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## Adolescents Perceptions of Victims and Perpetrators of Cyberbullying

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Graduate Program in Psychology  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Education  
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ADOLESCENTS PERCEPTIONS OF VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF  
CYBERBULLYING

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

by

Jasprit K. Pandori

Graduate Program in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The University of Western Ontario

London, Ontario, Canada

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## Abstract

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that occurs through technological means, such as social networking, and instant messaging, among others. It can be constant, and at other times may occur in isolated incidents, but despite the timeline of progression, some scholars argue that the effects are almost always catastrophic (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012). The present study examined the behavioural characteristics of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration, along with help seeking behaviours and reporting likelihood amongst adolescents in southwestern Ontario. A mixed methodology was utilized. Quantitative secondary data from a large scale survey completed by a school board in southwestern Ontario of 16, 145 participants was analyzed, and qualitative data from semi-structured focus groups, including 112 participants, was also collected. Results indicated a clear trend for gender differences between each experience, females were more likely to be victimized than males, however males were more likely to perpetrate. An overlap between both roles was evident and females were more likely to perpetrate and be victimized than their male counterparts. Retaliation and revenge were major themes for cyberbullying perpetration and role overlap. In the qualitative study, participants were more likely to report experiences to their peers than any other reporting source. Implications for future research and cyberbullying prevention strategies are explored further.

Keywords: cyberbullying, bullying, adolescents, perpetration, victimization, reporting likelihood, help seeking, mixed methodology, gender

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## Table of Contents

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Abstract.....  | ii   |
| Acknowledgements.....  | iii  |
| Table of Contents.....   | iv   |
| List of Tables.....  | vii  |
| List of Appendices.....  | viii |
| Introduction.....  | 1    |
| Literature Review.....   | 2    |
| Bullying: Definitions, Categories and Context .....                  | 2    |
| Pattern of Bullying: Traditional vs. Cyberbullying.....              | 4    |
| Factors Related to Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization..... | 6    |
| Factors Related to Help Seeking and Reporting Behaviours.....        | 9    |
| Gender and Cyberbullying.....  | 12   |
| Theoretical Framework.....   | 13   |
| Current Initiatives.....   | 14   |
| Present Study.....   | 16   |
| Methodology.....   | 19   |
| Participants.....  | 19   |
| Measures.....  | 20   |
| Procedure.....   | 22   |
| Data Analysis.....   | 23   |
| Results.....   | 24   |
| Quantitative Data.....   | 24   |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Use of Technology as a Function of Gender.....  | 24 |
| Frequency of Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization as a Function<br>of Gender.....                 | 25 |
| Frequency of Overlap between Cyberbullying Perpetration and<br>Victimization as a Function of Gender..... | 28 |
| Frequency of Reporting as a Function of Gender.....   | 30 |
| Qualitative Data Themes.....  | 32 |
| Theme 1: A victim of cyberbullying would also be a perpetrator of<br>cyberbullying for revenge.....       | 32 |
| Theme 2: A cyber-bully is usually joking.....   | 33 |
| Theme 3: A cyber-victim always knows when they are being cyber-<br>bullied.....                           | 34 |
| Theme 4: Deal with cyberbullying yourself; don't report to parents,<br>teachers or the police.....        | 34 |
| Theme 5: The best way to deal with cyberbullying is to ignore it.....                                     | 35 |
| Theme 6: Nothing can be done to stop or prevent cyberbullying.....  | 36 |
| Theme 7: The media makes cyberbullying worse.....   | 37 |
| Discussion.....   | 38 |
| Limitations.....  | 43 |
| Implications of research.....   | 45 |
| Recommendations for future research.....  | 47 |
| Conclusion.....   | 48 |
| References.....   | 51 |

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Appendices.....       | 55 |
| Curriculum Vitae..... | 73 |

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Participants in Safe Schools Survey

Table 2: Participants in Semi-Structured Focus Groups

Table 3: Use of Technology

Table 4: Reported Frequencies of Experiences with Cyberbullying Perpetration Between Male and Female High School Students

Table 5: Reported Frequencies of Experiences with Cyberbullying Perpetration between Male and Female High School Students

Table 6: Reported Means for the Frequency of Experience with Both Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization Between Male and Female High School Students

Table 7: Reported Means for the Frequency of Reporting Cyberbullying Experiences and Help Seeking Likelihood Between Male and Female High School Students



## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A: Safe Schools Survey

Appendix B: Semi-structured Focus Group Cyberbullying Questionnaire

Appendix C: Information and Distribution Letter for Teachers

Appendix D: Youth Information Letter and Consent Form

Appendix E: Parent Information Letter and Consent Form

Appendix F: Semi-structured Focus Group Cyberbullying Resource Sheet

## Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying

Research on school violence and bullying suggests that bullying plays an important role in the lives of adolescents not only in North America, but European and Asian countries as well (Li, 2008). Campbell (2005) suggests that bullying was not as sensationalized or deemed a seriously important issue in the past few decades. However, with the rapid development and advancement of technology with cellphones and the Internet worldwide, bullies are now able to expand their opportunities for school violence through the vastness of school and digital communication (Li, 2008).

Adolescents are becoming increasingly dependent on the Internet, cellphones, and social networking, and less dependent on face to face interaction (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). For example, in Japan medical experts have coined the term "*keitai-izon*" which means "mobile dependence syndrome" (Okazaki & Hiroki, 2001, p. 1). Computers, cellphones and other forms of technology are easily accessible within most nuclear family homes and are now being used for a variety of purposes including entertainment, communication, social networking, and academic needs (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). The continued dependency on technology and overwhelming accessibility also allows individuals to engage in anonymous online harassment and bullying (Li, 2006). This has paved the way for a new digital, growing epidemic known as cyberbullying.

Although cyberbullying has numerous definitions, Bauman (2010) simply identifies it as the "use of technology to intentionally harm or harass others". As this is a relatively new and emerging issue, recent research demonstrates that the phenomenon of cyberbullying is becoming a global issue (Li, 2008). Recent news reporting and media coverage of this issue is continuing to grow, as victims engage in extreme reactive behaviours such as suicide and suffer with entrenched depressive symptoms. Research also indicates the repetitive nature of cyberbullying,

in which a single act of electronic harassment can be experienced a countless number of times, with consistent feelings of re-victimization (Nocentini, Calmaestra, Schultze-Krumbholz, Scheithauer, Ortega, & Menesini, 2010).

As cyberbullying is still in its early stage of discovery, it is essential to note that most relevant research examines cyberbullying through comparisons of traditional bullying with consideration of gender, age, culture, and types of cyberbullying (Bauman, 2010). To further examine cyberbullying as an independent occurrence, this research study examined how various factors determine susceptibility or victimization to cyberbullying, behaviours related to perpetration, along with reporting and help seeking behaviours.

### **Literature Review**

In order to examine cyberbullying in its context, it is imperative to analyze and assess previous research. The following extensive literature review will provide further context on the variations of bullying, including traditional schoolyard bullying versus cyberspace bullying, factors related to perpetration and victimization, factors related to help seeking and reporting behaviours, an analysis of current cyberbullying theoretical frameworks, and current initiatives in schools and major communities. It is essential to examine each of these areas as they are pivotal in fully comprehending the seriousness and severity of adolescent's experiences in cyberbullying.

#### **Bullying: Definitions, Categories and Context**

Bullying is a complex phenomenon and its transition into cyberbullying is even more puzzling. As a result, researchers are desperate to understand this growing epidemic. Various research studies have produced several definitions of cyberbullying; however it is quite evident that it is an umbrella term (Tokunaga, 2010). A study by Li (2008) conducted a cross-cultural

comparison of adolescents experience related to cyberbullying in Canada and China through an anonymous questionnaire. Specifically, Li (2008) provided definitions and labels for terms related to cyberbullying and traditional bullying. For example, “bullies and victims” referred to those involved in traditional schoolyard bullying, and “cyberbullies and cyberbvtims” referred to those involved in cyberbullying (Li, 2008, p. 224). The researcher also provides context on various forms of cyberbullying that have been collectively identified throughout literature. For example, according to Willard (2004) there are seven categories of cyberbullying-related actions:

- (1) Flaming – sending angry, rude vulgar messages about a person to an online group or to that person via email or other text messaging.
- (2) Online harassment: Repeatedly sending offensive messages via email or other text messaging to a person.
- (3) Cyberstalking: Online harassment that includes threats of harm or is excessively intimidating.
- (4) Denigration (put-downs): Sending harmful, untrue, or cruel statements about a person to other people or posting such a material online.
- (5) Masquerade: Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material that makes that person look bad.
- (6) Outing: Sending or posting material about a person that contains sensitive, private, or embarrassing information, including forwarding private messages or images.
- (7) Exclusion: Cruelly excluding someone from an online group.

Researchers found that both Canadian and Chinese students, regardless of cyberbullying or victimization self-identification, utilized “multiple means”, referring to the tools that bullies

used in both a cyber-environment and within face-to-face interaction, providing further insight in the overlap between bullying in traditional and cyber environments.

Another study by Tokunaga (2010) utilized a meta-synthesis of 25 scholarly quantitative research articles to examine cyberbullying victimization. The meta-synthesis approach, according to Tokunaga (2010), is utilized for the purposes of summarizing an entire body of literature on a specific topic. Tokunaga (2010) concluded that the following factors: gender, academic achievement and the use of technology, could potentially contribute to cyberbullying but were not conclusive throughout all of the examined literature. Researchers also disclosed the limitations of self-report survey data, and stress the importance of future research with the inclusion of “focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations”, in order to utilize the “triangulate” approach by combining both qualitative and quantitative forms of data.

These studies are mere examples of several that highlight that there are not only several definitions of cyberbullying but also numerous forms. For this reason, researchers argue that it is possibly a highly subjective experience that lacks a conclusive definition that demonstrates the entirety of the phenomenon that is cyberbullying.

### **Pattern of Bullying: Traditional vs. Cyberbullying**

Scholarly research that highlights the phenomenon of cyberbullying also tends to dissect the important relationship and potential overlap between traditional bullying and cyberbullying tactics. A study conducted by Hinduja & Patchin (2008) examined cyberbullying victimization and offenders through a large scale online study. Researchers utilized four cyberbullying measures: one for victimization, one for offending, another for serious cyberbullying victimization, and one for serious cyberbullying offending. Results found that there was no statistically significant difference between boys and girls with respect to their experiences, but

concluded that participants who reported recent school problems, assaultive behaviours or substance abuse were more likely to be both a cyber-victim and offender (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Research by Erdur-Baker (2010) postulated a relationship between cyber and traditional bullying experiences and gender differences. Data was collected in north-west Turkey through questionnaires and participants were recruited from three high schools through convenience sampling (Erdur-Baker, 2010). Results showed that there was a significant relationship between being a cyber-bully and cyber-victim than a cyber and traditional bully (Erdur-Baker, 2010). Researchers also concluded that the same adolescents who are victims in traditional environments are cyber-bullies in the cyber-environment, providing an interesting revelation in the power of anonymity within the cyber-environment (Erdur-Baker, 2010).

Vandebosch & Van Cleemput (2009) provide further context on the differences between these forms of bullying by categorizing specific tactics. For example, traditional and cyberbullying can both involve direct bullying, such as physical bullying where “damaging someone’s personal belonging” is deemed as traditional bullying and “purposely sending a virus infected file” is a form of cyberbullying (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). Another interesting overlap is the strategies listed within indirect bullying which both involve “spreading false rumours” either in a physical school environment or online (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009).

Although these are only a few examples of recent research on the relationship and content between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, they demonstrate the critical importance of recognizing the clear overlap between both forms of bullying. Further context on this form of

research can immensely contribute to prevention work in cyberbullying, along with information on specific indicators for cyberbullying perpetration and victimization.

### **Factors Related to Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization**

Although research provides context on the occurrence and prevalence of cyberbullying, along with a comparison to traditional schoolyard bullying, it lacks in its efforts to explain the behavioural characteristics and assumptions of cyberbullying perpetrators and victims. Specifically, it does not appropriately outline the factors that are related to the susceptibility of adolescents engaging in these behaviours. Vandebosch & Van Cleemput (2009), in an effort to provide this information, classify cyberbullies as possessing maladaptive “psychosocial characteristics” such as “disconnect from school, lack of perceived self-support, problematic behaviour such as purposefully damaging property, police contact, physically assaulting a non-family member, stealing and the consumption of cigarettes or alcohol” (p. 1355). Although these researchers recognize the overlap between bullies and victims, cyberbullies are considered to be more susceptible to victimization at a younger age and most often become highly frustrated with their harassment that they eventually engage in bullying as a form of retaliation (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009).

Another study conducted by Helenius, Ikonen, Klomek, Koskelainen, Lindroos, Luntamo, & Sourander, & Riskari (2010), utilized a population-based, cross-sectional study to examine the “associations between cyberbullying and psychiatric and psychosomatic problems among adolescents”. Results found that traditional bullying victims tended to be cyber-victims, and traditional bullies tended to be cyber-bullies, as well as cyber-victims. Researchers also concluded that cyber-victims and cyber-bullies were more likely to have psychosomatic

problems and high levels of emotional and peer problems, suggesting an overlap between the behavioral characteristics of cyberbullying perpetrators and victims.

