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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

RESTORING TRUST: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

OF CYBERBULLYING AMONG YOUNG WOMEN

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN NURSING

BY

NANCY HAND CAMP

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To my husband, John and my son, Matthew

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is a global and national public health issue with the potential to affect the healthy social and emotional development of adolescents and young adults. There has been an 80% increase in social media use in 18-29 year olds between 2004 and 2014 (Gahagen, Vaterlaus, & Frost, 2016). In a study of 14-24 year olds (MTV/AP, 2011), 76% identified cyberbullying as a serious problem, with more than 56% reporting they have experienced cyberbullying. Cyberbullying research has been conducted predominantly with adolescents (ages 11-18 years), however scant research has been conducted with older adolescents and young adults (ages 18-30 years). This classical grounded theory study explored the process of cyberbullying victimization from the perspective of 15 young women ages 18-30 years old. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using constant comparison. The substantive theory that emerged from the data is comprised of the core category, Restoring Trust, and five key categories: *Becoming the Target, Suffering in Silence, Reaching Out, Receiving Support,* and *Becoming Empowered.* Of significance is the discovery of trust as the dynamic that moves the process forward. Trust is initially lost when the young woman becomes the target, and then restored through the process of reaching out for help, receiving support, and becoming empowered. Being believed is the gateway to restoring trust. Knowledge and insights gained from this study will inform prevention and intervention strategies.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There has been an 80% increase in social media use in 18-29 year olds between 2004 and 2014 (Gahagen, Vaterlaus, & Frost, 2016). In a 2011 MTV/Associated Press study of 14-24 year olds (N = 1,355), 76% identified digital abuse (cyberbullying) as a serious problem, with more than 56% reporting they have experienced digital abuse. One in three claims they have sent or received "sext" messages, and one in two asserts that they regularly see discriminatory language used in social media (MTV, 2011). As of 2012, it was estimated that 95% of teens use the Internet, 81% used social media, 78 % owned a cell phone, and 75% were texting (Mitchel & Jones, 2015). Hinduja & Patchin (2015) reviewed nine of their previous studies and found the average prevalence rate of lifetime cyberbullying victimization across studies to be approximately 26 percent.

Cyberbullying has emerged as a significant issue for adolescents and young adults. The increased use of technology, although a positive development, may place users at risk for negative outcomes. Carter & Wilson (2015) identified cyberbullying as a 21st century health care phenomenon that nurses have the knowledge and assessment skills to effectively address. Juvonan & Gross (2008) identified cyberbullying as a national public health issue and further posited that with the rapid increase in electronic and online communication, millions of adolescents have the potential to be affected. Raskauskas & Stoltz (2007) cautioned that cyberbullying poses a new threat to the

healthy social and emotional development of adolescents. Given the high prevalence of peer victimization and its devastating impact on adolescents and young adults, it is urgent that health care providers, educators, counselors, and the legal system develop strategies to prevent bullying and victimization in all its forms.

This study investigates the experience of cyberbullying victimization from the perspective of young adult women. The purpose of this grounded theory study is to explore the perceptions of young women who have been bullied via any electronic means such as cell phones, text messages, social networking sites (SNS), chat rooms, and/or web pages. It is anticipated that the knowledge gleaned from this study will generate a theory to provide health care providers, educators, counselors, and law enforcement new insights to inform measurement, prevention, and intervention efforts. This research employs classical grounded theory design to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying from the perspective of those living the experience. This chapter begins with an overview of adolescent development and a discussion of technology in the life of adolescents and young adults. Traditional (face-to-face) bullying will be addressed and contrasted with the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of significance of the problem, purpose and rationale for the study, and primary research question. For the purpose of this study, traditional bullying will be referred to as bullying. Cyberbullying and electronic bullying will be used interchangeably to describe bullying by any electronic means. Electronic aggression, Internet bullying, and Internet harassment will be used as synonyms for cyberbullying.

Background and Context

Adolescence

Adolescence is characterized by a myriad of developmental changes. Not only do adolescents experience physical growth and development, they also experience psychological, cognitive, and social changes, not the least of which is the desire to define who they are as individuals. Adolescence is marked by basic developmental challenges including identity, autonomy, intimacy, sexuality, and achievement (Steinberg, 2008). According to Erikson (1968), the primary task of adolescence is development of identity. Adolescents question who they are and who they are to become, while struggling with the need for autonomy as they begin separating from parents. The role of "victim" often induced by bullying is a negative identity that may be incorporated into the developing sense of self as a result of exposure to bullying.

Peers play a pivotal role in social and emotional development, with peer and romantic relationships increasing in importance during adolescence (Davis, 2013; Espalage & Swearer, 2003; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Adolescent friendships develop through openness, loyalty, and sharing of confidences rather than just sharing common interests and activities. Sexuality is another challenge during adolescence as teens enter romantic relationships and grapple with understanding their own sexual values and morals. In preparation for young adulthood, teens also explore their aspirations for the future and strive to achieve academic success (Steinberg, 2008). All of these challenges play out in the relationships that adolescents have with family members, peers, and teachers on a daily basis. The manifestation of those challenges is often expressed and

shared electronically via the Internet with friends and acquaintances.

Trends contributing to the cyberbullying phenomenon include increased access to and use of technology, use of computer mediated communication (CMC) as a primary means of contact, and reliance on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat to establish and maintain social relationships among adolescents and young adults. Social networking sites have been described as a …"cultural requirement for American high school students, places where students can explore their identity, work out an image of how they see themselves, and provide spaces where they can escape adult culture" (Boyd, 2008, p. 44). In her recent book, Boyd (2014) posits that teens are attempting to find spaces where they can exercise their autonomy, interact with their peers and gain some freedom from parental control, which absent the use of technology, is no different than teens from previous decades.

Adolescents and Technology

A discussion of cyberbullying requires an exploration and understanding of technology and adolescents. Present day teenagers are the first group of adolescents to be born and raised in a digital world. Palfrey & Gasser (2008) refer to these adolescents as "Digital Natives" (p. 1). They study, work, communicate and interact with each other much differently than prior generations of teens. They obtain the news by reading blogs online. They download music to a smart phone instead of going to the music store. They communicate primarily via texting (Sabella, 2013). This generation is connected 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by a common culture that most adults do not understand. For teens …"major aspects of their lives [including] social interactions, friendships, and civic

activities are mediated by digital technologies. And they've never known any other way of life" (Palfrey & Gasser, p.2).

The digital world has changed the way people relate to each other and the world around them. Teens spend much of their time on line and often do not distinguish between the offline and online worlds (Boyd, 2008, 2014). They have created a network that merges human interaction and technical prowess to such an extent that human relationships are changing in fundamental ways (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

The idea of being "friends" is no longer constrained by geography. Friendship groups no longer consist of only the neighborhood kids and classmates. Adolescents acquire friends from everywhere, sharing thoughts and photos around the world through social networking sites. Research reports vary regarding the numbers of friends that young people have through social media. Palfrey and Gasser suggest most adolescents have between 150-300 or more "friends" on their social networking sites. A 2013 report by Pew Research found the average teen has 425 friends (Madden, et al. 2013). A study by Aboujaoude, Savage, Starcevic, & Saleme (2015), reported teens have an average of 506 friends on social networking sites.

Changes in technology have brought about a significant shift in the way friendships are formed by reliance on smart phones, texting, instant messaging, iPads, email, and blogs (Strom & Strom, 2012). Often the more friends one has reflects the individual's status within the immediate and extended peer group. The nature of these friendships, although based on characteristics of traditional friendship like shared interests and activities, is fundamentally different. Online friendships may often be

fleeting. They can be entered and exited with the click of a mouse. However, the nature

of online friendships may be more important to teens than fully realized by adults.

In an ethnographic study by Boyd (2008), a teen was quoted as saying: "If you are

not on MySpace, you don't exist" (p.1). Although MySpace has lost popularity, this

statement could also apply to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Teens use

social networking sites to "hang out" with their friends. Boyd (2014) contends it is

socially critical for teens to participate in this activity. She further posits that the online

world of teens reflects their offline peer network. The immediate online world of teens is

not filled predominantly with strangers and pedophiles, but rather includes people they

know from school, church, sports, and other activities. When asked if they would rather

hang out with friends or be online with them, teens much preferred face-to-face

interaction. However, they cited several legitimate reasons why they are unable to do so,

including over-scheduling, increased suburbanization, and lack of transportation that

limits face-to-face interaction. In light of these obstacles, adolescents found online

socialization an easier and more accessible way to maintain relationships with their peers.

This constant online presence is reality for adolescents and young adults in a digital

world.

The digital world, however, is not without problems. Unlike interactions in public

face-to-face spaces, communication in the digital world has specific properties that make

it unique. Boyd (2008) identified five characteristics inherent in social networked spaces

that are absent in face-to-face conversation: persistence, searchability, replication,

invisible audiences, and scalability. She posited that digital communication creates a

persistence of memory, meaning that a conversation lives on long after it occurs. Although face to face conversations may live on in the mind of the individuals, the digital world provides a new canvas for those conversations to persist. All of the content in digital communication is searchable, not just by peers, but also by parents, teachers, admissions personnel, and employers, all of whom have power over the adolescent or young adult. Content can be, and often is, replicated. Young people who share a conversation in confidence with a friend, may find the information forwarded to others, or posted on a social networking site. When conversing in public spaces, young people are aware of their audience. In the digital world, communication takes place in front of invisible audiences. Conversations that are appropriate within a peer group are often available to a wider invisible audience in which the conversation may no longer be considered appropriate. Finally, scalability describes the amplification of images and interactions that occur in the digital world. A single image, video, or conversation can be transmitted instantly to millions of people well beyond the scope of the immediate peer group. Scalability, when coupled with replication, searchability, persistence, and an invisible audience, creates perfect conditions for cyberbullying to initiate and thrive.

Palfrey & Gasser (2008) identified issues of privacy as another primary concern. Each online experience creates a digital footprint; a trail that leads back to the sender. In some cases, the adolescent or young adult is displaying a positive image of him or herself. Others, however, are posting information and photographs that could pose a present danger, or generate embarrassment and humiliation in the future.

Navigating adolescence requires the teen to develop social skills to negotiate peer

interactions. The context in which this interaction occurs, whether face-to-face or via electronic means, is essential to socialization. Boyd (2008) acknowledged that a significant part of teen socialization is learning to recognize social cues; facial expressions, tone of voice, and other non-verbal signs. As Palfrey & Gasser (2008) pointed out, adolescents are still in the process of developing these social skills and may not fully grasp the impact of their words or actions in an online world because they cannot see the reaction of the other person.

In summary, technology has provided untold access to information and opportunities only dreamed of 20 years ago. Along with the explosion in technology comes the responsibility to use it in a positive manner. Although anecdotal evidence exists that teens are the victims of intimidation and harassment by unknown adults lurking on the Internet, those instances are frightening, but relatively infrequent. The data about the psychological harm that teens are doing to each other in the form of cyberbullying is much more troubling and requires continued research and effective prevention and intervention strategies.

History of Bullying Research

Bullying research was conducted initially in Scandinavian countries in the 1970's. However, serious attention was paid to the issue in1982, when three 10-14 year old boys from northern Norway committed suicide as a result of bullying. The death of the boys resulted in a nationwide campaign to address bullying in Norwegian schools (Olweus, 1993). In the late 1980's and early 1990's, bullying received more public attention and research funding in other countries including Japan, United Kingdom, the Netherlands,

Australia, Canada, and the United States (Olweus, 1993). In the mid 1990's Norwegian researcher Olweus, a pioneer of bullying research, extended his research by working with his American colleagues to study bullying in the United States. It was not until the tragic school shootings at Columbine High School that researchers in the United States increased their focus on bullying among children and adolescents.

Traditional Bullying

Definitions. Traditional face-to-face bullying has been defined in various ways. Olweus (1996) defined bullying as: "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students" (p.9). He further explained that the negative actions could include physical, verbal, or alienation and isolation actions. The final piece of the Olweus definition of bullying includes a power differential between the bully and the victim. The power imbalance in bullying is usually based on size, strength, or status, with the stronger student bullying the weaker student. Roland (1989) characterized bullying as "long standing violence, physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or group directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself in the actual situation" (p.21). Nansel and colleagues (2001) defined bullying as aggressive behavior or intentional 'harm doing' by one person or a group, generally carried out repeatedly and over time, that includes a power differential. Johnson, Munn, & Edwards (1991) described bullying as a willful, conscious wish to hurt, frighten, or threaten someone. Selekman & Vessey (2004) described bullying as a spectrum of behaviors that includes teasing on one end of the spectrum and bullying leading to violence on the other end of

the spectrum.

Lack of consensus on the definition of bullying increases complexity in interpreting and comparing research findings. In spite of this, the commonalities between these definitions have become the criteria by which all bullying, regardless of type, is measured: (a) presence of negative actions with intent to harm; (b) repeated occurrences over time; and (c) imbalance of power between the bully and the victim.

To address the inconsistencies in defining bullying, a federal panel of experts was convened to create a consistent definition of bullying. The CDC (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014) published the updated definition which reads:

Bullying is any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm (p.7)

This definition encompasses both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, and seeks to place into context the notions of repetition and power imbalance that have plagued defining bullying behaviors regardless of setting.

Prevalence. The National Center for Education Statistics reported findings from a 2007 survey (Department of Education and Justice, 2009) that approximately 32% of 12-18 year old students reported being bullied at school during the previous year. In a recent meta-analysis of 80 studies, Modecki and colleagues (2014) found an average 35% prevalence rate for traditional bullying, consistent with previous findings. Most bullying occurred within the school building, on school grounds, or on the school bus. Of those children bullied, 21% reported being bullied once or twice per month, while 17%

reported the frequency as once or twice per week (10%) or almost daily (7%). Only 36%

of those students who were bullied reported the incidents to a teacher or other adult in the

school (Department of Education and Justice, 2009).

Consequences. Bullying is a public health issue affecting children and

adolescents throughout this nation. The effects of bullying on children and adolescents

are well documented and include physical and psychological consequences that can last

well beyond the incidences of bullying. Victims of bullying report a higher incidence of

depression, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts than non-bullied youth (Brunstein-

Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, Gould, M., 2007). Internalizing behaviors

such as anxiety, withdrawal, worry, and fear may manifest as early as 10 years of age in

children who have been bullied (Arseneault, et al., 2008). Somatic complaints such as

headaches, stomach aches, dizziness, nervousness, and sleep disorders are more frequent

in children exposed to bullying (Srabstein, McCarter, Shao, & Huang, 2006). The

consequences of exposure to bullying not only affect the child's physical and

psychological health but also play a role in academic achievement, school attendance,

and early drop-out from school. Children who bully others are more likely to engage in

violent behaviors themselves and often have criminal convictions later in life (NIH,

2003). As adults, male bullies are often involved in unstable relationships, domestic

violence, risk-taking, and employment termination. Women who bullied others in school

are more likely to use harsh discipline with their own children. Both male and female

bullies report higher rates of alcoholism, personality disorders, and greater use of mental

health services as adults (Strom & Strom, 2005; Strom & Strom, 2012).

Cyberbullying

  Definitions. Similar to bullying, cyberbullying also has numerous definitions.

Hinduja and Patchin (2009) defined cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted

through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (p.5). Smith and

colleagues (2008) defined cyberbullying as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by

a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against

a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (p.376). Cyberbullying, defined by

Ybarra and Mitchell (2007), is "an overt, intentional act of aggression towards another

person online" (p.42).

  Willard (2007) defined cyberbullying as "being cruel to others by sending or

posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social cruelty using the Internet or

other digital technologies" (p.1). She further subdivided cyberbullying into 8 categories

that included: flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing and trickery,

exclusion, cyberstalking, and cyberthreats. Flaming is a short-lived heated argument

between two or more people that usually includes offensive language, rudeness, and

vulgarity and occurs in a public communication space such as a chat room or discussion

board. Harassment is characterized as sending ongoing, repeated offensive messages to

an individual. Harassment usually occurs in email or public communication spaces and is

longer-lived than flaming. Denigration is described as harmful, false, and/or cruel speech

directed toward the target. The purpose of denigration is to interfere with friendships or

damage the reputation of the target and often involves spreading rumors and gossip.

Unlike harassment, the target is not usually the direct recipient of the messages, but rather

sees it in a public posting or hears about it from others. Impersonation occurs when a cyberbully gains access to the password of the target and posts information that reflects badly on the target and that others assume is originating from the target. Impersonation can set the stage for the target to be falsely accused of whatever the cyberbully has written. Outing and trickery involves tricking the target into disclosing potentially humiliating or embarrassing information under the guise of friendship and confidentiality, and then sending, posting, or forwarding that information to others. Exclusion refers to designating who is and is not a member of a particular group. Just as it occurs in the offline world of teens, exclusion in the online world involves being cast out of an online group, either by being removed from "friends list" or being ostracized from a chat room or gaming community. Regardless of the environment, Willard (2007) asserted that exclusion creates intense emotion, and for many teens is the ultimate rejection.

Prevalence. Of 73 studies reviewed by Hinduja & Patchin (2014) the prevalence of cyberbullying victimization was reported to be between 2.3% to 72%. The wide range in prevalence is most likely due to the lack of conceptual clarity, multiple definitions for cyberbullying, and methodological differences in the studies. One of the earliest cyberbullying studies by Ybarra & Mitchell (2004), the Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS), conducted between 1999 and 2000 found that 19% of the participants (n=1,501) were involved in cyberbullying either as bullies (12%), victims (4%), or both (3%). The National Children's Home Study, a survey of 856 youth 11-19 years old, conducted in London in 2001 reported 25% of participants were victims of cyberbullying. Hinduja &

Patchin (2006) conducted an online survey of 384 youth aged 17 years old and younger

that found 30% of participants were victims of cyberbullying, and 11% were perpetrators

of cyberbullying. They replicated that study in 2005 (n=770) and reported that 32% of

boys and 36% of girls were victims, while 18% of boys and 16% of girls were

cyberbullies. Williams & Guerra (2007) assessed the prevalence of different types of

bullying (physical, verbal, and cyberbullying) and found 9.4% of the sample had

experienced cyberbullying. Kowalski & Limber (2007) researched which form of digital

communication was used for cyberbullying and reported that IM was the most frequent

medium used (66.6%), followed by chat rooms (24.7%), email (24.2%), and websites

(23.4%). If that study was replicated now, it would likely show different results because

of the rapid advancement of technology. Since 2002, cyberbullying experts, Hinduja and

Patchin (2015), have surveyed more than 15,000 students about cyberbullying. The

average occurrence rate of cyberbullying across their last eight studies is approximately

26 percent.

      Consequences. Teens exposed to cyberbullying experience diverse reactions

ranging from sadness, anger, and retaliation to committing suicide. Anecdotal accounts of

teens taking their lives due to bullying and cyberbullying have been widely reported in

the press (Eckholm & Zezima, 2010; Tan, 2011; Tresniowski, 2009; Tresniowski, 2010.

