Exploring the Bullying and Cyberbullying Experiences of Secondary Students in an Alternative Education Program

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By
Chelsey V. Antifaiff

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to explore how secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program use technology, their online experiences, and their perceptions and experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying. Seven secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program were interviewed. A basic qualitative interpretive research design was used to explore and understand the perceptions and experiences of the students interviewed for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Three themes emerged from participant interviews using social-ecological theory as the theoretical framework for analyzing the data: (1) Navigating the complexities of technology usage; (2) The multiple facets of bullying: Victims, bystanders, and peer aggression; and (3) It could be anyone: The emotional experiences of cyberbullying victims and bystanders. The current study's findings have contributed to research in the area of technology use, online experiences, and the bullying and cyberbullying experiences of secondary students in an Alternative Education Program, and the findings have several implications for educators and recommendations for future research.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mom, Gloria Antifaiff, who has always encouraged and believed in me throughout my educational pursuits, including this thesis. Your dedication to education and life-long learning is admirable, and you have instilled in me the value of life-long learning. You have supported me unconditionally over the many, many years of my post-secondary education and without you, I would not be where I am today. Your persistence and dedication to your own educational pursuits have inspired me to always pursue my dreams, no matter how unreachable they may have seemed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 begins with my personal connection to the research topic, followed by an overview of bullying, cyberbullying, and technology use among youth. Next, the purpose of the present study is included, and then commonly used terms throughout this thesis are defined. The chapter concludes with an overview of the chapters included in this thesis.

Upon graduating with a second undergraduate degree, I began working as an Educational Assistant (EA) to support students with diverse learning needs at a high school in Calgary, Alberta. My goal was to obtain practical experience in an educational setting prior to pursuing a graduate degree in educational psychology. I worked with students in an Educational Support 1 (ES1) program; a program designed for students with mild cognitive impairments, and combined practical academic instruction with work experience opportunities (Calgary Catholic School District, 2016). The students in the program had below average intellectual ability and demonstrated learning challenges. Students could travel independently within the school and community, but demonstrated delays in adaptive behaviours such as conceptual skills, social skills, and practical everyday living skills compared to their same-age peers. Students received academic instruction in language arts and mathematics within the ES1 classroom, and were also integrated into regular education classes with their peers, with the support of an EA (Calgary Catholic School District, 2016). Upon completion of the program, students received a certificate of completion, rather than a high school diploma.

As an EA supporting students' academic and behavioural needs, I worked with a diverse group of students who, along with being coded by the school district as students with mild cognitive impairments, had diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual Disability, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and Cerebral Palsy, a physical disability. During the students' breaks and free time, I observed many of the students using technology including the use of cellphones and computers to access online gaming websites, browse the Internet, and use social media websites such as Facebook. I wondered about their experiences using technology and about their online experiences. I wondered what opportunities the use of technology had created for them. I wondered about their online safety, and if the students had been taught at the school level or by their parents how to use technology safely and appropriately. I wondered if the students had experienced cyberbullying or witnessed cyberbullying, and if they were aware of strategies to address cyberbullying and how to protect

themselves. My experiences with the students in the ES1 program led me to pursue exploring how students in a different education program used and experienced technology, and to explore their perceptions and experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying.

Bullying among children and youth has been a substantially researched topic over many years, with numerous findings citing the devastating emotional and psychological impact of bullying on young people (Conners-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, Mckelvey, & Gargus, 2009; Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Olweus, 1993). Bullying is defined as aggressive behaviour that is carried out repeatedly over time and is intended to cause harm to others (Olweus, 1993). Bullying also involves an imbalance of power or strength between the person carrying out the bullying and the victim (Olweus, 1993). Bullying can be direct, meaning the bullying occurs in the form of open attacks on the victim or indirect, meaning bullying occurs in the form of social isolation or intentional exclusion from a group (Olweus, 1994). Bullying can take on many forms, including verbal (e.g., teasing, name-calling, or threatening), relational (e.g., rumour spreading, gossiping, or exclusion from a group), or physical (e.g., hitting, shoving, tripping) (Espelage, Rao, & Rue, 2013; Morrison, 2009). It has been found that victims of bullying tend to display internalizing behaviours such as withdrawal, anxiety, and depression whereas perpetrators of bullying display externalizing behaviours such as aggression and impulsiveness (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Menisini, Modena, & Tani, 2009; Olweus, 1994). Studies have demonstrated that children and youth who are involved in bullying as victims and perpetrators experience a greater number of overall mental health challenges than those not directly involved in bullying as a victim or perpetrator (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Cook et al., 2010; Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

The bullying experiences of students with exceptionalities and students in different education programs have not been extensively researched topics as compared to the bullying experiences of typically developing students (Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011a; Swearer, Wang, Maag, Seibecker, & Frerichs, 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Students with exceptionalities represent a diverse group of students who may require special education services and "their exceptionalities may involve sensory, physical, cognitive, emotional, or communication abilities or any combination of these" (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2015, p. 6). Some studies have found that students with exceptionalities are at a heightened risk for becoming victims of bullying due to the characteristics associated with the type of exceptionality

such as reduced social skills or behaviour problems, and lack resources to cope with being bullied, and further, may experience bullying more frequently than students without exceptionalities (Christensen, Fraynt, Neece, & Baker, 2012; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose, Forber-Pratt, Espelage, & Aragon, 2013; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014; Zeedyk, Rodriquez, Tipton, Baker, & Blacher, 2014). Students with exceptionalities who are victims of bullying may experience devastating and lasting emotional and psychological consequences including mental health challenges such as anxiety or depression, poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, and impaired academic performance (Christensen el al., 2012; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose et al., 2013; Swearer et al., 2012; Zeedyk et al., 2014). It has been found that the educational setting can contribute to the risk of involvement in the bullying dynamic; students who are enrolled in special education programs are at an increased risk for becoming victims of bullying and also, for becoming perpetrators of bullying than students in a regular education program (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose, Espelage, & Monda-Amaya, 2009; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose, Espelage, Aragon, & Elliott, 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Additionally, it was found that the more restrictive the special education setting is, the higher rates of aggression, perpetration, and victimization occur (Rose et al., 2009). However, few studies have explored the cyberbullying experiences of students in a different education program, and further research is needed to investigate whether students in a different education program are at risk for involvement with cyberbullying (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

Cyberbullying is a relatively new form of bullying that has become increasingly prevalent among today's society. Technology has become an integral part of everyday life for many people, including children and youth, but with the increase in use of technology comes risks such as involvement in cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Reid & Weigle, 2014). Cyberbullying is defined as deliberate behaviour intended to cause harm that reflects a pattern of behaviour, not just related to a single incident (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Cyberbullying occurs when technology is used to spread or forward hurtful and vulgar messages and/or images through email, texting, social media, or other forms of electronic communication (Campeau, 2013). Technology makes it possible for cyberbullying to occur with a perceived amount of anonymity, spread rapidly, and be preserved easily (Li, 2007). Similar to bullying, cyberbullying has the potential to greatly impact the mental, physical, and emotional

well-being as well as academic performance of children and youth (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Kowalski & Limber, 2013). Cyberbullying is different than traditional bullying due to the fact that the use of technology has made it possible for youth to be bullied on and off school grounds (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Kowalski & Limber, 2013). Bullying that may have occurred at school is now able to continue off school grounds through the use of technology, and for some youth, it may feel as though there is no escape from experiencing both bullying and cyberbullying.

As technology such as computers, cellphones, and tablets have become an everyday and common aspect of today's society, the use of the Internet and social media websites among adolescents has increased substantially over recent years (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Reid & Weigle, 2014). The Pew Research Center (2015) examined adolescents aged 13 to 17 and their use of technology in a nationally representative study and found that 87% of youth had access to a computer, 88% of youth had access to a cellphone, and 58% had access to a tablet. For many youth, the use of technology plays a central role in their lives, and many use social media websites as a form of communication and social connection with their peers (Reid & Weigle, 2014; O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Websites that allow for social interaction with others are considered social media, and refer to any website that allows for social interaction and the exchange of ideas (O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Many social media websites allow youth to create online profiles and personalize their pages by adding pictures, videos, or other material (Reid & Weigle, 2014). The Internet allows for adolescents to experience a wide variety of opportunities to connect, create, and express themselves (Good & Fin, 2015; O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Technology can be used as a means for adolescents to express their personal creativity and share their creations with others (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Adolescents can post writing, music, or other forms of expression online, and receive feedback from others, which can facilitate interaction with others who have similar interest or talents (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Although the use of technology such as computers, cellphones, or tablets and the use of social media websites comes with many benefits such as social interaction and connection with others, there are also associated risks and consequences such as cyberbullying, harassment, and Internet addiction or overuse for some youth (O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Reid & Weigle, 2014).

1.1 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to explore how Saskatchewan secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program use technology, their online experiences, and to explore the students' experiences and perceptions related to bullying and cyberbullying. Students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program in Saskatchewan have impairments that markedly limit their functioning in reasoning, problem solving, abstract thinking, and academic learning (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). Students demonstrate limitations in intellectual functioning and are academically achieving well below grade level (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). The technology use patterns and online experiences of adolescents in a different education program has not been an extensively researched area; many research studies have focused on establishing the technology use patterns of typically developing students (Engelhardt & Mazurek, 2014; Good & Fang, 2015; Kuo, Orsmond, Coster, & Cohn, 2014; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). It is important to determine the technology use patterns of students with exceptionalities and students in a different education program before it can be determined if the technology use patterns of the students are associated with a heightened risk of experiencing negative consequences online such as involvement in cyberbullying (Kuo et al., 2014; O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Reid & Weigle, 2014).

There are currently two research studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences among adolescents who did not attend regular education classes, and were enrolled in a different education program (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013) and one study that differentiated between students who received special education services and students who did not (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The studies that have explored the cyberbullying experiences of students in a different education program found that cyberbullying involvement did occur among the students, and the findings highlighted the importance of further research to determine the prevalence rates and experiences of cyberbullying among this population of students, and could further confirm the need for prevention and intervention programs (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Additionally, it is important to understand the cyberbullying experiences of students in a different education program, as it has been found that involvement in cyberbullying is associated with profound negative consequences on the overall emotional and psychological well-being of children and youth (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman &

Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). All research studies that have investigated the cyberbullying experiences among students in a different education program have utilized a quantitative research approach. Further research is needed to explore the technology use patterns, and bullying and cyberbullying experiences of secondary students in a different education program using a qualitative research approach. Social-ecological theory was used as the theoretical framework to understand the interrelated relationship between the individual and family, peer group, school, community, and culture factors that interact to influence involvement in bullying and cyberbullying (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Swearer & Espelage, 2004). The following research questions were explored in the current study:

1. How do secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program use and experience technology, including the use of cellphones, tablets, and computers, and what are their online experiences?
2. What are the bullying and cyberbullying experiences and perceptions of secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program?

1.2 Definitions

For the purpose of adding greater clarity to the terms used in this study, the following terms are defined:

1.2.1 Bullying. Bullying can be defined by three key components: (1) aggressive behaviour that is intended to cause harm to others, (2) the behaviour is carried out repeatedly over time, and (3) involves an imbalance of power or strength between the perpetrator and the victim (Olweus, 1993; 1994).

1.2.2 Cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is defined as deliberate behaviour intended to cause harm that reflects a pattern of behaviour, not just related to a single incident, through the use of computers, cellphones, and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

1.2.3 Social Media. Social media refers to any website that allows for social interaction and the exchange of ideas (O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Examples of social media are: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, blogging websites, gaming websites, and chat rooms (O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

1.2.4 Students with Exceptionalities. Hallahan et al. (2015) define students with exceptionalities as "those who have problems or special talents in thinking, seeing, hearing,

speaking, socializing, or moving" (p. 3). In terms of education, students with exceptionalities are those who require special education services to achieve their full potential, and are "markedly different from most students in the following ways: students may have intellectual disabilities, learning or attention disabilities, emotional or behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, disorders of communication, autism, traumatic brain injury, impaired hearing, impaired sight, or special gifts or talents" (Hallahan et al., 2015, p. 5).

1.2.5 Alternative Education Program. Students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program have impairments that markedly limits functioning in reasoning, problem solving, abstract thinking, and academic learning (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). Students demonstrate limitations in intellectual functioning and are academically achieving well below grade level, and are unable to meet the curriculum outcomes in regular education courses (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a).

1.3 Chapter Organization

A review of the literature related to bullying, cyberbullying, and technology use among students with and without exceptionalities, and including students in different education programs, follows in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 describes the research methods and procedures used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study and the three major themes found. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a summary of the findings, an integration of the findings related to existing literature, practical implications of the findings, strengths and limitations of the study, and implications for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following section begins with a review of Saskatchewan education programs, and a discussion of the conceptual framework used to analyze the results follows. Then a review of the literature pertaining to bullying, technology use, and cyberbullying among students in different education programs and students with exceptionalities are discussed.

Bullying and cyberbullying are complex phenomena, influenced by an interaction between the individuals involved and an interplay of complex social-ecological systems, including family, peer groups, and school factors (Espelage et al., 2013; Rose, Nickerson, & Stormont, 2015a; Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). Social-ecological theory can be used as a theoretical framework for understanding the complexity of bullying and cyberbullying behaviours (Baldry, Farrington, & Sorrentino, 2015; Cross et al., 2015; Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Rose et al., 2015a; Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Espelage, 2011). Bullying and cyberbullying are serious concerns among all school-aged children and adolescents, and can lead to profound and lasting consequences for the overall mental and emotional well-being of those involved in the bullying dynamic (Baumeister, Storch, & Geffken, 2008; Hebron & Humphrey, 2014; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012). The bullying and cyberbullying dynamic includes students who are victims, bullies, both a bully and victim, and bystanders or observers (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Olweus, 1993). For some populations of students, there is an increased risk for involvement in the bullying dynamic, including those with exceptionalities in general or special education programs, students with special healthcare needs, gender and sexually diverse students, and culturally diverse students (Baumeister et al., 2008; Hebron & Humphrey, 2014; Rose et al., 2011a). Students with exceptionalities in general education or special education may be at a heightened risk for experiencing bullying and cyberbullying (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). It has been found that the educational setting, including general education, special education, or an integration of both settings, can have an impact on the bullying and cyberbullying behaviours of students (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2011b; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Additionally, some research studies have found that students with exceptionalities in special education settings may be at an increased risk for being victimized and perpetrating bullying and cyberbullying (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

Therefore, it is important to develop an understanding of the different education programs for students with diverse learning needs, in order to further understand these students' involvement in the bullying and cyberbullying dynamic.

2.1 Overview of Saskatchewan Education Programs

There are a range of Prekindergarten-Grade 12 education programs in Saskatchewan designed to meet the diverse learning needs of students. The Ministry of Education provides "leadership and direction to many sectors including: early learning and child care; Prekindergarten through Grade 12 education; literacy; and the provincial network of libraries" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017a, para. 2). The education programs in Saskatchewan include programming for students with diverse needs who require special educations services. Students with exceptionalities represent a diverse group of students and "their exceptionalities may involve sensory, physical, cognitive, emotional, or communication abilities or any combination of these" (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2015, p. 6). Generally, the learning needs of most students can be met through the Regular Education Program, with teachers utilizing the adaptive dimension to support the diverse learning needs of students (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011). The adaptive dimension allows teachers to make adjustments to their instruction, environment, and materials to help students achieve the curriculum outcomes in the Regular Education Program (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011). In Saskatchewan, the core curriculum is designed to provide students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 with a provincially developed curriculum that includes required areas of study and essential learnings at each grade level (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011).

At the secondary level (Grades 10 to 12), students in the Regular Education Program must complete course credits to graduate with a Grade 12 high school diploma (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011). Regular courses contain 100% of the provincial curriculum outcomes. However, for some students with learning challenges, their educational needs cannot be met through regular courses, and they require modified courses. Modified courses at the secondary level include courses that contain at least 50% of the provincial curriculum outcomes, with the remainder of the curriculum outcomes developed by the school division (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017b). Modified courses are considered to fall under the Regular Education Program, and students are integrated and instructed within regular courses (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2017b). Modified courses meet the requirements for a

Grade 12 high school diploma; however, some post-secondary institutions will not accept modified courses as meeting admission requirements.

In Saskatchewan, Additional Education Programs include the Alternative Education Program and the Functional Integrated Program. The Alternative Education Program is designed for students who are unable to meet the curriculum outcomes in the Regular Education Program or in Modified courses, even after the adaptive dimension has been extensively applied (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). Alternative Education courses contain less than 50% of the provincial curriculum outcomes and/or contain outcomes developed by the school division (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). Students in Alternative Education may not be integrated within regular courses, and is dependent on availability and school resources. Students take electives within regular courses with their peers, with teachers responsible for adapting the curriculum to meet their diverse learning needs. Students do not receive a Grade 12 high school diploma, their transcripts indicate completion of an Alternative Education Program, and post-secondary institutions do not accept Alternative Education courses as meeting admission requirements (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a).

The decision to move a student to the Alternative Education Program must be based on a comprehensive and holistic formal and informal assessment process, including assessment of academic and cognitive functioning, educational history (e.g., cumulative record file), current school performance, and in collaboration with a team including the student, parents/guardians, and school personnel (e.g., classroom teachers, student support services teachers, guidance counsellors, school administrators, and psychologists) (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). The formal assessment results must indicate impairment that markedly limits functioning in reasoning, problem solving, abstract thinking, and academic learning (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). Students in the Alterative Education Program have limitations in intellectual functioning and are academically achieving well below grade level (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a).

Students in the program may have a diagnosis of an Intellectual Disability, a disability characterized by deficits in intellectual functioning such as reasoning, problem solving, abstract thinking, judgement, and academic learning and deficits in adaptive functioning, including limitations in the conceptual (academic) domain (e.g., reading, language, math reasoning, writing, and memory), social domain (e.g., awareness of others' thoughts, feelings, and

experiences, empathy, interpersonal skills, friendships, and social judgment), and practical domain (personal care, job responsibilities, money management, and task organization) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). However, a diagnosis is not a requirement for qualifying for an Alternative Education Program. Students with diagnoses of visual or hearing impairments, mental health disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression), Autism Spectrum Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, or physical disabilities do not qualify for enrollment in the program simply based on a diagnosis. Students must have impairment in reasoning, problem solving, abstract thinking, and academic learning that markedly limits functioning, and are unable to meet the curriculum outcomes in Regular and Modified courses (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). The Alternative Education Program is not appropriate for the following students: those with average to above average intellectual ability diagnosed with a Specific Learning Disorder and/or behavioural disorders (e.g., Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, or Conduct Disorder), those with inadequate educational opportunities (e.g., poor attendance), or for students whom English is a second language (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a).

The Functional Integrated Program is an individualized program with no credit requirements, and areas of focus may include: academics, communication, personal management, social competence, leisure/recreation/physical wellness, and career/work exploration (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006b). Students in the Functional Integrated Program generally are diagnosed with intellectual or multiple disabilities, and their diverse learning needs cannot be met through Alternative Education courses, even after the adaptive dimension has been extensively applied (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006b). Students do not receive a Grade 12 high school diploma, and their transcript indicates completion of a Functional Integrated Program (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006b).

As described above, there are a range of education programs in Saskatchewan designed to meet the diverse learning needs of students with and without exceptionalities. It is important to develop an understanding of the education program students are enrolled in, as the school setting is a part of a complex and interrelated system in which children and youth function. As some research studies have found that students with exceptionalities in special education settings may be at an increased risk for victimization and perpetration of bullying and cyberbullying, it is important to gain an understanding of the educational setting students are enrolled in (Heiman &

Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012). Additionally, both bullying and cyberbullying can have a devastating impact on the overall functioning of children and youth (Baumeister et al., 2008; Hebron & Humphrey, 2014; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012). It is important to develop an understanding of a theoretical framework that can be used to understand risk factors for involvement in bullying and cyberbullying, in order to develop effective prevention and intervention programs that include students who are enrolled in different education programs (Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Espelage, 2011).

2.2 A Social-Ecological Framework for Understanding Bullying and Cyberbullying

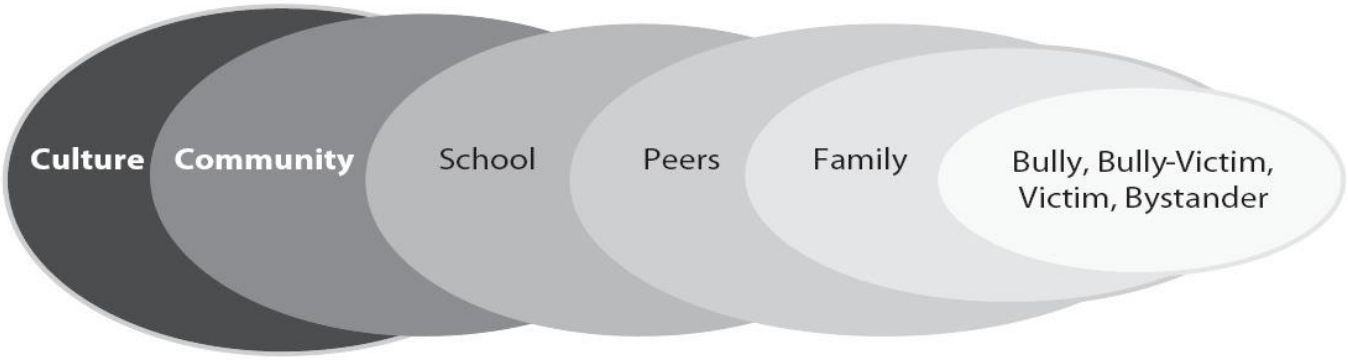

Figure 1. A social-ecological framework of bullying among youth (Swearer & Espelage, 2011).

Bullying and cyberbullying are complex phenomena that do not occur in isolation between the bully and victim, but rather involve an interplay of individual, family, peer, school, community, and cultural factors (Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Espelage, 2011). Involvement in bullying and cyberbullying has moved from a linear relationship between the bully and victim to a more dynamic and fluid nature of involvement, with bullying roles changing over time (Cross et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2015a; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). As presented in Figure 1, bullying can be understood as part of a complex interaction between an individual and the systems that influence involvement in bullying (Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Espelage, 2011). Social-ecological theory was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, and can be used as a theoretical framework for understanding the complexity of involvement in bullying and cyberbullying (Baldry et al., 2015; Cross et al., 2015; Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Rose et al., 2015a; Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Espelage, 2011). A social-ecological framework has mainly been applied to understanding involvement in bullying, and has only recently been applied to understanding cyberbullying (Baldry et al., 2015; Cross et

al., 2015). Much of the cyberbullying research has been conducted without a theoretical framework for explaining the complexity of cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010). This framework can be applied to better understand the interrelated relationship between the individual and family, peer group, school, community, and culture factors that interact to influence involvement in bullying and cyberbullying (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Swearer & Espelage, 2004).

According to the social-ecological framework, the child is at the center of their social ecology, and there are five interrelated systems that interact to influence behaviour: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Rose et al., 2015a; Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). There are multiple individual factors that can influence involvement in bullying such as: age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, health status (e.g., obesity), internalizing and externalizing behaviours, socioeconomic status, exceptionalities, and special education status (Hong & Espelage, 2012). The microsystem involves systems that children and youth have direct contact and interaction with, and include family, peers, and the school (Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). It has been proposed that the microsystem has the most direct influence on involvement in bullying among children and youth, due to the interaction between the individual and their immediate environment (e.g., family, peers, and school) (Hong & Espelage, 2012). At the microsystem level, risk factors for involvement in bullying have been identified, and include parent-youth relationships, family and parenting practices, peer relationships, school connectedness, school environment, and teachers' attitudes (Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012). The mesosystem involves an interaction between two or more microsystems, and the interactions can occur between family, peers, and the school (Espelage, 2014; Hong & Espelage, 2012). The interactions among family, peers, and school impact involvement in bullying; for example, parenting practices can influence peer friendship selection, and teachers and school personnel can also influence students' relationships with their peers (Espelage, 2014; Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012). Parent-teacher interviews are also an example of the mesosystem (Espelage et al., 2013). The exosystem refers to "the social context with which the child does not have direct contact, but which affects him or her indirectly through the microsystem" (Espelage et al., 2013, p. 10). The neighborhood environment is an example of an exosystem that can influence involvement in

bullying; unsafe neighborhoods can influence bullying behaviour because of a lack of adult supervision or negative peer influences (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Parent work environments and the availability of recreational activities in the community are also examples the exosystem (Espelage et al., 2013). The macrosystem is considered to be the outermost layer of the child's environment, and impacts the child through indirect influence on the other systems (Espelage et al., 2013; Espelage, 2014). Examples of the macrosystem include cultural norms and values, religion, policies, and laws (Espelage, 2014; Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012). The chronosystem involves the dimension of time, and "includes consistency or change (e.g., historical/life events) of the individual and the environment over the life course" (e.g., family structure changes) (Espelage, 2014, p. 261). Examples of the chronosystem that can impact involvement in bullying include the divorce of parents, puberty, and economic change (Espelage et al., 2013).