Bauman (2010) examined cyberbullying and its potential relationship with rural intermediate schools through an exploratory study. Bauman (2011) found the majority of those involved with cyberbullying had experiences as both offenders and victims. Victimization was also associated with self-blaming behaviours, and participants who were victimized were generally found to tolerate the abuse through cyberspace than be disconnected from technology. As well, researchers found that victims suffering from forms of relational aggression within cyberbullying were more likely to experience depression and internalizing behaviours than their counterparts.

A study conducted by Li & Beran (2005) surveyed middle school students in Alberta, Canada through a 15-item survey instrument. The research examined adolescents reactions to cyber-harassment and considered different severities within the forms of cyberbullying, for example “annoying or dangerous with occurrence of death threats”. Researchers found that cyber-victims were victimized in cyberspace, as well as within a school setting. With respect to behavioural patterns and related factors, cyber-victims reported a higher degree of sadness, inability to concentrate on academics and distress, whereas cyber-bullies were found to offend due to the nature of a power imbalance and social dominance over their victims. The research indicated there is a relationship between traditional, schoolyard bullying and cyberspace. However, researchers were unsuccessful in their attempts to conclude which event occurs first or if both forms of bullying can lead to the occurrence of the other. For example, Li & Beran (2005) assume that if bullies do not receive consequences for engaging in cyber-harassment then the bully may continue this behaviour in a traditional school setting and vice versa. As well, the



research examines implications for the anonymity of electronic bullies who may remain undetected and increase their severity of traditional schoolyard bullying.

Researchers Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor (2007) conducted a study to examine adolescent perceptions of online harassment potentially constituted as bullying. Researchers found that “those harassed by known peers were about five times more likely to have used the Internet to harass someone they were mad at than youth not harassed” (p. 54). As well, results showed significance for gender and perpetration, in which girls were found to be much more likely to engage in cyberbullying and online harassment than their male counterparts (Wolak et al., 2007).

Perren, Dooley, Shaw & Cross (2010) found that cyberbullying behaviours are highly correlated with psychological and physical problems. Specifically, through a large scale examination of this phenomenon, they found that both cyber-victims and cyber-bullies experienced higher levels of stress than their peers, including higher depressive symptoms, which eventually led them to engage in destructive behaviours such as “increased alcohol consumption, tendency to smoke, and poor school grades” (Perren et al., 2010, p. 2).

A study conducted by Law, Shapka, Domene, & Gagne (2012) examined self-identification as cyberbullies among adolescent’s aged 10 to 18. Results showed that through interviews and data collection, adolescents were reluctant to acknowledge their aggressive online behaviours in comparison to face to face forms. Specifically, participants reported that engaging in behaviours such as “sending mean messages, developing hostile websites, or posting embarrassing pictures” were performed as a means of retaliation as opposed to random aggression (p. 669). Law et al. (2012) conclude that both cyberbullies and cyberbivictims engage in these behaviours online because it is much easier than face to face contact. This is apparently

attributed to the power imbalance that exists in traditional bullying environments, in which the victim is less likely to engage in retaliatory behaviour (Law et al., 2012). In summary, these results indicate that adolescents view their own self-cyberbullying behaviours as “reactive” whereas others who engage in online harassment are viewed as “proactive” providing some insight in the motivation behind this occurrence (Law et al., 2012, p. 670).

Although some research has made efforts to examine the motivation behind cyberbullying, there is still a huge gap in this area. However, some research does cite “revenge” as being a powerful motivator and suggests a connection in the relationship between cyberbullies and cyberbystanders. For example, research by König, Gollwitzer, & Steffgen (2010) found that in 41.4% of their sample, cyberbystanders engaging in future cyberbullying behaviours chose their former perpetrators, and 52.1% of the sample resulted in traditional victims who became cyberbullies as a means of retaliation, once again strongly suggesting a potential overlap between the two cyberbullying experiences which this study examined further.

### **Factors Related to Help Seeking and Reporting Behaviours**

In order to contribute to prevention research in the scope of cyberbullying amongst high school students, it is vital to ascertain help seeking behaviours that students are more inclined to engage in as a means to deal with their bullying related experiences. Specifically by examining the likelihood and frequency for students to not only seek assistance but the reporting sources they will utilize, such as informing their peers, parents, police, teaching staff, among others, and reasoning behind the increased likelihood of reporting to one source over the other.

A study by Cornell & Unnever (2004) in the United States examined “student’s decisions to report being bullied” through anonymous reporting. Researchers concluded that there is a “strong positive relationship between reporting and chronicity of victimization”. The findings

indicated that there are generally two factors which are directly related to a victim's decision to report: school climate and family context. Specifically, researchers found that "victims were less likely to come forward if they believed their school tolerates bullying, [and] if victims believed that their teachers overlook bullying or do little to stop it", which provides background into the implications of adolescent perceptions of school programs and overall school climate. As well, researchers concluded that parental socialization directly impacts victim's decision making process, whereas "victims were significantly less likely to report that they were being bullied if their parents used coercive child-rearing techniques" (Cornell & Unnever, 2004). Future research within this area could potentially examine the implications of a lack of help seeking and reporting behaviours in adolescents for prevention programs and teacher/parental education in schools.

Chou & Huang (2010) conducted an anonymous self-report survey on intermediate high school students and found that a majority of the participants were reluctant to report cyberbullying incidents, in which 200 participants reported themselves as witnesses to cyberbullying, 11.2% of the sample informed their parents and a mere 3.7% informed their teachers (Chou & Huang, 2010). The study also found that participants indicated the act of reporting was "not their business" or "no big deal", providing some insight into the lack of incident reporting among adolescents (Chou & Huang, 2010). Reasons for reluctance were as follows: "being afraid of getting into trouble, feeling useless to ask a teacher for help, feeling afraid of being bullied in return, and being excluded from the in-group" (Chou & Huang, 2010). This study also provided valuable insight into the importance of the bystander role and adolescent's attitudes behind their reluctance to report such incidents, and whether they are directly involved or observing its occurrence.

A study by Li (2006) examined gender differences through a survey study in three intermediate high schools. Specifically, Li (2006) aimed to examine student's cyberbullying experiences, with a concurrent focus on gender differences in perception of school climate. Results found that 62% of participants reported being cyber-bullied one to three times (Li, 2006). Researchers did not find a gender difference within victimization, however data showed that males were "more likely to be bullies and cyber-bullies" than female participants demonstrating a difference in perpetrating behaviours (Li, 2006).

Recent research completed by Li (2010) examining cyberbullying in high schools found that students self-reported cyberbullying into four main categories, "no big deal", "just liv[ing] with it", "upset or really upset" and "no opinion" (p. 378). Reactions to cyberbullying were reported as follows, only a few participants reported "take revenge" and the majority of their participants "chose not to inform anyone" (p. 378). With respect to help seeking and reporting behaviours, Li (2010) found that 40% of the sample indicated that even after reporting cyberbullying behaviours "nothing changed" (p. 379). A final question examining a hypothetical scenario, asked participants, "if you were cyberbullied at school or at home, would you report the incident to a school counselor, teacher or administrator?". A total of 80% of participants replied "no" (Li, 2010, p. 380).

Based on the aforementioned research it is evident that a pattern of reduced likelihood to report cyberbullying incidents amongst high school students strongly exists, along with a reluctance to inform parents or teachers as a means of seeking assistance. However, research continues to lack in its explanation for these behaviours, and fails to provide concrete strategies to close the gap between teacher/parent-student communication. The present research study

highlights these areas in an attempt to address adolescent beliefs about various reporting sources in an effort to reduce the gap within cyberbullying reporting.

### **Gender and Cyberbullying**

Although this research is focused on the behavioural characteristics of perpetration and victimization, it is important to highlight the variations of cyberbullying among both females and males. Past research indicated a significant difference between male and female involvement in cyberbullying, however recent research is beginning to uncover inconclusive results or no accountable differences. Owens, Shute & Slee (2000) indicate that teenage girls are more likely to engage in online aggression than their male counterparts. Individual interviews indicated that girls utilized indirect aggression such as online bullying to victimize their peers. Results also demonstrated girls rejection of interventions to bullying and felt that “peer mediation” was more helpful in resolving their conflicts (Owens et al., 2000). Research by Bauman (2010) and Campbell (2005) indicates that females and males might be reporting similar levels of perpetration and victimization.

A study by Li (2006) found that males were more likely to perpetrate cyberbullying than female participants, however female participants had a higher rate of reported victimization. This study also concluded that females who are victimized are more likely to report their experiences than their male counterparts. In contrast, Blair (2003) indicates that females are more likely to be involved in cyberbullying as they have higher frequencies of utilizing technology and communicating via instant messaging and email.

It seems that gender differences remain inconsistent in cyberbullying research. Although some findings mirror others, it is unclear which gender is more likely to perpetrate or be a victim of cyberbullying. This study looks to examine the relationship between gender and these factors.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Although cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon, several frameworks provide further context on its occurrence. For example, researchers Lwin, Li & Ang (2012) utilize “protection motivation theory” as a means to explain how an individual reacts when they are confronted with a threat. Specifically, the theory assumes that when individuals are met with issues such as online harassment, they tend to move towards protection behaviours in order to prevent its reoccurrence (Lwin et al., 2012). This may explain adolescent likelihood to react negatively by retaliating or the onset of maladaptive behaviours such as social isolation and other psychosomatic concerns.

Another framework by Li (2010) assumes that “all human systems have emerged from the synthesis of the interaction of its parts. A systems view suggests that the essential quality of a part or component of a system resides in its relationship with and contribution to the whole”, therefore indicating that cyberbullying must be examined through its various facets, such as the bullies, victims, community, teachers, parents, etc., as opposed to an individualistic focus (p. 7). This is known as “dynamic systems theory” (Li, 2010).

Other research focuses on the technological influences in cyberbullying, in which the ongoing accessibility of cellphones and computers allows individuals to remain anonymous in their harassment and offers perpetrators with a means to easily harass their victims (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). As well, there are implications for the apparent lack of supervision and monitoring within cyberspace, in which there is a lack of censorship or protection for cyberbystanders and the general public (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). With respect to cultural dimensions, most present day adolescents in Western society have been brought up in a technologically dependent world, so they are able to access various forms of communication

without issue and the worry that their parents will be able to monitor their perpetrating behaviours (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). There is also huge implication and focus on accessibility, in which computers and cellphones now allow individuals to be accessed and access from any location at all times, creating an unrelenting environment for cyberb victims who will most likely experience constant harassment both in and outside of school (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Although these are only a few examples, each theoretical framework provides meaningful context into the underlying dimensions of cyberbullying. They provide a unique explanation about human behaviour, which is a main area of this study, specifically with respect to the motivation behind perpetration and victim-specific reactions to cyberbullying experiences.

### **Current Initiatives**

As technological advancements continue and there is a growing incidence of reported cyberbullying, schools are being encouraged to examine this phenomenon and address it accordingly. For example, on June 1, 2009 the “Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act” was passed in the Ontario legislature and came into effect on February 1, 2010 in order to reduce issues that a negative impact on the schools climate, such as “school related bullying” or “racist and sexist comments” by ensuring that all school staff report serious incidents, and instill serious consequences for perpetrators such as suspension or expulsion (Ministry of Education, 2012).

As well, schools are beginning to actively take on more bullying related campaigns in order to provide students with education about the issue, including more suitable resources and assistance programs; however due to the incidence rate continuing to grow, these efforts may not be entirely effective (Lwin et al., 2012). Campbell (2005) provides four significant areas proven to reduce the likelihood of bullying with respect to school programs and prevention initiatives:

- (1) Awareness Raising: In order to reduce this issue, students, staff and the public must be aware of the problem. By educating individuals on the issue, along with its consequences, students may feel more comfortable accepting the problem which will further increase the success of prevention programs. As well, through these means, individuals can dispel common myths that surround cyberbullying.
- (2) Whole School Policies: Although there are several provincial policies in place that are beginning to address the issue of bullying and cyberbullying, Campbell suggests that each school must implement a unique policy that is individualized specifically for their own school in response to provincial legislation combating bullying in schools. This way, students and staff can voice concerns and be at the forefront of its production, resulting in group cohesiveness to address this serious issue.
- (3) Supervision: Increased adult supervision both at school and in the home can significantly reduce the likelihood of bullying. Teachers need to instill classroom rules about technology use and recognize suspected incidents of harassment. As well, parents should re-examine the location of communicative tools in the home in order to ensure that each device is in a common, visible area that can be easily viewed.
- (4) Programs: Campbell (2005) also suggests that social and curriculum programs are two means of addressing bystanders and witnesses of cyberbullying, along with teacher education and training on how to handle these incidents.

Although this research suggests the importance of school involvement and developing initiatives that address cyberbullying both on and off the school campus (Chibbaro, 2007), without concrete research on the dimensions of cyberbullying perpetration and victimization this can be difficult. Research is limited in these areas and scholars such as Dooley, Pyszalski & Cross



(2009) stress the significance of the development of a standard cyberbullying discourse. Specifically, Dooley et al., (2009) highlight the high levels of variation in methodology in most cyberbullying research. This suggests that a comprehensive standard of research, such as a mixed methods analysis, would exponentially contribute to comprehending the varying facets of cyberbullying, including the specific behavioural characteristics of victimization and perpetration. An awareness of this information would be a critical focal point in the development of prevention programs and cyberbullying initiatives, which is a key area of the present study.