Garbarino & deLara (2002) pointed out that adolescents' lives are filled with teasing,

name-calling, and gossiping, therefore making it difficult to determine which behaviors

among peers cause distress and which are quasi-acceptable to adolescents. They

postulated, however, that the effects of non-resiliency, coupled with emotional violence

like cyberbullying, creates feelings of shame, low self-esteem, impaired self-image, and learned helplessness for the victim. Other consequences associated with cyberbullying include anger, sadness (DeHue,Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Topcu, Erdur-Baker, & Capa-Aydin, 2008), depression, decreased interest in school (DeHue), anxiety (Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols & Storch, 2009; Juvonon & Gross, 2008; Kowalski & Limber, 2013) decreased ability to concentrate, impaired ability to make friends (Cassidy, Jackson & Brown, 2009), fear (Cassidy, et al, 2009 ; Ybarra,Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2006), and suicidal thoughts (Cassidy, et al, 2009, Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Comparison of Bullying and Cyberbullying

Researchers study cyberbullying by applying the same criteria used to study bullying: infliction of harm, repetition, and power imbalance. There are, however, several noteworthy differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying, including anonymity, potentially larger audience, and disconnection between the bully and the target that warrant further mention. Repetition may be a shared trait, but seems to manifest differently in cyberbullying.

Anonymity

Anonymity is one of the attributes that differentiates cyberbullying and bullying, and researchers have assumed that cyberbullies remain anonymous to the victim. However, research findings are inconsistent. Findings from the YISS-2 study of 10-17 year olds (n=1,500) reported by Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor, (2007) revealed that 43% of victims knew their harasser. Fifty-nine percent of incidents by known peers involved posting messages for others to see; repetition of incidents by same harasser, more than

one harasser, and instant messaging as the primary method of harassment. Juvenon &
Gross (2008) conducted an Internet based survey (n=1,454) and reported that 73% of
cyber victims were "pretty sure" or "totally sure" of the identity of the Internet harasser,
and about half of those victims knew the bully from school.

In a study of 177 seventh grade students, Li (2007) reported that 59% of
cyberbullying victims knew the identity of the harasser. In a multi-site study (n=3,767)
by Kowalski & Limber (2007), 52% of the victims knew the identity of the bully.
Findings from these studies seem to refute the belief that most cyberbullies remain
anonymous. Additional research should be conducted to more fully understand the
prevalence of anonymity and its effect on the victim of cyberbullying. It is plausible that
not knowing the identity of the bully may create a sense of hyper-vigilance and increased
anxiety in the victim, further magnifying the negative effects of electronic victimization.

Audience

The audience in cyberbullying is more widespread than in traditional bullying. A
cruel message between a cyberbully and victim may be spread throughout the school
community by the time the student returns to school the following day. The ability to
quickly disseminate humiliating, embarrassing, and cruel messages to a larger audience
may intensify the effects of the cruelty on the victim. Cyberbullying and the expanded
audience extends bullying beyond the schoolyard, invading the safety and security of the
victim's home. As a result, victims may feel like they are unable to escape the torment.

Disconnection

Another difference, and perhaps one of the most troubling, is the "virtual"

distance between the cyberbully and the target and its effect on empathy. In face-to-face

bullying, the bully is able to see the immediate reaction of the target through verbal and

non-verbal cues. Being able to see the effect of his actions on the victim in real time may

generate a feeling of empathy and be a catalyst for behavior change. However, with

cyberbullying, the bully receives no immediate feedback from the victim, essentially

disconnecting the bully from the consequences of his actions (Suler, 2004). Lack of

empathy for the victim coupled with disinhibition creates an environment where the bully

feels emboldened to say whatever he/she feels, no matter how cruel, and never see the

effect on the victim. The "disinhibition effect" as it relates to electronic communication

asserts that people say things during online communication that they would never say if

communicating face-to-face (Suler, 2004). Lapidot-Lefler and Barak (2012) expanded

this assertion and researched anonymity, visibility, and eye contact as each relates to

disinhibition. The results suggested that of the three independent variables, lack of eye-

contact was the chief contributor to the negative effects of online disinhibition.

Disconnection may also involve moral disengagement. Bussey, Fitzpatrick, &

Raman (2015) surveyed 942 7th-9th grade students regarding cyberbullying, moral,

disengagement, and self-efficacy. Their findings indicated that high levels of

cyberbullying self-efficacy (the belief in the ability to cyberbully others) were positively

correlated with high moral disengagement scores and high self-reported cyberbullying.

Further research into the disinhibition effect and moral disengagement as it relates to the

phenomenon of cyberbullying would be beneficial.

Repetition

According to Olweus (1993), for an individual's actions to be considered bullying, they must occur repeatedly. A single episode of aggression or cruelty between a bully and a victim would not, by definition, constitute bullying. If a teen receives a cruel message from another person, it would be considered a single episode according to the Olweus criteria. However, because of the permanence of electronic communication, it could be hypothesized that the target of the cruel message may read and re-read that message numerous times, being re-victimized each time. Likewise, if a victim receives a cruel message from one individual who also disseminates that message to a much larger audience, the cruelty may be magnified and the door is open for others to add to the cruelty. By definition, this would not rise to the level of bullying because it is a single episode. However, it is plausible that the target of the bullying feels the pain and torment of these single incidents of cruelty more so than if they had been bullied repeatedly by a single individual.

Researchers have explored the similarities and differences between bullying and cyberbullying. Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols, & Storch (2009) identified cyber victimization as a separate latent variable from overt and relational bullying. Similarly, Varjas, Henrich, & Meyers, (2009) found cyberbullying to be a unique modality. In addition, Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown (2009) reported that approximately three quarters of students in their study perceived cyberbullying to be very different from face-to-face bullying. Conversely, other researchers (Katzer, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak, 2009; Li, 2008; and Juvenon & Gross, 2008) found bullying and cyberbullying more similar than

different. Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor, (2007) asserted that electronic bullying should

only be considered bullying if it is associated with offline bullying, while Williams and

Guerra (2007) posited that the causal pathways to Internet bullying may not be unique.

In summary, there appear to be differences between the two phenomena that

would benefit from additional research. With the research conducted to date, there is

simply not enough definitive empirical evidence to conclude whether bullying and

cyberbullying are the same or different concepts.

Significance

One need only to read the newspaper or listen to the evening news to recognize

that cyber bullying is a significant issue facing adolescents and young adults. Popular

press illustrates the disastrous consequences of cyberbullying including the suicides of

Megan Meier, Ryan Halligan, Alexis Pilkington, Phoebe Prince, Tyler Clementi, Jamie

Rodemyer, and Rebecca Sedgewick, to name a few (Eckholm & Zezima, 2010; Tan,

2011; Tresniowski, 2009; Tresniowski, 2010; Wallace, 2014). The Centers for Disease

Control (CDC, 2006) convened a panel of experts and has recognized cyber bullying as a

public health issue. The Obama administration has convened three National Bullying

Summits in 2010, 2011, and 2012 to explore bullying and cyber bullying in the United

States (White House, 2011). The health objectives for Healthy People 2020 now include

objectives specific to adolescent health that include bullying (HealthyPeople.gov). The

Illinois State Board of Education has established a School Bullying Prevention Task

Force (SBPTF) to explore the causes and consequences of bullying in schools, and to

identify promising practices to combat bullying (ISBE, 2010). The State of Illinois

established a bullying task force under the direction of Attorney General Lisa Madigan to explore the issues, identify and implement prevention strategies, and update legislation to keep pace with advances in technology. Local law enforcement agencies now have cyber-crime specialists to handle cyber bullying and cyber stalking cases occurring in their jurisdictions. Additionally school districts have implemented task forces to further explore the impact of cyber bullying on the school environment and academic achievement.

This study is significant because it will add to the theoretical literature on cyberbullying, and provide a deeper understanding of cyberbullying grounded in the reality of young women who have experienced it. Generation of a substantive theory may inform prevention and intervention efforts and development of sound measurement instruments to inform the practice of healthcare providers, educators, counselors, and school administrators.

Significance to Nursing

Nurses interact with adolescents and young adults in a variety of settings and need to be knowledgeable about cyberbullying and the effects on physical and mental health. The school nurse may be the first person the adolescent turns to when faced with bullying of any kind. Nurse practitioners in pediatric offices and primary practice settings interact with adolescents during routine physical exams, immunizations, and illness visits. Nurse practitioners in woman's health develop relationships with adolescent girls as they navigate changes during puberty, and young women as they transition from adolescence into young adulthood. Mental health nurses have the opportunity to interact with young

women in both inpatient and outpatient settings. Parish nurses may also interact with adolescents in youth groups and church activities. Each interaction with a young woman provides the opportunity to ask about cyberbullying, listen, provide information, and make referrals as necessary. Scant research into cyberbullying has been conducted by nurses. This study will add to the nursing literature and provide nurses in a variety of settings with a greater understanding of cyberbullying and its effect on adolescent girls.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to generate a theory of cyberbullying victimization grounded in the experience of young women. Grounded theory methodology using in-depth interviews will provide a deeper, richer understanding of the phenomenon and add to the theoretical research literature.

Rationale

Current cyberbullying research studies have been predominantly exploratory, quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive studies that examine incidence, prevalence, grade level, and gender variables. Most studies have focused on middle school and high school populations. These studies tend to examine cyberbullying as an "incident" or "event" rather than a social process. This research study focuses on young women aged 18-30 years old, and seeks to add to the research base by framing the phenomenon of cyberbullying as a social process based in the framework of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) is based on the belief that: (a) human beings act based on meanings they ascribe to things in the world, (b) those meanings arise from interactions with others, and (c) those meanings are handled and acted upon through an

interpretive process by the individual. Conducting in-depth interviews with research participants will allow the social process and related meanings to emerge from the data based on the individual's perception and interpretation rather than interpretation of meaning by a researcher. The resultant substantive theory will be a reflection of the reality of young women who have experienced victimization through cyberbullying.

Research Questions

The primary research question in a grounded theory study is designed to provide a broad approach to the phenomenon. The primary research question for this study will be: "What is the experience of being a young woman and the target of cyber bullying?" Within the framework of a semi-structured one-on-one interview, questions will be used to elicit information regarding the social-psychological process of cyberbullying including being targeted, subsequent effects, social support, and recovery. Additional questions will be added as data collection and analysis occur simultaneously and hypotheses arise from analyzing the data.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions will be used in this study. *Bullying* is:

> any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm (Gladdin, et al., 2014, p.7)

Cyberbullying is defined as "any type of harassment or bullying (teasing, telling lies, making fun of someone, making rude or mean comments, spreading rumors, or making threatening or aggressive comments) that occurs through email, a chat room, instant

messaging, a website (including blogs), or text messaging" (CDC, 2008, p.3). Electronic

bullying, electronic aggression, Internet bullying, Internet harassment, and digital abuse

will be used as synonyms for cyberbullying. *Electronic victimization* is the experience of

being targeted, harassed or bullied via electronic means. *Sexting* is "the practice of youth

writing sexually explicit messages, taking sexually explicit photos of themselves or

others in their peer group, and transmitting those photos and/or messages to their peers"

(National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2009).

Summary

Cyberbullying is a public health problem that is likely to increase in the wake of

advancing technology, and has the potential to affect every adolescent or young adult

who uses a computer or cell phone. The effects of cyberbullying on the social and

emotional health of adolescents have been reported anecdotally in the national press, and

have been addressed in research studies. Continued research is needed to more fully

understand the phenomenon of cyberbullying from the unique perspective of young

women, with the goal of generating valid and reliable instruments to measure the

phenomenon and implementing evidence-based strategies to reduce the prevalence of

cyberbullying and enhance the social and emotional well-being of adolescents and young

adults. This chapter addressed adolescent development, technology in the lives of young

people, and the history of bullying and cyberbullying to date. Additionally, the purpose,

significance, rationale, research question, and definition of terms were described. Chapter

Two will present the review of literature as it relates to the individual, family, school,

legal system, and social policy.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will explore current research related to the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Information on the search strategy and an overview of the research conducted to date will be presented. The literature review will be organized to include cyberbullying research as it relates to the individual, family, school, legal system, and social policy. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of methodological and theoretical implications, as well as identification of gaps in research, and recommendations for future research.

Search Strategy

In light of the multidimensional nature of cyberbullying, it was important not only to search a variety of databases, but also to search a variety of key words. The following data bases were reviewed for articles written from 2000 to the present: Medline, PsychInfo, ERIC, CINAHL, Communications & Media, Child and Adolescent Development, Criminal Justice, and Dissertations & Theses. Key words used in this search included: cyberbullying, electronic bullying, online bullying, electronic harassment, online harassment, online victimization, relational aggression, social cruelty, emotional health, psychosocial health, violence, Internet, adolescents, teenagers, and college students. Additionally, alerts were implemented so notification of new articles would be sent to the researcher. Reference lists of all articles were reviewed to obtain

additional relevant articles. Tables of contents for specific adolescent focused journals, computer communication journals, and psychology journals were also reviewed manually for pertinent articles that may have been missed in the search process.

Overview

The majority of quantitative studies were cross-sectional, descriptive correlational studies designed to explore the prevalence of the phenomenon, determine the most frequent methods of cyberbullying, or identify predictors of cyberbullying behaviors for the bully or the victim. Samples studied included early, middle, and late adolescents from a variety of geographic regions. Scant research involving college-aged samples was found. Similarly, there was a dearth of qualitative research. Reflecting the multidimensional nature of cyberbullying, the review of literature will be organized to address research that focuses on the individual, family, school, legal system, and society.

Cyberbullying and the Individual

According to the Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS-2), there was a 50% increase in cyberbullying between 2001 and 2005 (Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2006). The YISS -2 surveyed a nationally representative random sample of 1,500 Internet users ages 10-17 years and a caregiver in the same household by telephone to determine (a) the characteristics of youth who were targets of Internet harassment, and (b) the characteristics associated with reporting distress related to the incident. Nine percent of the sample reported being harassed online at least once in the previous year. Thirty-two percent of those reported chronic harassment, described in the survey as more than 3 times in the previous year. Of those harassed, 38% reported distress described as feeling very or extremely upset or afraid. Preadolescents (defined as 10-12 years old),

and those targeted by adults, or asked to send pictures were more likely to report distress as a result of the online harassment (Ybarra, et.al). Additionally, using IM, blogging, and visiting chat rooms increased the odds of being a target (p<.001). The latter finding is consistent with other studies (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005; Li, 2007). In contrast, a study by Juvenon & Gross (2008), after controlling for Internet use, reported school-based bullying was a stronger predictor of cyberbullying than the use of any specific electronic communication device. In a review of all three YISS studies from 2000, 2005, and 2010 (Jones, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2011), findings indicated that general and distressing online harassment increased significantly for girls only, with rates increasing 50% between 2005 and 2010.

A multi-school study conducted by Kowalski & Limber (2007) surveyed 3,767 middle school students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades in six separate middle schools to determine the prevalence of electronic bullying among middle school students. Gender and grade were examined for differences. The findings revealed significant gender differences (p<.001) with more girls than boys being the victims or bully/victims of electronic bullying. Findings within other studies, however, have yielded conflicting results regarding gender differences (Flores, Simos, Fisoun, Dafouli, & Geroukalis, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012; Topcu, Erdur-Baker & Capa-Aydin, 2008). Differences among grade level for this sample indicated that 6th grade students were the least likely to be involved in electronic bullying (p<.001). The large sample size and multiple sites added strength to the study. On the other hand, instrumentation included a 23-item rationally derived Electronic Bullying Questionnaire for which no reliability or validity data were reported. Researchers limited the time

frame to incidents that occurred "in the past couple of months" which may have excluded

students who experienced electronic bullying prior to the two month window, thus

underestimating the prevalence of electronic bullying in this sample.

Again using data from the YISS-2 study, Ybarra and Mitchell (2007) explored

behavioral and psychosocial characteristics of Internet bullying perpetrators based on the

frequency of online harassment perpetration. They found that 29% of respondents

reported limited (17%), occasional (6%), or frequent (6%) Internet harassment

perpetration. Girls in this sample were 50% more likely to be categorized as limited

perpetrators ($p<.02$), while boys were three times more likely to report frequent

perpetration ($p<.001$). Rule breaking behavior such as skipping school and serving

detention was reported three times more frequently in occasional perpetrators ($p<.002$)

and seven times more frequently ($p<.001$) in frequent Internet harassment perpetrators.

Aggression problems were reported at a two-fold increase for limited perpetrators ($p=.03$)

and a nine-fold increase for frequent perpetrators ($p<.001$). The researchers cautioned

that "Internet harassment perpetration might be a marker for a larger constellation of

psychosocial problems" (p.189).

Raskauskas & Stoltz (2007) conducted a self-report survey (*n*=84) to identify the

relationship between involvement in electronic and traditional bullying. Findings

revealed that roles in traditional bullying were predictive of roles in electronic bullying.

Findings suggested that students involved in electronic bullying are a subset of those

involved in traditional bullying either as bully or victim. The author posited based on

these findings, that bullying begins offline and may continue in the online environment,

rather than the reverse. That finding is consistent with subsequent studies conducted by

Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown (2009), Hinduja & Patchin (2014), and Kowalski & Limber (2013) which indicate that those students who are bullied in person, are more likely to also be victims of cyberbullying. Although other researchers (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004) found that victims of traditional bullying often retaliated by becoming electronic bullies, the findings from subsequent studies, including the Raskauskas & Stoltz study did not support that hypothesis. It should be noted that this study was conducted with a small sample of (n=84) making it difficult to generalize findings. Additionally, the Internet Experiences Questionnaire was created specifically for this study and no reliability or validity data were reported.

A study conducted in the Netherlands (DeHue, Bolman & Vollink, 2008) sought to determine young teen's experiences with cyberbullying and parental perception of the problem. Surveying 1,211 students (mean age 12.7 years) and their parents, the researchers found that 16% of the student sample had cyberbullied someone else and 23% of student respondents had been victims. The percentage of girls who had been cyberbullied was significantly higher than boys ($p<0.05$). Additionally, the correlation between participation in Internet and traditional bullying was significant ($p<.001$), as was the correlation between being a victim of both bullying and cyberbullying ($p<.001$). This finding is consistent with studies by Hinduja & Patchin (2009) and Kowalski & Limber (2013). More than half of the parents surveyed reported setting limits on the frequency of use and content viewed on the Internet. There was no companion question for the teens to determine if the limits were adhered to. In this sample, parents' perception of their children's involvement in Internet bullying either as a bully (4.8%) or victim (11.8%) was considerably lower than the children's response of 17.3% for bullying and 22.9% for

victims, supporting the premise that adults for the most part are naïve to the activities their teens are involved with in the online world.

Williams and Guerra (2007) conducted a study to contrast the prevalence of verbal, physical, and electronic bullying among elementary, middle school, and high school students (*n*=3,339) in 78 Colorado schools, and to examine whether predictors of physical and verbal bullying also predicted Internet bullying. Findings revealed verbal bullying to be most prevalent (70.7%), followed by physical (40.3%) and Internet bullying (9.4%). Their evidence suggests that verbal and Internet bullying rises sharply after 5th grade, peaks in 8th grade, and decreases slightly in subsequent years. Moreover, researchers found that all three types of bullying were significantly related to students' normative beliefs approving of bullying, negative school climate, and negative peer support. This study expanded knowledge of cyberbullying beyond simple prevalence rates to begin to examine predictors of bullying behaviors.

