzing, and keeping notes and memos.

Coding

Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim into written text by a professional transcription service. Once transcription of each initial interview was completed, I began the process of initial coding. In Charmaz's (2006) approach, coding takes place in several phases and by using several different approaches. These include initial coding, line-by-line coding, incident coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006). See Appendix B for applied examples that were used in this study, which illustrate each of these coding approaches.

Charmaz (2006) describes initial coding as staying close to the data and finding "action" in each segment of data. Code words that reflected action were applied; gerunds (a verb that functions as a noun, typically ending in -ing) are often used (Purdue University, 2014). The key, Charmaz notes, is to keep initial coding "open" to emergence of new ideas. This is best done quickly to prevent overthinking and fatigue.

Secondly, Charmaz (2006) suggests word-by-word, line-by-line coding, and incident-to-incident coding as possible techniques. Word-by-word coding is tedious, but may provide analysis of the structure and flow of words and how they are interpreted. Line-by-line coding includes naming each line of the text but may bring about ideas that had previously been missed. This type of coding tends to work well with detailed content on processes or fundamental empirical problems (Charmaz, 2006). Since this study is focused on exploring processes, line-by-line coding was utilized to take a more comprehensive look at processes.

Charmaz (2006) explains that incident coding may be beneficial in allowing a comparison of incidents among the data, and then a comparison of incidents to earlier conceptualization of those incidents. After line-by-line coding was completed, specific incident coding was conducted. The researcher explored incidents of how and when the cyberbullying

started and ended (Aims #1 and #2), the processes that occurred throughout the experience (Aim #1 and #3), as well as when and how the cyberbullying behavior was reported (Aims #1 and #4).

Throughout the entire process, including interviewing, data collection, and data analysis, I kept memos in an electronic journal to capture thoughts, identify new ideas, make connections, and bring up new questions and directions for study. These memos became very important during transitions in coding levels. I asked myself questions such as “why are these participants refusing to be involved in previously loved activities?” and “what is going on inside the participant that is leading to these actions and decisions?” I found that earlier codes of “refusing to participate” and “losing desire” (to participate or to be on a team) became “avoiding” and “withdrawing” as these actions were taken to avoid the risk of being further victimized. The participants were trying to find a way to distance themselves from the emotional pain of being teased and outcasted.

Focused coding, which involves “using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 56), was the third step in the coding process. This coding offered a new look at the data to ensure that the codes applied were the most fitting for the data. The three previously noted excerpts from interviews demonstrate how coding went from initial coding to more encompassing coding of the entire incident. In focused coding, I attempted to identify what was going on based upon the victims’ words, to what was actually going on at a much deeper level. The participants were avoiding situations that may put them at risk for further victimization. At the same time, this was changing the activities they were involved in, their activity level, and their behaviors. Participants who were once active and social, became sedentary and withdrawn. They were losing elements of their personalities that were once very present and becoming “withdrawn” and “isolated”.

Finally, theoretical coding was employed to analyze possible connections between categories identified in focused coding and lend theoretical conceptualization to the findings (Charmaz, 2006). For example, during further analysis, I went back to my initial codes and asked myself how I moved from initial codes of “refusing to participate” and “quitting” to “withdrawing” and “avoiding” and finally to “being isolated” and “withdrawing.” All of these codes, I found, indicated major changes in the activities and personalities of the participants. Many of them made comments such as “*I used to be really outgoing before (the cyberbullying),*” and “*I used to be really close to my family and spend time with them, but now I’d rather be alone.*” These comments, in addition to the initial and focused codes that were identified within the transcripts, led to the conclusion that the participants had changed. They had lost characteristics of their personalities, themselves, and thus, the theoretical code of “Losing Oneself” emerged.

It is during coding and analysis that Charmaz (2006) suggests delving back into the literature, though she does not specify an exact point in which to do so. She encourages weaving a discussion of the literature throughout the entire paper or project. Charmaz (2006) does not support delaying the literature in grounded theory (as Glaser recommends), but rather using the literature to “1) clarify your ideas; 2) make intriguing comparisons; 3) invite your reader to begin a theoretical discussion; and 4) show how and where your work fits or extends relevant literatures” (p. 167). Going back to the literature after analysis allows the researcher to situate his/her current work and note its contribution to the field.

Throughout the analysis, I was reminded of and frequently revisited the literature to compare my findings with that of other studies on cyberbullying. Since my study was the first of its kind in the cyberbullying literature, there was nothing specific with which to compare it, but I

did find that many of the sub-processes I found occurring in the cyberbullying cycle also occurred with traditional bullying and some sub-processes, such as withdrawing from activities, friends and family, isolating oneself, etc. were common among adolescents who had been victimized. I found that many of the categories constructed from this research fit well with the processes that were noted within the traditional bullying literature, and though the processes were not brought to the theoretical level, they also fit other victims' experiences with cyberbullying (though most of those experiences were explored quantitatively and did not provide as much rich description as this study).

NVivo 10 for Mac (NVivo) was used for analysis of the transcripts, after the transcripts were initially coded by hand (this is further discussed in Chapter Five). NVivo is qualitative data management software which allows the codes to be electronically entered, stored, sorted, and combined or collapsed. NVivo allowed the researcher to work very closely with the data, moving back and forth easily among transcripts, and allowed for extensive note taking on the transcripts. NVivo also provided for easy retrievability of codes and the related text and kept coding in an organized and collective location. As stated previously, initial coding was done by hand. Later, after training with NVivo software was completed, I uploaded the transcripts into NVivo. I used the hand-coded data and entered the same information into the software program. I then re-coded each transcript initially using NVivo, which allowed me to keep an electronic record of the codes and simply highlight areas that fit within an already identified code, or make a new code (also known as a node). I was then able to move codes or nodes into broader, more encompassing categories that contained multiple text excerpts. I continued this process for each level of coding.

Data saturation was noted after the tenth and eleventh interviews, when no new codes emerged and all currently identified codes were encompassed within the constructed and defined categories. After data saturation was achieved, the researcher began the process of sorting and diagramming codes to develop core categories and visualize the theory coming together. Additional interviews were conducted, for a total of 15 interviews, and it was again noted that no new codes or categories emerged. In order to ensure that the findings were representative of the experiences of the participants, the preliminary theory was shared with three participants during a second interview, and also with the dissertation chair. Upon completion of the second interviews, the PI reviewed transcripts for new or clarifying information. Recommendations for changing the wording of some processes, from the participants of the second interview and from the dissertation chair, were taken into consideration and modifications were made to include richer, more descriptive terminology that better fit the experiences of the victims. Consultation with the dissertation chair also resulted in a more well-designed theoretical model of the theory that emerged from the analysis, as well as the specific naming of the processes.

Human Subjects Protection

Human subjects protection approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Dakota as well as at Ohio University (the PI's place of employment), prior to recruitment.

Vulnerable Populations of Adolescents

Adolescents are considered a vulnerable population; victimized adolescents are an especially vulnerable population. The vulnerability of children is based on the premise of not having the mental capacity to thoroughly understand and consent to the research process, including potential risks and consequences of participation (Shi & Stevens, 2010). Thus, written

parental consent, as well as written assent from each adolescent participant was required. Additionally, the ability of a child to be free from coercion or a feeling of obligation to participate cannot go without careful consideration. It was important to ascertain, as part of the assent process, that participants were not coerced to participate by a parent or any other person. Prior to the beginning of each interview, the participant was informed of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study, as well as his/her rights as a participant. Verbal assent was obtained (in addition to previously collected parental consent and participant written assent), to ensure that the participant was informed and participation was voluntary. Each participant, after being verbally informed of the risks and benefits of the study and his/her rights, was asked if he/she had been coerced or pressured into participating. All participants denied coercion and stated that they were participating of their own will.

Informed Consent

Verbal parental and adolescent assent was obtained prior to the screening session, for participation in the screening session. Written parental consent forms were required for adolescent participation in the interview, as well as for audio recording of the interviews for transcription purposes (See Appendix F and G). Adult participants (age 18 and over) completed their own informed consent form (See Appendix H). As noted previously, unwillingness to provide consent for audio recording would have resulted in exclusion from the study. Consent forms were provided and included information about the purpose of the study, requirements for participation, potential risks and benefits of participation, strategies to protect participant confidentiality, mandatory reporting requirements, and contact information for the PI and institutional officials.

Parental consent forms were collected either at the conclusion of the screening interview (for those who were screened in person) or when the participant arrived for his/her interview (for those that were screened over the phone). The PI introduced herself to the parent and the participant, offered the opportunity for any additional questions or concerns to be shared, and written consent was obtained from the parent or legal guardian (See Appendix F). Written assent from the participant was obtained prior to commencement of the interview, to ensure that the participant understood the purpose of the study, risks and benefits of participation, and to confirm that the participant was not being coerced into participating (See Appendix G). Those indicating that they had been coerced or were not comfortable sharing their experience would have been released from the study, however, this was not found to be an issue with any of the study participants. Additionally, participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that they had the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. No participants verbalized or indicated a refusal to participate or to withdraw.

Benefits

This study will enhance understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying, thus leading to early recognition of cyberbullying behavior and victimization, prevention strategies, and prompt intervention techniques. Moreover, sharing one's personal cyberbullying experience may have given the participants an outlet to be heard, and may have resulted in a reflective experience that allowed the participants to see their experiences in a new way. In fact, multiple participants expressed their contentment in participating in the study, citing helping others and stopping cyberbullying as their goal. Participants were given a \$10 gift card for their participation in each interview.

Potential Risks

Risks associated with the study were anticipated to be minimal and not physical in nature. Participants were informed they may experience some uncomfortable emotions or stress while discussing the sensitive topic of cyberbullying. The PI, an experienced nurse, was available to provide emotional support during and after the interviews, if the participant had become distressed when discussing experiences related to cyberbullying. The participant had the opportunity to stop the interview at any point. The researcher observed the participant for emotional distress and the interviews would have been delayed or stopped if significant distress had occurred. This was not a factor in this study as participants did not indicate significant distress before, during, or after the interviews and no adverse reports to the interview were brought to the attention of the PI. Two participants did cry briefly during the interview, but this was an appropriate and normal reaction to discussing a difficult experience. The interview was briefly stopped during these brief crying episodes and the participant was questioned if he/she was okay and if he/she felt okay to continue with the interview. Both participants acknowledged that they were “okay” and that they were simply “sad” when remembering how they had been treated. The crying was not uncontrollable and neither participant appeared to be in emotional distress. If the cyberbullying was still occurring, participants may have been at some risk for retaliation for their involvement in the study; however, strategies were in place for protection of participant confidentiality. No reports of retaliation as a result of participation in the study were received. A referral list for local providers was made available for continued emotional and psychological support for those subjects who wish to further discuss their personal experiences with the topic. All participants denied the need to follow up with local mental health providers, so no lists were distributed.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Written consent forms and participant coding information (alphanumeric coding used in place of names) were stored securely within a locked filing cabinet in the office at the home of the researcher. The researcher was the only person with access to a key for the locked cabinet. Demographic data was removed from paper documents for further protection of confidentiality; this information was stored electronically and was secured on a password-protected jump drive that was locked in a different cabinet than the participant coding information for additional protection. Field notes and memos were documented electronically and stored on a separate password-protected jump drive.

All identifying information was removed from the audio file and interviews were transcribed using a professional transcription service. A confidentiality agreement form was obtained from the transcription service to ensure confidentiality for participants (See Appendix K). Electronic transcription files were stored electronically via a password-protected jump drive that was kept locked in the researcher's home office when not being utilized for completion of the study. Printed copies of the transcripts used for manual coding purposes were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office. Audio files and written transcripts only contained an alphanumeric code (e.g. A1) to indicate the participant who was sharing the information. No demographic data or identifying information was included on audio files or written transcripts. Again, the researcher was the only person with access to the locked cabinets and the password-protected devices. Consents and audio files will be kept until three years after completion of the research. At that time, written information will be destroyed by shredding of documents and electronic files will be erased.

Trustworthiness

Quantitative research designs rely on reliability and validity to support the credibility of the study; the credibility of qualitative research is reflected through trustworthiness (Polit & Beck, 2012). Trustworthiness implies that the findings are significant and worth acknowledging. Guba and Lincoln (1994) provide a commonly used framework for developing and assessing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, using five criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity.

Credibility

Credibility, in quantitative research, is most often associated with internal validity and demonstrating confidence in the truth of the findings (Polit & Beck, 2012). In qualitative research, credibility is also associated with confidence in the truth of the findings and involves carrying out steps to demonstrate the believability of the findings. Credibility in qualitative inquiry can be exhibited with numerous techniques. For this study, credibility was established by seeking and reaching theoretical saturation in the development of codes and categories.

Charmaz' constructivist approach to grounded theory "seeks to bring about mutual understanding through collaboration between researcher and participant" (Hunter et al., 2011a, p. 8). Charmaz (2006) strives to do this through constant co-construction and reconstruction of data. Charmaz posits that researchers can define ideas and interpret data through close study, comparison, and memo writing. Throughout the entire process, including interviewing, data collection, and data analysis, the researcher kept notes (memos) to capture thoughts, identify new ideas, make connections, and bring up new questions and directions for study. Constant comparison was employed as a method for ensuring that data was explored from many different angles and interpretations were clearly documented. Triangulation can be used to show various

constructs of reality, which supports the basis of symbolic interactionism in grounded theory research, and was accomplished by linking the various forms of data collected during the study (Siegle, n.d.). Interviews (narrative data), documented observations (field notes), and reflective notes (memos) were analyzed to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Within qualitative research, descriptions of a phenomenon should be vivid enough to provide readers a clear perception of their experience (Glaser, 1967). This faithfulness to description is indicative of the credibility of a grounded theory study. Concurrent data collection and cross-checking among data will assist the researcher in ensuring credibility of the study. Audio files were transcribed verbatim. The PI listened to every audio file twice, and verified the content in the written transcript for accuracy. Any transcription errors were corrected on the transcripts (these errors were minimal and were due to static heard on the audio file, murmured responses from participants, and typographical errors). Additionally, the researcher requested feedback from participants by presenting the theory and asking “is this how it is?” As such, member-checking with participants was used in this study to ensure co-construction of the theory, correct errors, and summarize the findings (Siegle, n.d.). This took place during the second interview, when preliminary findings were shared with participants. Participants indicated that they found the emergent theory to “hit the nail on the head” in regards to their cyberbullying experience. Participants agreed that they had indeed lost themselves during the cyberbullying experience, agreed with the various ways of coping, and indicated that though they “hadn’t really thought of it that way”, they had come to find themselves after the cyberbullying was resolved. Finally, peer debriefing with someone outside of the study, such as the student’s advisor or mentor, assisted in providing an outsider’s perspective and a “devil’s advocate” approach. The advisor for this study was consulted regularly about the development of the theory

and provided various perspectives and thoughts on the matter, which led to further analysis and resulted in a more descriptive theory.

Dependability

The second criterion of Guba and Lincoln's (1994) framework for trustworthiness evaluates the stability of data over time and across similar conditions (as cited in Polit & Beck, 2012). The qualitative research study must show that with similar participants in a similar context, the findings of the study would hold true. Dependability can be difficult to demonstrate without replicating the study, but an audit of records kept during the study, including transcripts, memos, journals, etc., can offer a testament to the dependability of the findings, if further support is needed (Polit & Beck, 2012). Transcripts, memos, and field notes, as previously described and as further discussed in the following paragraphs, will be kept locked in a secure location for three years and will provide witness to the processes that occurred during the completion of the study.

Confirmability

Siegle holds that "an adequate trail should be left to enable the auditor to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the inquiry" (n.d., para. 5). Confirmability can be best supported with strong auditability. Auditability involves maintaining a thorough record of methodological decisions within a qualitative study, including sources of data and sampling techniques, and analytics (Siegle, n.d.). For grounded theory studies, memos are often the best record of these decisions as well as the thought processes behind these decisions (Cooney, 2011). Memos are essential to grounded theory methods and are not just notes, but are research tools (Lempert, 2007). Throughout this study, the researcher maintained comprehensive memos of emerging thoughts and findings and an electronic journal describing personal values and beliefs and decision

rationales, etc. Through these memos, the researcher was able to “explore, explicate and theorize” categories and emerging patterns (Lempert, 2007, p. 245). These notes provided a trail of thoughts for how research decisions were made, how data emerged from the interviews, and how categories were identified and described. This information was reviewed later on to help explain the development of the overall theory and ensure that the findings accurately reflect the participants’ voices and not the biases and presumptions of the researcher (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Transferability

In quantitative research, generalizability is an important concept. Findings should be generalizable to similar populations in comparable conditions; this is best achieved through random sampling. Qualitative research, however, does not use random sampling and “does not maintain that knowledge gained from one context will have relevance for other contexts or for the same context in another time frame” (Siegle, n.d., para. 3). Generalizability is not the goal of qualitative research. In qualitative research, it is important for a study to have transferability, or be applicable in other settings or groups. For grounded theory, transferability is generally viewed as “fittingness”. Fittingness, according to Beck (1993), demonstrates that non-participants in similar situations are able to find meaning in the theory. The reader will determine the transferability or fittingness to his/her situation. The researcher’s responsibility is to provide rich, descriptive data (thick description) to enable readers to make a decision about transferability (Polit & Beck, 2012). This study offers the reader rich descriptions, as provided by the participants, of their experiences and the context of those experiences, demographic data, and descriptions of the research setting with the findings. This information will allow readers to determine if the theory is fitting in similar situations (Cooney, 2011).

