

Institute for Clinical Social Work

AN EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOR AND CYBER-BULLYING

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BY

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ABSTRACT

Using developmental psychology and self psychology as an analytical lens, this study finds that cyber-bullying is a normative behavior that can be predicted from the crises and disruptions that are common to adolescence. It is also a behavior that should diminish or disappear once adolescents become more mature or reach adulthood. In addition, cyber-bullying is facilitated by a relative lack of adult oversight which is in turn facilitated by the lack of conventions that would govern interactions on newly developed social media sites such as Facebook. At the time that the participants engaged in cyber-bullying, Facebook was a new phenomenon and the norms for interacting online had not yet been established. The research was conducted via a mixed-methods, grounded theory approach with 90 subjects, aged 18-23, initially completing an online screening survey followed by in-depth interviews with 15 subjects who met the screening requirements. Findings show that the participants had difficulty in identifying their behaviors as cyber-bullying even when the behaviors were consistent with their definitions of cyber-bullying. Participants reported that it was acceptable “to look away” or take a passive by-stander role when witnessing cyber-bullying under specific circumstances. Most reported that they cyber-bullied either because peer groups were engaging in that behavior or because they wanted to defend a friend. In retrospect, many expressed regret for having engaged in that behavior, an indicator of having achieved maturity.

For my families, both work and home.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
Cyber-Bullying Literature	
Traditional Bullying Literature	
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	
III. METHODOLOGY.....	34
Design and Type of Study	
Scope of the Study, Setting, Population and Sampling	
Data Collection Methods and Instruments	
Data Analysis	
Protection of the Rights of Human Subjects	
Privacy/Confidentiality	
Informed Consent	
Limitations	

TABLE OF CONTENTS – *Continued*

Chapter	Page
IV. RESULTS/FINDINGS.....	43
Results of the Survey	
Results of the Interviews	
Social Media Use	
Cyber-Bullying Defined	
I Am Not the Bully	
Acceptable to Look Away	
Easier to Be a Cyber-Bully	
Growth	
Findings	
V. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS.....	76
Theoretical Implications	
Psychosocial Moratorium	
Non-Participants	
Social Implications	
Clinical Implications	
Implications for Further Research	
Appendixes	
A. CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION.....	101
B. RECRUITMENT FLYER.....	104
C. ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE.....	106
REFERENCES.....	110

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
4.1	Been Accused of Cyber-Bullying, Later Regret Negative Post.....	44
4.2	Interviewed or Not, Later Regret Negative Post.....	45
4.3	Interviewed or Not, Read Disrespect, Look the Other Way.....	45

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As the digital realm advances with the development of smartphones, other digital devices, and social media sites online, opportunities for interacting with others online have increased, and these interactions have the potential of connecting more people than ever before at any time of the day or night. As these opportunities have grown, we have also witnessed an increase in the social problem of cyber-bullying, particularly among adolescents. The rapid growth in technology presents many avenues for cyber-bullies to engage in negative and hurtful behavior, and it also allows cyber-bullies to remain unseen. The cyber-bully can quickly use a digital device to post or send a hurtful message to a larger group of people while remaining unseen and, at times, anonymous. For example, the following narrative of a 14-year-old girl shows how someone can be cyber-bullied through a text message (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007):

I went on this trip with my family. When I came back everyone at school was avoiding me. They moved away when I came by and whispered and pointed at me. Finally a friend told me that my friend had sent text messages to everyone that I had been out of school because I'd had an abortion. I was so embarrassed!

Unfortunately, incidents like this are happening everywhere, and unlike traditional bullying, the victims cannot hide in their homes from the bully. They cannot hide because today most youth belong to social networking sites, such as Facebook, which allow bullies to target their victims in front of a large audience. Most Facebook

users have several hundred friends. By using Facebook, someone who cyber-bullies can post a hurtful message about his or her victims, and within minutes, this is broadcast into cyber space. A hurtful message will be seen in seconds by hundreds of online users. Even when deleted, a typed message can always be discovered, as it is never completely removed from the Internet.

As society has begun to understand some of the dangers of the Internet, the popular press has had increased coverage of cyber-bullying. This media coverage guides most people's understanding of what cyber-bullying is and its impact. This coverage has tended to focus on the most extreme cases and their devastating effects. One example of this is the tragic loss of Hope Witsell. At the age of 13, a photo of her topless had been passed around her school. After months of cyber bullying and ridicule by her classmates, she hung herself (Inbar, 2009).

Hope's story is not an isolated occurrence. Megan Meier took her life too (Cathcart, 2008). She established a relationship with a fictitious boy named Josh Evans on the social networking site MySpace. "Josh" was initially kind to Megan, yet only one month after their online friendship began, he started to call her horrible names. Later, her parents discovered that adults and a few of her girl classmates created this fictitious boy. Cyber-bullying was brought to the headlines by this sad tale.

Media coverage of these devastating and heart-wrenching cases has made it clear that this is an increasing social problem with unspeakably high costs for those who are victims. As a result of these tragic consequences, much of the scholarly literature on cyber-bullying has focused on the prevalence of cyber-bullying and its effects on victims.

The prevalence of cyber-bullying is determined by the number of youth who witness cyber-bullying as a bystander, engage in cyber-bullying as a “bully,” or suffer as a victim of cyber-bullying. According to Wong-Lo and Bullock (2011), in 2010, incidences of cyber-bullying increased to 90% of youth playing one of the three roles—bystander, bully or victim—even though only 19% of youth had played one of these roles in cyber-bullying in 2000 (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a). The findings are clear that cyber-bullying is an ever-increasing problem.

In addition to gaining an understanding of the prevalence of cyber-bullying, the research has also tended to focus on the effects that it has on victims. According to the literature, victims reported feeling angry, sad, and hurt (Beran & Qing, 2007) or emotionally upset after incidents of cyber-bullying (Topcu et al., 2008). Furthermore, cyber-bullying has an impact on victims’ confidence (Price & Dalgleish, 2010) and leads to problems in school (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). The literature has revealed a range of responses, mostly negative, to cyber-bullying, and it is clear that the consequences of cyber-bullying can be quite severe for those who are the targets.

Thus, as a result of this focus, much is known about how likely it is that youth will experience cyber-bullying as well as the effects that it can have on victims. However, much less is known about the perpetrators of cyber-bullying behaviors. Currently, not much is known about what would motivate cyber-bullies to engage in this behavior, and what these behaviors represent. Because of the lack of knowledge about cyber-bullies, researchers interested in answering these questions have referred to the literature on the traditional bully. This literature (Bradshaw, O’Brennan, & Sawyer, 2008; Espelage &

Holt, 2001; Frisen et al., 2007; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008) has revealed the characteristics of bullies and the motivation behind bullying. For instance, we know that traditional bullies have a search for power (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008) report low self-esteem (Frisen & Johnson, 2007) and have a reputation as being popular (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Espelage & Holt, 2001; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008).

However, this literature does not clarify the profile of a cyber-bully; it is unclear how or if these findings apply to the case of cyber-bullying. There are differences in the way that traditional bullying and cyber-bullying are defined that would make it difficult to apply findings about traditional bullies to cyber-bullies. Traditional bullying consists of overt and covert tactics meant to harass others through physical and verbal attack (overt bullying) or through damaging the individual's social relations (covert bullying) (Siyahhan, Aricak, & Cayirdag-Acar, 2012). Cyber-bullying occurs when someone uses technology as a means to bully another person. Hinduja and Patchin (2006) define cyber-bullying as a deliberate, repeated, and hurtful activity using a computer, mobile phone, or other electronic device. While the language between both forms of bullying is similar, one important difference between the two would be the use of an electronic device. In addition, a universally accepted definition of cyber-bullying does not exist because there is debate over whether or not to include specific elements such as repetition and the need for power in the definition of cyber-bullying (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011).

In addition to not consistently investigating the motivation of cyber-bullies, the literature has also tended to focus on the social, behavioral, and empirical aspects of this phenomenon. This means that we know how it happens and the role that the Internet,

electronic devices, and media can play in giving cyber-bullying its power. However, the focus on cyber-bullying as a social and behavioral problem does not provide a complete picture. We know nothing about cyber-bullies from a psychological perspective because it has not been examined through that lens.

Unfortunately, this limits our understanding of cyber-bullying and does not provide guidance to mental health professionals as to how to address it when working with youth. Academics and mental health practitioners need to understand where this behavior comes from, and the current literature does not address that issue at all. As helpful as the research on the impact on victims is, it cannot put an end to cyber-bullying because we know little about what motivates individuals to engage in cyber-bullying. In order to truly understand this phenomenon, it is not enough to focus on how often it occurs and its regrettable effects on the victims. We also need an intimate understanding of what would motivate someone to engage in this behavior. Without an understanding of the dynamics involved, we do not have the information that is necessary to help victims.

An understanding of the dynamics of cyber-bullying should include a psychological perspective that focuses on the behavior from the perspective of those who perpetrate it. To gain a deeper understanding of cyber-bullying, we can enlist theories of developmental and self-psychology to provide a lens through which to understand why cyber-bullies do what they do. To address these issues and fill gaps in the research, a mixed methods research analysis of perpetrators' behavior was conducted. Data were examined using self-psychological and developmental theories in an effort to explain cyber-bullying behavior. Questions explored were: Is cyber-bullying behavior

pathological and a precursor to criminal behavior? Are cyber-bullies a specific type of person? Were those who engaged in this behavior experiencing deficits within themselves and seeking ways to feel complete? Results indicated that rather than being a precursor or indicator of criminal behavior, cyber-bullying is normative during adolescence, and an explanation of its emergence can be found in self-psychology and developmental psychology.

It was important to gain a self-psychological and developmental theory of cyber-bullying. This theoretical perspective will benefit social workers because a therapist can determine whether or not online behavior is normative or pathological. It can also help social workers work with victims because they can talk more specifically about what motivates people to engage in this type of behavior. It might provide a level of comfort to know that this behavior may be outgrown and allow the victim to gain insight into how to effectively manage the effects of this behavior.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a number of literatures that can give us an understanding of cyber-bullying. To gain understanding we first turn towards the existing cyber-bullying literatures and then the bullying literatures. Through this examination of cyber-bullying and bullying, it was evident that existing literatures on cyber-bullying have studied this behavior from a social and behavioral point of view. However, there was a gap in understanding this phenomenon from a psychological perspective. This gap in understanding led to an exploration of the developmental theory and self psychology literatures.

Cyber-Bullying Literature

Currently, there is no agreed upon definition of cyber-bullying. One suggested definition of cyber bullying is "negative or hurtful repetitive behavior, by the means of electronic communication tools, which involves an imbalance of power with the less-powerful person or group being unfairly attacked" (Smith et al., 2008, p.1). Another definition provided by Campbell (2005) states that a cyber-bully sends hurtful messages through e-mail, texting, chat rooms, mobile phones, mobile phone cameras, and web sites. These two definitions by Smith et al., (2008) and Campbell (2005) represent poles of a continuum on how cyber-bullying had been defined in the literature. Although these definitions accurately portray cyber-bullying, researchers need a universal definition that

will help them develop reliable and valuable measures of cyber-bullying (Tokunaga, 2010). Unfortunately, researchers have been unable to accomplish this as of 2014. The only common thread is that all definitions include the following: cyber-bullying is a category of bullying that occurs in the digital realm/medium of electronic text (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011).

One way cyber-bullying is happening within the digital realm is on social networking sites such as Facebook. Facebook users have grown at an unbelievable rate with 1 million users in 2004 and now with a staggering 1.1 billion users in 2013 (Smith, 2013). With the increasing number of members, messages now reach large numbers of people in a way that was not possible before, and unfortunately, social media has also become a way of engaging in cruel behavior. Facebook as a means to engage in cyber-bullying is happening almost universally among teens since “95% of social media-using teens have witnessed cruel behavior on social networking sites” (Lenhart et al., 2011).

Facebook was created in 2004, but cyber-bullying was happening much earlier. A study conducted in late 1999 and 2000 provided some of the earliest data on the prevalence of online behavior (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a). A large sample of 1501 youth and their parents were interviewed over the phone. In this sample, 19% had witnessed online harassment (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a). A follow up to the Youth Internet Safety Survey was completed in 2005. Reports showed a 50% increase in Internet harassment (Ybarra, & Mitchell, 2004b). By 2011, 90% of youth had witnessed cyber bullying/harassment (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011). Patchin and Hinduja (2004) conducted a large online survey to assess the electronic bullying (cyber-bullying) experiences of 571

individuals younger than age 18. In this study, 74% agreed that bullying occurred online, and 30% of participants reported being the victim of online bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005). This early data outlined the prevalence of the problem of cyber-bullying.

Along with identifying the prevalence of cyber-bullying, some of the earliest researchers examined data to create a profile of those involved in cyber-bullying as both victims and/or bullies. Compared to the general population, those involved in cyber-bullying reported more emotional struggles (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a). Cyber-bullying was also correlated to school problems (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). The early profile did not identify one gender as being more involved than another. Some studies suggested that those involved could be either male or female (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Topcu et al., 2008). However, one study did find males to be more involved in cyber-bullying (Qing, 2006) while another found females were more often involved (Hindjua & Patchin, 2007). In this early profile, cyber-bullies had more substance abuse/use and reported involvement in traditional bullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b). Engaging in traditional bullying was a strong indicator that one would also engage in cyber-bullying (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b;). Studies indicated that a traditional bully would often cyber-bully as well. However, the literature does not address whether someone who engages in cyber-bullying would also be a bully in the traditional sense.

Cyber-bullying can overlap with traditional bullying, but has unique characteristics (Erdur-Baker, 2010). One unique characteristic is that cyber-bullying can occur at any time of the day. Most traditional bullying behavior happens during the school day and can happen anywhere. A second unique characteristic is that a victim of

cyber-bullying may be unaware of who the bully is. One study found 48% of those bullied did not know who had bullied them (Kowalski, & Limber, 2007). Traditional victims would know their harassers. Another difference is that in traditional bullying, boys are over-represented (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Nansel et al., 2001). In cyber-bullying, girls may be equally represented (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Topcu et al., 2008). Some studies have found that when bullying occurred through instant messaging, chat rooms, email messages, and on websites, girls specifically were over-represented as bully/victims and victims (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Smith et al., 2008). Although these studies found girls over-represented, others have found boys to be more over-represented (Qing, 2006). From the results of these studies, gender involvement is unclear in cyber-bullying. Yet, traditional bullying does share some characteristics with cyber-bullying.

Some researchers focused on similarities and differences between bullying and cyber-bullying while others examined the impact on the victim. Beran & Qing (2007) surveyed 7th-9th grade students' reactions to cyber-bullying in Canada. Results indicated 21% of victims involved with cyber-bullying reported feeling angry, sad, and hurt (Beran & Qing, 2007, Topcu et al., 2008). Researchers also examined the same phenomenon of cyber-bullying within London schools. These researchers found 22% of victims involved in cyber-bullying reported feeling sad and hurt (Smith et al., 2008).

Along with a focus on the emotional impact, other literature focused on who the victims of cyber-bullying were. One study found those with "special needs, academic abilities, un-popularity, physical appearance, physical and mental disabilities,

unfashionable clothing, and ethnicity” (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009, p. 389) were often over-represented as victims. Specifically, one study looked at cyber-bullying among students with intellectual disabilities. Students with intellectual disabilities reported being bullied online at least once a week (Didden, 2009). Other predictors of being cyber-bullied were the use of electronic media. One study found that access to electronic tools was a predictor of being involved in cyber-bullying for public school students, but not for private school students (Topcu et al., 2008).

Further studies expanded on the profile of the victim, and others focused on the effects of cyber-bullying and how victims’ cope. A mixed method study explored the experience of Australian students and being a victim of cyber-bullying. At the time of the survey, 33% of the sample was being bullied online (Price & Dalglish, 2010). This study explored the experience of young people under 25 years of age, and the impact of being a victim of cyber-bullying. Data indicated that 78% of the victims felt their confidence was affected when victimized. In addition, 70% of victims reported low self-esteem (Price & Dalglish, 2010). With an awareness of the impact on the victims, researchers wanted an understanding of how victims of cyber-bullying cope. Seeking support has been found to be helpful strategy for victims. Victims reported improvement when they had someone to talk with (Aricak et al., 2008). Other coping strategies found to be successful included confrontation, and avoidance (Perren et al., 2012). The victims reported most often that they would avoid online activities to stop cyber-bullying (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009; Smith et al., 2008).