Another comparison study of school victimization and electronic victimization conducted in Germany (Katzer, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak, 2009) similarly found a strong relationship (p<.01) between school and electronic victimization. Additional findings revealed that low self-concept, lack of popularity, and poor parent- child relationships may also be predictors of victimization. Although this study did include interesting variables that need to be evaluated, the measurement instruments demonstrated insufficient reliability and validity. Cronbach's alphas for some scales were as low as .39, .40, and .65 making data inferences questionable.

The popularity of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat has led researchers to study SNS use and its relation to cyberbullying victimization. Stakstrud

and colleagues (2013) found that the number of Facebook friends in general was the strongest predictor for risk of victimization by cyberbullying. Wegge and colleagues (2015) found that the number of online friends who were not also face-to-face friends increased the risk of cybervictimization. Similarly, Schacter and colleagues (2016) identified that more personal disclosures on social networking sites also increased the risk for cybervictimization.

A Canadian study by Cassidy, Jackson & Brown, (2009) used surveys and open-ended questions to explore students' opinions about cyberbullying and their reporting practices. The study (*n*=365) found that 95% of the students (age 11-15 years) identified physical and mental disabilities, ethnicity, special needs, high or low academic ability, physical appearance, choice of clothing, and being unpopular as more likely to provoke electronic harassment. Although that implies that marginalized individuals are the targets of bullying, approximately one third of this sample reported being cyberbullied, indicating a more widespread issue affecting the "average student" as well as those identified above. Moreover, this study revealed that almost one fourth of participants would not tell anyone about being the victim of cyberbullying. This is a serious finding considering the social and emotional effects associated with victimization. As with other studies, teens were most likely to report the incident to a friend rather than an adult. These findings are consistent with bullying research that indicates that adolescents are reluctant to report incidents of cyberbullying to adults for fear of losing access to the computer, the social lifeline for teens (Boyd, 2007; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

Mendez-Baldwin and colleagues (2015) recently conducted a survey of cyberbullying attitudes and behaviors, including whether victims would report the

cyberbullying, with 359 high school students. Their findings revealed that 45% of students would tell their parent if someone was making fun of them or posting embarrassing photos of them online. This is an important finding suggesting that almost half the students in this sample were comfortable seeking parental support for cyberbullying. There was also a significant correlation ($r = .15$; $p < 0.01$) between being friends with a parent on a social media site and telling the parent if they were being cyberbullied. That finding illustrates the need for parents to be aware of and to be involved in their teen's online life.

Hoff & Mitchell (2008) used a mixed methods approach that included open-ended questions as part of the survey given to 351 students. Findings revealed that cyberbullying emerged from relationship problems such as breaking up, envy, intolerance, and ganging up on another individual. Students also reported experiencing "powerfully negative" effects related to social well-being; and they perceived the reactions of school personnel and other students to be ineffective or absent. A review of 153 studies on bullying predictors identified peer status and social competence as the predominant predictors of bullying victimization (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010).

A qualitative study using gender specific focus groups found that students, particularly females, viewed cyberbullying as a problem. Moreover, cyberbullying was not discussed in school, and school personnel were not perceived as helpful resources should the problem arise. It should be noted that the researchers did not ask the participants about their own experiences with cyberbullying, but limited the discussion to the students' perceptions of cyberbullying in general (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber,

2007). Finally, a qualitative study of 58 focus groups (*n*=279) conducted by

Vandenbosch & Van Cleemput (2008) found that measuring the activities and

mechanisms of cyberbullying without considering the context of the *interaction*, for

example teasing among friends vs. cyberbullying is an inadequate method of studying the

phenomenon, and could likely account for the discrepancy among study findings.

<div align="center">**Cyberbullying and the Family**</div>

Although the influence of family on a child's social behavior is significant, little

research exists regarding cyberbullying and the family. Wang, Bianchi, & Raley (2005)

studied 759 parent-teen dyads to determine family rules regarding Internet use. Findings

suggested that parental monitoring was perceived and reported differently by parents and

teens, with parents reporting a higher level of monitoring than teens reported. Similarly,

DeHue, et al., found that parents' perception of the teens' involvement in cyberbullying

was considerably lower than the actual involvement reported by the teen. Although not

specific to cyberbullying, Pernice-Duca and colleagues studied family cohesion, parental

responsiveness, and school climate as predictors of relational aggression. The findings

indicated that family environment, specifically parental responsiveness, was one of the

most significant predictors of relational aggression and victimization (Pernice-Duca,

Taiariol, & Yoon, 2010). Hambrados-Medieta and colleagues (2012) in a Spanish study,

found that the mother was the main provider of emotional support in the family.

Similarly, Fanti and colleagues (2012) conducted a longitudinal study and found family

social support was a protective factor against both cyberbullying victimization and

perpetration. In addition, Sevickova and colleagues (2015) found that poor parental

attachment decreases social support seeking. These findings may expand the current body

of knowledge regarding the importance of family support on predictors of cyberbullying perpetration and victimization. Regardless of the framework in which cyberbullying is studied, the significance of family involvement must be included in future research.

Cyberbullying and the School

Bullying, once thought to be relegated to the school yard, bus stop, cafeteria, and hallways, has moved beyond those boundaries into cyberspace. School counselors, school nurses, teachers, and administrators share concern about cyberbullying, yet are unsure about the impact of cyberbullying on the school environment. The school nurse may be the first person the student turns to for support when being bullied. Limited research exists regarding the relationship between cyberbullying and schools. Numerous studies indicated a relatively strong relationship regarding the co-occurrence of in-school bullying and electronic bullying (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009; Hinduja & Patchin (2009); Juvenon & Gross, 2008; Katzer, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak, 2009; Kowalski & Limber (2013); Raskauskas & Stoltz, (2007) and Ybarra, Deiner-West, & Leaf, (2007).

A Turkish survey-based study (Topcu, Erdur-Baker, & Capa-Aydin, 2008) compared the experiences of cyberbullying in 183 students between the ages of 14 and 15 in public and private schools. Public school students ($n = 89$) reported higher incidence of cyber victimization experiences compared to private school students ($x^2 (2, N = 89) = 11.32, p = 0.003, R^2 = 0.94$) Additionally, public schools students reported stronger negative reactions of anger (45%), sadness (21%) and embarrassment (12%) related to the incidents, whereas private school students ($n = 72$) reported "feeling nothing"(24%) or "taking it as a joke"(35%). It would be beneficial to conduct additional research on the degree of reaction to determine what variables account for the differences.

Ybarra and Mitchell (2007) reported an association between cyberbullying and significant psychosocial problems and troublesome behaviors, such as rule breaking and aggression, which can impact the school environment. Ybarra, Deiner-West, & Leaf, (2007) reported students harassed online were significantly more likely to report two or more detentions or suspensions, skip school in the previous year, and were eight times more likely to carry a weapon to school in the 30 days prior to the survey.

Interesting results from the 2005 Health Behavior in School-Aged Children survey (N=7,182) found that having more friends was related to an increase in bullying behavior and a decrease in victimization for physical, verbal, and relational forms of bullying, but did not affect cyberbullying. Moreover, higher socioeconomic status was a protective factor for physical victimization, but was related to higher levels of electronic bullying and victimization. Increased parental involvement was related to less involvement across all bullying behaviors (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Studies by Stakstrud (2013) and Wegge, Vandebosch, Eggermont, & Walrave (2015) revealed similar findings regarding the number of friends and risk for cybervictimization.

School Climate

Some school personnel believe that bullying and cyberbullying are a normal part of growing up; a rite of passage that students must tolerate. The manner in which the school community embraces or rejects this notion has a significant effect on students. Garbarino & deLara (2002) pointed out that if problems of emotional violence, like bullying and cyberbullying, are denied or avoided, those problems are …"accepted as fate - a part of existence" (p.59). Accepting emotional violence as normative behavior in schools creates a negative and unsafe learning environment. In addition, it fosters learned

helplessness, the belief that one has no control over what is happening. This is consistent with assertions regarding teens' reluctance to report incidents of bullying and cyberbullying because either teachers won't intervene, or even if they did, the situation would not change. In one study, Williams & Guerra, (2007) found that all types of bullying (physical, verbal, electronic) were related to beliefs of tacit approval of bullying and negative bystander behavior, negative school climate, and negative peer support.

In contrast, O'Brennan, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw (2014) found that staff-student connectedness was a protective factor for the negative effects of cyberbullying on academic achievement. Similarly, Morin, Bradshaw, & Berg (2015) found that teacher-student connectedness helps reduce internalizing behaviors related to cyberbullying, especially for girls. Loneliness has been identified as a predictor for cyberbullying victimization by Sahin, (2012). In a study short-term longitudinal exploring methods to ease loneliness among students, Lohre, Kvande, Hjemdal, & Lilijef (2014) found that having a trusted teacher in school decreases loneliness and improves overall well-being in school.

School Safety

Although adults responsible for the school may perceive it as a safe environment, students may have a different perspective. Recent research on school climate and safety has shown that students do not feel safe in school largely as a result of breakdowns in interpersonal relationships with staff and other students (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & D'Alessandro, 2013). Garbarino & deLara emphasized that adolescents often grasp the nuances in the school environment, but adults are often "clueless" in estimating the actual occurrences of physical and emotional violence that happens on a daily basis (p.35). A

2001 study conducted by the American Association of University Women (cited by

Garbarino & deLara) of 2,064 students in 8th – 11th grade revealed 20% of all students

were afraid some or most of the time that someone would hurt or bother them at school.

Conversely, a study of urban middle school students' perceptions of bullying,

cyberbullying, and school safety revealed that cyberbullying did not affect the students'

perception of school safety (Varjas, Henrich, & Meyers, 2009). Jacobson and colleagues

(2011) asked 243 fifth-grade students if they felt unsafe at school. Results indicated that

23.8% (*n=*57) reported sometimes or always feeling unsafe related to teasing and

bullying that occurred away from adult view. Additional research regarding the

relationship of school safety, positive relationships with staff, and prevalence of

cyberbullying is needed to further address this issue.

Interventions

The most widely used and empirically researched bullying prevention program in

the US and abroad is the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (BPP), a comprehensive

school-wide program that has been shown to reduce levels of bullying by 25-50 percent.

The goal of the BPP is to decrease or (ideally) eliminate bullying problems in and out of

the school setting, prevent new problems from developing, and enhance peer

relationships (Mason, 2008). A major component of the program is the school-wide

assessment, and interventions designed to improve school climate to create a safer and

more positive learning environment.

Additional intervention programs have been developed but few have been

rigorously evaluated regarding their effectiveness on cyberbullying and victimization.

One exception is the ViSC Social Competence Program from Austria which was

evaluated over a two-year period (*n*=2,042) using a randomized control group design.

ViSC is an anti-bullying prevention program for 5th -7th grade students designed to target

traditional bullying behaviors. There is no content specific to cyberbullying included in

the program. Researchers wanted to evaluate if a traditional bullying prevention program

would also have an impact on cyberbullying and cybervictimization. After controlling for

traditional aggression, traditional victimization, and age, results indicated program

effectiveness for cyberbullying and cybervictimization (Gradinger, Yanagida, Dagmar, &

Spiel, 2015).

It will be critical moving forward that intervention programs not only include

media literacy, cyberbullying prevention, and intervention content for students, but also

for parents, teachers, counselors, nurses, and administrators (Worthen, 2007). Scant

research exists related to evaluation of bullying prevention programs. This is a significant

gap in cyberbullying research to date.

Cyberbullying and the Legal System

The legal issues related to cyberbullying are numerous, and in-depth coverage of

the legal implications is beyond the scope of this study. However, a brief explanation of

the law as it applies to schools, free speech, and cyberbullying is warranted. When

cyberbullying incidents occur, parents often expect the school district to impose

consequences on the perpetrator, but schools are reluctant to intervene if the

cyberbullying occurred beyond school property. Willard (2007) explained that the legal

issues in cyberbullying involve balancing a student's right to free speech against another

student's right to safety and security. The legal standard that has been applied to

cyberbullying cases is *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*

(Trager, 2009). The Supreme Court asserted that "conduct by a student, in class or out of it…that materially disrupts class work or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others is, of course, not immunized by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech" (p.554). This standard is broadly applied when considering the effects of cyberbullying on the school environment. Brady (2008) posited that in cases where the school district has insufficient evidence to demonstrate "both a substantial disruption in the educational process and a connection to school activities, the courts have consistently held that the student's cyber-based speech and expression activities are expressly protected by the First Amendment" (p.97).

An analysis of state anti-bullying laws (Hinduja & Patchin, 2016) found that all 50 states now have anti-bullying laws. Of those, 48 states have laws that include electronic harassment, while only 23 have laws specifically including the term "cyberbullying". All states except Montana, require a school policy addressing cyberbullying, however only 14 states include off-campus behaviors as part of the policy. Moreover, a review of state sexting laws (Hinduja & Patchin) revealed that only 20 states currently have sexting laws.

In an earlier analysis of state laws Neimeyer (2008) asserted that *state laws* (emphasis added) addressing protection from off-campus cyberbullying will produce policies at the school level giving school administrators the authority to deal with cyberbullying regardless of where it originates. Currently, the state laws suffer from the same lack of conceptual clarity and definitions for cyberbullying making passage of the laws and enforcement inconsistent.

Through the passage of the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act in 2008,

public schools are required effective July, 1, 2012, to educate students about cyberbullying, online safety, and sexual predators. The schools must certify that their Internet safety policies provide for the education of minors about appropriate online behavior (Federal Communications Commission, 2012). The guidelines did not specify teacher or staff education as part of the requirement. However, incorporating teacher and staff education may strengthen the outcomes.

The state of Illinois signed the Internet Safety Education Act into law in 2009 requiring all public schools to teach age-appropriate Internet safety courses to all students in grades 3 through 12. This law also added electronic communications to the current harassment laws, including actions such as creating a web site or page designed for the purpose of bullying (Jacobs, 2010). Strengthening the laws and applying them consistently will provide better protection for the targets of cyberbullying.

At present, the laws seem unable to keep pace with the rapid changes in technology. Moreover, behaviors such as sending sexually explicit messages or photos by electronic means (also called "sexting"), popular with adolescents, is considered child pornography in some states and being prosecuted accordingly. There is a need for greater comprehension of technology-related adolescent behavior and the law.

Cyberbullying and Social Policy

In an article reviewing the critical health objectives for *Healthy People 2010* as they related specifically to the adolescent population, Park, Brindis, Chang, & Irwin, (2008) asserted that trends in the area of violence (carrying weapons, physical fighting, and homicide) have shown little or no improvement. Moreover, they stated that "there is no federal infrastructure in place with specific responsibility or authority to improve

adolescent health across all of the 21 critical health objectives (CHO) outcomes" (p.331). As a result, adolescent health issues have been approached on an individual level to change behavior, rather than the multi-level public health approach that is needed to see change.

As a consequence, *Healthy People 2020* now includes Adolescent Health objectives. Although bullying is not addressed within the Adolescent Health topic area, it is addressed in the Injury and Violence Prevention objectives. The new Adolescent Health objectives focus on the need for adolescents to be connected to an adult in their lives. To that end, one of the objectives specifically addresses the need to increase the proportion of adolescents who have an adult with whom they can discuss serious problems (HealthyPeople.gov, 2010). This will be essential in dealing with a variety of adolescent issues, including cyberbullying.

Recognizing that cyberbullying and bullying have been identified as a public health issue, Srabstein and colleagues (2008) reviewed all state laws to determine the extent to which public health policy has been incorporated into existing anti-bullying statutes. Evaluation criteria for the statutes included: a definition of bullying, an explicit prohibition of bullying, specific population to be protected, recognition of the link to public health and safety risks, designated prevention programs, and established penalties. As of June 2007, only 16 of 35 states that had enacted anti-bullying legislation had incorporated basic public health principles (Srabstein, Berkman, Pyntikova, 2008). The review of literature did not reveal any updates of these findings.

In 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention brought together a group of experts in technology and youth aggression to examine the phenomenon of

cyberbullying. The panel determined that electronic aggression, or cyberbullying, is an emerging public health problem (David-Ferdon, & Hertz, 2007). This sentiment is shared not only by other researchers (Juvonan & Gross, 2008; Power, 2007; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007) but also by a number of organizations and agencies that have recognized peer victimization in all forms to be a serious issue in adolescent health.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) included peer victimization, school violence, and Internet victimization on the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, which measured past-year and lifetime exposure to violence in children from birth through 17 years old. This was the first attempt to measure exposure to violence in the home, school, and community across all age groups, and to measure the cumulative exposure to violence over the children's lifetime (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby, & Kracke, 2009). Findings from this study will add to the current body of knowledge to inform prevention and intervention efforts.

Recognizing bullying and cyberbullying as forms of youth violence, the American Academy of Pediatrics revised its position statement on the "Role of the Pediatrician in Youth Violence Prevention" to include bullying. The policy specified, among other aspects, that healthcare providers must act as leaders in violence prevention, detection, and intervention in their roles as clinician, advocate, educator, and researcher (Muscari, 2009). The American Academy of Pediatrics has not updated their position statement on youth violence at this time.

The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM) published a position paper on bullying and peer victimization stating that (a) bullying is not acceptable or normative behavior and needs to be prevented; (b) requiring healthcare providers should

be familiar with signs, symptoms, and consequences of bullying; and (c) healthcare providers should partner with school personnel to provide leadership and education to community organizations regarding interventions and referrals related to bullying (Eisenberg & Aalsma, 2005). A recent review of the SAHM website indicated no further updates to the position paper on bullying and peer victimization published in 2005.

The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) issued a position statement on Mental Health of Students that recognized mental health as being as critical as physical well-being to the academic success of students. They acknowledged peer and electronic bullying as contributing to the mental and physical health issues of students. Moreover, they recognized the role of the school nurse in prevention, early identification, and intervention to ensure successful mental health outcomes for students (NASN, 2008, 2013).

A recent position statement on Bullying Prevention in Schools recognizes the role of the school nurse as a crucial team member in bullying prevention efforts (NASN, 2014). The nurse is often the child or adolescent's first contact with the healthcare system, therefore nurses engaged in the care of children and adolescents in all settings, including primary care, pediatric practices, health clinics, mental health, public health, and community health must be cognizant of the devastating effects of cyberbullying.

An overview of the literature from the past decade indicates that cyberbullying is an important public health issue. The numerous international studies cited in this review further highlight cyberbullying as a global health issue. Mobilizing funding for research and creating positive policies for prevention and intervention depend on clearly defining the concept, linking cyberbullying to the health objectives of *Healthy People 2020,* and

increasing public awareness of the problem among adolescents and young adults.