### **Present Study**

With the recent increase of cyberbullying related incidents, scholarly research is beginning to provide more context and factors related to the overall phenomenon of online harassment, the overall attitudes by the students, potential preventative measures and programs, including help seeking behaviours. However, research is still lacking in these areas and fails to identify key factors for the motivation and reasoning behind cyberbullying perpetration and victimization. Moreover, although there is clear strength in using a mixed methodology, it is not as often used in cyberbullying research.

In accordance with a critical examination of existing literature, the present study utilized a mixed methods approach. Secondary data collected as part of an initial school board research initiative in southwestern Ontario on cyberbullying was utilized to examine major trends quantitatively, specifically on the relationship between perpetration and victimization, along with help seeking behaviours and attitudes. Secondly, qualitative data was collected from a convenience sample of high school students within southwestern Ontario secondary schools. Students were recruited to participate in semi-structured focus groups to examine students' knowledge and attitudes regarding cyberbullying victimization and perpetration, including its

concurrent impact on school programs, help seeking behaviours, teacher and parental roles, and peer education.

The mixed methods approach of this study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative data as a means of encompassing all areas of the cyberbullying experience. It is evident that quantitative data is most often utilized in most research surrounding cyberbullying; however it does not necessarily account for individual experiences and unreported trends that could explain this growing issue. For example, although the secondary survey data may provide insight on the incidence and prevalence of cyberbullying, including adolescents who may self-identify as cyberbullies or cyberbystanders, the semi-structured focus groups may provide further understanding into why adolescents engage in this behaviour and if there is a relationship between cyberbullies and cyberbystanders, not otherwise achieved through individual data collection means.

Scholarly research also highlights the significance of mixed methodology in research. For example, Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2004) refer to mixed methodology as the “gold standard” of research. Specifically, they describe this method as foolproof through its strategy of expanding and verifying data by comparing it to another (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004). Through this process, each separate data set is complimentary and provides a combination of “micro and macro levels of study” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004). Moreover, this type of methodology can also be extremely “statistically significant” and “practically significant” in which its process allows for theory application. In this case, data collection from adolescents on both quantitative and qualitative levels is highly applicable to addressing cyberbullying, highlighting a key strength of this study. Through the combination of survey data and semi-structured focus groups,

adolescents will also have an opportunity to share their experiences and provide suggestions implicating future school intervention and prevention programs.

### **Part I Research Question**

What characteristics comprise a “cyber-bully” and a “cyber-victim”? Is there an overlap of characteristics between both labels?

**Hypotheses Part I.** There will be a significant overlap between factors associated with cyberbullying and cyber-victimization. Specifically, previous literature suggests that cyberbullying encompasses experiences as both the cyber-bully and the cyber-victim. Factors will also include involvement in bullying in both the school environment and cyberspace, frequent and open accessibility to several technological means, such as computers, cellphones, social networking, among others, along with frequent behavioural reasoning associated with retaliation, increased peer support and lack of consequences or repercussions (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; Helenius et al., 2010; Bauman, 2010; Li & Beran, 2005; Wolak et al., 2007; Perren et al., 2010; Konig et al., 2010; & Law et al., 2012)

### **Part II Research Question**

What factors influence reporting and help seeking behaviours for “cyber-bullies” and “cyber-victims”? Why or why not may adolescents engage in these behaviours?

**Hypotheses Part II.** Accessibility to acceptable resources and school climate will be a major factor in adolescent’s likelihood to report cyberbullying experiences. Cyber-victims will be less likely to report incidents when there is a lack of peer support. Adolescents will also be less likely to report incidents to teachers over other resources due to the lack of adolescent connection between school and home environments. Adolescents will also be generally less

likely to report and seek help for cyberbullying experiences in fear of being “cut off” from the cyber- and social-networking world (Cornell & Unnever, 2004; Chou & Huang, 2010; Li, 2006; Li, 2010).

Although cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon, recent comprehensive research has examined gender differences with respect to factors differentiating and relating male and female cyberbullying behaviours. There is a lack of research examining adolescents’ perceptions and attitudes of cyber-victimization and perpetration, including related factors that increase or decrease susceptibility for these behaviours, and the following study aims to understand these facets of the phenomenon through quantitative data providing context on the existence of relationships between variables, along with qualitative data serving as exploratory means to further understand those outcomes. Implications for this research are expected to be utilized for future prevention programs, peer/teacher/parental education, and public understanding of the severity of cyberbullying.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The present study analyzed quantitative secondary data from a Safe Schools research initiative in a sample of 16, 145 students taken from a total of 17, 577 students within 28 secondary schools in southwestern Ontario. Of this sample, 50.1% were male participants and 49.9% were female, ranging from grades 9 to 12 (See Table 1). Data was collected during the months of March and April 2011. Students provided responses to the Safe Schools Survey which was administered by a large school board in southwestern Ontario. Students were asked to provide their gender, age range (14 to over 18), and grade (9 to 12, or extra year).

Table 1

*Participants (Safe Schools Survey)*

| <b>Participants (n=16, 145)</b> |                      |                        |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
|                                 | <b>Male (n=8090)</b> | <b>Female (n=8055)</b> |
| Intermediate Grades (9/10)      | 4344 (54%)           | 4351 (54%)             |
| Senior Grades (11/12/+)         | 3746 (46%)           | 3704 (46%)             |

As the initial study was authorized by the school board, the present study arranged semi-structured focus groups in order to collect qualitative data in efforts to compliment the secondary data. Participants were randomly selected through convenience sampling as class cohorts from a Secondary School in southwestern Ontario. Classes were selected by teachers interested in participating in the study, along with consenting students. Ten semi-structured focus groups were arranged and included a sample of 112 participants, in which 45.5% were male and 54.5% were female ranging from grades 9 to 12 (See Table 2).

Table 2

*Participants (Focus Groups)*

| <b>Participants (n=112)</b> |                    |                      |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
|                             | <b>Male (n=51)</b> | <b>Female (n=61)</b> |
| Intermediate Grades (9/10)  | 28 (55%)           | 27 (44%)             |
| Senior Grades (11/12/+)     | 23 (45%)           | 34 (56%)             |

**Measures**

**Safe Schools Survey.** The secondary data was collected by a large school board in southwestern Ontario. The survey instrument was developed to examine “students views on the issues of school safety and bullying”, including perceptions on potential implementation of preventative programs and help-seeking behaviours. The Safe Schools Survey is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition since 2004, and began including the topic of cyberbullying in its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition due to heightened prevalence in schools. The Safe Schools Survey was composed of eight sections including:

student perceptions, inclusion, incidents relating to victimization, incidents relating to perpetration, responses to bullying, reporting bullying, use of technology and general comments.

The Safe Schools Survey for example, asked questions regarding victimization: “Please indicate how often, if ever, the following events have ever happened to you personally → abuse on the basis of verbal, sexual, physical, social, etc.” and “Please indicate how often, if ever, you personally, either by yourself or as a part of a group, have done the following at school this year → abuse on the basis of verbal, sexual, physical, social, etc.”.

Participants responded to questions on a five-point Likert scale: “Daily”; “Weekly”; “Monthly”; “Seldom”, or “Never”. The survey also examined frequency of technology use and cyberbullying, such as “Have you ever forwarded pictures, spread rumours online, or post inappropriate comments, etc.” These questions utilized a five-point Likert scale: “Never”; “Once or twice”; “2 or 3 times a month”; “About once a week”; and “Almost every day” (Appendix A).

**Cyberbullying Questionnaire.** As cyberbullying research is still somewhat limited, there are few measures that assess cyberbullying and its related implications. This short 11-item cyberbullying questionnaire was self-developed as a continuation of the Safe Schools Initiative and administered prior to the commencement of the semi-structured focus group discussion to provide initial insight in adolescent’s perceptions surrounding cyberbullying. Questions on this instrument were built from the initial Safe Schools Survey as a means to further research and information in this area for the purposes of the semi-structured focus groups. Questions examined thoughts and experiences surrounding victimization, perpetration, school safety, peer influences, along with the motivation behind engaging in cyberbullying behaviours (See Appendix B).

**Semi-structured focus groups.** Questions examined the following: (1) Students attitudes and feelings concerning perpetrating/offending behaviours in relation to cyberbullying, such as “If someone is a victim of cyberbullying, why would they also be a perpetrator of cyberbullying?” and “How does someone know they are cyberbullying?”, (2) Program/ Help Seeking Implications, such as “Why would you be reluctant to report cyberbullying?” and “What do you feel can be done to prevent or stop cyberbullying?” and (3) Awareness of media impact/influence, such as “What have you seen in the media recently concerning cyberbullying?”

### **Procedure**

**Secondary data.** Secondary data were accessed from the Safe Schools Survey database through a Research Department of a large school board in southwestern Ontario. Data was analyzed to examine behaviours related to victimization and perpetration, help seeking, and school program implications.

**Semi-structured focus groups.** Researchers contacted interested teachers within the southwestern Ontario school board to participate in the semi-structured focus groups. Students were informed by their teachers and administrators that a focus group would be conducted to examine their knowledge and attitudes of cyberbullying. Interested teachers were provided with a detailed distribution form (Appendix C), information and consent forms (Appendix D), including parental consent for underage participants (Appendix E), prior to the commencement of the focus groups to distribute to students. Forms were collected by the researchers prior to the start of the groups.

Two researchers were present during each of focus groups – one researcher led the focus group question, and the other researcher recorded the discussion through informal note taking. This discussion was later translated into major response themes. Each focus group commenced

with a brief questionnaire in order to gain insight of adolescents current thoughts and experiences of cyberbullying, and as a foundation for the focus group discussion. No identifiable data was collected as students were asked not to include their names or the names of other students.

Upon completion of the focus groups, researchers provided participants with a cyberbullying resource (Appendix F) and ensured that the participants were not negatively impacted from their participation in the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The examination of the secondary data was completed through the research department of a large school board in southwestern Ontario. This data analysis focused on specific questions within the Safe Schools Survey to examine current trends, perceptions and attitudes surrounding behaviours related to victimization and perpetration, as well as reporting and help seeking behaviours. Specifically, data was analyzed to determine the frequency of experiences as a cyberbullying perpetrator or victim, along with a potential overlap between the two roles. Although gender differences were not included in the initial hypotheses, a clear trend was evident; therefore analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine if there were significant relationships between gender and cyberbullying experiences.

Data collection from the semi-structured focus groups was recorded through informal note taking. Upon reviewing focus group transcripts, each participant response was numerically coded and segmented into frequencies to determine related units. Through this process, frequencies were assigned in order to categorize major and minor themes for each discussion question. Categories were determined by key terminology and phrases and continuously reviewed to ascertain the key meaning of each participant response. For example, a question surrounding motivation for cyberbullying included a major theme of retaliation/vengeance, with a



quote such as “getting back at someone”. Upon completion, transcripts and themes were reviewed by co-researchers to maintain reliability and consistency.

## Results

### Quantitative Data

The present study utilized secondary data from the a Safe Schools study in a large school board in southwestern Ontario, along with semi-structured focus groups to analyze student’s experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. The secondary data included a sample of 16 145 of which 50.1% were male and 49.9% were female ranging from grades 9 to 12. The safe schools survey asks participants questions on their use of technology, including text messaging, instant messaging, and social networking such as Facebook.

### *Use of Technology as a Function of Gender*

Participants were asked to rate their use of technology, specifically instant messaging, social media and their cellphone, through a “yes” or “no” response. Table 3 shows frequencies for reported use by female and male participants. Female participants had a higher frequency of use than males on all four questions. For instant messaging, 75% of females and 71.4% of males said “yes”. More females reported using text messaging than males (88% vs. 77% respectively). Females also had a higher frequency in owning a personal cellphone compared to males at 86.8% and only 76.6% for males. The highest frequency of use was for social networking, such as using Facebook, for both genders, however females had a higher usage rate at 93.1% compared to males with 89%.

Table 3  
*Use of Technology*

|  | Male |    | Female |    |
|--|------|----|--------|----|
|  | Yes  | No | Yes    | No |
|  |      |    |        |    |

|                                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Instant Messaging               | 5556<br>(71.4%) | 2227<br>(28.6%) | 5942<br>(75%)   | 1983<br>(25%)   |
| Text Messaging                  | 6027<br>(77.1%) | 1789<br>(22.9%) | 6988<br>(88%)   | 949<br>(12%)    |
| Social Networking<br>(Facebook) | 6949<br>(89%)   | 863<br>(11%)    | 7398<br>(93.1%) | 545<br>(6.9%)   |
| Have a personal<br>cellphone    | 5975<br>(76.6%) | 1821<br>(23.4%) | 6888<br>(86.8%) | 1044<br>(13.2%) |

### *Frequency of Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization as a Function of Gender*

Cyberbullying experiences of perpetration and victimization were analyzed by gender. Questions on the survey instrument asked participants to rate the frequency of their experiences on a five-point Likert scale from “never” to “almost every day”. Both sets of experiences were divided into two categories as “personally experienced” and “done” to decipher between the two roles. Table 4 shows the reported mean frequencies of experiences as a cyberbullying perpetrator and victim for male and female participants. An ANOVA was conducted for each of the eight experiences in order to determine gender differences for each category.