Beyond prevalence and victims' response, the literature has indicated a low reporting rate. Low reporting rates were found in Sweden; 50% of victims did not tell anyone (Slonje, Smith, 2008). In Turkey, in 2008, a small sample of 183 students from private and public schools were asked about their experiences with cyber-bullying. This research also found that the victims did not report being a victim of cyber-bullying to adults, but they did report it to friends (Topcu et al., 2008). In 2006, a Canadian study of junior high school students found that only 40% of victims would report the incident to an adult (Qing, 2006). One year later less than 35% of students indicated they would report the incident (Qing, 2007). The data showed that female cyber victims were more likely to report the incident to adults while males chose not to tell an adult (Qing, 2006).

Qing (2007) took the research a step further and examined the experience of cyber-bullying in both Canadian and Chinese schools to explore the cultural perspective. Findings from a combination of 264 seventh grade students in Canada, and 197 seventh grade students in China, indicated that 28.9% of those surveyed were victims and 17.8% had bullied. In total, 52.9% of students were aware of cyber-bullying (Qing, 2007). Those involved used emails, chat rooms, mobile phones, and other technologies. This study indicated that Chinese students reported being victims more often than Canadian students. This suggested a cultural difference in cyber-bullying activity. Findings indicated cyber-bullying was happening worldwide.

Up until 2009, most studies that had been conducted on the experience of cyber-bullying had been quantitative studies. Researchers in Australia wanted to understand the experience of cyber-bullying by employing qualitative methods. A qualitative research

method allowed for a more in-depth approach to this topic. Researchers examined a small cohort of young people working on a secondary education certificate. They interviewed eight students in a semi-structured format to explore the impact of cyber-bullying. They also surveyed 91 students, and these students reported high levels of bullying behavior; 63% had bullied, and 58% were targets (Reeckman & Cannard, 2009). Those who reported their stories through interviews shared that they experienced fear and sadness when they knew their cyber-bully. When the cyber-bullying was anonymous, there was little emotional impact (Reeckman & Cannard, 2009). Quantitative studies had been unable to present this finding.

Studies were done on the impact to victims, and research has attempted to understand the motivations for engaging in cyber-bullying. In 2010, a high school sample reported on perceived motivations for cyber-bullying (Varjas. et. al., 2010). This high school sample reported both internal and external motivators as the perceived reason people cyber-bully (Varjas et al., 2010). Internal reasons included boredom, jealousy, and revenge. External reasons included no consequence for their actions or that the target was different from themselves (Varjas et al., 2010). In 2009 a middle school population in Canada was surveyed, and the study also explored motivators for cyber-bullying (Cassidy et al., 2009). Motivation for bullying included: not liking the person, the victim upset them, they were bullied first, and because it was “fun” (Cassidy et al., 2009). These studies examined perceived reasons why someone would engage in cyber-bullying.

Few studies explored cyber-bullying among college students. Dilmac (2009) examined college-age students and the relationship between psychological needs and

cyber-bullying. For this study, 666 undergraduate students from Selcuk University in Turkey were asked about their involvement and exposure to cyber-bullying. The intent of this study was to explore the relationship between psychological needs and cyber-bullying (Dilmac, 2009). Both an exploratory/demographic survey and the adjective check list (ACL) were used to identify traits of the participants. Findings indicated a link between aggression and attention-seeking, and engaging in cyber-bullying behaviors. This is consistent with other findings about aggression and cyber-bullying (Beran & Li, 2005; Harman, et al., 2005; Willard, 2007).

In summary cyber-bullying behavior happens worldwide. Victims indicated feelings of anger, sadness, fear, and a negative impact on self-confidence and/or self-esteem (Beran & Li, 2005; Price & Dalgleish, 2010; Reeckman & Cannard, 2009; Topcu et al., 2008). Bullies could be engaging in cyber-bullying for fun, to exert power, or to defend a friend (Cassidy et al., 2009; Reeckman & Cannard, 2009). Another theme of the research showed a low reporting rate of victimization. Those involved in cyber-bullying did not report to adults (Qing, 2006; Qing, 2007; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). Most studies showed no significant gender differences for those involved in cyber-bullying (Qing, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Topcu et al., 2008).

Traditional Bullying Literature

A review of the literature on traditional bullying was necessary to understand the phenomenon of cyber-bullying. The bullying and cyber-bullying literatures have common threads and share similar terminology and language. Traditional bullying was first studied

intensively in Scandinavian schools. Studies on bullying have defined traditional bullying, explored the bystander's role, and explored the concepts of repetition and power imbalance. The most notable contributions came from Olweus (1994) who is often credited with creating the definition of traditional bullying. According to Olweus (1994), bullying consists of intentional and repeated acts that occur through direct verbal, direct physical and indirect forms, and it typically occurs in situations where there is a power or status difference (Olweus, 1994). Traditional bullying most often occurs in a school environment and a bystander's behavior influences the cycle of bullying by providing an audience (Karna, Voeten, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2010). Bullying in the traditional way has two criteria: *repetition* and *power imbalance*. Both are used in the literature, although they are not universally accepted (Brain, 1997).

As compared to other countries, bullying in the United State occurs at a high rate. A study with a sample size of 207 adolescents found that 76.85% had experienced bullying, 88% reported they had observed bullying, and 77% had been a victim of bullying during their school years within the United States (Oliver, Hoover, & Hazler, 1994). In 1994, a study of schools in the United States explored the severity of bullying. Bullying behavior was found to be more severe in the United States compared to figures reported for Norway, Ireland or Scotland (Oliver et al., 1994). Another study in the United States reported that 39% of students had been bullied at some time during their school years, 20% stated that they had bullied others, and of these 13% reported being both bullies and victims (Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007). In 2004, an anonymous online survey of 16,012 middle and high school students in the United States found over

37% of the youth reported some type of frequent involvement in bullying with 17.5% as a victim, 11.7% as a bully and 8.4% as a bully/victim.

Studies have explored the psychology of the bully, victim, and the bully/victim. The bully represented 7% of the population and was found to have high social standing, and considered cool (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). By use of self-reporting scales, peer reports, and teacher reports, sixth grade students reported that those involved in bullying as either a victim, bully or bystander had greater school problems than those not involved. Those involved also experienced greater difficulty with their peers. Of these participants, 9% were victims who reported being emotionally distressed. Six percent of participants were considered both the bully and the victim. The bully/victim experienced depression and anxiety and reported more conduct, school, and peer problems. The bystander reported less emotional distress within this study (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

Although bystanders reported less emotion distress, they are still a part of the cycle of bullying and can be affected. Therefore, bullying involves a bully, a victim, and a third party, the bystander. The bystander role has been examined by looking at recorded videos of bullying (O'Connell et al., 1999). From the videotaped recordings, researchers found evidence to support the idea that peers have an influence on the bullying dynamic. Peer inaction greatly influenced the dynamic of bullying by encouraging bullies. Prior to the video recordings, 41% of participants reported they would help out their peers; however, the videos found that 54% of the time participants did not help out the victim (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). This indicates that prior to the recordings people believed they would actually intervene when in reality they intervened much less

frequently than they believed they would. This study supports the dynamic of bullying being more than just an interaction between the victim and the bully. All parties involved are affected although those involved as victims were most affected by bullying (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Bullying involvement either as a victim, bully, or a bystander led to anxiety and school problems, and in turn, there is less connection to the school (Bradshaw et al., 2008).

As victims of bullying experienced difficulties, it became important for researchers to examine this issue. A large study with a sample size of 15,686 examined the psychosocial adjustment of those involved as either a victim or a bully. In this study, sixth through tenth grade students in public and private schools, throughout the United States, completed the World Health Organization's Health Behavior in School-aged Children survey to explore bullying in schools (Nansel et al., 2001). Those youth who reported both bullying and being bullied demonstrated problem behaviors and poorer adjustment across both social/emotional dimensions. Considering the combination of social isolation, lack of success in school, and involvement in problem behaviors, youth who both bully others and are bullied may represent an especially high-risk group for developing social and emotional difficulties and problem behaviors (Nansel et al., 2001).

In addition, the literature has found that not all victims respond to bullying in the same way. A 2010 study found that victims of bullying displayed different variations of social anxiety and social isolation, and some victims had an increased risk of suicidal ideation and/or suicide attempts (Karna et al., 2010). This suggested that victims of bullying should be screened for suicide. Further literature indicated that students who

were victimized were at-risk for psychological difficulties (Espelage & Holt, 2001). A study in British Columbia, Canada explored why some victims of bullying are more negatively affected. This study of 399 eighth-through tenth-grade students found social hopelessness was a risk factor for suicidal ideation. In contrast, perceived family support for the victims was a protective factor. Victimized students had fewer thoughts of suicide when they believed they had greater family support (Bonanno & Hymel, 2010).

To understand the reasons bullying is occurring, researchers sought to understand the perceived reasons why people become victims. Characteristics that would make someone a target for males included: not fitting in, being physically weak, being short tempered, their friends, and their clothes. Female victims attributed bullying to not fitting in, their facial appearance, their emotional state, being overweight, and earning good grades (Oliver et al., 1994). Another study indicated a different appearance and low self-esteem as the reasons for being a victim of bullying (Frisen et al., 2007).

As the literature focused on the profile of being a victim, an understanding of a bully profile was also established. Several studies supported the finding that most bullies are more often male (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Nansel et al., 2001). Some studies found that bullies were perceived by most as popular (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Espelage & Holt, 2001). Specifically, one study explored the relationship between popularity and bullying behavior across gender and grade level with sixth through eighth grade students. This study measured the extent to which students who bully affiliate with one another. It also identified groups of students who bully others to determine if bullying groups differed on psychosocial measures as compared to non-

bullying groups (Espelage & Holt, 2001). This study found bullying emerged in early adolescence. Males more often reported bullying peers, and those who bullied shared the same amount of popularity as those who did not bully (Espelage & Holt, 2001). Bullying behavior decreases with age (Frisen et al., 2007; Nansel et al., 2001). Specifically, the findings on popularity decreased with age possibly because bullying became less popular over time (Espelage & Holt, 2001).

Beyond characteristics of bullies, motivation for bullying was explored. One study in Finland found bullying was about the search for power (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008). These researchers examined 85 written accounts of the phenomenon of bullying and found that creating a reputation for oneself as a reason for bullying behavior. Bullying was a way to create status and show one's power in peer relationships (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008). Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) then suggested these actions as reasons for bullying: for amusement and play, and/or to silence the victim. Another study found that students bully because they had an inability to fit in with the group (Nansel et al., 2001). In other words, they were perceived as outsiders.

In summary, Olweus (1994) is considered the leading researcher on the topic of bullying and is credited with developing the most widely agreed-upon definition. The bystander plays an important part (O'Connell et al., 1999). Individuals impacted the most are those who identify as a bully and as a victim. The following themes exist in the literature on traditional bullying: Bullying has both intention and repetition (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Brain, 1997;). Bullying is a complex dynamic that involves a bully, victim and bystanders (Karna et al., 2010; O'Connell et al., 1999). Males are more often involved

than females (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Nansel et al., 2001;). Bullies have a reputation as being popular (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Espelage & Holt, 2001; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Victims were chosen because they were different (Frisen et al., 2007; Nansel et al., 2001; Oliver et al., 1994).

When studying a phenomenon like cyber-bullying, it made sense to appeal to a literature that seemingly would fit because there are similarities. However, there are also differences. Similarities include: the language and terminology and a decrease in bullying behavior with age. However, that is where the similarities end. Differences found within the literature include: females may be equally represented in cyber-bullying, victims could be anyone with access to electronic tools and the bystander played a different role.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This research used both developmental theories and self-psychology as a theoretical lens to understand cyber-bullying. It also included an examination of aggression during adolescence. An examination of literature on these theories was necessary to offer an interpretation of the results of this study. Developmental theories explored in this study included Anna Freud's and Erik Erickson's contributions. Beyond an understanding of developmental theories, self psychology theory was explored. Self psychology does not yet have a cohesive developmental theory although it does contain a general understanding of what happens in development (Palombo, 1985). The lack of a cohesive developmental theory made it necessary to explore developmental theories within the literature.

Anna Freud's (1958) contribution to psychoanalytic developmental theory was her understanding of developmental lines. This was her most notable addition to psychoanalytic theory: an understanding of development. She understood development to be a concept of progression with natural movement forward and backward being pushed along by innate drives (A. Freud, 1958). Throughout development, aggressive and sexual drives are moved forward through instinctual drives. In other words, instinctual drives move development and are paired with specific outward behaviors at each stage of development. For example the oral phase, age 0-1, is noted by biting and spitting, the anal phase, age 1-3, with hitting and kicking, and the phallic phase, 3-6, with overbearing actions (A. Freud, 1958). Within normal adolescent development, inconsiderateness, mental cruelty, dissocial outbursts are common outward behavior (A. Freud, 1958).

Each stage of development has tasks and challenges; adolescence has its own unique set of challenges with the end result being disengagement from parental figures (A. Freud, 1958). One main developmental task of adolescence is to leave one's parents. Along with this separation from parents, adolescence is linked with the unique challenge of puberty. The final task of adolescence is to reach emotional maturity. Anna Freud (1958) understood the task of adolescence to be that of reaching emotional maturity during which ego mastery is occurring (A. Freud, 1958). Puberty paired with development creates stress when trying to reach emotional maturity.

Erik Erikson (1956) further expanded upon development with an important contribution regarding identity at the end of adolescence. He broke adolescence into two distinct stages with his main contribution to developmental theory coming from his focus

on identity during the end stage of adolescence. The end stage of adolescence is the integration of who one has been with who one is to become (Erikson, 1946). There is “a turning point, a crucial moment when development must move one way or another, marshaling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation” (Erikson, 1956, p. 16). Within this turning point, one must merge with a future by marshaling resources through, for example, the attainment of a career. Also, during this moment, there is a pause to allow for recovery, or, in a way, the healing of past developmental breaks. Finally, differentiation from one’s caregivers must occur in order to merge a positive identity. A positive identity would result in a mature and satisfied adult. Satisfaction must come from within and from the outside to merge together in a positive identity. Without satisfaction, a negative identity may be created. A negative identity could include delinquent and/or aggressive behavior.

Erikson (1956) has called this stage at the end of adolescence the psychosocial moratorium. This stage, as Erikson described, involves the stabilization of ego identity and in the end the containment of affective fluctuations, including depression, within a tolerable range (Erikson, 1956). The stabilization of ego identity is a complex process and takes a great toll on the ego and is not driven by biological demands, but is driven by psychological organization. In other words, as puberty comes to an end, one must organize all the demands of the person they were with the person who they will become. This organization will begin around the age of 18. One aspect of this developmental challenge includes leaving one’s family to find one’s own place in society. Through this process, one will seek gratification outside of the self and often from one’s peers. “A

psychosocial moratorium during which extremes of subjective experience, alternatives of ideological choice, and potentialities of realistic commitment can become the subject of social play and joint mastery” (Erikson, 1956, p. 119). As adolescents figure out future choices, they may experience anxiety, which could lead to other problems.

This stage of development at the end of adolescence can be overwhelming. “In no other stage of the life cycle are the promise of finding oneself and the threat of losing oneself so closely allied” (Erikson, 1956, p. 244). Erikson addressed the steps of this crisis. The first step is to seek out something to have faith in, but paradoxically, as adolescents look for someone to believe in, they often announce the opposite: mistrust for that in which they put their trust. In the second step, the adolescent looks for an opportunity to choose a path, but paradoxically may choose to act shamefully in the eyes of adults. He will make this choice to look good in his peers’ eyes. If what he chooses causes him shame, he would rather turn away than look foolish in the eyes of his peers (Erikson, 1956). In an effort to not look foolish, some could turn away from what they most desire and act according to the approval of his or her friends. A loss of identity may lead to an over-reliance on peers. This over-reliance on peers could lead an adolescent to act in ways uncharacteristic to their normal behavior. For example, they could act cruel in a group setting or exclude others in an effort to avoid these overwhelming feelings. Erikson (1956) does not condone cruelty or exclusion of others but this cruelty may be unavoidable during adolescence. Cruelty may be a reaction or a way to “defend against a sense of identity loss” (Erikson, 1956, p. 132).