Conclusions

The review of literature highlights the serious lack of conceptual clarity of cyberbullying. More than a decade of research on cyberbullying has provided multiple definitions of cyberbullying, making it difficult to measure and compare study findings. The majority of early cyberbullying studies focused primarily on estimating prevalence, exploring gender differences, comparing cyberbullying to traditional bullying, and investigating the consequences and effects of cyberbullying on the victims (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015). The majority of studies attempt to measure cyberbullying using the criteria applied to the study of traditional bullying. The efficacy of this approach is questionable since the extent to which bullying and cyberbullying share the same attributes has yet to be empirically determined. Research of prevalence rates and gender differences appear inconclusive. Current research, however, supports the assertion that there is an association between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, in that many cyber victims have also been victims of face-to-face bullying. Research also suggests that school climate and lack of social support contribute to cyberbullying. Researchers are in agreement that cyberbullying significantly affects the social, emotional, and psychological well-being of adolescents and young adults.

Theoretical Implications

Current cyberbullying research has been conducted without an empirically derived theory or conceptual framework. To date, no specific theories of cyberbullying have been reported. Instead, researchers seem eager to place cyberbullying within the same framework as bullying. The validity of this assumption has not been challenged.

General Strain Theory has been used as a framework to study cyber bullying by several researchers (Hay, 2010; Hinduja, 2007; Patchin, 2011). However, until cyberbullying is conceptually and operationally defined, and variables are consistently studied within theoretical boundaries, cohesion among studies will remain elusive.

Methodological Implications

Several methodological issues were apparent in the research studies reviewed. A number of researchers used Internet surveys to gather data. This approach allowed the researchers to capture the adolescent target population; however some samples were drawn from teens who were visiting a specific site for a popular Caucasian female singer, to which the survey was attached. Using this approach eliminated many participants simply by virtue of musical taste, is not reflective of the overall adolescent population, and makes generalization of findings impossible due to sample bias.

One of the most significant methodological issues, however, was the lack of psychometrically sound instruments to measure the phenomenon. With most of the studies reviewed, researchers created surveys for individual studies either by using a portion of an existing instrument, modifying an existing bullying instrument to reflect cyberbullying, or creating a new instrument specifically for the study being conducted. In almost all cases, reliability and validity data for the instruments were not provided, or the psychometric assessment revealed that the instruments were not reliable, thus the instrument cannot be valid and inferences drawn from the findings are not valid.

Gaps in Research

The gaps in cyberbullying research reflect a lack of visibility for this public health concern and offer many possibilities for an ongoing program of research. One of the most

significant gaps is the need for clear conceptual and operational definitions of cyberbullying that are grounded in the perceptions of adolescents and young adults. Without clear definitions, the research will continue to be a mix of individual studies with no mechanism to compare and group findings. Development of psychometrically sound measurement instruments to accurately measure cyberbullying is essential for the advancement of science. Theoretical research into cyberbullying is beginning to emerge; however no specific cyberbullying theory has been generated.

Cyberbullying is a multi-layered issue. However, limited research is available comparing parent, school nurse, school counselor, teacher, coach, administrator, and student perceptions of cyberbullying. The role of the family in cyberbullying is essential to understanding the phenomenon and warrants additional research focus. Although studies have confirmed that cyberbullying has detrimental effects on the individual, longitudinal research is sparse. The bystander group has mostly been ignored in cyberbullying research and yet represents the largest group in the bully-victim-bystander triad.

The final gap in research is the dearth of qualitative research. The quantitative studies provide useful descriptive data. Some quantitative studies also include open-ended questions to gather qualitative responses. However, solid qualitative research into the phenomenon of cyberbullying is lacking. This study seeks to fill that gap.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the current state of the science related to the phenomenon of cyberbullying as an emerging public health problem. Cyberbullying literature was reviewed within the contexts of the individual, family,

school, legal system, and social policy. The goal of this exploration was to discover

contributions as well as gaps in current research, and to determine directions for future

research efforts. Chapter Three will address the research design used for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this study is the social-psychological process of cyberbullying among young women. Methods used to conduct this study are outlined in this chapter. The research design, sample, recruitment strategies, protection of human subjects, and data collection and analysis are presented.

Research Design

Grounded theory was an appropriate research method for generating a substantive theory of cyberbullying among young women. The majority of cyberbullying studies are exploratory, quantitative, descriptive studies that examine incidence, prevalence, grade level, and gender variables. These studies tend to address cyberbullying as an "incident" or "event" rather than a social-psychological process. Conceptual clarity and a lack of a theoretical framework specific to cyberbullying victimization are identified as significant gaps in the current literature. Classical grounded theory design (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) lays the foundation for exploring the social-psychological process of cyberbullying grounded in the experience of the individuals. Grounded theory is used to generate a substantive theory to explain the behavior found in the data, and uses the participant's personal experiences to explore the social-psychological process, understand the phenomenon being studied, and reveal the participant's primary concern (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2001).

Sample

Although previous bullying and cyberbullying studies focus on middle school adolescents (11-13 years old), fewer studies have sampled high school students (14-18 years old), and fewer yet have studied college aged students and young adults. Therefore, inclusion criteria for this study were (a) participants must be females between the ages of 18-30 years old, (b) have personal experience with being bullied electronically (via internet, cell phone, instant messaging, email, and/or web pages), (c) have the cognitive ability to participate in an interview; and (d) possess the ability to understand and speak English. Exclusion criteria included (a) males, (b) young women less than 18 years old, and (c) individuals who did not personally experienced cyberbullying victimization, and (d) impaired cognition. A purposive sample of 15 young women aged 18-30 years old who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate provided data for this study.

Recruitment

Recruitment efforts for this study focused on general solicitation strategies designed to reach young women who have experienced cyberbullying victimization. Recruitment was conducted primarily through social media, including Facebook and Twitter. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A), announcements were placed on Facebook and Twitter describing the study. Study announcements included the recruitment criteria, researcher contact information, and gift card offering (Appendix B). Announcements were posted on 14 different bullying related Facebook group pages, bullying prevention association pages, suicide prevention group pages, and professional organizations dealing with mental health issues. The researcher

checked Twitter daily and followed as many cyberbullying Twitter feeds as possible to expand the audience receiving the study announcements. Announcements were reposted frequently. The researcher also set up a daily Rich Site Summary (RSS) feed for "cyberbullying in the news" to be alerted to any recent news stories that might have led to potential participants. Flyers were placed in coffee shops and eateries where young women congregated. Snowballing technique, a form of purposeful sampling whereby one participant refers others to the research study (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007) was also used in recruiting participants for this research study.

Over a 23 month period, 33 people responded to the announcements and expressed interest in the study. Of those 33 people, 18 agreed to participate in the study. When a participant expressed interest, she contacted the researcher via email. The researcher replied with an email thanking the participant for her interest and included the Participant Information Sheet and Demographic Form to be completed (Appendix C). The potential participant was instructed to review the information sheet, complete the demographic form, and return it to the researcher along with suggested times for the interview to be conducted at the participant's convenience. If the potential participant did not respond after receiving the forms, the researcher contacted her again via email. After three email attempts to receive a response, the researcher concluded that the woman did not wish to participate in the study, and ceased contact.

Protection of Human Subjects

The study design included precautions to ensure protection of the research participants and the study data. Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at

Loyola University Chicago was received prior to recruiting participants.

Informed Consent Process

The IRB waived informed consent for this study. However, they did require that all participants receive an information sheet detailing the study. A Participant Information Sheet was created that included the details of the study and outlined the participant's rights as a study participant. The researcher used a university email address for potential study participants to respond to if interested in participating in the study. When a potential participant expressed interest, the researcher sent the Participant Information Sheet and Demographic Form to the participant. The participant was instructed to read the information sheet and notify the researcher if she had any questions. Prior to beginning the interview, the researcher reviewed the information sheet with the participant and answered any questions. The Demographic Form was completed and returned to the researcher prior to the interview.

Protection During the Interview Process

The interview was arranged at a time convenient to the participant. As stipulated in the study proposal, the interview could have been conducted in person, via Skype, Facetime, or by telephone. All participants chose to be interviewed via telephone. Participants were instructed to be in a quiet, private place, free from distractions, with a reliable phone signal to participate in the interview. Prior to the interview, participants were assured that they could refuse to answer any question or to end the interview at any time without repercussions. None refused to answer questions or end the interview prematurely.

Protection of Data

Confidentiality involved not just the protection of the individual, but also the protection of the data. Digitally recorded interviews were kept on a password protected computer at the researcher's residence. A code number was assigned consecutively to each interview. All subsequent documents such as the demographic sheet and transcribed interviews displayed only the code number assigned to that participant. The digitally recorded interviews were sent to a secure transcription service. All identifying data were replaced with XXXX when interviews were transcribed. The transcribed interviews were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's residence. Memos and notes written by the researcher contained no identifying information and were kept in a locked file cabinet to ensure privacy. The transcribed interviews were reviewed only by the researcher and the dissertation advisor.

Data Collection

In classical grounded theory design, data collection and analysis occur concurrently (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Interviews were conducted via telephone at a time convenient to the participant. Prior to beginning the interview, the Participant Information Sheet was reviewed with the participant to answer any questions about the study. Participants were reminded that the interview would be audiotaped and were told when the tape recorders were switched on.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data for this study. The interview began with casual conversation and an explanation of the interview process prior to recording. This allowed the participant time to chat and feel comfortable with the

researcher before beginning the interview. Participants were then asked if they were ready to begin, and were told that the digital audio recording would begin.

In classical grounded theory, the goal is to listen to the participant's main concern rather than assuming a preconceived problem (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2001). The interview was started by inviting the participant to tell the researcher about her experience with cyberbullying. As she recounted her experience, open-ended questions were used to elicit more in depth responses. Probes such as, "can you give me an example", "please say some more about that", or "what did you mean by" were used to clarify and encourage participants to elaborate on key points of their story. The researcher took basic notes during the interview to capture thoughts and to refocus the participant as needed. Follow up questions were generated and asked to elicit additional information.

As the participant shared her story, additional focused questions were addressed. An interview guide was used to focus on specific points during the experience (see Appendix D). Questions relating to the participant's thoughts and feelings, whether she told someone about the experience, and what helped her to resolve the issue were included in the interviews.

As the interviews were conducted and analyzed, hypotheses, concepts, and relationships between the concepts began to emerge from the data. In subsequent interviews, questions were asked to clarify and elicit feedback on the emerging concepts and hypotheses. Seeking clarification of the properties and categories is a method of theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978).

At the conclusion of the interview, participants were thanked for their participation and asked if they knew of any other young women who might be interested in participating in the study. Participants each received a handwritten thank you note and a $25 gift card as a token of appreciation for sharing their stories.

Data Analysis

Using the classical grounded theory approach, data analysis begins as soon as the first interview is completed and transcribed. The focus is on generating concepts rather than descriptions (Glaser, 2001). Constant comparison method allows the researcher to develop a level of abstraction that generates concepts that can then be linked together as a substantive theory. Constant comparison requires the researcher to analyze each interview transcript line by line. As each subsequent interview is completed and transcribed, it is coded and compared to the previous interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The coding process involved several levels that are non-linear and undertaken simultaneously. The first level was open coding during which the researcher thoroughly examined each interview line by line and assigned codes to identify processes occurring in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Each interview was analyzed line by line and codes were written in the margins of the transcript. The participant's own words and phrases were used to develop the initial open codes. As the open coding continued, theoretical memos of ideas, thoughts, and emerging hypotheses were written to capture and "bracket" those emerging data for later consideration.

The next level, axial coding, involved categorizing the open codes into categories that appeared to conceptually cluster together. The researcher examined all of the codes

generated during open coding, and began to condense or collapse them into clusters and higher levels of abstraction. According to Glaser & Strauss, (1967), the reduction and clustering of the codes into categories and sub-categories identify and describe concepts that will eventually lead to a theory grounded in the experiences of the participants. As concepts and hypotheses emerged from the data, theoretical sampling was used to elicit feedback from subsequent participants to confirm or disconfirm the emerging hypotheses. Data collection ceased when saturation was reached. Saturation is reached when no new codes or categories are found in the data that will add to the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Memos were reviewed and used as the basis for linking the concepts together to form the substantive theory.

Unlike other qualitative research designs that rely on interpretation of the data by the researcher(s), the findings from grounded theory are derived directly from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Deriving the findings directly from the data ensure that the findings faithfully reflect the reality of the study participants relative to the phenomenon being studied.

Summary

In this chapter, classical grounded theory method was presented as a viable and appropriate design for use in this study. The sampling process as well as data collection and analysis were presented. Protection of human subjects and data management were discussed. Chapter Four will include a presentation of the study findings generated during this study. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of methodological rigor in classical grounded theory research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of this study on the social-psychological process of cyberbullying among young women. Data were gathered through one-to-one phone interviews with young women who had personally experienced cyberbullying. The data revealed a common trajectory through which all of the young women moved as they navigated the experience. From the data, a substantive theory on cyberbullying among young women was derived. The empirically derived theory has a core category and five key categories, each with its own sub-categories. Together those form the substantive theory Restoring Trust: A Grounded Theory on Cyberbullying among Young Women. This chapter will begin with a discussion of the sample, recruitment, and data collection and analysis. Presentation of the findings will follow and the chapter will conclude with a discussion of methodological rigor in grounded theory research.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 15 women aged 18-30 years old. The mean age of participants was 22.26 years. Conducting the interviews by phone removed any geographical barriers. As a result, nine participants were from the Midwest, five were from the Northeast, and one was from the Southeast. All participants were Caucasian. Religious preference was diverse with six participants identifying as Catholic, two as

Protestant, one as Muslim, two as Agnostic, one as Spiritual, and the remaining three

participants identifying no religious preference. The education level of the participants

included nine participants with some college experience, four college graduates, and two

graduate school students. Of the fifteen participants, ten were current students at the time

of the interview for this research study. The five non-student participants were employed.

Participants were asked to identify which social networking sites and methods they used

to communicate. Results showed that all 15 participants used Facebook, 14 texted, 14

used phone calls, and 11 used both Instagram and Snapchat. Nine participants used

Twitter, and eight used email and Pinterest. Two used Tumblr, and three used Vine

applications. None participated in chat rooms at the time of the interview although a few

had used chat rooms in the past.

Recruitment

Recruitment of study participants began upon receiving approval from the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Loyola University Chicago. Young women between

the ages of 18 and 30 years old who had personally experienced being the target of

cyberbullying at any time during their lives, who could speak and understand English,

and were cognitively able to participate, were recruited for this study. Recruitment was

conducted primarily through social media, including Facebook and Twitter. Social media

study announcements included the recruitment criteria, contact information, and the offer

of a gift card in appreciation of participation. Announcements were posted and reposted

on numerous bullying and cyberbullying related Facebook group pages, bullying

prevention association pages, suicide prevention group pages, and professional

organizations dealing with mental health issues. The researcher checked Twitter daily and

followed as many cyberbullying Twitter feeds as possible to expand the audience

receiving the study announcements. The researcher also set up a daily Rich Site Summary

(RSS) feed for "cyberbullying in the news" to be alerted to any recent news stories that

might lead to potential participants. Flyers were placed in coffee shops and eateries where

young women congregated. Snowballing recruitment technique was used by asking all

study participants for recommendations of other young women who fit the study criteria

and might be interested in participating in the study. Of the 15 women who participated

in the study, six were recruited from Facebook, two from Twitter, five from word of

mouth, and two from the snowballing technique.

Over a 23 month period, 33 potential participants responded to the study

announcements and were sent the study Participant Information Sheet. Of those 33

women, 18 initially agreed to participate in the study. The lower response rate, after

expressing interest in the study and receiving the Participant Information sheet, may be

related to the potential length of the interview, described as 60 minutes in the Participant

Information Sheet. Potential participants may not have wanted to invest that much time

for the interview. Of the 18 who agreed to participate, three were eliminated. One

participant was eliminated because she did not meet age criterion. A second participant

was eliminated because she had not personally experienced cyberbullying, but rather

wanted to tell her sister's story of cyberbullying. A third participant canceled her

interview an hour before it was to take place because she was not ready to tell her story.

To stimulate recruitment, the gift card amount was increased to twenty-five dollars with

IRB approval.

When participants contacted the researcher, a Participant Information Sheet and

Demographic Form were sent via email. Those who initially expressed interest but did not respond after receiving the study information received three follow-up emails from the researcher. When the potential participant did not respond after three follow-up emails, the researcher ceased contact. Participants were instructed to read the Participant Information Sheet, and to complete and return the Demographic Form. In addition, they were asked to identify a convenient date and time during which they would be available for an interview. Upon return of the demographic information, the researcher confirmed the date and time of the interview. A follow-up email was sent to the participant the day prior to the scheduled interview as a final confirmation.

Data Collection

Data were collected during one-on-one telephone interviews over a 23 month period from January 2014 through December 2015. Interviews ranged between 21 and 68 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded and then uploaded to a secure transcription service where they were transcribed verbatim and returned to the researcher. Upon receipt of the completed transcripts, the researcher listened to the taped interview and read the transcript simultaneously to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Identifying information was replaced with XXXX in the interview transcripts.

The researcher conducted one-on-one telephone interviews with each participant. On the day of the interview, the researcher set up three digital audio recorders to record the interview. Three digital audio recorders were used to protect against recorder malfunction. The researcher contacted the participant by phone and verified that it was still an appropriate and convenient time for the interview. Although the IRB waived informed consent, the researcher wanted to be certain each participant understood the

study, her rights as a participant, and how the interviews would be conducted. Prior to beginning each interview, the Participant Information Sheet was reviewed and the participant was asked if she had any questions about the study. She was reminded that she could end the interview or take a break at any time during the interview if necessary. None of the participants chose to end the interviews once they started sharing their stories.

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix D). The researcher took brief notes during the interviews as prompts for follow up questions and to be used as memos for data analysis. After several interviews, patterns of behavior, concepts, and relationships between the concepts began to emerge. Using theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), participants in subsequent interviews were asked questions about the emerging findings to elicit feedback and gain clarity. After several more interviews had been conducted, the researcher found that all of the participants to that point had experienced cyberbullying in elementary, middle school, or high school. Theoretical sampling was employed to recruit young women who had experienced cyberbullying during college or in the workplace to gain a broader perspective on the phenomenon across stages of adolescence and young adulthood. Data collection continued until saturation was reached, indicating no new categories or properties had emerged that would substantively add to the theory.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory methodology requires that data collection and analysis occur concurrently. The process of generating a grounded theory uses the constant comparison method as outlined by Glaser & Strauss (1967). "The essential relationship between data

and theory is a conceptual code" (Glaser, 1978, p.55). The first step in constant comparison is open coding. The researcher performed open coding by reading each interview line by line and writing key words and phrases in the margins of the transcribed interview using the participants own wording as much as possible. The lines and phrases identified by the codes were then cut and pasted onto individual code sheets. As subsequent interviews were coded, those codes were compared to the previous codes. During the constant comparison of the interview data, properties were added to the codes, codes were revised, combined, and additional codes emerged. As Glaser stated, "constant comparisons literally force generation of codes" (1978, p.57). To aid in visualizing the volume of codes, the researcher used a 3 foot x 4 foot foam presentation board and Post-It™ tape to create a "coding board". Each code was written on a piece of the removable tape and placed on the board. As the constant comparisons continued, the researcher moved the open codes around into groups where data had similar properties.