Frequency of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration generated low mean frequencies. Participants were more likely to select “never” as their most frequent response throughout each experience. Male participants reported to “forward someone else’s email, IM, or text without their permission” almost every day more than female participants. An ANOVA for this experience showed a significant main effect for gender, where  $F(1, 15556) = 21.02, p < .05$ , with females ( $M=1.34, SD=.69$ ) reporting this more than males ( $M=1.29, SD=.79$ ).

Cyberbullying perpetration in the form of spreading a rumour about someone online produced a significant main effect of gender,  $F(1, 15555) = 66.12, p < .05$ . Males ( $M=1.24, SD=.76$ ) reported a higher level of perpetration in this category than females ( $M=1.16, SD=.50$ ).

The ANOVA for sending a threatening email, IM, or text generated a significant main effect for gender,  $F(1, 15548) = 110.35, p < .05$ . Males ( $M=1.32, SD=.84$ ) reported a higher frequency of sending threatening messages than females ( $M=1.20, SD=.56$ ) in the past school year.

The final category of perpetration showed a significant main effect of gender,  $F(1, 15553) = 101.45, p < .05$ , with males ( $M=1.27, SD=.82$ ) posting an embarrassing picture of someone online without their permission more than females ( $M=1.15, SD=.53$ ) in the past school year.

Cyberbullying victimization was measured with the same four experiences of perpetration over the past school year. An experience of someone forwarding your email, IM, or text without your permission indicated a significant main effect of gender,  $F(1, 15599) = 63.09, p < .05$ , where females ( $M=1.56, SD=.85$ ) reported to be victimized in this category more than males ( $M=1.45, SD=.90$ ).

Participants were asked to rate their experiences of someone spreading a rumour about them alone. This category generated a significant main effect of gender,  $F(1, 15571) = 97.26, p < .05$ . Females ( $M=1.56, SD=.84$ ) reported to have a rumour spread about them online more than their male counterparts ( $M=1.42, SD=.87$ ).

Results for cyberbullying victimization in the form of experiencing someone sending you a threatening email, IM, or text indicated no significant main effect of gender,  $F(1, 15585) = 2.27, p < .05$ .

The final experience of cyberbullying victimization produced a significant main effect,  $F(1, 15578) = 5.13, p < .05$ , where females ( $M=1.40, SD=.77$ ) experienced someone posting an embarrassing picture of them online without their permission more than male participants ( $M=1.37, SD=.89$ ).

Table 4

*Reported Frequencies of Experiences with Cyberbullying Perpetration Between Male and Female High School Students*

| Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization Experiences                       | Mean (SD) Response by Gender |            | <i>F</i> | df       | <i>p</i> |
|--|------------------------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|
|  | Male                         | Female     |          |          |          |
| Forwarded someone else's email, IM, or text without their permission           | 1.29 (.79)                   | 1.34 (.69) | 21.02**  | 1, 15556 | .05      |
| Spread a rumour about someone online   | 1.24 (.76)                   | 1.16 (.50) | 66.12**  | 1, 15555 | .05      |
| Sent a threatening email, IM, or text  | 1.32 (.84)                   | 1.20 (.56) | 110.35** | 1, 15548 | .05      |
| Posted an embarrassing picture of someone online without their permission      | 1.27 (.82)                   | 1.15 (.53) | 101.45** | 1, 15553 | .05      |
| Experienced someone forwarding your email, IM, or text without your permission | 1.45 (.90)                   | 1.56 (.85) | 63.09**  | 1, 15599 | .05      |

|   |            |            |         |          |     |
|---|------------|------------|---------|----------|-----|
| Experienced someone spreading a rumour about you online                                   | 1.42 (.87) | 1.56 (.84) | 70.53** | 1, 15571 | .05 |
| Experienced someone sending you a threatening email, IM, or text                          | 1.44 (.90) | 1.46 (.78) | 2.27    | 1, 15585 | .05 |
| Experienced someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission | 1.37 (.89) | 1.40 (.77) | 5.13**  | 1, 15578 | .05 |

(Where: 1=Never; 2=Once or twice; 3= 2 or 3 times a month; 4=About once a week; 5=Almost every day)      \*\*p < .05    \*\*\*p<.001.

### ***Frequency of Overlapping Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization Experiences as a Function of Gender***

To examine the overlap between cyberbullying perpetration and victimization, new variables for both experiences were generated. First, each experience within either role (perpetrator/victim) was combined to determine the frequency of a participant's involvement in more than one experience, more than two experiences, more than three experiences, or all four experiences. Table 5 shows the reported frequencies for each category. A Chi Square analysis was utilized to examine gender differences between each overlapping experience.

Perpetration for one or more experiences produced the highest frequency out of all four perpetration categories. Females reported higher perpetration in one or more experiences than males. A chi square indicated a significant difference in which females were more likely than males to perpetrate on one or more experiences in cyberbullying,  $\chi^2(1) = 188.63, p = .0001$ .

The lowest reported frequency for both genders was for perpetration on all four experiences. A chi square analysis, however, demonstrated a significant difference between genders,  $\chi^2(1) = 94.52, p = .0001$ .

Cyberbullying overlap in victimization had a higher frequency of reporting than perpetration amongst both female and male participants. However, females reported a higher level of victimization than males. This category was also the highest in frequency out of all four categories. A chi square analysis also demonstrated a significant difference between genders,  $\chi^2(1) = 238.42, p = .0001$ .

Table 5

*Reported Frequencies of Experiences with Cyberbullying Perpetration between Male and Female High School Students*

| Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization Experiences | Frequency Response by Gender |        | $\chi^2$ | <i>p</i> |
|--|------------------------------|--------|----------|----------|
|  | Male                         | Female |          |          |
| Perpetrator: One or more experiences                     | 16.6%                        | 25.5%  | 188.63** | .0001    |
| Perpetrator: Two or more experiences                     | 5.2%                         | 2.1%   | 108.77** | .0001    |
| Perpetrator: Three or more experiences                   | 4.2%                         | 1.1%   | 138.63** | .0001    |
| Perpetrator: Four or more experiences                    | 2.9%                         | 0.8%   | 94.52**  | .0001    |
| Victim: One or more experiences                          | 27.9%                        | 39.6%  | 238.42** | .0001    |
| Victim: Two or more experiences                          | 7.7%                         | 10.1%  | 26.85**  | .0001    |
| Victim: Three or more experiences                        | 4.9%                         | 3.1%   | 32.98**  | .0001    |
| Victim: Four or more experiences                         | 3.3%                         | 1.5%   | 55.09**  | .0001    |

\*\**p* < .05    \*\**p* < .001

In order to conclude whether or not an overlap between cyberbullying perpetration and victimization exists, a final variable was created on the basis of frequency of overlap. Through a

chi square analysis and reported mean frequencies, it is evident that an overlap between cyberbullying perpetration and victimization does exist. For this data set, females ( $M=.20$ ,  $SD=.40$ ) were more likely to perpetrate and be victims than their male counterparts ( $M=.12$ ,  $SD=.32$ ). A chi square analysis also indicated a significant difference between both genders,  $\chi^2(1) = 205.10$ ,  $p = .0001$ .

Table 6

*Reported Means for the Frequency of Experience with Both Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization Between Male and Female High School Students*

|   | Mean (SD) Response by Gender |           | $\chi^2$ | df       | $p$   |
|---|------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-------|
|   | Male                         | Female    |          |          |       |
| Cyberbullying Experiences of Perpetration and Victimization | .12 (.32)                    | .20 (.40) | 205.10** | 1, 15591 | .0001 |

\*\* $p < .05$     \*\* $p < .001$

### ***Frequency of Reporting and Help Seeking as a Function of Gender***

Participants were asked to indicate which resources they were more likely to access to address a cyberbullying experience on a five-point likert scale from “not very likely” to “very likely”. Table 7 indicates the mean frequencies for both male and female participants. An analysis of variance was conducted to test for significant gender differences due to a clear trend amongst response frequencies.

The highest frequency response in addressing cyberbullying amongst both female and male participants was to speak directly with the victim; however, females ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ) were more likely than males ( $M=2.74$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ) to do so. A significant effect for gender was found for this response,  $F(1, 15759) = 993.22$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Females were also more likely than males to talk to their parents, tell a school staff member, access community resources, and/or report to a hotline in order to address a cyberbullying experience. A significant gender difference was found for each of those categories.

No significant main effects were found for telling the police, in which both female and male participants reported the same low frequency, or for approaching the individual responsible for bullying where males reported higher than females.

Table 7

*Reported Means for the Frequency of Reporting Cyberbullying Experiences and Help Seeking Likelihood Between Male and Female High School Students*

| Cyberbullying Reporting and Help Seeking                     | Mean (SD) Response by Gender |        | <i>F</i>   | <i>p</i> |
|--|------------------------------|--------|------------|----------|
|  | Male                         | Female |            |          |
| Talk to the student about what is happening to him/her       | 2.74                         | 3.35   | 993.222**  | .05      |
| Talk to your parents   | 2.02                         | 2.79   | 1404.491** | .05      |
| Tell a school staff member                                   | 2.17                         | 2.43   | 185.436**  | .05      |
| Tell the police  | 1.66                         | 1.66   | .028       | .05      |
| Ignore what is happening                                     | 2.52                         | 2.12   | 440.350**  | .05      |
| Approach the person responsible for the bullying             | 2.60                         | 2.59   | .460       | .05      |
| Access community programs, resources or individuals for help | 1.80                         | 2.01   | 139.470**  | .05      |
| Call a hotline to report                                     | 1.54                         | 1.55   | .329       | .05      |

(Where: 1=Not Very Likely; 2=Not Likely; 3=Neutral; 4=Likely; 5=Very Likely)

\*\**p* < .05    \*\**p* < .001



## Qualitative Data

In conjunction with the secondary data from the school board, semi-structured focus groups were conducted at a local high school in southwestern Ontario as means to learn more about adolescent beliefs about cyberbullying. A total of 10 focus groups were conducted with 112 participants, in which there were 51 male participants and 61 female participants, ranging from grades 9, 10, 11, 12, and extra year. Each group was conducted within a classroom setting with a teacher present and ranged from 5 to 30 participants. Two researchers were present and asked varying questions surrounding cyberbullying beliefs, experiences, victimization, perpetration, help seeking, reporting likelihood, media involvement and suggestions for school based prevention programs. Although numerous themes were produced throughout the discussion, each of the themes were categorized as major and minor on the basis of the frequency of response and were as follows:

### ***Theme 1: A victim of cyberbullying would also be a perpetrator of cyberbullying for revenge***

Students identified various explanations for the potential overlap between the cyberbullying roles of perpetration and victimization, including power differentials, anonymity and even as a means of joking. However, the most frequent theme was revenge and retaliation. Students conceptualized this as a victim's effort to "stand up for themselves" against bullies when they felt "defenseless, angry, vulnerable, and powerless". Senior girls were most responsive to this question and collectively demonstrated the same general theme of retaliation, whereas both intermediate boys and girls conveyed the importance of anonymity within cyberbullying tactics and role overlap. Some example statements are listed below:

*"Like it's all about when it's justified, like if it happen to you, you think it should happen to someone else"* (female, gr.12)

*“It takes place on the web, it isn’t ever face to face. I can get back at someone without having to face them”* (male, gr. 9)

***Theme 2: A cyber-bully is usually joking and might not be sure they are cyberbullying***

Throughout the focus groups, the term cyberbullying seemed to convey serious and severe intentions amongst students. Students therefore conceptualized cyberbullying perpetration as ranging from joking, revenge, and anonymity to a clear intent to seek out a victim. Joking was the most prominent response for a motivation to perpetrate. Students explained that their peers and self-identified victims may misunderstand their intent behind specific messages due to the lack of emotion within cyberspace. A common element of this discussion included sarcasm and the inability to physically gauge the reaction of the message receiver. Some reflected sentiments are listed below:

*“You don’t see someone’s reaction and it could be funny to you but it could hurt someone”*

(female, gr.11)

*“40% of the time someone is making a joke”* (male, gr. 11)

A thought-provoking response reflected by a grade 12 girl touched on the commonality of cyberbullying. She described society’s apparent dependence on technology and lack of face to face interaction, in turn increasing the frequency of cyberbullying incidents. She also explained society’s desensitization to cyberbullying, specifically where youth may view it as a normal every day experience.