Identity is a merger of what one is to become with who one has been and this merger occurs within one's peer group. As a merger of identity occurs, there is a comparison within one's peer group. In other words, identity is formed in part by the culture of an adolescents' peer group. During this merger, a normative developmental crisis occurs (Erikson, 1956). This merger will create disturbances and confusion as individuals try to find their place in the world. This confusion may contribute to group actions or to possible delinquent behaviors (Erikson, 1956). The adolescents are off-balance and may make inappropriate choices based upon peers' behavior.

In summary, according to Erikson (1956), confusion is experienced during this stage of development, and all individuals will be participants in a normative crisis. During this crisis, adolescents must navigate what has gone before and what is to come in order to consolidate a positive identity. At times as they navigate through this process, some adolescent behavior will be unacceptable by adult standards. Adolescents could display a negative identity while navigating this important developmental task (Erikson, 1956). It is normative during adolescence to display a negative identity while navigating adolescence. The hope, at the end of adolescence, would be the merger of a positive identity, but unsuccessful navigation would lead to a negative identity. A negative identity, beyond adolescence, could include an outward display of delinquency and aggressive behaviors into adulthood.

Aggression follows a developmental path and it is important to understand whether a response is normative. Anna Freud's and Erik Erikson's developmental contributions offer an understanding of normative aggression. Anna Freud's stages are

driven by innate aggressive drives. For example, during the oral stage, biting is driven by innate aggressive drives. The infant does not hate his mother; his behavior is an expression of aggressive drives (A Freud, 1958). During the anal stage, it is not hate, but aggressive love that turns towards destruction of outside objects (A. Freud, 1958). The toddler hits as a response to development this is driven by aggressive drives. These drives are innate; he hits not because he hates or wants to hurt others. During adolescence, mental cruelty, dissocial outbursts, and aggression are innate drives (A. Freud, 1958). During each stage of development, there is a working through of these drives and the innate aggression drives would end with mature assertiveness.

To further expand upon an understanding of normative aggression an understanding of adolescent development was necessary. Erikson (1956) stated a negative identity may occur while navigating the stage of adolescent development. A negative identity would include aggression and delinquent behavior. This behavior could be destructive. The hope is the end of adolescence would be a merger of a positive identity. A positive identity would include emotional maturity.

The understanding provided by Anna Freud's and Erik Erikson's developmental theories support the understanding that aggression is a normative response to development. The challenge would be to determine if aggression and the outward destructive behaviors were normative or pathological. Aggressive behaviors that are normative would be a response to development and aggression that is pathological could be an indication of a much deeper problem.

Aggression as a reaction to perceived frustration offers an additional way to understand aggression in adolescence. Aggression occurs when necessary perceived optimal empathetic responses from selfobjects occurs (Kohut, 1972). Selfobjects are one's caregivers and perceived failures on the part of selfobjects could trigger an aggressive reaction in adolescence. Perceived failures could be as simple as child experiencing a distant caregiver. These perceived failures in selfobjects could trigger an aggressive reaction that could be played out online, in the form of cyber-bullying. Therefore, in development, those who experience perceived failures would be even more prone to aggression.

To summarize, the process of adolescent development is challenging, and can lead to destructive behaviors. The disengagement from parents causes some of these challenges. At the same time, individuals may become overly dependent upon peers. In addition, puberty is accompanied by psychological tasks that create confusion. Confusion paired with an overdependence upon one's peers could lead to engagement in delinquent behavior. Another challenge is what Erikson called the psychosocial moratorium. This pause is a process of self-discovery and the sense of a crisis is normative. During this pause, an adolescent may become aggressive and delinquent cruel behavior may be a defense against the loss of identity. It is better to be cruel than to lose one's identity. Aggression during adolescence may occur as a response to developmental challenges and this aggression is normative. Normative aggression paired with deficits in self-structure would then lead an adolescent to engage in aggressive behaviors online.

To understand how deficits in self-structure could lead to aggression and then cyber-bullying, an exploration of self psychology was necessary. In addition, a psychological perspective could address a gap in the literature and deepen our understanding of the problem of cyber-bullying. A self psychological theory could provide this deeper understanding. Self psychology posits that developmental needs are met via interactions with selfobjects. When selfobject needs are met appropriately, a cohesive self results. In other words, development is in part influenced by the capacity of the selfobject to respond to the needs of the self.

Self psychology had its beginnings in Chicago in the 1970s through the work of Heinz Kohut. Through the method of empathic observation, Heinz Kohut (1972), considered the founder of self-psychology, developed a new understanding of narcissism. Prior to 1970, narcissism as understood by Freud was pathological. “For Kohut, narcissism has a natural course of development that eventuates in a whole and functioning self” (Siegel, 1996, p. 107). Through empathic observation, Kohut (1972) found that all people have basic human needs which are met through selfobject interactions (Palombo, 2008). Basic human needs include acceptance, being cared for, and being valued. Central to his theory was the idea that the cohesive self is created through interaction with others. These interactions provide these basic human needs and help to form a self that feels whole, complete, and is able to work through life’s challenges. The cohesive self feels approved, protected and acknowledged by one’s fellow beings (Basch, 1989).

Coining the term selfobject, Kohut (1972) theorized that basic needs are met through interaction with others. The term selfobject helps define the relationship between the self and others (Palombo, 2008). Kohut described the selfobject as outside the self, and yet, experienced as part of the self. People cannot and do not live in an isolated world. Interactions with selfobjects occur throughout the life span. Initially selfobjects are caregivers, but selfobjects shift as one enters adolescence. Further, the self continues to seek out new selfobjects throughout one's life to fulfill ones needs. New selfobjects in this search include peers, friends, community connections, and spouses.

Kohut (1972) initially suggested a complete self-structure is formed along two poles of the bipolar self and later added the concept of twinship. The poles are the pole of mirroring and the pole of idealization (Palombo, 2008). When the needs of these poles are met, the end result is a complete self-structure. Mirroring needs are met when the child is affirmed. Children are affirmed when praised and complimented in phase-appropriate ways. Idealization needs are met when children have someone to admire. They have a parent or caregiver to look up to who provides consistency and reliability. Children need to have someone affirm them and someone to idealize.

When the needs of these two poles are met, a cohesive self forms. When these needs are unmet because of a lack of consistency in responses from the selfobject, a fragmented self forms. A fragmented self would be seeking ways to feel whole. One could seek ways to feel whole by engaging in self-destructive or aggressive behavior. These responses occur along the two poles of the bipolar self (Kohut, 1972).

The bi-polar self, which later included twinship, provided a way to understand the progression of narcissism. Kohut suggested that narcissism is transformed into creativity, empathy, humor, and wisdom through the formation of a cohesive self (Siegel, 1996). Narcissism has its own developmental path containing the two poles: the grandiose self, mirroring, which results in ambitions, and the idealized parental imago with its developing ideals, idealization. The process along these two poles occurs through mirroring and idealization. Mirroring and idealization build psychic structure and form a cohesive self. twinship is the need to be around similar others.

Mirroring needs are met through affirmations. For example, “You did it, good job!” is said to the child when he or she succeeds. If this is a phase-appropriate affirmation from parents, it is internalized and experienced without knowing, somewhat akin to breathing (Palombo, 2008). This mirroring function provides feelings of confidence and respect. As the parent appropriately affirms the developing child, this affirmation is integrated into the personality and becomes the foundation of ambition and healthy self-esteem. A deficit in mirroring then may lead to a chronic search for affirmation. For example, an individual who experiences a deficit in mirroring may seek out unhealthy avenues of affirmation. Unhealthy avenues could include attention seeking behaviors and/or neediness. There may be a need to be always affirmed and validated.

The second pole is that of the idealizing parental imago. Kohut (1972) understood that when idealization is healthy, a set of ideals would become the child’s guide. Ideals are formed from the “looking up too”, the longing to have an object to admire. Having someone to idealize allows a child to model his or her behavior. Idealization offers a

sense of security. “Sharing in the strength of that person and feeling protected results in the function of feeling empowered and effective as a human being” (Koch, Bendicson, & Palombo, 2009, p. 265). When a child senses this predictability, dependability and reliability, that child develops the capacity to self-soothe and self-regulate. In healthy development, this idealized parental imago is gradually internalized and through internalization, the child develops guiding ideals (Palombo, 2008). When this idealization is missing, children seek out adventure and have a wish for power to experience the feeling of idealization (Elson, 1986).

Described as a tension arc, the relationship between the poles of mirroring and idealization build psychic structure. Kohut (1972) described this structure building as transmuting internalization based on optimal frustration and internalization through rupture and repair. Rupture and repair occurs throughout development. This optimal frustration of rupture and repair is important to the creation of a healthy self (Palombo, 2008). Rupture and repair along the tension arc create a cohesive self. “Kohut believed that in the formation of the bipolar self the child has two chances for consolidating a cohesive nuclear self” (Elson, 1986, p.111). The two chances include the child’s perceptions, and the child internalization of selfobject functions. Therefore, a caretaker as a selfobject must instill in a child the functions that they initially provide. These capacities are internalized through “transmuting internalization,” and the child is then able to self-regulate and experience life’s disappointments and failures.

The developing child learns to self-regulate by experiencing optimal phase appropriate ruptures and repairs. When selfobjects do not respond to the needs of a child,

in a phase appropriate manner, the child then experiences traumatic, not optimal ruptures. “Such optimal frustrations of the child’s need to be mirrored and to merge into an idealized selfobjects, hand in hand with optimal gratifications, generated the appropriate growth facilitating matrix for the self” (Kohut & Wolf, 1978, p.416). In other words, the selfobject functions merge to the self to allow for a cohesive self to form, one that is able to self-regulate and experience life’s disappointments. An unavailable selfobject may create a void when these optimal ruptures and repairs are not responded to in a way that is phase-appropriate or inconsistent.

Deficits in structure occur when selfobject needs are not met because of inconsistencies in the responses of the selfobject. Kohut (1972) understood that the repeated empathic failure of one’s selfobjects impacts one’s self-structure (Siegel, 1996). Individuals who experience these early interactions with initial caregivers as faulty experience deficits in selfobject functions. People who have deficits in selfobject functions tend to feel disappointment more readily than those with a cohesive self. Those experiencing deficits are unable to manage what comes their way and in turn seek out ways to feel whole and complete. The earliest interactions with their selfobjects were experienced as faulty, resulting in a continuous search for ways to complete the self. Elson (1986), writing about Kohut, explains, “due to failure of the original selfobjects they suffer narcissistic injuries seen through low self-esteem, rage and injuries to self and others” (Elson, 1986, p.6).

To explore the dynamics of narcissist rage, it is important to understand that this is a psychological process and is not mature aggression (Kohut, 1972). Narcissistic rage

and mature aggression are related, but are not the same. The developmental path of narcissistic rage is shaped by our earliest selfobject interactions and “rage responses may occur because the frustration is intolerable” (Palombo, 2008, p.176). Kohut explored in his paper on narcissism the wish to “blot out the offense which was perpetrated against the grandiose self and the unforgiving fury which arises when the control over the mirroring self-object is lost or when the omnipotent self-object is unavailable” (Kohut, 1972, p. 386.). Those with a perceived loss feel rejection.

Narcissistic rage exists “in the wide spectrum of experiences that reaches from such trivial occurrences as a fleeting annoyance when someone fails to reciprocate our greeting or does not respond to our joke to such ominous derangements as the furor of the catatonic and the grudges of the paranoid”(Kohut, 1972, p. 378). Some may feel disheartened and may experience narcissistic rage when they are unable to reach goals that they had set out for themselves. On the other hand, if there is a healthy balance, it will be linked to positive feelings and a sense of well-being (Palombo, 2008). Without this healthy balance, those who struggled as a child may now be faced with the realization of their unresolved earliest selfobject deficits (Elson, 1986). They are unable to regulate all of life’s challenges and may engage in self-destructive behaviors. These deficits may be mild to severe and “may be found in one pole or another, or in both” (Elson, 1986, p.113). These deficits could lead to sadness, hopelessness, and weakened self-esteem.

In summary, in adolescence, one begins to depend on peers more than family; biological processes and cultural expectations drive this shift. This shift leads the

adolescent to a narcissistic retreat to protect against the changes. This narcissistic retreat and resulting rage may create aggression towards others. This aggression may be played out in the form of cyber-bullying. The present study attempted to bring together developmental theory and self psychology theory to provide a deeper understanding of cyber-bullying.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Design and Type of Study

For the purpose of this mixed methods study, cyber-bullying was defined as follows: Cyber-bullying is when a person is engaged in behavior similar to that of a traditional bully but over the Internet or cell phone (Erdur-Baker, 2010; Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011). This included sending hateful e-mails to someone, saying hurtful things on a social media site, and spreading rumors about people on the Internet (Campbell, 2005). Cyber bullying could also include ignoring someone, posting hurtful/embarrassing things about others, and teasing or making fun of someone on the Internet (Smith et al., 2008). Cyber-bullying could also be deliberate, repeated and hurtful activity using a computer, mobile phone, or other electronic device (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006).

Most of the current research on cyber-bullying had been conducted quantitatively through the use of surveys. As a result of this approach, cyber-bullying findings tend to focus on prevalence and other quantifiable measures. This mixed methods study aimed to dynamically understand what motivates those who engage in cyber-bullying behaviors and a mixed methods design would provide a space to provide such an understanding.

A dynamic understanding would not have been possible with quantitative data alone. Therefore, this study is a mixed methods design, and is described as nested research (Creswell, 2003).

This study is described as nested research and involved both quantitative and qualitative data to provide an understanding of a larger problem (Creswell, 2003). Within this study, the quantitative piece served as a guide for the selection of participants for the qualitative piece. Therefore, in the case of this study, the qualitative portion is nested within the quantitative portion.

For the quantitative portion, 90 participants completed a brief survey online on the survey monkey website. College-age participants were directed to the site via a flyer. The flyer (see appendix C) was posted in two coffee houses near universities and at two local universities on posting boards. This method led to quick data gathering. This sample size was larger than the researcher anticipated. The survey was intended to be a screening instrument to locate participants for the qualitative interviews. It was a benefit to this research that the sample size was 90 because with a larger sample size the data could then be analyzed quantitatively.

Of the 90 participants, 39 volunteered to be interviewed. Out of those 39, a select group of 15 were chosen for the qualitative piece, based on answers they provided on the survey instrument. Given the population studied, it would have been difficult to find a sample without a brief survey acting as a screening questionnaire. The survey then provided a way to locate those who had engaged in cyber-bullying behavior because it was unlikely anyone would have recognized his or her behavior as cyber-bullying. The

selected group was chosen for further interviews if they were on Facebook daily and answered yes to two or more of the screening questions (see appendix C).

In addition to screening the participants, the questions on the quantitative survey were intended to determine if participants engaged in cyber-bullying behaviors. The first cyber-bullying behavior examined was posting disrespectful comments online. Disrespect could include rude and or impolite comments, and comments that were intended to hurt another and comments that make others feel bad. The second behavior examined was to look away when reading any disrespectful comment posted. To look away could be defined as reading a comment that was impolite or rude instead of reporting or helping the individual. The third potential cyber-bullying behavior examined was to “forward on messages” to those for whom they were not intended. To “forward on a message” is language used on social media sites. To “forward on a message” with the intent to hurt another or spread a rumor could be considered a cyber-bullying behavior. The last question specifically asked if participants had been accused of cyber-bullying.

Qualitative data were gathered by using grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006) through an in-depth interview process with 15 participants. Using grounded theory as a guide, the interviews began broad and built content until the point of saturation (Charmaz, 2006). The point of saturation was reached when interviewees provided no new information. Each interview built upon the next and questions for further interviews were created after initial interviews. Each interview helped to understand an individual’s experience and unique perceptions of social media behavior along with an individual’s role in cyber-bullying. Each participant was asked to talk about a time they posted something negative online and how they experienced viewing others’ hurtful comments.

In addition, those who had been accused of cyber-bullying addressed how they experienced being labeled a bully. During the interview process, this researcher took field notes on what was heard, seen, and sensed (Charmaz, 2006).

These interviews guided the development of theory by examining the patterns within the interviews. Patterns included the repetition of stories and shared experiences among the participants. Participant and researcher constructed theory through the interview process. Epistemologically the findings are situated within a constructivist framework (Charmaz, 2006).