During the coding process, the researcher wrote theoretical memos to capture thoughts and insights about the concepts, connections between the concepts, conceptual definitions, category names, and the newly emerging theory. The theoretical memos encompassed the thoughts and ideas that crossed the researcher's mind during the coding process and subsequent analyses. The researcher reviewed and sorted the memos to further explore the emerging theory. Additional theoretical memos were added as the level of abstraction increased, and served as a guide for the axial coding process.

Axial coding, the second level of coding in grounded theory, was conducted when the researcher began to place the existing codes into categories. As categories were generated based on the data and the theoretical memos, the researcher used a second 3

foot x 4 foot foam presentation board and removable Post-It™ tape to begin to visualize

the model. This was referred to as the "theory board". As codes earned their way into the

theory, they were moved from the coding board to the theory board. Category labels were

written on pieces of tape and then placed on the theory board. This process allowed the

researcher to "see the big picture" as the theory emerged. It facilitated easily moving the

codes, categories, and conceptual relationships around as axial coding continued and the

theory developed. Different colored tape delineated the core category, key categories, and

properties of the categories. Through the process of open coding and axial coding, a

substantive theory of cyberbullying among young women was generated with a core

category, and five key categories, each with its own set of properties.

The next section presents the core category, key categories, and sub-categories

that illustrate the social-psychological process of cyberbullying among young women.

Findings

Core Category: Restoring Trust

The core category in classical grounded theory accounts for most of the basic

social-psychological process discovered through the empirical data derived from

participant interviews. It must be relevant and relate to as many of the categories and

sub-categories as possible. The core category reoccurs frequently in the data and has

"grab". The core category must be central by relating to the key categories and properties

in order to account for most of the variation in the patterns of behavior (Glaser & Strauss,

1967; Glaser, 1978).

The core category for this study is labeled "Restoring Trust". When a young

woman is the target of cyberbullying, she endures an unrelenting and intense attack on

her spirit. Participants described the unrelenting nature of their experiences with phrases such as: "there was never a day where someone took a break [from bullying]", "I don't think they [other people] understand the level of harassment that we got on the Internet every day", and finally, "I can't make this stop". For some of the women, the cyberbullying lasted for a defined period of time ranging from a few weeks to many years. For others, the cyberbullying was still happening at the time of the interview for this study. To endure such an unending attack, the young women needed to reach out and find a trusted adult to help them resolve the problem.

Glaser (1978) posits that the core category not only accounts for variation in the behaviors, but "is also a dimension of the problem" (p.96). Trust was the dynamic that moved the social-psychological process forward. Throughout the cyberbullying experience, the woman's trust in herself and others was tested, shaken, regained, shaken again, and finally restored. Trust became a dimension of the problem and carried through the entire process. The woman needed to find the courage within herself to trust that someone would be there to support her. The core category, Restoring Trust, accurately captures the social-psychological process depicted in the resulting substantive theory. Based on the data, the social-psychological process of young women overcoming cyberbullying hinged on restoring trust, both in herself and others. The dynamic of trust is woven throughout the social-psychological process illustrated in Figure 1.

The social-psychological process begins when the young woman becomes aware that she is a target of the bully (*Becoming the Target).* Her trust is shaken, especially if friends participated in the cyberbullying. As the cyberbullying continues, the young woman tries to handle it alone (*Suffering in Silence).* The cyberbullying escalates and the

Core Category: Restoring Trust
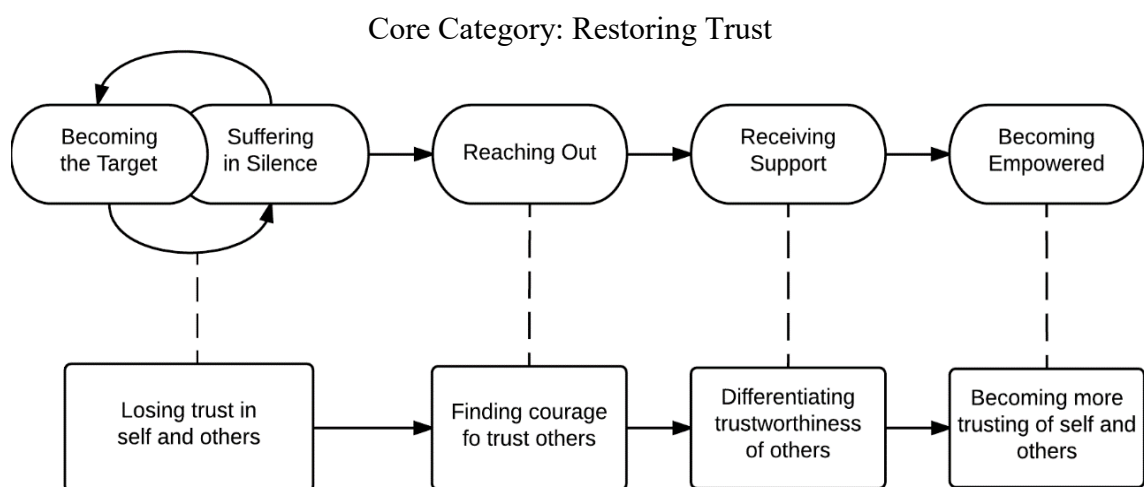
Figure 1. Visual representation of Restoring Trust Theory

young woman continues to suffer in silence. The first two stages of the process,

Becoming the Target and *Suffering in Silence,* are concurrent and cyclic. As the woman

continues to receive messages, she begins to experience self-doubts and accepts what the

bullies are saying as the truth. When the young woman concludes she can no longer

manage the cyberbullying on her own, she finds the courage to reach out for help

(*Reaching Out).* The ability to reach out for help and to trust that someone would help her

is the turning point that moves the young woman forward in this process. When reaching

out for help, however, the young woman faces obstacles and reports feeling negatively

judged and disbelieved. When this occurs, she persists in searching for a trusted adult

who will listen and help. Once the young woman finds a trusted adult, and receives the

needed support (*Receiving Support)* she is able to move on to the final stage. She receives

support primarily from her mother, close friends, and selected other adults. It is during

this stage that the young woman learns to discern who she can trust within her support

system. *Receiving Support* enables the young woman to successfully move on to the final

stage. During the final stage, *Becoming Empowered,* the young woman reflects on her experience and begins to trust herself again. She begins to believe in herself and is able to renounce the bully's opinions of her. The young woman continues to work on becoming more trusting of others, and becomes strong enough to advocate for herself and others in similar situations.

The five key categories, *Becoming the Target, Suffering in Silence, Reaching Out, Receiving Support, and Becoming Empowered*, along with the respective sub-categories will be discussed to illustrate the development of this substantive theory of cyberbullying among young women. For ease of reading and presentation, all words in the Core Category are capitalized. Each *Key Category* is written in italics with all words capitalized. The *sub-categories* are written in lower case italics. Quotes from the participants are used to illustrate the category and sub-category descriptions.

Becoming the Target

The first key category, *Becoming the Target*, incorporates the sub-categories of *being labeled, feeling ganged up on,* and *dealing with the identity of the bully.* The process of cyberbullying begins when the young woman realizes she is a target (*Becoming the Target)*. The participants discovered they were targeted when they received the first message from the cyberbully. For some, the bullying began as face-to-face bullying in school and continued online. The women reported being teased, picked on, labeled as losers, and excluded from groups both online and in school. As they reflected on their experiences, participants discussed circumstances that may have led to them being targeted.

Participants identified certain times when the bullying and cyberbullying were

more prevalent. The young women spoke of difficulty in making the transitions to middle

school, high school, and college as key times when they endured traditional (face-to-face)

bullying as well as cyberbullying. One participant stated "…I think middle school is, like,

the hardest age group to go through…I think the kids are just brutal to each other". This

was a common observation among participants when describing cyberbullying

experiences that happened during the early years of middle school and high school. One

participant explained:

> I think that's because that's the transition of elementary school to middle school,
> and you go from being the oldest in elementary school in 5th grade to now the
> youngest in 6th grade. And the 7th and 8th graders have had time to, you know,
> get associated with each other. And that's when, like, the cliques start, and the
> friends form, and friends become excluded, and everything like that.

It is not uncommon for bullying to occur during times of transition in school.

Moving into middle school is one of the most difficult transitions. All aspects of puberty

and adolescence combine to make it a difficult developmental period. Older middle

school students have already established the social hierarchy. Younger middle school

students are faced with finding where they fit in within that hierarchy. The transition

from middle school into high school presents similar challenges. Although most

cyberbullying research has been conducted with 6th-10th grade students, several of the

participants experienced cyberbullying as high school freshmen or college freshmen. One

participant commented, "my first experience happened my freshman year of high

school", and another said, "it was the first month of college."

Being labeled. When participants reflected on their experiences, they spoke of

feeling singled out and *being labeled* for myriad reasons, including being the "new kid",

appearance and ethnicity, academic and/or athletic ability, ending romantic relationships,

or being the victim of sexting.

Similar to traditional bullying, participants commented that being new, or being perceived as somehow different made them a target. One commented, "… I moved around a lot as a kid. My Dad's job, we kept getting transferred, so I was constantly the new kid". She experienced loneliness and isolation. Her response to that loneliness was to talk to people in chat rooms. She found "friendship" from talking to people online that she did not know. Lack of meaningful friendships played a role in the participant's response to the cyberbullying. If she did not have strong friendships to begin with, it was more difficult to find the support she needed.

Feeling different or being perceived as somehow different from the peer group increased the chance of being targeted in both traditional bullying and cyberbullying. One young woman recounted:

> I feel all my life I felt different cuz [*sic]* I actually, my parents actually immigrated to the United States. I'm actually from Europe. It took me forever to feel like I was part of everyone, everyone at school and stuff.

Not feeling like part of the peer group identifies the young woman as an "outsider" among her peers. It also raises the question of whether bullying is a precursor to feeling different, or if feeling different makes one more of a target.

Other participants described being singled out because of socioeconomic status. One participant recounted the message that was posted on her Facebook page calling her a "Salvation Army and Good Will good for nothing bitch". The message was posted by a young man that she had been friends with since kindergarten. She felt deeply betrayed because they had grown up together. Another participant commented that the perpetrator attacked the victim's parents by saying "I saw your mother working at a grocery store,

you must be poor". The attack on her parents was particularly difficult for the young woman because she did not want her mother to see the message and be hurt. Even as this participant was being hurt by cyberbullying, she wanted to shield her mother from seeing the comments.

Another young woman felt singled out because of her athletic ability saying "…it [cyberbullying] started when, um, I had made the softball team over her [the bully]. And she just, from that point on, was just rude, and nasty, and was texting me rude things". In this particular case, the cyberbullying lasted from 6th grade until the young woman graduated from high school. Her experience was compounded because she and the perpetrator were team mates and could not avoid interactions.

Some participants felt targeted because they ended a romantic relationship. One participant said "I think breaking up with him had a big part to do with it", and another stated "I think that he hated that I was able to break up with him, and kind of move on. Even though we had like dated for all those years." One participant who was targeted by her ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend during freshman year of college said, "It's just weird that they [the ex-boyfriend and new girlfriend] still talk about me…and I only dated him for less than a year. It didn't really make sense." Among the participants who experienced cyberbullying as a result of a break up, trust was threatened because they were betrayed by someone who previously expressed loving feelings for them.

The experiences were not limited to adolescents. One participant experienced workplace bullying and cyberbullying. She described being bullied in person and online as a new nurse when she had to report another nurse to the nurse manager. She stated:

Okay, so I wrote her [coworker] up and, um, I submitted it to the manager and I

assumed that she was gonna [*sic*] act professionally. The manager was gonna [*sic*] act professionally. I was very surprised that it did not go down that way, and that's how she [the bully] started bullying me, um, indirectly by, uh, getting cliques with other girls and, uh, ganging up on me, basically. And then, a few months later, it moved on to Facebook and, uh, it would be very passive aggressive kind of bullying.

This participant trusted that the nurse manager would listen and handle the situation in a professional manner. When that did not happen, the participant lost trust in the manager and began to lose confidence in herself. She continued to have interactions with the bully because they were co-workers. Feeling let down by the nurse manager, and working in an increasingly hostile environment, she had to decide whether to stay in the job and endure the stress, or leave, feeling like she allowed the bully to "win". She ultimately decided to leave the job.

Several participants recounted *being labeled* as sluts or whores, particularly if provocative photographs had been distributed during sexting incidents. One young woman stated, "Um, so I would get these messages on Instant Messenger from these random people saying, you know, "You're a slut. You're a whore. You're disgusting. Everyone hates you." Another commented, "…the way people perceived it, I was a slut. I got the title of university slut…I had only been going to the university for three weeks". In both cases of the dissemination of nude photos, the young women viewed it as a significant betrayal of trust and a personal violation of privacy.

Feeling ganged up on. *Feeling ganged up on* was a recurring comment throughout the interviews. Cyberbullying, by its very nature, provides an opportunity for people to use social media to degrade others. There is a "jump on the bandwagon" mentality that occurs when cyberbullying is perpetrated. The young women were not

only shocked to have been targeted, but they were overwhelmed by the numbers of people who participated in the cyberbullying. This was especially difficult when some of the perpetrators were current or former friends. One young woman described her situation by saying "… [I was] feeling attacked and then when all of the people that were my friends started joining in, I felt completely isolated". Another participant whose experience was related to her beliefs on vaccine use recalled, "…it got to the point where the owner of the page would go back and forth with me [arguing] and her followers would attack me on the page". One young woman stated, "...it's not like I was getting, like, you know, one message every couple of days. I was getting 20 to 30 messages a day, if not more." In addition to the volume of messages, the participants also struggled with knowing the identity of the perpetrators.

Dealing with the identity of the bully. *Dealing with the identity of the bully* was difficult for many of the participants. Some participants reported knowing the identity of their cyberbullies, while others were uncertain of the perpetrator's identity. Several of the women discussed the ease with which people can use the Internet to bully others. One participant aptly referred to it as "being tormented from behind the screen". Another commented "…now that they're [the bullies] behind a screen they feel comfortable enough to just say those, like, brutal things about people". Other young women said, "You had no idea who these people were…I just started getting comments".   One participant described how she was bullied through social media, saying, "it [the cyberbullying] would be people making fake accounts to, you know, call me names and stuff like that".

If the participant knew the identity of the cyberbully, especially if it was a friend,

there was a sense of betrayal. One participant expressed the betrayal she would feel if she

found out the cyberbully was a friend by saying:

> Also, not knowing [the identity], I think that's the thing that I struggled with the
> most because I was really worried that that person [the bully] was a person that I
> hung out with, was a person that maybe I told my secrets to.... I guess I just really
> wanted to know if it was someone that I had confided in and trusted that was
> saying these things to me or if it was just like a complete stranger that knew
> nothing about me...

If the cyberbullying was done anonymously, the participant felt uneasy and fearful. One

participant recounted, "I think it would've been a lot easier to handle if the posts were

being posted with, like, a face and a name so I could know who was posting it. I doubt

the people that were posting them [the messages] have even met me".

In addition to dealing with the identity of the perpetrators, the participants also

struggled to understand "why" they had been targeted. They wanted to figure out if they

had done something to warrant the bullying. They also wanted to understand why

someone who did not personally know them would invest so much time and energy to

cyberbully them. The women referred to being vulnerable or feeling insecure about

themselves, and wondered how the perpetrator knew about their personal insecurities.

One participant commented, "I just didn't understand why people were saying things to

me that hurt me the most". Participants expressed confusion when friends chose to

participate in the cyberbullying. One participant commented, "... one day she [a friend]

pretty much turned on me. I don't know why. It was very sudden".

Many of the young women assumed they had done something wrong and that the

cyberbullying was somehow deserved. One young woman said, "Why is this even

happening to me? Like, I didn't do anything wrong". Another responded, "...I guess I was

just really trying to analyze what I did wrong, like, why I deserved it. But the messages, the emails, they never had the answer". Another participant stated, "…I had been nice to her [the bully] in the past, nice to her boyfriend, and nice to, you know, pretty much everyone that knew her. So, I couldn't really figure out why, exactly, she targeted me".

A participant whose situation was work-related, stated, "…you have to know that I was a new nurse, so I was still trying to figure out what was going on around me. You know? I'm still trying to figure out is this [the bullying] normal?"

Understanding why someone would treat them with such contempt was perplexing to most participants. Participants used logic and reasoning to try and understand why they were being targeted. However, cyberbullying is not a rational process, and often left participants with unanswered questions. This feeling was articulated well by a participant who said:

> I was trying to make sense of something that didn't make sense. If I keep thinking about what happened before this message came, maybe something will make sense and maybe I can connect something I did with why…but it never made sense.

Becoming the target of cyberbullying left participants feeling labeled, ganged up on, and confused as to the identity of the perpetrators, and wondering why they were chosen as a target. The women experienced a crisis in which their trust in others was badly shaken. The participant's response to being targeted was to suffer in silence.

Suffering in Silence

When cyberbullying occurred, all of the participants experienced a period in which they remained silent and tried to handle the situation on their own. *Suffering in Silence* subsumes four sub-categories that include: *feeling under attack, struggling with*

emotions, accepting the bully's opinion, and *trying to handle it alone.* The duration of this stage varied among participants. During this stage, participants struggled to believe in themselves. They expressed self-doubt and lost the ability to trust their own judgement.

Feeling under attack. Participants described a sense that they were *feeling under attack* on a regular basis. One participant recalled, "It's like going into a warzone. You don't know what's gonna [*sic*] happen, it was coming from all angles". Participants spoke of the unrelenting nature of the cyberbullying, and the inability to escape the messages. One commented, "I just felt like I was getting attacked every single day". Another responded, "it didn't really go away until he [the bully] graduated and I was finally able to breathe again".

Some participants received messages telling them to kill themselves. This particular aspect of cyberbullying was difficult for the affected women to handle. One participant received text messages that said, "Why don't you kill yourself. No one will notice". Another received a message that read "Go kill yourself. No one wants you to come to school tomorrow. Go slit your wrists". Of the 15 study participants, one engaged in self-harming, three contemplated suicide, and one attempted suicide. One participant poignantly recalled:

> I mean I can remember being 15 and 16 years old and thinking, I don't wanna [*sic*] go to school tomorrow. If I kill myself, then I don't have to go to school tomorrow. And, you know, now at 26, looking back and thinking how scary that is that, you know, I had, even had those thoughts, um, but I really attribute it to the cyberbullying because, you know, you're having those thoughts, and then this message pops up on your screen, 'Kill yourself. Everyone hates you. Don't come to school tomorrow.' You know, you start to entertain that idea. Like, well, what happens if I don't come to school tomorrow? What happens if I kill myself tonight? Is anyone gonna [*sic*] care?

Another participant commented on the severity of the cyberbullying and face to face bullying she endured after a nude photo of her breasts was disseminated without her knowledge or permission. She recalled:

> If he [the ex-boyfriend] had just sent a naked picture, and everybody had seen me naked, and that was the end of it, that would have been terrible, but it wouldn't have even come close to the bullying [I received]. I mean the people who bullied me made me want to kill myself. I mean, I did. I attempted suicide six months after the picture [was sent].