Authenticity

“Authenticity refers to the extent to which researchers fairly and faithfully show a range of realities” (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 585). Authenticity pulls on the readers’ senses, inviting them to experience the life of the participant vicariously and as such, provide the reader with a better understanding of the experiences being shared (Polit & Beck, 2012). Authenticity was provided in this study with the use of thick descriptions and vivid explorations of the participants’ experiences. These descriptions were checked with participants to ensure that the researcher has correctly interpreted their experiences. Additionally, theoretical sampling was employed with the goal of representing diverse experiences, while allowing for full development of the categories and themes that emerged from the analysis. Once saturation was believed to have occurred during the tenth and eleventh interviews, I noted that only one participant had been male. Thus, I sought out more interviews with male participants to ensure that male participants did not have varied experiences outside of the categories that had been constructed. The thirteenth interview was conducted with a participant that identified as bisexual, which was a diverse experience from the previous participants and the final two interviews were conducted with male participants. All three of the final interviews further saturated the categories that had been developed, and no new codes or themes emerged. The fourteenth participant was the only participant who had not yet left the cyberbullying cycle, however, his experience up to that point was represented by the categories already constructed. Thus, the findings from these additional participants helped authenticate the previously identified theory, and expanded its meaning through additional varied experiences.

Chapter Three provided an explanation of grounded theory research, the different grounded theory approaches, and the rationale for choosing Constructivist Grounded Theory as

the guiding methodology for this study. Additionally, Chapter Three included a comprehensive description of the grounded theory methods utilized in this study, from designing the study to completing data analysis. Chapter Four will provide a detailed look at the findings, and an explanation of the theory and model that emerged.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to develop a Grounded Theory that explains the processes involved in cyberbullying from the perspective of those who have been victimized. One-on-one, audio-recorded interviews were conducted, the transcripts of those interviews were analyzed using Constructivist Grounded Theory methods (Charmaz, 2006) and codes, themes, and categories were identified. This chapter will provide details of the findings from those interviews and explicate the Grounded Theory that emerged from those findings.

Sample

The final sample size needed to reach theoretical saturation was 15 participants, ranging between 14 and 20 years of age. The mean age of participants was 16.4 years. Thirteen percent of the participants (n=2) identified themselves as “other” on the demographic questionnaire classifying race/ethnicity, thus the ethnic/racial minority rate was near the original 15% diversity rate sought for the study. All other participants self-reported as Caucasian. Participants were 80% (n=12) female and 20% (n=3) male, with no participants reporting as transgender or “other.” Though recruitment efforts were restricted to the four-county area initially identified, not all participants were born and raised in the rural Appalachian area. Fifty-three percent (n=8) of the participants reported growing up outside of the area, thus enhancing the diversity of the sample.

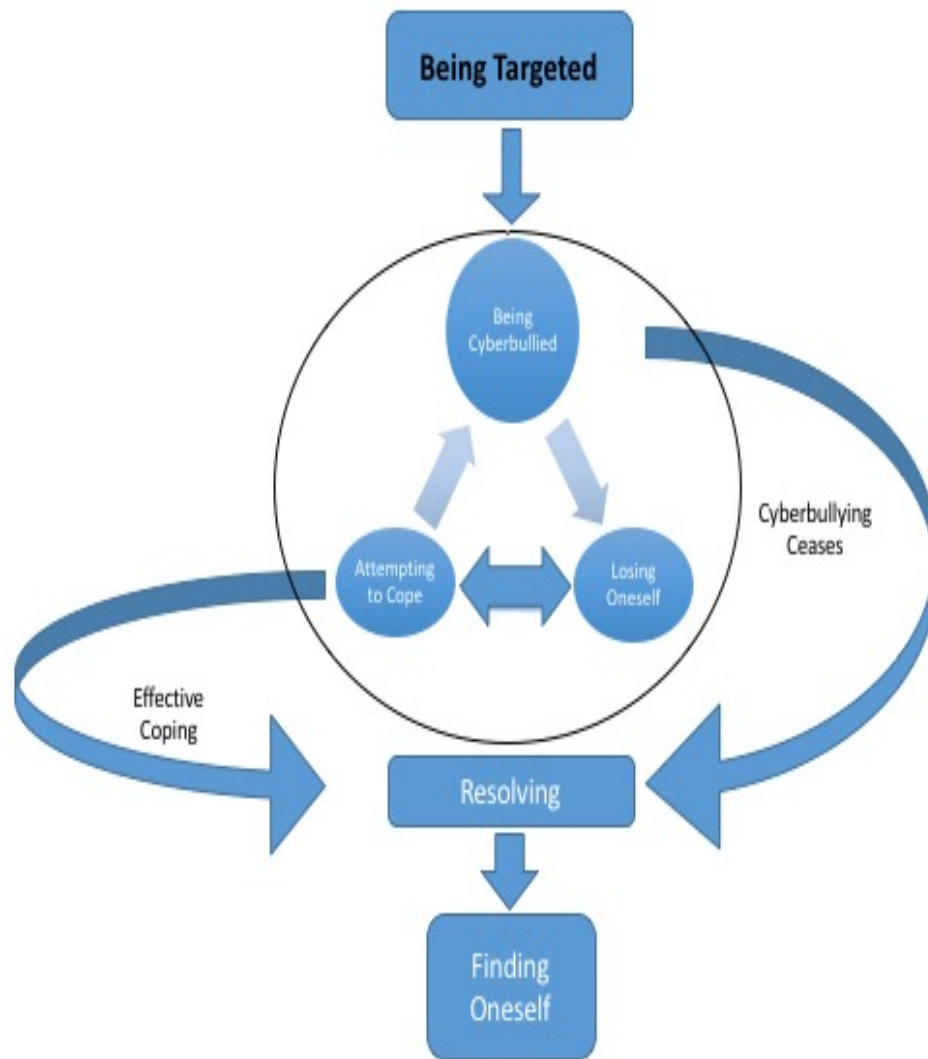


Figure 4. Emerging from Cyberbullying

Emerging from Cyberbullying

The research questions for this study were focused on the processes that occur as cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends, including antecedents and consequences, and coping strategies used by victims of cyberbullying. Emerging from Cyberbullying materialized as the core category from this research and is represented in the theoretical model in Figure 4. Based on interviews with victims of cyberbullying, it became evident early in data analysis that they

progressed through multiple social processes during their cyberbullying experiences. Victims described Being Targeted for various reasons and Being Cyberbullied through many venues and methods. As the cyberbullying occurred, participants became trapped in a cycle of Being Cyberbullied, Losing Oneself, and Attempting to Cope. As the cyberbullying continued, participants continued to be unwillingly engaged in the experience and attempted to cope with the cyberbullying in many different ways. If attempts at coping were not effective, the victim continued Losing Oneself (experiencing personality changes and losing qualities that were previously part of their self-identity) in the process. If attempts at coping were effective, or the cyberbullying ceased for whatever reason, the participants reported moving into a stage of Resolving the cyberbullying and ultimately, Finding Oneself. Based on accounts from the victims, it was only through effective coping or cessation of the cyberbullying that they could escape the cyberbullying cycle, experience resolution, and find themselves again.

Seven primary processes were involved in Emerging from Cyberbullying, as illuminated by the participants' stories: Being Targeted; Being Cyberbullied; Losing Oneself; Attempting to Cope; Resolving; Finding Oneself. Proceeding through these processes, the victims emerged from being cyberbullied as newer versions of themselves (Finding Oneself), having evolved throughout the experience. For all but one participant (who was still being cyberbullied and had not moved into Resolving at the time of the interview), the cyberbullying experience left the individual feeling able to better defend him or herself and empowered to stand up for and protect others against bullying and cyberbullying.

Each process is identified and described in the sections that follow. In addition, the overall context of Emerging from Cyberbullying is first described. Excerpts from participant

interviews are provided to support the emergence of each process. Interpretation of the findings are not presented in this chapter, but will be incorporated into the discussion in Chapter 5.

Context

“In order to analyze social processes, one must take into account the context of the situation” (Charmaz, 2006, p.131). Thus, the findings of this study must include findings describing the context (time, place, and culture) in which the experience of cyberbullying occurred from the victims’ perspectives.

Time

A key piece to the context of the cyberbullying experience was the age at which the experience began and ended, and how long the experience lasted. The average age at the time of the cyberbullying experience was 14.6 years, and all of the participants interviewed were within four years of the cyberbullying ending; the mean length of time since the cyberbullying took place was 2.3 years. One participant reported being cyberbullied at the time of the interview.

The participants reported cyberbullying victimization between the ages of 9 and 19, with 87% (n=13) being cyberbullied during the ages of 12-16. Many of the cyberbullying experiences took place between fifth and eighth grades, with 20% (n=3) of participants reporting that their experiences began as young as third grade and 20% (n=3) reporting that their experiences occurred as late as ninth or tenth grade. Only one participant reported being cyberbullied in eleventh grade and one reported that her cyberbullying experience began and ended within a one-month period during her freshman year of college. On average, the cyberbullying experiences lasted nearly two and a half years, with 13% (n=2) participants reporting that they were cyberbullied for five years or longer.

Participants reported that the cyberbullying took place both during the school year and during summer break, with most reporting that the experiences took place during the school year, or were worse during the school year. Participants reported that they believed they were cyberbullied during times when the perpetrator had “down” time (free time).

Place

This study took place in the Appalachian region of Southeastern Ohio; however, not all participants were native to this area of the country and some did not live in the area during the time the cyberbullying took place. Aside from geographical location, participants reported that for the most part, the cyberbullying did not take place during school hours. However, face-to-face bullying was often occurring simultaneously and this would most often take place during school hours, with cyberbullying following during the evening hours and on the weekends. One 15-year-old male participant described traditional school bullying, including taunting and intimidating, following him home and online:

“At recess, kids would come up to me and start saying stuff to me and corner me.

Then, when I got home, that’s when the cyberbullying started.”

Participants reported receiving or reading harassing messages from various locations, with cyberbullies having the technological means to reach their victims across geographical barriers. Participants were cyberbullied at home, in their cars, and even at extracurricular events. Wherever and whenever they had access to the Internet or a cell phone, they were at risk for cyberbullying to occur. The victimization occurred through the use of multiple venues, including social networking sites on the Internet (MySpace and Facebook), text messages, telephone and voicemail messages, as well as via applications such as SnapChat and Instagram. More information about the venues used will be described in the process, *Being Cyberbullied*.

Culture

It is important to take into consideration that adolescents and young adults were the population of study. Stereotypically, adolescents are egocentric. Consequently, the adolescent is not only self-absorbed, but believe that others are also obsessed with his/her behavior and appearance (Elkind, 1967). Additionally, all of the participants fell into the Millennial Generation, which has a culture all its own. According to Twenge (2013), Millennials are usually described as the “me” generation, in which they are noted to be very self-focused and frequently self-centered. Thus, the characteristics typical of the Millennial adolescent (self-absorption) may further exacerbate the egocentrism of normal adolescence. During adolescence, many physical, emotional, and psychosocial changes are occurring. This was clearly noted by one participant who stated:

“I was at that really awkward phase of intermediate school. This was like the beginning of our year changing, your attitude (developing) and you’re getting really mouthy; there is a lot of stuff going on.”

The culture in middle school is centered around finding one’s identity and recognizing one’s values and ideals (Erikson, 1959). As such, participants struggled with finding themselves while they were being marginalized and victimized by their peers and worried about what others thought, or might think of them. One participant describes doing things with a friend who was a poor role model just to fit in:

“And I honestly do things- it’s kind of an acceptance thing. So, I even told her (my friend) ...This isn’t a good idea, all this stuff, and I still think because of all my experiences before, I still look for acceptance.”

Another participant described feeling not only fear, but guilt when she was being cyberbullied, feeling perhaps what was happening might be her fault:

“Fear and kind of guilt, like maybe I did something wrong, you know? I don't know because why would these people say that to me if it wasn't my fault?”

This research demonstrates the dynamic nature of cyberbullying. Each experience varies but there were similarities in the context. This study found that cyberbullying was occurring during a pivotal developmental period for adolescents; a time when many changes are taking place physically, emotionally, and socially. As adolescents seek to find their place among their peers and society as a whole, they may be outcast and mocked by their peers. They may believe that they are at fault or that they did something wrong to deserve being treated poorly and this may affect the victim's self-esteem, overall mental health, and ultimately, their transition into young adulthood.

Being Targeted

Being Targeted is the first process identified in the adolescent victim's experience with cyberbullying. The participants of this study were the objects of malicious behavior directed at them by one or more individuals. While participants recognized that they were targeted, the reasons why they were targeted were not always clear. According to Juvonen and Graham (2014), targeting for bullying of any type is rarely random. So what factors increased the victim's risk of being targeted? Is the targeting really based on what type of reactions to the cyberbullying are sought by the cyberbully? (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). One participant simply described being an unsuspecting target:

“Again, really looking back, I didn't do anything wrong. I was just an easy target.”

Three categories emerged as the reasons participants believed they were targeted for cyberbullying victimization and are regarded as antecedents to the cyberbullying experience: Being Different; Show of Power; and Out of the Blue.

Being Different

Participants, in an attempt to explore the antecedents to the cyberbullying experience, were asked what they believe led up to the cyberbullying. Most participants reported being targeted for cyberbullying because they were different or unique in some way. In some cases, the victim was viewed as Being Different because he or she did not fit the typical gender stereotype—for example, a soft-spoken boy who preferred dancing to full contact sports, or a girl who liked to keep her hair short and avoided frilly clothing. Other cases involved victims who were perceived as different based on an appearance that they believed the cyberbully found unacceptable, such as dressing differently, being considered too heavy or too thin, or not being considered financially wealthy. A 14-year-old female participant summed it up by stating,

“They’d make fun of my hair because my hair was really short and they all had this long, really pretty hair and they would make fun of me just because I was not like them.”

One male adolescent participant exemplified being targeted because he was not a “typical” boy:

“It’s because I’m a dancer and I do that kind of stuff and they think I’m an outcast because it’s typical for boys to play sports.”

The participants did not necessarily believe that these differences were negative aspects about themselves, but rather believed that the cyberbully found their behavior or appearance unacceptable by his/her standards. Thus, they became a target of the cyberbully’s aggression.

Show of Power

Some participants perceived that they were targeted because their cyberbully was demonstrating a “show of power”. As youth progress into adolescence, developmental psychologist Erik Erikson purports that they enter the stage of Identity versus Role Confusion (Fleming, 2004). In this stage, adolescents may question themselves about who they are and how they fit into the bigger picture of society and the universe. They seek to establish a sense of self and as such, may experiment with various attitudes, behaviors, styles, etc. (Fleming, 2004). In many of the participants’ stories, the victim perceived that the cyberbully was attempting to publicly display his or her authority, seek revenge, avenge for a friend, respond intensely to feelings of jealousy towards a victim, or simply demonstrate his or her dominant status in the social hierarchy.

One 14-year-old female, when asked what prompted the cyberbullying, stated:

“It was probably because I took my friend to the movies. Apparently she (the bully) got mad because I didn’t take the other girl (to the movies) or that I took my friend away from the other girl.”

This is an example of cyberbullying in an attempt to avenge a perceived wrong of a friend and is an attempt by the cyberbully to show her power in controlling or handling the situation. The participant felt as though she had done nothing wrong to prompt this attack, but the cyberbully took this as an opportunity to demonstrate power over the victim, by seeking vengeance.

Jealousy has been indicated as one reason for traditional bullying behaviors (Thornberg, Rosenqvist, & Johansson, 2012; Qing, 2010) and was also perceived by participants in this study as a reason to cyberbully. One participant indicated that she had won a local pageant for teen girls and perceived that her peers cyberbullied her because they were jealous:

“I was in a pageant, and I was in a dress and they told me to send a picture of it, so I didn’t know what was going on. So I was like, ‘okay’ and they sent back pictures in fake crowns and weird dresses to make fun of me.”

Displaying social dominance was a third way that cyberbullies demonstrated a “show of power.” In an attempt to project social power to members of a group, adolescents may feel the need to belittle or control someone else (Aleude et al., 2008; Kuntsen, 2011). One female participant reported that her mom’s decision to prevent her from going to a friend’s New Year’s Eve party resulted in years of torment, bullying, and cyberbullying. The friend, who was very popular among her peers and had a controlling (and equally as popular among adults) mother, was offended and took the party rejection as an insult. After skipping out on the party, per her mother’s direction, the participant described the situation as:

“It was like every single person that I had thought I had a friendship with now thought that I thought I was too cool to come to her New Year’s party. I don’t know why, but it just insulted the mom. I don’t know if it was because she thought that this new girl didn’t want to come to her party and that meant that I was talking about her – I don’t know.”

In this case, the cyberbully was attempting to publicly display her influence over the victim to avenge what the cyberbully perceived as an insult or personal challenge to herself and demonstrate her dominant status in the social hierarchy. The victim’s perception was that the popular girl just could not accept that anyone would want to miss out on her party. The victim saw it as a, “How dare you? Who do you think you are? I’ll show you what happens when you reject me!” response.

Out of the Blue

The remaining participants, who didn't perceive their cyberbullying as occurring as a result of others viewing them as Being Different or as a Show of Power, reported that the cyberbullying began randomly and that they do not know why they were targeted. One female participant, when asked if there was an event or situation that occurred and possibly prompted the cyberbullying, shook her head "no" and stated:

"No. It just started out of the blue."

Another female participant reported being cyberbullied by peers she thought were her friends:

"It was out of the blue. I had thought that these girls were my friends. I had known them for a few years and then the tables had turned."

Though these participants, unlike others, did not have a reason as to why they were targeted and cyberbullied, they described moving through the cyberbullying experience in the same manner as the other participants. There was no indication from their interview data that indicated that they struggled through the experience any more or less than other victims, and were still able to move to resolution and finding themselves.

Being Cyberbullied

Once victims were targeted for cyberbullying, the malicious attacks began. All victims reported that the cyberbullying began without notice and that they were taken by surprise. In some situations, the experience began with face-to-face or "traditional" bullying, such as name-calling or physical touching and hitting, and then moved to an electronic format and became cyberbullying. Other times the cyberbullying occurred first and traditional bullying occurred after. In most cases, the participants reported the cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying at some point occurring simultaneously, regardless of which occurred first.