Social-ecological theory has been proposed as a theoretical framework for understanding children and adolescents' involvement in bullying and cyberbullying, and involves developing an understanding of individual factors in relation to family, peer group, school, community, and cultural factors that can promote or inhibit bullying and cyberbullying (Baldry et al., 2015; Cross et al., 2015; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Rose et al., 2015a; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). It has been proposed that individual factors interact with the family, peer group, school, community, and cultural factors, and influence involvement in bullying and cyberbullying, and as such, it is important to understand that no single individual factor or system influences involvement in bullying and cyberbullying (Baldry et al., 2015; Cross et al., 2015; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Rose et al., 2015a; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). Involvement in bullying and cyberbullying must be understood as part of a complex interaction of factors, and social-ecological theory can be used to develop bullying prevention and intervention programs due to the importance of understanding that involvement is impacted by multiple factors (Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Rose et al., 2015a; Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a).

2.3 Bullying

Bullying and cyberbullying are complex phenomena that have the potential to lead to devastating physical, psychological, and emotional consequences for children and youth involved (Campeau, 2013; Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Olweus, 1993; 1994). Both bullying and cyberbullying continue to be growing concerns among children and youth, and creating safe

schools and communities are critical for students' success, learning, and overall emotional well-being (Campeau, 2013). Bullying among children and youth is becoming increasingly prevalent, and at least 1 in 3 Canadian adolescents have reported being a victim of bullying at some point in time (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2012). Due to the importance of addressing bullying and cyberbullying among children and youth, an Anti-Bullying Initiative was developed in Saskatchewan in order to create an action plan for addressing bullying and cyberbullying in Saskatchewan schools (Campeau, 2013).

2.3.1 Defining bullying. The following definition of bullying was proposed by Jennifer Campeau (2013), Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education in regard to an Anti-Bullying Initiative:

> Bullying is a relationship issue where one person or group repeatedly uses power and aggression to control or intentionally hurt, harm, or intimidate another person or group. It is often based on another person's appearance, abilities, culture, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Bullying can take many forms: physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, or social. It can occur in person or through electronic communication. (p. 11)

Cyberbullying was defined as a form of emotional, psychological, and social bullying that can occur using electronic communication such as email, texting, instant messaging, and/or social media websites (Campeau, 2013). The proposed definitions were created with the goal of using universal and consistent definitions of bullying and cyberbullying across the Saskatchewan Education System. The need for a Saskatchewan action plan to address bullying and cyberbullying demonstrates the critical nature of these phenomena, and further, the need for effective evidence-based prevention and intervention programs to educate students, those who work with students, and parents about the seriousness of these problems.

The above definition is consistent with the widely accepted and commonly used definition of bullying proposed by Olweus (1993). Olweus's (1993) definition of bullying consists of the following key components: (1) bullying is aggressive behaviour that is intended to cause harm to others, (2) bullying is carried out repeatedly over time, and (3) bullying involves an imbalance of power or strength between the perpetrator and the victim. It is important to note that bullying is not an appropriate term to use in a situation where two students of equal power or strength are fighting; bullying involves a power imbalance in which the victim is unable or has

difficulty defending him/herself (Olweus, 1993). Bullying may be classified as either direct, meaning the bullying occurs in the form of open attacks on the victim or indirect, meaning bullying occurs in the form of social isolation or intentional exclusion from a group (Olweus, 1994). As noted in Chapter 1, children and youth may experience bullying in many forms, including verbal (e.g., teasing, name-calling, or threatening), relational (e.g., rumour spreading, gossiping, or exclusion from a group), or physical (e.g., hitting, shoving, tripping) (Espelage et al., 2013; Morrison, 2009). It has been found that males are more often involved in physical forms of bullying whereas females are more often involved in indirect forms of bullying such as rumour spreading or social exclusion (Espelage et al., 2013; Morrison, 2009; Mouttapa, Valente, Gallaher, Rohrbach, & Unger, 2004).

2.3.2 Classifications, characteristics, and impact. There are four classifications of bullying that have been identified as involved in the bullying dynamic: victims, bullies, bully-victims, and those not involved in bullying or bystanders (Olweus, 1993). Bullying affects not only the victims but also those who bully, bully-victims, and bystanders (Olweus, 1993). Individual characteristics of victims include children and youth who are more anxious and insecure than other students, and are often cautious, sensitive, and quiet (Olweus, 1994). Children who are victimized by peers have been shown to exhibit more internalizing behaviours such as feeling depressed, withdrawn, or anxious (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009). According to Cook et al. (2010), not being liked by peers and deficits in social competence can place students at risk for become victims of bullying. Victims of bullying have been found to be less socially accepted by their peers and labeled as rejected; teachers also have reported that victims are more socially isolated than others, and the victims themselves report that they have few friends and are lonely and unhappy at school (Conners-Burrow at al., 2009). Victims of bullying may experience several adverse consequences such as poor physical health, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, loneliness, low self-esteem and negative view of themselves, poor academic performance, peer rejection, and a limited number of friends (Cook et al., 2010; Hodges, Boivin Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Olweus, 1994; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). Numerous studies have demonstrated that victims of bullying can experience profound and lasting effects on the psychological and emotional well-being of the victims (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Cook et al., 2010; Hodges et al., 1999; Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Olweus, 1993; 1994; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a).

There are a number of individual, family, and school factors that contribute to the reasons why children and youth may become perpetrators of bullying (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Cook et al., 2010; Menisini et al., 2009; Olweus, 1994; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). Individual factors such as temperament also contribute to reasons why children may bully others (Olweus, 1994). The central characteristic the typical bully embodies is their aggression towards not only peers, but also adults including both parents and teachers (Olweus, 1994). Bullies tend to display more externalizing behaviours such as conduct problems, aggressiveness, and impulsiveness and are thought to display more unemotional traits and lack empathy for the victim (Menisini et al., 2009; Olweus, 1994; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). Unlike those who are victimized, bullies report that they have positive relationships with their classmates, and further, may hold a higher social status (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). However, bullies are also likely to experience mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression (Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). Youth who exhibit aggressive behaviours and bully others are thought to disengage from their own personal moral standards in order to justify engaging in negative and aggressive behaviours (Bandura, 1999; Barchia & Bussey, 2011). Moral justification is when negative behaviour is viewed as warranted and serving a worthy purpose (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). Research has suggested that youth who experience a lack of warmth and parental support from their parents, witness aggressive behaviours, and lack parent supervision are risk factors that can predict involvement in the bullying dynamic (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Cook et al., 2010; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). School factors also contribute to reasons why a child may bully others (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Cook et al., 2010). Research has demonstrated that supervision at school plays a major factor in the frequency and severity of bullying problems as low levels of supervision at school may lead to more frequent occurrences of bullying (Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, 2011). Additionally, a positive or negative school climate can have an impact on both bullying and victimization behaviours (Swearer & Hymel, 2015a; Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013).

Bully-victims are students who are both perpetrators and victims of bullying (Olweus, 1994). It has been found that bully-victims experience more adverse consequences of bullying than students who are victims or bullies, and bully-victims are at a greater risk for experiencing anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, substance abuse, aggression, and poor attitudes toward school (Berkowitz & Benbenishty, 2012; Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Puura, 2001; Swearer &

Hymel, 2015a). Bystanders also hold a significant role in the bullying dynamic: on average, two to four peers are present in the majority of bullying incidents (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Bystanders may contribute to the bullying dynamic in terms of how bullying is responded to; for example, bystanders may passively watch, which can be interpreted as supporting the bullying, bystanders can intervene to stop the bullying from occurring, or bystanders may encourage the bully (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999; Polanin, Espelage, Pigott, 2012). Students who are involved in the bullying dynamic as victims, bullies, bully-victims, and bystanders are all impacted by bullying, and there are certain populations of students who are at a greater risk for becoming involved in the bullying dynamic (Baumeister et al., 2008; Hebron & Humphrey, 2014; Rose et al., 2011a).

2.3.3 Bullying among vulnerable populations. Bullying is a serious concern among all children and adolescents, but for some populations of students, there is an increased risk of involvement in the bullying dynamic, including students with exceptionalities, students in different education programs, gender and sexually diverse students, and students of different race or ethnicity (Baumeister et al., 2008; Hebron & Humphrey, 2014; Rose et al., 2011a). The educational setting students are enrolled in has been found to be a risk factor for involvement in the bullying dynamic, because there is evidence to suggest that students enrolled in special education programs are at an increased risk for becoming victims and perpetrators of bullying than students in a regular education program (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Additionally, Rose et al. (2009) found that the more restrictive the special education setting is, the higher rates of aggression, perpetration, and victimization were reported. It has been found that students with exceptionalities and those in different education programs may experience greater negative consequences and long-term effects of bullying than typically developing students due to a lack of coping skills and resources to address the bullying (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Peer victimization is associated with reports of withdrawal, anxiety, depressive symptoms, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, and disruptive behaviour (Baumeister et al., 2008). Students with exceptionalities who experience victimization may also experience negative consequences such as anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, and minimal social and academic participation (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh,

2013; Rose et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). It is evident that students who are victims of bullying experience a range of negative consequences, and this also demonstrates the seriousness of bullying behaviours and the need for awareness and prevention of bullying among students with exceptionalities. Social-ecological framework has been used to explain involvement in bullying for typically developing students, but has only recently been used for understanding involvement in bullying among students with exceptionalities and students in special education settings (Farmer, Wike, Alexander, Rodkin, & Mehtaji, 2015; Rose et al., 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose, Simpson, & Moss, 2015b; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b). It is important to develop an understanding of the risk and protective factors associated with bullying involvement in order to help inform effective anti-bullying policies and to inform prevention and intervention programs (Rose et al., 2015b).

2.3.4 Risk factors. There are many factors that place students with exceptionalities and students in a different education program at a greater risk for involvement in the bullying dynamic (Farmer et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b). Individual risk factors that can influence involvement in the bullying dynamic include the type of exceptionality and characteristics associated with the type of exceptionality (Farmer et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b). Peer factors are also important for understanding students with exceptionalities involvement in bullying (Farmer et al., 2015). School factors such as the school climate and educational placement of students with exceptionalities can also influence involvement in the bullying dynamic (Farmer et al., 2015). As social-ecological theory has only recently been applied to understanding the bullying involvement of students with exceptionalities and students in different education programs, research is limited in the area of examining family, community and cultural factors associated with involvement in bullying (Farmer et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b).

Student disability status has been found to be a risk factor for involvement in the bullying dynamic (Farmer et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b). Children and youth diagnosed with an Intellectual Disability (ID) have been found to be at an increased risk for becoming victims of bullying, and often have greater difficulty coping with being bullied than typically developing students (Christensen et al., 2012). In a study that compared the prevalence rates of bullying among 46 adolescents with an

ID and 91 typically developing students, it was found that a greater percentage of students with ID reported being victims of bullying than those without an ID (Christensen et al., 2012). Adolescents with an ID may exhibit social skills deficits that impact their relationships with peers, and may explain why these students are at an increased risk for experiencing bullying (Christensen et al., 2012). In a study examining the bullying experiences of adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a disorder characterized by deficits in social interaction and communication skills, and ID, it was found that adolescents with ASD were victimized more frequently than those with ID and typically developing peers (Zeedyk et al., 2014). Some studies have demonstrated that adolescents with ASD are more likely to be victimized than both students without an exceptionality and students with exceptionalities other than ASD (Hebron & Humphrey, 2014; Screckovic, Brunsting & Able, 2014). Students with ASD can demonstrate both social skill deficits and communication deficits that place them at an increased risk for experiencing victimization due to experiencing difficulty with relationships with peers (Zeedyk et al., 2014). Rose et al. (2015b) examined the prevalence rates of bullying among 13, 325 students without exceptionalities and 1, 183 students with exceptionalities such as, a specific learning disability, health impairment, intellectual disability (ID), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), emotional and behaviour disorder, sensory-related disability, speech or language impairment, physical disability such as visual or hearing impairment, and traumatic brain injury. It was found that students with an ID reported the highest rates of victimization (74%), followed by students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (72%) (Rose et al., 2015b). Overall, it was found that students with exceptionalities reported proportionally higher rates of bullying, fighting, relational aggression, victimization, online victimization, and relationship victimization than typically developing students (Rose et al., 2015b). The researchers concluded that the findings were of importance to educators as it was found that students with exceptionalities were at a greater risk for experiencing multiple forms of aggression and involvement in bullying (Rose et al., 2015b).

Some studies have found that individual attributes associated with the type of exceptionality place students at risk for becoming victims of bullying; individual risk factors include attributes such as, poor social skills, communication difficulties, and emotional or behaviour problems (Christensen et al., 2012; Rose et al., 2011b). Rose et al. (2011b) proposed that social and communication skills deficits are strong predictors of involvement in bullying for

students with exceptionalities. Students with exceptionalities who have emotional and interpersonal problems may experience significant difficulty developing relationships with their peers, and have been found to be at a heightened risk for experiencing victimization (Christensen et al., 2012). It has been thought that students who have exceptionalities that are characterized mainly by aggression are also at a heightened risk for victimization and perpetration of bullying than those with exceptionalities that are not characterized by those symptoms (Baumeister et al., 2008).

Peer factors are also thought to influence involvement in the bullying dynamic, including competence with social situations and the social placement of students with exceptionalities (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). Students with exceptionalities are at risk for experiencing social difficulties, and may also experience lower levels of social support and experience social isolation when compared to typically developing students (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). For example, students with Autism Spectrum Disorder experience significant difficulty with social situations, which may be a risk factor for involvement in the bullying dynamic (Rose et al., 2015b).

The type and severity of the exceptionality, personal attributes, educational setting (general education or special education) are all areas that have been found to influence victimization and perpetration of bullying among students with exceptionalities (Rose et al., 2011b). School factors such as the educational placement of students with exceptionalities has been found to be a risk factor for involvement in the bullying dynamic (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). There is evidence to suggest the students in special education settings are at an increased risk for being victimized and victimizing others than those in general education settings (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). It has also been found that students with exceptionalities in special education settings victimize others more than students with exceptionalities in inclusive settings (Rose et al., 2011b). Involvement in the bullying dynamic as victims, bullies, and bully-victims have been associated with numerous psychological and emotional consequences, and is has been found that students with exceptionalities are at risk for experiencing anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, and minimal social and

academic participation due to involvement in bullying (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). As there are many risk factors for determining involvement in bullying among students with exceptionalities and those in different education programs, it is also important to develop an understanding of how students experience cyberbullying.

2.4 Technology Use and Cyberbullying among Adolescents

2.4.1 Technology use among adolescents. Technology including computers, cellphones, and tablets, and the associated use of the Internet has become a significant component of everyday life in today's society. For children and youth, the use of technology and the Internet has increased substantially over recent years (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Reid & Weigle, 2014). Technology such as computers, cellphones, and tablets, and the associated use of the Internet have become the standard for children and adolescents to socialize with peers, learn about the world, and experiment with self-identity (Good & Fang, 2015). The Pew Research Center (2015) examined how adolescents aged 13 to 17 use technology in a nationally representative study and it was found that 87% of youth had access to a computer, 58% had access to a tablet, and 88% of youth had access to a cellphone. Many adolescents have made the use of cellphones and social media websites an integral part of their lives, and use social media websites as a form of communication and social connection with their peers (Reid & Weigle, 2014). Many social media websites such as Facebook, Google+, Instagram, and Twitter allow youth to create online profiles and personalize their pages by adding pictures, videos, or other material (Reid & Weigle, 2014). Google+ is a social networking service, similar to Facebook, which allows users to create profiles, make posts, and connect with others (Google, 2017). Instagram is a service that allows users to post and view pictures and videos, and Twitter is a service that allows users to exchange messages through posting and responding to Tweets, and may contain photos, videos, or links, up to 140 characters (Instagram, 2017; Twitter, 2017). The Pew Research Center (2015) found that Facebook was the most popular and frequently used social media website. Although the use of technology such as cellphones and the use of social media websites have many potential benefits, there are also associated risks and consequences for some youth (O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Reid & Weigle, 2014).

Students in different education programs and those with exceptionalities may be at a heightened risk for experiencing negative consequences online such as exposure to inappropriate

content, harassment, cyberbullying, or Internet overuse (Good & Fang, 2015; Kuo et al., 2014; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Therefore, it is important to determine if the technology use patterns of students in different education programs and students with exceptionalities place students at a greater risk for experiencing adverse consequences (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The technology use patterns and online experiences of adolescents with exceptionalities, including those in different education settings, have not been as extensively researched as the technology use patterns of typically developing students (Engelhardt & Mazurek, 2014; Good & Fang, 2015; Kuo et al., 2014; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). As research is limited in the area of how adolescents with exceptionalities, including those in different education programs, use technology, it is important to determine the technology use patterns of the students, before technology use patterns and risks can be determined (Kuo et al., 2014).

Wells and Mitchell (2014) explored the Internet use patterns of youth receiving special education services and it was found that 68% of youth receiving special education services and 75% of typically developing youth used the Internet for more than four days per week, with the most frequent location of Internet usage at home followed by Internet use at school, for both groups of youth (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Overall, it was found that youth who received special education services used the Internet for fewer days per week than youth not receiving special education services (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Engelhard and Mazurek (2014) found that out of 169 children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder, 53% had access to some form of technology such as a computer, television, or video game system in their bedroom, and it was found that children and youth that had access to technology in their bedroom spent a greater amount of time using technology compared to those without access in their bedroom. Kuo et al. (2014) examined the technology use patterns of 91 adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder and found that 98% of the participants had access to a computer and the most common Internet activities included playing online games, using social media, instant messaging, emailing, and browsing websites. It is evident that both typically developing youth and youth with exceptionalities had integrated the use of technology into their everyday lives, but the use of technology was associated with many risks and consequences, and in particular, cyberbullying (Good & Fang, 2015; Kuo et al., 2014; O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Reid & Weigle, 2014; Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

2.4.2 Defining cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a relatively recent phenomenon that has received significant attention from researchers and educators as cyberbullying, like bullying, has the potential to have a profound and lasting impact on the overall emotional and psychological well-being of children and youth (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; 2013; Notar, Padgett, & Roden, 2013; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010). However, a universally used, conceptual and operational definition of cyberbullying has yet to be defined by researchers, and as a result, many research studies use varying definitions of what constitutes as cyberbullying (Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse, 2012; Notar et al., 2013; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010). A lack of conceptual and operational clarity can lead to confusion about what constitutes as cyberbullying, and as a result lead to misinformation and difficulty understanding and measuring cyberbullying (Law et al., 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010). Prevalence rates and the impact of cyberbullying may vary across research studies due to different definitions used to measure cyberbullying (Law et al., 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010).

To address the need for a universally accepted definition of cyberbullying, Patchin and Hinduja (2015) proposed four criteria that can be used for distinguishing cyberbullying from other hurtful online behaviours: repetition, intent, harm, and imbalance of power. Patchin and Hinduja (2015) have defined cyberbullying as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cellphones, and other electronic devices. This means that cyberbullying behaviour is deliberate and intended to cause harm, and reflects a pattern of behaviour, not just related to a single incident, and the identity of the perpetrator may be known or unknown to the victim (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; 2015; Tokunaga, 2010). Examples of the many types of cyberbullying include: sending rude messages or threats to someone's email account or cellphone, spreading rumours or posting hurtful messages on social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter, stealing a person's account information to break into their account and send damaging messages to others, and pretending to be someone else online to hurt another person (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; 2015; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; 2013). Cyberbullying is different than bullying in that it can occur at any time, reach a wide audience, and cyberbullying perpetrators can hide behind the perceived anonymity that the Internet allows for (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). As cyberbullying has the potential to be distributed quickly to a widespread

audience, the victims of cyberbullying may experience repeated victimization each time a post is viewed or shared by others (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015).

2.4.3 Challenges with defining cyberbullying. The definition of cyberbullying is similar to the widely accepted definition of bullying proposed by Olweus (1993), as both definitions refer to repetition, intent, harm, and an imbalance of power (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). However, researchers have experienced significant difficulty operationalizing cyberbullying in research studies because it can be difficult to measure all four of the proposed criteria (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; 2015; Tokunaga, 2010). Patchin and Hinduja (2015) proposed that repetition is the most important component of cyberbullying, and the most easily identifiable component. Repetition refers to incidents that are happening more than one time, and not simply related to a single incident such as one mean text message or one hurtful social media comment. However, repetition in cyberbullying may be determined by a single post if it is visible and shared by others, leading to the target of cyberbullying victimized each time the post is viewed by others (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). Intent refers to behaviour that is purposeful or willful, and deliberately done to cause harm to the victim (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). Intent to harm the victim is an important component of the definition of cyberbullying in order to distinguish cyberbullying from other hurtful online behaviours, but Patchin and Hinduja (2015) indicated that intent is difficult to measure in research studies, as children who have been hurt by cyberbullying will typically believe they have been hurt intentionally. Another important component of the definition of cyberbullying is harm, meaning that the victim of cyberbullying has been harmed in some way, and can include emotional, psychological, or physical consequences (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). The researchers claimed that harm is also difficult to measure, but it is best measured through self-report methods from the perspective of the victim. Whereas intent is determined from the perspective of the perpetrator, harm must be determined from the perspective of the victim (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). The fourth component of cyberbullying proposed by Patchin and Hinduja (2015) involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and victim, but is difficult to define online. Patchin and Hinduja (2015) indicated that a power imbalance may occur when the perpetrators possesses knowledge or information of some kind that could be used to inflict harm on the victim or may occur when someone who is proficient with technology uses it in a way meant to cause harm to the victim, but the researchers

stated that establishing whether there is a power imbalance between those involved in cyberbullying is very difficult to measure in research studies.

Researchers claim there has yet to be a clear and operational definition of cyberbullying that encompasses all of the four components when measuring cyberbullying in research studies (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). Thus the following definition has been proposed as a definition that can be provided to students in research studies: "Cyberbullying is when someone repeatedly harasses, mistreats, or makes fun of another person online or while using cellphones or other electronic devices" (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015, p. 72). The definition includes the repetition and harm criteria, but the researchers chose not to include intent and power imbalance due to the difficulty measuring the two components. The purpose of creating a conceptual and operational definition of cyberbullying is to lead to a universally used and agreed upon valid, reliable, and replicable definition that can be used by researchers (Law et al., 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010). As different researchers use varying definitions of cyberbullying, it is difficult to make comparisons across research studies, and further contributes to the lack of clarity of what constitutes as cyberbullying (Law et al., 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010).

2.4.4 Canadian studies. Few Canadian studies have examined cyberbullying with large and diverse samples. Beran, Mishna, McInroy, and Shariff (2015) examined the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying among Canadian youth in a national study that included 1, 001 children and youth ranging in age from 10 to 17 years old. It was found that approximately one in seven Canadian children and youth are cyberbullied, and one in 13 children and youth are perpetrators of cyberbullying, and the prevalence rates did not vary based on demographic characteristics, with the exception of boys, who reported slightly higher rates of perpetrating cyberbullying than girls (Beran et al., 2015). The victims of cyberbullying experienced several negative outcomes such as anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, eating problems, and drug usage (Beran at al., 2015).

Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk, & Solomon et al. (2010) examined the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying among a sample of 2,186 middle and high school students in Toronto, Ontario. The study also examined the use of technology, cyberbullying behaviours, and the psychosocial impact of bullying and being victims of bullying (Mishna et al., 2010). Almost all participants in the study had a computer in their home (99%) and 98% of participants reported using a computer for at least one hour daily (Mishna et al., 2010). Over half of the students reported that they used their cellphones daily to speak to friends and 65% of the students

indicated that they had communicated with friends online daily (Mishna et al., 2010). Nearly half of the participants (49.5%) indicated that they had been bullied online in the previous three months and the most common form was being called names which accounted for 27% of cyberbullying incidents (Mishna et al., 2010). This was followed by 22% of participants had rumours spread about them, 18% had someone pretend to be the participant, 11% were threatened, 10% received unwelcome sexual photos or texts, 9% were asked to do something sexual, and 7% had private pictures of themselves distributed without their consent (Mishna et al., 2010). Although 21% of students indicated that being cyberbullied did not bother them, 16% reported feeling angry, 8% reported feeling sad, and 7% reported feeling scared (Mishna et al., 2010). Many students (89%) reported knowing the perpetrator and most students indicated that the perpetrator was someone they considered a friend (Mishna et al., 2010). The results of this study demonstrated that the participants frequently used technology and that cyberbullying was a significant problem among middle and high school students (Mishna et al., 2010).

Li (2007) studied the nature and extent of cyberbullying experiences of 177 middle years students in Calgary, Alberta. Over a quarter of the students who participated in the study reported being victims of cyberbullying and one out of six students had cyberbullied others (Li, 2007). Over half of the students knew someone who had been a victim of cyberbullying (Li, 2007). According to the victims of cyberbullying, 31.8% were bullied by schoolmates, 11.4% by people outside their schools, 15.9% by multiple sources, and 40.9% were unaware of the identity of who cyberbullied them (Li, 2007). The anonymity associated with technology makes it easier for cyberbullying to occur and as a result, more difficult to prevent (Li, 2007). This study found that cyberbullying is a problem in the Calgary schools included in the study. The Canadian studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences of children and youth demonstrate that cyberbullying is occurring in Canadian schools, and highlight the need for intervention and prevention programs to be developed and implemented (Beran et al., 2015; Li, 2007; Mishna et al., 2010).

2.4.5 Cyberbullying among vulnerable populations. As cyberbullying is a relatively recent phenomenon, the cyberbullying experiences of students in different education programs and students with exceptionalities has not been an extensively researched topic. Additionally, risk and protective factors for involvement in cyberbullying among students in a different education program and among students with exceptionalities have not been identified (Cross et

al., 2015; Baldry et al., 2015). To date seven research studies have examined the cyberbullying experiences of children and adolescents in different education programs and those with exceptionalities (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014; Yen et al., 2014) and one research study that has examined the cyberbullying experiences of college students with exceptionalities (Kowalski, Morgan, Drake-Lavelle, & Allison, 2016). The research studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences of children, youth, and college students with exceptionalities, including those in different education programs, have included students with an Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and mental health disorders such as anxiety or depression (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Kowalski et al., 2016; Wells & Mitchell, 2014; Yen et al., 2014). Few studies have explored the cyberbullying experiences among students with exceptionalities, and even fewer have examined the cyberbullying experiences among students who are attending a different education program. There are currently two research studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences among adolescents who did not attend regular education classes, and were enrolled in a different education program (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013) and one study that differentiated between students who received special education services and students who did not (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Cyberbullying is a serious concern among children and adolescents in different education programs and those with exceptionalities as research studies have cited the devastating emotional, psychological, and physical consequences of those who are involved as victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The following section describes the research studies that have explored the cyberbullying experiences of students with exceptionalities and students in a different education program.

Didden et al. (2009) were the first researchers who began to explore the cyberbullying experiences of adolescents who were attending a different education program, and the only research study to date that has examined the cyberbullying experiences of students with an Intellectual Disability. The study sought out to explore the characteristics and prevalence of

cyberbullying and associations with other variables such as gender, age, disability, self-esteem, and depressive symptoms (Didden et al., 2009). The participants ranged in age from 12 to 19 years old and were diagnosed with an intellectual and/or developmental disability such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), a disorder on the autism spectrum (Didden et al., 2009). The researchers stated in the literature review that cyberbullying is another form of bullying using electronic means, and referenced a previous research study that defined cyberbullying as: "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend itself." However, the definition fails to account for the harm or distress caused to the victim of cyberbullying. Patchin and Hinduja (2015) have proposed that in incidents of cyberbullying, the victim must feel as though they have been harmed in some way, and as such, harm to the victim is an important component of the definition of cyberbullying.

A total of 114 participants were selected from a special education school in the Netherlands, and included a larger male sample (72%) than female (28%) (Didden et al., 2009). Students were selected to participate in the study if they had a total Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of at least 50 and could read information presented on a questionnaire, but the researchers did not disclose how it was determined if the students were able to read the questionnaire. Overall, participant IQ scores ranged from 52-118. IQ refers to general intellectual functioning or overall intelligence (Greenspan & Woods, 2014). Of the 114 participants, 82% had an intellectual disability or borderline IQ (<85) and 18% had average/above average IQ in the range of 85-118, and were attending the special education school due to a developmental disorder and behaviour and emotional problems. The researchers indicated that 67% of the participants had a diagnosis such as ADHD or PDD, among others; however, the other diagnoses were not specified.

A limitation of the study was that the researchers did not disclose what percentage of students had an Intellectual Disability, ADHD, and PDD, and did not disclose what other diagnoses were considered to fall under the category of a developmental disorder, including students who had comorbid, or more than one diagnosis. The researchers stated that there were other diagnoses beyond ADHD and PDD that fell under the 67%, but did not disclose what other diagnoses were included. It is unclear how many students were diagnosed with an intellectual disability and how many students were considered to have borderline IQ (<85). In North America, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) is

used by qualified professionals to diagnosis mental disorders, including developmental disabilities such as an Intellectual Disability (ID), ADHD, and Autism Spectrum Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). According to the DSM-5, individuals diagnosed with an intellectual disability do not have IQ scores greater than 75 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), meaning that students with IQ scores in the range of 75 to 85 would not qualify for a diagnosis of an intellectual disability. The researchers shared that most of the participants (82%) had an intellectual disability or borderline IQ (<85), but did not disclose how many students had a diagnosis of an intellectual disability, and further, the participants in the category had a large spread in overall intellectual functioning, with IQ scores ranging from 52 to 85. Further differentiation among the students falling under the 82% would lead to a greater understanding of the different students' experiences with cyberbullying.

A questionnaire was used as the method for collecting data and completed in the students' classroom with both the classroom teacher and researcher present. Demographic information about each participant was gathered from the students' personal files. The questionnaire consisted of questions pertaining to cellphone and Internet usage, cyberbullying, and depressive symptoms, but the researchers did not indicate if the questions were taken from a previous research study or if the questionnaire was developed by the researchers, which may have an impact on the validity of the questionnaire. The questions pertaining to cyberbullying were asked using a 5-point Likert scale and based on the participants' experiences in the previous three months. One of the response options on the scale stated, "once to five times" regarding involvement in cyberbullying as a victim or perpetrator. This is problematic as the definition of cyberbullying must include repetition and not simply be related to a single incident (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). Because of the language used in the response option in this study, there may have been students who considered themselves to have been cyberbullied or cyberbullied others when cyberbullying was in reality related to a single incident. Additionally, the researchers did not disclose what definition of cyberbullying was provided to or explained to the students or if the definition was included in the questionnaire for students to refer to, if needed. Questions measuring self-esteem were also included in the questionnaire, and the researchers disclosed that the questions were used from a previous research study. The researchers stated that the questionnaire was simplified by using language that the students could understand.

The study found that the majority of the participants (87%) owned a cellphone, with the most popular cellphone activities including making phone calls (70%) and sending text messages (75%) and 97% of the participants had access to the Internet at home (Didden et al., 2009). The participants used the Internet for a range of purposes, beginning with the most frequently used to the least: using MSN, an instant messaging program, downloading music, playing online games, sending/receiving emails, downloading pictures and videos, looking up information for educational purposes, using a webcam, putting information about oneself on the Internet, chatting on a website, and using Skype (Didden et al., 2009). The researchers did not specify if there were different cellphone and Internet usage patterns among students with different diagnoses.

Under prevalence rates, the researchers indicated that most students were not involved in cyberbullying using cellphones (86%) or through the Internet (90%) (Didden et al., 2009). The prevalence rates for students who were victimized via cellphones was 4% and 7% via the Internet. The study found that 4% of students reported cyberbullying others via cellphones whereas no study participants reported cyberbullying others via the Internet. Approximately 5% of the students reported being both a victim and cyberbully via cellphones and 3% of students reported being both a victim and cyberbully via Internet (Didden et al., 2009). The researchers did not state how the prevalence rates were calculated, and in the discussion section it stated that victimization and bullying using cellphones and the Internet were relatively prevalent, but this statement is contrary to the prevalence rates indicated in the results section. Additionally, the researchers did not indicate prevalence rates among the different diagnoses such as those with an intellectual disability, ADHD, or PDD. However, it was found that students with ADHD were cyberbullies using cellphones more often than others (Didden et al., 2009). The most frequent types of cyberbullying were deliberately ignoring phone calls, frequent calling (or being called), and sending (or receiving) anonymous text messages (Didden et al., 2009). Cyberbullying using the Internet took the form of putting information about other students on the Internet, sending anonymous mail, hacking someone's computer, and sending multiple messages at a time using MSN (Didden et al., 2009).

A positive correlation was found between being a victim of cyberbullying and cyberbullying others through the Internet, meaning that most students who were cyberbullies were also victims of cyberbullying. Additionally, the more often students were a victim of

cyberbullying, the more they were also a cyberbully using cellphones (Didden et al., 2009). It was also found that the higher students' IQ, the more often they were a cyberbully using the Internet (Didden et al., 2009), but the researchers did not disclose the range of what was considered to be a higher IQ. The researchers indicated that the more often a student was victimized via the Internet or cellphone, lower self-esteem and more depressive feelings were reported (Didden et al., 2009). The more the students' bullied via the Internet, the more depressive feelings were reported and the more students bullied via a cellphone, lower self-esteem was reported (Didden et al., 2009), but there was no indication if students with certain diagnoses reported lower self-esteem and depressive feelings. It was also found that students who used their computer for more than one hour per day were cyberbullied more often on the Internet than students who used their computer for less hours per day (Didden et al., 2009), and again, there was no indication if students with different diagnoses had varying computer usage patterns.

The researchers concluded that students with developmental disabilities have a somewhat lower probability of being victimized and/or being a bully via the Internet and cellphone than typically developing peers, but stated that this was not a firm conclusion as there was a lack of research in this area and there was no control group that included students without a diagnosis (Didden et al., 2009). The researchers indicated that it is important for educators to be aware of cyberbullying among students with developmental disabilities as it was found that the students use the Internet and cellphones at similar rates to students without a disability (Didden et al., 2009). Overall, the study had some limitations, but found that there was a group of students who were both a victim and cyberbully using cellphones and the Internet, and that cyberbullying victimization and perpetration was associated with emotional and psychological problems. The frequency of computer use was also linked to the likelihood of becoming a victim of cyberbullying using the Internet. A weakness of the study was that the diagnoses of the students were not included in the results section that indicated prevalence rates, other than it was indicated that students with ADHD cyberbullied others using cellphones more often than others. The stated purpose of the study was to explore the cyberbullying experiences among students with an Intellectual Disability, but the prevalence rates of cyberbullying involvement for students with this exceptionality were not discussed. Cyberbullying involvement was measured in association with multiple variables including IQ scores, self-esteem and depressive symptoms,

and frequency of computer use, but there was no differentiation among the different diagnoses of the students. Further differentiation among the different groups of students may have led to a deeper understanding of the cyberbullying experiences among students with different diagnoses.

Similar to Didden et al. (2009), Kowalski and Fedina (2011) examined the bullying and cyberbullying experiences of children and youth with ADHD and/or Asperger Syndrome, a disorder on the autism spectrum, and the social, psychological, and health effects of involvement in both bullying and cyberbullying. Additionally, the researchers examined the parents' perceptions of their child's experiences online and examined if parent and child perceptions were congruent. This was the first study to compare student responses with parent responses. The children and youth were attending a summer wilderness camp for children and youth with ADHD and/or Asperger Syndrome. Participants included 42 children and youth and their parents from across the United States, 24 were male and 18 were female ranging in age from 10 to 20 years old and enrolled in Grades 5 through 12. The researchers did not disclose how many students were diagnosed with ADHD and Asperger Syndrome, or with both diagnoses.

The children and youth completed a paper and pencil survey consisting of four parts in a small group setting, separate from their parents. Part one included questions related to demographic information and Internet and cellphone usage, including questions pertaining to whether their parents had communicated with them about Internet and cellphone safety, and if their parents had established rules for using the Internet. The definition of bullying and cyberbullying were provided to the participants and questions related to bullying and cyberbullying were also included in part two. The definition of bullying and questions related to bullying were taken from the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire that was created by Olweus (1996; 2004). The definition of cyberbullying and questions related to cyberbullying were taken from the Electronic Bullying Questionnaire that was created by Kowalski and Limber (2007). The definition of cyberbullying that was provided to the participants was "When we say 'cyberbullied' we mean bullied through email, instant messaging, in a chat room, on a website, or through a text message sent to a cellphone" (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011, p. 1203). This definition of cyberbullying is problematic as it is vague and does not include the four components Patchin and Hinduja (2015) have proposed as the definition of cyberbullying. The definition did not account for repetition, intent to harm the victim, and the imbalance of power between the victim and perpetrator. The definition of bullying that was provided to the

participants included the four components of repetition, intent, harm, and power imbalance. Questions pertaining to cyberbullying were mostly asked using a five-point response format and one of the response options was: "it has only happened once or twice" (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011, p. 1203), and this was problematic as well, as cyberbullying must happen more than one time in order to constitute as cyberbullying. Part three of the survey was related to questions pertaining to the physical and psychological effects of cyberbullying, using three scales with established validity and reliability (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). Part four consisted of questions aimed at alleviating any negative emotions that may have been triggered by the previous questions (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). The parents of the children and youth were asked to complete an online survey adapted from the i-SAFE parent survey and consisted of questions pertaining to their own use of the Internet and what they knew about their child's use of the Internet, and questions related to their child's involvement with bullying and cyberbullying (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). However, the researchers did not indicate if the definition of bullying and cyberbullying was provided to the parent participants.

Kowalski and Fedina (2011) found that children and youth were familiar with the Internet, with some participants frequently using the Internet. Of the children and youth participants, 41% indicated using the Internet for 1 to 2 hours per day and 24% used the Internet for 3 to 4 hours per day. There was no discussion of the specific Internet activities the children and youth engaged in and additionally, no indication of if there were differences in the Internet use patterns between children with ADHD and Asperger Syndrome. It was found that nearly 50% of the children and youth indicated that their parents never or rarely discussed safety using the Internet or cellphone while 82% of the parents said that they sometimes or often had conversations about safety with their child (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). The researchers found that parents think they know more about their child's use of the Internet than they actually do. The parents indicated that their children used the Internet less than the children actually do, thought they communicated about Internet safety more than their children thought they did, and thought they had significantly higher knowledge of their child's Internet activities than the children had thought them to have. The researchers concluded that the results demonstrated the need for parent and child education on Internet safety (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011).

Both traditional bullying and cyberbullying occurred within this population of students, with higher rates of involvement in bullying than cyberbullying (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). It

was found that 57% of the children and youth participants had been bullied within the past two months, and 19% had been bullied several times a week (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). Within the previous two months, 38% of the participants were perpetrators of bullying and just over 28% victimized other students only once or twice (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). In terms of cyberbullying involvement, 21% of participants had been victims with the past two months and 9.5% experienced cyberbullying once or twice, and only 5.8% had perpetrated cyberbullying at least once within the previous two months (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). Cyberbullying most commonly occurred via instant messaging (66.7%), followed by social networking sites (60%), and text messaging (20%) (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). In regard to who perpetrated the cyberbullying, 50% of the participants indicated the perpetrator was a friend, 37% said another student at school, and 25% said they were not aware of the identity of the perpetrator (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). Of the children and youth participants, 14.3% were both victims of bullying and cyberbullying and approximately equal percentages of the participants were both a bully and cyberbully, 7.1% and 6.3% respectively (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). Over 31% of the cyberbullying victims were perpetrators of bullying (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). The parent participants were more aware of their child's experiences with bullying than cyberbullying, highlighting the need for parents to be educated about cyberbullying (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). The results may have been impacted by the parents not understanding what constitutes as cyberbullying as the researchers did not indicate whether or not the definition of cyberbullying was provided to the parents.

As noted above, in order to be classified as bullying and cyberbullying, the incidents should happen more than just once and be repeated over time (Patchin and Hinduja, 2015). The results of the current study found that 28% of the participants were victims of bullying once or twice and 9.5% were cyberbullied once or twice, and 5.8% perpetrated cyberbullying at least once, and as such the results do not meet the criteria that both bullying and cyberbullying must be repeated over time (Patchin and Hinduja, 2015). This is problematic as Patchin and Hinduja (2015) noted that varying definitions of bullying and cyberbullying could lead to different prevalence rates and difficulty determining what constitutes as bullying and cyberbullying. Kowalski and Fedina (2011) found that when the psychological effects of bullying were examined, participants who indicated that they were not involved with bullying experienced lower anxiety and depression than those who indicated being victims and perpetrators of

bullying. In regard to cyberbullying, there were no significant effects found, and the researchers indicated that this may have been due to the small number of students who indicated that they were involved with cyberbullying as victims and perpetrators (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011).

The results of Kowalski's and Fedina's (2011) study indicated that bullying and cyberbullying did occur among children and youth who had a diagnosis of ADHD and/or Asperger Syndrome. It was found that there were many participants who reported experiencing bullying as victims and perpetrators. The researchers concluded that the rate of perpetrating bullying was higher than observed in studies involving children and youth without a diagnosis, but the rate of perpetrating cyberbullying was less than typically developing students (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). The researchers also concluded that the victimization rate of cyberbullying was higher than had been found among children and youth without a diagnosis (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). A limitation of the research study was that there was no comparison group of typically developing peers to compare the results with. The prevalence rates of both bullying and cyberbullying may have been impacted by the researchers including a response option that consisted of experiencing either only once or twice, and as a result it was unclear what the true prevalence rates of bullying and cyberbullying were among the participants. Also, the researchers did not indicate prevalence rates of bullying and cyberbullying among students with ADHD and students with Asperger Syndrome. Further research will be needed in order to understand further cyberbullying among children and youth with ADHD and Asperger Syndrome.

Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2013) examined the Internet usage patterns and involvement in cyberbullying among students diagnosed with LD and attending either special education or general education classes in comparison to typically developing students in Israel. The researchers also examined student responses and reactions to being cyberbullied as well as gender differences. Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2013) were the first researchers to examine the cyberbullying experiences of students with LD attending general education or special education classes in comparison to typically developing students. The researchers defined cyberbullying as:

> A negative activity aimed at deliberate and repeated harm through the use of a variety of electronic media, such as social networks, chat rooms, email, and cell phones, through which threatening and offensive messages are sent and received. This violent use of the

> Internet by a person or group of people is mostly carried out anonymously to harm another person who cannot defend himself or herself. (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013, p. 2)

The definition provided by the researchers in the literature review encompassed all of the components of cyberbullying proposed by Patchin and Hinduja (2015).

The study included 507 participants from three middle schools and two high schools, and included 275 boys and 232 girls ranging in age from 12 to 17 years old. The participants were divided into three groups: 149 students with LD attending general education classes, 116 students with comorbid LD attending special education classes, and a comparison group including 242 typically achieving students. The students who were attending special education classes were students who had been diagnosed with comorbid LD, meaning more than one diagnosis, and presented with learning needs that could not be met within regular education classes (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013).

The students completed a questionnaire in their classroom under the supervision of one of the researchers, and included questions that assessed their Internet usage patterns and experiences with cyberbullying (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). The measure the researchers used to collect data was a questionnaire called the Cyberbullying Self-Report Questionnaire that had been developed during a previous research study (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). Although the researchers included a comprehensive definition of cyberbullying in the literature review, the researchers did not indicate whether the definition of cyberbullying was provided to the participants.

The researchers found no significant differences among the three groups of students in terms of Internet usage patterns and the students from each of the groups spent nearly the same number of hours per day on the Internet, with an average of 3.6 hours per day (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). Without considering differences among the groups, 15% of the participants reported being a victim of cyberbullying at least one time in the previous year, 13% of students reported being a perpetrator of cyberbullying, 34% of students witnessed cyberbullying, 38% of students knew someone who had been hurt because of cyberbullying, and 4.5% were both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). Although the researchers indicated that 15% of the participants were victims of cyberbullying, this was problematic as the researchers considered a one-time incident to

constitute as cyberbullying and further, did not differentiate between students who had experienced a cyberbullying incident one time compared to students who experienced cyberbullying multiple times. The researchers also examined gender differences among the different types of cyberbullying and found that overall, 62.8% of girls and 50.5% of boys reported being a victim of cyberbullying and 18% of boys versus 6% of girls reported being perpetrators of cyberbullying (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013).

Differences among the groups were examined and it was found that students with LD in special education classes were more often victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying than other students, and were more often both a victim and perpetrator (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). However, the researchers do not indicate how often the cyberbullying incidents occurred among the group students. When examining gender differences among the groups of students, it was found that girls with LD attending special education classes reported being a victim of cyberbullying more often and were more often perpetrators when compared to other groups (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). When examining the students' responses to being cyberbullied, the researchers found that students with LD attending special education classes more often retaliated back when being cyberbullied as a response strategy, fewer shared the cyberbullying incident with others, more reported laughing about being cyberbullied, and fewer stopped using the Internet when compared to other groups of students (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). Students attending special education classes reported lower percentages of emotional reactions for involvement in cyberbullying, the students reported being less anxious, sad, or stressed than the other groups of students. Additionally, the researchers found that involvement in cyberbullying among both students with LD and students with LD in special education classes impacted their attention and concentration, and for students with LD in general education classes, cyberbullying involvement impacted their academic achievement (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013).

The researchers concluded that students with LD had a greater involvement in cyberbullying when compared to typically developing students (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). The researchers indicated that the results of their study are consistent with results of previous studies that demonstrate that students with LD have a greater involvement in bullying as victims and perpetrators than students in general education classes (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). However, a limitation of the study is that the researchers did not disclose what

definition of cyberbullying was provided to the participants. Furthermore, in the results section, the researchers considered the participants to be a victim of cyberbullying even if the incident happened only one time. This further contributes to the problem that researchers have defining cyberbullying, and this in turn impacts prevalence rates of cyberbullying. The researchers also did not disclose what the comorbid diagnoses of the students with LD in special education settings were; further information would help to better understand the students' involvement in cyberbullying. Another interesting finding was that students with LD in special education classes were more likely to respond in an aggressive manner in response to being cyberbullied, and less likely to share their experience with another person than the other groups of students (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013). This finding has important implications for educators, helping professionals, and parents, such as the importance of students in special education classes developing a close relationship with someone. The researchers also concluded that cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs should be tailored to meet the needs of students attending special education classes as the researchers found that the group of students is at a heightened risk for involvement in cyberbullying (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013).

Wells and Mitchell (2014) examined the Internet use patterns among youth receiving special education services and youth with a physical disability, and explored the students' experiences with online sexual solicitation and online harassment. The researchers defined online harassment as including "threats, embarrassment of others, and making rude or nasty comments using the Internet or other technology" (Wells & Mitchell, 2014, p. 204). The definition of online harassment contains elements of cyberbullying, but does not account for all aspects of the definition of cyberbullying. The researchers used the following definition of unwanted sexual solicitation online: "requests to talk about sex, to share personal sexual information, or do sexual acts (Wells & Mitchell, 2014, p. 204). Wells and Mitchell (2014) were the first researchers to explore the involvement with sexual solicitation online among students receiving special education services and youth with a physical disability.