In explaining her state of mind at the time of the cyberbullying, she commented:

> You just feel so alone, and you don't think about any consequences. You just don't want to be there anymore. And I was never depressed previously. I never had any, um, mental [health] issues. It all stemmed from bullying and being torn down every day. I was treated like an animal.

The participants in this study were affected by the level of cruelty and took the messages to heart. Regardless of the age or maturity of the participant at the time of the cyberbullying, they all internalized the messages and struggled with the resultant emotions.

Struggling with emotions. As the participants continued to suffer silently they described s*truggling with emotions.* The young women all went through a sequence in which they read the cyberbullying messages the first time, experienced harmful emotions, and then re-experienced those feelings again each time they re-read the messages.

Participants described how it felt when they initially read the messages. They experienced an almost visceral reaction when reading the messages and described the feelings using physical terms and phrases. One participant stated, "I think the first time you read it, it feels like a slap across the face. You know it's that initial burn". Another commented, "Um, well I guess the first time you read it, depending on what it says…your

heart kind of drops and you get this, like, sinking feeling in your stomach". Another

young woman recalled, "The first time I read it, I just felt like my heart dropped".

The permanence of the messages, a characteristic unique to cyberbullying, creates

a scenario in which the targets can and do re-read the messages. Each time a young

woman re-reads the messages, she re-experiences the trauma. The participants described

how it felt to re-read the messages. One participant said, "You know, you start to

internalize it and make it part of you. And that definitely, I think, happens [the] second,

third, fourth time you read it." Another noted, "... the second time [reading the message]

you start to internalize it. You start to connect with it. You start to identify as it, and it

starts to, like, seep in." Similarly, another participant reflected, "Re-reading them [the

messages], I felt more pain and more anger because when you're rereading them, you're

really letting them settle in. You're really letting them settle in to your mind".

To the outside observer, it is puzzling why someone would continue to read

messages that clearly cause them pain. The participants in this study described their

experiences and tried to explain why they felt compelled to reread the messages. One

participant stated:

> I was, like, rereading it cuz [*sic*] I didn't think it was really there. I would kind of
> reread it to see if that's what they had actually said or maybe I read it wrong the
> first time. And then every time you reread it, it's like another, you know, like
> punch to the face. Like, you're rereading the same insult over and over again and
> it's not going away.

Another commented:

> Yeah. It's really like, kinda [*sic*] like, you know, they say, like it's a car crash.
> You can't look away. Like, it really is. Like, I would delete the apps [Yik Yak
> and Fade], and I'd have the screen shots, and I'd read them and read them. And I
> just couldn't believe people were actually saying this stuff...I couldn't believe it.

There was a sense of disbelief when participants read the messages for the first time. This

disbelief prompted them to re-read the messages to confirm the content of the messages.

However, they continued to re-read the messages almost to obsession.

One participant recalled her need to re-read the messages, saying:

> ...I remember not being able to sleep or waking up and just checking it to see if I
> got a post in the middle of the night. I would check it [Facebook] a lot. I would
> be on it every single day. I would be in class, in the middle of class, and I would
> just check it. I felt I always had my phone in my hands, and I would always
> check it. It just felt strange and overwhelming. Then another part of me wanted
> to read what else was being said.

Participants discussed the need to analyze the messages as a reason for re-reading

the messages. One participant recounted:

> "I probably stopped maybe two years ago. Stopped trying to analyze the things
> that she [the bully] posts on her Tumblr. I just kept looking at it, and I was like,
> what, specifically, does she hate about me? Why is this person doing this, and
> maybe if I read it a little later, I'll find something that I didn't see before."

Another participant explained that she knew she had a choice whether to re-read

the messages. She stated, "I mean, I knew from the beginning I didn't have to open my

emails, but I just, you know, I wanted to. I wanted to see what they had to say".

The participants were drawn to the messages even though they knew re-reading the

messages would cause them pain.

There was evidence of self-doubt when the young women read and re-read the

messages. Participants questioned themselves and their responses to the cyberbullying

messages. One young woman commented, "Well it kinda [*sic*] made me think about 'am

I taking this too seriously?'" Another wondered, "Am I just imagining this?" There was

a sense of disbelief when re-reading the messages. Still another participant recounted, "I

started to doubt what was going on. Like maybe this is normal. You know? Maybe this is

just part of being 16". The young women experienced diminishing trust in themselves as they questioned whether they were taking the messages too seriously, or whether the messages were in fact a normal part of adolescence and young adulthood.

Reading the messages caused the participants to experience a wide array of emotions. The predominant emotions they described were fear, humiliation, hurt, sadness, and anger.

Fear. Many of the participants described feeling fearful during their experiences with cyberbullying. For some, they feared the cyberbullying would become physical. One young woman commented, "They [the bullies] started sharing things that I never recall telling them, like, what school I went to, and saying that they could find me at school... and that's when I got kind of scared". Another participant commented, "I was really scared that they were gonna [*sic*] you know, follow up on what they were saying and come beat me up." One participant had been cyberbullied in college in two separate incidents, once by a female perpetrator and once by a male perpetrator. When asked to elaborate on the fear she experienced with each incident, she responded:

> The one with the guy [was more frightening] because I'd never felt scared with the [female] situation, but with the male, I felt really scared. I had these horrible thoughts going through my head, like what if he shows up to school with a gun and tries to kill me? What if he tries to kidnap and rape me? I was really scared. I had nightmares about it, and it still just creeps me out. Definitely, that one was a lot worse.

Fear is an emotion that followed the participants throughout their experiences, and for some the fear had not subsided.

Humiliation. Participants experienced embarrassment and humiliation of varying degrees. The perceived severity of embarrassment and humiliation was affected by the

nature of the message and the size of the audience. One participant who was being cyberbullied by a younger girl commented, "...the main reason I was embarrassed was because this is a girl [the bully] that was younger than me".

Another participant explained how it felt to be humiliated for being poor. She stated:

> ...it's a public announcement...so it just was embarrassing for the most part. Because the people who weren't that close to me didn't know the lifestyle I lived [referring to being poor]. I felt even more embarrassed to tell her [mother] because I didn't want her to feel guilty for us not having, you know, a fancy lifestyle.

When nude photos were distributed, the humiliation was much worse because there was an added sense of shame. One participant explained:

> I was ashamed. I couldn't believe that I had been so stupid to do something like that [send the photo to her ex-boyfriend]. Um, I was embarrassed. I was mortified, um, and I was terrified of my parents finding out and my reputation being ruined, because at that point I didn't realize how far it [the photo] had gone.

Hurt. Many participants felt hurt by the cyberbullying. They expressed their feelings by saying, "I wasn't gonna [*sic*] pay attention to it, but at the same time, deep down inside it was hurting me a little". Another participant said, "I guess it just hurt my feelings that people knew I wasn't rich". Another young woman being cyberbullied about her appearance and ethnicity commented, "It was just comments like that that hurt my physical image, and especially for a girl, that was really hard to take in". When discussing the role of bystanders, one young woman commented, "That hurts, too. They [bystanders] don't want to say anything. They're afraid of her [the bully]". Commenting on receiving messages from someone she knew, one participant said, "...it was actually really hurtful, because it was someone that was close to me that knows me that is saying

all these things". One woman summed it all up by saying, "...just because it's being said online does not take away or blunt it from hurting you".

Anger. Participants spoke of feeling anger at different times during their experiences. Some were angry at the bully, some were angry at themselves, and others experienced generalized anger at the situation. One young woman was receiving anonymous messages disparaging her appearance. She commented, "I was so mad that I was getting those comments that I would actually tell my friends to post positive comments [about me]". She wanted to counter the negativity with positive messages from her friends. When another participant went to the school administration for help and did not receive it, she commented, "I was really angry and I felt, you know, I didn't feel believed". Similarly, another young woman commented, "Um, a lot of my anger stems towards my high school's counselor because her job was to protect me and to see if anything was wrong, and not just be in that room [principal's office] for legal reasons". One young woman who was told to just turn off her computer to make the cyberbullying stop, commented, "...that really made me so mad because I think cyberbullying is so much more than strictly social media". Most participants became angrier as the cyberbullying continued.

Sadness. Participants discussed feeling sad, lonely, and crying during their experiences. One participant said, "I felt very sad and very lonely, and I also felt different." Another participant talked about depression stating, "Actually, I did get really depressed from it. ...in the eighth grade into freshman year I was extremely depressed and would self-harm".

One participant commented that her family noticed a difference in her behavior

and asked:

> Why are you spending more time in your room? Why do you not make eye contact with us when you talk? Why are you neglecting yourself? Um, how come you don't wear colorful things anymore? Um, how come you're not fun anymore? You know, how come you're not social anymore? Um, you know, why are you lazy? You know people described me as lazy, and it wasn't lazy. It was, um, it was just, you know, I felt down.

Another young woman commented, "I kind of brushed it off [cyberbullying], but as things continued and people were still being really mean, I really just felt hopeless".

Accepting the bully's opinion. As the cyberbullying continued and additional messages were received, the young women began *accepting the bully's opinion* and internalizing the content of the messages. One expressed her thoughts by saying, "These people are only saying these things to me because it must be true. I believed that what they were saying must have been true, cuz [*sic*] I remember looking at myself in the mirror wondering."

One participant discussed how the messages she was receiving affected her behavior. She recounted:

> …you know, I went through this very promiscuous stage, um, because I felt, like, Well, this is, this is what I am. I'm a slut. I'm a whore, so why don't I just prove it? Why don't I just embrace it? Why don't I just become this person? …I was taking ownership of the label.

Another commented:

> Yeah. I really did [believe the messages], yeah, just because there were so many of them. It was all people who, like, I thought I was okay with. You know? I thought we all liked each other. You know? And then when I find out that these are their actual thoughts…. Just everything altogether it made me really believe, like, everything they were saying.

One other participant recalled, "I wasn't a slut, I like didn't even kiss people. But I perceived myself as a slut because people were saying those things about me."

Trying to handle it alone. As they were experiencing the emotions of being

cyberbullied, they were also trying to figure out how to best handle the situations on their

own. Some participants tried to ignore the cyberbullying with limited success. Comments

included, "Initially, I would just try to ignore it" and "I was smart about it. I didn't

respond to anything". Receiving advice to ignore the cyberbully was common. One

young woman recalled a conversation with her best friend who she said stated:

> 'Maybe if you ignore it, it'll go away. Don't make any sort of comments about
> her on your Tumblr. Don't talk about her, even in the slightest. Don't look at her
> page. Just cut everything off, and maybe it'll go away.' Unfortunately, she was
> wrong, but I did try that. I'm still trying that.

Another participant received similar advice from a friend, "She told me to just try

and let it go, try to ignore it if I can because if you ignore it they'll realize it's not

working and then they might stop". Participants agreed that ignoring the messages was

not an effective strategy.

To deal with the messages, some participants blocked the perpetrators from their

Facebook accounts, while others deleted their own accounts completely. One young

woman commented, "I have lots of people I've blocked on Facebook just because I don't

want to have to talk to them or see anything they post or have them see what I post".

Another recounted:

> I deleted the account, and then I went on all my Facebook, I went on Facebook
> friends, and I just looked at everyone on the list and everyone that I thought could
> have wrote those things, I actually ended up deleting them from Facebook. Yeah,
> I spent a lot of time just going over my friend's list. I think at that time I had 800
> friends on there, so it was very overwhelming.

For some, the cyberbullying continued despite efforts to delete and change

accounts. One young woman commented:

...she's been looking at my Tumblr and my Facebook. I've changed my Tumblr URL so that she couldn't find me, and somehow she found me. I don't have my name or my email on public file for Tumblr. I have no idea how she keeps finding me, but I've changed it [the account]. I've deleted accounts. I've created new ones, and she always finds it and has just been watching me for five years, and it's really creepy and unsettling.

Another strategy participants used was deleting the comments as they were received so they would not have to read them at all. One young woman stated:

It's not like I was getting, like, you know, one message every couple of days. I was getting 20 to 30 messages a day, if not more. So sometimes I wouldn't even open the messages. I would just delete them.

The unrelenting nature of cyberbullying and the inability to escape the messages was overwhelming and caused some young women to miss out on milestone events. They spoke of losing friendships, not attending significant events like homecoming and prom, quitting sports teams, and giving up activities they loved. One participant changed her career aspirations, and another participant left her job because of the bullying and cyberbullying she was enduring.

It was common for the participants in this study to withdraw from activities as the cyberbullying continued. A participant commented, "[I] definitely withdrew from things, initially just to kind of stay off the radar". Another said, "I was always in band...I always used to do marching band in parades...I would do [music] lessons and I stopped going to those." One participant recounted, "I had to actually stop playing [softball] my senior year, which affected me greatly. I lost some prospects looking at me for college scholarships".

One college-aged young woman who did not attend the homecoming football game and pep rally after a nude photo of her was disseminated on Yik Yak commented:

I didn't go to homecoming...I had to be excused from pep band [for that performance]....I, was really excited for it [the football game], and then there was this post that was like 'if we lose, we should kill [participant's name] tonight'. I was very scared that night.

Another young women who was a high school senior at the time of the cyberbullying experience, commented, "I didn't go to the football games. I didn't participate in a lot of things that I would have [participated in] just because I didn't wanna [*sic*] be in the spotlight. I didn't wanna [*sic*] have to have people be talking about me". The participants did not want to draw attention to themselves. They preferred to remove themselves from events rather than to risk being targeted.

For two participants, the cyberbullying experience had a profound impact on career choice and employment. One young woman spoke of her concern by saying:

I'm not necessarily still afraid of that person [the male bully], but I'm afraid of getting into situations like that [cyber harassment]. I really wanted to go into mental health nursing, and now I don't anymore because I'm like, wow, people with mental illness can really be unpredictable, and that could really happen [again]. I was like, I can't just not be nice to people....I was like, I can't go into mental health nursing because of this person [the bully], because of what happened. What if that happens again?

The other young woman commented, "... I loved what I did, and why should I let one person, you know, why should I let one person do that [bully her into quitting]? But she affected me, and I ended up quitting [her job]".

Friendships were also lost during these experiences for a variety of reasons. After a nude photo of her had been distributed in her sophomore year of high school, one participant commented, "Friends left me. They couldn't be friends with me [anymore]". When the photo was distributed, the parents of her friends no longer wanted their daughters to be seen with the participant. Another recounted losing all of her friends after

ending a romantic relationship, saying, "I basically had to start over. It was like I was a freshman again. I had to find all new friends." Ending the relationship forced her to make all new friends because she and her ex-boyfriend shared the same circle of friends.

Suffering in Silence was a highly emotional stage for the participants. The trust they had in themselves and others was severely damaged when they read and re-read the messages. They began to internalize and believe what the bully was saying, further eroding their confidence. The struggle to handle the cyberbullying experience alone became overwhelming and the young women concluded they needed help to resolve the situation. At this point in the process, the young women summoned the courage to reach out for help, hoping that someone would be there to support them.

Reaching Out

When participants concluded that they were unable to effectively handle the situation on their own, they realized they needed to reach out for help. The Reaching Out category encompasses the sub-categories of *feeling judged*, *being believed or not, and finding a caring adult.* The act of Reaching Out required participants to find the courage needed to tell an adult about the cyberbullying. When they did reach out, participants experienced both positive and negative responses from the adults around them. The participants often felt they were judged, disbelieved, punished, and dismissed by the adults that were supposed to help them. Their fragile sense of trust was once again shaken. In spite of this, the young women demonstrated courage and persistence in continuing to search for a trusted, caring adult who did provide support.

Feeling judged. Participants made the decision to tell someone when they were no longer able to handle the situation successfully on their own. In most cases,

participants told their mothers. Many were afraid to tell their mothers and expected the

mother to be angry. One participant commented, "...I didn't wanna [*sic*] tell my Mom, I

think for the most part, because I didn't want her to take away, like, those [computer]

privileges that I had". Another commented, "I was scared that she was gonna [sic] be

really mad at me." One participant was concerned that her mother would "go into full

mama bear mode to protect her cub". The participants were actually surprised to find

their mothers were more concerned than angry, and demonstrated strong support for their

daughters. One commented:

> When I finally did tell her [Mom], she was mad that I didn't tell her for so long.
> But she was more reassuring...I could still talk to people online. There was just
> more supervision and more privacy settings that were put into place.

Mothers received high praise from their daughters regarding the maternal support

they offered. It was evident that maternal support was an important component in this

process. One participant commented, "...my Mom knew what was happening...she was

kinda [*sic*] my backbone in this whole situation". Another young woman simply stated,

"...my Mom stuck by me."

Some of the young women, especially if a provocative photo of the young woman

was distributed, were afraid of disappointing their parents and that fear prevented them

from revealing the cyberbullying sooner. One woman poignantly said, "I didn't want my

parents not to be proud of me, and if they saw these messages, then they wouldn't be

proud of me anymore."

Likewise, another commented:

> ...I mean obviously if they saw the picture I don't think they would've
> been that proud, and I just didn't want them to know. I wanted them to think, you
> know, everything was okay. It was the first month of college.

This particular young woman did not disclose the situation to her parents until she was admitted to the psychiatric ward of a hospital near her college campus after expressing suicidal thoughts.

Telling their friends was not as difficult for the participants since many of the friends already knew about the cyberbullying because they saw it played out on social media. One young women commented "...they [her friends] read the comments. I had no choice but to tell them". Another participant recalled, "[I told] just my closest friends because they were always bullied, too, so it's kind of like we were going through the same thing as a group of friends." Being friends with others who were bullied provided a sense of comfort for the participants. They did not feel quite so alone and could share their experiences with others who could relate and understand. Overall, the young women found their close friends to be supportive.

Participants were not eager to tell school authorities about the cyberbullying because they did not want the online bullying to escalate, nor did they want to be seen as "tattle-tales" or "snitches". Many of the participants did not want to tell the school because they believed the school officials would not do anything to rectify the problem, and in some cases might make it worse. When asked if she told the school, one participant responded, "I felt like the school wouldn't do anything about it…the school always says if it [bullying] happens outside of school we can't do anything about it". Similarly, participants were reluctant to tell law enforcement officials and only did so when there was a threat of physical harm.

Some participants were let down by the very adults from whom they requested

help. Being told to "work it out" was a common response. When she went to her softball coach, one participant was told "…either you're gonna [*sic*] have to stop playing, or you're gonna [*sic*] have to work it out between the two of you'. The participant went on to say "I looked at it like a slap in the face where he wasn't gonna [*sic*] help me with something that was affecting me that bad". Two of the participants were victims of nude photos being widely distributed without their knowledge or consent. One participant, who was a high school sophomore at the time, reported:

> ...there were teachers who had my [nude] picture on their phone, who would talk about it in class and stuff....um, there was really nothing the school did to protect me. Really, nobody did. Teachers stood by and watched it happen.

Another participant who was a college freshman at the time, recalled her experience dealing with a psychiatrist when she was admitted to the psychiatric ward after having suicidal thoughts. She discussed having to explain her situation. When she told the psychiatrist about the cyberbullying and distribution of the nude photo, she stated "he told me to turn off the computer and ignore it". Participants assumed that adults would either be unwilling to help, or would not know how to help. One participant commented, "I felt like the school wouldn't do anything about it". Another said, "They [the school] weren't always really effective at helping even if they tried to help". A college aged participant mentioned, "I don't think that they [the college] really would've done anything, and they didn't, in general'. When participants did reach out for help, they were often not believed.