There were many ways to describe the cyberbullying experience including the venues utilized and the victims' perceptions of the cyberbully. Each participant had a unique experience, but many similarities emerged in the collective experience.

Venues

Participants of the study reported various venues in which they experienced cyberbullying. Facebook was reported as a venue in nearly 87% (n=13) of participant experiences, with both anonymous and known cyberbullies posting harassing messages and pictures to the victims and on pages developed specifically for the purpose of attacking the victim. One victim reported having two Facebook pages created by her peers for the purpose of making fun of her, and described being completely stunned that the cyberbullies went through so much trouble to harass her. The participant stated:

“The first one got deactivated, then they made a new one and then that kind of led into the second and third one. I guess they got bored but-it sounds crazy. It’s so much easier to do it to my face because they needed to go through the hassle of setting up the fake Facebook account, setting up the page and commenting hateful stuff. It’s just astounding!”

More than half of participants reported cyberbullying occurring via an electronic application such as Instagram (used primarily for posting pictures and short videos), and SnapChat (used for sharing video and picture-based stories). Electronic applications (apps), commonly used for brief communications among adolescents, were never described as being the sole means for the cyberbullying, but were used in combination with other venues, most commonly in addition to Facebook. SnapChat is unique in its use as a venue for cyberbullying as those receiving “Snaps” (pictures or up to 10-second-long videos) will not know what the

message contains unless they choose to open it, thus compounding the surprise factor. Snaps can also be set by the sender to disappear within one second, leaving the recipient with no proof the message was ever sent. One 14-year-old female participant described a cyberbullying experience with SnapChat and how she attempted to cope by ignoring the messages:

“Because they know (when) you open them, I don’t usually open them till later because I don’t want them to know. As soon as you open them it’s like they want to send more and more and more. After the first one, if I find out what it’s about, then I’ll just stop opening them.”

Instagram was another common application used for cyberbullying with one-third (n=5) of participants reporting cyberbullying via this venue. Instagram is used for the posting of photos and up to 15-second-long videos and unless set to private viewing, is open for anyone to view. One participant reported using Instagram multiple times daily and described various cyberbullying experiences by complete strangers on her fan pages. A fan page is an Instagram account set up for the purpose of sharing pictures, collages, and fan-created videos and unique photo edits of celebrities, Internet celebrities, or athletes. The participant described her experience:

“I run a fan page and one person got on there and told me that I was a stupid stalker and that they (the celebrity) were never going to pay attention to me and called me a “B” word and then I blocked him. Then a girl went on there and told me that I was ugly and that the person I made a fan page for would never like me. Another girl got in an argument with me over the fan page and told me I was rude.”

Other less reported, but notable, venues for cyberbullying included text messaging (texting), anonymous phone calls and voicemails, and Twitter. One participant reported being very fearful after receiving harassing calls and voicemails from an anonymous male voice:

“One night, I got a phone call and it was from an unknown number. I answered and it was these guys and they said my name a few times and then I just hung up on them because I figured it was just a prank. They called back and I didn't answer and then they left a voicemail. Before I could check the voicemail, they called back again. So, then I just let it go. I didn't want to talk to them. They left about three voicemails and in the voicemails they told me that I was fat and that if I died nobody would care, and that I was a stupid piece of shit and all of these terrible things, and it scared me because they sounded like older guys.”

Perceptions of the Cyberbully

Victims used various words to describe cyberbullies, but one word was found to be descriptive in each experience: mean. The victims perceived these cyberbullies to be motivated by their own hatred, unwilling to accept others' perceived differences, and driven by their own selfish agendas. Some participants attempted to provide an explanation as to why others were mean:

“They probably have life issues that they won't admit or deal with and it makes them angry to know that there are people out there that their life is just so happy and that their (own) life is so sad. They just want to be mean to others so their (victim's) life can be just as sad as theirs (the bully).”

Another participant described an experience in which her friends were mean, but they tried to portray it as being in jest:

“I thought that they were going to be my friends and it ended up they were always mean to me. They claimed that they were joking but it was stuff that was taken too far as a joke.”

Multiple participants described cyberbullies as being cowardly and willing to make attacks anonymously or from behind the computer screen, but not face to face. One participant stated:

“It’s very cowardly in my opinion. You hide behind a text message and you can’t say something to my face. (They) talk behind my back in person and I see (them) saying things but (they’d) rather address them over a text message.”

Another participant described her cyberbullies as not being brave enough to bully her in person or to make themselves known:

“They wouldn’t have the guts to show themselves to my face and had to be cowardly and do this anonymously on a social networking site.”

Losing Oneself

As participants described their experiences with cyberbullying, it became clear that they were no longer the same individuals they were before the cyberbullying began. This category was consistent among all participants and was titled: Losing Oneself. Participants of this study described the changes in their activities, self-concept, values, family dynamics, and personalities, with many of these changes being consequences of being a victim of cyberbullying. Some participants reported intentionally joining or, conversely, withdrawing from activities in order to escape from the pain or redirect their thoughts to something more positive. Others described changes in their personalities and self-concept during the cyberbullying experience, such as

losing self-confidence and being less outgoing and social. One participant stated that she lost all desire to interact with others during the cyberbullying experience:

“I remember I was always stressed out all the time and I was really snappy with people. I didn’t like socializing at all. I didn’t like doing anything.”

Other participants reported questioning their own judgment and actions. One participant explained how she suddenly felt as though her joy in socializing was gone and her relationships with her “friends” were not genuine.

“Suddenly I was just second-guessing myself all the time, which is not something I would normally do. I just didn't feel enjoyment out of being around the kids that I was normally with. Everything just suddenly felt very fake to me.”

Still, others found that their overall family dynamics changed as they either pulled away or grew closer to their family members during the cyberbullying. All participants, in various ways, described losing their sense of safety and privacy by not being able to hide from the victimization, even in their own bedrooms. Some participants reported feeling trapped and intimidated, while others reported feeling like they were living under a microscope, as if their every move was made under the watchful eye of his/her peers. One participant conveyed feeling broken, as if who she once was was no longer whole. She described displaying a toughness on the outside but stated:

“Honestly, I just said all these things just to show that I was still – you know, I was tough even though I was so broken inside.”

Although each participant had a different experience with cyberbullying, every participant reported being changed in a negative way and losing positive characteristics of themselves during the process of being cyberbullied, thus substantiating the category of Losing Oneself.

Attempting to Cope

As the cyberbullying continued and the participants reported changes in their behaviors, activities, personal relationships, and personalities, they all began making attempts to cope with the cyberbullying. Methods for coping were quite varied among participants and many participants used a combination of coping methods. Some of those coping methods were positive in nature, while others were not. Overall, five common ways of attempting to cope emerged: Disengaging; Being Self-Destructive; Focusing; Seeking Support; and Actively Opposing.

Negative Coping Methods

Disengaging. Many participants reported that in order to deal with the cyberbullying, they isolated themselves, withdrew from extracurricular activities, friends, and family members, opted to skip out on social activities, and spent significantly more time alone. In essence, they disengaged from other people and once loved activities. One participant described withdrawing from sports and isolating herself from everyone and everything:

“Before, I was into sports because I love softball so I was in that for a while, but when I started getting bullied for my weight I didn’t play anymore. I was in soccer which I don’t really play anymore because of my weight. I used to be outgoing; I used to be outside a lot, and now I just kind of stay in my room all the time. I don’t really do anything.”

Another participant similarly described isolating himself and turning to “dark” music to cope, though he later admitted that he was not sure if it was really helping him to deal with the situation.

“The more I get cyberbullied, the more I push people away. So, when I get home I will just put my headphones in and sit in my closet with the lights off. Since this summer my music has been getting darker and sadder as it goes on.”

One male participant felt so alone he even admitting to faking illness to avoid going to school:

“I was all alone. I can’t count how many days I pretended to be sick just so I couldn’t go to school. So I didn’t have to go to school and I didn’t have to face everyone there.”

Being Self-Destructive. One of the most significant and concerning negative outcomes of cyberbullying and failed attempts to cope in other ways, resulted in participants coping by *Being Self-Destructive*. This category included resorting to cutting, drug or alcohol use, precarious behaviors (such as sneaking out of the house, lying to parents, and attending unchaperoned parties), and even suicidal thoughts as a way to escape from the cyberbullying victimization. Thankfully, this was not a frequently reported method of attempting to cope and only a few participants of this study reported these behaviors.

One participant reported thoughts that she had experienced years earlier during her cyberbullying experience but never revealed to anyone:

“After everyone was so mean to me, I honestly did not – I don’t want to say I didn’t want to live anymore because it’s just too much, but I wasn’t happy with myself. I thought, no one else is happy with me so I started cutting. I thought it would take the pain, like visible pain away – take life from the emotional pain, but it really didn’t. It didn’t. Nothing helped me feel like I was wanted or accepted.”

The participant stopped cutting almost as quickly as she started, but still has visible scars that are generally covered by clothing. Fortunately, once she realized the cutting did not alleviate her emotional pain, she reported never having the desire to self-harm again.

A female participant who struggled with depression, isolation, and not eating after the cyberbullying began, described never feeling as horrible as she did during her cyberbullying experience, and questioned if it was even worth continuing to try to live through the pain:

“I remember going without dinner for a whole week because of it, and then – and then even times I had thought of suicide. I mean I never told my mom about it but it was just – It was horrible. I had never felt like that in my life. I have never been so upset, like ever, until then.”

Another participant described similar feelings. She described feeling so low and alone that she considered taking her own life:

“I wanted to kill myself... I just wanted the world to end because I didn’t even want to go and face them (the cyberbullies).”

Thankfully, these two participants worked through their feelings and did not attempt suicide. As they continued to work through the victimization, finding better ways to cope, they no longer had feelings of self-harm or suicidal ideation. Neither of the participants reported these thoughts to adults or friends at the time, but both did finally reveal previous thoughts of suicide to their mothers many months after the cyberbullying had ended. It was the mothers, after noticing many changes in their child’s behavior and personality during the cyberbullying experience, who inquired as to what was taking place. Upon becoming aware of the significance of the victimization, the participants reported that both mothers intervened and provided emotional support to their daughters. Both participants denied having suicidal thoughts after the cyberbullying ended, and denied recently or currently experiencing suicidal thoughts or any feelings of emotional distress.

Positive Coping Methods

Focusing. In contrast to those participants who quit extracurricular activities and isolated themselves from others during their cyberbullying experiences, other participants coped by finding something to focus on to take their mind off of the victimization. They forced themselves

to block out their negative thoughts and focused their time on finding a positive outlet for expression. One male participant found music to be a positive focus and became involved in percussion in the school band:

“I definitely listen to music – and music was kind of my own way of going to somebody else. I had started band and just setting there, just playing a beat, that kind of helped. That kind of distracted me from everything. But drumming now... it’s an escape for me because I can be myself. I can not worry about what people are going to say to me.”

A female participant found solace in taking up a new sport and avoided activities that caused her stress:

“I never did anything on the weekends. I played golf. I ended up winning the boy’s conference all four years in high school, so I sort of like channeled my time.”

The same participant also found a positive outlet in artistic expression:

“I would paint because that’s what I do. So I would do things that I thought would make me better and I just kind of tuned it out.”

Seeking Support. Though some participants attempted to cope by working out things on their own and spending time alone, others worked at connecting with other people to find comfort and support during times of distress. One female participant who was cyberbullied in high school reported turning to friends and family for support during her cyberbullying experience:

“I wouldn’t let myself be alone, because I didn’t want to feel like I didn’t have anybody there. Whenever I was by my parents or my family, or my boyfriend at the time, I think that’s when I was secure about it and I knew that there were people that cared about me.”

An older adolescent participant found that connecting with her parents and her coach was a great support during her cyberbullying experience:

“I would say I had a good support system. I think that without that, it would have been hard. I didn’t have to have all the weight on my shoulders, and the stress, and upset feelings, and things like that, and they could hold some of it for me and help me through it. I think that was huge to help me cope.”

The findings indicate that participants wanted to share what was going on when they were cyberbullied, but they did not necessarily seek intervention or advice; they simply wanted to have a voice and feel supported by those around them. David Elkind provides great insight into the mind of the adolescent. Elkind (1967) describes that one consequence of adolescent egocentrism is how adolescents “believe that others are as admiring or as critical of him/her as he/she is of himself/herself” (p. 1030). However, this is not generally the case as other adolescents are so wrapped up in themselves that they are too busy to be focused on others. Regardless, the adolescents may still believe that they are playing to an audience and they seek to feel accepted and fit in (Elkind, 1967; Fleming, 2004; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Seeking out emotional support without requesting intervention corresponds with the need to feel supported and accepted.

Unfortunately, not all of the participants who reached out to others found the support they needed. For example, an older female participant enlisted the support of her mother to fight against the cyberbullying. However, her mother did not support her the way she had hoped and instead, left the participant on her own to handle the cyberbullying. This left the teen feeling even more helpless and alone:

“I talked to my mom once. She scoffed and laughed and said I was making a mountain

out of molehill.”

Another female participant had a similar reaction from her dad, but instead of attempting to understand the situation or just dismissing it altogether, he put the blame on his daughter:

“My dad tells me I’m weak and its my fault. (He said) I need to stand up for myself, otherwise it’s just going to get worse and they can see that I’m weak, so it’s my fault.”

The same female participant sought support from her mother, seeing her as the last option for getting help. Initially the mother wasn’t sure of how to respond, but eventually took the issue to school personnel:

“At first, she (wanted to) see where it would go and then whenever I told her it was getting bad, she talked to the one counselor guy that I talked to. Then she told the seventh grade teacher and then the counselor, and he told our other counselor and now she knows.”

The participant, however, did not feel that involving the school helped the situation. She reported that the cyberbullies were always well-behaved in the presence of adults and the cyberbullying continued even after school personnel were informed. Ultimately, the lack of support and intervention by adults led this teen to separate herself from her parents and family, isolating herself, and being left to cope on her own.

A male participant shared his cyberbullying experience with his stepfather, who is a police officer, but the participant was surprised by the adult’s advice and didn’t agree with it:

“I told my stepdad about it and he tells me to punch them in the face. I don’t feel like violence is a good thing because I’m ‘noodle’ arms and I’d get beat up.”

Instead, the teen was left to deal with the issue on his own as no other advice or alternatives were suggested, and the cyberbullying continued.

Actively Opposing. A few participants took to Actively Opposing the cyberbullying by standing up for him/herself and speaking up against the victimization. Unlike those who attempted to cope with the cyberbullying on their own, only seeking emotional support, not advice or intervention, from friends and family members, a less common strategy was for victims to actively opposing the cyberbullying. Participants who actively opposed their cyberbullying spoke up against the behavior in an attempt to stop it or enlisted others to speak up or intervene on their behalf. Sometimes this approach was successful; sometimes it was not. Furthermore, this attempt to cope had both positive and negative impacts on the victim, depending on the outcome.

After repeatedly receiving harassing and threatening messages from her cyberbullies, one teen responded via text:

“I was like, this has got to stop and I texted them and I said ‘I honestly don’t know why you guys are doing this. I don’t know what I’ve ever done to you guys, but you guys are acting like really bad friends right now’.”

Later, she stated that she just stopped trying to be friends with them at all:

“I stopped. I said if you guys are going to treat me like this I’m done and I remember sitting in the back of the classroom by myself.”

After this event, the victim limited her contact with the cyberbullies and though the victimization lessened and eventually stopped, the decreased self-confidence, isolation, and sadness, that were a result of the cyberbullying, continued for months until the victim found another group of friends who supported and encouraged her.

Another female participant addressed her cyberbully face-to-face at school, during lunch, when the cyberbully sat down at the same table as the victim. The victim called her out for being a coward:

“She sat down at the same table with me, and didn’t say a single word to me. I said, ‘You are so bad over the keyboard, but you can’t even say anything to me in real life? This is a joke.’ ‘You said you’re a badass over the keyboard, saying all these things to me but you can’t even look me in the eye right now and say anything.’”

The participant reported that the cyberbully gave no response to the confrontation at school and engaged with other peers at the lunch table while ignoring the victim. After school, the cyberbullying continued.

Resolving

During the cyberbullying experience, as the victim was actively being cyberbullied, participants were found to be trapped in a cycle of Being Cyberbullied, Losing Oneself, and Attempting to Cope. The continuance of this cycle was dependent upon the victim being affected negatively by the behavior. If the cyberbullying ceased, for whatever reason, and the victim was able to positively cope with the experience of having been cyberbullied, he or she could move into a place of resolution. Likewise, even if the cyberbullying continued, but the victim found effective coping methods, he or she could also move into a state of resolution.

One participant had not yet entered into the Resolving process and was still trapped in the cycle of Being Cyberbullied, Losing Oneself, and Attempting to Cope. The participant described various attempts to cope, such as initially Seeking Support from parents (which was ineffective), Disengaging from others and isolating himself from family and most of his peers, and Focusing on other activities, such as extracurricular activities. Unfortunately, this participant also described Being Self-Destructive (cutting) in the past, early in his cyberbullying experience, but denied current self-harm or emotional distress and expressed that he had no desire to self-harm in the future. This participant had not yet found effective ways to cope with the ongoing

cyberbullying, and was still caught in the cycle. However, all other participants were able to resolve the cyberbullying experience, and stop the cycle, once they found a way to no longer be affected by the cyberbullying. Though for several participants some consequences of the cyberbullying persisted, participants had resolved or successfully dealt with the existing cyberbullying experience. It is from that point that the victim was able to move into the final process of the cyberbullying experience: Finding Oneself.