Scope of the Study, Setting, Population and Sampling

Participants were male and female, five were male and ten were female, between 18-23 years old. Studies on cyber-bullying typically had consisted of participants under the age of 18, and little is known about cyber-bullying among the college-age population. One study (Dilmac, 2009) did target the college-age population but findings did not answer the question, “Does cyber-bullying end at the age of 18?” and this begged the question of whether or not cyber-bullying ends at the age of 18, as many studies implicitly suggest.

Participants responded to postings at the local colleges and coffee shops within the Quad City area at the Iowa and Illinois borders. The flyer requested participation in a study on young adults’ experiences with social media (see appendix B). Potential participants were informed that they would be asked to fill out a survey on social media behavior because it seemed unlikely participants would volunteer to participate in a study on cyber-bullying if they did not believe that they either engaged in that behavior or were

the victims of it. Therefore, a survey on social media behavior would attract more interviewees.

The online survey had 90 respondents with 39 subjects volunteering for the interview. Although 39 volunteered, 15 did not qualify for the interview portion because of answers on the survey questionnaire, and three were unable to meet for an interview. That left a total of 21 potential interviewees. However, after 15 interviews, the point of saturation had been reached and the remaining six were not interviewed. This researcher selected 15 interview participants who were on Facebook daily and who answered yes to two or more of the questions on the online survey. Those interviewed received a \$10 gift card for coffee. Interviewees were allowed to choose the interview location in order to feel the most comfortable when discussing their experiences. In addition, those interviewed could stop at any time. All participants signed an informed consent form prior to the interviews. All but one interview was at the researcher's office; one participant was interviewed in her apartment.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data were collected in two two ways. First, participants completed an online screening instrument on Survey Monkey (see appendix C), accessed from a computer address on the recruitment flyer (see appendix B). The screening instrument assessed their social media behavior, and asked general demographic questions. From the responses provided, 15 were chosen to participate in open-ended interviews. They were chosen for the interviews if they were on Facebook at least daily, and checked yes on at least two survey questions. To explore their unique experiences on social media sites,

each participant was asked to talk about a time they posted something negative online and how they experienced viewing others' hurtful comments. All participants were asked to define cyber-bullying. Those who had responded yes to the question asking if they had ever been accused of being a cyber-bully addressed how they experienced being labeled a bully.

After the initial interviews were transcribed, coded and memoed, the transcripts then served as a guide for additional questions for subsequent interviews. This follows a grounded theory approach because it builds upon interviews and further questions were added as new topics and themes became relevant (Charmaz, 2006). For example, additional questions included what role family plays on social media sites and specifically how families joining changed their online behavior. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by a paid transcriptionist. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality agreement prior to providing services for this research.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in two ways. First, the results of the survey were tabulated and classified as to the type and extent of social media participation. Survey results were examined to understand patterns, frequency, and measures of association. This quantitative analysis, utilizing SPSS, checked for patterns, frequency, and selective measures of association (chi-square) of the behaviors reported.

The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed through grounded theory techniques. Utilizing grounded theory coding allowed for the theoretical piece to take shape (Charmaz, 2006). There were two stages of coding; the first initial coding line-by-

line to highlight important data from the interviews. When working with initial coding, it is important to work with spontaneity (Charmaz, 2006) to break down the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The second stage of coding was a more in-depth coding of the data. This more in-depth coding created links between codes and created themes, topics, and keywords. This in-depth coding led to memo-writing. Memos were a way to explore and discover thoughts sparked by research (Charmaz, 2006). Memos provided an opportunity to analyze ideas, prompt theories, and allow for the free flow of thoughts and ideas. In addition, memos included non-verbal communication demonstrated during the interviews. The building blocks of theory were these memos. By writing, organizing and sorting the memos, deeper theory evolved.

MAXQDA was utilized to organize the codes and memos. MAXQDA is a software program designed to manage large bodies of audio, graphical, and textual data. The MAXQDA program provided a section for memoing, coding and formulating categories. It was invaluable for organizing categories, allowing this researcher to create themes.

Protection of the Rights of Human Subjects

There were minimal risks to participants in this study. There was a potential risk of a negative response from talking about their online behavior. Topics could have become too sensitive for the participants, and may have elicited an emotional response. The participants could also have become overwhelmed with guilt when discussing their online actions.

To reduce these potential risks, this researcher monitored the participants' anxiety levels by watching for changes in mood or affect. If a participant should have needed to talk further about a sensitive topic, referrals were available. Interviewees also had the option to stop the interview at any time, and discontinue participation.

The information gathered from this interview process expands upon the existing literature. There was no direct benefit to the participants of this study.

Privacy/Confidentiality

All non-electronic information gathered is in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. All electronic data is stored in a password-protected computer to protect participant confidentiality. Transcripts had no identifying information. The researcher is the only person who had access to these files and reports. The participants were not identified by name in order to keep their information confidential and private. All confidential materials will be destroyed five years upon completion of the study.

Informed Consent

All participation was voluntary and all participants completed an informed consent form, for participation in this research. The informed consent (see appendix A) included an explanation of the purpose, the costs, the benefits and risks associated with the study. The informed consent outlined the subject's confidentiality and privacy. It clearly stated that participants are allowed to skip any questions and/or quit at any time. Participants were asked to explain the contents of the document as a way to indicate their

understanding. If they agreed, the participant was asked to sign the form. Each participant was given a copy of his or her signed consent.

Limitations

These findings are specific to the population studied and therefore may not reflect the larger population. Findings are not reflective of minorities or urban populations. Most participants were Caucasian, middle class, college students and from small Midwestern cities. The sample was gathered through purposive sampling that may not be representative of the population as a whole. The small sample may also limit the generalizability of the findings. Finally, participants volunteered. Therefore, findings are limited to those who were willing to share their experiences.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Participants for the survey were recruited from responses to flyers posted in coffee houses and university boards concentrated mostly in college-populated areas of the Quad Cities (in both Iowa and Illinois). The participants were asked to complete a brief survey about their social media behavior. The survey was conducted over the course of a five-month period after which all data were entered into SPSS for statistical analysis, frequency of responses, and selective measures of association (chi-square). Findings were considered statistically significant at .05 or below.

Results of the Survey

The online survey was completed by 90 young adults 64.4% were female and 35.6% were male. Most respondents were in college at the time of the survey with 64.4% reporting that they had some college education. Of the respondents, only one reported never having used Facebook. Among those who reported using Facebook, the largest percentage, 85%, used Facebook several times a day. Fourteen of the respondents (15.6%) said they had been accused of cyber-bullying and thirty-nine (43.3%) agreed to be interviewed further.

A statistical comparison of those who agreed to be interviewed and those who declined showed no significant difference between the groups on key questions. This

suggests that those interviewed were representative of the sample. In addition, there were no significant differences regarding the gender or education level between these two groups. As suggested and confirmed by the results of this study, gender and educational level do not have an effect on cyber-bullying behaviors.

The first examined behavior was whether or not participants had ever regretted posting something negative on Facebook (See Tables 4.1 and 4.2). From the results of the survey, 54.4% (47) reported to have later regretted something negative they posted. Those interviewed and willing to be interviewed more often regretted posting something negative. Of significance, those who had posted something negative had been accused of cyber bullying. Also significant, those interviewed regretted posting something negative.

Table 4.1 Been accused of cyber bullying* Later regret negative post

	Later regret negative post		Total	
	yes	No		
Have you ever been accused of Cyber bullying?	yes	13	1	14
	no	34	42	76
Total		47	43	90

Chi-Square = 10.972^a significance .001

Table 4.2 Interviewed or not * later regret negative post

		later regret negative post		Total
		yes	No	
Interviewed	no	34	41	75
	yes	13	2	15
Total		47	43	90

Chi-Square = 8.559^a significance .003

The second examined behavior was “forwarding on messages” to someone for whom it was not intended with 36.7% (33) who reported forwarding on a message. It should be noted that those who had been accused of cyber-bullying reported more frequently that they had been forwarding on messages to someone for whom it was not intended. Although not significant, a higher percentage of those interviewed also had forwarded on a message to someone for whom it was not intended.

The third examined behavior was looking the other way when reading something disrespectful with 58.9% (53) of respondents reporting that they looked the other way when reading something disrespectful online. (See Table 4.3.) Those who were interviewed did report at the significance level .003 that they would look the other way when they read something disrespectful. Although not significant, a higher number of those accused of cyber-bullying have looked the other way.

Table 4.3 Interviewed or not, * Read disrespect, look the other way

		Read disrespect look the other way		Total
		yes	No	
Interviewed	no	39	36	75
	yes	14	1	15
Total		53	37	90

Chi-Square=8.821^a significance .003

Findings showed that the young adults accused of cyber-bullying were willing to talk about their behavior because those accused of cyber-bullying more often than others wanted to talk about their negative posts. This finding was at the significance level of .001. Findings also showed that those who regretted their behavior wanted to talk because those willing to interview did regret their behavior more than those unwilling to be interviewed. This finding was at the significant level of .003.

Results of the Interviews

Based on qualifying questions from the online survey, 15 participants were interviewed. Participants were chosen from the 39 participants who agreed to talk further, and had answered yes to two or more of the questions about cyber bullying behaviors. The 15 participants interviewed all resided in the Quad Cities area at the time of the interviews. All 15 participants were Caucasian. Of the 15, five were young men and ten were young women. On average, all had had a Facebook account for five or more years at the time of the interview. All participants checked their Facebook accounts more than once per day. All but one participant were interviewed in the researcher's office. One chose to be interviewed in her home. All interviews occurred from February to July 2014.

Social Media Use

Participants tended to state that Facebook is most often used as a window into the lives and worlds of friends and family. Daily use of social media was divided by age with a split around the age of 20. For the younger participants, 18-19, Facebook is considered the main communication tool that included daily posts about themselves. On the other hand, the older participants did not engage in daily posts, but still reported daily use and that they would share an occasional picture with friends and family. Another reported use for all users was to get one's news. In sum, Facebook is a way to keep in touch with family and friends, and a source for news.

Overall, Facebook is seen as an acceptable medium to connect with friends and family or get news, as the following typical responses indicate,

It's kind of just to like, see what's going on in other people's lives.

I just wanted to post pictures and look at other people's pictures and see what other people are doing in their lives.

I guess I use it a lot to get like news and stuff too, I'll scroll down and read the news article and there's posts and watch the videos.

I use it to learn about events happening you know, keep up with the news.

Beyond use as a way to keep in touch and get one's news, Facebook was used as an organization tool for clubs. When someone needed to organize a club event or an activity they would turn to Facebook to make connections and send out information in order to make events successful. The following is a typical response, "I also use it for organizing groups and stuff. I'm the president of the Lacrosse Club and we run almost the entire group off of Facebook." Overall, approximately 50% of those interviewed used Facebook as a way to organize small clubs or groups.

Cyber-Bullying Defined

After they were able to discuss their social media use, each participant was asked to provide a definition of cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying was generally defined by the group of interviewees as an Internet-based attack on another, and included behaviors such as harassing, embarrassing, or threatening. According to ten of the participants, cyber-bullying is similar to traditional (non-physical) bullying in content, but different in terms of the medium—writing—which adds to its permanency. The participants were split regarding whether cyber-bullying needs to be a constant or if a one-time occurrence could be considered a cyber-bullying behavior. Cyber-bullying is also seen as a quick way to attack or get back at others. It was described in the following ways:

It hurts you emotionally, it hurts your feelings, you say rude things, I just, I feel like it's pretty much the same just you type it instead of speaking it. But it's permanent on Facebook.

Disrespect and like any type of verbal bullying that you would say in person, you just do it online.

Saying something rude is more of a one-time thing. Like you just say it and it's one or maybe an argument starts on it but bullying is like saying something and is a constant thing. It's like maybe every hour of the day or every day saying something to that person just constant is bullying to me.

I think it's like a personal attack on someone for a belief that they have or anything about them that someone does negative or attacks you negatively for like, your beliefs or your sexual orientation or the way you look or the way you do something and someone publicly attacks you for it, calls you out on it, for the entire world to see and if people join in on that, that's, I don't think that's right. That's not okay.

I would say cyber-bullying is any, I mean I guess it could be sort of most activities that you do in person but online I mean like I think it could be calling somebody a name to their like personally writing to them something negative about them or it could be writing negatively about someone even if you don't say

their name. You just post a like you know, about somebody and don't mention them.

Posting stuff on Facebook that like makes someone feel bad or embarrassing people. Just being mean on social media sites.

It's hard for me to say, but I guess I would define it as anything that makes the person being bullied feel unsafe or scared. Because there's I would say like constantly badgering someone over something or threatening them.

It could be posting something else that someone else doesn't want posted, like if you post a photo and somebody definitely doesn't want it up there, that's cyber-bullying.

Three of the participants defined cyber-bullying as ganging up on others who are weak and calling them out for their behavior. This calling out of others was described in two ways: the first as sub-tweeting and the second as "truth is" comments. Sub-tweeting is to talk about people in a negative way without using their names, but instead simply relaying details about the situation. "Truth is" comments are comments that can be rude or disrespectful about another person, because they represent the truth.

Cyber bullying is people like running their mouth about other people or truth is, they do truth is a lot.

The sub-tweets would be so specific that you knew exactly who they were talking about and then that person would retaliate and then it just is going back and forth and then they start tagging each other because you know, you're chicken if you don't tag them in it.

It's where you don't say their name but you're like 'uh, gosh I can't believe they would do that', blah, blah, blah or something about like whoever. Just to get a fight started.

Cyber-bullying was described as having a stronger impact than bullying in the traditional sense because of the permanency it implies. Those who had witnessed cyber-bullying or who had engaged in cyber-bullying behaviors themselves spoke of the permanency of cyber bullying. The permanency comes easily: you put it out there and it

is there forever. This permanency is what sharply differentiates it from real-life or traditional bullying; it is easy for people to realize or remember. As one interviewee phrased it,

My parents would always be like never put anything on Facebook that you wouldn't say in real life and that's terrible advice because there's things I would say in real life, but I would never put it on Facebook.

From these definitions cyber-bullying was explained as hurtful, disrespectful, and threatening attacks online that share similar threads to that of traditional bullying. Similar threads included disrespect and unfairly attacking. Cyber-bullying differed in repetition and permanency. These young adults agreed that cyber-bullying was negative.

Through the discussion of social media behavior and defining cyber-bullying, the following major themes emerged. The participants in this study:

1. Did not consider themselves to be the cyber-bullies. Other people were the bullies; they described their behavior as helping out a friend.
2. Felt it was acceptable to look away when reading negative posts. They believed if it was not affecting them it was okay to look away.
3. Felt it was easier to cyber-bully most often because cyber-bullying behavior is simple and could be misinterpreted.
4. Explained that they stopped engaging in disrespectful behavior as they matured and Facebook grew. Growth had a two-fold effect.

I Am Not the Bully

“I don't think I ever really thought....that I was a bully”.

As was the case with the larger sample in the questionnaire, these 15 participants wanted to talk and share their stories in an effort to explain what had happened: they did not see themselves as cyber-bullies. Most often they believed they were helping out a friend or just joking around. Behaviors, which could be considered cyber-bullying behaviors were reported as common practice online. These included: to look the other way when reading negative comments, to forward messages to individuals who were not intended recipients, to state strong opinions even if negative, and to joke with one another even if the comments are disrespectful. They did not understand these behaviors to be cyber-bullying behaviors.

As a result, when asked to discuss their own engagement, they would provide a scattered picture. Most were able to provide a picture of others' cyber-bullying behavior, but when asked to discuss their own engagement, they only provided a scattered picture. When confronted with their behavior, they would forget what they had done. They would also hesitate when asked specific questions about their actions. Many would offer up a vague, “I don't know” or “I forget, yeah that was so long ago I can't remember.” They would say that they cannot remember it right now and they would deny negative behavior. Common responses included:

I don't know why I said yes [to forwarding messages] but yeah I probably have done this, I have sent some sort of negative comment on.

Not off the top of my head.[Asked about why they were called a cyber-bully]

I don't think anyone has called me a cyber-bully. I usually am nice. I said that?

In addition, these young adults would talk about what they had done. For example, they would post disrespectful comments. However, when asked to describe in detail what they had said and why, they would forget the specifics, but knew something had happened.

I'm sure it could have been offensive, but I don't remember the details right now.

I don't know exactly why I did it, I guess because she was rude first.