Being believed or not. When the young women did tell someone other than a parent or friend, they often experienced not being believed. When one participant told her guidance counselor what was happening, he said, "Oh, no, he's [the bully] a good kid.

He wouldn't do anything like that. It must be a misunderstanding". She poignantly stated, "The bully wins every time someone doesn't believe you". Another participant who went to the school principal said, "I always thought he [the principal] pretty much thought I was a liar". A number of the participants saved evidence by printing out the messages or saving screen shots of the messages to back up their claims of cyberbullying. One participant who printed out all of the Facebook messages and texts she was sent stated, "they [school administration] told me that they didn't have enough proof, which I found kind of crazy, that a written post on Facebook wasn't enough proof. It just kinda [*sic*] made me feel like I wasn't, like, worthy of their help or something". Another participant recounted her experience when she took the printed messages to the principal, stating:

> I actually went to his office and he did not even care to look at them [the messages]. He threw them away in front of me, and said, 'I don't need to see this. You guys should be friends. You should go to class now'.

Another young woman stated, "I was able to show them the direct messages on my phone". In her case, she stated that the school principal and school resource officer told her, "You have two months before you turn 18. If you are going to do anything [to the bully], do it now", presumably so she couldn't be punished legally as an adult if she harmed her perpetrator.

Not being believed was detrimental to the young women who reached out for help. Their trust that school personnel would protect them, was once again shaken when reaching out was met with unhelpful suggestions or indifference. Through perseverance, however, most found a caring adult who was able to help them navigate the situation.

Finding a caring adult. Finding a caring adult was an essential element in the young women moving through the basic social-psychological process. Participants

discussed the importance of finding a caring adult to help them navigate the rough waters of cyberbullying. While most participants had the support of their mothers, they also aligned themselves with a caring adult within the school environment.

In one case, the participant's mother contacted the school social worker and the young woman began attending a school support group and having individual counseling sessions with the social worker over a two year period. The participant commented:

> ...we [social worker and participant] kind of worked on [participant] becoming more comfortable. And then after talking to her [social worker] individually about just like, the loneliness, and things like that, I started [attending] a group of other kids who were maybe not diagnosed with depression, but exhibited signs. There was about seven of us in a group, and we met once a week, and would just work through different issues that we were having.

Another young woman found a caring adult in the school secretary, commenting:

> ...I was the secretary's assistant at my high school my senior year...we developed a really close friendship so I opened up to her a lot. She kinda [*sic*] gave me ideas to handle it [cyberbullying]. Without her I don't know if it ever would have been resolved.

Participants also discussed going to school counselors for support. In some cases, the participant had both an academic counselor and a guidance counselor, but chose to seek out the academic counselor for help with non-academic issues. One participant stated, "I would go to her [the academic counselor] for a lot of things that you should go to your guidance counselor for". When asked to describe the qualities of the academic counselor, the participant responded, "She is just a very inviting person, and I mean, just anybody that has her feels open and safe in her office. You feel like she will be your advocate in any situation". When asked to describe the qualities found in a caring adult, another participant stated:

> ...they need to build a relationship from day one, so they know the student...to

have a baseline to check in on them and know if they are doing okay, and being able to tell if something is wrong. I think that was my big thing is that I had talked to these staff members for three years before this [cyberbullying] happened. That was something that really helped because I knew that they weren't gonna [*sic*] judge me.

In discussing what would have helped her the most during her cyberbullying experience, one young woman poignantly commented, "I think it would have helped just to know that someone cared. You know, someone cared enough to ask [how I was doing]. I probably would have just wanted someone to care".

The benefits of finding a caring adult should not be underestimated. The young women in this study all found a caring adult, whether it was the mother, a teacher, a secretary, or a school counselor to provide the support needed to move on from the negative experience. The caring adult acted as an advocate, a sounding board, and a non-judgmental ally in the participant's battle with cyberbullying.

Receiving Support

When the young women in the study found support, they were able to move forward in the process of coping. The Receiving Support category encompasses the sub-categories of *accepting help, being there for me,* and *adopting new coping strategies.*

Accepting help. Participants willingly accepted the help and advice they received. For some, this meant attending support groups, for others it meant taking advice to form new friendships. The young women in this study often had to make new connections and friendships because prior relationships were damaged as a result of the cyberbullying that occurred. For some of the participants, this was difficult because they were self-described loners, while others were hesitant to trust new friendships based on previous negative experiences. Some participants made connections with other people

who had been bullied stating, "...it helped me to know I wasn't the only person [being cyberbullied]." Participating in a support group was beneficial for one participant who commented, "...I had other people that were feeling lonely, or things like that, I could relate to".

Several participants spoke of making better friends. One young woman met a young man in her art class and they became fast friends. She recalled,

> ...he was easy to open up to. We became very good friends and he introduced me to, he had a big group of friends, and he introduced me to all of them. Now they're still my group of friends today.

Another participant commented that making new friends meant "...exploring different people [in band] and finding more people from my own grade". Participating in extra-curricular activities helped in meeting new people for some, but not all, of the young women.

Being there for me. "Being there" was a phrase that was repeated throughout the interviews. All of the young women spoke of having someone "be there" for them and identified that type of support as beneficial in helping them through the experience. They discussed having a small number of close friends that stood by them. One participant commented of her best friend, "...she would relate to my pain and be [say] 'I understand how hurtful these [messages] are, but this isn't true about you'". Another recounted that her friends "...made it very clear that if I needed anything they were here". Another participant recalled, "My other friend stuck by my side, and we're still best friends to this day".

When asked to elaborate on what it means to have someone "be there", one participant remarked, "...she [her friend] would walk with me from class to class, to the

bathroom, just as support because I was scared. When I didn't have any other friends, she would call me, talk on the phone...all that kind of stuff". A young woman cyberbullied in college commented, "...a couple of them [friends] knew what was being posted and they would like leave candy on my desk and let me know they were there if I needed anything". Another young woman recounted, "...she [best friend] was really good at convincing me that it [the cyberbullying] wasn't my fault, and building me up when I was low". One young woman whose nude photo was distributed, spoke of the power of support. She recalled, "...there was one boy in the high school, who would go with me to, like, events and sit next to me, and just having him there made me feel like I was protected. Having his presence was really important to me".

Family was an important source of support for most of the participants. One college student commented that her parents were "...very concerned about my mental health and my, you know, overall experience on campus. They wanted me to be safe. They wanted me to feel safe". Another young woman who experienced workplace bullying and cyberbullying eloquently commented on family support:

> "I appreciate the support, you know, because it gives me power to do it [take care of herself] on my own. Right, so if they do give me support, I'm not expecting them to fix the problem for me. I'm just expecting them to give me validation that, you know what? Keep going. You know, don't let this bring you down".

Adopting new coping strategies. Study participants used a variety of coping strategies throughout their experiences with cyberbullying. During the *Suffering in Silence* phase, participants found themselves withdrawing from people and activities, becoming anxious or depressed, and/or, resorting to self-harm. However, once participants moved into the *Receiving Support* stage, they were able to identify and adopt

more positive coping strategies.

Many of the young women were good students and found that keeping up with academics was a positive way to cope. Others participated in numerous activities and stayed busy. One participant commented that she participated in "anything and everything" at her small school. Another recalled, "I've always been very focused in school and my extra-curricular activities. So just throwing myself into those things helped me deal with anything else".

Other participants used the arts to cope. One young woman commented, "I had to kind of pull out of it [depression]. I listened to music a lot. Music has always been, like, a therapy for me". Another participant used poetry, stating "I wrote a lot of poetry. It was very sad, you know, a lot of teenage angst...angry poetry. But it was really how I coped". Another recounted, "I was always a bookworm so I'd read a lot, kind of get lost in another world by reading I guess".

Although the young women learned new coping skills, some were still dealing with the lasting effects from their cyberbullying experiences.

The young women in this study discussed the lingering effects they have endured from cyberbullying. A number of participants spoke about not being as trusting as they once were. One participant commented, "...I always feel more on my toes, less trusting of people now...like maybe I should be more closed off, or more reserved and not so naïve...". Another simply stated, "I am not as trusting as I used to be, and I don't like social events, really".

One participant commented on her ongoing anxiety issues:

...it did impact my life. And, you know, the things people are saying have

stopped, but I still suffer like, really bad anxiety. And I have panic attacks a lot because of it [cyberbullying]. And still seven months after the fact, it's still hard for me to feel completely safe on campus.

Another college student commented on the duration of the effects from cyberbullying that began during her freshman year of college. She said, "... [It lasted] a long time. It wasn't until last year [senior year] that I actually started loving myself again and knowing who I was". Another participant commented on her ongoing fear when meeting new people, saying "...I sort of always have that, like, fear in me when I like, meet new people, that they're gonna [*sic*] be like mean to me".

Receiving support from caring, trusted adults helped the cyberbullying victims to move through the process to the final stage, *Becoming Empowered.*

Becoming Empowered

The final stage of this substantive theory is *Becoming Empowered*. The participants reflected on their experiences with cyberbullying and recognized that although the experience was negative, they had experienced personal growth which lead to them *Becoming Empowered*. The four properties subsumed within this key category are *learning to be strong, discounting the bully's opinions, becoming who I was meant to be,* and *advocating for self and others.*

Learning to be strong. All of the young women in the study spoke of becoming stronger as a result of the experience. There was a common thread among the responses from the young women in this study recognizing that they had experienced personal growth. One commented, "...believe it or not, I feel like it's made me a stronger person. I'm able to, you know, make better judgments of people".

Another mentioned:

"So I think to an extent it made me like a stronger person.... that I held my composure, and kept my cool, and, you know, tried to stay out of it instead of responding online. You know I kind of confronted it, uh, in person".

One participant recalled:

I think that it made me stronger, and it made me realize that, you know, what I had to face... and I think it just made me realize that they're the ones [the bullies] that, you know, like, are having the problems, themselves. So it's not necessarily about me.

For a number of participants, the experience helped them develop greater empathy. One young woman noted, "I'd like to think it made me a better person...more understanding". Another added, "I think it's made me a little bit of a stronger person. I don't listen to everything people say anymore. I feel it's made me be nicer to other people because I know what it was like to be on the other end of it [bullying].

Although the young women endured difficult situations, they all emerged stronger and more confident.

Renouncing the bully's opinion. During the earlier stage of *Suffering in Silence,* the participants spoke of taking the cyberbullying messages to heart and believing the opinions of the bullies. As they moved through the process of restoring trust, they became able to discount the opinions of the bullies. In reflecting on her experience and where it has lead her, one young woman eloquently recounted her journey:

I really had to work on my self-esteem. I absolutely hated myself, I had no self-esteem. I felt like garbage. I felt like those girls that bullied me, they took ownership of me. They took ownership of my self-esteem and ownership of my confidence. And by taking it back, it was really empowering.

Similarly, another young woman who struggled with believing the bullies, commented:

Now, I feel I have the [self] acceptance to just be, 'Oh, no it's not true', go back

to the unconscious or whatever. I mean, they [self-doubts] still come up, I just don't spend much time on them. I'm just, 'No, they're not true'. I'm confident in myself.

Discounting the cruel messages and opinions of others was difficult for the participants, but they were able to overcome the negative experience, and trust that they were capable of moving forward and continuing to grow.

Becoming who I was meant to be. As the young women regained trust in themselves, they reflected on who they were "meant to be". One participant recounted:

I feel I was a late bloomer into knowing who I was and knowing my identity, but then getting bullied and then especially the cyberbully experience that happened, that was just, it took a long time to repair myself.

Another young woman who endured cyberbullying until she went away to college and physically separated herself from her perpetrators, poignantly remarked:

I wanted to start fresh. I think I was becoming the person I always [knew I] was. I always knew I was a good listener, and a strong leader, and a good organizer, but, you know, I didn't have a place to display those talents. It wasn't until I went to college that I was really able to use them and flourish and really become the [person] that I always was and wanted to be.

Still another commented, "Like, I embrace what happened. It was part of my life. It's part of my story. I think it's really helped me to be more sensitive to other people".

The participants were able to recognize the personal growth that occurred in the wake of such negative and painful experiences. They were finally able to trust in their own ability to learn from their experiences and move forward with their lives.

Growing and becoming who they were meant to be also included reflecting on the lessons they had learned from the cyberbullying experience. Not surprisingly, many of the lessons were directly related to the responsible use of social media. Participants discussed maintaining privacy online and being selective about who they admitted into

their social media accounts. One young woman shared:

> I make sure that all of my information online is really private now. I don't add people on Facebook that I don't know. I make sure all of my posts are private. I make sure my Instagram account is private. Just, anything that I have, I don't add my entire name to or my entire email. I just make sure everything is very private.

Another commented, "I'm a very private person now with my Internet presence...and I think that should be encouraged [rather than] just accepting every person's friend request because you want to have 1,000 friends on Facebook".

Regarding distribution of nude photos, one young woman commented about the lesson she learned, saying:

> I was stupid for taking the picture, and that I should have known better, and been smarter, and made better choices. But I was 16, and I was naïve, and I never, in a million years, thought the picture would go viral. And so, when I took the picture, I hurt myself, but when my boyfriend sent the picture out, he hurt me and then everybody else who got the picture hurt me, too.

The participants were no longer willing to let the negative events of the past decide the future for them. They took ownership of their lives and recognized they were capable of advocating for themselves and others.

Advocating for self and others. The participants grew strong enough to become advocates for themselves and others in similar situations. Two of the participants speak to middle school and high school students about their cyberbullying and sexting experiences to educate and raise awareness. Another participant has been instrumental in getting state legislation passed to prevent adolescents from being charged with a child pornography felony if they distribute or receive a nude photo in a sexting incident. Another young woman was interviewed for her college newspaper after experiencing cyberbullying on campus. In all of these cases, the young women reported stepping outside of their comfort

zones to share their stories. One participant recalled attending a conference where a federal law enforcement official was speaking about cyberbullying. Another local law enforcement person in the audience commented that the police don't have time to deal with 15 year old girls fighting on Facebook. The young woman described her response to the incident:

> ...so I sat there shaking and raised my hand. I said, 'I just have a couple of things to say.' And for the first time I shared a very short synopsis of what had happened to me and what the effect had been on my life and how important it was he paid attention to this [cyberbullying].

As a result of that encounter, the young woman was asked to co-present with law enforcement officials speaking to students. She now frequently speaks to students across the country about her experiences with cyberbullying.

Each participant provided valuable insight into her personal experience with cyberbullying. As advocates, the participants offered advice for other young women, parents, and school personnel when dealing with cyberbullying.

Advising young women. The young women in this study were eager to offer advice to other young women who may be experiencing cyberbullying and/or traditional bullying. One participant commented, "I definitely want them to know not to take anything too personally". Another commented, "I guess I would like them [young women] to know to be confident in themselves and to just tell someone [about the bullying]". One young woman harassed by a young man commented, "...if you have a funny feeling, or if you feel something is wrong, talk to somebody about it because you really should follow your instincts".

Another eloquently said:

I think I would want them to know that this time in your life does not last. It doesn't define who you are. That you don't have to take other people's words and opinions and make them your own. Take other people's opinions very lightly. The only person's opinion that matters of yourself is yourself. And to, you know, just stick through it, and hold on and share. Tell someone what's going on. And keep telling.

Regarding sexting, a participant advised "...don't send pictures because it can ruin your life, and even if you think your significant other won't send it out, it can always end up in the wrong hands".

Another participant wanted young women to know:

...just that it [the bullying] ends, that you'll think it's never gonna [*sic*] stop. You'll read something and you'll get a message the next day. You think they're gonna [*sic*] do it every day for the rest of your life. It eventually stops. People either, you know, grow up or you just somehow get them out of your life. It's gonna [*sic*] stop eventually.

Finally, a participant who was hospitalized after a suicide attempt expressed, "...it's not worth ending your life over, at all. And I'm so glad that I didn't".

Advising parents. Participants also offered salient advice for parents whose children were experiencing any form of bullying. Most participants encouraged parents to listen to their children and to recognize changes in the child's behavior that might indicate a problem. Participants recommended that parents monitor their child's social media so they could be more aware of what was actually happening in the child's life, both online and offline. One participant stated, "...you need to be aware of what's going on in your child's online life because that's a really good indicator of what's happening in their emotional life, their school life, and their home life". Regarding sexting, one participant commented, "Your kids know about sexting. I've had ten year olds who've told me they know about it. So don't put your head in the sand...it could be your

daughter". Another young woman said, "I think a lot of parents don't realize how severe cyberbullying can get...you have to make sure your child knows that it's not their fault...being supportive and understanding is really the main thing". Being believed surfaced as a key element in parental involvement. One woman commented, "...I would say check their [the child's] email. Believe them. I would right away say you should always side with your child". Another participant advised parents, "...to listen...if something is bothering their child, it should bother them, too".

Advising school personnel. Participants in this study interacted with teachers, counselors, school nurses, and administrators in the school setting when they were enduring cyberbullying. The participants offered advice to school personnel when dealing with cyberbullying. One participant suggested, "Maybe ask them [the target] how they feel, and do they feel threatened, or is there anything that they [school personnel] can do to help."

Another stressed the importance of believing the student:

So when someone comes to you and says, 'I'm being bullied online,' believe them and ask them what happened. You need to believe your students, um, and be aware of what's going on cuz [*sic*] even if they're not coming to you, if you see it happening, stop it. If you hear about it happening, you know, investigate it.

One young woman commented, "So I think teachers, nurses, counselors just need to be aware of what's going on in their school and be proactive about, um, stepping in when necessary".

Another participant stated:

...a lot of times it comes down to having a conversation with the kids, and seeing if they're okay, and letting them know that, you know, you are a trusted individual they can come to if they need help. And if you hear something, or something just doesn't seem right with them, just sit down and talk to them about

it, and openly ask them [if they are being bullied].

Another noted,

...I would say they should be more observant of their students...and form a friendship with them...that's all I really, really would've wanted for someone just to say. 'I'm here for you. You can always talk to me'.

Similarly, one young woman commented:

...being that person to come talk to because I think that a lot of young women, if they're going through something like that, feel alone. And they feel that they don't have anyone to go to. Um, and I think, no matter who it is, school nurse or the counselor or, um, teachers or anything like that, I just think that, um, they should just have the open-door policy, and just have the students always be able to come to them, no matter what.

The young women in this study were willing to share their stories to help other young women having similar experiences. Their insights into the social-psychological process that occurs with cyberbullying among young women were invaluable and informed the generation of the Restoring Trust theory.

Methodological Rigor

According to Glaser& Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978, 2001), the worth of an empirically derived grounded theory can be judged according to the following specific criteria: a) fit, b) relevance, c) workability, and d) modifiability. Each criterion will be discussed as it relates to the generation of the substantive theory presented in this research study.