Finding Oneself

After resolving the cyberbullying, either through cessation of the cyberbullying or through successful coping strategies, the victim, who lost his or herself during the experience, began to find him or herself again, though generally as a much different person. There was no clear timeline as to how long this process took, as every participant emerged from cyberbullying over varying periods of time. However, every participant reported being changed as a result of the experience and most of these changes were positive. The participants were ultimately able to discover new things about themselves and to perceive themselves as being, for the most part, in a “good place.”

Some participants of the study reported feeling stronger as a result of successfully dealing with being cyberbullied. When asked how the experience of cyberbullying had changed her, one participant who reported being so depressed during the cyberbullying that she had pondered suicide stated:

“It was like you hit rock bottom before everything gets better, and it’s like I hit my rock bottom and then I became stronger. That was just a really low point and I’m going to come back and I’m going to be as strong as ever.”

Another participant, who had attempted to cope with cyberbullying by turning to alcohol, drugs, cutting, and other risky behaviors during the cyberbullying experience, explained how she found her way out of the negativity of cyberbullying and emerged with a better understanding of herself. She described having the strength to fight against the temptation to take part in risky activities as a coping strategy and an attempt to fit in, and instead to just be herself:

“I just honestly feel I’m more comfortable with myself now.”

The participant’s self-assurance and comfort with herself made her feel stronger.

A common finding among participants, as a result of going through the cyberbullying experience, was a heightened awareness of the need to protect and support others who may be experiencing cyberbullying. In the process of Finding Oneself, many participants reported they were becoming advocates for other victims. Some participants recognized the importance of support and guidance during this type of situation and indicated that they would, or are currently, supporting other victims. One female participant stated:

“It has changed me for the better; it’s made me more aware of what people can actually do, and what people are willing to go through to hurt someone. I think it has made me more aware so I can then help others who are going through this same thing.”

One participant, who suffered through cyberbullying for years, found her negative experience allowed her to be a positive influence on others. She described volunteering at an after-school program and interacting with peers who were being bullied and cyberbullied. She explained feeling like she had a duty to help other victims and that gave her a purpose; she felt as though she was finally “someone”.

“There’s one girl that’s been bullied plenty of times that I can remember, and I’ve helped her through a lot of that, because I know what it felt like to be bullied. I think that

it (cyberbullying) made me a better person than I was back then because I actually feel like I do have a purpose now, other than when I was getting bullied and felt like I was just nothing to anyone.”

Many of the study participants reported that having been through cyberbullying (and sometimes traditional bullying) and survived, they feel an obligation to speak up about it and stand up for others who are being victimized. They explained that as a bystander it's important to step up and speak out against cyberbullying. An older participant, reflecting back on what she had learned from her experience with cyberbullying reported feeling more mature as a result and was willing to stand up for what is right:

“I just feel like everything that happened, I grew off of. I took it, and now I know (how it affects the victim), and if I see it, I now step up about it.”

These participants, thankfully, were able to find the sun behind the clouds. They struggled through the storm of attacks, the pain of feeling alone, worthless, and helpless, and finally, found a way out and into resolution.

While some participants found themselves changed in a positive way, others described negative changes as well. For some, the cyberbullying resulted in the victim being generally less trusting of others, thus impacting their relationship with others, or even preventing relationships from developing. One 14-year-old participant described herself as being less trusting as a result of being cyberbullied by those she believed to be “friends”:

“I kind of learned not to trust as many people. I kind of learned the hard way that you can't trust everyone and I think I just lost my trust over the years. (Now,) I've got to be

able to know the person a long time before I can trust them, because I went and told those girls everything about me and then they used it against me.”

Other participants reported a strain in familial relationships as a result of cyberbullying and failed attempts to gain support from parents. For example, one participant received an unsupportive response from her mother when she reported the cyberbullying to her and as a result, felt it has affected the way she feels about her mother ever since:

“I think I started trusting her (mother) a lot less than I used to. I think it’s affected everything to this day, because every time I’ve tried to talk to her about anything like this, she has the same reaction.”

A 14-year-old, who had begged her parents for almost two years to allow her to transfer back to her old school because of bullying and cyberbullying at her new school, described her family dynamics as changing drastically as a result of her experience and what she perceived as a lack of understanding by her parents. Her parents, she reported, believed she would get a better education at her new school and refused to allow her to transfer back to the school where she grew up. As a result, she stopped speaking to them unless absolutely necessary and this was a big change from previously being a close familial unit. She describes giving her parents an ultimatum,

“They would not take me back (to the former school). I told them that if they were not going to take me back then I was not going to talk to them. I wouldn’t talk to them. I used to talk to my family and be really close to them, but now I mostly go to my room while they’re sitting out in the other room.”

Unfortunately, many consequences of cyberbullying are omnipresent, even when the cyberbullying has stopped. Participants found themselves changed by the experience in both positive and negative ways that shape their present and future lives.

Summary of Findings

This chapter presents the findings of a grounded theory study of 15 adolescent victims of cyberbullying. Findings related to all specific aims were described and excerpts from participant interviews were provided to support the emerged themes. The context in which these cyberbullying experiences occurred was also described. As a whole, the study brought forth a theoretical model of the psychosocial processes involved as cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends.

Emerging from Cyberbullying is a social process that begins with Being Targeted and Being Cyberbullied through a variety of venues and methods, becoming caught in a cycle of these acts that involves Losing Oneself, and Attempting to Cope. Once effective coping successfully helps a victim emerge from this cycle, or the cyberbullying ceases (for whatever reason), Resolving the cyberbullying experience can occur and the victim is able to enter the final process of Finding Oneself. The theoretical model was co-constructed from the emergence of categories and themes from the data (as described within this chapter), the researcher's interpretation of the participants' experiences, and the participants' feedback on the researcher's interpretation and development of the model. A discussion of and implications for the use of this model and the findings, as well as recommendations for future research will be explored in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to generate a grounded theory that explains the processes involved in cyberbullying from the perspective of those who have been victimized. As anticipated, this study offers an intimate view of cyberbullying from those closest to the phenomenon: the victims. A Constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) was implemented in order to explore the psychosocial processes involved in cyberbullying as it begins, unfolds, and ends, as well as coping strategies that were used during the experience and which strategies were noted to be effective in dealing with cyberbullying.

There were six themes that emerged as a result of this study, demonstrating the social processes involved in the cyberbullying experience (as described by victims). As a result, a theoretical model, *Emerging From Cyberbullying*, was constructed to assist in visualization of these processes. This chapter will discuss the findings in relation to the four specific aims of this study and relate the significance and relevance of the study results to findings in the extant literature. This chapter will also provide implications for policy and nursing practice, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Emerging From Cyberbullying

Six emergent processes surfaced during the collection and simultaneous analysis (constant comparison) of the interview data obtained from the 15 participants of this study.

These six categories, classified as social processes, were constructed as a model that cyberbullying victims move through each process almost systematically. This model will be thoroughly examined and compared to existing literature on cyberbullying, expanding upon or challenging previously offered theories.

Chapter Two offers an extensive literature review on traditional bullying, cyberbullying, characteristics and motivations of bullies, characteristics of victims, psychosocial development, health consequences associated with victimization, and coping strategies (including reporting cyberbullying). In original Grounded Theory, a review of the literature is discouraged, so as to leave the researcher more open-minded to discovery within the data and to reduce the likelihood that data will be forced into preconceived interpretations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Charmaz (2014), however, purports that “researchers typically hold perspectives and possess knowledge in their fields” (p. 306) before making a final decision on a research project. Thus, it would be unlikely that simply delaying a literature review would ensure that the researcher begins the project with a blank slate. The key then, is to take a “critical and reflective stance” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 307), engaging what is already known when looking critically at the data, but not allowing it to influence the emergence of themes and categories. The researcher must remain aware of when ideas and thoughts become present in the study and be very scrutinous about where these ideas and thoughts come from (Charmaz, 2014).

In this research using Constructivist Grounded Theory, a literature review was conducted prior to conducting the study, as is traditional in formulating a dissertation proposal. However, the period of time between the initial literature review, the proposal, and the beginning of data collection and analysis was significant, aiding in allowing the researcher to critically examine her preconceived notions and set those thoughts aside so that themes could emerge freely.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with participants in a quiet, confidential environment. Open questions were asked to engage the participant in sharing his or her story candidly. It became clear during the first few interviews that cyberbullying was more than just one person or group attacking or harassing another adolescent. The interviews plainly outlined social processes (or stages) that the participant moved through, from Being Targeted, Being Cyberbullied, Losing Oneself, Attempting to Cope, and moving into a stage of Resolving the cyberbullying, and Finding Oneself. The data indicated that once the victim was being cyberbullied, he or she was caught in a venomous cycle of Being Cyberbullied, Losing Oneself, and Attempting to Cope, only emerging from cyberbullying when either the cyberbullying ceased (for various reasons), or the victim was able to cope effectively and no longer allowed the cyberbullying to affect him or her negatively.

The experience of being cyberbullied is different for every individual, yet there are commonalities in each person's experience, which is represented by the Grounded Theory of Emerging from Cyberbullying. However, the literature provides us with an extensive list of negative outcomes related to cyberbullying, indicating the great need for prevention and intervention, which can only come from a thorough understanding of the dynamics of the cyberbullying phenomenon.

Discussion

There were four specific aims of this research project: 1) Explain the processes that occur as adolescent cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends; 2) Identify antecedents and consequences of cyberbullying from the victim's perspective; 3) Describe the methods that victims use to attempt to cope with being cyberbullied; and 4) Describe the context in which adolescent cyberbullying occurs. Discussion will focus on each of the four specific aims.

Specific Aim #1

The first aim of this study was to explain the processes that occur, from the victim's perspective, as adolescent cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends. No previous studies have explored adolescent cyberbullying from the perspective of victims, utilizing grounded theory methods. Thus, this study offers an innovative approach and intimate look at a pervasive phenomenon. The overall findings from this study lead to the construction of a theoretical model of the social processes that occur throughout the cyberbullying experience, from beginning to end.

Specific Aim #2, which is discussed later, specifically addresses the first process in the theoretical model, as it is antecedent to the cyberbullying. After the victim has been chosen, the cyberbullying begins. At this point, unless immediate intervention occurs and the cyberbullying ceases, the victim will become entangled in a cycle of Being Cyberbullied, Losing Oneself, and Attempting to Cope. Cyberbullying took place in many forms and across many venues, with some cyberbullying taking place concurrently with traditional bullying, or one occurring before the other. This finding is consistent with a previous study of more than 24-thousand Italian students, in which slightly more than 26% reported being cyberbullied and victimized at school simultaneously (Vieno et al., 2014).

Cyberbullying can also take place by itself, without the victim having any involvement in traditional bullying, as was reported during this study and others (Smith et al., 2008; Vieno et al., 2014). Smith et al., (2008) found that phone call and text messaging were the most common media used for cyberbullying. Though cyberbullying via text messaging was seen quite often with the participants of this study, social media was found to be the platform most often used (specifically Facebook and Instagram). This discrepancy between studies may be due to the

exponential growth of Facebook and Instagram users since Smith and colleagues' (2008) study took place. For example, at the end of 2010, Facebook reported an estimated 608 million users worldwide, while during the time of this study, 1.5 billion active monthly users were claimed (Statista, 2015). Instagram boasts a reported 400 million active users as of September, 2015, with this being an increase from 100 million users in early 2013; SnapChat reports 100 million daily active users (Dredge, 2015). This growth in Facebook, Instagram and SnapChat, SnapChat's CEO Evan Spiegel claims, is because teens use pictures to talk to one another and to the world (Dredge, 2015). They can also use pictures, and sometimes captions and short comments, to cyberbullying on these platforms as well, as was found in this study.

Cyberbullies are perceived in many different ways by their victims and by other peers, with the participants of this study using the word "mean" most often to describe their perpetrators. This was consistent with a Canadian study, conducted by Qing (2010), which found that more than 41% of middle and high school adolescents believed that teens cyberbullied others just to be mean, and that nearly 64% believed that the cyberbullies found victimizing others to be "fun." Additionally, this study found that some participants perceived their bullies as potentially "having issues" at home that led them to cyberbully, another common student belief for cyberbullying that was reported by Qing (2010).

As victims continued to be cyberbullied, they began to Lose Oneself in the overwhelming mental stress that accompanies victimization by cyberbullying. Previous studies have determined that there are serious mental health consequences of cyberbullying including fear, explosive anger, persistent worry, changes in self-esteem (often from feeling rejected or offended), anxiety and depression, self-harm, and even suicidal ideation and attempts at suicide (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2012; Gualdo et al., 2015; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Sourander et al., 2007;

Tokunaga, 2010; Van der Wal, de Wit, & Hirasing, 2003; Ybarra, 2004). With the exception of attempted suicide, most of these consequences were reported by participants in this study. As such, participants began to feel differently about themselves, how and when they interacted with others, as well as what activities they were involved in. Their self-identities changed.

In an attempt to deal with the cyberbullying victimization, the participants of this study reported using various coping strategies. Disengaging was the term found to best describe the coping strategy in which participants reported isolating themselves, closing off communications with others, and withdrawing from activities that previously brought enjoyment. Essentially, they disengaged themselves, emotionally and socially, as a way to protect themselves from victimization. This often had a negative effect on friendships and family dynamics. Many studies in the literature report that victims of cyberbullying feel extremely sad, annoyed, irritated, frustrated, scared, rejected, defenseless, and embarrassed (Gualdo et al., 2015; Price & Dalgleish, 2010). Some students even reported missing school to avoid further embarrassment (Price & Dalgleish, 2010). Participants of this study reported the same feelings during the cyberbullying. With these feelings invading the victim during the experience, it is understandable why some chose to close themselves off to the world.

Focusing was another type of coping that was identified. In Focusing, the participants turned from their negative thoughts and feelings and attempted to find something positive to channel their time. A few participants engaged in new sports, hobbies, or other extracurricular activities that took their thoughts away from the pain of cyberbullying victimization. This was not a specific recommendation or suggestion found in other studies, outside of the strategy of “being positive”, but was indeed a way for victims to attempt to stay positive in light of a lot of negativity. Dredge, Gleeson, and Garcia (2014) found that individual level factors were used by

some adolescents to buffer the negative effects of victimization by staying positive, laughing it off, and having a thick skin. These are not necessarily strategies for coping, but likely personal characteristics of individual victims that may assist them in being better able to deal with cyberbullying.

Many participants chose to cope with cyberbullying by Seeking Support from others. Some sought out strength in numbers, by seeking support from their friends or seeking to find new friends. Others sought support from family members, teachers, or parents, in hopes of gaining support. However, those who sought support from others did not necessarily ask for assistance in addressing the problem. Much of the literature on coping strategies for bullying and cyberbullying recommends that victims speak out and seek support from adults or others (Aricak et al., 2008; Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007; Price & Dalgleish, 2010). However, as Frisen et al. (2007) found, adolescents who were not involved with bullying were more likely to believe that victims *can* stand up for themselves; victims themselves were unlikely to confront the bully. The same was found in this study. Most victims did not confront the bully or make any retaliatory moves for fear of the cyberbullying worsening.

Though most participants did not confront the cyberbullies, some did choose Actively Opposing the cyberbullying victimization. This was done by ignoring or blocking the user on the Web, blocking cell phone numbers, deleting personal social media accounts, and actively seeking support for intervention. Fenaughty and Harre (2013) describe these approaches as taking self-action, and although they found these to be popular strategies for victims to cope, they also reported that these were not particularly effective in resolving the situation. Their focus group study also found that ignoring the user was commonly used by cyberbullying victims,

possibly being the easiest method to utilize, but victims often sought out other strategies for coping when ignoring was not successful in stopping the victimization (Fenaughty & Harre, 2013).

As explained above, findings from previous studies indicate that victims of cyberbullying should report the behavior and seek help from adults, as this may be helpful in combating the problem through awareness, monitoring, and education (Beale & Hall, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Huang & Chou, 2010; Fekkes, Pijpers & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Mesch, 2009; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Many participants of this study, however, indicated that they didn't want adults to intervene, that getting adults involved did little or nothing to solve the problem, or even worse, that reporting cyberbullying to adults resulted in failed intervention(s) and an exacerbation of victimization. These findings are supported by Li (2011), who found that only 15% of youth who reported being cyberbullied noted that the situation improved after reporting it, and 6% stated the victimization worsened. Addington (2013), in a study with 272 adolescent cyberbullying victims, reported that two-thirds of victims did not report cyberbullying to adults at school. Additionally, Bauman (2010) found that a mere 12% of students stated they would report cyberbullying behavior, and only 9% indicated they would tell a parent. These results are similar to Mishna and MacFadden's (2008) report in which only 11% of students who were cyberbullied indicated they had reported it to an adult. Fenaughty and Harre (2013) found a higher number of participants who reported seeking adult support and intervention, at roughly 23% for mobile phone cyber victims and nearly 17% for Internet cyber victims; however, this approach was not found to be significantly effective in resolving the situation. Thus, findings from this study correspond with the extant literature that adolescents generally do not

consistently report cyberbullying to adults, with some reporting that involving adults was ineffective, resulted in failed interventions, and at times, intensified victimization.

The literature provides a large of information on coping strategies for victims of cyberbullying. However, a previous literature review of those studies found that there were no studies on coping strategies conducted solely from the perspective of victims of cyberbullying. Many studies, such as in the case of Paul, Smith, and Blumberg (2012) and Smith et al. (2008), were conducted with adolescent students who may or may not have been victims of cyberbullying. As Frisen et al. (2007) indicated, those who have not been cyberbullied may have more optimistic views of what can effectively be done to curb cyberbullying. In reality, those who are actually victimized may be more pessimistic about their options, unsure of what action(s) to take, or not in a mental capacity to make informed decisions about how to best respond. Previous studies, which have included all adolescents, present adolescent opinion about ways to cope with being a victim, rather than actual experience of victims, which the present study does.