Each participant was able to define cyber-bullying, but they could not recognize the behavior within themselves. Most of their definitions included disrespect and name-calling, for example, and these young adults had participated in name-calling and disrespect, but did not acknowledge it directly. When the behaviors of the participants were similar if not identical to cyber-bullying behaviors, they would show some regret, but find ways to justify their behavior by defining it as something distinct from bullying: "I am not the bully"; "I was just inconsiderate"; "I was joking"; or, "I was sticking up for my friend". These labels of "inconsiderate", "joking" and "defended a friend" were common explanations for their actions. Regret would surface when they thought of their bullying roles, and they knew on some level that what they did was not right, but they simply refused to or otherwise could not define themselves' as cyber bullies. Thus, they felt regret, but not for being cyber-bullies:

It wasn't respectful [he had named called someone online] and it wasn't nice.

Looking back that was disrespectful. [she had been thinking about how her comments could have hurt someone]

Making these simple statements that their behavior was not nice or that it was disrespectful was a common response among these participants. These young adults knew

at the time that what they were doing was unkind, but was it cyber bullying? They certainly did not believe they were cyber-bullying.

I'm not saying that I was completely innocent. [when asked if they were a cyber-bully]

I was rude, but would I call myself a cyber-bully? No, I was just messing around.

Many attributed their behavior to the influence of others; in some cases, they joined in simply because everyone else was doing it, and in other cases, because they just wanted to impress someone else. They were not doing any bullying, but merely doing what others were doing. They didn't initiate the process, but were just joining in.

I don't know it was probably out of anger I wanted to do what everybody else was doing. I also didn't really like this person, so I also wanted to throw my two cents in there too. Some of it was anger, but yeah.

In another case, a participant in the study wanted to impress an upperclassmen whose approval she sought, so she created a fake account of a male who pretended to like a girl in their class. The targeted girl believed the guy was real and she began to talk about how she liked him. As a result, this girl took a liking to this guy and she was embarrassed when the truth came out. Instead of acknowledging that she herself was a cyber-bully, this young lady passed the blame to the older girl. She was not the leader, therefore not the bully. She dismissed the situation as a funny way to get a laugh and claimed: "It was just a prank: it was not cyber-bullying."

When participants described their behavior as disrespectful, the participants believed the disrespect was acceptable because they came to the aid of someone who was perceived as being attacked. If a friend was being harassed or bullied it was acceptable to respond in a negative way: this was viewed as sticking up for a friend. "She deserved it, she was being rude, so I just told it like it was".

A few young adults posited that they were not bullies or disrespectful because they stood up for the rights of a friend by stating facts about someone. There was a belief among the participants that they were helping their friends and when they attacked someone, they were only speaking the truth. Although making these kinds of comments for others to read could be considered a cyber-bullying behavior, many felt it was just a way to state the obvious about a given situation or scenario. "I wasn't bullying her, I was just stating a fact that she was acting like a cry baby" School officials had labeled the young lady who made this comment a cyber-bully. But, she viewed her behavior as a statement of the truth: she was sticking up for friends and many participants felt this was okay. It was viewed okay because it was a way to help out a friend.

In summary, several common responses were reported as reasons for their actions. First, they may have explained that their actions were "a joke." Those offended would know it was a joke. Another common response was "I was inconsiderate or rude in the moment", "I made a mistake". In addition their peers influenced them and they believed other people were cyber-bullying; they were just along for the ride. Finally, they did not view their behavior as cyber-bullying behavior. They just believed that they had "stood up for a friend" by stating facts even when disrespectful.

Acceptable to Look Away

On average, participants in this study had around 500-700 friends on Facebook. Most agreed that if a random friend is being pushed around or even bullied, it was okay to look the other way. They stated they needed to pick their battles, and if they did not

know someone that well, there were “no good reasons to involve themselves” in the conversation.

I don't know [why she would look away], because usually, because usually, it's between like two really good friends, you can totally tell they're joking.

I feel like I don't want to like get into a fight I don't want to like do something if I don't know what is going on.

I don't know their business, so it is not my business.

This was in contrast to how they responded if they saw negative comments that affected someone they cared about and would call an actual (not just Facebook) friend. In the case of actual friends, they would get involved. They would not look away, but actively (verbally) respond. “ I would say something about it if it was a friend.”

In summary, most interviewees would rather not get involved when a post did not directly affect them. They let it go because it was not about them or it was directed at someone they did not know well. Four of the participants did not let it go completely. They shared that they inquired further by reading subsequent posts when they saw disrespectful things. They wanted to be sure the situation had been resolved. They then discovered that others had handled the situation.

I just kind of let it go because like, a lot of it's between people I don't really talk to. But, depending on how many comments there are, I'll go through the comments and see what was all said well. If it's getting handled already, I'm not going to say anything because it's not, I mean it's not really my place to say anything because it has nothing to do with me and it could start something with me and that person, but I would probably say nothing.

Easier to Be a Cyber-Bully

Cyber-bullying is easier than traditional bullying. First, it is simple to forward on messages with the click of a button. Second, comments can be interpreted in many different ways. For example, they can be interpreted as joking behavior.

Forwarding on messages to other Facebook members' walls or inboxes was discussed and presented as an easy practice. Participants in this study described a world in which forwarding on messages and involvement in harassing jokes were common practice. Often, those who forwarded on messages stated that they did not intend to hurt others, but may have done so unintentionally. Many young adults said that forwarding on messages to those who were not intended to receive them was common practice on sites like Facebook and Twitter. Some even stated that this practice is precisely the idea behind Facebook – what it “is about,” so to speak – and that at times a message that was forwarded on could carry malicious intent.

Sure I forward on messages, but yeah nothing that I would think is bad. I guess it could be, but yeah, I forward on messages.

Facebook is built on forwarding messages.

You share something and you just keeping sharing it or you can't really ask permission, can I share this, you just kind of share it.

I send on messages like all the time, if I think it is funny.

I always send on messages, to get a laugh, even at someone's expense.

Many had witnessed malicious forwarding, but none admitted they were involved in promulgating negative information about others. Indeed, this was not a behavior they saw in themselves. To forward on a message was simply common practice.

Others felt that forwarding on messages was simply a matter of sharing information as long as the details of a given situation were not provided. For example, if the forwarding was executed in a respectful manner, then it was deemed an acceptable act. "I mean I would never tell anyone's darkest secrets by forwarding on messages".

Cyber-bullying is easier because of the online medium and unlike traditional bullying there is the issue of interpretation. If you were not intending to cyber-bully, the way comments could be perceived would determine whether or not what you are doing is cyber-bullying. For example, an opinion can easily be misinterpreted online and be experienced by another as offensive. Therefore, it becomes cyber-bullying.

Interview results illustrated that to voice a strong political view or opinion is acceptable as long as the intent was to not hurt anyone. Expressing a strong political opinion was valued enough that even when it carried a risk of offending someone, vigorously proffering a strong opinion was an acceptable way to behave online.

They are my opinions I am not intending to hurt someone, I can say what I want.

I state what I believe even if it offends others.

Other times cyber-bullying behavior could be essentially brushed off as a joke. Many of the young adults believed that such bullying behavior was known among friends to be jocular and that because it is a form of joking, was acceptable. When asked about this kind of behavior, they indicated that their intent was to make someone laugh.

It's like a joke or whatever I didn't think it would actually hurt somebody's feelings if this happened.

I mean people usually know I'm joking. I am just playing around with someone.

A lot of what we do is make jokes with each other.

In summary, cyber-bullying is easier than traditional bullying for three reasons. First, cyber-bullying is simple because anyone could forward on messages that would hurt another with one click. Second, typed messages can be misinterpreted. Finally, cyber-bullying may be confused with joking behavior.

Growth

This growth was two-fold. The participants stopped engaging in disrespectful behavior as they matured and Facebook grew. Interview data indicated that cyber-bullying behavior occurred at an earlier point in their development. Many regretted their actions by the time of the interviews. They had matured.

I changed the most once I was in college, I grew up.

I was younger at the time, I was like 16 years old, so I just thought, like I can just say whatever I want and now I realize like I shouldn't do that.

It was a while ago and I know I have matured.

At the time I thought I was being cool that it would just be like I don't know fun to mess with somebody or whatever and I didn't really think about the consequences.

In addition to individual growth, early Facebook use had no set rules. When the participants were first on Facebook, they kept it a secret from their parents. However, as Facebook grew and parents joined, rules were created. When their parents, joined the interviewees noted that they changed their typical social media behavior mainly because more rules were put into place.

I mean none of my siblings, or my dad, or anybody had a Facebook, I could say what I wanted.

I created both MySpace and my Facebook at a friend's house, so they didn't really know that I had one until I kind of spilled the beans and I was like, 'oh, well I saw this on Facebook' and they were like, "you have a Facebook?"

Before their parents became more closely involved, these young adults engaged in posts and behaviors that they did not regulate or think about before posting. Over time, however, self-monitoring of online behavior increased. As families began to join Facebook, they could monitor their children and obtain passwords to gain access to the online worlds of their children. Thus, parents would then begin to determine if behavior was deemed inappropriate. In turn, more thought was given to what was said on social media sites, and these participants became self-reflective and they self-monitored.

I knew she had my password so I was like I probably shouldn't say anything about this, probably shouldn't say anything about that either.

My parents still try to moderate what I post.

She'll tell me your dad don't like what you posted. You should take that down. Or sometimes I'll post something, that gets a lot of comments, and maybe some people don't like what I'm posting and my mom will be like, you might want to take that down.

Interviewees noted that the presence of their parents and other important adults in their cyber worlds had a large impact and they began to self-monitor. They indicated that when mothers, fathers, and other adults were potentially watching their every post, they would think and, consequently, edit posts. For example, the knowledge that grandma is watching on Facebook certainly affected the number of negative things shared. This adult presence helped the young participants monitor what they were posting, and overall, they agreed that it created a filter for them.

Yeah, when adults joined, it just kind of got weird. Made me think more.

I don't know. A lot of adults would start being my friends and I didn't want that. Like my grandma started friending me and stuff and I'm just like no I can't say that.

When these young adults first had Facebook accounts, social media was new, and because it was new, there were no rules at first. When parents joined, these participants reported that they began to monitor what they posted because adults were potentially watching.

Findings

Finding one:

The young adults interviewed, who were defined as cyber-bullies, did not see themselves as cyber bullies.

Finding two:

The young adults interviewed, felt it was acceptable to look the other way when someone is being disrespected online.

Finding three:

It is easier to be a cyber-bully than a bully in the traditional sense.

Finding four:

The growth of Facebook, which included family, suppressed prior bullying behavior.

Finding One

These young adults were defined as cyber-bullies, but did not see themselves as cyber bullies.

The interviewed participants engaged in cyber-bullying behavior yet did not think of themselves as cyber-bullies. They identified as victims, protectors, or witnesses to

cyber-bullying behavior even though they had engaged in the target behaviors examined. Target behaviors examined included writing negative posts, forwarding on messages, and looking away when reading something disrespectful.

An examination of target behaviors indicated that those interviewed had written negative posts. Posting disrespectful comments is a cyber-bullying behavior. Those interviewed had forwarded on messages. Forwarding on messages to someone other than the intended recipient is a cyber-bullying behavior. Those interviewed looked the other way if someone was being disrespected. Looking the other way defines the role of a bystander in cyber-bullying. Therefore, these young adults had engaged in cyber-bullying behaviors even though they did not see themselves as cyber-bullies.

The most reported behavior by these participants was that they had posted disrespectful comments about others online. Posting disrespectful comments is a cyber-bullying behavior, and these participants did not realize their behavior was dangerous and irresponsible. They justified their actions and explained their behavior as helping a friend. To protect their sense of self, they regressed back to playground rules. "They did it first so I hit back". This rationalization allowed these young adults to believe their actions were okay or even honorable.

I was really just protecting my friends from being bullied. I say what needs to be said.

I posted kind of sticking up for the guy, and just kind of bashed the guy that was bashing him, just to like show the guy I was like standing up for him a little bit.

They posted and joined in to maintain or build friendships. For example, one 18-year-old talked about how he helped his friend who was being bullied online. When they were 16 years old, his friend had been involved with a girl, and now the new boyfriend

was calling him a wimp online by saying his ex-girlfriend was “with a real man now.” The friend had been called a wimp repeatedly, so the interviewee took action. The interviewee felt he was defending his friend because the other guy just needed to be stopped.

He defended his friend by writing on the “bully’s” wall, “you are a man-whore, loser.” He repeated the post until the new boyfriend stopped making disrespectful comments. The impression at the time was that this interviewee really felt he was helping out a friend and if others viewed it as bullying behavior, “so what he [his friend] needed me”. The other guy had labeled him a bully, but his perception was that his name-calling put an end to behavior that he had viewed as cyber-bullying. “I mean I am no bully, I just tell it like it is, I was defending my friend’s honor.”

It was also an acceptable practice to post negative comments online when in a “fight”. The use of the word “fight” in the interviews speaks to a common rationalization for their actions. When called a “fight,” they could then explain away behavior and perhaps clear their conscience of any wrongdoing. “We were fighting and he needed to be put in his place”. Those interviewed reported that negative posts were an acceptable way to fight back online. These negative response posts were common on Facebook.

They do not see themselves as cyber-bullies when they engaged in fighting behaviors online and these young adults did not understand the severity of their actions. In addition, they were seemingly void of any concern about the risk involved in their actions. One risk would have been the possibility that their victim had a weak sense of self, and the hurtful language could have triggered a painful response. For example, the victims could have taken their own lives.

These participants had forwarded on messages and they felt Facebook was based on forwarding on messages, and that to do so was just part of the process. Facebook was so new that there were no rules set, and what was acceptable had not yet been defined. For example, these participants would read disrespectful comments and forward them on as a way of getting people to laugh. They did not understand what was acceptable behavior in a new situation. They were unaware that this could be considered a cyber-bullying behavior. “You share something and you just keeping sharing it or you can't really ask permission, ‘Can I share this?’ You just kind of share it.” Even if the message was disrespectful they might share to get a laugh. “I shared what she said because yeah, it was funny.”

Results of the interviews indicated that a cyber-bully is defined in the eye of the beholder. The cyber-bully was viewed as the person who started the battle, not the one who protected friends. For example, others were perceived as aggressors; when the participants were aggressive, they rationalized that they had helped out friends. Interviewees shared the opinion they were helping a friend, and when things reached a boiling point in an interaction online, these young adults would post disrespectful comments to help a friend. Many regretted their comments later, but at the time, they responded with anger. “We were in a fight at the time. You know just had to vent and get it out there what an idiot she was being.”

Name-calling was tolerated and most did not see their actions as a problem. They would rationalize their behavior and believe what they did was okay because someone they would consider to be a real cyber-bully would say things like “go kill yourself,” a more severe action.

Yes I told her she was an idiot and a bitch and yes I wrote it on her wall because like she put a picture of girl on there telling her to go kill herself and I told her that's not even right and she started yelling at me and I told her to stop acting like she was all big and bad because she's not and why you going to go tell someone to go kill their self, it's not right.

This young lady believed she could say what she wanted to defend morality. She believed her name-calling was an appropriate response.

A few participants felt they had been unfairly labeled a cyber-bully and that their actions were necessary. In one instance, school administration approached a young lady who had been involved in an online fight, and called her a cyber-bully. The young lady believed this was unfair because the other girl had started the fight. She did not understand why the school needed to be involved when she felt she was stating the truth. “She was being a baby, so I called her a big fat baby”. She wrote this on the girl’s Facebook wall for all her friends and family to read, and continued to write this on her wall until the school officials accused her of being a cyber- bully. She was unable to acknowledge that she had been disrespectful.

Some of the participants did acknowledge they were being disrespectful. However, they felt the disrespect was necessary and they would not consider it cyber-bullying. For example, one participant joined in with a group of friends to put down another student. They believed she was acting rude, as they interpreted the situation. To put a stop to her behavior, they posted comments on her page about her being a bitch that no one wanted to be around. “I guess you could say I was being disrespectful, but it was necessary in the moment.”

As participants shared their experiences, it was clear they had been greatly influenced by their friends, and these participants felt their actions were acceptable. They

would not call themselves cyber-bullies because they believed their behavior did not reach the level of cyber-bullying. It is of interest though how often a participant's definition of cyber-bullying included actions they had engaged in themselves. This suggests that they were unable to see their own behavior for what it was and they disavowed their role in cyber-bullying. Below are their definitions of cyber-bullying followed by examples of their behavior that fit the definitions.