The researchers conducted telephone surveys with a national sample of 1,560 youth in the United States who ranged in age from 12 to 17 years old, and included 167 youth who were receiving special education services at school, 98 students were diagnosed with a physical disability in regular education classes, and 31 students had both a physical disability and received special education services at school (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The researchers defined

special education services as students who were on an individualized education plan or who received other special education services at school (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The researchers defined a physical disability as a "health or medical problem that affects the kinds of activities a child can do" (Wells & Mitchell, 2014, p. 206). The researchers did not ask the parent participants what type of physical disability their child had been diagnosed with, and this was a limitation as there is a wide range of disabilities that could be considered physical. The researchers also were interested in exploring parent perceptions of their child's use of the Internet.

The researchers began the telephone interview by asking the parents if their child had received special education services or had been diagnosed with a physical disability. The researchers did not disclose what types of questions were asked to the parent participants regarding their child's use of the Internet. After the researchers spoke with the parent, they requested to conduct a confidential interview with the child. The researchers asked the youth participants questions regarding their Internet use patterns, and questions that pertained to sexual behaviour online, online harassment, and whether youth had accessed X-rated websites. The researchers defined online harassment to the youth participants as "rude or nasty comments to someone online; used the Internet to harass or embarrass someone you were mad at; spread rumours about someone through the Internet, whether they were true or not; shared something about someone with others online that was meant to be private; posted or forwarded a video or picture of someone online that showed them being hurt; involved in a group on a social networking site or other online site where the focus was making fun of someone else" (Wells & Mitchell, 2014, p. 206). The researchers shared that if a youth participant responded with a 'yes' to experiencing online harassment in the past year, the youth would be classified as a target of harassing behaviour online. This was different than the definition of cyberbullying, as it had been proposed that cyberbullying involved repeated harm to the victim, and not related to a single incident (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). The researchers also asked the youth participants questions about unwanted sexual solicitation online which included talking online about sex, requests for sexual information, or requests for sexual acts (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The youth participants were also asked closed-ended questions regarding their relationship with their parents and questions related to offline victimization in the past year. The researchers defined offline victimization to the participants as including physical or sexual abuse, peer or sibling

abuse, dating violence, and statutory rape (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The researchers did not identify the origin of the questions they used. Lastly, the participants answered questions related to depression symptoms. These questions came from a checklist that had been previously developed, with established reliability and validity (Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

The researchers did not report on whether parent perceptions of their child's use of the Internet was similar to the child's reported use of the Internet, and the researchers did not disclose why this information was not included in the results of the research study. The researchers found that youth who received special education services at school and had a physical disability generally used the Internet for fewer days per week than other youth, and were less likely to use the Internet at home, less likely to use the Internet at a friend's home or from a cellphone, less likely to use social networking sites and talk to known friends online, and less likely to post a picture of themselves online (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). In terms of youth who did not have a physical disability, but received special education services, the Internet was used less often than youth not receiving special education services, and the youth were less likely to use the Internet at a friend's home or from a cellphone, and less likely to use social networking sites, use video chat rooms, and talk to known friends online, however this was still reported by 86% of students receiving special education services (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Additionally, youth receiving special education services were less likely to post a picture of themselves online or harass others online. However, youth receiving special education services were more likely to send a picture of themselves to someone they met online, engage in sexual behaviour online, and more likely to report online victimization and unwanted sexual solicitation than those not receiving special education services (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The youth also reported that receiving an online sexual solicitation left them feeling very or extremely upset or afraid. Youth receiving special education services were more likely to report distressing online harassment. Youth who received special education services at school reported significantly higher rates of offline physical or sexual abuse, offline peer or sibling abuse, and levels of depression (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The researchers found that for youth receiving special education services at school, reports of unwanted sexual solicitation was more common among older girls, intense Internet users (greater than two hours per day), using the Internet from a friend's home, using social networking sites, and among youth who talked with people they met online (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The researchers also found that certain offline characteristics

of youth receiving special education services were related to reports of sexual solicitation, including being a victim of statutory rape, delinquency, substance use, currently dating, and having had sexual intercourse (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Girls receiving special education services at school were almost three times more likely than boys receiving special education services to report a sexual solicitation.

Overall, it was found that youth receiving special education services at school used the Internet differently than other youth; the youth used the Internet less frequently, were less likely to access the Internet from someone else's home, and less likely to use social networking sites, and the researchers indicated that the above factors had been found to place youth at an increased risk for online victimization (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Despite this, the youth receiving special education services were more likely to report an unwanted sexual solicitation online than youth not receiving special education services. The researchers concluded that youth who receive special education services represent a diverse group of students, with a wide range of exceptionalities and diverse needs (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). A limitation of the study was that the researchers did not ask if students receiving special education services had any diagnoses beyond a physical disability. It is also unclear whether the youth who were receiving special education services attended general education classes with their typically developing peers or if the youth attended a different education program. As the researchers stated, youth who receive special education services may demonstrate a range of exceptionalities and diverse needs, and because of this, further research to differentiate among youth receiving special education services is needed (Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

Yen et al. (2014) examined the cyberbullying experiences and association with depression, anxiety, and suicidality among male adolescents who had been diagnosed with ADHD by a child psychiatrist using the DSM-4. The researchers were also interested in examining comorbidity with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)/Conduct Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Tic Disorders, but stated that participants who demonstrated low intelligence (IQ score of below 70) or had difficulties with communication were excluded from the study (Yen et al., 2014). The participants were recruited from adolescent psychiatric outpatient clinics in Taiwan. A total of 251 participants aged 11 to 18 years old were included in the study, and 33 participants were also diagnosed with ODD/Conduct Disorder, 36 participants were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and 25 participants had a Tic Disorder (Yen et

al., 2014). The researchers were interested in studying the cyberbullying experiences of comorbid ADHD as previous research studies have found that ADHD symptoms, ODD/Conduct Disorder, and Autism Spectrum Disorder were associated with bullying involvement in children and adolescents with ADHD, and stated that previous research studies had not examined the cyberbullying involvement of adolescents diagnosed with comorbid ADHD (Yen et al., 2014).

The participants completed questionnaires with a research assistant. The Cyberbullying Experiences Questionnaire (CEQ) was used to examine the participants' experiences with cyberbullying in the past year, but the researchers did not reference who created the cyberbullying questionnaire. The researchers also did not disclose how cyberbullying was defined to the participants and did not share if the participants were provided with a definition of cyberbullying prior to completing the questionnaire. The participants also completed a questionnaire regarding their involvement with bullying and satisfaction with their peers. The School Bullying Experience Questionnaire (C-SBEQ) was used to assess bullying in the past year, and the researchers stated that the questionnaire was developed from a previous research study (Yen et al., 2014), but the researchers did not indicate how bullying was defined. The researchers also used questionnaires to measure the participants' association with depression, anxiety, and suicidality using questionnaires with established validity and reliability (Yen et al., 2014).

The researchers found that 19% of the participants were victims of cyberbullying and 14% were perpetrators of cyberbullying, and older age increased the risk of becoming a cyberbullying victim and perpetrator (Yen et al., 2014). There were no significant associations between being a cyberbullying victim and comorbid diagnoses. Participants who were diagnosed with combined ADHD, a type of ADHD characterized by both inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive symptoms, were more likely to perpetrate cyberbullying than participants who were diagnosed with the inattentive type of ADHD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Yen et al., 2014). It was also found that severe Internet addiction increased the risk of becoming a cyberbullying perpetrator. Participants who were victims of bullying were at an increased risk of becoming a victim of cyberbullying and participants who were perpetrators of bullying were at an increased risk for becoming a cyberbullying perpetrator (Yen et al., 2014). The victims of cyberbullying were found to report more severe depression and suicidality than those who were not victims of cyberbullying, but there were no significant differences in

depression, anxiety, and suicidality among those who were and were not perpetrators of cyberbullying (Yen et al., 2014).

The researchers concluded that a high proportion of the male participants were involved in cyberbullying as victims or perpetrators, and the victims of cyberbullying reported more severe depression and suicidality than those who were not victims of cyberbullying (Yen et al., 2014). The prevalence rates of cyberbullying involvement may have been impacted by the definition the researchers used of cyberbullying, but since the researchers did not disclose the definition of cyberbullying provided to the participants, it is unclear of exact prevalence rates of cyberbullying among the group of students. The researchers also did not disclose how the participants were involved in cyberbullying as victims or perpetrators, and gaining an understanding of how the participants experienced cyberbullying could help to better understand and prevent cyberbullying from occurring. The researchers found that cyberbullying perpetrators reported more severe Internet addiction, but did not share how many hours spent on the Internet constituted as an Internet addiction. Although the study had limitations, a concerning finding was that the participants who were victims of cyberbullying reported more severe depression and suicidality, and further, participants who were victims of bullying were at an increased risk for becoming a victim of cyberbullying, which may help adults to better identify adolescents who are at a greater risk for also becoming victims of cyberbullying.

Heiman et al. (2015) examined the cyberbullying experiences of adolescents with ADHD and the impact of cyberbullying involvement on loneliness, self-efficacy, and social support. The students with ADHD were diagnosed through the use of the DSM-4 and had IQ scores greater than 80 (Heiman et al., 2015). The researchers defined cyberbullying in the literature review as "an intentional online act via electronic media, to harm embarrass and/or humiliate another person" (Heiman et al., 2015, p. 15). The definition of cyberbullying did not reference that to be considered cyberbullying, the incidents must be repeated over time and there is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This was problematic as the researchers may have included cyberbullying incidents that occurred once in the prevalence rates of cyberbullying involvement.

The participants were recruited from three middle schools and two high schools in Israel. The participants included 140 adolescent students with ADHD attending regular education classes and 332 typically developing students who ranged in age from 12 to 16 years old

(Heiman et al., 2015). The group of students with ADHD were on average older than the group of typically developing students, and 26% of the students with ADHD were female and 74% of students with ADHD were male (Heiman et al., 2015). The participants completed questionnaires in their classrooms with the researcher and teacher present. The researchers used a questionnaire from a previous research study in order to assess the participants' cyberbullying experiences. The researchers did not disclose what definition of cyberbullying was provided to the participants. The participants also completed questionnaires that had been developed by previous researchers to assess the associated variables related to loneliness, self-efficacy, and social support (Heiman et al., 2015).

The researchers found that students with ADHD and those without spent a similar number of hours using the Internet, with a mean of 3.6 hours per day (Heiman et al., 2015). When examining the cyberbullying involvement, it was found that more students with ADHD reported being victims, perpetrators, and witnesses of cyberbullying compared to students without ADHD (Heiman et al., 2015). Students with ADHD who were victims of cyberbullying were more likely to ask the cyberbully to stop, tell their parents or other family member, and tell a teacher than victims of cyberbullying among students without ADHD (Heiman et al., 2015). Overall, it was found that girls were more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than boys, with no significant differences between the two groups of students (Heiman et al., 2015). Students with ADHD who were victims of cyberbullying reported higher levels of loneliness and lower levels of social self-efficacy and social support than students without ADHD (Heiman et al., 2015). Students who were perpetrators of cyberbullying had a significantly lower social self-efficacy and lower family support than students who were not perpetrators of cyberbullying, with no difference between the two groups of students.

The researchers concluded that adolescents with ADHD reported a higher prevalence rate of cyberbullying victimization, perpetration, and witnessing cyberbullying compared to their peers without ADHD, and stated that the results were consistent with a previous research study that examined the cyberbullying experiences of students with ADHD (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). It is possible that the prevalence rates were impacted by the definition of cyberbullying used in the questionnaire, and it was not indicated how often the participants with ADHD had experienced cyberbullying as victims and perpetrators. The researchers also only shared prevalence rates of involvement in cyberbullying, and did not disclose how the participants

experienced cyberbullying. Both Heiman et al. (2015) and Yen et al. (2014) found that adolescents with ADHD were more involved in cyberbullying than their typically developing peers, but both studies did not indicate how the participants with ADHD experienced cyberbullying. Further investigation into how the students with ADHD experienced cyberbullying would be helpful to better understand and prevent cyberbullying from occurring.

Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2017) were the first researchers to explore the Internet usage patterns and cyberbullying experiences, and perceived social support among adolescents with a visual impairment. The participants included 407 adolescents from four public schools in Israel, and included 61 students with a visual impairment, ranging in age from 12 to 16 years old. Students with a visual impairment were attending regular education classes, but received special education supports based on student needs and most of the students with a visual impairment used a screen reader software and/or screen magnification (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017).

The students completed questionnaires in their classrooms with a research assistant present. The researchers used a questionnaire from a previous research study to assess the students' experiences with cyberbullying. The researchers did not provide a definition of cyberbullying in the literature review and did not share what definition of cyberbullying was provided to the participants. A questionnaire from a previous research study was used to assess the participants' perceived level of social support from their family and friends.

It was found that students with a visual impairment used a computer and the Internet for as much as typically developing peers, and 51% of students with a visual impairment used e-mail and 57% used text messaging. Students with a visual impairment used e-mail more often than students without a visual impairment, and used text messaging less often than their typically developing peers, and may be the result of being able to access computer accommodations for sending e-mails (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017). The researchers found significant differences among the groups of students for involvement in cyberbullying. Students with a visual impairment were more often a victim and perpetrator of cyberbullying than their peers, and witnessed and reported knowing someone who had been cyberbullied more often than students without a visual impairment (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017). Students who were a victim of cyberbullying were also more likely to tell someone about their experiences compared to students without a visual impairment (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017). More typically developing peers reported that any involvement in cyberbullying did not affect their social

situation, school grades and concentration than students with a visual impairment (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017). Students with a visual impairment reported having lower levels of social support from their friends and others compared to students without a visual impairment. There were no significant differences found for family support between students with and without a visual impairment. The researchers also examined the relationship between perceived social support and involvement in cyberbullying. Among the students with a visual impairment, social support was significantly positively correlated with telling someone about their cyberbullying experience (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017). It was also found that students without a visual impairment who reported more social support were less likely to be involved in cyberbullying (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017).

The researchers concluded that students with a visual impairment reported a higher rate of victimization, perpetration, and were witness to cyberbullying than their peers without a visual impairment. The prevalence rates of cyberbullying among both groups of students may have been impacted by the definition of cyberbullying used by the researchers, and because the researchers did not disclose how cyberbullying was defined to the participants it was difficult to fully understand the cyberbullying involvement of students with visual impairment and those without. Additionally, the researchers did not share how both groups of students were involved in cyberbullying as victims and perpetrators, and this was problematic because it is difficult to develop prevention programs if it is unclear how students experience cyberbullying. Students with visual impairments were more likely to report their experience with cyberbullying than students without a visual impairment, and the researchers concluded that this may be due to the perception of family support among students with a visual impairment (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017). The researchers also concluded that higher perceived levels of social support from friends and others may serve as a protective factor against involvement in cyberbullying, which pointed to the significance of peer support in students with exceptionalities (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017). The results of the study found that students with a visual impairment reported less social support from their peers and others, and this finding was consistent with Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2013) and Heiman et al. (2014), who found that students with learning disabilities and ADHD received less social support from their peers. This study highlighted the importance of both family support and peer support for students with a visual impairment who were involved in cyberbullying.

2.4.6 Summary of research articles. There is a lack of research in the area of cyberbullying among children and adolescents with exceptionalities and among those attending different education programs (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences of children and adolescents with exceptionalities have included students with an Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and mental health disorders such as anxiety or depression, and even fewer research studies have examined the cyberbullying experiences among students in a different education program (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The studies that explored the cyberbullying experiences of students with exceptionalities and students in a different education program found that cyberbullying involvement did occur among the students, and the findings demonstrate the importance of additional research to further explore cyberbullying among the students (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

Currently, there are no published Canadian research studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences of students with exceptionalities and students attending a different education program, and this also highlights the need for Canadian research to explore this phenomenon. Further research is also needed to determine the prevalence rates and experiences of cyberbullying among this population of students, and could further confirm the need for prevention and intervention programs to be developed. It is important to understand cyberbullying and the negative consequences involvement in cyberbullying may have on students with exceptionalities and students in different education programs, as it has been found that involvement in cyberbullying can have a lasting impact on the overall well-being of children and youth (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

A consistently agreed upon definition of cyberbullying has yet to be determined, and this was demonstrated by the studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences of students with exceptionalities and students in different education programs (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski &

Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The researchers used varying definitions of cyberbullying, and some researchers considered a one-time incident as cyberbullying whereas others indicated that cyberbullying must include repeated incidents (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The studies contribute to the lack of conceptual clarity and challenges of defining cyberbullying (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

The research studies that examined the cyberbullying experiences of children, youth, and college students with exceptionalities and in different education programs all used a quantitative research approach, specifically the use of a questionnaire, for collecting data (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Heiman et al., 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2017; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Kowalski et al., 2016; Wells & Mitchell, 2014; Yen et al., 2014). It is important for future research studies to utilize a qualitative research approach as this approach may allow researchers to gain further understanding of the participants' perspectives of cyberbullying, and give voice to the participants' experiences.

As there have only been two research studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences of students in a different education program, and one study that included students receiving special education services, the present study sought out to explore the cyberbullying experiences of Saskatchewan secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program. As there are currently no research studies using a qualitative research approach to examine the experiences of participants in a different education program, the present study was conducted using a qualitative research approach in order to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences with cyberbullying. This study will contribute to the literature involving the cyberbullying experiences of students in a different education program, and provide further information to better understand the complexity of cyberbullying among students in a different education program. This study may point to the need for further research to determine the most effective prevention and intervention programs for addressing cyberbullying among students attending a different education program. The following chapter provides an overview of the research methods and procedures used in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 3 begins with a rationale for the use of qualitative research methodology, followed by an overview of basic qualitative research. Next, a description of the participants and recruitment process is discussed. Then data generation and data analysis are discussed, followed by ethical considerations.

3.1 Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

This study explored how Saskatchewan secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program used technology, their online experiences, and their experiences and perceptions related to bullying and cyberbullying. Basic qualitative research involves exploring and uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). Qualitative research is significant in the social sciences field as research questions often involve gaining an understanding of human perspectives and experiences (Trainor & Leko, 2014). According to Trainor and Leko (2014), there have been limited studies in the area of special education research that utilized a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research allows for descriptive information that can lead to an understanding of children and youth with exceptionalities, their families, and those who work with the students (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). Qualitative research can be used to explore the attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of students with exceptionalities as well as the general public (Brantlinger et al., 2005). There are also few research studies that have explored the cyberbullying experiences of youth in a different education program, with some exceptions including studies by Didden et al. (2009), Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2013), and Wells and Mitchell (2014). The above research studies utilized a quantitative research approach, and point to the need for further research to understand and explore the cyberbullying experiences of youth in a different education program, particularly from a qualitative research approach. The present study employed a basic qualitative research design and explored the following research questions:

1. How do secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program use and experience technology, including the use of cellphones, tablets, and computers, and what are their online experiences?
2. What are the bullying and cyberbullying experiences and perceptions of secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program?

3.2 Basic Qualitative Research

The goal of a basic qualitative research study is to interpret and understand how the meaning of a particular phenomenon is constructed by the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). A basic qualitative research design was used for the purpose of exploring the participants' use of technology and online experiences, and to explore their perceptions and experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying. Qualitative researchers utilizing a basic qualitative research approach are interested in "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013, p. 24). Data collection can occur through interviews, observations, or document analysis, and is related to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). Data is analyzed inductively in order to identify reoccurring patterns and themes, with the purpose of understanding how the participants make sense of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013).

3.3 Participant Selection and Recruitment

Upon University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board Approval (Behavioural Research Ethics #15-140), purposeful sampling was used to recruit seven secondary students who were enrolled in an Alternative Education Program. Purposeful sampling refers to the researcher selecting participants who are likely to generate the most useful data for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). Students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program demonstrate impairment that markedly limits their functioning in reasoning, problem solving, abstract thinking, and academic learning (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). The students in the program demonstrate diverse learning needs that cannot be met through regular or modified courses, and the students have limitations in intellectual functioning and are academically achieving well below grade level (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). The Alternative Education Program is not appropriate for students with average to above average intellectual abilities, students with inadequate educational opportunities, or for students whom English is a second language (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2006a). The following inclusionary criteria were used to determine the participants' eligibility: (1) age and grade: participants who ranged in age from 14-18 years of age and were in Grades 9-12; (2) education: enrolled in an Alternative Education Program; and (3) those who were willing to share their stories and experiences related to technology use, online experiences, bullying, and cyberbullying.

The recruitment process involved submitting a research application package to an urban school division superintendent, and the application package included an application form, a letter of research support from the student researcher's thesis supervisor, and a copy of the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board Approval certificate. Upon approval of the study by the superintendent, a recruitment email was sent by the high school participating in the study, to the parents of the students enrolled in the Alternative Education program. The email invited their child to participate in the research study, and requested that the parent contact the researcher by phone or email if they were interested in having their child participate. Two parents were interested in having their child participate in the study and contacted the researcher through email. The researcher responded to the emails and ensured the students met the established inclusionary criteria, and a mutually agreed upon time and urban public library location was scheduled with each parent and child. For participating in an interview, all of the participants in the current study were provided with an opportunity to enter their name into a draw for a chance of winning a $50.00 MasterCard gift card.

Due to a lack of response from the parents of students enrolled in the urban Alternative Education Program, an amendment to the ethics application was made to the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board to also include a rural school division in the present study. After approval was received, a letter of research request was emailed to the rural school division superintendent for approval. Once the superintendent approved the research request, a recruitment letter was emailed to a rural high school principal. The principal responded to the recruitment email and provided approval for the study. The student researcher then contacted the teacher of the Alternative Education program and a mutually agreed upon date and time was scheduled for the student researcher to present to the students. The student researcher explained the study to the students and invited the students to participate. Parent consent forms were provided to the students to give to their parents to sign, if they were interested in participating in the study. Three of the students' parents/guardians signed the consent form for their child to participate in the study. Once the parent consent forms were received, the student researcher established a time and date with the students' classroom teacher for the interviews to take place.

Due to a lack of participants, a second high school within the rural school division was recruited to participate in the study. An amendment was made to the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board to reflect a change in participant compensation, in anticipation of

recruiting additional participants. Participants were compensated with $15.00 for participating in an interview and entered into the draw to win the $50.00 MasterCard gift card. Two of the students' parents signed the consent form for their child to participate in the study. Once the parent consent forms were received, a time and date for the interviews to take place was determined with the students' classroom teacher.

3.4 Data Generation

Each of the seven participants met with the student researcher for one interview that lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded. Interviews with the two urban high school students were conducted in a private meeting room in a predetermined urban public library location. During the interview sessions with the two urban high school students, the consent form was first reviewed with their parents and then signed by each parent. Afterwards, the parents left the room, and the participant assent form was reviewed orally with each participant. The two participants provided their assent to participate in the study prior to beginning the interviews. Interviews with the rural high school students were conducted in a predetermined private meeting room within the high schools. During the interview sessions with the remaining five participants, the participant assent form was reviewed orally with each participant. Each of the five participants provided their assent to participate in the study before the interview began. All of the participants were reminded that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they were able to withdraw at any time, with no consequences for withdrawing. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, with open-ended questions used to focus the direction and content of the interview (see Appendix A).

During the interviews, participants were provided with a sheet of paper with the definitions of bullying and cyberbullying; the researcher orally reviewed the definitions with the participants prior to discussing bullying and cyberbullying (see Appendix B). The definitions were left in view of the participants in order to allow for the participants to refer back to the definitions throughout the interview. The researcher's professional background and extensive review of the literature related to technology use and online experiences, bullying, and cyberbullying guided the selection of the questions used within the interviews. This ensured that the questions used were clear and concise, and would provide useful and descriptive information from the participants. The interviews followed a flexible, conversational style format, with the interview guided by a list of questions to be explored (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). Following the

interview, participants were debriefed, and thanked for their participation, and a participant resource handout was orally reviewed and provided to each of the participants (See Appendix C). Due to the potential for discomfort and stress after the participants shared their experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying, the handout was created to provide the participants with a list of resources that could be accessed if they felt distressed after leaving the interview. Prior to the participants leaving the interview room, the student researcher checked in with the participants regarding how they were feeling. The two participants from the second rural high school were each compensated with $15.00 for participating in the interview. All participants were informed that their name would be entered into a draw to win a $50.00 MasterCard gift card, and the student selected was contacted by the phone number provided by the parent on the signed consent form.