In this study, cyberbullying most often resolved as a result of the cyberbully stopping the cyberbullying behavior. Most often this occurred suddenly, with no warning, and the cyberbullying behavior simply ceased. A couple of participants reported that their cyberbullying gradually decreased and eventually stopped after intervention from a parent led to involvement of school personnel. Others reported that the cyberbullying never completely stopped, but that effective coping strategies had allowed them to move past it and no longer be affected. After this resolution of the cyberbullying cycle (Being Cyberbullied, Losing Oneself, and Attempting to Cope), participants moved into the final process in *Emerging from Cyberbullying: Finding Oneself*. It was here that participants described being changed (primarily in positive ways) as a

result of the cyberbullying experience. They reported being different than they were before the cyberbullying began, but most felt stronger and empowered to stand up for themselves and others. This research provided new knowledge in the resolution of cyberbullying and succeeding process of Finding Oneself. There is no existing literature exploring how cyberbullying ends and how victims have “moved on” or changed as a result.

Specific Aim #2

The second aim of this study was to identify antecedents and consequences of cyberbullying from the victim’s perspective.

Antecedents. It is important to note that these are the perspectives of the victims of cyberbullying and may not be representative of others involved in the experience. The antecedent to cyberbullying, from the victim’s perspective, is Being Targeted. There are many specific reasons for why a cyberbully might choose a particular individual to victimize and, in this study, the participants had varied perceptions about why they were the target of cyberbullying. The findings from this study indicate three broad categories, encompassing all of the participants’ perceived reasons for being targeted: 1) Being Different; 2) Show of Power; and 3) Out of the Blue.

Some participants believed they were targeted for cyberbullying because they were different or perceived as different by their peers. These findings are in alignment with a significant amount of literature on traditional bullying and cyberbullying, that indicates that bullies often choose their victims because they are different or because they stand out from the crowd. These studies on bullying and cyberbullying indicate that youth believe that victims are often targeted based on perceived differences in behavior, appearance or dress, or social status (Aluede et al., 2008; Erling & Hwang, 2004; Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007).

From a developmental standpoint, the victimization of others based on perceived differences is likely a result of adolescents attempting to find their identity and their place in society during a time of great intrapersonal confusion. Developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson, places adolescents in a developmental stage of “Identity versus Role Confusion” (Erikson, 1959). Fleming (2004) describes that the goal of adolescence is for, “Teens not to merely learn ‘who they are,’ they must at the same time learn to define and invent themselves. Identities are tried out like new suits of clothes” (p. 9-11). Thus, adolescents are struggling with their own identity and may play on the insecurities of others to give himself or herself a sense of control or feeling of fitting in.

Similarities hold true of those who cyberbully as a Show of Power. Thornberg and Kuntsen’s (2011) study indicated that in establishing oneself as a leader of the social hierarchy, adolescents may look to elevate their own status by diminishing others. Aleude et al. (2008) support this idea and reason that teens may seek to prove their authority or make themselves feel better and more important during their own identity crisis by playing on the weaknesses of those around them. Moreover, when one adolescent’s authority is questioned or he or she feels threatened by the actions of a peer, a show of power may occur out of jealousy or revenge, with the threatened adolescent attacking those around him/her (Thornberg, Rosenqvist, & Johansson, 2012). The adolescent victims in this study perceive this as being just one reason why they were targeted for cyberbullying. Qing (2010) also supports this as a reason for cyberbullying, reporting that nearly 45% of teens believe that cyberbullies attack out of jealousy and 45% may turn to cyberbullying when they get angry at another peer. Ultimately, the bully strives to control and cyberbullying can be a strategy used to gain and maintain an domineering position within the social hierarchy (Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

The third and final category that emerged as a reason a victim was targeted for cyberbullying was reported as being Out of the Blue. In these cases, the victims could find no reasonable explanation as to why they were chosen by the cyberbully. Again, this fits with Erikson's stages and the idea that adolescents are trying on many different types of identities during this time of their lives and their behavior may be unusual and unpredictable. Adolescents may rebel and go against the values and beliefs of their parents and/or those unwritten expectations of society as a whole (Fleming, 2004). Some of those unexpected behaviors could be positive, while others are clearly negative.

In the case of the cyberbully, there could be many variables leading the cyberbullying to act out, such as marital discord among parents, divorce, major changes in the home, such as a birth or death, or changing schools. The variables are endless and with the unpredictability that comes with adolescents, anything could potentially cause the adolescent cyberbully to target another adolescent. The behavior may be very out of character for the cyberbully, but adolescence can lead to many changes in the adolescent. In the case of the victim, he or she may view himself or herself as normal and feel as though he or she fits in well, when others may have a different opinion. The true cause of the cyberbullying may not necessarily be out of the blue, but may be perceived that way by the victim. Without further research with cyberbullies themselves, it may be difficult to ascertain why they choose to cyberbully.

Consequences. The consequences of cyberbullying victimization are vast and very heavily covered in the literature. There are mental and emotional health consequences, psychosomatic complaints, physical stressors, academic impacts, and developmental challenges that can occur when an adolescent is the victim of cyberbullying (Arseneault et al., 2006; Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Sourander et al., 2007; Tokunaga,

2010; Van der Wal, de Wit, & Hirasing, 2003; Ybarra, 2004). This study found similarities with previous findings of mental and emotional health consequences, psychosomatic complaints, and academic impacts of cyberbullying, as indicated above. Additionally, this study found that survivors of cyberbullying may feel less trusting of others, become distanced from their family and friends, and choose to disconnect from social media. However, there can also be positive changes for the adolescent victim of cyberbullying, generally occurring once the victim has resolved the cyberbullying and moves into the final process in the theoretical model constructed from this research: Finding Oneself. In this final process, the participants reported moving past the cyberbullying and finding themselves in a better place mentally and emotionally. Most participants reported feeling stronger, empowered, and better equipped to handle cyberbullying if it should occur in the future. There is currently no literature that supports the positive outcomes associated with cyberbullying and it cannot be assured that everyone will experience a positive self-worth after experiencing such a challenging ordeal. On an encouraging note, the experiences of the participants in this study are somewhat encouraging and demonstrate that some cyberbullying victims may find themselves stronger as a result of surviving cyberbullying.

Specific Aim #3

The third specific aim of this research was to describe the methods that victims use to attempt to cope with or manage being cyberbullied. To reduce the overall prevalence and the negative health outcomes and other consequences of cyberbullying, gaining insight into the effective and ineffective coping strategies used by victims is crucial (Davis, Randall, Ambrose, & Orand, 2015). Of the 15 participants in this study, each offered varying approaches to coping with cyberbullying and many of them are noted in the literature. Some strategies used were social in nature and included both positive and negative approaches, such as seeking the support

of friends and family or isolating oneself from everyone; attempting to ignore the cyberbullying and blocking users and callers; deleting or changing social media accounts and privacy settings; confronting the bully and asking him or her to stop; and finding an outlet to express oneself, either negatively (such as in self-harm) or positively (such as in finding a creative outlet) and focusing energy in that manner. These strategies have been found in other studies as well (Davis, Randall, Ambrose & Orand, 2015; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Monks, Robinson & Worlidge, 2012).

While the literature provides evidence that these coping strategies are commonly used by adolescents experiencing cyberbullying, not every strategy works universally. As noted in this study, reporting the cyberbullying to adults did not always garner a positive response. At least two participants reported being blamed for the cyberbullying by their parents. When parents addressed the report of cyberbullying with intervention and attempted to involve school personnel, some attempts were effective and others were not. These findings are consistent with the literature in that adolescents most often do not report cyberbullying behavior to adults (Addington, 2013; Fenaughty & Harre, 2013; Li, 2011), and that there is no indication that reporting the victimization to adults will result in successful resolution of the situation (Fenaughty & Harre, 2013). However, in some cases, participants of this study did find support from parents and other adults when reporting the cyberbullying. In any case, it is important to note that effective coping, much like physical growth and development, is unique to the individual. By being informed of strategies that have been effective for some, we can offer suggestions that may prove beneficial. However, we must keep in mind that these strategies are not one-size-fits-all and we must be willing to provide alternatives to these strategies when they are not effective in stopping the cyberbullying.

Specific Aim #4

The final aim of this study was to describe the context in which adolescent cyberbullying occurs. In order to explore context, we must look at the time, place, and culture in which cyberbullying occurs. Contrary to more direct forms of bullying, which tend to occur among younger children, Smith et al. (2008) and Gualdo et al. (2015) suggested that cyberbullying peaks during adolescence, particularly during the middle school years (6th-8th grades). The participants in this study reported that their cyberbullying experiences began as young as third grade, with most reporting that their cyberbullying experience happened between sixth and eighth grades, which is consistent with Smith et al. and Gualdo et al.'s findings. There is no reliable data in the literature identifying how long victims typically experience cyberbullying. The participants in this study reported cyberbullying that lasted from months to up to six years. The average time of the cyberbullying experience in this study was two and a half to three years.

There is no set location in which cyberbullying occurs, which is what makes it unique and so challenging to detect. Cyberbullying, unlike traditional bullying, can cross the boundaries of time and space and if a connection to the Internet or cellular data is available, cyberbullying can occur. Most of the participants in this research reported that their cyberbullying took place on social media (Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, or MySpace) or via text. Since most schools restrict the use of social media and cell phones during school hours, most of the cyberbullying did not take place at school. Instead, victims were invaded in their own homes, in cars they were traveling in, at the mall, sporting events, etc., outside of school hours. No location was free from victimization as long as there was access to cellular data or the Internet. This may lead to high levels of anxiety and fear as the victim may feel that he or she has no "safe place" and cannot hide from the victimization. Some participants of this study reported feeling a need to escape

from it all. One participant found peace by hiding in a dark closet at home with headphones and loud music. Another participant worked with her high school guidance counselor to finish high school early. Her primary reason for this was to escape from the town in which she felt persistently victimized, even during trips to the grocery store.

Cyberbullying occurs primarily in adolescence, typically peaking in middle school and declining throughout the high school years (Gualdo et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2008). Adolescence is a time of great changes for boys and girls, including changes in growth and development, changes in values and beliefs, and a change from the close guidance of parents to the freedom to make independent choices (Fleming, 2004). Adolescence is also a time to search for one's true identity, trying on various styles before deciding on one or a combination (Fleming, 2004). During this time, many adolescents will try to fit in with the crowd in an attempt to find normalcy and comfort, knowing that he or she is not alone in the challenges of being a teen. For some adolescents, being different may be a gift. They may pride themselves on their uniqueness and not worry about how they are viewed by others. Still, other adolescents may try to fit in but still be viewed as different, if only by the color or style of their hair or the shoes they wear. Adolescence, as described by some of the participants of this study, comes with a culture that often expects conformity and a set social status. Those who do not follow the rules of conformity or challenge the social hierarchy may find themselves being unfairly victimized.

Limitations

The purpose of grounded theory research is not to be generalizable, but rather, transferable. Instead of generalizing findings to samples from the same population, transferability allows for the reader to determine if research findings will transfer to their own context (Mertens, 2012). This study took place in the Appalachian region of Southern Ohio with

a primarily white, female population. It could be argued that because there were some non-Caucasian participants, as well as some male participants, these findings represent varied adolescent experiences with cyberbullying. However, in order to provide support for the theory identified in this study, it is recommended that the study be replicated with additional samples that include more diverse populations, ethnically, socioeconomically, and geographically.

For reasons related to human subjects' protection, this study did not include participation by anyone under the age of 18, without parental consent. This limited the study to those participants whose parents were aware that they had been cyberbullied. Since the literature points to only a small number (10-15%) of adolescents reporting cyberbullying to adults (Agatston et al., 2007; Bauman, 2010; Mishna & Macfadden, 2008; O'Connell, Price, & Barrow, 2004), it is safe to assume that there are many more victims who may have been otherwise eligible for this study but could not participate because their parents were unaware of the cyberbullying and could therefore not give consent. The experiences of these individuals may vary from those who made adults aware of the victimization. Additionally, the participants of this study who had emerged from the cyberbullying cycle, reported primarily positive outcomes after the experience was over. This is not always the case. Thus, this study is limited to those participants who reported positive outcomes after the cyberbullying experience. This may have been a product of interviewing participants who had reported the cyberbullying and were able to provide parental consent and assent to talk about their experience.

The average length of time since the cyberbullying experience was 2.3 years, with two participants noting it had been four years since their cyberbullying experience had taken place. However, this did not prove to be a major limitation of the study. All participants were able to

recall their cyberbullying experience vividly and provide detailed recollections of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences at the time.

Implications for Policy

Cyberbullying continues to be a pervasive problem across the world. Where there is technology, there is cyberbullying, and as technology continues to drive our society, we have an obligation to hold perpetrators accountable. There are currently no federal laws specifically against cyberbullying. However, bullying/cyberbullying can overlap with other federal law related to discriminatory harassment, if it is based on race, national origin, color, gender, age, disability, or religion (StopBullying.gov, 2014a). In these cases, federally funded schools are obligated to step in and resolve the issue. Some states have developed policies and/or laws for addressing bullying and cyberbullying. In many states, these laws require that school districts have a policy in place prohibiting intimidation, harassment, and bullying (StopBullying.gov, 2014b). These policies should include definitions of what constitutes intimidation, harassment, and bullying, include cyberbullying, and provide clear steps for disciplinary action in the case that such policy is enforced. Cassidy, Brown, and Jackson (2012) denote the importance of providing students and parents with concrete examples of what does and does not constitute cyberbullying, as doing so will assist in clearing up most misunderstandings about when the school will take action against a student related to cyberbullying (when the perpetrator is known). Students, parents and guardians, and all school personnel should be well informed of these policies and disciplinary action must be upheld consistently in order for these policies to truly have an impact.

School personnel, from administration to custodial staff, can have great insight into the culture within the school. Teachers see students in the classroom, but it is likely that adolescents

behave differently in the presence of the teachers and administrative staff, than they do in the hallways, bathrooms, and other areas within and around the school. Other school personnel, such as lunchroom staff, custodians, counselors, school nurses, and teachers' aides, may see more negative behaviors and victimization of students. Additionally, counselors and school nurses may be the adults at school who are most likely to see the consequences of bullying and cyberbullying victimization as they function in a care-provider role. Accordingly, it would be beneficial to include individuals in various roles in planning and developing anti-cyberbullying policies and appropriate interventions. Ultimately, writing and distributing policy is not enough. Fair and consistent enforcement of policy is necessary to provide consequences to perpetrators of bullying and cyberbullying to protect current and potential victims from further harm.

The findings of this study indicate that most cyberbullying victimization takes place via social media and text messaging. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to write policy limiting texting outside of school property as this brings up issues related to freedom of speech. However, policy related to cyberbullying within schools should be very specific and should include a clear "no tolerance" policy for cyberbullying that takes place any time the adolescent is in school, on school grounds, or at a school event. Cyberbullying that takes place outside of school property, but can be shown to have impact during school (such as online rumors that eventually lead to harassment, physical or verbal bullying, or exclusion at school), or vice versa, should be addressed within the school cyberbullying policy and not tolerated. Internet accounts and pages of a negative nature that are set up with a name that clearly connects the user and content to a particular school, and are used to promote gossip and encourage "calling out" or making accusations of inappropriate behaviors by staff or students, should be included in school policies on cyberbullying, and the person(s) responsible must be held accountable. Consequences for

violating these policies must be consistently enforced to promote compliance and clearly display a no-tolerance policy for cyberbullying.

Communications are well-monitored in some areas of our daily lives. For example, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) maintains federal guidance over television broadcasting, radio (including commercial and amateur), phone, and the Internet (FCC, n.d.). Though there are guidelines and restrictions in place to protect children from obscene broadcasts, access to unlawful content, and unwanted “spam” phone calls, there are no guidelines in place for protections against cyberbullying. Since social media has become a common place for cyberbullying to occur, administrators of many social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, have implemented policies and procedures of their own in an attempt to combat electronic bullying and harassment. Facebook has a set of community standards that were developed to protect individuals, public figures, and the general public. Additionally, Facebook teamed up with the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence to create the Bullying Prevention Hub that offers resources and tools for parents, youth, and teachers, to deal with cyberbullying and its consequences (Facebook, 2016). Facebook users and accounts can be reported for violations of the Community Standards and accounts can be deactivated and/or deleted upon review by site administrators. Unfortunately, setting up a another Facebook account is fairly easy and with unlimited access to creating new and fake identities and emails online, the user can be back online in a matter of minutes.

Instagram (Instagram, 2016) has Community Guidelines and Twitter (Twitter, 2016) has Twitter Rules in place to encourage blocking users who post harassing, intimidating, or inappropriate pictures, videos, or comments. Users can delete comments that are posted on their Twitter or Instagram feed, block other users, and set their personal profiles to private status.

Users can also report violations of these policies to site administrators, but again, even deleting accounts does not ensure that the cyberbullying will not recur if the user is able to set up a new account.

Having these policies and opportunities for reporting in place are helpful in identifying problematic users and provide good suggestions for limiting contact with harassing individuals. Sadly, the ability to continually create new identities and accounts prevents permanent resolution of cyberbullying solely by these means. These social media platforms indicate that they will work with law enforcement, if they believe there is a true danger to an individual or society, however, who can determine how badly an individual is affected by cyberbullying that may seem minor? Also, how could administrators of these platforms possibly closely monitor millions of users? Thus, suggestions for policies related to social media should focus on clearly identifying violations of guidelines and standards, but also provide significant resources to assist users in coping with cyberbullying behaviors and reporting harassing and cyberbullying behaviors to adults, site administrators, and if necessary, law enforcement.