*“[In] today’s society, everyone talks in text messages, you don’t call people on the landline anymore. So you’re used to talking to people on the internet and you don’t know if you’re talking sarcastically. Cyberbullying is such a big issue that people just perceive it as normal”* (female, grade 12)

***Theme 3: A cyber-victim always knows when they are being cyber-bullied***

A clear differentiation between cyberbullying and cyber-victimization was made by the participants quite early in each focus group discussion. Students explained that although a cyber-bully may not be entirely aware of their effect on others, a cyber-victim is almost always aware of what they are experiencing. Specifically, participants highlighted a variation of circumstances that would allow an individual to self-identify as a cyber-victim. For example, feeling hurt, embarrassed, uncomfortable, threatened, and potentially asking the tormentor to stop but be ignored. Some examples are as follows:

*“You tell them to stop and they don’t, they’re saying things about you and if it was like one of your best friends and they turn on you and say stuff to people all over Facebook...it hurts”*

(male, gr.9)

*“It’s constantly happening, with experience I trusted someone with my password and she promised me she wouldn’t do anything and went into my MSN and said a nasty thing on my status”* (female, gr.11)

***Theme 4: Deal with cyberbullying yourself; don’t report to parents, teachers or the police***

Students were asked about their likelihood to report cyberbullying incidents to a variety of sources including parents, teachers, the police, a trusted community figure and their peers, among others. Students in intermediate and senior grades stressed the importance of not disclosing cyberbullying experiences to teachers and parents. They expressed that these reporting sources would most likely “over react” and in some cases make their situations worse. The police were described only as a last resort and in some cases were rarely mentioned as a likely reporting source. Participants in senior grades conveyed a higher likelihood to share their cyberbullying experiences with peers and to deal with their situations privately and independently, whereas

intermediate grades were more likely to seek assistance in more severe situations. Some examples are reflected below:

*“If you tell a teacher you’ll look like a tattletale and make you look dumb, why would you get the school involved it’s your own situation”* (female, gr.9)

*“Parents take it too far, take it to the police or the school where you don’t want it to go because it could become a bigger deal that could turn into physical stuff”* (female, gr.11)

*“If you tell your teachers they have to report it or tell the guidance counsellor and make it a big deal. If you tell your teacher your basically telling 10 other people”* (female, gr.11)

*“I wouldn’t talk to a teacher, they only know you in class, like if you talk a lot in class and make jokes they might not take it seriously”* (female, gr.9)

***Theme 5: The best way to deal with cyberbullying is to ignore it***

A discussion examining ways to handle cyberbullying demonstrated mixed ideas; however the most prominent response was to simply ignore it. Although students explained the effortless nature of erasing one’s existence in cyber-space, it was somewhat conveyed in a joking and sarcastic manner and in some cases with frequent laughter. Students felt that while cyber-victims have the option of deleting themselves from social networking websites, it is unlikely they will do so due to their high levels of online communication. Other students felt that since deleting themselves was not an option, cyberbullying was therefore unstoppable and would continue to be a normal online experience. Examples are as follows:

*“Don’t talk to the person ever again, it’s completely easy, just delete them off your phone... \*laughter from peers\*... (male, gr.10)*

*“I wouldn’t delete my Facebook, I would delete the person, like I want to hang out with my friends and they wouldn’t be able to contact me”* (male, gr. 9)

*“I feel like that doesn’t totally stop it, like just cause your blocking them doesn’t mean that they don’t have other ways to do it” (female, gr.10)*

***Theme 6: Nothing can be done to stop or prevent cyberbullying***

Students felt that there is nothing concrete that can be done to stop and/or prevent cyberbullying for numerous reasons, including revenge, rebellious teens, downplay of incidents, and age gaps in addressing cyberbullying. The most frequent response explained that although assemblies, guest speakers and prevention programs could help, they highly lacked in their efforts to actually enforce prevention tactics online. Specifically, students were unsure how parents, teachers and even the police could monitor all day to day activities online and prevent minor and major cyberbullying related incidents, such as posting a mean comment on someone’s wall, etc. Moreover, students reflected that in most cases cyberbullying incidents were between two individuals who would only be able to resolve it on their own without outside supports. They also explained that efforts to address cyberbullying in schools were “boring” and do not have a real effect on perpetrators or the general youth population because it is not taken seriously.

*“At my high school before here, they had a lot of assemblies and it didn’t help” (female, gr.11)*

*“I don’t think you can stop cyberbullying, it won’t get through anyone’s head...it’s kind of like war” (male, gr.9)*

*“There’s been so many years of assemblies and police coming to schools saying it’s bad but there’s still people doing it and the amounts keep increasing” (female, gr.11)*

*“People don’t care unless it’s happening to them, like kids have committed suicide over it but they still do it. They don’t get the message unless the person their bullying does something to themselves or they do” (female, gr.9)*

***Theme 7: The media makes cyberbullying worse***

Media influence is evidently an important component of addressing various teen related issues, including cyberbullying. In a discussion of media's role in reporting cyberbullying and prevention strategies, students explained the negative effects of how cyberbullying has been portrayed in various television shows and other media outlets including commercials. The most frequent theme was the way in which the media makes cyberbullying worse by downplaying its severity and incorporating it into various lucrative television shows geared towards a youth audience, including gossip girl, mean girls, pretty little liars, among others. Students also felt that the news lacked in their efforts of addressing cyberbullying by sensationalizing the victim's experiences and in some cases over-exaggerating the incident. Some youth conveyed that the perpetrator in most television shows almost always escapes negative consequences, and in most cases also in real life through news reporting. All students collectively agreed that the media could play a significant role in reshaping the way youth view cyberbullying in a more positive way, however felt that since the focus tends to be on monetary gain this was unlikely.

*"The media makes it worse, you see like magazines and they gossip, isn't that the same thing, like celebrities or like that girls are so fat or have ugly outfits"* (female, gr.9)

*"TV shows and movies portray it to an insan[e] level...its always from the side of the bully and made to be funny, no TV show ever portrays it like this is bullying and its bad"* (female, gr.11)

*"A lot of people don't watch the news, and the people who are being bullied watch it and might think oh that kid killed himself, that's my way out"* (male, gr.9)

*"With political campaigns, like that's a form of cyberbullying or media bullying like parties go after each other the same way, they aren't good role models"* (female, gr.12)

*"I don't think they show the consequences, but I think they should"* (male, gr.9)

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the behavioural characteristics of cyberbullying perpetration and victimization, along with help seeking and reporting likelihood amongst the adolescent population, and specifically high school students in southwestern Ontario. Quantitative results from the secondary data, along with qualitative results from the semi-structured focus groups will be explored.

Secondary survey data included 16, 145 participants from grades nine to twelve, ages 14 to 18. Questions regarding student's use of technology, experiences with cyberbullying perpetration and victimization, along with help seeking and reporting likelihood were examined. This data was analyzed descriptively through frequencies, analyses of variance and chi square. Although gender differences were not included in the hypotheses, a trend was apparent within cyberbullying experiences. Analyses of variance were utilized to further examine those differences. Research questions examined characteristics of cyber-perpetration and cyber-victimization, along with an overlap between both experiences, factors related to help seeking and reporting experiences, and adolescent perceptions surrounding school safety.

Semi-structured focus groups included 112 participants from grades nine to twelve, ages 14 to 18. Questions regarding adolescent beliefs about cyber-perpetration and victimization were explored. Specifically, participants were asked to openly discuss behavioural characteristics surrounding cyberbullying, motivation and reaction. Participants were also asked about reporting likelihood, available/accessible resources, help seeking behaviours, prevention strategies and media involvement. Data was analyzed descriptively through combining responses into major and minor categorical themes. Qualitative data provided meaningful insight into the quantitative results by providing reasoning behind each frequency and analysis.

**Cyber-victim, Cyber-bully, and Overlap.** Quantitative results from the secondary data provided insight on adolescent experiences of cyberbullying and victimization. Although gender differences were not an initial focus of the study, a clear trend throughout the data was evident, and an analysis of variance indicated that females were more victimized on all four experiences than their male counterparts. However, perpetration statistics varied, in which males were more likely to perpetrate through more aggressive means such as spreading a rumour online, posting an inappropriate picture online or sending a threatening text more than their female counterparts. Females scored highest on forwarding an email or message to someone without the original sender's permission. These results do not entirely mirror most research on cyberbullying, which indicates that males are more likely to engage in traditional bullying tactics, whereas females are more likely to utilize technology as a means to engage in bullying (Dooley, 2009; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Keith and Martin, 2005). Although research accounts for higher female involvement in cyberbullying, results for perpetration in this study differ with males having a higher frequency (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Dooley, 2009; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Keith & Martin, 2005).

Discussion from semi-structured focus groups provided a clearer picture of behavioural characteristics associated with perpetration and victimization in cyberbullying. Participants reported revenge and retaliation as major themes for overlapping between cyberbullying perpetration and victimization. Power differentials were a second major theme in which participants explained a desire to enforce control over another through cyberbullying. Surprisingly, research indicates that anonymity is a major motivation for role overlap (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008); however the findings of this study were contradictory.



This study hypothesized that an overlap between cyber-bully and cyber-victim would exist and this finding, although small in comparison to the sample size, was confirmed. 11.4% of males and 19.9% of females reported experiences as both a perpetrator and victim. A significant difference between gender was also found. These findings matched existing research on cyberbullying and the higher likelihood of female involvement than their male counterparts (Ang & Goh, 2010; Smith et al., 2008; Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000).

Characteristics for cyber-victim and cyber-bully were also explored through the semi-structured focus groups. Male and female participants indicated that a cyber-bully may not always be aware of their impact on a victim. A frequent theme of joking was evident throughout this discussion, in which participants indicated that cyberbullying might be taken too seriously by a victim. Revenge and retaliation was a second major theme, where students explained that a victim in a traditional school setting may decide to perpetrate online for revenge.

With respect to qualitative responses surrounding cyber-victimization, participants felt victims were almost always aware that they were being cyber-bullied. Elicited feelings of embarrassment, hurt, feeling uncomfortable, and threatened were common responses for awareness of being a victim. Research indicates that these are only surface feelings and can lead to more significant psychosomatic disturbances such as depression, high levels of stress and even suicide ideation, indicating the high need for early prevention in cyberbullying and victim support (Helenius et al., 2010; Perren et al., 2010; Campbell, 2005; Wang, Nansel, & Iannotti et al., 2010).

Although this large sample provided deep insight into the frequency of cyberbullying experiences, motivations for role change and dual experience are still unclear; however through semi-structured focus groups it seems that retaliation/revenge and anonymity are major themes.

It is essential to note that findings for motivation are limited due to the smaller sample size of the focus group, however further research in this area could confirm these results.

**Reporting Likelihood and Help Seeking.** Participants were asked about a series of reporting resources they were likely to access in dealing with cyberbullying experiences. These ranged from talking to the victim directly, talking to the perpetrator directly, speaking with their parents, a teacher, the police or accessing community resources. Quantitative results indicated the participants were most likely to speak with the victim directly and least likely to speak with the police. These findings are generally in line with previous research which indicates that adolescents are reluctant to report cyberbullying experiences to resources they consider authority figures in fear of worsening the situation, or believing that it is not anyone else's concern but their own (Chou & Huang, 2010; Cornell & Unnever, 2004; Li, 2006; Li, 2010). Female participants had a higher response frequency for utilizing various resources such as parents and teachers more than their male counterparts.

Qualitative focus group themes provided more insight into the motivation behind participants' likelihood to report to certain sources over others. A major response theme was a reluctance to report to parents and teachers with sub-themes expressing over-reaction, worsening the situation, or being unhelpful. A second major theme was the higher likelihood to handle the situation amongst their peers by reporting to them. Participants also agreed that it would be in the victims best interest not to confront the perpetrator directly as it could escalate the situation from online to a physical altercation.

In order to probe further into reporting likelihood, participants were asked about the most optimal strategies for a cyber-victim. Although in previous responses students provided insight into various reporting sources, this discussion resulted in both female and male participants

indicating that cyberbullying is unstoppable and an everyday norm of their lives interacting online. As well, a sub-theme indicated that cyberbullying could potentially be prevented by the victim's deletion of their online identity. However, participants explained that this was unlikely due to their high levels of online interaction and technological dependency (Cornell & Unnever, 2004; Li, 2006). This sentiment provides a great deal of insight into adolescent beliefs about cyberbullying prevention and accessible resources. Implications for these beliefs can result in a catastrophic impact on potential victims who may assume they cannot escape their online harassers (Pranjic & Bajraktarevic, 2010).

Another important consideration is that of the relationship between reluctance to report and criminal conduct (King, Walpole, & Lamon, 2007). Based on the findings of this research, adolescents are evidently more likely to report cyberbullying experiences to their peers than any other source. It may be essential to consider how this could influence adolescent response to cyberbullying. Specifically, adolescents reporting to one another may be more inclined to retaliate in a more hostile manner than in those circumstances where a third party adult was notified. For example, King et al. (2007) found that there are high levels of gang behaviours online in which adolescents share various perpetrating bullying experiences with one another. One strong online community is on a website called "Happy Slapping" where adolescents post videos of assaulting an "unsuspecting victim" and is prominent in France, Sweden, Austria, Denmark and Canada (King et al., 2007). Implications for these types of behaviours can provide context into the importance of early intervention and open communication between adults and the adolescent population on how to better handle cyberbullying.

## **Limitations**

Although this study was unique in its utilization of a mixed methodology, it does contain several limitations. The secondary data from the school board was a part of a comprehensive safe schools initiative examining student perceptions about school safety and bullying. In 2004, an additional section was included in order to examine cyberbullying and technology use. It is essential to note that the questions included are limited in their scope of including cyberbullying experiences as they may not encompass every victim experience and perpetrator strategy. It may have also been difficult for participants to rank their experiences on a timeline, and the validity and accuracy of these responses are therefore questionable as participants could have overestimated or underestimated their experiences. As well, examples of social networking and instant messaging are not as applicable to present day tools, such as MySpace and MSN Messenger.

Sample size, statistical and practical significance, along with effect size are other important considerations. As the quantitative data included a large sample of participants, the level of practical significance is questionable even though a small significance was generated. Research indicates that although potential sampling error is significantly reduced with larger samples, it can result in the lack of producing statistical significance and statistical power (Lipsey & Hurley, 2009). Although this study resulted in significant differences between gender on cyberbullying perpetration and victimization, along with reporting likelihood, the results were quite small and therefore may not be necessarily meaningful in comparison to larger effect sizes.