Each of the participant interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed. The identity of each participant was protected through the use of pseudonyms assigned to each participant and all personally identifying information was removed from the transcripts. However, participants were advised that direct quotes may be used when reporting the findings, and that this may interfere with guaranteeing complete anonymity. In qualitative research it is typical for the participants to be provided with an opportunity to review the transcript of their interview; however, in this study the participants were not provided with the opportunity to read and review their transcripts and sign a transcript release form. The participants shared their experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying, and due to the sensitivity of sharing upsetting incidents and the potential cause for discomfort and stress, it was deemed inappropriate to review the transcripts with the participants due to the possibility of causing the participants to relive their upsetting experiences again.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed and interpreted using social-ecological theory as the theoretical framework. Data generation and data analysis are simultaneous processes used in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). Data analysis is a process of making sense of the data and creating meaning, and involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). Further, data analysis is the process that is used to answer the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). The data set in the present study was transcribed interviews and data

was generated using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) have identified a six phase process for analyzing qualitative data that involves a recursive process of moving back and forth throughout the phases, rather than simply moving from one phase to the next. The first phase of data analysis is *familiarizing yourself with your data* and during this phase, I transcribed the data, read and reread the data, and documented ideas about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the data was transcribed and I became familiar with the data, the next phase began which involved g*enerating initial codes* about the data and included coding interesting features of the data. Then, I began *searching for themes*, and grouped codes into potential themes. Social-ecological theory was used as the theoretical framework to assist in the identification of themes related to students' experiences with bullying and cyberbullying. Once I determined the themes, the next phase involved *reviewing themes* to examine if the themes related to the initial codes that were generated, and to the entire data set. The next phase involved *defining and naming themes* and determining what each theme was about. Lastly, phase six involved *producing the report* and I used the determined set of themes to create the final analysis of the report. The purpose of the present study was to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences related to technology use, online experiences, bullying, and cyberbullying following the Braun and Clarke (2006) six phase process for analyzing qualitative data.

3.6 Trustworthiness

It is the role of the qualitative researcher to ensure that their research study is trustworthy and conducted rigorously through establishing credibility, transferability, and confirmability, all terms that are widely used in qualitative research (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). Credibility refers to how accurately the findings reflect and capture reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). Credibility was established through sufficient and timely engagement in the data collection process and by providing detailed accounts of the data in order to accurately reflect the results of the study. Member checks were also used during the interviews to establish credibility by clarifying, restating, and summarizing information shared by the participants in order to ensure accuracy. Transferability can be established through reader generalizability and leaves the reader to determine whether the findings are applicable or transferable to similar situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). In this study, thick descriptive data was gathered from the

participants about their use of technology and online experiences, and their experiences and perceptions related to bullying and cyberbullying, in order to allow the reader to understand the unique experiences of the participants in the study. Confirmability was established through the use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step process of thematic analysis, with the process being documented throughout the analysis of the data.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was sought from the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board. Student participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were informed of the right to withdraw from the study at any time, with no repercussions for withdrawing. Before proceeding with data collection, signed consent from the parents/guardians of the participants was received. Prior to beginning the interview with the participants, the researcher orally reviewed the participant assent form, which included the following sections: who the student researcher and supervisor were, the purpose and procedure of the research, potential benefits, potential risks, confidentiality, right to withdraw, and assent to participate. Students were informed that sharing their experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying may cause feelings of distress or discomfort, and it was reiterated that they could choose to discontinue participating in the interview at any time, with no consequence.

Following the interviews, participants were again reminded that the information they provided would be kept confidential, and pseudonyms would be given to each participant and no identifying information would be used when reporting the findings; however, the participants were informed that direct quotes may be used in the findings, which limits complete anonymity. Once the interviews were completed, a resources handout was orally reviewed and provided to the participants in order for the students to be made aware of resources that could be accessed if they were feeling distressed and needed to talk to someone after leaving the interview. Prior to the participants leaving, the student researcher checked in with the participants regarding how they were feeling after sharing sensitive information. Digital recordings of the interviews were only available to the student researcher, and the data will be stored for five years in the office of the student researcher's supervisor.

The following chapter provides a description of the participants in the current study, followed by a description of the results, and the final chapter includes an overall discussion of the results.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter introduces the seven participants who participated in this study, outlines their use of technology and online experiences, and describes their perceptions and experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying. To protect the identity and confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used, individual names mentioned by the participants were altered, and repetitive words or statements (i.e., yeah, okay, etc.) were omitted. Information from participant interviews was used in relation to the research questions, and social-ecological theory was used as the theoretical framework for generating themes from the data. This chapter is followed by the final thesis chapter which focuses on discussing the findings in context of the literature.

4.1 Participants

This study involved seven participants who were enrolled in an Alternative Education program in Saskatchewan. The participants ranged in age from 14 to 18 years of age and included one female (Emma) and six males (Lucas, Chase, Jake, Ethan, Nick, and Greg). The first participant interviewed was Lucas, a 16 year old urban high school student in Grade 10 at the time of the interview. Lucas presented as friendly and animated, and was actively engaged in sharing his stories and experiences. Lucas was involved in extracurricular activities, including a youth group and taekwondo. However, Lucas found taekwondo to be hard work and frustrating, and he shared that he had difficulty retaining what he had been taught, and consequently, was taking a break from taekwondo. In his spare time, Lucas shared that he enjoyed spending time with friends and playing video games on his Xbox 360. Lucas had his own laptop and cellphone.

The second participant interviewed was Chase, a 14 year old urban high school student in Grade 9 at the time of the interview. Chase presented as an open and talkative student upon first meeting him and throughout the interview process. Before the interview began, Chase shared his thoughts about his first year of high school, and about a conflict with a teacher. Chase also shared that he and his girlfriend had recently broken up and expressed sadness over this. Chase was involved in an improvisation group at his high school, and shared that he tried out for the high school soccer team, but did not make the team. Chase enjoyed playing video games on his Xbox 360, and owned a cellphone and tablet. In his spare time, Chase wrote songs, and recorded himself singing and rapping his songs. Sometimes he posted the videos to YouTube.

The third participant interviewed was Emma, a 14 year old rural high school student in Grade 9 who lived in a residential youth care home at the time of the interview. When meeting the interviewer, Emma presented as outgoing, but was hesitant to provide much detail when responding to general questions before the interview began. After rapport was established and the interview began, Emma willingly shared her stories and experiences. Emma said that she did not enjoy her first year of high school, and generally did not enjoy being around people. She had some close friends who she spent her lunch hour with at school. Emma was not involved in any extracurricular activities and mainly enjoyed spending time with her close friends. Emma mentioned that she enjoyed going swimming over summer holidays. Emma had a tablet, but it was broken, and previously had two cellphones, but the first cellphone was lost and the second cellphone was broken. Emma had been without a cellphone for approximately a month.

The fourth participant interviewed was Jake, a 17 year old rural high school student in Grade 10 at the time of the interview. Jake presented as a friendly and happy student, but he provided limited detail when answering questions. Jake was not involved in extracurricular activities outside of school, but shared that he worked part-time outside of school hours. Jake said that he would be working over summer holidays, and he did not mind having to work over the holidays as he preferred to be indoors rather than outdoors. Jake had his own tablet and cellphone. Jake shared that his favourite pastime was to make people laugh and that he considered himself a ventriloquist. Jake had been a ventriloquist for approximately seven years, and used his tablet and cellphone to make videos of himself as a ventriloquist to post on YouTube. Jake shared that his long-term goal was to be on Comedy Central, an American television channel.

The fifth participant interviewed was Ethan, a 17 year old rural high school student in Grade 11 at the time of the interview. Ethan presented as confident and independent, and while sharing his stories and experiences, appeared to have the mindset that he could independently manage problems, without needing the support of a friend or adult. Ethan played on the school basketball team in elementary school and high school, and also played basketball outside of school. Ethan owned a cellphone.

The sixth participant interviewed was Nick, a 16 year old rural high school student in Grade 10 at the time of the interview. Nick presented as friendly, expressive, and eager to share his stories and experiences. Nick was involved in many extracurricular activities, including

volleyball, football, football camp over the summer, and Cadets. He was also planning on trying out for the high school basketball team during the following school year. Nick shared that he had his learner's license, and was saving money to buy himself a car. Nick had a part-time job outside of school hours. Nick shared that after the completion of high school, he wanted to work on the oil rigs. Nick had a cellphone, but could not access the Internet with it as it was an older cellphone, and owned a tablet, but the charging cord was broken.

The seventh and final participant interviewed was Greg, an 18 year old rural high school student in Grade 11 at the time of the interview. Reciprocal conversation with Greg was limited and he demonstrated difficultly providing detailed responses to questions, but overall he presented as a friendly and polite student. Greg was not involved in extracurricular activities. He shared that he enjoyed school and in his spare time played video games. Greg did not spend time with friends outside of school. Greg owned a cellphone.

Participants were interviewed by the researcher to explore the students' use of technology and online experiences, and to explore their perceptions and experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying. As participants' stories were reviewed, three major themes were identified: (1) Navigating the complexities of technology usage; (2) The multiple facets of bullying: Victims, bystanders, and peer aggression; and (3) It could be anyone: The emotional experiences of cyberbullying victims and bystanders. These themes are discussed and linked together using meaningful participant quotes.

4.2 Theme 1: Navigating the Complexities of Technology Usage

4.2.1 Frequent and multiple uses of technology. The participants demonstrated a frequent use of technology, including a wide array of experiences using technology devices such as computers, cellphones, and tablets. Lucas shared that he had his own laptop that he primarily used in his bedroom. He estimated that he spent approximately two hours per day using his laptop to play games online, browse YouTube videos, listen to music, use Google+, and occasionally to type homework assignments. Chase did not have a computer at home, but had access to a computer in a public library and at a friend's house. He shared that he used a computer at the public library, but was only able to use it for one hour, due to the time limit imposed by the library. At his friend's house, he could immerse in computer activities and used a computer for multiple hours. He shared, "At my friend's house, usually me and him just stay up the whole night on the computer on weekends. He has two laptops in the kitchen." Similar to

Lucas, Chase used a computer to play games, specifically on a website called Roblox, browse YouTube videos, browse Facebook, write songs, and sometimes for typing homework assignments. At the time of the interview, Emma did not have a computer in her current living arrangement, but did have access to a computer at school, if she needed to complete homework assignments. Emma shared that she had previously used her parent's computer almost daily to browse Facebook, and sometimes for typing assignments for school. Jake had access to a computer located in his family's basement, but shared that he only occasionally used it to play online puzzle games and for homework. Like Chase, Ethan did not have a computer at home, but used a computer in the school library during lunch breaks to play online games and watch YouTube videos, and sometimes for typing school assignments. He described the online game he played during the school lunch hour, "There's traps and all that, and you rip body parts off. It's a fun game." Nick had access to a computer at home, he shared, "I have two, but they're not mine, they are my stepdad's. I use them once in a while, if I'm allowed to go on Facebook or Instagram or have to do homework, he'll let me." Nick also used a computer at school to play games during break and sometimes to work on homework. Greg had a computer at home, but the computer did not have Internet access. Like the other participants, Greg had access to a computer at school and primarily used it to watch YouTube videos and sometimes for homework assignments.

All of the participants interviewed reported having access to a computer, and spent varying amounts of time using a computer. Common Internet activities using a computer included: playing online games, watching videos on YouTube, and browsing social media websites. All of the male participants, except for Greg, used a computer to access online gaming websites. All of the participants used a computer for school assignments, specifically, for typing assignments. Additionally, Lucas, Chase, and Greg all played video games using video game consoles.

At the time of the interviews, all participants had a cellphone, with the exception of Emma, whose cellphone was broken. Common cellphone activities included watching YouTube videos, listening to music, and the use of social media such as Google+, Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Lucas shared that he had a cellphone, and that he could use it for more activities compared to his previous cellphone:

> I have an HTC phone, it's in my pocket here. I had another phone but it was an LG, but I couldn't possibly do anything. I didn't have Google+ or anything. I could only call or text or view some pictures. It was boring, but then once I got my new phone I finally got to do whatever it is I want to do. I like to go on YouTube and just listen to music. I have a playlist and whenever you like a certain song or hear a song on the radio, you put it down on a certain playlist. I also watch videos recommended by a friend, and I go on Google+.

Chase shared that he had seven phones, but most had broken and one was stolen. He primarily used his cellphone to check Facebook and to record songs. When Emma had a cellphone, she primarily used it to listen to music, take pictures, use Facebook, and Snapchat, a mobile app that allows individuals to send pictures and videos to others that only appear for a limited period of time (Snap, 2017). Jake had a cellphone and primarily used it to make ventriloquist videos. He also used his cellphone to access social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Ethan had a cellphone and used it to browse the Internet, including a website called theScore, a sports website, and to use Facebook. Nick had a cellphone and described it as a flip phone that could not access the Internet. Greg had a cellphone and primarily used it to play games and watch videos on YouTube.

Chase had his own tablet, and used it daily. When asked how often he used his tablet he shared:

> Probably three to four hours. I'm usually down in my basement or my room. I stay up late using it, even though my mom tells me to shut it down. I'm like, "Okay," and then I just keep on recording.

Chase used his tablet to write and record songs, and to browse Facebook. Jake also had his own tablet, and like Chase, used it to upload videos to YouTube. Jake recorded himself making ventriloquist videos. He also used his tablet to listen to music and play games. Like Chase and Jake, Emma and Nick also had their own tablets. However, Emma's tablet was broken and Nick's tablet did not have a working charging cord.

4.2.2 Self-expression through the use of technology. Three participants, Lucas, Chase, and Jake, had their own YouTube channels and created videos and uploaded the videos to YouTube as a means of expressing themselves and sharing their creativity with others. A YouTube channel must be created by the user in order to upload videos, make comments on

videos, and to make playlists (YouTube, 2017). Lucas discussed creating videos about video games:

> I upload fan-made videos on YouTube, and I don't get many views, but I don't really care about the views. A fan-made video is something that someone makes because they like a certain game. It has random pictures of characters from a video game. My friends liked it. I kept it to a minimum of four, sometimes six to seven minutes.

Chase wrote songs and recorded himself singing or rapping using his tablet or cellphone:

> Mostly, I use my tablet to write songs. I rap sometimes. I built my life and childhood in the songs. I sing too, but I really don't sing in front of people. If I do, it's just normal, but I actually have a really, really good voice and I sing on my own. Sometimes, if I feel like going on YouTube, I'll post the videos, but mostly my songs are a lot more personal, I put my girlfriend in it, and then our break up in it. Usually I do not post my personal songs on YouTube because they are really personal. I have a YouTube channel, but my girlfriend is the number one person that goes on my channel, and I'm not ready to show her my songs yet.

Jake used his tablet and cellphone to record himself making ventriloquist videos. Like Chase, Jake also had his own YouTube channel. When asked what he primarily did on his cellphone and tablet, he shared:

> Making videos. Ventriloquism videos. I've been doing it for 7 years now. I post the videos to YouTube. I have a small channel on YouTube. I want to be like the comedian Jeff Dunham and by the time I get to 30, my life goal is to be on Comedy Central.

Jake and Emma both used their cellphones to take pictures and upload the pictures to social media websites. Emma shared, "I take pictures with my cellphone. Like if I look nice, I'll just say, 'Oh damn.' I sometimes post the pictures on Facebook." Jake shared that he used Instagram to look at pictures and post pictures. Lucas, Chase, Jake, and Emma all used technology devices such as cellphones and tablets, and social media as a means for expressing their personal creativity and sharing their creations with others.

4.2.3. Social connectedness and social difficulty. Out of the seven participants interviewed, all but Greg had social media accounts, with most accessing their social media accounts on a daily basis, some accessing their accounts multiple times per day. Five out of the seven participants had a Facebook account. Lucas daily used his laptop and cellphone to use

Google+. Lucas described his use of Google+ and made the comparison that Google+ is similar to Facebook:

> I use Google+, if you know what that is. Google+ is like Facebook, except you don't do online chat. You just post things and pictures, you could create a poll, you could write down an essay or anything like a rant or you could upload a video on there. Not only that, you'll get invitations to parties or different communities.

Lucas described himself as a role-player and shared:

> Role playing is like you portray yourself as someone, like a fictional character like Iron Man, for example. I'm a role-player too. I have a lot of friends who are role players, on Google+, that is. On Google+ when you ask out to the public, "Does anybody want to role play?" Then if they say yes, you ask, "Do you want to make the post?" Then if they say yes, they'll make the post. If they say no, then you have to make the post.

Chase frequently accessed Facebook through the use of multiple forms of technology, including his cellphone, tablet, and a computer at his friend's house or public library. Chase shared: "I have a lot of Facebook friends." Similar to Chase, Emma also had a Facebook account and had previously used her cellphone and parents' computer to use Facebook daily. Jake had Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts, but with the use of multiple accounts came the need to remember multiple passwords. Jake shared: "I have a Twitter account but I forgot my password. So it's done." When asked if he had utilized the *Forgot Password* option, he said: "But then each time I do it, I forget once a month." Jake no longer accessed his Twitter account due to repeatedly forgetting his password. Jake said, "I use Instagram to basically, look at pictures and I post pictures." Similar to Chase, Emma, and Jake, Ethan also had a Facebook account and primarily used his cellphone to access Facebook. Ethan shared that he used Facebook daily, and also used Facebook to message his friends. Nick also had a Facebook account and used a computer at his house to access Facebook. Nick had an Instagram account and said that he liked to browse pictures, but shared that he did not often use Instagram and Facebook.

While the use of social media can lead to social connection and interaction with others, one participant experienced a lack of connection and frustration through the use of Google+. Lucas explained:

> It's just sometimes when people are role-playing and I'm not role-playing, I didn't ask or say that I wanted to role play. It seems like they wanted me to just talk through role play.

> They didn’t want to talk to people out of character and just talk normally. That's why I had enough with some people who are being like that. I just wanted a normal conversation, because role-play is just for fun. I get that, but if you're trying to post everyday stuff like every day problems like rants that you have, stories that you make up based off your imagination, some funny stuff that you found, you just post them. Sometimes when people are just getting the wrong idea and just not getting my point, then I get a little irritated and I just tell them to think about it for yourself. I don't always have to do this for you because you have your own mind. Use it.

Lucas desired social connection with others, beyond role-playing, and shared that he wanted to have conversations and share his posts with others. He misused the role-playing section of Google+, and did not understand that the chatrooms for role-playing were to be used exclusively to role-play with others. Lucas experienced significant frustration with his experiences role-playing on Google+, and did not understand why people would not engage in conversation with him.

Similar to the use of social media, cellphones can be used as a form of communication and social connection among adolescents. The use of a cellphone to make plans with friends was important to Lucas. He used his cellphone to phone and text message his friends, but if he wanted to make plans with friends, he typically made a phone call to his friends. Lucas shared:

> I don't make phone calls that much. If I'm going to call someone I have to watch how many minutes I'm calling because the exact minutes I'm not supposed to go past is ten minutes. Sometimes I text my friends. Sometimes they are busy. If I was trying to arrange a plan or to hangout then I call them, and then I text them, just to be sure. I always tell them the day before, just hoping to make sure that they remember.

Nick did not often use his cellphone to send text messages to his friends, but like Lucas, shared that he used his cellphone to phone his friends to make plans. Chase shared that he frequently used his cellphone to text message his friends. Like Lucas and Chase, Ethan also used his cellphone to text message his friends and family on a daily basis. However, he usually only made phone calls to his mother.

While not all participants used their cellphones daily to send text messages or make phone calls, it was apparent that for some participants, the use of a cellphone facilitated social connection and interaction with peers. However, for Emma, Jake, and Greg, the use of a

cellphone was not often used as a form of connecting with their peers. Further, some participants experienced a lack of social connection through the use of cellphones. Emma reported that she did not often use her cellphone to text message or phone her friends. Like Emma, Jake also did not often use his phone to text message or make phone calls to his friends. Jake explained, "My friends don't text me." Only occasionally did Jake make phone calls, typically to his parents. Greg reported that he sometimes used his cellphone to call family members, but did not often send text messages to friends.

4.2.4. Online safety and privacy. While some of the participants demonstrated an awareness of online safety and privacy, others demonstrated an unawareness of how to protect themselves online. One participant, Chase, demonstrated a particular insight and understanding about posts that were made online. He shared: "As soon as you put something on the Internet, you can't take it back." Chase also demonstrated an awareness of online safety. Chase had an app that he used to alert him if someone tried to access one of his accounts:

> On every device I get, like an iPad, I always download this one app, it's for security, if anyone's stealing your identity or trying to hack into my personal stuff or trying to access any of my accounts, like YouTube or Facebook. I was the one who showed my mom the actual app, and she has it on her phone now, too. I forget what the app is called. It's some kind of security locks system.

He described it further:

> As soon as someone logs onto your account or is typing your name in, your e-mail address, it automatically sends a really loud, loud noise. At first when it went off, it scared my mom and she was freaking out. I was like, "Don't worry. It's just my tablet."

Chase also demonstrated an awareness and understanding of privacy settings on Facebook. Chase utilized selective privacy settings and limited what he shared on Facebook:

> Usually I just share with Roy and my girlfriend. That's the only two people that I share my private stuff with. I have a lot of Facebook friends, but I know what blocks everything and what blocks what I say so no one else can see it besides specific people that I want to see. I know how to block people.

Chase also limited what videos he posted on YouTube, and described that some of the songs he wrote and sang were private. Chase said:

> Usually I do not post my personal songs on YouTube because they are really personal. I have a YouTube channel, but my girlfriend is the number one person that goes on my channel, and I'm not ready to show her my songs yet.

Chase valued privacy and security, especially with his online experiences. Nick was another participant who demonstrated an awareness of online safety using Facebook. He discussed a strategy he used when he received a friend request from someone he did not know. He shared:

> I just browse on Facebook and see who adds me. And then if they add me and I don't know them, I just look through their profile not to be creepy or anything, just to check and see if they have any friends of mine so then I can see if I know them.

Nick also shared that he was aware of how to block people on Facebook: "I know how to on Facebook, you can go into their profile and then there's a place where you can add someone and then it also says delete and block." Chase and Nick both demonstrated an awareness of online safety and security using Facebook. Lucas, Emma, and Ethan all used social media such as Google Plus or Facebook, and all stated that they were aware of how to block people, when needed. The above participants had some knowledge of online safety, but one participant, Jake, demonstrated an unawareness of how to protect himself online. Jake, who posted videos of himself on YouTube, shared that he was unsure whether or not individuals could be blocked from commenting on his YouTube videos.

The participants had all integrated technology devices such as computers, cellphones, and tablets into their everyday lives, and had varying online experiences and uses for social media. For some, the use of technology devices allowed for a form of self-expression and a means for sharing their own unique creativity with others. Some participants reported frequently accessing their social media accounts, and using their cellphones to send text messages or make phone calls to friends. This was not the case for all of the participants, who despite having access to social media and cellphones, experienced a lack of social connection with their peers. With the use of technology and online experiences comes the necessity for awareness of online safety and privacy. While many of the participants demonstrated some knowledge of online safety, one participant demonstrated a lack of awareness of security settings.

4.3 Theme 2: The Multiple Facets of Bullying: Victims, Bystanders, and Peer Aggression

4.3.1 Victims of bullying: The emotional impact. Five out of the seven participants in this study identified that they were victims of bullying, and shared their experiences and feelings

about being victimized. Lucas shared an experience that captured the seemingly relentless and ongoing nature of experiencing a form of verbal bullying. The experience was emotional and frustrating for Lucas. He shared:

> There's this one guy I used to be friends with. His name was Fred. He was bullying me. He was a nice person at the time, he used to be a nice friend. We're not friends anymore because he is cantankerous, hard to deal with. Then it's like he was the one who kept on bringing me and the gang down. He never knew when to stop. I had enough, I said, "I don't want to hear this anymore." But he just kept doing it. Not until I had to hang out with other people that I saw how much of a mean person Fred was and then I just had to forget about it, forget about what he did.