Implications for Practice

The ultimate goal of this study was to provide an explanatory theory for nurses, health care professionals and other adults to use in understanding the dynamics of cyberbullying. This theory can be utilized to inform and guide public health efforts at reducing adolescent violence by promoting prevention of cyberbullying, early identification of victimization, and intervention in cyberbullying behaviors. The transition from childhood to adolescence is vital in the development of healthy, adaptive, and well-functioning young adults (Carter & Wilson, 2015). With the significant changes in technology that have occurred over the past two decades,

technological tools and the Internet have provided a very different daily connection to family, friends, and the world than has ever been seen before.

Nurses and health care professionals (HCP) need to be aware of the impact that technology and Internet use has on adolescent health. Cyberbullying is a widespread problem with significant consequences for the physical, mental, and psychosocial health of adolescents and young adults (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Mishna et al., 2010; Sourander et al., 2010; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Since cyberbullying often goes unreported, it is even more important that adults be able to recognize the potential for victimization. If cyberbullying victimization is suspected, it would benefit the nurse or HCP to conduct a detailed assessment exploring the adolescent's use of technology, as well as risk factors for and experiences with cyberbullying (Carter & Wilson, 2015). This may require the nurse or HCP to find effective ways to build trust and rapport with the adolescent patient in order to encourage open and honest communication. It is also important for the nurse to recognize that many signs and symptoms of stress such as frequent headaches, stomach pains, nausea and vomiting, difficulty concentrating, and sleeping problems can be experienced by cyberbullying victims, and victimization should not be ruled out or ignored without further evaluation (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Mishna et al., 2010; Sourander et al., 2010; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). The participants of this study reported some of these same complaints, as well as changes in dietary habits, weight loss, irritability, social isolation, and self-harm. Unfortunately, there are no specific screening tool(s) used by health care providers to assess adolescents' exposure to cyberbullying or cyberbullying victimization. There are instruments that can be used in most any setting to measure overt and covert bullying victimization, such as the Gatehouse Bullying Scale, Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale,

Peer Victimization Scale, and Victimization Scale. These tools, however, are specific to traditional bullying (Hamburger, Basile, & Vivolo, 2011).

Beran's The Cyber-Harassment Student Survey, developed in 2005, is a brief survey used to assess awareness and involvement with cyberbullying as a victim and bully (Hamburger, Basile, & Vivolo, 2011). This tool, however, primarily focuses on determining how victims have been impacted by the cyberbullying, such as feeling embarrassed, anxious or afraid, or if they have missed school or performed poorly academically as a result of the victimization. The tool does not focus on identifying if cyberbullying victimization is occurring or if there are health consequences present as a result of current victimization.

The Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey, developed by Patchin and Hinduja (2006), assesses cyberbullying victimization and perpetration, as well as more specific details about the experience (Hamburger, Basile, & Vivolo, 2011). Neither of these tools, however, are well-suited for assessing the mental and/or physical impacts of cyberbullying or facilitating a discussion about cyberbullying behavior. In order for adults, especially health care providers, to identify, intervene, and assist adolescents in coping with cyberbullying, development and testing of a brief and easy to use screening tool for assessing cyberbullying victimization and enabling discussion about the situation is warranted.

Nurses in the school setting have a great obligation to their students to provide a safe environment in which students can feel comfortable sharing their concerns and complaints. This may come through the initiation or modification of anti-bullying or bullying prevention campaigns and must include cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts as equally important. Furthermore, administration may need the nurse to provide education to school staff and parents on the health consequences of cyberbullying and effective coping strategies, as well

as strategies for early detection of cyberbullying and appropriate intervention and reporting requirements. Additionally, nurses should be informed of the behavioral changes and physical complaints that cyberbullying victims note during their experiences, such as headaches, poor appetite, stomach pain, that may mimic other illnesses but possibly be related to stress from cyberbullying victimization.

Some of the participants of this study reported negative responses or disinterest from parents and other adults when reporting the cyberbullying. It is vital that adults be aware of the presence and consequences associated with cyberbullying and recognize that the adolescent may perceive them as their only hope for resolving the victimization. “Addressing youth violence and prevention strategies...as well as promotion of community awareness and education is an obligation of nurses” (Carter & Wilson, 2015, p. 124). This does not just apply to nurses in the school setting, though they may have more opportunities to work directly with adolescents, but all nurses in the community. The nurse, in the role of educator, can assist in informing adults of the best strategies for identifying, intervening, and negating cyberbullying victimization. Also, health care providers can use the theory to help adolescents understand that based on the findings of this study, victims can get past the cyberbullying and come out of it feeling stronger and empowered to help others.

Ultimately, a multidisciplinary team including nurses and health care providers, school counselors, teachers, school staff and administrators, law enforcement, and parents/guardians would be ideal in addressing the complexities associated with cyberbullying. Formation of school-based and/or community coalitions may be an excellent way to bring the relevant stakeholders together to addressing cyberbullying prevention and intervention.

Implications for Research

Cyberbullying is not a completely novel phenomenon, appearing with the rise of public use of the Internet and cell phones in the 1990s and continually progressing in our technology-driven society. However, there are still gaps in the research that need to be addressed. The findings from this study contribute to the extant literature on cyberbullying by providing an intimate look at the cyberbullying experience from the perspective of the adolescent victim. Specifically, these findings identify the social processes that occur as cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends, and describe coping strategies used during the experiences. Though this study offers a theoretical model of Emerging from Cyberbullying that is grounded in the data, new questions for research have materialized.

One recommendation for future research would be to include conducting focus groups to further explore the strength of the theoretical model, Emerging from Cyberbullying. Connelly (2015) states that focus groups are often used for topics the researcher views as social experiences and can be helpful in exploring the insight and interaction among groups of participants who have faced a similar social experience. Collecting data from a group means that the participants will respond to what others have to say, either in agreement or disagreement, facilitating further discussion about the victims' experience with cyberbullying (Connelly, 2015). This data would offer good insight into the model currently being presented and may provide new information that was not previously considered. Specific processes within the model can also be examined to determine factors that may negatively or positively influence progression through the cyberbullying cycle to resolution.

For reasons related to human subjects' protection, this study did not include participation by anyone under the age of 18, without parental consent. This limited the study to those

participants whose parents were aware that they had been cyberbullied. Since the literature points to only a small number of adolescents reporting cyberbullying to adults (Agatston et al., 2007; Bauman, 2010; Mishna & Macfadden, 2008; O'Connell, Price, & Barrow, 2004), it is safe to assume that there are many more victims who were not eligible for this study and their experiences may vary from those who made adults aware of the victimization. Thus, it would be useful in future research to include participants who did not report the cyberbullying to an adult. For human subjects' protection, however, this may require that data be collected anonymously and indirectly.

A few participants of the study reported poor responses by adults when the cyberbullying was reported (blaming the victim, downplaying the event, or ignoring requests for help), including parents and school personnel. Mishna (2004) states that youth will doubt themselves and stop sharing their feelings and experiences with adults if they are not listened to and validated. Since reporting the incident to an adult is a positive strategy for seeking support and intervention, it is vital that all adults (parents, health care providers, school personnel, social workers, etc.) who deal with adolescents are informed of the high prevalence and negative outcomes associated with cyberbullying. It would be beneficial to conduct research on adults' knowledge of cyberbullying behaviors and outcomes to provide a better understanding in which areas further education is needed. For development of effective adult responses and interventions, future research should be conducted on the attitudes, perceptions, actions and beliefs of adults in relation to adolescent cyberbullying. Understanding the processes and stressors that parents/guardians of cyberbullying victims experience may be helpful in identifying effective strategies for parenting an adolescent who is being victimized, and may uncover consequences of cyberbullying that extend to the parent(s) of the cyberbullying victim.

Additionally, it may prove insightful to promote future studies with adolescent victims of cyberbullying to inquire if there are any commonalities in the ways in which they would find adults to be most helpful in preventing or intervening in cyberbullying experiences. It may also be beneficial to explore consequences of adolescent cyberbullying that extend to the parents of the victims.

It is vital that adolescents learn how to cope with stressors. Coping can be effective independently, but at times may require outside support. Research should be conducted to explore factors impacting the type of coping strategies used, whether or not it was a positive or negative coping strategy, as well as the coping strategy's effectiveness in moving the adolescent victim to resolution of the cyberbullying experience. In order to facilitate intervention, additional research should be conducted to examine factors that determine when and why adolescents choose to report cyberbullying to an adult and what factors influence the decision to not report the victimization. Intervention studies with cyberbullying victims are also suggested for future investigation. Intervention studies could include providing support groups and/or education to victims who have not yet reached resolution, on effective coping strategies identified within this study and the extant literature. After the victim has reached resolution, outcomes related to the victims' physical, mental, and social health could be measured to examine the effectiveness of the support groups and education.

Though it may prove challenging to gain access to cyberbullies, some studies have suggested the importance of understanding cyberbullying from the perspective of cyberbullies. This study gives the impression that cyberbullies are mean and vindictive (at least from the victims' perspectives). This may be true; however, it is possible that cyberbullies have other motivations for cyberbullying and may even feel pressured by their peers to do so. Thus,

research is suggested with cyberbullies to explore their motivations for cyberbullying and to understand how they are affected by the experience.

It is important to acknowledge that with the exception of one participant (who had not yet reached resolution), all participants in this study emerged from their cyberbullying experience, stronger. To fully understand the cyberbullying experience from all viewpoints, it is necessary to conduct research with participants who have not emerged from cyberbullying positively or at all. Human subject protections may inhibit research with individuals who have attempted suicide or have had serious mental health effects from cyberbullying victimization, but research with friends and family members may provide some insight into these experiences.

Finally, this study is the first qualitative, grounded theory study conducted with adolescent victims of cyberbullying. There are many challenges associated with gaining access to adolescent participants, but it is crucial that scholars do not avoid this population. In order to gain true insight into the experience of cyberbullying, researchers must stay close to the experience. Adolescents may not be able to articulate an in-depth picture of cyberbullying activities in questionnaire form (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008). Therefore, continued research on cyberbullying in adolescents is needed from a qualitative approach (Carter & Wilson, 2015).

Implications for Nursing Education

It is the responsibility of nurse educators to prepare nurses to provide safe and quality care for clients in the complex and evolving environment in which we live (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2008). As we see changes in the way clients interact with individuals, with a move toward more electronic forms of communication, and how they respond to these interactions (both positively and negatively), we must be prepared to adapt

nursing practice to address needs associated with these changes. Thus, as cyberbullying continues to progress, it is necessary for us to inform and educate nurses and future nurses about the dynamics of cyberbullying and prevention and intervention strategies.

For pre-licensure nurses in associate or baccalaureate degree programs, it is expected that nursing education provide students with the information needed to “practice from a holistic, caring framework” (AACN, 2008, p. 8). Addressing the physical, mental, and psychosocial needs of adolescents is required to provide holistic care to that population. With the high prevalence of cyberbullying, we must include knowledge of the phenomenon, as well as tactics for identifying the presence of cyberbullying into the nursing curricula (most likely during the study of the pediatric population). We must also identify appropriate prevention and intervention strategies, as well as effective coping strategies, in order to share this information with our clients and inform our nurses about caring for victims of cyberbullying.

For nurses prepared as an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), a deeper level of understanding of nursing practice, including assessment, identification of problems, planning, intervention, and evaluation, is expected (AACN, 2011). Thus, it is necessary that nursing curricula for APRN programs educate on the need to “use advanced clinical reasoning for ambiguous and uncertain clinical presentations, and incorporate concerns of family, significant others, and communities” into the planning and delivery of care (AACN, 2011, p. 9). This includes providing education on the development and use of screening tools to identify cyberbullying victimization and offering resources and strategies for coping and combatting the problem of cyberbullying.

Continuing education is required for all levels of nursing practice. As we learn more about the phenomenon and health consequences of cyberbullying, it is crucial that we keep

practicing nurses informed of the role they play in identifying and assisting clients in dealing with cyberbullying victimization, as well as the potential they have for educating the community in prevention and intervention efforts.

Lessons Learned

Recruitment

This study was my first full study as a novice researcher and some aspects of the study proved more challenging than others. The most challenging piece of this study, as in most research, was the recruitment process. This study was primarily focused on an adolescent population that had faced an emotionally unsettling and contentious experience. Thus, going into the recruitment process, I expected significant challenges in recruiting, as schools and parents would likely be very protective of these vulnerable adolescents. Initially I expected the greatest barrier to recruiting to come at the hands of the parents. I was surprised to find that most parents were more than willing to allow their teen to share their experience with cyberbullying with me, as long as the teen was comfortable doing so. Interestingly, I had a few potential participants demonstrate initial interest in the study, only to decide before moving forward that they just “didn’t want to talk about it.” A couple of potential participants had even “made up” with the cyberbully, and indicated that since they were now friends with the cyberbully, they did not feel comfortable sharing the bad experience the person subjected them to (even knowing that they and the cyberbully would remain anonymous). In retrospect, I don’t believe there is a clear solution to this problem. When researching controversial areas such as cyberbullying, there is likely to be a wide range of varying emotions involved. Thus, it is to be expected that participants may change their minds about participating or be cautious of sharing some information with a researcher.

Recruiting was very slow at first, with only five participants in the first six months of recruitment. I changed from solely community recruitment methods to also attempting to include schools, but had difficulty getting in touch with school administration. After making multiple attempts via email and phone to contact 17 schools in the recruitment area, I was able to get approval to post my recruitment fliers in only two school districts. I received a “yes” from one school principal, but a “no” from the school superintendent based on concerns that the interviews would be audio recorded, and no response from the other 14 schools. This was not anticipated and significantly hindered my ability to recruit. Furthermore, I only received two messages on the toll-free phone line set up for recruiting purposes. All other participants contacted me via email or face-to-face in the community. Looking back, I found the toll-free telephone number to be an unnecessary cost, and think I would have been able to recruit just as successfully by having the initial contact via email. I believe that the most effective way to recruit potential participants would be to hang fliers in the community setting, attend community events where fliers could be shared with adolescents and their parents, and make connections with school counselors and coaches who may have more time and opportunity to share the research materials with adolescents.

Interviewing

As a novice researcher, choosing interviews as the method for data collection proved to be both challenging and rewarding. Charmaz (2006) describes an interview as “a directed conversation” (p. 25). In order to fully explore a phenomenon, the researcher must be able to go deeply into the experience as possible, through the interpretation of the individual who lived it (Charmaz, 2006). This is a technique that takes time and practice to master. As I progressed from one interview to the next, I learned how to ask my interview questions in ways that related to the

individual participant. I found that following the interview guide in one specific order was not always the best approach and that if allowed time to think and speak openly, the participants would often answer my questions spontaneously. I learned that each participant wanted to share his/her story in his/her own way. This required me to listen actively, and as I continued the interviews, I improved at this. My recommendation for other novice interviewers would be to watch trained interviewers in action and practice their interview technique before conducting interviews independently.

Memos and Field Notes

When preparing for and proposing my study, I read about the importance of memoing and conducting field notes during data collection. I did keep memos and some brief field notes during data collection, but it wasn't until I began my analysis that I truly understood the importance of these steps in Constructivist Grounded Theory. Thankfully, as data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, I was able to remember and even visualize my interviews. I found myself referring to field notes to recall my participants' attitude and behaviors before, during, and immediately after the interview. I sought out my memos as I compared codes and categories and connected words to processes, and noted relationships between concepts. However, I believe that even more extensive and detailed memos and field notes would have only served to improve my experience. I would encourage writing extensive field notes and memos for any qualitative researcher. It may seem time consuming initially, but ultimately allows for a more complete analysis.

Data Analysis

I used NVivo 10 for Mac (NVivo) during my study, but only *after* I initially coded the transcripts by hand. My reasoning for this was because Charmaz (2006) recommends that initial

coding be done quickly, so as to “spark thinking and spawn a fresh view of the data” (p. 48). Since I was relatively new to NVivo (aside from an online training course), I found that I could move through the data quicker by hand. After this initial coding, I entered it into NVivo for easier visualization. I did find that NVivo makes it easier to search for common words, codes, and categories and provides a neat, paper-free coding method. Subsequently, I used NVivo for the second level of coding: Focused Coding. I found it to be quite easy to develop categories and connect various codes to categories. Though I kept memos and field notes, I did so using Microsoft Word. NVivo does offer a place for memoing within the program, but I did not find this feature until after I had collected extensive notes using Word. I do plan to use NVivo in future qualitative data analysis, but would like further training and practice in using the program. I would recommend that other qualitative researchers consider using a data management program such as NVivo to keep transcripts and coding in one neat, secure location.

Myself as a Researcher

I found the entire process of conducting Constructivist Grounded Theory to be initially overwhelming, but ultimately, very rewarding. The IRB proposal and recruitment parts of the study were wearisome and at times, I felt as though I was moving in slow motion. However, once the data collection process began, and I was able to sit face-to-face with the participants, I remembered why I had chosen to explore adolescent victims’ experiences with cyberbullying.

As an adult who grew up in the 80s and 90s, I have no personal experience of being victimized online, where the harassment and torture can follow the victim across boundaries of time and space; they cannot escape. I initially had no understanding of what that feels like. This study gave me the chance to understand. I wanted to hear the victims’ stories. I wanted to give them a voice. I wanted to understand what they went through in hopes of learning as much as I

could about the antecedents, consequences, and dynamics of cyberbullying from the perspectives of those who had been hurt. As a result, we (the participants and myself) were able to construct, through their experiences and my understanding of those experiences, a theory and theoretical model of the adolescent victim's experience with cyberbullying.