The findings of this study are not generalizable to all cyberbullying experiences nor can it be utilized to outline a comprehensive list of behavioural characteristics that encompass perpetration and victimization. However, the purpose of this research was to provide more

insight into each cyberbullying role through complementary quantitative analyses and qualitative themes. Although these findings are also not generalizable to findings across Canada since they were limited to the region of southwestern Ontario, they do provide context on a large scale sample through meaningful qualitative themes in a smaller sample. A larger sample over a longer period of time could be more beneficial in uncovering these specific areas of cyberbullying. It could provide cultural diversity, along with more significant information on adolescent beliefs about cyberbullying and prevention strategies.

With respect to generalizability and the location of the research, it is important to note that diversity was also lacking within the sample. As the region of southwestern Ontario is not as culturally diverse as others, responses within the study were limited culturally and may not have accounted for the experiences of other ethnic minorities. Research indicates high levels of difference in cultural responses to stressful situations and this could have altered the findings of the research (Davis, Greenberger, Charles, Chen, Zhao, Dong, 2012). As well, current research in cyberbullying is virtually non-existent (Bauman, 2010).

Data was collected through convenience sampling which poses another limitation. Interested teachers were initially contacted and asked to distribute the information and consent forms prior to the commencement of the study. Students may have felt obligated to participate in the study and/or students with cyberbullying experience may have been more likely to participate than other students without experience. Therefore, this type of sampling may have skewed the results, however both sets of data contained rich and meaningful information that were extremely useful for this and future research in cyberbullying.

Language and advancements in technology are core factors to consider in cyberbullying research since they are both constantly evolving and changing. However, with ongoing

advancements and cultural/generational shifts, cyberbullying research can be limited in its findings and become easily outdated. For example, during the qualitative focus groups students continued to refer to the term “chirping” to convey a back-and-forth argument between two individuals online. Both researchers were unaware of this term and needed to ask students to clarify on several occasions. It is also essential for researchers conducting this type of research to try their best to reflect the language of the population they are examining. Slang terminology can be quite useful during focus group discussions and can diminish barriers between participants and researchers by allowing for a more open discussion. Survey instruments should also reflect more popular uses of technology. For example, currently Facebook and Twitter are quite popular but MySpace is not. Research is lacking in these areas and does not seem to account for the importance of updating research to ensure that it is applicable to the current generation.

### **Implications of Research**

The present study provided a unique perspective on cyberbullying victimization and perpetration amongst adolescents’ in southwestern Ontario, Canada through a mixed methodology. The large scale secondary data from the safe schools initiative provided comprehensive insight on the frequency of adolescent technology use and cyberbullying experiences. The semi-structured focus groups also provided a high level of invaluable information that greatly complimented the quantitative findings. The space for these focus groups also enhanced youth empowerment with respect to direct involvement in the formulation of cyberbullying prevention strategies through an identification of their needs, ideas and possible solutions, while concurrently providing a new and comprehensive outlook on reporting behaviours in cyberbullying research (MacKay, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2012).

As technology continues to advance, so does our generational dependency. Face to face interaction has significantly decreased, which has in turn increased the likelihood of major and minor forms of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Okazaki & Hiroki, 2001). Cyberspace provides an endless means of anonymity and identity protection, allowing vulnerable users to experience bullying and other serious forms of online harassment (Erdur-Baker, 2010). New sub-phenomenon's within cyberbullying are continuing to unveil themselves. For example, a recent study by Levine (2013) indicated the growing rates of "sexting", a "sharing [of] sexually suggestive photos and messages through cell phones and other mobile media" (p.257). Results indicated that 85% of individuals under the age of 18 currently own a cellphone (Levine, 2013), staggering results and evidently highlight the importance of this research. In order to learn more about prevention strategies and victim assistance, ongoing cyberbullying research is crucial.

Psycho-education for parents and teachers is also critical in addressing cyberbullying. For example, although current initiatives are in place in various regions across Canada, it is ultimately the schools responsibility to engage their teaching administration and enforce certain anti-bullying policies. Research continues to emphasize the importance of cyberbullying prevention both on and off school premises (Campbell, 2005; Lwin et al., 2012). As mentioned in the current initiatives section, various strategies such as awareness raising, whole school policies, increased supervision and other in school prevention programs are only a few examples of solutions to cyberbullying. However, research is critical in these areas in order to maintain terminology, generational language, cultural shifts and technology use so that research is relevant to various populations on both national and international scales.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Although scholarly research has provided a strong foundation of the cyberbullying phenomenon and its effects on adolescents and school climates, research on reporting behaviours and specific authority figures is lacking, along with effective strategies for addressing cyberbullying in schools. Technological influences of the likelihood to report to certain sources, such as being anonymous and/or parental and school administrator understanding of youth language, etc., are also not as often examined (Vandebosch, Van Cleemput, 2009; Tokunaga, 2010; Erdur-Baker, 2010, & Kowalski et al., 2012). In order to further assess these behaviours, further research is needed in Canada. Adolescents must be provided with an appropriate means to feel comfortable reporting cyberbullying, and mobilize their peers to do the same. The interactive effects of empowerment within this process can potentially alter the devastating short- and long-term effects of pervasive bullying both on and off school property in a significant manner. As scholars highlight, cyberbullying is becoming an indicator for high risk suicidal behaviours, depression, social phobias, and other interpersonal concerns for victims, perpetrators and the school climate (Helenius, Ikonen, Klomek, Koskelainen, Lindroos, Luntamo, & Sourander, & Riskari, 2010; MacKay, 2012). Mental health implications may need to be further explored in these areas in order to ascertain the suitability of certain interventions and/or the need for victim-specific assistance on the basis of certain circumstances.

The long-term effect of cyberbullying has also not been critically examined in scholarly research. Although it may be difficult to quantify and monitor, a longitudinal study on cyberbullying experiences specific to behavioural characteristics could provide critical information. As research indicates, cyberbullying most often commences in middle school and peaks during high school. Specifically, studies suggest that cyberbullying is most prevalent



during this time period due to significant changes in lifestyle (i.e. puberty) and school climate (Kowalski et al., 2012). It could therefore be beneficial to examine cyberbullying at an elementary level to determine potential pre-disposing factors which may increase an individual's susceptibility for victimization and/or perpetration. A larger sample size would increase the reliability of this research, along with variance in the location of data collection to account for participant differences across Canada for example.

It seems that most research on cyberbullying continues to provide various definitions and frequency of experiences, however is lacking in its specificity of certain roles, motivation and predisposing characteristics. Future research could highlight these areas and provide a foundation for developing suitable prevention strategies. By determining the onset of these characteristics, parents, teachers and community members could formulate early intervention programs to assist adolescents in learning more about safe online practices and the seriousness of cyberbullying. This in turn could provide heightened levels of support for victims of cyberbullying and prevent the cyclical pattern of overlapping between roles of victim and perpetrator. Development of these programs could also assist with pre-service and current teacher training for addressing cyberbullying issues both on and off school property.

### **Conclusion**

The present study explored the behavioural characteristics of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration, overlapping between both experiences, and reporting likelihood and help seeking factors amongst adolescents in a southwestern Ontario secondary school. Findings indicated that an overlap existed between both experiences, and females generated a higher report frequency than their male counterparts. Data results also demonstrated differences in reporting likelihood, in which participants were more likely to report to their peers than to an

authority figure. Factors behind their help seeking behaviours were conveyed through qualitative focus group themes, in which participants felt reporting to a parent, teacher or the police would escalate the situation in a negative manner. Moreover, participants felt that prevention strategies for cyberbullying were lacking as they are unable to remove themselves from online interaction and therefore felt that cyberbullying is unstoppable. Further research is needed in order to determine the underlying factors behind these results. However it does provide new insight into the cyclical nature of cyberbullying experiences between perpetration and victimization and can greatly assist with the development of early intervention programs.

The significance of the mixed methodology within this study was undeniable. Although the quantitative secondary data was from a large scale sample, and the qualitative data was quite smaller, it provided deeper context for the frequency of responses. Future research utilizing a larger sample, including a diverse population base and longer-term analysis could be more useful and account for other factors not otherwise considered in cyberbullying research, such as cultural differences in perpetration and victimization.

Although research on traditional schoolyard bullying has continued to evolve, cyberbullying has become a growing concern with technological advancements. As Sullivan stated in early cyberbullying research, “Kids can be cruel. And kids with technology can be cruel on a world-wide scale” (Kowalski et al., 2012, p.2). In March 2011, a website entitled SMUT was created by a group of high school students, rating girls on the basis of their involvement in sexual activity, and was later “liked” on FaceBook by over 7000 users in just a few hours (Kowalski et al., 2012). Further research by the World Health Organization has found that cyberbullying is becoming increasingly prevalent globally in both middle and high schools (Ryan, Kariuki, Yilmaz, 2011). Young Canadians are included within this statistic, and with

advancements in technology, and an increased generational dependence on social networking and media, youth are more susceptible to not only be victimized, but engage in perpetrating behaviours (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

In conclusion, although the sentiment that cyberbullying is on the rise is controversial amongst various scholars, the incidence of reporting is critical in this study and others.

Adolescents are continuing to report high frequencies of being victimized and perpetrating behaviours. For this reason, ongoing research in cyberbullying is essential in order to decrease prevalence rates and prevent harmful consequences for the youth population.

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## Appendix A

### Safe Schools Survey



# SAFE SCHOOLS SURVEY

*Why are you being asked to complete this survey?* We want students' views on the issues of school safety and bullying and we want students to tell us what will work to improve school climate and help students seek assistance in dealing with these issues.

*Who is being asked to participate?* Students at \_\_\_\_\_ will be given an opportunity to complete this survey during the month of March. This is an anonymous survey - do not include your name.

*What will be done with the survey information?* Schools will receive a school and system summary. The survey results, and other relevant information, will be used by school teams, including students, to create appropriate and realistic programs or interventions that will lead to the improvement of the school environment.

Are You:  Male  Female      GRADE:  9  10  11  12  12 extra year  
 AGE:  under 14  14  15  16  17  18  over 18

Shade Circles Like This ●  
 Not Like This ☒

**Definition of Bullying** - Please read this definition carefully before completing this survey.  
 There are 3 parts to bullying -  
 - an intent to harm, hurt, or humiliate another individual  
 - a repeated activity (occurs more than once)  
 - a real or perceived power imbalance based on for example, size, age, status  
 Bullying involves many kinds of inappropriate behaviour. It can be physical (e.g., hitting, stealing), verbal (e.g., threatening, name calling, ), sexual (e.g., comments), social (e.g., exclusion, spreading rumours), or cyber bullying (e.g. sexting, inappropriate postings).

#### STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Select one response for each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.

STRONGLY DISAGREE  
 SOMEWHAT DISAGREE  
 NEUTRAL  
 SOMEWHAT AGREE  
 STRONGLY AGREE

|   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| There is a positive climate for learning at this school. ....                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This is a safe school for students. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students generally follow the school Code of Conduct. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students believe that staff think the safety of students is important. ....                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students demonstrate respect for other students. ....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students demonstrate respect for staff. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students believe that staff demonstrate respect for students. ....                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students are proud of this school. ....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| There is a caring, respectful atmosphere at this school. ....                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel safe in the school building. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel safe on school property. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel safe in my community. ....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Internet communication is seldom used to bully. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students who are being bullied are willing to report these incidents to school staff. ....        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students who see others being bullied are willing to report these incidents to school staff. .... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students can identify incidents of bullying. ....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students know how to report incidents of bullying. ....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students believe they have a role in preventing bullying. ....                                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Students have the skills and knowledge to intervene appropriately when bullying occurs. ....      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Spring 2011





21291

**INCLUSION**

Do you ever feel unwelcome or uncomfortable at your school because of any of the following? (Please bubble in the items that apply to you).

- No, I always feel welcome
- My sex (male/female)
- My ethnocultural or racial background
- My Aboriginal background (First Nation, Metis, Inuit)
- My appearance
- My religion or faith
- My language background (my first language)
- My grades or marks
- My family's level of income
- A disability that I have
- My sexual orientation
- Other reason(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**INCIDENTS**

Please indicate how often, if ever, the following events have happened to you personally at school during this school year.

Have you personally been:

|   | Daily                 | Weekly                | Monthly               | Seldom                | Never                 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| verbally bullied? .....                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| physically bullied? .....                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| socially bullied? .....                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| sexually bullied? .....                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| bullied using technology? .....             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| bullied based on sexual orientation? .....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| bullied based on ethnic background? .....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| threatened to hand over money? .....        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| intimidated by a gang or gang member? ..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**INCIDENTS**

Please indicate how often, if ever, you personally, either by yourself or as part of a group, have done the following at school during this school year.