Lucas was bullied by someone who he thought was a friend to him, and eventually came to the conclusion that he needed to make new friends and distance himself from Fred. Similar to Lucas, Jake experienced verbal bullying from a person he thought was a friend. Jake was the recipient of repeated mean comments and racist remarks. He shared:

> It's kind of, it's my friend. In Grade 8 he was really mean. He was saying mean things and being racist. It happened outside of school and sometimes inside school. It happened quite often. Basically, whatever I do and anything I do, he'd find a way to make fun of it.

Jake went on to explain that the person who bullied him was being bullied by other people. Jake explained how he felt about experiencing bullying, "I just don't really feel anything because you just get used to it." Jake shared that he did not confront the bully, and tried to ignore the mean comments. Greg also shared that he was a victim of verbal bullying in elementary school that involved people calling him mean names. He said the bullying made him feel hurt. Chase was a victim of multiple forms of bullying, including relentless verbal, relational, and physical bullying. He said, "I've been physically bullied. I've had a lot of rumours spread about me and I've been pushed around and I have defended myself." He went on to share his experience:

> It was the first day I started dating my girlfriend. At first we didn't want anyone to know about us dating, just our parents, and then my sister found out that I was dating someone and she told her friends, and I was like, "Whatever." But her friends told other people, and their friends told a really bad person that likes spreading rumours. People said lots of mean things about me. Personal, personal stuff. Really bad stuff. This happened last

year. It mostly happened every day, and then me and my girlfriend finally got sick and tired of it, and then we broke up and then we secretly started dating again.

Chase was angry, overwhelmed, and frustrated that he experienced verbal and relational bullying nearly every day. He had people verbally bully him, and had people spreading rumours about him. He went on to explain what happened after he and his girlfriend continued dating:

> The mean things stopped, but then this one person named Joe, he found out that we were dating again and then he started bugging me about it, and pushing me around and kicking me and excluding me from games that my friends were playing. One time, he pushed me in the shoulder and then I grabbed his arm and said, "No." It was happening so often. I told the teacher, and I told her the truth. I did threaten to break his arm, but I'm sick and tired of these rumours being spread around, this physical getting pushed around, so I just had enough and I just threatened to break his arm. It's called self-defence. I know, I could be charged for threatening a person and assaulting someone, but what he does to me, pushes me around, kicks me, I can also charge him for assault and abuse. The principal told him to stop, but then he kept on doing it, and then I said, "Screw this. I'm on my last year. I'm glad I'm going to high school so I don't see him."

The bullying Chase experienced was difficult for him to manage, and at times, led him to retaliate with physical aggression. Chase shared how he felt about being bullied by Joe:

> Really sad and hurt and really angry, and then that time when Joe pushed me in the shoulder and then I just ended up snapping and saying, "No, I'm sick and tired of this stuff. You've got to stop or someone's really going to get hurt.

Chase shared that he resorted to threatening the bully with physical violence in an attempt to get the bully to stop.

Emma, the only female participant, shared multiple experiences with bullying. She described an ongoing experience that involved verbal bullying, and physical intimidation and threats from two female students. She shared:

> This girl tries to say she wants to fight me and then she doesn't. Every time I see her I won't say anything and then she won't like, come and beat me up or anything, which is weird coz like, I don't know what I did to her. She's like younger than me, so I was like, "Have fun trying to." But then she's trying to get her older sister after me. She was like trying to bring her older sister to like bring me to the ground. Once they told me I was

> going to get jumped. A couple of years ago now. It was the older girl, she says she's in a gang. She was like, "Next time you try to say something," I was like, "What did I say?" She was trying to say that I was trying to say stuff about her and I was like, "Why would I want to say stuff about you, you're in Grade 11?"

Emma shared how being physically threatened made her feel, “I got really scared, I was like, ‘Oh man.’” Emma felt fearful and confused about why the two female students were physically threatening and intimidating her. Emma went on to share a recent and ongoing experience with a male student at her high school:

> This guy here calls me a bitch and a slut. Because I didn't want to go out with him, so he calls me a slut. He asked me out, I was like, "No." And then, he kept on saying I was a bitch and a slut so I was like, "Okay, thanks." He's also kind of scary. He asked me for like, pictures and I said no, and now he calls me a slut. He calls me a bitch, ugly little girl, sometimes.

Emma shared that the male student had been calling her derogatory names in person and through Facebook. The bullying happened during her first year of high school in Grade 9, and left a significant impact on how Emma viewed herself and her self-worth. She internalized what the male student said about her and began to believe the derogatory remarks about herself. She shared how the experience made her feel:

> I don't know, actually it makes me feel like that. And then my friends tell me I'm a slut, so then I start feeling like a slut. And then they call me like, a bitch and then I'm like, "Yeah".

Emma experienced bullying from the male student, and also from people whom she thought were her friends. Lucas, Jake, Greg, Chase, and Emma were all victims of relentless and ongoing bullying and shared the emotional impact of the bullying. The participants who were victimized felt a mix of emotion including anger, hurt, confusion, and frustration due to their experiences with bullying.

4.3.2 Bystanders of bullying. Although Ethan and Nick did not share experiences about being victimized, both participants observed physical altercations at school and had sisters who were victims of relentless bullying. Ethan recounted an experience of witnessing a physical altercation at school. He shared that he observed a group of male students physically hurting another student. Nick shared that he had been a witness to multiple physical altercations at

school. Nick shared an incident where he was in a classroom and observed a physical altercation among students in the school hallway:

> We were in a classroom and these two kids were fighting. One kid pushed somebody. So the other kid got up and pushed him and then the other kid just grabbed him and threw him down on the floor. And hit his head. We saw it in the classroom but it was out in the hall.

Nick also shared another experience of witnessing a physical altercation at school:

> Someone was trying to take some other guy's girlfriend. And he was trying to say that he wasn't. And then the other guy just gave it to him. Shoved and pushed him up against the juice thing. Over a girl.

Chase was another participant who identified that he had witnessed a physical altercation. He shared that his friend had his arm broken during a physical altercation. Chase also shared that he had witnessed his girlfriend being bullied, and shared that, "It was really, really sad."

Ethan and Nick both had sisters who were victims of bullying. Ethan shared that his younger sister was bullied because of her appearance. He said, "She's 15 years old. People make fun of her hands because she only has four fingers." Ethan said that his sister asked him to help make the bullying stop. Nick also had a younger sister who asked Nick to help make the bullying stop. Nick shared:

> She just gets really bullied lots. Even now that she is in this elementary school, she gets bullied a lot. She asked me to do something, I can't do anything because I can get charged and put into a juvenile home if I try and do something. They're saying to her "Oh, I'm gonna fight you after school" and all this. I don't wanna get put into jail at this age, have a record. And then I can't go travelling when I'm done at my school.

Ethan, Nick, and Chase have all observed physical altercations that have occurred at school, and Ethan and Nick both have younger siblings who have experienced bullying. Further, both Ethan's and Nick's sisters had asked for assistance from their older brothers to help prevent the bullying.

4.3.3 Peer aggression and justification: Moral disengagement. Four of the male participants, Lucas, Chase, Ethan, and Nick, all shared experiences of engaging in a form of peer aggression and retaliation. Lucas engaged in a form of cognitive restructuring in order to justify

aggressive behaviour in his peer group. Lucas shared an incident involving a peer in his friend group:

> Well, I kind of feel bad when I was going up against this one guy named Josh. It's like he was fun to hang out with and he's great friend, honest, sometimes we just play around, like play shove. Sometimes when Josh tries to hurt some of my friends, like he tried to hurt my friends Dustin and Mike. He tried to hit them, then I told him to back off because that's not really nice of him to do and I just told him, "Get lost." I thought he hit them because he didn't really like them or he was just trying to cause some trouble.

Lucas went on to explain:

> I wanted Josh to learn his lesson so badly, I was like, "Come on, guys, let's go take this guy down," and "Take out this loser." Then it's like when I told them that we're going to get him, we got him and then somehow it didn't make sense that he was laughing while being hit by some of my friends. I didn't do anything. I was just standing there watching.

Lucas reframed the physical aggression in order to view the aggression as serving a worthy purpose: to protect his friends and to teach Josh a lesson. Lucas shared how he felt after the physical altercation between his friends and Josh:

> Well, I felt kind of better after what they did, but then later on in the day when school was over, I was feeling kind of down because I never should've been so harsh on him when he just only did those things.

Chase also shared an incident where he felt justified to respond with physical aggression. He shared:

> Joe actually got a broken arm by a bully, and then I went over and hurt the other guy. My favorite phrase is, "You mess with my family, then you mess with me. You mess with my family, you mess with both of us, then you better pray, because there's a lot of people after you." I didn't hurt him really bad. I just broke a finger.

Chase further justified his aggressive behaviour by distorting the negative impact of his behaviour by saying “I didn’t hurt him really bad. I just broke a finger.” Chase minimized the negative impact of his aggression. Chase went on to share how he felt after the incident:

> I felt really bad for the person that I broke his finger, and then I went over and gave him a hug. I felt bad for him. He was sitting there crying, and I went over and I said, "I'm sorry, just don't mess with my family." It's the worst thing he can do.

Chase went on to further justify his actions by reasoning that his aggression was for a worthy cause if it served the purpose of protecting a friend. Chase stated that he had not bullied another person, but explained, “Unless someone gets on my bad side, then there’s consequences.” Chase implied that he would engage in peer aggression if he felt justified to do so. As shared earlier, Chase was a victim of bullying and he responded to the bullying with threats of physical aggression, including threatening to break the bully’s arm and telling the bully, “You’ve got to stop or someone’s really going to get hurt.” Chase felt justified to respond with physical intimidation because he reasoned that he was a victim of relentless bullying. Nick shared an incident involving an ongoing conflict between him and a peer. Nick felt justified to engage in physical aggression with his peer. He shared:

> Some kid tried calling me names and then I tried defending myself. I was like, "Stop it." And then I started shoving him, which I should never did. He was trying to fight me and all this. That was only once. But he always threatens me, it’s like, "Why do you do that?" If I make a comment about his girlfriend, like, it's just a joke.

Nick went on to further explain the conflict with his peer:

> There's a kid in our class and he was in the bathroom. And I kind of think this is a threat to me. He said, "Oh, he’s playing with himself to your hair." And then I was like, "Well how do you know? Maybe he’s touching himself to your girlfriend." And he's like, "If you say anything about my girlfriend again, I'm going to punch you." It's like he felt really offended.

Nick and his peer engaged in an ongoing back and forth conflict; however, Nick felt justified to respond with physical violence towards the peer for calling him names. Ethan shared that his younger sister, who was a victim of bullying, requested that he help prevent the bullying from happening. Ethan felt justified to protect his sister, and used intimidation in an attempt to prevent people from bullying his sister. He said, “The guys get scared and they say okay” to leaving his sister alone.

4.3.4 How to handle a bully: Strategies and adult involvement. Some of the participants identified adults as a strategy to help manage bullying, while others were reluctant to

seek adult involvement and feared the repercussion of involving an authority figure. Chase, who was a victim of bullying, was the only participant who involved a teacher when he was being bullied, and the remaining participants who were victims of bullying did not involve an adult. Chase's teacher involved the school administrator in dealing with the bullying situation. Chase shared:

> It was happening often. I told the teacher, I told her the truth. The principal told him to stop automatically, and then he kept on doing it, and then I said, "Screw this. I'm on my last year. I'm glad I'm going to high school so I don't see him."

Chase confided in his teacher to help prevent the bullying from happening, but in the end, the bullying continued, leading Chase to reason that it was his last year at the elementary school and hoped he would not have to see the bully once he was in high school.

Lucas, Emma, Jake, and Greg were also victims of bullying, but did not confide in an adult about their experiences with bullying. Lucas shared some strategies he would employ to protect himself from bullies, "I'd tell them to stop. If they don't, you should just leave them alone and just try to not listen to them, what they're saying and what they're thinking might not be true." Lucas would first stand up to a bully, but then shared that he would try to ignore what the bully said to him. He went on to explain that it is better to attempt to distance himself from a bully:

> Then after realizing that some people just want to cause an argument or a commotion, you might as well just move on and grow up from these people. Sometimes you got to look for new people instead of just hanging out with the same old people who were just going to do the same crap all over again.

Emma was unable to express any strategies to protect herself from bullies and said: "I don't really deal with it" and went on to reason that as summer holidays were approaching, she would not have to see the male student at school. Emma was against sharing her experiences with bullying with an adult. When asked if she felt talking to an adult about the bullying would help, she shared, "No, because people would say I'm a rat. I don't say anything." Jake was another participant who was unable to identify any strategies beyond ignoring the mean comments to address being bullied. Like Emma, Jake was also reluctant to involve an adult. He shared, "I would tell an adult, but then things will get complicated. If I tell an adult the bully will bully more." Jake was concerned that there would be consequences to confiding in an adult about the

bullying he was experiencing. Greg shared that he would try and ignore the bully. Similar to Emma and Jake, Ethan would not involve an adult if he were being bullied. Ethan shared, "Words don't hurt me. I'm pretty tough and can take care of myself." Ethan felt that he could handle situations on his own, rather than involving an authority figure. Only one participant involved an authority figure to help prevent bullying from occurring; however, the bullying continued to happen, and the remaining participants were reluctant to confide in an adult. Further, some of the participants were unable to identify strategies to protect themselves from being bullied, besides ignoring the bully.

4.3.5 Bullying insight: Why are people so mean? Some of the participants expressed their thoughts and feelings towards bullying, and further, identified what might lead an individual to bully others. Lucas commented on the wide-spread nature of bullying, "Don't do it. It's like an epidemic." He shared his insight into why people bully others:

> A bully is someone who lacks fair judgement, for example, you see this one guy, you think, "Oh wait, he's a bad person," and you just don't even realize that, "Do you think he was just a bad person?" and then you're like, "No, he wasn't. He was probably good. He's still good. It's just that he could be upset about something or he could just be going through something and he just wanted something to take away the pain. Yes, then it's like there's always a good side and a bad side when it comes to things.

Lucas expressed that he believed bullies were essentially well-meaning individuals, but may be experiencing a difficult time in their lives. Ethan also expressed a similar insight into why people bully others, "Bullying is not good. The bullies probably have their own problems and that's why they are always picking on other people." Jake shared the reason he felt he was being bullied by someone, "Well, that's the reason because his friends bullied him too. Then he takes the mean attitude and does it to me." Chase expressed his thoughts about bullying:

> Since I have witnessed bullying and been through bullying, I really don't like it, and if anyone was being bullied in front of me, then I would probably stick up for the person. I'm one of those kinds of guys where if I was the Governor of Canada, I would automatically stop bullying.

Chase felt that if he was an individual of power, he would attempt to eliminate bullying from taking place. Greg shared his thoughts on bullying, by simply expressing "it's mean." Chase and Nick both shared that they believed an increase in supervision would lead to a reduction in

bullying. Chase expressed his insight into why he felt bullying happens more in high school compared to elementary school:

> In high school there is less supervision, it's not like elementary school. In elementary school, there's six to ten supervisors on the playground. There's more recesses in elementary school, but in high school, we call them breaks and there's three breaks, morning, lunch, and afternoon. I think bullying is the same in elementary school and high school, but happens more in high school because there's less supervision and there's more things that people can get their hands on. If I had the choice, I would set up more supervision around a lot of places.

When asked how bullying could be prevented, Nick shared:

> I think have more supervision on kids at school and then don't just say "Oh here is a green sheet for bullying" somebody, like expel them or make them not be in school anymore, so then they have to go to a different school.

At Nick's school, a green sheet was given to students for misbehaviour. Nick felt that more severe punishment for bullying was warranted at his school. Lucas, Ethan, and Jake all expressed their insight into why an individual may bully another person. The above participants felt that bullying others was wrong and further, two participants, Chase and Nick, felt bullying could be prevented with an increase in adult supervision.

Many of the participants including, Lucas, Jake, Greg, Chase, and Emma, were victims of bullying, and all expressed the emotional impact of experiencing bullying. The participants experienced a range of negative emotions, including anger, hurt, and fear. Three of the male participants, Ethan, Nick, and Chase, shared experiences of witnessing incidents of physical aggression at school, and the three participants also were witness to incidents of bullying. Four of the male participants, Lucas, Chase, Nick, and Ethan, were involved in incidents of physical aggression and intimidation, and the participants all shared reasons to justify their aggressive behaviours.

4.3 Theme 3: It Could Be Anyone: The Emotional Experiences of Cyberbullying Victims and Bystanders

4.3.1 Victims of cyberbullying: The emotional impact. All of the participants, except Lucas and Greg, were victims of cyberbullying, and some shared multiple experiences involving cyberbullying. Chase identified that he was a victim of cyberbullying and shared an incident that

involved an older high school student in Grade 10 who used his personal information to access inappropriate websites.

> I know the actual guy's name. His name is Max. He tried to steal my identity to go onto inappropriate sites. The authorities got involved and got mad at me and I said, "You know what? I don't look at those sites." Really, really bad sites. P, the P word. P-O-R-N. The police found out that it wasn't me. It was Max, so they went over and told him not to do that. It was a warning.

When Chase was asked how he knew that someone was accessing the inappropriate websites using his information, he shared that he had a security app that alerted him if someone accessed one of his personal accounts. Chase went on to explain that police officers came to his house:

> There's several officers. They're called online officers. They check to see if anybody is being cyberbullied on the Internet and if inappropriate things are being posted, so they log on and it's really easy to see what the actual person's name is. They found out my house address and then they said, “Chase, is this you?” I said, “You're speaking to him.” They said, “You got to stop looking at these inappropriate websites." I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "A lot of inappropriate stuff on the Internet, pictures and that." I said, "That's not me. That's Max and he lives at this address." Then they went to his house.

Chase shared that he knew it was Max accessing the inappropriate websites before the police officers came to his house. Chase explained that Max hacked into his Gmail account and used Chase’s email address to access the inappropriate websites. Chase shared another cyberbullying experience through Facebook. Chase shared:

> I've been threatened to be stabbed and shot a lot from a guy. His name is Dan. He's just a little kid in Grade 8. He was using Facebook to send me messages and write on my Facebook wall, and I told him, "As soon as you put something on the Internet, you can't take it back." Then my mom went on my Facebook, because she was the one who set it up for me, so she knows my e-mail address and password. She contacted the police.

Chase said, “It started one time, and then it got to two days and three days, and so on.” Chase explained that once his mom checked on his Facebook account and involved the police, the boy stopped messaging Chase. Emma was also a victim of cyberbullying, she was cyberbullied through Facebook by a male student at her high school who also bullied her in person. She

shared that the cyberbullying began when she started high school at the beginning of the school year. She shared that the male student would send her private messages through Facebook and called her derogatory names. She shared, "He doesn't call me a slut in person, he'd only say it on Facebook." Emma's experiences with bullying and cyberbullying had a profound impact on her self-worth, and she admitted that she believed that what the male student was saying to her was the truth. Emma said that she had blocked the male on Facebook, but that did not stop him from making derogatory comments to her in person. Emma also shared that she had received mean messages on Facebook from people who she thought were her friends. After the audio recording had stopped, Emma shared that she had received multiple messages from males on Facebook who asked her to send nude photos of herself. Chase and Emma both recounted multiple experiences of being victims of cyberbullying. Both Chase and Emma were aware of who was cyberbullying them.

Jake, who posted videos of himself as a ventriloquist, also identified as being a victim of cyberbullying; however, Jake was unaware of who the perpetrators were. He shared his experience:

> Well, basically, what I do is when I post my videos, people talk about me and make fun of me and, so that I know that they're not into that. Some people told me to kill myself. I'm a bit shocked about it, it's kind of funny because they're just doing that to make me feel bad or they're just doing that because they're not feeling good about themselves.

Jake explained that he could delete the comments, but said, "I don't really mind it, I ignore it." Jake was not aware if he could block individual users from commenting on his videos on YouTube. He said that the cyberbullying had been happening for a long time and said, "It's people I don't know. I can see their username, but I do not know them." Jake did admit that he was shocked that the comments went as far as telling him to commit suicide, but he did not take any action to address the cyberbullying. Ethan was also a victim of cyberbullying, by multiple older students who did not attend the same high school as he did. Ethan made it clear that the mean comments did not affect him. He shared his experience: "People try to call me down on my Facebook. They said mean things on my Facebook wall. It doesn't really hurt. They said I'm weak. They stopped messaging me and they said they were sorry. I didn't really care." Ethan explained that he responded to the posts on his Facebook wall and said that he questioned the cyberbullies about the mean comments, he shared what he said: "Why are you doing this, and

what's wrong with you?" Nick had also been a victim of cyberbullying through Facebook; he shared that a 21 year old male was sending him threatening messages on Facebook. He explained:

> I was on Facebook and this message came up saying "Hey! beep, beep, beep, beep, why are you stealing my girlfriend and I'm gonna come after you, I'm gonna kill you." He said to stay away from his girlfriend and then I kept that message up on my mom's phone. I showed her the messages and I was like "Can I go to the police and show them this message?" So, I went there and showed them the messages.

Nick said that after he showed the police the threatening messages, the person stopped sending him messages. Chase, Emma, Jake, Ethan, and Nick all shared their experiences of being victims of cyberbullying. Many of the participants were cyberbullied through Facebook messages.

4.3.2 Cyberbullying bystanders: Online observers can make a difference.

All of the participants, except Emma, shared accounts of witnessing cyberbullying online. Many participants had friends who were cyberbullied and expressed a desire to prevent the cyberbullying from occurring. Lucas witnessed cyberbullying occurring from comments on YouTube videos. Lucas's friend, Adam, had a friend who uploaded videos on YouTube, and several people made mean and hurtful comments about the videos. Lucas shared the experience:

> There's this one person who had a YouTube channel, there are 52 subscribers. Basically, my friend Adam and I were just watching some of his friend's videos, and some of the videos were not that great because he was young. We had a little suspicion that there was something going on in the comments. Like, let me guess, two people like him, but fifty others, they just subscribe to him just to hate on him. Then I said to Adam, "Can't you do anything about it?" Well, he didn't, so then I told one of my friends that I met online and then she decided to do something about it, and then she did. She agreed to help the kid not be bullied anymore. She wrote in the comments section and said: "Hey kid, don't listen to these people who are bringing you down. Laugh at the face of fools because they're just jealous and you just keep doing what you like to do best."

Lucas was not aware of how to prevent Adam's friend from being cyberbullied, and elicited the help of a friend he had met online. Chase had also witnessed cyberbullying and similar to Lucas, Chase shared a desire intervene to support the victim, and challenge the cyberbullies. Chase's

friend used an online gaming website and was often the recipient of mean comments. Chase described an incident he had witnessed:

> My friend was online and his name is Roy. He was really being treated mean, and then he got called upstairs by his grandma and then I put the headphones on, and I took the headphones out and hooked it up to the speaker, and then I put it on my tablet and recorded it, and I said, "Yo, you know this isn't Roy. This is Chase." They're like, "Oh, hi, how are you?" I'm like, "Good, but you might want to watch what you say, because someone could be recording you."

Chase's strategy to address the cyberbullying was to record what the cyberbullies were saying to his friend in attempt to intimidate the perpetrators. He went on to say, "They got scared and they stopped cyberbullying a lot of people." Jake had also observed cyberbullying, and like Lucas and Chase, Jake felt the desire to intervene to support his friend from cyberbullying. Jake shared that he had a friend who uploaded videos to YouTube and people made mean comments about him. Jake shared that he responded to the mean comments:

> What happened is that when someone makes a mean comment on my friend's post, I try to talk to them, but they don't reply. His friends bully him, they know what ticks him off. He deleted his account because of that. Because his friends made fun of it.