The value of qualitative research is being increasingly recognized in the research arena and in academia. With the acknowledgement of the importance of qualitative research, however, comes the demand to employ rigorous strategies to ensure the credibility of the findings (Darawsheh, 2014). Reflexivity, and the transparency it provides into the role of the qualitative researcher, increases the rigor of the study findings. Reflexivity, simply put, is a "process of thoughtful, conscious awareness of the researcher in the process of research" (Engward & Davis, 2015, p. 1532). It is different from reflectivity in that it requires additional scrutiny, not just within oneself and one's decisions throughout the research, but the impact research decisions may have on those attempting to understand and utilize the research findings (Engward & Davis, 2015). Recognizing myself as a research instrument, it was important that I find a way to be reflexive throughout the study, without overemphasizing the need to acknowledge my presumptions, experiences, and personal biases.

As discussed in Chapter Three, I acknowledged (in reflective memos) my personal experience and presumptions about cyberbullying, including my thoughts that it was similar to a military attack. I acknowledged my personal biases as to who cyberbullies are and who their victims generally are. Throughout data collection and analysis, I found myself seeing the cyberbullying process as a military attack. I found myself using terminology that was consistent with that belief and was finding data and pushing it into those "steps" of the military attack. It was after three or four interviews that I began to find myself writing more detailed memos about

the similarities in participants' experiences and seeing connections between a similar process in one participant's experience and that of another participant (such as how participants perceived they were targeted and why). From here, I found that the participants were not being chosen because they were weak, as I had presumed, and they did not necessarily even possess the characteristics of my preconceived ideas of a "victim" of cyberbullying. It was at this point that I stepped away from my data, went back to my presumptions and determined that I was forcing the data and not allowing it to emerge. I then went back to the transcripts and began recoding the incidents. I found that some of the codes that emerged were similar to a military attack, but I did not force the data into such themes and terminology. I let the experiences speak for themselves and found myself using the participants' words to describe what was going on.

Throughout the data collection process, I conducted semi-structured interviews that began with a brief, open-ended question. The purpose of this question was to allow the participant to provide his or her account of the cyberbullying experience, without being lead into one direction or another. Occasional prompts were used to keep the participant on topic or to extrapolate specific information needed to address specific aims, but the participant was free to begin and end the story wherever he or she chose and spontaneously share what he or she found to be important to my understanding of the experience. Some participants indicated it was necessary to give some "back story" or history to lead into sharing his/her experience, while others began at the beginning of the cyberbullying or even somewhere in the middle of the experience. I found this approach to be beneficial in obtaining rich, descriptive accounts of the cyberbullying experience from the perspective of the victim.

Initial interviews of participants' experiences were transcribed verbatim to reduce researcher bias. This approach was chosen to limit the researcher's influence of what should or

should not be included in the data. This ensured that all of the participant's words were analyzed and considered important to understanding the cyberbullying experience. Second interviews that addressed the representativeness of the theory to the participants' experiences were not transcribed, but were reviewed multiple times and notes were taken to allow the participants to co-construct the theory and model with the PI.

During analysis, I followed Charmaz' (2006) approach for coding that included, 1) initial coding; 2) focused coding; and 3) theoretical coding. Memos were utilized during constant comparison between and among transcripts to explore connections, identify new questions, and organize thinking. This allowed me to question and challenge my own ways of thinking and to determine if I was making assumptions based on what I thought I knew about the victim's experience with cyberbullying, or if I was constructing meaning grounded from the voices of the participants.

I have the opportunity to share the findings of Emerging from Cyberbullying and make changes in the prevention, intervention, and impact of cyberbullying. From my perspective, the time and work put into this study, with the courage of the participants in sharing their stories, was completely worthwhile. I want to continue to expose the phenomenon of cyberbullying and make contributions that will assist those who have been victims, and hopefully, prevent others from becoming victims. My recommendation to others who are considering qualitative research as a means to answer important questions is to not consider the trials of the journey of conducting such research, but to consider the positive impact that the findings will bring. You may be truly surprised by what you can do.

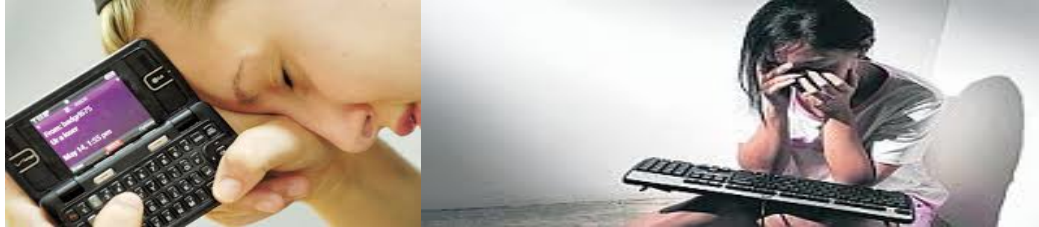
Concluding Remarks

This study offers a theoretical model of cyberbullying, Emerging from Cyberbullying, that is grounded in the data from 15 one-on-one, in-depth interviews with adolescent victims of cyberbullying. The model was constructed as a social journey for these participants, indicating how they went from Being Targeted into a cycle of Cyberbullying, Losing Oneself, and Attempting to Cope, progressing into Resolving the cyberbullying, and finally entered a state of Finding Oneself. The model suggests that cyberbullying occurs in the context of constant interaction between the victim and his or her cyberbully, with interferences from family members, friends, adults, and peers, of whom all had the potential to influence social processes. These cyberbullying experiences were challenging and difficult to cope with and led the victim to eventually resolve the experience and find oneself (with the exception of one participant who was still in the cyberbullying cycle during the time of the interview), most often in a positive light.

The model presented provides a beginning understanding of the social processes involved as cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends. From this, we have a much better understanding of cyberbullying from one very important side of the story: the victim's. From their perspective, we can postulate why victims are chosen as targets of cyberbullying, claim a better understanding of what actually occurs during cyberbullying activities, and describe different ways in which victims attempt to cope with cyberbullying. As a result of this study, we can also see where the social system is failing in protecting adolescents from cyberbullying and develop better strategies for prevention, coping, and intervention. Additional research needs to be conducted to further strengthen this model and provide a more complete understanding of the impact and influences that social interaction plays in shaping, and possibly negating, the cyberbullying experience. In

any case, this study has given a “voice” to those previously unheard. As nurses, let us listen. It is through the victims’ voices that understanding and positive change can emanate.

Appendix A
Recruitment Flier



1 in 4 TEENS ARE *CYBERBULLIED*

If your son or daughter has been cyberbullied and is between the ages of 13-16, his/her participation is needed in an important research study to understand more about how cyberbullying occurs.

PARTICIPATION INVOLVES

2 one-on-one *CONFIDENTIAL* interviews that will last 1-2 hours. Your child will receive a \$10 gift card after each interview.

You can find out more about the study by visiting: www.mycbproject.com

If you have questions, or would like to participate, please call

Melvina “Mel” Brandau toll free: **1-844-599-1470**

or email mel@mycbproject.com



Mel Brandau

Appendix B
Applied Examples of Coding Methods

Transcribed Text	Initial Coding	Focused Coding	Theoretical Coding
<p>“They would message me on Facebook and then they would post their own status about me. It didn’t include my name, but the other people that were involved in (cyber) bullying me would know who it was about.”</p>	<p>Facebook messaging</p> <p>“Indirecting”</p> <p>Bullies have support</p>	<p>Being under attack</p> <p>Bullies are cowards</p>	<p>Being Cyberbullied</p>
<p>“I remember commenting on one of them (negative posts) and it was along the lines of (questioning) why did they have to pick on me like that. Every time I would comment they would delete my comment and keep messaging me and calling me. I took it as getting shot down at a party over the Internet.”</p>	<p>Speaking up</p> <p>Why me?</p> <p>Persistent bullies</p> <p>Getting shot down</p>	<p>Putting up a fight</p> <p>Taking it into their own hands</p> <p>Intervening</p> <p>Being rejected</p>	<p>Attempting to Cope</p> <p>Actively Opposing</p>
<p>“Both (face to face and cyberbullying) kind of hurt me in the same way, but when they shot me down, it took all I had and I’d just break down and cry.”</p>	<p>Being hurt</p> <p>Exhausting</p> <p>Breaking Down</p>	<p>Being rejected</p> <p>Falling apart</p> <p>Breaking Down</p>	<p>Losing Oneself</p> <p>Attempting to Cope</p>

THE CYBERBULLYING PROJECT

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [RESEARCH](#) [LINKS](#)



THANK YOU FOR VISITING!!

This site was developed as part of a research project on adolescent cyberbullying. The purpose of this site is to spread the word about the research project, recruit participants into the study, and promote awareness about cyberbullying.

If you are interested in learning more about the research being conducted, please click on the RESEARCH tab above.

If you are interested in learning more about cyberbullying, you can visit the “About” page or click on the “Links” tab for more resources.

This site is not an alternative for mental or emotional counseling. If you are experiencing significant emotional or mental distress and need help, please call the national crisis line: 1-800-273-8255

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

HOME ABOUT RESEARCH LINKS

If your son or daughter has been cyberbullied and is between the ages of 13-16, his/her participation is needed in an important research study to understand more about how cyberbullying occurs.

Participation in this project will include 2 one-on-one **CONFIDENTIAL** interviews that will last 1-2 hours each.

Participants will receive a \$10 gift card after each interview in appreciation for his/her participation.



The interview will include several general questions about the experience of being cyberbullied, events leading up to the cyberbullying and consequences of the cyberbullying, as well as any methods used to cope or manage being cyberbullied.

Participants may experience some mild stress or painful emotions while discussing their experience with this sensitive topic. Individuals who are currently experiencing serious stress or emotional distress, have or are having thoughts of self-harm, or have been or are currently being treated for emotional issues should **NOT** participate.

If your child is between the ages of 13-16 and has been cyberbullied, I invite you to inquire about their interest in participating in this study. If they are interested, please call 1-800-XXX-XXX for more information. You will be invited to leave your contact information and the researcher will return your call. You can also email the researcher at: mbrandau@roadrunner.com

CYBERBULLYING

HOME ABOUT RESEARCH LINKS

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is aggressive, intentional, and is done with the intent to harm or harass another person or group. Cyberbullying can be anonymous or involve a known cyberbully.

Cyberbullying is repetitive. In order to be considered cyberbullying, the behavior must take place multiple times, or must take place in a way in which the behavior can be viewed or reposted repeatedly (ex: sharing videos/pictures, posting on a webpage or social media site, forwarding emails, etc.).

Cyberbullying can be carried out by a group or individual, against another group or individual.

Cyberbullying can take place via cell phone (call, texting, apps), computers, tablets or other mobile, web-accessible devices, via email, instant messaging, social networking sites, etc.

WEB LINKS

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [RESEARCH](#) [LINKS](#)

For more information about [cyberbullying](#) and how you can help stop it, please visit the sites below.

[CDC Violence Prevention](#)

Information from the Centers for Disease Control about “electronic violence”. Includes publications and initiatives to combat the problem.

[CDC Stryve Initiative](#)

National initiative led by the CDC with the goal of reducing youth violence. STRYVE stands for Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere.

[Cyberbullying Research Center](#)

A website full of [cyberbullying](#) information and resources for anyone working with youth.

[StopBullying.gov](#)

A site from the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, dedicated to promoting awareness and stopping of all types of bullying.

[Pew Research Internet Project](#)

A site dedicated to informing the public about current trends, attitudes and issues shaping America.

[Delete Cyberbullying](#)

An online project aimed towards youth. Offers a place to share stories and commit to avoiding [cyberbullying](#).



Appendix D
Informational Telephone Message

This is Melvina “Mel” Brandau, PhD student at the University of North Dakota, College of Nursing and Professional Disciplines. This is a confidential, toll-free line intended for parents and legal guardians of potential participants. Thank you for your interest in the study, “Adolescent Experiences with Cyberbullying.”

The purpose of this study is to better understand the phenomenon of cyberbullying from the perspective of teens who have been cyberbullied.

If you are the parent or legal guardian of a boy or girl between the ages of 12 and 23, and they have been (or are currently being) cyberbullied, they are invited to participate.

Participation in the study involves one, 1-2 hour one-on-one interviews with me, in person or via Skype. The interview will include several general questions about the experience of being cyberbullied. Your teenager will receive a \$10 gift card after completion of each interview.

As this is a sensitive topic of discussion, teens who are currently experiencing serious stress, have been treated for emotional issues, or are having thoughts of self-harm, should NOT participate.

If you would like to discuss setting up an interview, or you would like more information about the study, please leave your first name, your phone number and the best time to reach you-or indicate how I might otherwise contact you. Please indicate if I can leave a message on your answering machine or voicemail. I will return your call very soon. Thank you for considering your teen for participation in the study.

Appendix E
Screening Script for Potential Participants

Potential Participant's Name _____

Potential Participant's Parent(s) Names _____

Potential Participant & Parents Contact Number _____

Verbal consent will be obtained from parent/legal guardian before beginning.

Telephone Screening Interview Script

This is Melvina “Mel” Brandau and I am a PhD student at the University of North Dakota, College of Nursing and Professional Disciplines. Thank you for your interest in my study about cyberbullying.

The purpose of my study is to learn more about cyberbullying and teenagers’ experiences of being cyberbullied. I hope that through my study, we can find ways to prevent and stop others from being cyberbullied.

Based on the information that you received from the telephone message, do you have any additional questions about the study? *Answer questions and inquire if parents/participants are still interested in participating.*

(If still interested)-Because cyberbullying can be sensitive topic and discussing it may bring up strong feelings, we are advising individuals who are currently experiencing significant stress or emotional distress against participating. Is it okay if I ask you some questions to determine if there is any reason why you should not participate?

1) Are you currently under any serious stress or experiencing any serious emotional problems? If yes, thank the individual for his/her interest and offer information related to available community resources. If no, continue to the next question.

2) Do you feel that discussing your experiences of being cyberbullied will cause you significant emotional problems that will be difficult to cope with? If yes, ask:

3) Are you currently experiencing thoughts of harming yourself or someone else?

If yes, the participant will be referred immediately to trained mental health professionals.

If the answer is no to all of the above questions, the individual is considered eligible to participate. With verbal permission from the parent/legal guardian, an interview will be arranged.

Appendix F
Consent Form (Parent or Legal Guardian)

Your child is invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Melvina S. Brandau RN, MS, PhD Candidate at the University of North Dakota, College of Nursing and Professional Disciplines. The purpose of this study is to look at the ways in which cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends. The goal of this research is to provide a framework for health care providers, parents, teachers, and others to use in understanding cyberbullying, in a grand effort to inform and guide public health efforts at reducing adolescent violence. The researcher is specifically interested in hearing about your child's personal experience with cyberbullying, including a) when and how the cyberbullying began and ended; b) events and interactions that occurred during the cyberbullying; c) how they responded to the cyberbullying; and d) any methods they used to attempt to manage or cope with the cyberbullying. A copy of the interview guide for this study is available at your request.

If you consent to your child's participation in this study, they will be asked to complete a questionnaire requesting your contact information, their current age, race/ethnicity, and approximate age during the time of the cyberbullying. It will take approximately five minutes to complete this form. In addition, your child will be asked to participate in two one-on-one interview(s) with the researcher, lasting one to two hours. The interviews will be at a time and location that is convenient for your child. During the interview, your child will be free to discuss issues and answer questions to the extent that he or she is comfortable. He or she may choose to NOT answer any question that they are not comfortable with. Parents, legal guardians, and other persons will **not** be permitted to participate in the interviews.

The interview(s) will be audio-recorded and transcribed into a written text. All names and identifying information will be removed from the transcript in order to ensure that the information your child shares will be anonymous. Your child will be assigned a number and that number will be used to mark the interview transcripts. You and your child's identity and all information that is obtained in connection with this study, whether in person, over the telephone, or in writing, will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Exceptions include any information related to the abuse of a child, or indications of danger to self and/or others. Ohio law mandates the researcher to report these circumstances to the offices of Child and Family Services. If your child indicates that he/she is at risk for self-harm, this information will be shared with you. To protect the confidentiality of the data, no other information shared during the interview will be shared with parents/guardians

The study data, consent forms, and the numbers associated with study participants will be retained in separate locked files in the researcher's home office. These files will only be accessible to the researcher and her advisor at the University of North Dakota. The files will be kept for a minimum of three years following completion of the study, at which time written files will be destroyed via shredding. All audiotapes of the interview will be destroyed after verification of transcripts. Only the researcher, her advisors, the transcriptionist, and people who audit Institutional Review Board procedures will have access to the data. In any type of reports or manuscripts generated as a result of the study, there will not be any identifying information included that would make it possible to identify your child. Direct quotes may be used in writing

the findings of the study, but all identifying information will be removed from the quotation. Your child's name will not be used. Your child may also be contacted sometime after completion of the initial interview to ask for clarification of information that he or she provides, to inquire about any additional thoughts that he or she may have had, or to ask him or her to review a summary of the results of the study. Upon request to the researcher, you and your child may receive a copy of the findings of this study.

Your child's participation in this study will be completely voluntary. After consent is obtained from you, the parent or legal guardian, assent (agreement) will be obtained from your child. If your child refuses to give his or her assent to participate, he or she will not be included in the study. There will be no cost to you or your child for participation in this study. After the completion of each interview, your child will receive a \$10 gift card in appreciation for his or her participation.

There are no known risks for participation in this study. A potential risk is that your child might experience some emotional discomfort or stress during the interviews, because of the sensitive nature of the topic of being cyberbullied. The researcher will be available to assist your child with dealing with any discomfort and stress and will help your child access further assistance if it is needed. Any treatment that is received for stress or emotional distress as a result of the interview will be exclusively at the cost of the participant or parent/guardian. The researcher may stop the study or take your child out of the study at any time if she judges it is in your child's best interest. She can do this without your consent.