Have you personally:

|  | Daily                 | Weekly                | Monthly               | Seldom                | Never                 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| verbally bullied a student? .....                                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| physically bullied a student? .....                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| socially bullied a student? .....                                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| sexually bullied a student? .....                                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| bullied a student using technology? .....                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| bullied a student based on sexual orientation? .....               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| bullied a student based on ethnic background? .....                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| threatened a student to make him/her hand over money? .....        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| intimidated a student as part of a gang or as a gang member? ..... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

21291

## SCENARIO

| NOT VERY<br>LIKELY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | VERY<br>LIKELY |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|

If you are aware of a student who is being bullied how likely would you be to do the following:

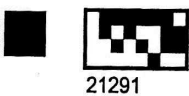
|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| talk to the student about what is happening to him/her .....                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| talk to another student about what is happening to the student .....               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| talk to your parent(s) about what is happening to the student .....                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| tell a school staff member about what is happening to the student .....            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| tell the police about what is happening to the student .....                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| talk to a trusted adult in the community about what is happening to the student .. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ignore what is happening to the student .....                                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| approach the person responsible for the bullying .....                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| use skills you have learned to deal with the bullying .....                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| access community programs, resources, or individuals for help .....                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| call a hotline to report the bullying .....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## DEALING WITH BULLYING

What are things that you think your school could do to help you feel more welcome and to help prevent bullying? (Bubble in the items that you agree with.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Provide students with information about bullying   | <input type="radio"/> Train students about strategies to use to stop bullying |
| <input type="radio"/> Provide students with information about how to report bullying                               | <input type="radio"/> Train parents about strategies to use to stop bullying  |
| <input type="radio"/> Hold information meetings for parents and guardians  | <input type="radio"/> Train staff about strategies to use to stop bullying    |
| <input type="radio"/> Provide training to teachers and school support staff on how to prevent and address bullying | <input type="radio"/> Have staff and students read books on the topic         |
| <input type="radio"/> Have group or class discussions  | <input type="radio"/> Run programs about bullying                             |
| <input type="radio"/> Invite a guest speaker   | <input type="radio"/> Do a school or class project                            |
| <input type="radio"/> Show films on the topic  | <input type="radio"/> Hold an assembly about bullying                         |
| <input type="radio"/> Educate parents about prevention of bullying   | <input type="radio"/> Involve students in preventing bullying                 |
| <input type="radio"/> Educate parents about recognizing when bullying occurs                                       | <input type="radio"/> Present skits on bullying topics                        |
|  | <input type="radio"/> Other (please explain): _____                           |


 Turn Over



**Use of Technology**

Do you use IM (instant messaging) such as MSN Messenger? -----  Yes  No

Do you use text messaging? -----  Yes  No

Do you use any social networks such as Facebook, Myspace, Twitter? -----  Yes  No

Do you have your own personal cell phone? -----  Yes  No

Do you check your social network accounts...

A few times a week or less     Once or twice a day     Few times a day     Many times a day

Have you personally experienced any of the following during this school year?

|   | Never                 | Once or Twice         | 2 or 3 Times a Month  | About Once a Week     | Almost Every Day      |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Someone forwarding your private email, IM, or text message that was only intended for that person. .... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Someone spreading a rumour about you online. ....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, IM or text message. ....                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Someone posting inappropriate comments, pictures or videos of you online without your permission. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Have you done any of the following to another student during this school year?

|   | Never                 | Once or Twice         | 2 or 3 Times a Month  | About Once a Week     | Almost Every Day      |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Forward an email, IM, or text message that was sent to you to someone else or posted it where others could see it. .... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Spread a rumour about someone online. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sent a threatening or aggressive email, IM or text message. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Posted an inappropriate comment, picture or video of someone online without their permission. ....                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**COMMENTS**

Do you have other ideas or suggestions that you would like to make about topics covered by this survey?

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY.**

## Appendix B

## Cyberbullying Questionnaire

**Cyberbullying Student Survey**

The following brief survey was designed in order to gain more insight of adolescent views and experiences of cyberbullying. It will address several areas of cyberbullying experiences including your thoughts on seeking assistance and improving your overall school climate.

You will need approximately 5-10 minutes to complete this survey. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Your answers will be kept confidential and will not be shared. Therefore, we ask that you be completely honest when answering the questions. Do not write your name on the survey.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Gender:

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please read this definition carefully before completing this survey.*

**Definition of Cyberbullying** – Cyberbullying can be defined as a repeated act performed through the use of communication technology such as instant messaging (IM) and social networking sites, with the intent of hurting, harming or humiliating a specific person or group of people.

**Please select one response for each statement to indicate your technology use.**

|   | <b>Daily</b> | <b>At least once<br/>a week</b> | <b>At least once<br/>a month</b> | <b>Less than<br/>once a month</b> | <b>Never</b> |
|---|--------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Use the Internet                            |              |                                 |                                  |                                   |              |
| Use IM (instant messaging) such as MSN, BBM |              |                                 |                                  |                                   |              |
| Use Social Networks (such as                |              |                                 |                                  |                                   |              |

|                                |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Facebook,<br>Myspace, Twitter) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Text Message                   |  |  |  |  |  |

**How likely are you to talk to the following people about cyberbullying if you were being cyberbullied or knew someone being cyberbullied?**

Please select one response for each statement.

|   | Very likely | Likely | Not Likely |
|---|-------------|--------|------------|
| Talk to the student directly                    |             |        |            |
| Talk to your peers                              |             |        |            |
| Talk to your parents                            |             |        |            |
| Talk to your teachers                           |             |        |            |
| Talk to a trusted adult in the community        |             |        |            |
| Talk to the police                              |             |        |            |
| Call a hotline to report the bullying           |             |        |            |
| Access community programs or resources for help |             |        |            |
| Ignore what is happening                        |             |        |            |

**Are you more likely to be involved in cyberbullying if...?**

Please select one response for each.

|  | Very Likely | Likely | Not Likely |
|--|-------------|--------|------------|
| <b>One of your friends is cyberbullying</b>      |             |        |            |
| <b>A group of your friends are cyberbullying</b> |             |        |            |

**Which of the following people have talked to you about cyberbullying before?**

Please check all that apply.

\_\_\_\_ Your Peers

- Your Teachers
- Your Parents
- The Police
- Adults in your Community

**Who uses cyberbullying more often?** Please check one response.

- Boys
- Girls
- Same

**What do you think occurs more often?** Please check one response.

- Bullying (including face to face bullying that is verbal or physical)
- Cyberbullying

**Do you feel safe at school?** Please check one response.

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

**Have you ever been cyberbullied?** Please check one response.

- Yes
- No

**Do you know anyone who has been cyberbullied?** Please check one response.

- Yes
- No

**What are the most common excuses for cyberbullying?** Please check all that apply.

- Just a joke
- The person deserves it
- Revenge
- Not really harmful (i.e., "isn't a big deal")
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What can stop adolescents from cyberbullying?** Please check all that apply.

- Discussion with Peers
- Discussion with Parents
- Discussion with Teachers
- Discussion with a(n) Adult(s) in your community
- School assemblies

- \_\_\_ The media
- \_\_\_ Public Service Announcements (PSA's)
- \_\_\_ Invite a guest speaker

## Appendix C

### Teacher scripting for information/consent form distribution

**Name of Study:** Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying: A Mixed Methods Analysis of High School Students Experiences.

**Investigators:**

Peter Jaffe, Ph.D., C. Psych – Western University,

Jasprit Pandori, M.Ed. (candidate) - Western University,

Jeremy Doucette, M.Ed. (candidate) - Western University,

**Teacher Script**

As students from [school name], you are being asked to participate in focus groups examining cyberbullying. Each focus group will take approximately 45 minutes to complete and will take place during class time. You will be participating amongst your peers within our classroom setting. You will also be asked to complete a short survey on your knowledge of cyberbullying. There will be questions about your understanding of cyberbullying, experiences, factors related to victimization and perpetration, and help seeking and reporting implications. Information about your experiences will be obtained through informal note taking, which will later be translated in to major themes and trends. If you choose not to participate or would like to discontinue the focus group at any point during the study, you will be asked to complete individual homework in the school library.

In order to participate, you are required to read the Information Letters and provide signed copies of both sets of Consent Forms at the beginning of the focus group.

The information you give the researchers is confidential, and this confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If you tell one of the researchers about a child being hurt, or that you intend to hurt yourself or someone else, the researchers are required to contact the proper authorities.

Your responses will not be linked back to your name. Your name on your consent form will be kept separate from the other information you provide. At the end of the program the researcher will shred any papers with your name on it. The information collected during this research may be used for educational purposes or become part of a published scientific report. This information will only be reported in terms of group findings. NO information will be reported that would allow anyone to be identified individually.

It is possible you might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about answering personal questions in the focus group. You will not be required to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. The researchers will provide you with information on cyberbullying at the end of the focus group. If you experience distress please talk to the researchers. They will provide you with information on community supports and/or supports within the school that you can access.



Participation in this study is voluntary. Even if your parent has signed the consent form allowing you to participate, your participation in the study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status.

Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon and is increasing with technological advancements, for this reason it is a topic that is interesting to many teens. The researchers think that you may enjoy participating in the focus group, as you will be asked questions about topics that are important to teens and it will provide you with an opportunity to voice your own ideas. In addition, this research may provide significant social and scientific benefits through the knowledge that will be gained about the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University. Further contact information is provided on your Information Letter.

---

*Distribute the following (4 forms should be given to each student)*

- 1. Parental Information Letter**
- 2. Youth Information Letter**
- 3. Parental Consent Form**
- 4. Youth Assent Form**

**\*Please ensure that each student has received 1 copy of each letter. As well, please remind them that their consent/assent forms need to be brought back signed in order to participate.**

**Thank you for your participation and assistance! 😊**

## Appendix D

### Youth Information Letter and Consent Form

**Name of Study:** Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying: A Mixed Methods Analysis of High School Students Experiences.

**Investigators:**

Peter Jaffe, Ph.D., C. Psych – Western University

Jasprit Pandori, M.Ed. (candidate) - Western University

Jeremy Doucette, M.Ed. (candidate) - Western University

As a student in [school name], you are invited to participate in a research project being conducted with the [school board name]. We are seeking your agreement to participate in a research study, as described below. Students from your school in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 will be asked to participate in this study, which is a collaborative effort of [school board name] and Western University.

**Study Procedures**

We are asking students to participate in focus groups, which will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in the focus group during regular school hours. You will participate in a discussion among your peers within a classroom setting. You will also be asked to complete a short survey on your knowledge of cyberbullying. There will be questions about your understanding of cyberbullying, experiences, factors related to victimization and perpetration, and help seeking and reporting implications. Information about your experiences will be obtained through informal note taking, which will later be translated in to major themes and trends. Students who choose not to participate or discontinue the focus group at any point during the study will be asked to complete individual homework in the school library.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

The information you give us is confidential, and this confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If you tell one of the researchers about a child being hurt, or that you intend to hurt yourself or someone else, we are required to contact the proper authorities.

Your responses will not be linked back to your name. Your name on your consent form will be kept separate from the other information you provide. At the end of the program we will shred any papers with your name on it. The information collected during this research may be used for educational purposes or become part of a published scientific report. This information will only be reported in terms of group findings. NO information will be reported that would allow anyone to be identified individually.

**Risks**

It is possible you might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about answering personal questions in the focus group. You will not be required to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. The researchers will provide you with information on cyberbullying at the end of the focus group. If you experience distress please talk to the researchers. They will provide you with information on community supports and/or supports within the school that you can access.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Even if your parent has signed the consent form allowing you to participate, your participation in the study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status.

**Potential Benefits Associated with Participation**

Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon and is increasing with technological advancements, for this reason it is a topic that is interesting to many teens. We think that you may enjoy participating in the focus group, as you will be asked questions about topics that are important to teens and it will provide you with an opportunity to voice your own ideas. In addition, this research may provide significant social and scientific benefits through the knowledge that will be gained about the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

This letter is yours to keep. Please sign the attached assent form, and return it and the parental consent form to your teacher.

**Questions**

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University.

## Youth Consent Form

**Study: Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying: A Mixed Methods Analysis of High School Students Experiences.**

I have read the letter of information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate in the study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

---

Your name (please print)

---

\* Signature

---

Date

**Principal Investigator:**

Peter G. Jaffe, Ph.D., C. Psych.

Western University

## Appendix E

### Parent Information Letter and Consent Form

**Name of Study:** Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying: A Mixed Methods Analysis of High School Students Experiences.

**Investigators:**

Peter Jaffe, Ph.D., C. Psych – Western University,

Jasprit Pandori, M.Ed. (candidate) - Western University,

Jeremy Doucette, M.Ed. (candidate) - Western University,

As a parent of a student attending [school name], your son/daughter is invited to participate in a research project being conducted with the [school board name]. We are seeking your consent and that of your son/daughter to participate in a research study, as described below, which is a collaborative effort of [school board name] and Western University. Approximately 90 participants will take part in this study.

**Procedures**

We are asking students in your son/daughter's class to participate in a focus group with his/her classmates, which takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. Students will be asked to participate in the focus group during regular school hours. If you agree that your son/daughter may participate, s/he will take part in a discussion among their peers within a classroom setting. These sessions will be recorded through informal note taking. Students will also be asked to complete a short survey on their knowledge of cyberbullying. Students may choose not to participate or discontinue the focus group at any point during the study and will be asked to complete individual work in the school library. There will be questions about students understanding of cyberbullying, experiences, factors related to victimization and perpetration, and help seeking and reporting implications. Information about your son/daughter's experiences will be obtained through informal notes, which will later be translated in to major themes and trends.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

The information your son/daughter gives us is confidential, and this confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your son's/daughter's name or information which could identify him/her will not be used in any publications or presentation of the study results. Only the investigators and their research assistants will have access to this information. At the end of the project we will shred all papers with your son's/daughter's name on it and destroy informal notes.