Her definition:

I think it's like a personal attack on someone for a belief that they have or anything about them that someone does negatively like your beliefs or your sexual orientation or the way you look or the way you do something and someone publicly attacks you for it, calls you out on it, for the entire world to see and if people join in on that, that's, I don't think that's right. That's not okay.

Her behavior:

She publically attacked another student online by saying rude things about her because she felt the girl needed to be put in her place.. However, she was unable to recall what those rude things were.

His definition:

Posting stuff on Facebook to make someone feel bad or embarrassing people. Just being mean on social media sites.

His behavior:

Calling someone a 'man-whore' repeatedly online.

Her definition:

It could be posting something else that someone else doesn't want posted, like if you post a photo and somebody definitely doesn't want it up there, that's cyber bullying.

Her behavior:

She posted a photo of a "friend" that was unflattering and later regretted, but was slow to take it down.

Her definition:

I would say like constantly badgering someone over something and making fun of them for it like being a lesbian or something, yeah that's really rude.

Her behavior:

We created a page disrespecting a teacher because yeah she deserved it at the time. She was so clueless. (They called her a moron and other names.)

Her definition:

I feel like it's just basically the same as regular bullying. It hurts you emotionally, it hurts your feelings, you say rude things, I just, I feel like it's pretty much the same just you type it instead of speaking it.

Her behavior:

She regretted the times she posted negative photos of Facebook friends when they were drunk because she thought they were funny pictures. These actions hurt her friend's feelings.

As they spoke, some participants would admit to behavior being unkind and in retrospect, some did see their behavior for what it might have been. However, they carried a belief that everyone was doing it and they were unaware of the harm or consequences their actions had on others. At times, they may have viewed their actions, as disrespectful but acceptable, but did not see themselves as cyber-bullies.

Finding Two

It is acceptable to look away when someone is being disrespected online.

I think it would be definitely a rare situation for me to say something about someone else's posts.

Looking away when reading something disrespectful was part of the basic social process of these young adults. From the larger sample, over half, 58.9% of respondents, reported that they looked way when they saw someone being disrespected. Within the

smaller sample, the interviewees did not recognize this behavior as cyber-bullying, and they were unaware of their role as a bystander. They had a relaxed and unconcerned response when questioned about looking away. As they shared stories, common themes appeared as an explanation for looking away.

These participants based the decision to look away on a couple of reasons. First, they believed it was the norm to not get involved in others' fights because they did not want to get involved in other people's business. It was hard to read between the lines, and disrespectful comments between friends could be joking behavior. The other reported reason to look away was concern that the aggression would be turned on them.

Interviewees did not want to get involved in someone else's problems. For example, one participant would talk about how she sees disrespectful fights online with constant name-calling and rude posts. She had witnessed several girls name-calling one young lady for sleeping around. These girls were writing on her wall about how much of a slut the one girl was being by sleeping with someone. This witness believed it was a fight, that she was not part of, and did not want to get involved because it was not her business.

I don't know exactly why they are fighting. Could be something serious, could be something ridiculous, like you never know. I don't want to get in the middle of it, and have them be like you don't even know the situation, get out, blah, blah, blah.

Most interviewees felt it was not their business.

I'm not going to get in the middle of their business, because I don't know their business.

Why would I say anything at all? I have no idea what is going on.

Over half of those interviewed believed that, at times, good friends write disrespectful comments as a way to joke with one another. When they saw two Facebook

friends being disrespectful to one another, this was accepted. Friends could engage in these negative behaviors, and this understanding really blurred the line as to what was a cyber-bullying behavior. They believed it would be strange to step in when the rude comments are just inside jokes.

I don't know, because usually it's between like two like really, really good friends, you can totally tell they're joking.

I just ignore it. I consider it as joking around.

When asked if they knew this was a cyber-bullying behavior most responded by stating, “disrespectful comments could be comments between good friends who are joking”.

Some participants did not want to get in others’ business because they were concerned that they may become the target of the aggression. They were worried that it may happen to them and to protect themselves from becoming a victim, they just kept on scrolling.

I mean it's not really my place to say anything because it has nothing to do with me and it could start something with me and that person, so I just would keep quiet.

I just kind of let it go because like, a lot of it's between people I don't really talk to and I do not want to have them come after me.

This uncertainty about what they had seen created a fear that enabled these young adults to look away and stay out of others’ problems. They could go about their day if they chose not to say anything. This was an acceptable response.

Normally, when I see things that are negative I just keep on scrolling.

If I saw something negative about someone that's just an acquaintance or something like that, I would just read it and be like “oh, that's not cool” and I'll just keep scrolling through it.

It was agreed upon by participants that they would intervene if they knew and respected the person involved. When it was about an acquaintance and not a true friend, they would look away and stay out of others' disagreements. They rationalized that it is okay to look away when reading disrespectful comments if it does not affect oneself or friends. As with the first finding, they would take action if it affected a friend. They would post comments and ask Facebook to block comments if their friends were involved. They wanted to protect their friends from being bullied. Yet, when a true friend was not involved, looking away was an appropriate response.

On average, participants had around 500-700 friends on Facebook, and if one of these random friends is being pushed around or even bullied, it is okay to look away. They stated they needed to pick their battles, and if they don't know someone that well, why get involved. If someone had disrespected their friend, they would either retaliate or stick up for a friend and attempt to put a stop to what they were reading. Because when negative comments affected someone they cared about, they would get involved. They would not look away.

I would say something about it if it was a friend.

If you are disrespecting my friend, then yeah, I would defend their honor.

To look the other way is a passive action and part of the basic social process of these young adults. They would look away for self-preservation. With over 500 friends, it was simple for these young adults to look away if someone was being disrespected online.

I mean I think that sometimes I just pick my battles. Is it really my place to say this? Because like when you have 500 friends on Facebook, you're obviously not close with every single one of them.

I would probably not intervene unless I really know the person or know what's up with them a little bit.

A few participants did not act because they believed someone else had acted. One young lady shared that she had dug around when she saw disrespectful things. She then discovered that others had handled the situation.

I feel like I don't want to like get into a fight I don't want to like do something if I don't know what is going on. I have looked around before and yeah others had taken care of the problem.

I just kind of let it go because like, a lot of it's between people I don't really talk to. But, depending on how many comments there are because I'll go through the comments and see what was all said. Well if it's getting handled already, I'm not going to say anything because it's not, I mean it's not really my place to say anything because it has nothing to do with me and it could start something with me and that person.

These young adults believed negative posting about others was not their business, could be a joke, or if they did get involved, the aggression could be turned onto them. They would look away for self-preservation in an effort to not become a target themselves. As with the first finding, when a friend was involved, action was taken. If it was an acquaintance, they held strong to the belief that it is not their problem. They felt it was someone else's battle, and it was not their place to say something. They would rather not get involved when it does not directly affect them. These individuals were unaware of their role as a bystander to cyber-bullying.

Finding Three

It is easier to be a cyber-bully than a bully in the traditional sense.

The interview process and results spoke to a difference between a cyber-bully and a bully in the traditional sense. The impression from the data was that a cyber-bully is not

the same as someone who uses physical aggression to bully. A traditional bully, who is a physical bully, inflicts physical harm. A cyber-bully does not inflict physical harm even though the impact of their actions may be equal too if not greater than that of a physical bully. These young adults were not bullies in a physical way and did not present themselves as aggressive people. It was easy to bully with the protection of the screen especially when unaware they were the cyber-bullies.

Participants could hide behind a computer and be whomever they wanted online. It was easy to say rude things because it is a one-dimensional experience, and you do not have to deal with other people's reactions.

In person, a person can see how their body reacts to what you say like facial expressions, how they talk, they raise their voice or kind of back off or talk quieter and just talking online is just exclamation points and capital letters.

Some people might be a little nicer or meaner in person.

The computer lets you hide and be who you want to be whatever you want.

Several shared during the interviews how without body language the online world is a different place than the real world. It was much simpler to communicate in real life because online things can get confusing. This confusion made it difficult to gage the impact of one's messages. When there was not an understanding of the impact, it was easy for them to say what they wanted because without body language, conversations could be left up to interpretation.

There's no like positive body language or anything when you are online.

In real life, there's body language that can communicate, that doesn't exist on Facebook.

It's a little easier on the computer to say something rude if somebody is bothering you.

It was much easier to say rude things as this young man pointed out. The simplicity of cyber-bullying was evident when they spoke of the stories. They could say what they wanted and they did at the time.

Results from the larger sample showed that they wanted to talk about their disrespectful comments. Meaning when they posted negative comments it was easy, but now regret had entered the picture. They wanted to talk about what they had done because typing disrespectful comments and joining in was easy to do. And, they were shielded from the consequences of their behaviors. The computer screen prevented them from witnessing the impact of their words. These young adults were able to post with no immediate consequences for their actions. At the time of their actions, they felt little remorse, and things have since changed.

At the moment of typing, there were no consequences for their actions. These young adults believed they were helping out a friend, not engaging in cyber bullying. The online world is superficial; those who post negative comments shared that they could say what they want with no fear. There is no risk involved because they do not see the response. Without fear, risk or consequences, being disrespectful was easy. They said what they wanted because no one was monitoring.

Because a cyber-bully is not seen, a cyber-bully is much more hidden than the traditional bully. They are sneaky and could even remain anonymous. When they are cruel, they may never have to witness the impact of their words. A traditional bully sees the impact and how the person responds. A cyber-bully only has their imagination to understand the hurt they have created. If they do not visualize the response, they can remain unaware of the response. The removal of witnessing the impact creates a space

without consequences. The consequence came further down the road when someone pointed out that what they did could be cyber-bullying.

Another reason it is easier to be a cyber-bully than a bully in the traditional sense is because the affect is removed, as is an immediate response. In addition, the capacity to be emotionally connected to another is removed. It is difficult to understand how the victim has responded and to type words can be simple. There is no emotional connection with the victim. This allows anything to be said, and the worst sides of people come to light. The only immediate consequence was that maybe someone posted back a disrespectful comment.

A computer made it safe for these young adults to be disrespectful. Some young adults spoke of their own behavior and others shared what they had seen online. The impression from those interviewed was that they were everyday people who picked a side at the risk of hurting others. They placed value on relationships and did not intend to harm others. It was an unfortunate outcome if someone else's feelings had been hurt. "It was not a virtuous thing I said and I would have never said that to his face, I guess the computer helped out."

Being a cyber-bully is easier than being a bully in the traditional sense. The affect is removed and there are no immediate consequences for one's actions. These young adults hid behind a computer.

Finding Four:

The growth of Facebook, which included family, suppressed prior bullying behavior.

Facebook has increased in popularity since its beginning in 2004 until the present day. Parental involvement has increased too, and this larger community of extended family on Facebook toned down negative behavior. Parents asked if they could remove posts and have passwords. These actions began to limit cyber-bullying behavior on Facebook. The young adults would take down hurtful posts and untagged their friends in compromising photos as family joined.

This monitored Facebook use impacted what young adults would say online. Parental involvement led most to be more cautious, to think about their actions and to ask themselves, "Would it be okay if my family read this post?" They began to self-monitor and think, "Would grandma approve?" Self-monitoring helped protect potential victims.

I knew she had my password so I was like I probably shouldn't say anything about this, probably shouldn't say anything about that.

My coach warned us she is like you know we can see what you do and say on Facebook, so watch yourselves.

Most participants would talk about how it was strange that now Facebook was no longer a place for just them. It became a community in which you must think about what you post online.

Yeah, adults joined. So then it just kind of got weird, I guess you could say.

When my grandma joined, I knew I could no longer say what I wanted to say without a response.

The participants interviewed often spoke of behavior that happened in their past before other adults joined. They would talk about how when they were younger they had

been hurtful and disrespectful, but now they limited what they say and do on Facebook. A filter was created which limited the amount of negative posts. Adults were able to monitor what was happening online. The participants became aware of the monitoring and they thought about the consequences of the actions.

In summary, it is evident that these young adults did not see themselves as cyber-bullies. It was acceptable for them to look away if they saw negative comments. It was easy to be a cyber-bully, and their behavior changed when family and other adults joined Facebook.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The cyber-bullying literature tended to focus on the prevalence and the impact of cyber-bullying along with comparisons to traditional bullying. This research attempted to fill a gap and provide an understanding of what motivated cyber-bullies through an examination of their social media behavior. Interviews with those who had engaged in cyber-bullying provided the data. The constructs of psychoanalytical self psychology and developmental literature provided a dynamic understanding of what motivated these young adults to engage in cyber-bullying. These findings add to the existing literature most notably by demonstrating that the majority of cyber-bullying behaviors may be a response to normative adolescent development. In other words not everyone who engages in cyber-bullying is pathological or greatly flawed.

The following chapter will provide a discussion and consideration of the findings along with the implications. This researcher collected data from an online questionnaire (n=90) and from fifteen open-ended interviews. Questions addressed included: How do young adults define cyber-bullying? What is acceptable social media behavior? How do those who cyber-bully understand their behavior?

The data indicated that cyber-bullying behaviors were understandable responses to adolescent development. The participants in this study engaged in cyber-bullying

behaviors during adolescence. They were participants in cyber-bullying as a response to development. The chaotic unrest of adolescence led them to engage in behavior they would not engage in as adults. Their behavior was outgrown and as they matured the id impulses merged with super-ego morals as Erikson (1956) described. Their actions, if repeated, in adulthood could be evidence of a serious problem.

Participation in cyber-bullying may have been because of a lack of maturity paired with the relative newness of Facebook. The data indicated that these participants engaged during adolescence and now have outgrown earlier negative behavior. In fact, they were able to reflect back and talk about what had happened. With maturity, they were able to see their behavior as disrespectful and inappropriate. When they were young and lacked maturity, they were unable to see this behavior as inappropriate.

In addition, cyber-bullying behavior could have been facilitated by the emergence and newness of social media sites. These young adults engaged in cyber-bullying behaviors during a time and place when there were no rules or ideas about cyber-bullying, and social media sites were new. Participants even reported that as Facebook grew, family and other adults joined, and rules were created. However, in the early stages, few could predict acceptable behavior when it came to online activities. More specifically, they did not understand the impact of a huge online audience. There were no rules or ideas on social media etiquette.

As Facebook/social media sites have grown, the popular press has played a key role in society's understanding of a cyber-bully. The popular press would report on the most tragic cases, such as those that ended in suicide by the victim. Therefore, the outcome defined a cyber-bully. For example, within this research these participants'

actions shared similar threads to major media cases. However, the actions of the young adults in this study did not lead to any serious consequences. They did not understand that they were cyber-bullies because their actions did not lead to others taking their lives even though their actions could have had the same results. These young adults were lucky that their behaviors did not have a lasting impact even though they were destructive with others' feelings and emotions. In addition, they did not witness the impact they had on their victims. Those who made the news are the cyber-bullies who in the end became witness to the impact of their actions. Their actions led others to take their lives.

Beyond the conditions that would facilitate cyber-bullying this study examined acceptable social media behaviors. From the larger sample, 58% of the 90 respondents reported that they did look away when they witnessed cyber-bullying behaviors. To look away is part of the bystander role within cyber-bullying. Perhaps as bystanders they may not have responded because they were unable to see the victims' reaction.

The most famous example of the role of a bystander is the case of Kitty Genovese in which 38 residents of Brooklyn watched her being murdered and heard her screams and did nothing. They could not see her. They could only hear her screams. The case of Kitty indicates that often bystanders will ignore cries for help. A psychoanalytical interpretation may understand bystanders to be flawed in some way (Kabatnick & Marcus, 1986). Those who looked away could be viewed as pathological within the psychoanalytical literature (Kabatnick & Marcus, 1986). Affect denial may account for some of the reasons why witnesses did not respond (Kabatnick & Marcus, 1986); however, it is more than affect denial. The environment contributes to the response.

If one takes the environment into account, could looking away be a normative response and less pathological than a traditional psychoanalytical interpretation? This perspective makes us curious about the nature of cyber-bullying. Are social media sites set up in a way to promote bullying? The bystander then is not pathological, but unresponsive due to all of the dynamics involved in cyber-bullying.