There are no known individual benefits to participation in the study. A potential benefit is that your child may experience a reflective process during the interviews, which could contribute to his or her understanding of their personal experiences. Another potential benefit of this research is that your child will be able to inform the discipline of nursing and adults, teachers, and health care professionals who work with adolescents about how to prevent and intervene in instances of cyberbullying. This is knowledge that is currently lacking in nursing research. In addition, by sharing their experiences and perspectives, your child's contributions may improve the care that victims of cyberbullying receive in the future.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary, and your decision whether or not to consent to his or her participation will not change you or your child's future relations with the University of North Dakota or the researcher. If you decide to consent to your child's participation and he or she provides assent to participate, please be advised that you and your child are free to discontinue participation at any time, without penalty, by contacting the researcher.

If you have questions about the research, please feel free to ask them at any time, or you may call Melvina Brandau at 740-710-5233. If you have any other questions or concerns, please call the University of North Dakota, Office of Research Development and Compliance at 701-777-4279. You will be offered a copy of this consent form for future reference. Your signature below indicates that the study has been explained to you, that you have had your questions answered, that you have been encouraged to ask any questions concerning this study, and that you consent to your child's participation in the research.

I will cooperate freely in this research project and release any claim to the collected data, research results, publication of or commercial use of such information or products resulting from the collected information. I consent to my child's participation in this research project, including **AUDIO RECORDING** of the interview. I know what my child will be asked to do and that he or she can stop at any time.

Consent

Parent or Guardian's Signature

Telephone Number

Date

Principal Investigator's Signature

Date

Appendix G
Minor Participant Assent Form

My name is Melvina “Mel” Brandau and I am working on my PhD dissertation research project at the University of North Dakota, College of Nursing and Professional Disciplines. I am doing a research study about **adolescents’ experiences with being cyberbullied.**

I believe there are things about being cyberbullied that are not known and that adolescents may have information that can help teachers, health care professionals, and other adults prevent cyberbullying and help stop it. I believe that you can help me gain new knowledge about cyberbullying that can be used to make a difference in ending cyberbullying.

I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of a research study. A research study is a way to learn more about people. You can choose whether or not you want to participate. We have discussed this research with your parent(s)/guardian and they know that we are also asking you for your agreement. If you are going to participate in the research, your parent(s)/guardian also have to agree. If you do not wish to take part in the research, you do not have to, even if your parents have agreed.

You may discuss anything in this form with your parents or friends or anyone else you feel comfortable talking to. You can decide whether to participate or not after you have talked it over. You do not have to decide immediately.

There may be some words you don't understand or things that you want me to explain more about because you are interested or concerned. Please ask me to stop at anytime and I will take time to explain.

If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to **complete a questionnaire that asks for your gender, your current age, your race/ethnicity, and your approximate age during the time you were cyberbullied. This form will take approximately five minutes to complete. In addition, you will be asked to participate in two one-on-one interviews with the principal researcher, Melvina Brandau, lasting one to two hours. Only you and I will be allowed in the room during the interview. This is to protect the information that you share with me. The interview will be at a time and location that works best for you. During the interview, you are free to discuss issues and answer questions to the extent that YOU feel comfortable. You may choose NOT to answer any question that you are not comfortable with. The information you share with me will NOT be shared with your parents/guardians, unless you are at risk for harming yourself or someone else.**

There are some things about this study you should know. The interview you are being asked to participate in will be audio-recorded and transcribed into written text. Your name will **NOT** be included on the written transcripts; you will be assigned a number and that number will be used to identify your transcript. After the study is finished, the audiotape of your interview will be destroyed. Everything you share in the interview will be kept private to the extent of the law. However, I must report anything that you share that would indicate child abuse or a risk of harm to yourself or another person. The only people who will have access to the information that is

collected during the interview is myself, my advisors, and people from the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Dakota (they must approve this study).

There are no known risks for participation in this study, but you could experience some sadness or stress during the interviews because of the sensitive nature of the topic of being cyberbullied. As an experienced nurse, I will be available to help you with dealing with any discomfort and stress and will help you access further assistance if it is needed. I may stop the study or take you out of the study at any time if I believe it is in your best interest.

Not everyone who takes part in this study will benefit. A benefit means that something good happens to you. I think these benefits might include a better understanding of your personal experiences and feelings by talking about them. You may also be able to inform the nursing profession, adults, teachers, and health care professionals who work with adolescents about how to prevent and intervene in instances of cyberbullying. Your contributions may also improve the care that victims of cyberbullying receive in the future. As a thank you for sharing your story with me, you will receive a \$10 gift card after you complete each interview.

When I am finished with this study I will write a report about what was learned. This report will **NOT** include your name or that you were in the study. Direct quotes may be used in sharing the findings of the study, but your name and any other identifying information will be removed from the quotation. You can have a copy of the final report if you wish.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you decide to stop after we begin, that's okay too. Your parents also know about the study, but will not know about what you share in the interview, unless it is something that is legally necessary for me to report.

If you decide you want to be in this study, please sign your name.

I, _____, want to be in this research study.

(Print your name here)

(Sign your name here)

(Date)

Appendix H Consent Form (Adult Participant)

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Melvina S. Brandau RN, MS, PhD Candidate at the University of North Dakota, College of Nursing and Professional Disciplines. The purpose of this study is to look at the ways in which cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends. The goal of this research is to provide a framework for health care providers, parents, teachers, and others to use in understanding cyberbullying, in a grand effort to inform and guide public health efforts at reducing adolescent violence. The researcher is specifically interested in hearing about your personal experience with cyberbullying, including a) when and how the cyberbullying began and ended; b) events and interactions that occurred during the cyberbullying; c) how you responded to the cyberbullying; and d) any methods you used to attempt to manage or cope with the cyberbullying. A copy of the interview guide for this study is available at your request.

If you consent to participation in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire requesting your contact information, your current age, race/ethnicity, and approximate age during the time of the cyberbullying. It will take approximately five minutes to complete this form. In addition, you will be asked to participate in 1 one-on-one interview (either in person or via Skype) with the researcher, lasting one to two hours. The interviews will be at a time and location that is convenient for you. During the interview, you will be free to discuss issues and answer questions to the extent that you are comfortable. You may choose to NOT answer any question that you are not comfortable with. Parents, legal guardians, and other persons will **not** be permitted to participate in the interviews.

The interview(s) will be audio-recorded and transcribed into a written text. All names and identifying information will be removed from the transcript in order to ensure that the information you share will be anonymous. Your child will be assigned a number and that number will be used to mark the interview transcripts. Your identity and all information that is obtained in connection with this study, whether in person, over the telephone, or in writing, will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Exceptions include any information related to the abuse of a child, or indications of danger to self and/or others. Ohio law mandates the researcher to report these circumstances to the offices of Child and Family Services. If you indicate that you are at risk for self-harm, you will be referred to a counselor or mental health professional in the area. To protect the confidentiality of the data, no other information shared during the interview will be shared with anyone.

The study data, consent forms, and the numbers associated with study participants will be retained in separate locked files in the researcher's home office. These files will only be accessible to the researcher and her advisor at the University of North Dakota. The files will be kept for a minimum of three years following completion of the study, at which time written files will be destroyed via shredding. All audiotapes of the interview will be destroyed after verification of transcripts. Since dates of interviews will vary, it is impossible to give a set day for destruction. However, verification of transcripts will occur within one

week after transcription (which will take one-two weeks); ultimately, audio recordings will be deleted within 3 weeks from the interview date. Only the researcher, her advisors, the transcriptionist, and people who audit Institutional Review Board procedures will have access to the data. In any type of reports or manuscripts generated as a result of the study, there will not be any identifying information included that would make it possible to identify you. Direct quotes may be used in writing the findings of the study, but all identifying information will be removed from the quotation. Your name will not be used. You may also be contacted sometime after completion of the initial interview to ask for clarification of information that you provide, to inquire about any additional thoughts that you may have had, or to ask you to review a summary of the results of the study. Upon request to the researcher, you may receive a copy of the findings of this study.

Your participation in this study will be completely voluntary. There will be no cost to you for participation in this study. After the completion of each interview, you will receive a \$10 gift card in appreciation for your participation.

There are no known risks for participation in this study. A potential risk is that you might experience some emotional discomfort or stress during the interviews, because of the sensitive nature of the topic of being cyberbullied. The researcher will be available to assist you with dealing with any discomfort and stress and will help you access further assistance if it is needed. Any treatment that is received for stress or emotional distress as a result of the interview will be exclusively at the cost of the participant. The researcher may stop the study or take you out of the study at any time if she judges it is in your best interest. She can do this without your consent.

There are no known individual benefits to participation in the study. A potential benefit is that you may experience a reflective process during the interviews, which could contribute to your understanding of your personal experiences. Another potential benefit of this research is that you will be able to inform the discipline of nursing and adults, teachers, and health care professionals who work with adolescents about how to prevent and intervene in instances of cyberbullying. This is knowledge that is currently lacking in nursing research. In addition, by sharing their experiences and perspectives, your contributions may improve the care that victims of cyberbullying receive in the future.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and your decision whether or not to consent to his or her participation will not change your future relations with the University of North Dakota or the researcher. If you decide to consent to participation, please be advised that you are free to discontinue participation at any time, without penalty, by contacting the researcher.

If you have questions about the research, please feel free to ask them at any time, or you may call Melvina Brandau at 740-710-5233. You can also contact Melvina's advisor, Dr. Tracy Evanson, at 701-777-4174 or via email at tracy.evanson@email.und.edu.

If you have other questions or concerns, please call the University of North Dakota, Office of Research Development and Compliance at 701-777-4279. You will be offered a copy of this consent form for future reference. Your signature below indicates that the study has been explained to you, that you have had your questions answered, that you have been encouraged to ask any questions concerning this study, and that you consent to participation in the research.

I will cooperate freely in this research project and release any claim to the collected data, research results, publication of or commercial use of such information or products resulting from the collected information. I consent to participation in this research project, including **AUDIO RECORDING** of the interview. I know what I will be asked to do and that I can stop at any time.

Consent

Participant Signature

Telephone
Number

Date

Principal Investigator's Signature

Date

Appendix I
Demographic Data Questionnaire

Read each question and answer it, providing an X or providing the information requested in the blank spaces.

Participant Code: _____ (assigned after screening interview)

- 1. How old are you?** _____
- 2. What year were you born?** _____
- 3. What is your race/ethnicity? (Please check all that apply)**

Caucasian **African-American** **Asian** **Hispanic** **Native American/
Alaskan Native** **Other**

- 4. Are you: Male** _____ **or Female** _____
- 5. What grade are you in? If summer, what grade did you just finish?** _____
- 6. How old were you when you were cyberbullied?** _____
- 7. What grade were you in when you were cyberbullied?** _____
- 8. Are you currently being cyberbullied?** _____

Appendix J
Interview Guide

Study Aim	Key Questions	Probe Questions
<p>1. Explain the processes that occur as adolescent cyberbullying begins, unfolds, and ends.</p>	<p>I understand that you have been cyberbullied. Please tell me about your experience with cyberbullying.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did the cyberbullying begin? • How did it begin? • What was your first response/thoughts? • Did you know who was cyberbullying you? • How often did the cyberbullying occur? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After that first incident, what happened next? • If you knew who was doing it, did you interact with that person/people? • If you interacted with him/her/them, describe those experiences. • What feelings did you have while all of this was going on? • How did it affect your life and interactions with people in your life? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long did the cyberbullying take place? • Did you do anything specifically to try to stop the cyberbullying? If so, describe. • Did the method in which you were cyberbullied change throughout the experience? (Ex: were you first cyberbullied via text and later cyberbullied via social networking site, or another venue?) • How did it stop? (If it has)

		<p>what feelings did you experience? How did you deal with those feelings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you learn anything about coping with or managing cyberbullying? • What advice would you offer other teens that are being cyberbullied?
<p>4. Describe the context in which adolescent cyberbullying occurs.</p>	<p>What was happening in your life (outside of the cyberbullying), during the time in which the cyberbullying occurred?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where were you when you were being cyberbullied? Did the cyberbullying take place at school/home, somewhere else? • Did the cyberbullying take place during the school year? • Were you being bullied face-to-face at the same time you were being bullied? If so, describe this bullying. • Were there any specific events/activities going on during the time you were being cyberbullied? • What was happening in your life (outside of the cyberbullying), during the time in which the cyberbullying occurred? • What else is important for me to know about in relation to your experience of being cyberbullied?

Appendix K
TranscriptionStar Confidentiality Form



MUTUAL CONFIDENTIAL DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

This Agreement is dated the Nov. 7th, 2014 and effective upon the date of first disclosure or the date of this Agreement, whichever occurs first, between and among Melvina Brandau (hereinafter "Client") and **TranscriptionStar – iSource Solutions Inc.**, a California corporation with office located at 23441, Golden Springs Dr., Diamond Bar, CA 91765 (hereinafter "Company") (Client and Company each are referred to herein as a "Party" and are collectively referred to herein as the "Parties").

WHEREAS, Company has agreed to provide transcription services to the Client, during the course of which the Parties to this Agreement may wish to disclose to each other in oral and written form or in other medium, certain non-public confidential and proprietary information.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants and agreements contained herein and intending to be legally bound, the parties hereby agree as follows:

1. In connection with the Services, it may be necessary or desirable for a Party to disclose to the other certain non-public Confidential Information. For purposes of this Agreement, "Confidential Information" shall mean all non-public, confidential and proprietary information relating to the Parties, their respective clients and the Services, which has been or will be disclosed by a Party orally or as set forth in writing, or contained in some other tangible form.
2. The receiving Party hereby agrees to hold in strict confidence and to use all reasonable efforts to maintain the secrecy of any and all Confidential Information disclosed by the disclosing Party under the terms of this Agreement and may not disclose Confidential Information without the express, written prior consent of the disclosing Party, with the exception of the following:
 - (a) Information that, at the time of disclosure, is available to the public, or thereafter becomes available to the public by publication or otherwise, other than by breach of this Agreement by the receiving Party;
 - (b) Information that the receiving Party can establish by prior record was already known to them or was in their possession at the time of disclosure and was not acquired, directly or indirectly, from the disclosing Party;
 - (c) Information that the receiving Party obtains from a third party; provided however, that such information was not obtained by said third party, directly or indirectly, from the disclosing Party under an obligation of confidentiality toward the disclosing Party;
 - (d) Information that the receiving Party can establish was independently developed by their employees or contractors who had no contact with and were not aware of the content of the Confidential Information.

TranscriptionStar – iSource Solutions Inc., 23441, Golden Springs Dr., Diamond Bar, CA 91765
www.transcriptionstar.com; sales@transcriptionstar.com
Ph: 877-323-4707; 714-783-7922

TRANSCRIPTION STAR

3. The receiving Party may disclose Confidential Information if compelled to do so by a court, administrative agency or other tribunal of competent jurisdiction, provided however, that in such case the receiving Party shall, immediately upon receiving notice that disclosure may be required, give written notice by facsimile and overnight mail to the providing Party so that the providing Party may seek a protective order or other remedy from said court or tribunal. In any event, the receiving Party shall disclose only that portion of the Confidential Information which, in the opinion of their legal counsel, is legally required to be disclosed and will exercise reasonable efforts to ensure that any such information so disclosed will be accorded confidential treatment by said court or tribunal through protective orders, filings under seal and other appropriate means.
4. The receiving Party shall not use the Confidential Information for any purpose other than in connection with the Services. The receiving Party will only disclose Confidential Information to their directors, officers, employees or agents, as applicable.
5. The receiving Party shall take all reasonable steps, including, but not limited to, those steps taken to protect their own information, data or other tangible or intangible property that they regard as proprietary or confidential, to ensure that the Confidential Information is not disclosed or duplicated for the use of any third party, and shall take all reasonable steps to prevent their directors, officers, employees and agents (as applicable) who have access to the Confidential Information from disclosing or making unauthorized use of any Confidential Information, or from committing any acts or omissions that may result in a violation of this Agreement.
6. Title to, and all rights emanating from the ownership of, all Confidential Information disclosed under this Agreement, or any material created with or derived from the Confidential Information, shall remain vested in the disclosing Party. Nothing herein shall be construed as granting any license or other right to use the Confidential Information other than as specifically agreed upon by the Parties.
7. Upon written request of the disclosing Party, the receiving Party shall return promptly to the disclosing Party all materials and documents, as well as any data or other media (including computer data and electronic information), together with any copies thereof, or destroy same and, upon request of the disclosing Party, provide a certificate of destruction.
8. The receiving Party agrees that the disclosure of Confidential Information without the express consent of the disclosing Party will cause irreparable harm to the disclosing Party, and that any breach or threatened breach of this Agreement by the receiving Party will entitle the disclosing Party to injunctive relief, in addition to any other legal remedies available, in any court of competent jurisdiction.
9. This Agreement shall be construed under and governed by the substantive laws of California, without giving effect to the conflicts of laws provision thereof. Any disputes arising between the Parties relating to this Agreement shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction and venue of the federal and state courts located in the City and State of California, and the Parties hereby waive any objection that they may have now or hereafter to the laying of venue of any proceedings in said courts and to any claim that such proceedings have been brought in an inconvenient forum, and further irrevocably agree that a judgment or order in any such proceedings shall be conclusive and binding upon each of them and may be enforced in the courts of any other jurisdiction.

TranscriptionStar – iSource Solutions Inc., 23441, Golden Springs Dr., Diamond Bar, CA 91765
www.transcriptionstar.com; sales@transcriptionstar.com
Ph: 877-323-4707; 714-783-7922

TRANSCRIPTION STAR

10. This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement among the Parties as to the subject matter contained herein, shall supersede any other prior or contemporaneous arrangements as to the Confidential Information, whether written or oral, and may be modified in writing only.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the day and year first above written.

TranscriptionStar - iSource Solutions Inc.



By:
Name: Shiva Kumar
Title: COO
Date: November 03, 2014



By:
Name: Melvina Brandau
Title: PhD(c), MS, RN - Student
Date: November 7, 2014

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