Lucas, Chase, and Jake were all bystanders of cyberbullying, who sought to stop the cyberbullying and support the victim. Greg was not a victim of cyberbullying, but shared that he had observed mean comments on YouTube videos and shared, "It's kind of rude." Ethan shared that his younger sister was a victim of cyberbullying. He explained, "My sister has people always inboxing her on Facebook, saying stuff to her. She still has people inboxing her, calling her down. Sometimes they post it where everybody can see it or they inbox her through a private message." Ethan explained that his sister told their Aunt about the cyberbullying, and that led to a meeting taking place at the school to address the cyberbullying. Ethan said that after the meeting at school, the cyberbullying stopped. Like Ethan, Nick's younger sister was also a victim of cyberbullying. He shared:

> My sister was hanging out with her friend and they were on this game site on the Internet and this guy said to them, "I'm 14 years old, but then on Facebook he had no picture of himself. Then he kept messaging her saying "I'm gonna come find you guys so I can come take you." So after that, my sister came home and she told my stepdad and she

> started crying, she cried because she was scared that my mom was gonna yell at her, but my mom just talked to her about it.

Nick's sister experienced a frightening incident online, and Nick went on to share that they did not end up finding out who the male was. All of the male participants had been observers of cyberbullying. Lucas, Chase, and Jake all shared a desire to prevent the cyberbullying from occurring. Ethan and Nick both had younger sisters who were victims of cyberbullying.

4.3.3 How to handle a cyberbully: Strategies and adult involvement. Although Lucas was not a victim of cyberbullying, he had witnessed cyberbullying. When asked what strategies he would employ if he was a victim of cyberbullying, he shared:

> I would tell them to stop, and if they just kept on being mean, then I'd block and report that person. If that didn't work, then I'd just pretend that it didn't happen, or just try to forget about it.

When asked if he would tell an adult, he said, "No, I would just tell a few friends, tell my friends in real life." Emma and Jake were both victims of relentless cyberbullying, but shared that they did not confide in an adult about their experiences with cyberbullying, and felt that an adult would not make a difference. Both Emma and Jake did not employ any strategies beyond ignoring the perpetrators to address the cyberbullying. Jake said, "I try to ignore it." When Jake was asked if he had showed the mean comments on his YouTube videos to an adult, he shared: "Well, not really because they won't know at school. Because people can comment from around the world. And I don't know them so if I tell an adult, there's nothing they can do." Ethan shared that if he were being cyberbullied, he would say to the cyberbully, "Come say it to my face and say those things again" and when asked what he would do afterwards he said, "Probably tell them that words don't even hurt me." Ethan said he was aware of how to block people on Facebook if he needed. Ethan was another participant who said that if he were being cyberbullied he would not confide in an adult and "handle it on my own." Emma, Jake, and Ethan had all been victims of cyberbullying, but they indicated that they did not confide in an adult about their cyberbullying experiences. Although Lucas was not a victim of cyberbullying, he also would not confide in an adult if he were being cyberbullied.

As noted earlier, Chase shared a cyberbullying incident where he was a victim of cyberbullying and received threatening messages on Facebook. His mom checked on his Facebook account and saw the messages from the cyberbully, and she involved the police to help

prevent the cyberbullying from happening. Once the police were involved, Chase said the cyberbullying stopped. Chase also witnessed a friend being cyberbullied and Chase employed a strategy in order to get the cyberbullies to stop saying mean comments to his friend. He recorded what the cyberbullies were saying to his friend without their knowledge, and warned the cyberbullies to be careful what they said to others. Nick was a victim of cyberbullying, and he confided in his mom about the cyberbullying and they went to the police. Once the police were contacted, Nick said that he was no longer cyberbullied by the person. He also shared that he blocked the cyberbully on Facebook. Chase and Nick both had involvement from a parent and the police to help prevent the cyberbullying from reoccurring. Nick also went on to list several strategies he would use if he were being cyberbullied again: tell his parents, contact the police, talk to a school counsellor, or call the Kids Help Phone. Nick also said that if he were to witness someone being cyberbullied on Facebook, he would report the post. Greg was not a victim of cyberbullying, but shared that if he was, he would tell his parents or a teacher if the cyberbullying happened at school.

4.3.4 Cyberbullying insight: Why are people so mean online? Some of the participants expressed their thoughts and feelings about cyberbullying and shared how cyberbullying could be prevented, and further, identified what might lead an individual to cyberbully others. Lucas shared his feelings about cyberbullying, "Cyberbullying happens just about every day and sometimes when people are just being confrontational and they don't want to communicate or cooperate with you, you just sometimes have to block that person because they're not worth your time." Jake reasoned why cyberbullies engage in victimizing others: "I think people just do it because they don't feel good about themselves and, yeah they just try to make other people's life's miserable." Nick shared his insight into the anonymity of the Internet: "It could be a 50 year old man, it could be some 14 year old man. It could be anybody." Nick demonstrated an understanding that individuals can pretend to be someone else online.

Chase, Greg, and Nick all expressed unique, but unrealistic perspectives for preventing cyberbullying from occurring. Chase said that if it were possible he would convert negative comments online into positive comments as a method of preventing cyberbullying, "Online, if I had a choice, I would automatically take negative thoughts and just put a little microchip in and block any negative comment, so if someone's saying, 'I really don't like you. I'm going to kill you,' it would say, 'I really like you. I'm going to hug you.'" Greg felt that, "Banning the

cyberbully from the Internet" would help prevent cyberbullying from occurring. Nick shared that more security is required on the Internet, and that whoever invented the Internet needed to make it more secure. He also said that the people who invented Facebook and Instagram needed to create better security.

The participants all shared their experiences with cyberbullying, whether they were victims or observers of cyberbullying. While some of the participants were able to identify strategies to address being cyberbullied, others demonstrated limited knowledge and understanding of how to address the cyberbullying. Further, many of the participants shared that they would not confide in an adult about their cyberbullying experiences, and felt that adults would not be able to prevent the cyberbullying from occurring. However, two participants, Chase and Nick, both had involvement from their parents and the police when they were victims of cyberbullying, and shared that involving adults helped to prevent the cyberbullying from occurring again. The participants shared mixed feelings regarding the involvement of adults in preventing cyberbullying.

4.4 Summary

The experiences of seven secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program were explored to gain an understanding of how the students used technology and to gain a sense of their online experiences, and to understand their experiences and perceptions related to bullying and cyberbullying. Three themes emerged from the participant interviews using social-ecological theory as the theoretical framework for analyzing the data: (1) Navigating the complexities of technology usage; (2) The multiple facets of bullying: Victims, bystanders, and peer aggression; and (3) It could be anyone: The emotional experiences of cyberbullying victims and bystanders. The final chapter will summarize and discuss the participants' experiences in relation to existing literature, practical implications of the findings, strengths and limitations of the study, and areas for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter reviews and summarizes the main findings of the study, and integrates the findings within the existing literature. Following this discussion, implications for educators, strengths and limitations of the current study, and areas for future research are presented.

The purpose of the present study was to explore how secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program used technology and their online experiences, and to explore their perceptions and experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying. A basic interpretive qualitative research approach was used to understand the experiences and perceptions of the participants. The participants in this study included seven secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education program. Data analysis revealed three major themes: (1) Navigating the complexities of technology usage, (2) The multiple facets of bullying: Victims, bystanders, and peer aggression, and (3) It could be anyone: The emotional experiences of cyberbullying victims and bystanders. Social-ecological theory was used as the theoretical framework for understanding the interrelated relationship between the individual and family, peer group, school, community, and culture factors that influence involvement in bullying and cyberbullying (Baldry et al., 2015; Cross et al., 2015; Espelage et al., 2013; Rose et al., 2015a; Swearer & Espelage, 2011; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a).

5.1 Summary of Findings

The first theme focused on the participants' use of technology and online experiences, including self-expression, social connection, social difficulty, and online safety. All of the seven participants reported having access to a computer, whether it was located in their home, at a friend's house, at school, or at a public library. Common computer activities included using the Internet to access online gaming websites, access social media websites, watch videos on YouTube, and browse the Internet, and all of the participants used a computer for typing homework assignments. All of the male participants, except one, used a computer to access online gaming websites. All of the seven participants reported having had access to a cellphone, and four out of the seven participants had access to a tablet at one point. Common cellphone activities included: watching YouTube videos, listening to music, and accessing social media. The seven participants had integrated the use of technology into their daily lives, with many of the participants using technology such as computers, cellphones, and tablets on a daily basis.

Three of the male participants, Lucas, Chase, and Jake, reported having their own YouTube channels and created videos to upload to YouTube. Emma and Jake both reported posting pictures to their social media accounts such as Facebook or Instagram. For some of the participants, the use of technology had allowed for the opportunity to express their uniqueness and share their creations with others. All of the participants had social media accounts, including Google+, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, with the exception of Greg, who did not have any social media accounts. Many of the participants used their cellphones to make plans and communicate with their peers. However, for some of the participants, the use of technology such as cellphones or social media, did not allow for social connection with others. Further, the use of technology created a lack of connection and communication, and at times, frustration with the lack of social connection. It was evident that the use of technology was an important aspect in the lives of the participants, but not all participants were aware of online safety and security. Some of the participants limited what was shared on social media and limited who they were Facebook friends with, but most of the participants were unable to identify strategies to protect themselves online beyond using the blocking function.

The second theme focused on the participants' involvement with bullying, including victims, bystanders, peer aggression, and strategies to deal with bullying. Five out of the seven participants were victims of relentless and ongoing bullying. The participants experienced multiple forms of bullying, including verbal, relational, and physical bullying. The participants who were victimized disclosed a mix of emotions including anger, hurt, confusion, and frustration because of their involvement with bullying. Ethan and Nick were not victims of bullying, but had observed physical altercations at school and both had sisters who were victims of relentless bullying. Three of the male participants, Ethan, Nick, and Chase, were witness to physical altercations at school. Four of the male participants, Lucas, Chase, Nick, and Ethan were involved in incidents of physical aggression and intimidation with their peers, and each participant attempted to justify their aggressive behaviours. Some of the participants identified strategies to address bullying, while others were unable to identify strategies to protect themselves from bullies. Instead, some participants did not employ any strategies to manage the bullying. Further, only one participant involved an adult as a strategy to help manage the bullying, but the adults were unsuccessful at preventing the bullying from reoccurring. The remaining participants did not confide in an adult about their experiences with bullying, and

feared the repercussion of involving an authority figure. The participants expressed their thoughts and feelings towards bullying, and further, identified what may lead an individual to bully others. The participants felt that bullying others was wrong and further, two participants, Chase and Nick, felt bullying could be prevented with an increase in adult supervision.

The third theme involved the participants' experiences with cyberbullying as victims and observers, and strategies that were used to address cyberbullying. Five out of the seven participants were victims of cyberbullying, and some participants shared multiple experiences involving cyberbullying. Chase, Emma, Ethan, and Nick were all victims of cyberbullying through Facebook, and each of the participants knew the identity of the perpetrators. Additionally, Emma shared an experience about cyberbullying that involved males asking her to send inappropriate pictures of herself through Facebook. It was evident that many of the participants experienced cyberbullying through Facebook. Chase shared a cyberbullying experience that involved someone he knew using his personal information to access inappropriate websites. Jake was cyberbullied by individuals who made inappropriate comments on his YouTube videos, but was not aware of who the perpetrators were. All of the male participants shared experiences with witnessing cyberbullying. Three out of the six male participants expressed a desire to prevent the cyberbullying from occurring and provided support to the victims. Emma, Jake, and Ethan were victims of relentless cyberbullying, but indicated that they did not confide in an adult about their experiences with cyberbullying, and felt that an adult would not make a difference. Although Lucas was not a victim of cyberbullying, he also would not confide in an adult if he were being cyberbullied. Two participants, Chase and Nick, who were both victims of cyberbullying, had involvement from their parents and the police to prevent the cyberbullying from reoccurring. It was evident that the participants shared mixed feelings regarding the involvement of adults in preventing cyberbullying.

Some of participants expressed their thoughts and feelings towards cyberbullying and further, three participants shared unique perspectives for preventing cyberbullying. Lucas shared that for some people, cyberbullying was a daily occurrence and that sometimes the best strategy was to block the cyberbully. Jake reasoned that some people cyberbullied others because they did not feel good about themselves and in turn wanted to hurt others. Nick demonstrated an awareness of the anonymity the Internet allows for. Chase, Greg, and Nick all expressed unique, but unrealistic perspectives for preventing cyberbullying from occurring. Chase said that if it

were possible he would convert negative comments online into positive comments as a method of preventing cyberbullying. Greg felt that banning cyberbullies from using the Internet would help prevent cyberbullying from occurring. Nick felt that additional security is required on the Internet, and on social media websites such as Facebook or Instagram, and that whoever invented the Internet needed to make it more secure.

5.2 Integration of Findings with Existing Literature

5.2.1 Navigating the complexities of technology. Technology such as computers, cellphones, and tablets, and the associated use of the Internet have become the standard for children and adolescents to socialize with peers, learn about the world, and experiment with self-identity (Good & Fang, 2015). The use of technology and Internet activities have been associated with benefits such as social connection with others, a source of information, and a means of expressing creativity (Reid & Weigle, 2014). However, Internet activities are also associated with risks, and some adolescents, particularly those with exceptionalities, may be at a heightened risk for experiencing negative consequences online such as exposure to inappropriate content, harassment, cyberbullying, or internet overuse (Good & Fang, 2015; Kuo et al., 2014; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Therefore, it is important to determine if the technology use patterns of students with exceptionalities and those in different education programs place students at a greater risk for experiencing adverse outcomes such as victimization online (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The results of the present study found that students in the Alternative Education were victims and observers of cyberbullying.

The current study contributed to the lack of research in the area of technology use patterns among students in different education settings. The results of the current study found that secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program had access to a variety of technology devices such as gaming consoles, computers, cellphones, and tablets, with the majority of the participants using some form of technology on a daily basis. As previous research is limited in the area of the technology use patterns and online experiences of students in different educational programs, and because typically developing students were not interviewed, the findings can be compared to previous research involving typically developing students. The Pew Research Center (2015) examined the technology use patterns among adolescents who ranged in age from 13 to 17 years old in a nationally representative study. The Pew Research Center (2015) found that 87% of youth had access to a computer, and 58% had

access to a tablet. All the seven participants in the current study had access to a computer, at home, school, a friend's house, or public library, and four of the participants had access to a tablet at one point, and these findings are similar to the findings from the Pew Research Center (2015). All of the seven participants had access to a cellphone, and the Pew Research Center (2015) found that 88% of youth had access to a cellphone. The seven participants had similar access to technology as the Pew Research Center (2015) found among typically developing youth.

Wells and Mitchell (2014) found that 68% of youth receiving special education services and 75% of typically developing youth used the Internet for more than four days per week, with the most frequent location of Internet use being at home followed by Internet use at school, for both groups of youth (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). In the current study, the majority of the seven participants had accessed the Internet at home and at school, and some reported daily use of the Internet. Wells and Mitchell (2014) found that youth who received special education services used the Internet for fewer days per week than youth not receiving special education services. Both Chase and Lucas were two participants who reported using a computer or tablet in their bedroom and both participants had reported the most frequent use of technology, with both citing using technology for multiple hours per day, and comparable to the technology use patterns of typically developing students. The results of the current study found that the majority of the participants were victims of cyberbullying, indicating that there is some degree of risk associated with the students' internet use patterns.

The Internet allows for adolescents to experience a wide variety of opportunities to connect, create, and express themselves (Good & Fin, 2015; O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Technology can be used as a means for adolescents to express their personal creativity and share their creations with others (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Adolescents can post writing, music, or other forms of expression online, and receive feedback, which can facilitate interaction with others who have similar interest or talents (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Three participants, Lucas, Chase, and Jake, had their own YouTube channels and created videos and posted the videos to YouTube as a means of expressing themselves and sharing their creativity with others. Additionally, Jake and Emma both used their cellphones to take pictures and upload the pictures to social media websites. Lucas, Chase, Jake, and Emma all used technology devices such as cellphones and tablets, and social media as a means for expressing their personal

creativity and sharing their creations with others. Sharing personal creations with others is associated with a desire for social connection and interaction with others (Good & Fin, 2015; O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

Social media use among adolescents has become a main form of communication and connection with others, and plays a central role in the lives of youth (Reid & Weigle, 2014). All of the participants in the current study, except one, had social media accounts, with most accessing their social media accounts on a daily basis, and some accessing their accounts multiple times per day. Five out of the seven participants had a Facebook account, and one participant primarily used Google+. Similar to the findings of the Pew Research Center (2015) which identified Facebook as the most popular and frequently used social media website by youth, the findings of the current study also indicated that Facebook was the most commonly used social media website among the youth participants.

5.2.2 The multiple facets of bullying: Victims, bystanders, and peer aggression.

Bullying is characterized by three key components: aggressive behaviour that is intended to cause harm to others, carried out repeatedly over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength between the perpetrator and the victim (Olweus, 1993). Bullying among students with exceptionalities in different education programs and in inclusive settings has not been an extensively researched area as compared to bullying among typically developing students (Rose et al., 2011; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Social-ecological framework has been used to explain involvement in bullying for typically developing students, and has recently been applied to understanding the involvement in bullying among students with exceptionalities and students in special education settings (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). According to social-ecological theory, there are a number of individual risk factors that can predict involvement in the bullying dynamic for students with exceptionalities and students in different education programs, and there is also an interaction between the individual risk factors and the family, peer, school, community, and cultural influences (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al, 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). According to social-ecological theory, the microsystem includes the family, peer, and school systems in which youth have direct interaction with (Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a). The microsystem has been found to

have the most direct influence on involvement in bullying (Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Swearer & Hymel, 2015a).

The type of exceptionality has been identified as an individual risk factor that can influence involvement in bullying at the microsystem level, according to social-ecological theory (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). Maiano, Aime, Salvas, Morin, and Normand (2016) conducted a systematic review on the prevalence rates of bullying involvement among youth with an Intellectual Disability (ID) in regular education and special education programs as compared to typically developing students. Overall, it was found that students with an ID did not experience victimization of bullying at higher rates than other youth, and that all groups of students experienced victimization (Maiano et al., 2016). Additionally, it was found that for students with an ID, social skills deficits were greater risk factors for victimization than the cognitive impairment associated with a diagnosis of an ID (Maiano et al., 2016). According to social-ecological theory, individual characteristics place students at risk for involvement in the bullying dynamic (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). The majority of the participants in the current study identified as being a victim of bullying, and it is possible that difficulties related to social skills rather than cognitive impairment may have impacted the students' involvement in bullying as victims. However, further research using a social-ecological framework is needed to explore the individual factors that may contribute to the risk of involvement in bullying.

Family factors have been found to have an influence on the bullying involvement of children and youth (Espelage, 2014). The parent-child relationship has an important influence on involvement in bullying as it has been found that supportive family relationships can help to buffer the negative impact of bullying on children and youth, and also provide an opportunity for children and youth to discuss their experiences and cope with bullying (Espelage, 2014). In the current study, the five participants who were victims of bullying did not confide in a family member about their experiences with bullying. This finding is concerning because the majority of the participants were also reluctant to involve an adult at school to address the bullying, and as such, this finding highlights the importance that bullying prevention programs should include educating students in an Alternative Education Program about what to do if they are experiencing bullying.

The microsystem involves an interaction between the individual and peer factors that can influence involvement in bullying (Farmer et al., 2015). Peer factors such as competence with social situations and the social placement of students can impact involvement in bullying (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). Students enrolled in a different education program may experience social difficulties, and may also experience lower levels of social support compared to typically developing students (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). Some of the participants in the current study shared their experiences related to social difficulties with their peers such as a lack of social connection and frustration with social interactions. As the microsystem involves an interaction between the individual and their peers, it is possible the some of the participants' social difficulties and lack of connection with their peers impacted their involvement in bullying.

The school setting can impact students' involvement in the bullying dynamic in the microsystem, as involvement in bullying has been found to be related to an interaction between the individual and school factors. The educational placement of students is a risk factor that can impact involvement in the bullying dynamic (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). It has been found that students who are in special education programs are at an increased risk for becoming victims of bullying and also, for becoming perpetrators of bullying than students in a regular education program (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The participants in the current study were enrolled in a different education program, the Alternative Education Program, and five out of the seven participants reported being victims of bullying. However, none of the participants self-identified as being perpetrators of bullying. The results of the current study are similar to previous research studies that found students in a different education program were at an increased risk for experiencing victimization as the majority of the participants in the current study were victimized (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Rose et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011a; Rose et al., 2011b; Swearer et al., 2012; Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

The microsystem includes the school environment and student perceptions regarding the overall safety of the school, and are related to involvement in bullying and aggressive behaviours, according to social-ecological theory (Farmer et al., 2015; Hong & Espelage, 2002;

Swearer & Hymel, 2015a; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b; Wang et al., 2013). Negative perceptions of the school environment, including a lack of school connectedness and lower levels of adult supervision can increase bullying and aggressive behaviours, and have an impact on students' feelings of safety at school (Espelage et al., 2013; Hong & Espelage, 2002). Two participants shared that they felt an increase in adult supervision at school may help to reduce incidents of bullying. It has been found that school environments where bullying is more prevalent, can have an impact on student willingness to ask for help to address bullying, and students were less likely to ask for help compared to schools where bullying is not as prevalent (Bandyopadhyay, Cornell, & Konold, 2009). Out of the five participants who were victims of bullying, four participants did not involve an adult to address the bullying, and the participants shared a reluctance to confide in adults and feared the repercussions of telling an adult. The remaining participant who was a victim of relentless verbal, relational, and physical bullying did involve a teacher, who then involved the school principal, in addressing the bullying the participant was experiencing, but adult involvement did not help to prevent the bullying from occurring again. At the microsystem level, student perceptions of the school environment and perceptions of adult involvement in bullying can have an impact on involvement in bullying (Espelage et al., 2013). This finding is significant because it highlights the need for bullying prevention programs for students in a different education program to focus on increasing the students' willingness to ask for help when they are involved in bullying (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). According to social-ecological theory in the microsystem, a cycle can be created where victims of bullying feel as though adult involvement in addressing bullying will not make a difference, and as a result, do not convey their concerns to an adult, which means that teachers do not intervene in preventing the bullying from occurring, and the bullies continue to bully others, without consequences (Espelage et al., 2013). The school environment can have a significant impact on the bullying behaviours of students (Espelage et al., 2013).

An unexpected finding of the current study was that four out of the six male participants were involved in incidents of peer aggression, but did not self-identify as bullies. Interestingly, one of the male students involved in peer aggression had identified that he felt an increase in supervision at school might help to reduce incidents of bullying. Further, three out of the four students involved in the peer aggression incidents had all shared accounts of witnessing

aggressive behaviours among students at school, which may have contributed to a negative perception of the school environment. At the microsystem level, student perceptions of the overall safety of the school can impact involvement in aggressive and bullying behaviours (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Children and youth who exhibit aggressive behaviours are thought to disengage from their own personal moral standards in order to justify their negative behaviours (Bandura, 1999; Barchia & Bussey, 2011). It has been hypothesized that there is a relationship between moral disengagement and aggression (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). Moral disengagement can occur in order to justify engaging in aggressive behaviours through cognitive restructuring which involves moral justification and euphemistic labeling (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Gina, Pozzoli, & Hymel, 2014; Jimerson, Swearer, & Espelage, 2010). Moral justification is when negative behaviour is viewed as warranted and serving a worthy purpose (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Gina et al., 2014; Jimerson et al., 2010). For example, an individual may feel that aggression is socially and personally acceptable by associating it with a worthy purpose such as engaging in a physical altercation to protect a friend (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). Euphemistic labeling is another form of moral disengagement that involves reframing language to make negative acts sound justified and respectable (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Jimerson et al., 2010). Aggression may be viewed as acceptable if it is labeled in the form of teaching someone a lesson (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). Children and youth may also engage in aggressive behaviour by disregarding or distorting the negative impact of the behaviour by minimizing, ignoring, or misconstruing the consequences of the aggression (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Jimerson et al., 2010). For example, children may justify their behaviour by saying "It didn't really hurt the person" (Barchia & Bussey, 2011).