This is supported by the findings of Twemlow & Sacco (2013). The bullies or bullied are not mentally ill, nor are the bystanders. They are part of a system. “Bullying or bullied children in schools are typically not mentally ill, do not behave violently repetitively, and are frequently very regretful about what they do” (Twemlow & Sacco, p. 290). Twemlow and Sacco (2013) understand bullying, specifically in schools, to involve unconscious power dynamics enacted by all participants. Cyber-bullying also focuses on power dynamics. From this perspective, the unconscious dynamics enacted in a bullying scenario would change if the bully and victim visualize a perceived audience. In other words, if cyber-bullies could perceive an audience, there might be more or less cyber-bullying behavior happening online.

For the purpose of this discussion, a theoretical continuum of cyber-bullying behaviors might exist. On one extreme, there would be those who would never engage in cyber-bullying. It would be fair to speculate that not everyone will engage in cyber-bullying behaviors. On the other extreme, there would be cyber-bullying behaviors that represent intense and extreme forms of cyber-bullying. These extreme forms of cyber-bullying would include: adult participation, anonymous cyber-bullying, and directed cyber-bullying behavior with the intent to illicit an extreme reaction. This far extreme is represented in the media because the media portrayal typically presents these extreme

forms of cyber-bullying. Now if this theoretical continuum would exist, those who cyber-bullied in this study would land in the middle. They fell in the middle because they matured and their early actions were a normative response to development during adolescence.

Theoretical Implications

In order to fully understand how these behaviors could be normative, it is important to understand each theorist's contributions. Assumptions of developmental theory, within psychoanalytical theory, involve a reworking of earlier developmental issues brought on by the physical and biological changes of puberty (Blos, 1962; A. Freud, 1958). In addition, adolescence has been identified as a time of turmoil (Blos, 1962; Erikson, 1964; A. Freud, 1958). Anna Freud talks of disturbances during adolescent development and Erikson explores the loss of identity during this stage, while Kohut (1972) talks of shifting selfobject functions in adolescence. Also during adolescence one is developing more cognitive capacities (Palombo, 1988). Puberty along with new cognitive achievements threatens one's sense of a cohesive self and the hope is for one to reach a higher level of personality integration (Palombo, 1988). During this integration of self, one's peers now provide the essential selfobject functions. The parent is no longer able to provide these functions (Palombo, 1988). This shift in selfobjects gives the impression that peer relationships are of the utmost importance. Thus, all these theories share common threads and come to the conclusion that adolescence is a time of disturbance, great change and over-reliance on one's peers. The experience of

adolescence then would provide a space in which cyber-bullying actions would be normative.

In an effort to understand how these behaviors would be normative in adolescence, an understanding of Anna Freud's theory of development is necessary. Anna Freud (1958) understood adolescence as a developmental phase and identified behaviors during each stage. During the oral stage, it is appropriate and expected that the child will bite. Often, the first bite is to a mother's breast. As the child moves through development, an appropriate response during the anal stage is to hit, and during the phallic stages, domineering behavior is expected. In adolescence, cruelty, dissocial behavior, and delinquency are common. A baby bites, a toddler hits, a preschool age child wants to be in charge, and the adolescent tends to be cruel towards others and have outbursts of delinquent behavior. The young adults of this study were age appropriately cruel.

Cyber-bullying could be understood in this way as a normative piece, which involves mental cruelty and dissocial outbursts during adolescence. In adolescence, it is normal to see some level of delinquent behaviors and disrespect, such as mental cruelty and dissocial outbursts (A. Freud, 1958). Puberty is linked to increased sexual and aggressive drives. Cyber-bullying is aggressive in nature. This aggression is therefore a normative and possibly an expected response in adolescence. As suggested, these young adults showed disrespect and hateful actions towards others. They were delinquent and disrespectful because they engaged in actions outside of their normal reality. The upheaval and drives influenced their behavior and led to outbursts online, outbursts which included cyber-bullying behavior.

Further, the forces that move development at times cause upheaval along a path searching for emotional maturity (A. Freud, 1958). The cyber-bullying behaviors occurred during this time of emotional upheaval. As individuals enter adolescence, they are being pushed along to the next developmental stage through drives with the end result of adolescence being a separation from one's parents and a merging Id and Ego impulse to establish emotional maturity (A. Freud, 1958). At the time these participants had engaged in cyber-bullying, they had yet to establish this emotional maturity.

Building on Anna Freud's theory, Erikson (1956) describes adolescence as a normative crisis with fluctuating ego strength and increased conflict. During adolescence, identity is forming, and a defined ego is developing. This is happening within an individual's social reality (Erikson, 1946). The ego functions by searching out new opportunities as part of one's identity formation. This includes seeking out friendships within the greater social context beyond one's family. A newer social context for adolescence is the online world.

Erik Erikson's contributions presented a comprehensive picture of development with specific tasks during each stage of life. He concluded that development is continuous throughout one's life span. Erikson describes the task of adolescence as identity vs. identity diffusion (Erikson, 1956). This stage is followed by intimacy vs. isolation. He would argue that the task in adolescence is that of ego development with a reworking of the earlier developmental stages (Erikson, 1946, 1956). Ego development is complete as one passes through a psychosocial moratorium at the end of adolescence.

According to Erikson, while navigating the developmental stage of adolescence, one will experience disturbances. It is normative to be within crisis in adolescence, and

this crisis tends to push towards possible delinquent behaviors (Erikson, 1956). Findings from this study showed that these young adults were involved in delinquent behaviors. Disrespectful and delinquent behaviors were exhibited online, specifically during adolescence for these young adults. Following Erikson's theory, cyber-bullying behavior exhibited by these participants would not be pathological in nature.

Another way that Erikson can inform this behavior is by looking at the notion of negative identity and narcissistic retreat. Adolescents display a negative identity while navigating the task of adolescent development (Erikson, 1956), and part of a negative identity could include engaging in cyber-bullying behaviors. In addition, adolescence leads to changes and shifts that push some to a narcissist retreat (Erikson, 1956). This retreat allows for adolescents to be self-involved and attempt to solve problems in socially unacceptable ways. In the case of the participants in this study, they were feeling the upheaval of adolescence and responded in negative ways. They solved their problems in socially unacceptable ways by posting disrespectful comments about others online.

Self psychology provided another lens to examine the behavior of those participants in this study. Selfobjects are experienced as part of the self and are necessary for one's psychic survival and in adolescence the peers became the selfobjects (Kohut, 1972). For Kohut, selfobjects provide basic needs and these needs are met through selfobject interactions (Kohut, 1972). Seen through this selfobject lens, the data from this study revealed that cyber-bullying was a way to fulfill selfobject needs. For example, often those who engaged in cyber-bullying behaviors within this study did so to maintain and build friendships. All people need admiration, protection, belonging, a connection

with similar others, and the third structure building function of twinship to provide this connection (Kohut, 1972).

Protecting their friends online at any cost was evident in these findings. This could be related to the third structure function, twinship. The sample (n=15) interviewed had a need to be connected to others. There was a strong pull for them to protect their friends. Twinship or the need to be in a relationship with a similar other is part of healthy narcissism (Kohut, 1972). As the natural progression continued, they utilized friends as a way to fulfill their need of connectedness with a like other.

In addition to twinship, those with deficits in the selfobject functions of mirroring and idealization would be more apt to be aggressive online. For example, if there was not a person to idealize at an earlier point in development, one may seek out ways to feel this idealization, often resulting in unhealthy interactions. Engaging in cyber-bullying behavior is an unhealthy interaction displayed by these participants possibly as a way to experience idealization by one's peers. Adolescence provides a bridge towards new selfobjects, and this shift has the possibility of disrupting one's self. A disrupted self would create a fragmented self. At the time they engaged in cyber-bullying behaviors, they had a fragmented self paired with the normative disruptions of adolescence. They would lash out online therefore cyber-bullying was a possible attempt to reintegrate a fragmented self. From a self psychological point of view, those who continued to cyber-bully would have a fragmented self and would act out aggressively beyond adolescence.

Problems arise when there are deficits. Deficits in structure occur when selfobject needs are not met because of inconsistencies in the responses of the selfobject. Kohut, 1972 understood that the repeated empathic failure of one's selfobjects affects one's self-

structure (Siegel, 1996). Elson (1986), writing about Kohut, explains, “due to failure of the original selfobjects they suffer narcissistic injuries seen through low self-esteem, rage and injuries to self and others” (Elson, 1986, p.6). Individuals who experience these early interactions as faulty with initial caregivers experience deficits in selfobject functions.

Cyber-bullying then fills deficits in mirroring, idealization and twinship. “Deficits may be mild to severe and may be found in one pole or another, or in both” (Elson, 1986, p.113). These deficits lead to sadness, hopelessness, and weakened self-esteem. Sadness and hopelessness could lead to feelings of deadness inside. Therefore, those who engaged in cyber-bullying also fit with Kohut’s description of the “understimulated” self; they felt a need to create excitement to avoid feeling dead inside (Kohut & Wolf, 1978).

Most often, they engaged in cyber-bullying behavior as a response to a friend being ridiculed online. To illustrate the importance of peers, Erikson (1956) understood that a developing adolescent must choose a path in life. Some adolescents do not act because they would rather choose nothing than to make a choice that would make them look shameful in the eyes of their peers. A number of theorists have explained the importance of peers during adolescent development. During adolescence, one must recapitulate earlier developmental stages and, due to the recapitulation of earlier developmental phases, the connection with one’s friends can be as intense as the initial union with one’s parents (Erikson, 1956). Others have defined this phase in similar ways such as a detachment from parents and cathecting to new objects (Ritvo, 1971). Or they understand that friends are experienced as narcissistic extensions of the self to fill the void experienced from the intrapsychic void caused by separation of self from initial objects (Blos, 1962).

As the stories came out it was evident that these participants wanted to keep strong friendships, even at the risk of excluding others. The exclusion of others may be necessary to defend against identity loss (Erikson, 1956). Erikson does not condone this behavior, but understands it to be part of this struggle, and losing one's identity is a fate that is avoided at all cost. They would much rather exclude than to lose their own sense of identity. Adolescent peer groups provide a sense of identity. Thus we see that the peer group is so important that it may be necessary to exclude others to defend against loss of identity. Therefore, losing your peer group is a fate to be avoided at all cost. Excluding others actually reinforces a sense of identity. The findings in this study show that these young adults idealized their friends, but were able to devalue others.

The move of allegiance from parent to friend is normative and as these young adults transition from family to friends, their friends became the center of the world. There was fervor to idealize friends. It was developmentally appropriate for these participants to protect their friends. They were unable to tolerate others disrespecting their friends without retaliation although through growth they are now able to bear frustrations. The participants were accepting of who they had become and they were no longer in the throes of adolescence. As adults, they had internalized their initial selfobject functions, and when faced with disappointments, they no longer had a need to retaliate.

Cyber-bullying behavior is aggressive in nature and, therefore, in an effort to further understand this behavior, a brief examination of aggression is necessary. Aggression follows a path and it is important to understand what is normative and what is pathological along this path (A. Freud, 1958). Aggression may not be acceptable by society's standards, but it is not always pathological. As discussed, different stages of

development will exhibit aggressive behaviors and these aggressive drives will continue and change throughout development. The findings within this study speak to a normative aggression during adolescence. Within this study, these participants were engaging in aggressive acts online by posting disrespectful and hurtful comments.

Aggression during adolescence could be expected although if this behavior were repeated in adulthood, it would not be tolerated. Aggression has a healthy developmental path with the end result being that of demonstration of assertive behaviors and actions (Kohut, 1972). Aggression in adolescence, even when destructive, is normative because adolescence is a disruptive stage (Erikson, 1963; A. Freud, 1958). Therefore, these participants engaged in aggressive behaviors triggered by the onset of adolescence.

Psychosocial Moratorium

Thus far, the constructs of adolescent development have been explored to understand these young adults' cyber-bullying behavior. One important concept left to explore is the last stage of adolescent development: finding one's place in society. "During late adolescence one must take steps to find their relationship to society" (Ritvo, 1971, p. 242). Finding this relationship to society is the final stage of adolescent development, and a psychosocial moratorium, a term coined by Erikson (1956), describes it. During this final step of adolescence, one will consolidate a positive identity (Erikson, 1956). This is a crucial step because it provides a space to feel satisfied by both internal and external forces.

This consolidation of an identity is mainly an unconscious process and is the final task of adolescence (Erikson, 1956). At the end of this phase, the psychosocial

moratorium allows for this process to reach its peak. This is complete once an individual passes through a psychosocial moratorium. This process, in a way, is a bridge to adulthood. In this stage, an adolescent must think about who he or she is and whom he or she will become. Maturity leads individuals to a place of control of their ego; they are no longer driven by id instincts. Through maturity they are able to identify with whom they were at a different point in development. This formulation of an identity is complete when there is a realization of one's own potential along with an ability to affect others (Erikson, 1956).

This pause to form an identity creates a space for self-evaluation, and it is possible these participants were within this moratorium at the time of the interviews. It would be fair to think that those who interviewed were examining their life choices consciously or unconsciously to forge an identity. Findings indicated they wanted to talk about past behavior and through this process they were able to integrate some parts of themselves. They shared their stories in an effort to integrate themselves. Through this process, they may have been able to make right internal forces, feelings, and consolidate outside world views of themselves. They integrated what had happened and began to identify their place in the world.

In order for adolescence to proceed successfully, there must be a resolution, within a psychosocial moratorium, of past behavior along with an integration of whom they are to become (Erikson, 1956). In other words, this moratorium (a pause) provides a space for the synthesis of id drives and super ego morals (Erikson, 1946). This synthesis end result is a consolidated super ego, a cohesive self with mature defenses allowing for integration of the personality. The importance of this integration is that "there is no

feeling of being alive without a sense of ego-identity” (Erikson, 1946, p.367). Those unable to make use of a psychosocial moratorium will be unable to move beyond adolescence (Erikson, 1956). Without this pause to evaluate one’s life choices, dissatisfaction can occur leading to a formulation of a negative identity. A negative identity acted out could include dissocial and delinquent behaviors beyond adolescence.

Non-Participants

The participants of this study engaged in cyber-bullying behaviors during the normal course of development and have since matured. However, others may not have matured and may still be unable to move to the next developmental phase. The young adults of the study described a growth and change and were able to experience regret and maneuver their way through this developmental challenge. However, those who did not experience this growth might still be engaging in these behaviors.

It is possible from a self psychology lens that the participants from the larger survey (n=90) who were unwilling to interview had major deficits in self. Their selfobjects were unable to provide the necessary functions of safety and security and deficits occurred. Due to these deficits, they would struggle to talk about their behavior. Therefore, if they had interviewed, it may have created a space in which they did not feel safe. There could have been a threat to their sense of security and to talk about what they had done would have stirred up varying emotions. Those unwilling to be interviewed may have declined because they did not yet have a set of guiding ideals that would provide a sense of safety and security.

Another possible reason that some young adults were not able to talk could have been because they were still active participants in cyber-bullying. They may utilize cyber-bullying in an effort to feel alive. They might have an “understimulated” self, and need to create excitement to avoid feeling dead inside (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). In other words, earlier in life they did not have someone to idealize or look up to. Due to this deficit in the pole of idealization, they could have been participating in cyber-bullying because it was stimulating. This stimulation may have provided the needed selfobject function of safety and security. Due to this deficit and the need to be stimulated, they may engage in cyber bullying activities.

Those unwilling to interview could also have had a deficit in the pole of mirroring. The end result of mirroring is the development of healthy ambitions, which are at the center of maturity (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). It is probable then that the young adults unable to participate could have had a possible deficit in mirroring. This deficit would have led them to seek out affirmations from others. Talking about their actions would not meet this need to be affirmed. In fact, it would be detrimental to their self. Perhaps then, those unwilling to talk did so to avoid feelings of inadequacy.

Perhaps those who would have qualified for this study, but did not volunteer to talk, could be experiencing the unique challenges during a psychosocial moratorium. Erikson (1956) found that a psychosocial moratorium brings unique challenges because a developmental crisis is occurring which creates confusion (Erikson, 1956). Some of these challenges take a toll on the ego of certain individuals, specifically those who failed at earlier developmental tasks. Those within this vulnerable population may have been unable to navigate or experience the interview. These individuals who failed at earlier

tasks would be more vulnerable to losing their identity. In turn, any attempt to consolidate a positive identity would have been affected by a discussion of their negative behaviors. There may have also been a possibility of forging a negative identity because when one is weak, they would not be able to tolerate the frustration to the ego brought upon by a discussion of their negative actions.