The information collected during this research may be used for educational purposes or become part of a published scientific report. This information, however, will ONLY be reported in terms

of group findings. NO information will be reported that would allow anybody to be identified individually.

**Risks**

He or she will not be required to answer any questions that make him/her uncomfortable. The researchers will provide students with information on cyberbullying at the end of the focus group and any student who experiences distress will be encouraged to access community supports and/or supports within the school.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in the study is voluntary. He or she will not be required to answer any question that makes him/her uncomfortable. You or your son/daughter may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on his/ her grades or school involvement.

**Potential Benefits Associated with Participation**

Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon and is increasing with technological advancements, for this reason it is a topic that is interesting to many teens. We think that your son/daughter may enjoy participating in the focus group as they will be asked questions about topics that are important to teens and provide them with an opportunity to voice their own ideas. In addition, this research may provide significant social and scientific benefits through the knowledge that will be gained about the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

This letter is yours to keep. Please complete the attached consent and assent forms and give them to your son/daughter to return to his or her teacher.

**Questions**

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your son's/daughter's rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University.

## Parental Consent Form

**Study: Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying: A Mixed Methods Analysis of High School Students Experiences.**

I have read the letter of information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree that my son/daughter may participate in the study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

---

Your Name (please print)

---

Full name of student (please print)

---

\* Signature of parent or guardian

Date

**Principal Investigators:**

Peter G. Jaffe, Ph.D., C. Psych.

Western University

## Appendix F

## Semi-structured focus group cyberbullying resource sheet

# CYBERBULLYING

Name of Study: Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying: A Mixed Methods Analysis of High School Students Experiences.

## Resources

Who can you talk to if you need help or have questions?

- ✓ Talk to your teacher
- ✓ Talk to your parents
- ✓ Talk to your guidance counsellor
- ✓ Talk to your peers
- ✓ Talk to a trusted adult in the community
- ✓ Talk to the police



### Other resources:

- Kids Help Phone  
1-800-668-6868  
[www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)
- Stop-A-Bully (Safe & Anonymous)  
[www.stopabully.ca](http://www.stopabully.ca)
- Cyberbullying  
[www.cyberbullying.ca](http://www.cyberbullying.ca)
- Cyberbullying Research Center  
[www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)
- Wired Safety  
[www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org)





# Other Tips

## Socialize Safely

- Never use real names.
- Do not post personal information.
- Do not provide digital communication information.
- Secure your profile.
- Do not post pictures or videos.
- Online friends should be offline friends.
- Monitor friend profiles.



## Address Digital Harassment

|                            |                |                         |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Stop or leave              | DO NOT RESPOND | Save and Print          | Tell a trusted adult |
| Block the sender           | Check settings | Change number and email | Know the policies    |
| Meet with school officials | Report it      | Don't ignore it         | Involve the police   |



We recognize that experiences related to cyberbullying can be difficult to share, so we would like to thank you for your participation in the study.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University

If you have any questions about this study, please contact:  
 Peter G. Jaffe, Ph.D., C. Psych.      Other researchers:  
 Western University

Jasprit Pandori &  
 Jeremy Doucette

## Curriculum Vitae

**JASPRIT K. PANDORI****EDUCATION**

- Sep 2011 – Present                   **Master of Education, Counselling Psychology** (Candidate)  
*University of Western Ontario* (London, ON)
- Expected Completion: April 2013
- Sep 2008 – June 2010               **Certificate in Rehabilitation Services**  
*York University/Seneca College* (Toronto, ON)
- Graduated with High Honors (4.0 GPA)
- Sep 2005 – June 2010               **Bachelor of Arts with Honors**  
*York University* (Toronto, ON)
- Faculty of Health, Specialized Psychology
  - 2009 Dean's Honor Roll List Recipient

**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

- Dec 2012 – Present                   **Research Assistant/ Consultant**
- The Canadian Red Cross – Healthy Youth Relationships Project
  - Responsible for formulating materials for national youth focus groups, including consent, privacy and information forms, group and conduct guidelines, survey instruments, discussion questions and other administrative tasks
  - Assisting with project completion including data compilation, division, organization and final analysis and reporting
- June 2012 – July 2012               **Research Assistant**
- The Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet)
  - Responsible for revising and recommendations for Family Channel's Bullying Awareness Week and Teachers Guide (Oakes, Josephson, Haner, Cummings, & Pepler, 2012)
  - Assisted with materials on bullying awareness, teacher strategies, school outreach and media strategies including magazines, contents and programming
- May 2012 – Aug 2012               **Research Assistant**
- Western University

- Responsible for conducting research and reviewing materials for Safe Schools course textbook
- Responsible for completing extensive literature review and detailed drafts, with focus on mental health issues in schools, promoting wellness, hate and homophobia, bullying, and teacher strategies

Feb 2012 – April 2012

**Research Consultant**

- The Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet)
- Review of education and awareness website for youth under the RCMP with Research Team
- Responsible for generating theoretical framework, literature review, content analysis, survey compilation involving consumer satisfaction, along with involvement of potential focus groups

Sep 2011 – Present

**Master's Thesis**

- Western University
- Examination of Victimization and Perpetration in Relation to Cyberbullying Among High School Students (*In progress*)

Sep 2009 – May 2010

**Honors Thesis**

***Advanced Research Methods***

- Examination of Human Sex Differences in Feelings of Safety on Campus
- Unpublished Honors Thesis examined feelings of safety on a university campus, and specifically analyzed safety beliefs, attitudes and precautionary behaviours on campus with the utilization of a 50-item questionnaire distributed to York University students. An equal distribution of male and female students were used.

Sep 2008 – May 2009 **Research Project**

***Intermediate Research Methods***

- Examination of Cultural Variations in Emotion with a Focus on Western and Eastern Cultures
- In preparation for the honors thesis, this study examined the correlation between culture and emotion by specifically postulating that participants with Eastern cultural backgrounds would exhibit a higher level of internalized emotion (i.e. shame, guilt), and participants from Western cultural backgrounds would exhibit a higher level of externalized emotions (i.e. anger, frustration)

**Research Intensive Coursework**

Sep 2011 – Dec 2011

Master of Education, Counselling Psychology

*Western University*

- Research Design in Counselling (ED9546)

Sep 2005 – Sep 2010

## Bachelor of Arts (Honours, Specialized Psychology)

*York University*

- Statistical methods I and II (HH PSYC 2020)
- Introduction to Research Methods (HH PSYC 2030)
- Intermediate Research Methods (HH PSYC 3010)
- Advanced Research in Psychology (HH PSYC 4170)

**COUNSELLING RELATED EXPERIENCE**

Sep 2012 – Present

**Counselling Intern**

## Centennial College Career &amp; Counselling Centre

- Population: Adults and young adults (students)
- Conducted personal, academic and career counselling
- Responsible for independent case load of clients
- Tasks consisted of conducting counselling sessions, completing detailed case notes and participating in case consultation meetings with supervisory staff
- Provided clients with appropriate campus referrals and community partners
- Assisted with various pilot projects, including creating career based workshops, facilitating counselling groups for LGTBQ student population, reviewing centre materials to make improvements, and pioneering student internship program as 1<sup>st</sup> intern at Centre

Sept 2012 – Present

**Crisis Counsellor**

## Peel Distress Centre

- Population: Adults, children, youth, senior citizens (public sector)
- Responsible for crisis counselling via incoming/outgoing calls; Provided support, guidance and resources for distressed clients; Responsible for completing detailed call reports of each call and client concerns
- Completed extensive training in crisis support services ; Knowledge of Centre training protocol, including procedures to trace calls for emergency situations

Oct 2011 – Mar 2012

**Group Counsellor**

## Changing Ways

- Population: Domestic violence offenders (mandated)
- Responsible for facilitating group counselling
- Responsible for co-facilitating group counselling based on power and control wheel materials, client admittance and attendance into weekly sessions, updating and assigning

homework assignment and tasks, sessional planning and organization with supervisory staff and team facilitators, including note taking, report writing, and updating client case notes

Oct 2010 – March 2011

**Psychotherapist**

Pilowsky Psychology Professional Corporation

- Population: Adults, young adults, with psychiatric, developmental, and/or physical impairments (referred by law offices, rehabilitation clinics, and/or government)
- Conducted personal/trauma-related counselling
- Responsible for performing Intake Assessments, Psychometric and Diagnostic Testing Assessments, and Psychotherapy treatments on new and/or returning patients
- Responsible for documenting and recording all session information in corresponding patient files, and completing detailed and extensive sessional reports for various referral sources

Jan 2010 – Apr 2010

**Vocational Rehabilitation Counselling Intern/ Employment Consultant**

Cascade Disability Management

- Population: Adults, young adults, with psychiatric, developmental, and/or physical impairments (referred by ODSP or WSIB)
- Assisted Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors throughout therapy session and monitoring meetings by planning, assessing and reviewing client files
- Responsible for attending sessions/meetings and completing corresponding progress reports through independent note taking
- Organized, planned and facilitated one-on-one Job Retraining sessions with clients

Sep 2008 – Feb 2009

**Specialized Employment and Training Services Consultant/ Intern**  
COSTI Immigrant Services

- Population: Adults, young adults, with psychiatric, developmental, and/or physical impairments (referred by ODSP or WSIB)
- Provided counselling and job retraining
- Responsible for performing intake assessments and organizing, planning, facilitating employment retraining workshops
- Recorded and updated all client information in accordance to referral

## PUBLICATIONS

Doucette, J. D., Pandori, J. K., Jaffe, P., & Crooks, C. (2012). Respectful and responsible relationships: There is no app for that - the report of the Nova Scotia task force on bullying and cyberbullying. *Education Law Journal*, 22(1), 93-103.

Broll, R., Burns, S., Parkington, K., Pandori, J. K., & Doucette, J. D. (in press). Challenges and Lessons Learned in Cyber Bullying Research and Education. In *Volume 5 of the PREVNet Series*.

### Other refereed contributions

#### ***Co-Authored – Published in Conference Proceedings***

Pandori, J. K., & Doucette, J. D. (Jan 2013). Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying: A Mixed Methods Analysis. Paper presented at "The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Hawaii International Conference on Education, Honolulu, HI.

Pandori, J. K., & Doucette, J. (June 2012). Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying: A Mixed Method Analysis. Poster presented at *PREVNet's Sixth Annual Conference, Creating Healthy Relationships to Prevent Bullying: Get the Tools to Take Action*. Queen's University and York University. Toronto, ON.

Pandori, J. K., & Doucette, J.D. (2012). Adolescents' Perceptions of Cyberbullying. Poster presented at The Third Annual Graduate Research in Education Symposium, Western University, London, ON. (April 11, 2012), & Research Day 2012, Western University, London, ON. (March 19, 2012).

### Non-refereed contributions

Research Report - Safe Schools Course (*June – Aug 2012*)  
Western University, London, ON. Supervisors: Peter Jaffe, Ph.D. and Claire Crooks, Ph.D.  
Completed comprehensive literature review of various issues, such as, hate and homophobia, sexual harassment, and promoting a positive school climate.

Research Report - The Family Channel and The Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet) (*June – July 2012*)  
Supervisor: Wendy Josephson, Ph.D.  
Provided recommendations for Family Channel's Bullying Awareness Week Teachers Guide

Public Lecture - Power Inequities Webinar (*July 2012*)  
Lead/Sole Presenter - Canadian Prevention Science Cluster – SSHRC  
Completed webinar presentation with comprehensive research on power inequities, including racism and discrimination. Completed comprehensive research and provided Cluster with presentation notes.

Research Report - Deal.org Evaluation (*Feb – Mar 2012*)

PREVNet - Supervisors: Wendy Craig, Ph.D. and Claire Crooks, Ph.D.

Evaluated various sections of Deal.org, including homophobia and violence and generated research

### **CONFERENCE/WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE & ASSISTANCE**

- Jun 2012      **Creating Health Relationships to Prevent Bullying**
- PREVNet’s Sixth Annual Conference – Queens University and York University
  - Responsible for transcribing comments during round table discussion
- Oct 2011      **When Violence Becomes Entertaining**
- Recapturing childhood and adolescence from the toxic influence of media – presented by Centre for Research & Education and affiliates UWO, Fourth R and CAMH
  - Assisted in facilitating “*Digital Parenting: Kids.. ‘think before you ink!’*” workshop by educators Amie Donais and Kenji Takahashi
  - Responsible for organizing conference sub-workshops, introducing presenters and thanking them for collaboration to workshop attendees
- Oct 2011      **Children Exposed to Domestic Violence Conference**
- Reducing harm and prevention tragedies – presented by Child Abuse Prevention Council of London Middlesex
  - Responsible for meeting with attendees and assignment to each table for minute-note taking purposes, organized and engaged in group discussions with CAS London attendees for conference report purposes

### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- Sep 2012 – Present      **Canadian Psychological Association**
- Professional Student Member
- Sep 2012 – Present      **Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association**
- Professional Student Member
- Jan 2012 – Present      **Canadian Prevention Science Cluster (CSPC), Funded by SSHRC**
- Student Member representing Ontario Hub
  - Actively involved in opportunities to collaborate with students on projects, attending workshops and regional meetings (i.e., publication on cyberbullying, Bullying Awareness Week Teachers Manual for the Family Network, etc.)
  - Exposed to a variety of research methodology, framework, applicable skills, mentoring, collaborative inquiry and training