Lucas engaged in a form of cognitive restructuring including moral justification and euphemistic labeling in order to justify physical aggression directed at a male in his peer group. The incident involved Lucas encouraging his peer group to engage in a physical altercation with the male. Lucas reframed the physical aggression and disengaged from his own personal moral standards in order to view the aggression as serving a worthy purpose: to protect his friends (moral justification), and to teach the male a lesson (euphemistic labeling). Chase described an incident where he disengaged from his own personal morals in order to justify his physical aggression. Chase shared that one of his friends had his arm broken by a bully and Chase engaged in a physical altercation with the bully, and broke his finger. Chase justified his

aggressive behaviour by distorting the negative impact of his behaviour by indicating that he caused minimal harm to his peer, and minimized the negative impact of his aggression. Chase further justified his actions by reasoning that his aggression was for a worthy cause if it served the purpose of protecting a friend. As shared earlier, Chase was a victim of bullying and he responded to the bullying with threats of physical aggression, including threatening to break the bully's arm. Chase felt justified to respond with physical intimidation because he reasoned that he was a victim of relentless bullying. Nick had described an ongoing, back and forth conflict between him and a peer, and Nick felt justified to engage in a physical altercation because the peer had called him names. Ethan's younger sister was a victim of bullying, and asked Ethan to help stop the bullying from occurring. Ethan engaged in intimidation to prevent the bullying, and felt justified to protect his sister. Lucas, Chase, Nick, and Ethan all disengaged from their moral standards in order to justify their aggressive behaviours, and used cognitive restructuring and minimized the impact of their actions in order to justify engaging in the behaviours.

Social-ecological framework has been applied to understanding the involvement in bullying among students with exceptionalities and students in different education programs (Farmer et al., 2015; Swearer & Hymel, 2015b; Rose & Gage, 2017; Rose et al., 2015a; Rose et al., 2015b). Involvement in bullying is related to an interplay of individual, family, peer, school, community, and cultural factors (Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Espelage, 2011). A focus on understanding the microsystem that includes family, peer, and school factors is important because it has been found that the microsystem has the most direct influence on involvement in bullying among youth (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer & Espelage, 2011). The current study focused primarily on the microsystem that included an interaction between the participants and family, peer, and school factors related to involvement in bullying. The majority of the participants were involved in bullying as victims, and it is possible that the participants' experiences were related to a number of factors including: family factors such as parent involvement in addressing bullying, peer factors such as social difficulties and a lack of peer support, and school factors such as the educational placement, perceptions of school safety and teacher involvement, and observations of peer aggression. Future research is recommended in order to further explore the influence of the microsystem on involvement in bullying, and can include areas such as the parent-child relationship, parenting practices, peer relationships, and school environment. Additionally, future research exploring

the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem is needed in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of risk factors for involvement in bullying among students in an Alternative Education Program.

5.2.3. It could be anyone: The emotional experiences of cyberbullying victims and bystanders. Cyberbullying is a relatively recent phenomenon that has not been as extensively researched as bullying; however, it has been found that cyberbullying can have a profound and devastating impact on adolescents as a result of constant exposure to technology (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Notar, Padgett, & Rodent, 2013). Cyberbullying is defined as deliberate behaviour intended to cause harm, and reflects a pattern of behaviour, not just related to a single incident, using computers, cellphones, and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Cyberbullying can occur through the use of social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, chatrooms, email, cellphone texting, instant messaging, or blogs (Notar et al., 2013). The current study examined the cyberbullying experiences of youth in a different education program, utilizing a qualitative research approach, as the previous studies involving the cyberbullying experiences of students in a different education program were conducted using quantitative research measures (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Wells & Mitchell, 2014).

Few research studies have applied a social-ecological framework for understanding students' involvement in cyberbullying, and there are currently no studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences of students with exceptionalities and students in different education programs from a social-ecological perspective (Cross et al., 2015; Baldry et al., 2015). An individual risk factor for understanding involvement in cyberbullying is the use of technology, according to social-ecological theory (Cross et al., 2015; Baldry et al., 2015). The use of technology and Internet activities are associated with many positive outcomes for youth, but those with exceptionalities may be at a heightened risk for experiencing negative consequences online such as exposure to inappropriate content, harassment, cyberbullying, or Internet overuse (Didden et al., 2009; Good & Fang, 2015; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Kuo et al., 2014; Wells & Mitchell, 2014). The frequency of computer use has been linked to the likelihood of becoming a victim of cyberbullying using the Internet (Didden et al., 2009). The participants in the current study used technology in a similar manner to typically developing students, with the majority of the participants using technology on a daily basis and the majority of the participants

were victims of cyberbullying. According to Didden et al. (2009) the frequency of Internet use has been found to predict involvement in cyberbullying, and the results of the current study support this finding.

There are currently two research studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences among adolescents who did not attend regular education classes, and were enrolled in a different education program (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013) and one study that differentiated between students who were receiving special education services and students who were not (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Didden et al. (2009) examined the cyberbullying experiences of students diagnosed with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in special education settings. The researchers concluded that students with disabilities had a somewhat lower probability of being victimized and/or a cyberbully than typically developing peers, but stated that this was not a firm conclusion as there is a lack of research in the area. Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2013) found that students attending special education classes were more often victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying than other students, and were more often both a victim and perpetrator of cyberbullying than students in regular education classes. Wells and Mitchell (2014) examined the technology use patterns of youth with and without exceptionalities receiving special education services compared to typically developing students and found that youth receiving special education services in schools were more likely to report being victimized online. The results of the present study found that five out of the seven participants were victims of cyberbullying, and the results are similar to the findings of Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2013) and Wells and Mitchell (2014) studies, as both studies found that students in a different education program were more likely to become victims of cyberbullying. However, the results of the current study found that students in an Alternative Education Program did not disclose incidents of perpetrating cyberbullying, and these findings are contrary to the findings of Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2013) and Wells and Mitchell (2014). Further research is needed to explore the cyberbullying experiences of students in different education programs, and to specifically explore school factors, such as the educational placement, that may contribute to the risk of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying bystanders may witness cyberbullying online as it is occurring or view the cyberbullying after it had already occurred (Allison & Bussey, 2016). Observers of cyberbullying may intervene in order to support the victim or report the cyberbullying to adults

(Allison & Bussey, 2016). The results of the current study found that the majority of the participants had observed cyberbullying, and additionally, some of the participants attempted to intervene to support the victim and end the cyberbullying.

Hinduja and Patchin (2008) found that there was a link between cyberbullying and bullying; youth who were victims of bullying at school were significantly more likely to become victims of cyberbullying. These findings are similar to the current study as it was found that three of the participants were both victims of bullying and cyberbullying. This finding is important for educators, helping professionals, and parents to be aware of when assessing for risk for involvement in cyberbullying, as it was found that three participants were victims of both bullying and cyberbullying. Additionally, it was found that the majority of the participants did not confide in an adult about their experiences with cyberbullying, and these results are similar to Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2013) who found that students in a special education program were less likely to tell an adult about their experiences with cyberbullying than students in a regular education program.

According to social-ecological theory, family factors can contribute to involvement in cyberbullying victimization among youth (Cross et al., 2015; Baldry et al., 2015). Parent control over the use of technology and supervision of youth's online activities can impact involvement in cyberbullying (Cross et al., 2015; Baldry et al., 2015). It has been found that cyberbullying victimization is associated with low levels of parent control of technology (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, Lattanner, 2014). The results of the current study found that only two participants had parents who were involved in their use of technology, however both participants were victims of cyberbullying, but after adult involvement occurred, the cyberbullying did not continue.

Social-ecological framework has recently been applied to understanding the involvement in cyberbullying among typically developing students, but has not been applied to students with exceptionalities and students in different education programs (Cross et al., 2015; Baldry et al., 2015). Similar to bullying, involvement in cyberbullying is related to an interplay of individual, family, peer, school, community, and cultural factors (Cross et al., 2015; Baldry et al., 2015). The cyberbullying experiences of the participants in the current study focused primarily on individual factors and the influence of family, peer, and school factors at the microsystem level. It is important for future research to further explore individual, family, peer, and school factors

related to students in a different education program (Cross et al., 2015; Baldry et al., 2015). Additionally, future research that focuses on the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem is needed in order to gain an understanding of the risk factors for involvement in cyberbullying.

5.3 Implications for Educators and Helping Professionals

The results of this study provided insight into the technology use patterns, online experiences, and experiences related to bullying and cyberbullying of seven secondary students enrolled in an Alternative Education Program. The findings highlight several important implications for educators and helping professionals working in a school setting as well as for parents of students in an Alternative Education Program. It was evident that the seven participants in this study had integrated the use of technology, whether it was cellphones, tablets, or computers, into their everyday lives. The participants demonstrated knowledge about how to use technology in a variety of forms, but not all of the participants were aware of how to utilize technology in a responsible and safe manner. As the frequent use of technology was the norm for the participants, the findings from this study highlight the importance and need for students to be educated on how to use technology securely and appropriately, specifically, the importance of digital citizenship. Digital citizenship is a term that refers to "the norms of appropriate, responsible behavior in regard to technology use and is a method of preparing students for a society full of technology" (Ribble, 2017, para. 1). In Saskatchewan, an action plan entitled Digital Citizenship in Saskatchewan Schools (Couros & Hildebrandt, 2015) was created in response to the Saskatchewan Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying (Campeau, 2013). The action plan proposed to "support the instruction and responsible online behaviour for Kindergarten through Grade 12 students" and serve as a guide for school divisions and school administrators in developing and implementing digital citizenship policies, using Ribble's (2017) elements of digital citizenship (Couros & Hildebrandt, 2015, preface). While it is important that students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 are educated about digital citizenship, it is also important that educators include students in an Alternative Education Program in instruction involving digital citizenship.

Ribble (2017) proposed nine themes of digital citizenship in order to provide a framework for understanding the components of digital citizenship, falling under three categories: respect, educate, and protect. Within each category are sub-categories: Respect:

Digital Etiquette (i.e., electronic standards of conduct or procedures), Digital Access (i.e., full electronic participation in society), and Digital Law (i.e., electronic responsibility for actions and deeds); Educate: Digital Communication (i.e., electronic exchange of information), Digital Literacy (i.e., the process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology), and Digital Commerce (i.e., the electronic bullying and selling of goods); Protect: Digital Rights and Responsibilities (i.e., the freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world), Digital Safety and Security (i.e., electronic precautions to guarantee safety), and Digital Health and Wellness (i.e., physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world). It is important for school divisions and school administrators to give careful consideration to students in an Alternative Education Program when developing policies for digital citizenship in order to determine how to effectively teach the students about responsible and safe use of technology. It is important for teachers to have access to resources and professional development opportunities regarding digital citizenship, and that teachers receive support for implementing digital citizenship education into instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students in an Alternative Education Program. This also highlights the need for future research involving how to effectively implement a program on digital citizenship for students in different education programs.

It is important for educators to understand that students in an Alternative Education Program have integrated technology into their everyday lives, and it is also important that parents are educated on how to teach their children to use technology safely and responsibly. Educators and helping professionals such as school guidance counsellors, social workers, and psychologists can educate and support parents of students in an Alternative Education program on how to teach their child to use technology securely. It is important that parents are aware that students' use of technology and online experiences should be monitored. In this study, it was found that only two participants involved an adult in experiences with cyberbullying, and in both cases, adult involvement did prevent the cyberbullying from occurring again. However, the remaining participants who had experienced cyberbullying believed that adult involvement would not make a difference in preventing the cyberbullying from occurring. This finding is concerning because the majority of the participants were victims of cyberbullying and also believed that adult involvement would not make a difference in addressing the cyberbullying, and as a result, suffered in silence and isolation. Kowalski et al. (2015) found that typically

developing students may not report cyberbullying experiences due to a fear of losing access to technology. This common theme among the participants highlights the importance of both educators, including helping professionals, and parents educating students in an Alternative Education Program about how to use technology in a safe and responsible manner, including how to address cyberbullying.

While it is important that policies for implementing digital citizenship education to students in an Alternative Education Program address the diverse learning needs of the students, it is also important that school policies on bullying and cyberbullying are inclusive, and include students enrolled in different educational programs. All of the participants experienced bullying and cyberbullying in some form, whether it was as a victim or bystander. This finding highlights the importance of bullying and cyberbullying prevention programs including students in an Alternative Education Program. An important finding of this study was that many of the participants were unable to demonstrate knowledge of how to address bullying and cyberbullying, and some were hesitant to involve an adult in both bullying and cyberbullying experiences. It is important to educate students in an Alternative Education Program about how to address bullying and cyberbullying, including teaching the students' strategies that could be implemented during bullying and cyberbullying incidents. It is also important to educate students' regarding the importance of adult involvement in addressing bullying and cyberbullying.

An interesting finding of this study was that the majority of the male participants handled conflict with their peers with physical aggression and intimidation. The male participants utilized inappropriate, aggressive behaviour to address conflict with their peers, and felt justified to do so. It would be beneficial to students in an Alternative Education Program to be educated on conflict resolution, problem solving skills, and social skills, in order to teach students' alternative strategies for handling conflict with their peers, rather than viewing aggressive behaviour as the only option.

5.4 Strengths of the Current Study

This study has three main areas of strength. Firstly, this study provides insight into the technology use and online experiences, and bullying and cyberbullying experiences of secondary students in an Alternative Education program. Participant accounts of their experiences help to gain an understanding of how students in an Alternative Education Program experience and use

technology. The participants also shared their experiences, feelings, and insights about bullying and cyberbullying, leading to an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the participants.

Secondly, information shared by the participants provides educators, helping professionals, and parents with insight into the experiences the participants had with technology, bullying, and cyberbullying. The findings demonstrate the importance of teaching students in the Alternative Education Program about digital citizenship, and that policies on digital citizenship need to include all students in all programs. Teachers may benefit from professional development opportunities on digital citizenship, and also from support in adapting policies on digital citizenship to meet the learning needs of students in an Alternative Education Program. The findings also highlight the need for parents to educate their children on the appropriate use of technology, and that parents may require support from educators or helping professionals on how to do so. Valuable insight was gained regarding the students bullying and cyberbullying experiences, and highlight that it is important for educators, helping professionals, and parents to have discussions with students in the Alterative Education Program about their experiences.

Lastly, a strength of this study was that it contributed to the lack of research in the area of how students access technology and in the area of bullying and cyberbullying among students in a different education program. There is limited research in the area of understanding how students in different education programs use technology and about their online experiences. This study provided insight into how secondary students in an Alternative Education Program use technology and about their online experiences, and contributed to the lack of research in this area. Also, few studies have investigated the bullying and cyberbullying experiences of students' enrolled in different education programs. This study has provided insight and understanding into the experiences that the participants shared with bullying and cyberbullying, and contributed to limited research in the area, particularly with utilizing a qualitative research approach.

5.5 Limitations of the Current Study

There are three potential limitations related to this study. The first limitation was that interviews were used as the method of data collection, and included participants providing in-depth detail about their experiences related to the research questions. However, students were free to share whatever experiences they were comfortable sharing and to not share if they did not

wish too. This may mean that some students did not self-identify as bullies, victims, or witnesses. The majority of the male participants were involved in incidents of peer aggression, but did not self-identity as perpetrators of bullying; however, it is possible that the participants may have been classified as bullies by other students. Students in the Alterative Education Program have intellectual impairment and academic difficulty, which may result in the students' experiencing difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings clearly, and in detail. However, the purpose of the study was to gain understanding and insight into the students' experiences with technology, bullying, and cyberbullying, which involved students' expressing their own perceptions.

A second limitation of the study was that the diagnoses of the students were not known, and therefore the results may not be representative of all students in Alternative Education Programs or to students with specific difficulties. It is difficult to make specific associations among the technology use patterns of groups of students and specific difficulties, if diagnoses are unknown. An awareness of the diagnoses of students in the Alternative Education Program could lead to a more in-depth understanding of the technology use patterns and experiences with bullying and cyberbullying. Future research that includes gaining an understanding of student diagnoses will contribute to a greater understanding of the bullying and cyberbullying experiences of students in an Alternative Education Program.

A third limitation was that the sample size was small and the majority of the participants were male. Further research that includes a larger sample size and a greater number of female participants is needed.

5.6 Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study have several implications for future research based on the experiences of the students in the Alternative Education Program. This study contributed to limited research involving students in a different education program, and provides a starting point for further qualitative research. Further research involving students in different education programs is still needed to gain further understanding of the technology use patterns and involvement with bullying and cyberbullying. Quantitative research that includes an examination of gender differences is needed in order to gain an understanding of the experiences of both females and males in different education programs, and may lead to an understanding of a larger population of students in different education programs. Additionally, an examination of

students' diagnoses and associated strengths and challenges may lead to a greater understanding of the students' experiences with technology and involvement with bullying and cyberbullying.

Another area of future research involves including teachers and parents in a study with students in the Alternative Education Program in order to gain an understanding of teacher and parent perceptions of students' use of technology and experiences with bullying and cyberbullying, and this would allow for comparison of the teacher and parent responses to student responses. It is important to determine if teachers and parents are aware of students' online experiences, and experiences with bullying and cyberbullying as the results of the study found that students in the Alternative Education Program used technology in a similar manner to typically developing students and the majority of the students were involved in both bullying and cyberbullying as victims. A greater understanding of the students' experiences with technology, bullying, and cyberbullying can help educators and parents to better support and teach students in the program how to be safe and responsible users of technology and how to reduce the risk for involvement in bullying and cyberbullying.

As the findings demonstrate that students in the Alternative Education Program have integrated technology into their everyday lives, the need for educating students on safe and responsible use of technology is needed. Future research could explore how best to implement a program on digital citizenship to students in different educational settings, and the effectiveness of a program on digital citizenship. It is important that effective programs on digital citizenship are developed for students in different educational settings as it is evident that technology has become an integral component of the participants' lives.

It is important for future research to determine the most effective program for implementing digital citizenship to students, but also important that effective bullying and cyberbullying prevention programs are developed to include students in different education programs. Many bullying and cyberbullying prevention programs target typically developing students, but there is limited research regarding effective prevention and intervention programs for students in different education programs.

Future research that utilizes a social-ecological framework for examining the risk factors and protective factors related to involvement bullying and cyberbullying among students in a different education is of importance as the current research study focused primary on the individual factors and microsystem. Further research that explores the individual, family, peer,

school, community, and cultural factors of students in different education programs may lead to a greater clarity of the risk and protective factors associated with involvement in bullying and cyberbullying. Future research that focuses on the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem is also needed in order to develop an understanding of the risk factors for involvement in bullying and cyberbullying among students in an Alternative Education Program. Additionally, a social-ecological framework can be used to develop prevention and intervention programs to address bullying and cyberbullying, and it is important to understand the social-ecological factors related to bullying and cyberbullying involvement of students in a different education program in order to develop effective evidence-based programs.

5.7 Conclusion

The findings of this study have contributed to limited research in the area of technology use and online experiences, and the bullying and cyberbullying experiences of students enrolled in a different education program. There are currently two research studies that have examined the cyberbullying experiences among adolescents who do not attend regular education classes, and are enrolled in a different education program (Didden et al., 2009; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013) and one research study that differentiated between students who were receiving special education services and students who were not (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). Students enrolled in the Alternative Education program had integrated the use of technology such as computer, cellphones, and tablets into their everyday lives, and accessed the Internet for a variety of purposes, and demonstrated similar use of technology as typically developing students. However, the findings highlighted that the majority of the students had only a basic understanding of online safety, such as how to block someone, and the findings point to the need for students in an Alternative Education Program to be educated on Ribble's (2017) proposed themes of digital citizenship. This study provided valuable insight for educators and helping professionals in understanding the experiences of students in an Alternative Education Program. The findings highlighted the need for educators to include students in the Alternative Education Program when developing policies of digital citizenship, and that it is important for teachers to adapt education about digital citizenship to meet the diverse learning needs of the students. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that all seven participants were involved in bullying and cyberbullying, as victims or observers. Further, some of the participants were victims of both bullying and cyberbullying. Those who were victims demonstrated a range of emotion,

including hurt, shock, confusion, anger, and for some, a desire to retaliate with a form of aggression. Just as it is important to consider students in the Alternative Education Program when developing policies of digit citizenship, it also important for bullying and cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs to include students in the Alternative Education Program.

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Appendix A: Student Interview Guide

About the Student

- What grade are you in this school year?
- How old are you?
- Do you participate in any extracurricular activities?
- What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Computer & Cellphone Use

- Do you have a computer at home?
- Where is the computer that you use most of the time located?
- How many hours do you use a computer for in a day?
- Do you use a computer for homework? How often?
- Do you use the Internet? What types of websites do you visit? (E.g., social media websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or others, chatrooms, sports websites, Internet game websites, websites for homework). How often do you use the Internet?
- Do you have a cellphone? What do you use it for?
- How often do you use a cellphone to phone your friends? How often do you use a cellphone to send text messages?
- Do you have an iPad or tablet? What do you use it for? How often do you use it?

Bullying Experiences

- Have you ever been bullied? When did it happen? How often was it happening?
- How did being bullied make you feel? What did you do to make yourself feel better?
- Did you tell anyone you were being bullied? Who did you tell? Did it help stop the bullying?
- Have you ever bullied others? When did it happen? How often did you bully others?
- How did bullying others make you feel? If you stopped, what made you stop?
- Do you have friends who have been bullied? Or bullied others?
- Have you ever witnessed someone being bullied? Where did it happen? Did you or anyone else do anything to stop it from happening?
- How did witnessing someone being bullied make you feel?
- If you haven't been bullied, what would you do if you were being bullied?
- How do you feel about bullying?

- What do you think we can do to stop bullying from happening?

Cyberbullying Experiences

- Have you ever been cyberbullied? When did it happen? How often did it happen?
- Were you cyberbullied through: email, chat rooms, cellphone text messages, instant messages, social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or others), or video websites (e.g., YouTube).
- Who were you cyberbullied by? (e.g., Classmates, friends, people outside school, don't know who).
- Did you tell anyone you were being cyberbullied? Who did you tell? Did it help stop the cyberbullying?
- How did being cyberbullied make you feel? What did you do to make yourself feel better?
- Have you ever cyberbullied some else? When did it happen? How often did you cyberbully others?
- Did you cyberbully someone through: email, chat rooms, cellphone text messages, instant messages, social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or others), or video websites (e.g., YouTube).
- How did cyberbullying others make you feel? If you stopped, what made you stop?
- Do you have friends who have been cyberbullied? Or cyberbullied others?
- Have you ever witnessed someone being cyberbullied? Where did it happen? Did you or anyone else do anything to stop it from happening?
- How did witnessing someone being cyberbullied make you feel?
- If you haven't been cyberbullied, what would you do if you were being cyberbullied?
- How do you feel about cyberbullying?
- What do you think we can do to stop cyberbullying from happening?

Appendix B: Bullying and Cyberbullying Definitions for Participants

What is Bullying?

Bullying is when another student or many students:

- Say mean and hurtful things, make fun of someone, or call someone mean and hurtful names;
- Ignore or exclude someone from their group of friends or leave someone out of things on purpose;
- Hit, kick, push, or shove someone;
- Tell lies or spread rumours about someone or give someone mean notes and try to make other people dislike someone.

To be bullying, these things must happen more than just once and it is hard for the student being bullied to defend him or herself. We also call it bullying when a student is teased more than just once in a mean and hurtful way.

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that happens when an individual means to hurt another person with repeated unfriendly and mean behaviour through the use of computers (Internet), cellphones, iPads/tablets, and other electronic devices. It can occur through the use of email, instant messaging, chat message boards, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), or text messages. You may or may not know who is cyberbullying you.

Examples of cyberbullying are: sending rude messages to someone's cellphone or email, spreading rumours or posting hurtful messages on social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter, stealing a person's account information to break into their account, or pretending to be someone else online to hurt someone.

Appendix C: Student Resources Handout

Available Resources

If after completing this interview you have any feelings that you need to talk about, there are places listed below that can help.

You can:

- Talk to an adult you trust (e.g., parents or other trusted family member).
- Contact the Kids Help Phone for FREE at 1-800-668-6868. They are available anytime during the day or night to talk.
- Go to this website to chat online with a counsellor for FREE: http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/Home.aspx.
- Contact the Regina Mobile Crisis Services help line for FREE at (306) 525-5333. They are available anytime during the day or night to talk.

- Contact myself for additional information or for guidance on where to go for help.

Thank you,

Chelsey Antifaiff
Student Researcher