Social Implications

Cyber-bullying is a social problem and the results of this study indicated that the focus should be on the dangers of social media sites during adolescence. By taking a developmental and self psychology lens, cyber-bullying behavior can be seen as normative. However, in spite of this finding, cyber-bullying is still a growing social problem. An important solution would then be adult supervision because supervision helps develop reflective capacities. It is evident that parents are needed to help set the boundaries online, and they should also explore the dangers of social media sites with their children.

The most serious consequence of cyber-bullying is suicide, and the most tragic cases made media coverage because someone had taken their own life. Interestingly the most tragic cases of cyber-bullying are similar to those examined in this study. In some cases, comments made by these young adults were similar to those in the media, but the young adults in this study were lucky. Remarkably, the young adults in this study were able to navigate through this developmental phase without serious consequences; no one committed suicide because of their actions. Unlike others, they did not have to feel what it was like to have been a part of someone taking his or her own life.

Thus these findings reveal that the online world is a new platform for adolescents to be disrespectful and engage in bullying behavior. Hoffman (2013) describes a new digital culture in which adolescents are desensitized in their interactions because they do not see the effects of their actions. This new digital culture allows adolescents to post negative comments and look away when reading disrespectful comments. These negative actions are due to the lack of adult supervision and the newness of social media sites. The implications of this desensitized group are the creation of an online world where people are free to say what they want and write what they feel without consequences. The adolescents in this study showed the tendency to be desensitized; however, they were desensitized with one exception: They did not sit back and watch disrespect towards someone in their peer group.

All participants in this study experienced friends as important and a friendship was at the center of their behavior. Friends have always played a key role in adolescent development. With the addition of a digital world, the pack mentality continues on and sets the standards as to the actions taken. They have created a space in which it is okay to cyber-bully as a response or as a defense. The data of this study strongly reveals the role a friend plays in cyber-bullying. These young adults responded in their friend's defense to either a real or imagined threat which could be understood as a narcissistic injury (Kohut, 1972). This narcissistic injury might create a need to self-regulate by way of retaliation in order to restore self-cohesion. They would respond to a real or imagined threat and if the self was fragile, there might be a rageful response (Kohut, 1972).

The pack supports one another. This group mentality makes it simple for people to join in and pick on someone who upsets them or their friend. This is not a new

concept, in fact, we have seen this in traditional bullying. However, the online world can involve anonymity, and the removal of affect creates a new challenging dynamic. When they could not see how they affected someone, they did not have to be witness to the response. They were lucky because they stopped before anyone did anything drastic, but other cyber-bullies went too far. This would have been the case in the incidences in which someone took his or her own life.

Unfortunately, suicide as a response to cyber-bullying is occurring. In order to avoid these tragic outcomes, it is important to realize online users need a strong sense of self because without it, it would be easier to fall victim to attack. Of course, it is inappropriate to blame the victim, but it is important to be aware of what is happening online and the factors that would lead some adolescent online users to be protected. An online platform allows those who cyber-bully to have little restraint because they do not see the impact of their actions. Thus, stopping cyber-bullying is nearly impossible, and the prevalence is likely to increase as shown by past studies. The Pew Research Center (2014) has found that 40% of online users feel online harassment is a part of life. In other words, people have become accustomed to this behavior, and at times, it is deemed as an acceptable response to help peers. In order to help the victims, an increase in adult monitoring is necessary along with making sure an adolescent has a strong enough sense of self to navigate the online world.

In adolescence, it is normal to want to be part of a group and be accepted. To engage in cyber-bullying behaviors, as suggested, is part of a new cultural norm. At the time of their actions, the participants in this study were emerging adults with the inability to have a fully formulated self. They were able to hide, say what they wanted to say and

rationalize their behavior as helping out a friend. The defense of rationalization prevents anxiety as it protects one's self-esteem and keeps one feeling whole. The participants rationalized their behavior and felt they were heroes because they were protecting their friends.

The participants interviewed were selected because they were more likely to regret posting something online that was disrespectful. They have matured, their behavior has changed, and they regretted the things they had done online. First, they regretted their actions and wanted to explain away their behavior to justify their actions. Second, they were seeking forgiveness. "I was angry....but now I am seeking forgiveness." Regret allowed them to explain their behavior and justify it. These young adults rationalized and disavowed any wrongdoing. By using the defense mechanism of disavowal, they knew something, but did not know it at the same time. They protected themselves from the reality of their behavior. Disavowal gets rid of painful feelings. It was striking how little emotion the participants showed when they spoke about their cyber-bullying behavior.

These participants' behavior can be understood as poor choices. In the moment, they had not thought their actions were cyber-bullying. Later, someone made it clear they were being cyber-bullies. It was found within the larger sample, at a statistically significant level, that those who had been accused of cyber-bullying later regretted their behavior. An implication of this finding is that these adolescents were good people; they just made a mistake in the moment. They wanted to share their stories, and talk out what had happened. Perhaps, the realization they had been engaged in cyber-bullying led them to agree to participate in the study and talk out what had happened.

Clinical Implications

Therapists need to be aware that some aggressive behavior online may be a part of normative development. This understanding is necessary because it is probable that adolescents commit the majority of cyber-bullying behaviors during a normative crisis. Although, as suggested, cyber-bullying may exist on a theoretical continuum. On one extreme of this continuum would be those who would never engage and on the other extreme would be those who continue to engage in cyber-bullying behaviors beyond adolescence. Another danger of adolescents engaging in aggressive behavior online is that some may take it too far.

Results and findings suggest that therapists need to understand what young adults are experiencing online. In addition, therapists need to understand the peer relationships of their patients. There needs to be a focus on peer relationships because social media is another platform in which adolescent peer interactions occur. An understanding of their online behavior may be necessary within the treatment setting because online activities have become increasingly prevalent for today's youth. Their online activities will have an impact within the therapeutic relationship. It is also important to understand if a patient is engaging in cyber-bullying behavior and to explore the need being met by this behavior. An understanding of online behaviors may allow a therapist to gauge where their patients are developmentally. Thus understanding their online behavior is important when working with today's youth.

Implications for Further Research

This study provided a glimpse into cyber-bullying. Specifically, the extent to which adolescents engage in posting disrespectful comments, looking away when reading negative comments, and forwarding on disrespectful comments. Future studies should examine how not everyone will engage in the same behaviors as those interviewed in this study. Therefore, that is why a theoretical continuum may be a helpful construct. For these particular young adults, their cyber bullying behavior could fit within normative development and land in the middle of this continuum. Yet, this is not the normal for everyone. Others would never engage in cyber-bullying behaviors. Future studies could examine why some never engage in this behavior. Do those who choose not to participate have a stronger sense of self? Findings indicate that cyber-bullying behaviors could be part of normal adolescent development. Yet who are the others out there? There are those who never engage and those who continue to harass and bully online.

Self psychology may provide an understanding of those individuals who never engage in cyber-bullying behavior. Those with a healthy idealized parental imago would have the ability to self-soothe and self-regulate (Kohut, 1972). With this ability, they would be less likely to react online when they experienced disruptions. Within developmental theory, adolescent identity formation is happening within an individual's social reality (Erikson, 1946). Therefore, one could speculate that those who did not engage experienced their reality with more maturity, and the use of restraint online would be a sign of emotional maturity. They would experience their reality with more clarity because of the healthy idealized parental imago as an indication of possible earlier maturity.

Thus, those who did not disrespect others online may have had stronger and more positive earlier interactions with their initial selfobjects (Kohut, 1972). However, in contrast, the young adults who acted out online may have had deficits with their earliest selfobject functions. Selfobject functions are needed throughout life (Kohut, 1972). A move to new selfobjects during adolescence creates anxiety specifically if early selfobject needs were unmet. When selfobject needs are unmet, there may be more struggles during this shift from caregivers to the outside world. A failure in internalizing earlier caregivers would place too much importance on friends.

Future studies should explore what allows a percentage of adolescents to navigate this developmental task without engaging in cyber bullying behaviors. It is possible that those who do not engage may have internalized selfobject functions that lead to a stronger sense of self. In addition, they may have developed emotional maturity sooner than those who engaged in cyber bullying behaviors during adolescence. Perhaps they have internalized a cohesive self that is able to handle the throes of adolescence (Kohut, 1972).

Future studies should explore why some would continue to cyber-bully beyond adolescence. One understanding could be understood through the lens of Erikson (1956). He described a normative developmental crisis ending in a merging of the past with the future and the formulation of a positive identity. Anna Freud (1958) understood within normal development inconsiderateness and other delinquent behaviors are part of adolescence. The problem happens when forward movement does not occur without resolving the developmental task before them. Therefore, it is possible that those who

continue to engage in cyber bullying behaviors may have unresolved earlier developmental tasks. They are still working towards emotional maturity.

Furthermore, Erikson (1956) focused on the developmental task of creating a positive identity formed through a consolidation of the past with the future. Perhaps those still engaging in cyber-bullying have not reached this moment. Or a merger with the future self is not possible due to deficits in earlier developmental tasks. Those unable to obtain emotional maturity have failed to complete earlier developmental tasks. Further studies would be necessary to explore if those who continue or show a darker side into adulthood have consolidated a positive identity or if they are within a developmental crisis that is unresolved.

The darker side, cyber bullying among adults, needs to be explored in further studies. It is probable that some people may be unable to move beyond this developmental phase. At the time of their cyber bullying behavior, the participants in this research were highly influenced by their peers as they sought to find their own identity. Perhaps others who are still in this struggle were the ones not willing to talk. These individuals could also have moved on to the next social media site, or even more disturbing, they might have become the adults that make the news impersonating young kids online.

There is an ever-evolving picture of cyber bullying and harassment. Studies examining those who continue to bully beyond adolescence will be necessary to understand the dynamics of those participating in cyber-bullying activities. This study provides a snapshot of cyber-bullying behaviors. Those who were not willing to talk about their behavior would complete the picture. Those unwilling to talk may be posting

anonymously and may be involved in more violent behaviors. According to The New York Times (Schulten, 2014), online gamers of all ages have been involved in death threats and other misogynistic comments for years. What is the motivation for these anonymous death threats and hateful behavior? This example shows the need for further studies about such horrific online behavior.

As social media use changes each year, new questions will be asked. When are people crossing a line and how do we know the difference between a joke and true cyber-bullying actions? When is it a fight and therefore part of normative development or when is it a crime? When does it become a criminal charge or what makes a victim take his or her life? The literature points to the fact that there should be a more concrete agreed upon definition of what cyber-bullying is and is not. At this time, there is no universal definition among researchers of cyber-bullying, but all definitions include the following: cyber-bullying is a category of bullying that occurs in the digital realm/medium of electronic text (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011). In addition, the definitions the young adults provided were inconsistent. It is necessary for a study to conceptualize an agreed-upon definition as technology advances because without a clear definition it will continue to be a challenge to understand what cyber-bullying is and is not.

These findings show it is acceptable to look away therefore a clear understanding of the role of a bystander in cyber-bullying is important. How does the victim perceive their audience? Does knowing others are watching and not helping affect the victims? The challenge with cyber-bullying is to develop an understanding of the victims and the bullies' perceived audience. In other words, this audience may be greater than they imagined or it may be much smaller. The internal unconscious dynamics occurring would

be vast and further studies would be needed to gauge what each cyber-bully or victim fantasized or visualized as a potential audience.

This data adds to the existing literature and provides a glimpse into the world of the adolescent cyber-bully. Data described a world in which cyber-bullying behaviors are a part of adolescent development. The social implications of these findings speak to a culture of disrespect on social media sites. Further studies are necessary to glean an understanding of others on a theoretical continuum of cyber-bullying behaviors. For example, studies could determine the motivations for never engaging in cyber-bullying behavior, one end of the continuum, and engaging in extreme cyber-bullying behaviors or engaging in cyber-bullying into adulthood, the other end of the continuum.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Individual Consent for Participation in Research
INSTITUTE FOR CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK

I, _____, acting for myself, agree to take part in the research entitled: An Examination of the Impact of Uninhibited Social Media Behavior

Andre Iavarone will carry out this work under the supervision of Dr. DiLeonardi. This work is conducted under the auspices of the Institute for Clinical Social Work, 401 South State Street, Suite 822 Chicago, IL 60605, (312) 935-4232.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to give young adults an opportunity to talk about their social media behaviors and what happens when inhibitions are removed. This research will also explore how young adults define cyber bullying in an effort to build upon the existing literature.

PROCEDURES USED IN THE STUDY AND THE DURATION

A sample will be chosen from an initial survey. The sample size will be fifteen to twenty participants. Interviews will take place in this researcher's office, the participant's home or a mutually agreed upon neutral location. Those who participate in the interview process will receive a 10\$ gift card for coffee. Participation will be voluntary.

BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefits to participants accrued from participation in this study. The information gathered from this interview process will expand upon the existing literature.

COSTS

There will be no costs associated with participation in this study.

POSSIBLE RISKS/SIDE EFFECTS

There will be minimal risk to participants in this study. There is a potential risk to having a negative response to talking about their social media behavior. Topics may become too sensitive and could elicit an emotional response. Participants can stop the interview at any time.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY

In order to keep confidentiality all information gathered will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. Only the researcher will have access to these reports. Participants will not be identified by name in order to keep information confidential. At the completion of this study all audio materials will be destroyed. The remaining data will be kept in the locked cabinet for five years following completion of the study and then destroyed.

SUBJECT ASSURANCES

By signing this consent form, I agree to take part in this study. I have not given up any of my rights or released this institution from responsibility for carelessness.

I may cancel my consent and refuse to continue in this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. My relationship with the staff of the ICSW will not be affected in any way, now or in the future, if I refuse to take part, or if I begin the study and then withdraw.

If I have any questions about the research methods, I can contact Andrea Iavarone or Joan DiLeonardi at this phone number 847-687-6714. If I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I may call, Judith Aronson PhD., Institutional Review Board, ICSW, 401 South State Street, Suite 822 Chicago, IL 60605, (312) 935-4232.

SIGNATURES

I have read this consent form and I agree to take part in this study as it is explained in this consent form.

Signature of Participant

Date

I certify that I have explained the research to _____ and I believe that they understand and that they have agreed to participate freely. I agree to answer any additional questions when they arise during the research or afterward.

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX B
RECRUITMENT FLYER

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY ON Social Media Behavior

Interested participants between the ages of 18-23 are needed for dissertation research. Andrea Iavarone, a doctoral student at The Institute of Clinical Social Work in Chicago, is conducting this research. Some of those who respond to the questionnaires may be asked to participate in a one-hour interview to help in understanding young adults' use of social media. Interviews will be scheduled locally in the Quad Cities area at a location convenient to you. If interested please visit the below site and complete a short questionnaire.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KJT5WQR>

APPENDIX C
ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Social Media Behavior

Informed Consent Form

Research Procedures

The purpose of this research is to explore what is happening on social media sites when inhibitions are removed. This research will also explore how young adults define cyber bullying and understand their behaviors.

Risks

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this research.

Benefits

There are no benefits to you as a survey respondent.

Confidentiality

Response will remain anonymous and confidential. Your responses will not be used by anyone including Survey Monkey. Additionally, please note that although online communications are never guaranteed to be 100% secure, your privacy and confidentiality will be protected to the extent technologically possible.

Clicking the “next” button will complete an informed consent.

Participation

If you have read, understood and you are at least 18 click “next” below to proceed. If you do not wish to participate click “exit this survey” at the upper right hand corner of your web browser.

Contact

Andrea Iavarone, a doctoral student at ICSW in Chicago Illinois, is conducting this research. Ms. Iavarone may be contacted at 847-687-6714 or Iavarone.icsw@gmail.com should you have questions or to report a research-related problem.

NEXT

Social Media Behavior

1.
 How often do you use Facebook, Twitter or other social media websites? Several times a day:
 Once a day
 Once a week
 Once a month
 Once a year
 Never
2.
 When using your Facebook page or Twitter account have you ever sent a message or posted something negative that you later regretted?
yes
 no
3.
 If you read something disrespectful about someone would you look the other way?
Yes
 No
4.
 Have you ever forwarded a message to someone whom it was not intended for?
Yes
 No
5.
 Have you ever been accused of online bullying?
yes
 no
6.
 Would you be willing to talk further about your social media behavior?
Yes
 No
7. If you are willing to talk further please supply your contact information below. If selected for the interview process you will earn a \$10 coffee card.

NEXT

8.

 Which category below includes your age? 18-20 21-29

9.

 Are you male or female?

Male

 Female

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