Fit

In grounded theory methodology, fit means "the categories must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to and indicated by the data under study" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.3). The categories should fit the data naturally without being forced. Since the

categories are derived directly from the data, fit is usually assured. However, generating a substantive theory is an iterative process that requires the researcher to constantly compare the data and refit the categories as necessary (Glaser, 1978). In this study, the researcher analyzed the interviews line by line to accurately code the participants' experiences. As data were analyzed using the constant comparative method, and categories emerged, the researcher was mindful of the category and it's fit to the data. The analysis and generation of the theory required the researcher to revise categories as necessary to more accurately fit the data. Theoretical sensitivity was developed as the researcher continued to analyze the data and discover the categories that best fit the data. The theoretical memos written by the researcher during data collection and analysis helped identify the relationships between the categories and ultimately led to the generation of the substantive theory.

Work

Glaser & Strauss (1967) wrote that, "by work, we mean that they [categories] must be meaningfully relevant to and be able to explain the behavior under study". Glaser (1978) further posits that "a theory should be able to explain what happened, predict what will happen and interpret what is happening in an area of substantive or formal inquiry" (p. 4). The theory discovered in this study presents the phenomenon of cyberbullying among young women by identifying trust as the primary dynamic woven throughout the social-psychological process. This new insight will allow other young women to understand cyberbullying from a new perspective that has not been previously studied and will help other young women understand their own feelings and reach out for help. Additionally, this theory will be beneficial for adults providing support for the

young women enduring cyberbullying. It will serve as a framework for understanding the importance of trust as a major dynamic in healing the trauma of cyberbullying.

Relevance

According to Glaser (1978), relevance explains how a particular issue under study is resolved. In grounded theory, the researcher conducts participant interviews to determine the main concern and resolution of that concern. In this study, the process of cyberbullying among young women was explored. Based on the data, it was determined that the process of losing trust in others and gradually restoring trust was an essential component in resolving the issue of cyberbullying between and among young women. The young women were able to not only find people to trust in helping them resolve the issue, but they were also able to restore trust in themselves. They became stronger and were able to advocate for themselves and other young women in similar situations.

Modifiability

Modifiability means that the theoretical concepts discovered in the study can be modified for use in other substantive areas. In this study, the core category, Restoring Trust, could be applicable to other situations in which an individual's trust is shaken and in time restored. Such situations might include divorce, domestic violence, or childhood trauma.

In addition to the criteria specific to classical grounded theory mentioned in the preceding section, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose general strategies for appraising rigor in qualitative studies to assess credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. Credibility means that the findings represent the participants' realities. The substantive theory generated in this study is "grounded" in the participants' experiences,

therefore it reflects their reality. Constant comparison of the data and saturation of the emerging categories further demonstrates credibility by increasing the density of the theory.

Confirmability is "the extent to which the data and interpretations of the study are grounded in events rather than personal constructions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.324). To ensure confirmability, the researcher maintained theoretical memos which provided an audit trail regarding the researcher's thoughts and insights as the study progressed. The theoretical memos were also used to establish the foundational relationships between the concepts in the emerging theory. The researcher verified her findings with a mentor who has expertise in grounded theory. The mentor provided feedback and suggestions about the emerging theory and development of the core category to accurately capture the social-psychological process. The researcher incorporated alternative explanations as necessary.

Dependability of a study in qualitative research is demonstrated through both the process and the resultant findings of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was demonstrated by following the grounded theory research steps, creating an audit trail, and following through with data collection and analysis until saturation of categories was reached.

Transferability means that the findings are applicable in other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The core category, Restoring Trust, was described clearly and was general enough in its level of abstraction to be applied to other areas of research. The findings in this study applied to young women across the developmental stages of adolescence and young adulthood in school, as well as college and workplace settings.

The concepts within the Restoring Trust theory may apply to any substantive area in which trust is a key dynamic.

Summary

In this chapter, the social-psychological process of how young women lose and restore trust in themselves and others while experiencing cyberbullying was presented. The core category, Restoring Trust, and the five key categories and their sub-categories were discussed. Participant quotes provided the description of the properties to support and explain the social-psychological process of restoring trust. The chapter concluded with a discussion outlining the criteria for establishing methodological rigor in a grounded theory study. Chapter Five will include a discussion of the findings in relation to previous literature, unique contributions of this study to nursing, and implications for nursing practice, education, and research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of this grounded theory study on cyberbullying among young women as it relates to the previous literature. The story line of the Restoring Trust theory will be presented followed by a discussion of the core category and five key categories. The unique findings will be presented along with the strengths and limitations of the study. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the implications for nursing practice, education, and research.

Story Line

The young women in this study experienced cyberbullying of varying degrees and circumstances during the years they were in elementary, middle school, high school, college, and the workplace. The basic social-psychological process shows that although the circumstances were different for each woman, they experienced a common trajectory that included five stages: *Becoming the Target, Suffering in Silence, Reaching Out, Receiving Support, and Becoming Empowered*. Participants transitioned from one stage to the next in a linear manner.

The first stage of the social-psychological process, *Becoming the Target,* began when the participants became aware that they had become the target of a cyberbully. For some participants the bullying lasted several weeks, for others, several months or even years. Participants described feeling shocked at being targeted, and they grappled with

trying to understand "why" they were chosen as a target. Participants spoke of feeling singled out and labeled for a variety of reasons, whether for their appearance, culture, socioeconomic status, athletic ability, romantic involvement, or academic success. In some cases, the women had no idea why they were targeted. Participants discussed feeling ganged up on either by friends, strangers, or both as more people joined in the cyberbullying. The most hurtful perpetrators were former friends who betrayed their friendship by participating in the cyberbullying. The women's trust was shaken during this phase because they felt betrayed when former friends participated in the cyberbullying. Some women knew the identity of the bully, in other cases the cyberbullying was done anonymously. Not knowing the identity of the perpetrator increased their already heightened anxiety and further eroded their sense of trust because they did not know who they could trust.

The participant's response to being targeted was to suffer in silence. During the *Suffering in Silence* stage participants spoke of feeling like they were under attack as they received a constant barrage of hurtful messages. They felt compelled to read and re-read the messages searching for anything that would help them to understand why someone would choose them to bully. By rereading and reanalyzing the messages they concluded that the perpetrator's messages must be true. Participants experienced self-doubts and a lack of trust in themselves as they began to believe what was being said about them. As a consequence of accepting the bully's opinion participants experienced harmful emotions, including fear, hurt, anger, humiliation, and sadness. Several participants received messages telling them to kill themselves resulting in them experiencing suicidal thoughts, self-harming behavior, and one attempted suicide in the wake of the cyberbullying

attacks. Participants tried to cope by ignoring and blocking messages and by deleting social media accounts. Their attempts to cope alone were met with limited success. Their preoccupation with being targeted and their inability to escape the cyberbullying, resulted in some women reporting that they missed out on milestone events such as Homecoming and prom, favorite activities such as sports and band, as well as friendships. For some young women, the cyberbullying affected their career choices and decisions to stay or leave a job. When participants concluded that they were unable to effectively handle the situation on their own, they made the decision to reach out for help.

The participants reached out and accepted that they needed help in dealing with the cyberbullying during the *Reaching Out* stage. This stage was a turning point for the participants because they had to summon the courage needed to trust that someone would help them. Although initially afraid to tell an adult, most of the women told their mothers and they described that their mothers provided ongoing support. However, participants' efforts to receive support from school counselors, school officials, and law enforcement left them feeling negatively judged, disbelieved, and dismissed by the adults that were supposed to help them. Even though their trust was shaken again when they felt judged and disbelieved, the participants demonstrated courage when they continued to search for someone who would care enough to listen.

In the *Receiving Support* stage, the participants found that their mothers, selected other adults, and close friends believed them and were eager to support them through the process. Unlike earlier stages of this social-psychological process when participants did not know who to trust, they were now able to differentiate trustworthy individuals within their support system. Many spoke of their close friends as "being there" for them

throughout the cyberbullying experience, and emphasized the importance of being there for others as a key source of support. During this time participants began to reach out to form new friendships. They also began finding comfort by engaging in new activities including music, poetry, and writing about their experiences. Several participants identified after effects of the cyberbullying including lingering anxiety and depression. Being heard and believed was essential to developing trust in others. Receiving support from others enabled the young women to move toward the final stage.

The final stage of the process, *Becoming Empowered,* was characterized by the young women reflecting on their experiences with cyberbullying. They came to understand that the cruel messages they once believed to be true, were, in fact, not true at all. They discovered the strength to overcome the power of the bully's words and focus on "repairing themselves" and "becoming who they always were". Participants believed the experience with being cyberbullied and overcoming its harmful effects made them stronger and more confident. Many of the young women spoke of not being as trusting of others as they once were, but spoke of continuing to work on becoming more trustful. They came to recognize their ability to help others who had endured similar experiences. Some participants became spokespersons to educate school communities and law enforcement personnel about their responsibility to protect woman who report being cyberbullied. Participants wanted to encourage other young women to believe in themselves and stand up for themselves and others.

Social-Psychological Process of Restoring Trust

The social-psychological process of losing and restoring trust in cyberbullying victimization begins when the young woman becomes the target of cyberbullying. When

the young woman realizes she is the target of cyberbullying she wonders why she was chosen as the target. Her trust is shaken especially if friends or former friends participate in the cyberbullying. She responds to the cyberbullying by remaining silent and trying to handle the situation on her own. The first two stages of the process, *Becoming the Target* and *Suffering in Silence* happen concurrently and in a circular manner as illustrated in Figure 1.

Core Category: Restoring Trust
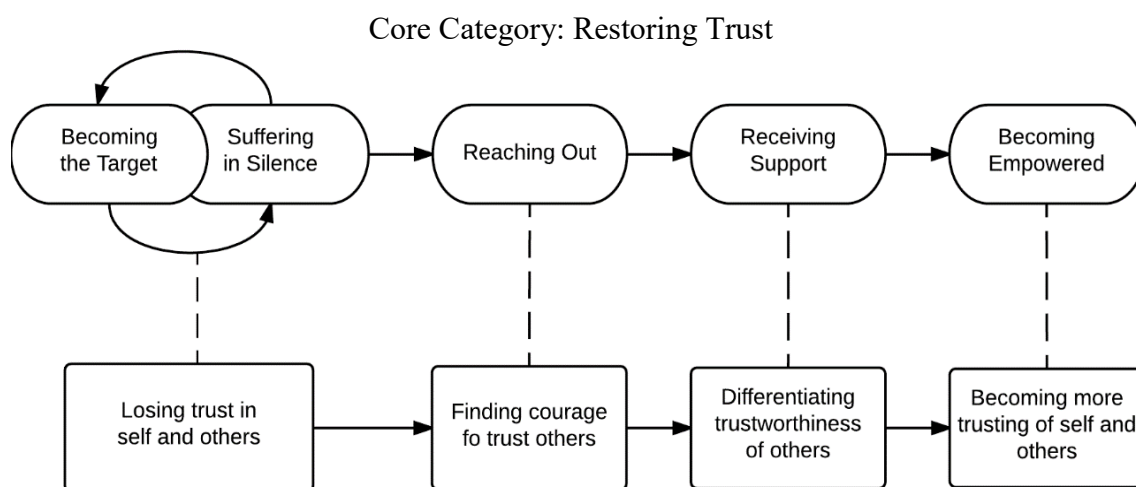
Figure 1. Visual representation of Restoring Trust Theory

As the unrelenting bullying continues, the young woman continues to remain silent as she suffers emotional turmoil. As the emotional turmoil continues, she loses trust in herself and others, especially if someone she trusted participates in the cyberbullying. She experiences self-doubts and begins to accept the bully's opinion as her truth. She no longer knows who she can trust. When she concludes that she can no longer handle the cyberbullying on her own, she finds the courage to reach out for help. When she begins *Reaching Out*, she encounters both positive and negative reactions to her requests for help. It is during this stage that the woman often feels judged, disbelieved, and dismissed

by the adults who are supposed to help her. Despite the negative reactions, the young woman continues to seek out a caring adult who will believe her. Being believed is an essential dynamic in restoring trust. Once the young woman finds a caring, trusted adult, she receives much needed support.

During the *Receiving Support* stage, the young woman receives support from her mother, close friends, and other trusted adults. She becomes able to make new friendship connections and learns to discern trustworthiness of the individuals in her life. She feels supported and identifies "being there for me" as a significant form of support. Her sense of trust begins increasing as a result of the support she receives, which then enables her to move into the final phase of the process. In the *Becoming Empowered* stage, trust continues to be restored as the young woman reflects on her experiences, recognizes her own strength, learns to believe in herself again, and advocates for herself and others in similar situations. She is able to trust her judgments about herself and other people, and she is able to discount the bully's opinions. Although she is more able to trust herself, she continues to work on becoming more trusting of others.

Core Category

Restoring Trust emerged as the core category for this study of the process of cyberbullying among young women. Restoring is defined as "bringing something back to the original state by rebuilding or repairing (Oxford American Dictionary, 2002, p.684). Trust is defined as a "firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something" (Oxford American Dictionary, 2002, p.874). The concept of "restoring trust" is not found in cyberbullying research literature. However, the dynamic of trust is evident throughout the social-psychological process of cyberbullying for the young women in

this study.

Although no studies have been conducted to explore the concept of trust as it relates specifically to cyberbullying, several studies have looked at trust and social network site (SNS) users. Walrave, Vanwesenbeeck, and Heirman (2012) explored the concept of trust and personal disclosure with 1454 individuals aged 10 to 65 years old who used social network sites such as Facebook. They found that younger participants disclose more personal information online and have a higher level of trust in their online friends. Moreover, they found that trust established in offline relationships is transferred to the online environment. In other words, if individuals use SNS to interact with an offline friend they trust, they will also trust that person in the online environment. In the current study, participants discussed their feelings of betrayal when a friend initiated or participated in cyberbullying them. The trust that they placed in the friend in the offline relationship was indeed transferred to the online environment. Subsequently, when the trust was betrayed in the online environment, it damaged the offline relationship, sometimes permanently.

A study conducted by Schacter, Greenberg, & Juvonen (2016) revealed that more personal disclosures on social networking sites increased the risk for cybervictimization. Furthermore, they found that high personal disclosure resulted in more victim blaming and less empathy from the study participants. Several participants in the current study experienced significant victim blaming and lack of empathy, especially if provocative pictures or intense personal disclosures were involved. Another study of 3,000 undergraduate students regarding the intensity of their Facebook use and level of social trust, revealed that those who used Facebook more frequently had higher social trust

scores compared to those who did not use Facebook (Valenzuela et al, 2009). Although the participants in that study reported high levels of social trust, they had not experienced cyberbullying. It could be hypothesized that if they were targets of cyberbullying, their social trust scores may have been lower.

Becoming the Target

The young women in this study spoke poignantly about *Becoming the Target* of online bullying. Many wondered why they had been targeted. Some attributed the cyberbullying to also being bullied face-to-face. It is not uncommon for bullying to begin in the offline world and then move to the online world. Research supports this overlap of traditional bullying and cyberbullying (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Cassidy, Jackson & Brown, 2009; Katzer, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak, 2009). Participants identified specific reasons that they thought they were targeted, including appearance, academic or athletic ability, being a new student, and ending or beginning romantic relationships. Selekman & Vessey (2004) support those findings, as do Hoff & Mitchell, (2008). Some participants spoke of having pre-existing anxiety disorders that they felt made them more of a target. This is supported by a short term longitudinal study that reported social anxiety increases the chances of being a target (Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016). Arsenault et al (2009) posits that withdrawal, anxiety-depression, diminished self-worth and decreased assertiveness predicts cyber victimization. It could be hypothesized that any outward sign of vulnerability increases the individual's risk of being targeted. It should be noted, however, that although traditional bullying has been associated with marginalized individuals, cyberbullying is present across all demographics. Although popularity and a large friendship base decreases the risk of traditional bullying, it actually increases the

risk for cyberbullying (Straksud, 2013).

Interacting with social media on a daily basis is common for adolescents and young adults. For many young people, the number of Facebook friends one has is an indicator of social status. In a study by Aboujaoude, Savage, Starcevic, & Saleme (2015), it was determined that most young people have on average 506 Facebook friends. The result is that having people who are more peripheral to the person's life counted among the person's "friend group" increases the risk of exploitation. Stakstrud (2013) using logistic regression, found that the number of Facebook friends was the strongest predictor for victimization from cyberbullying. The higher the number of friends, the greater the risk of being cyberbullied. It is plausible that a more popular student would have more Facebook friends, and could therefore be at higher risk for cyberbullying than a less popular student. Similarly, Wegge, Vandebosch, Eggermont, & Walrave (2015) reported that the number of Facebook friends who are not also face-to-face friends increases the risk of cyber victimization. That is an important finding and can be used to educate young people about appropriate use and safe management of their social networking accounts.

A number of participants in this study described themselves as loners and commented on their lack of strong friendships either because they had moved frequently, had experienced previous bullying, or were simply shy. Sahin (2012) found a significant correlation between loneliness and cyber victimization in that loneliness predicts cyber victimization. Focusing efforts on including students perceived to be lonely in activities and social groups may decrease cyberbullying victimization for that population of students.

Being ganged up on is a common perception in the experiences of the study participants. There is a sense of "jumping on the bandwagon" when cyberbullying starts. The perpetrator begins a cascade that ends up involving many more people who may or may not know the target personally. The participants all felt that they were being ganged up on as their experiences continued.

Knowing the identity of the perpetrator is problematic in cyberbullying. Some participants knew who was cyberbullying them, others did not. Research is inconsistent on this point. There appears to be an assumption that cyberbully targets do not know who is bullying them. However, researchers report that the individual knows or "has a good idea" of the perpetrator's identity (Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchel, 2007; Juvenon & Gross, 2008; Li, 2007; Kowalski & Limber, 2007). If the cyberbully is a current or former friend, the target often feels betrayed. Such a betrayal leads to a lack of trust within the victim. If the perpetrator's identity is unknown and the cyberbullying is done anonymously, the victim feels anxious and fearful. Both of these trajectories are supported in the current study. In either case, the victims of cyberbullying remain silent and attempt to handle the situation on their own for a period of time.

Suffering in Silence

During the *Suffering in Silence* stage, the young women experienced various emotional responses to the cyberbullying, including fear, humiliation, hurt, sadness, and anger. Numerous studies (DeHue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Topcu, Erdur-Baker, & Capa-Aydin, 2008; Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols, & Storch, 2009; Juvonon & Gross, 2008; Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009, Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2006) have explored the effects of cyberbullying on the psychological wellbeing of the targeted

individuals and are consistent with the findings of this qualitative study. More recently, Wang, Nansel, & Ianotti (2011) conducted a study of 7,313 sixth through tenth grade students and found that cyberbullying victims reported higher levels of depression than those not cyberbullied. Latmin, Modin, & Ostberg (2013) conducted a study of 22,544 Swedish youth and found that cyberbullying victims were associated with worse subjective health scores even when face to face bullying and socioeconomic status were taken into account, than those who were not victims of cyberbullying. Along with depression, cyberbullying has been linked to suicidal thoughts and actions. Popular media often implies a direct causation between suicide and cyberbullying, however, research studies exploring cyberbullying and suicide reveal a correlation but not direct causation (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). It is important to note that mental health issues such as depression and anxiety may be present prior to the cyberbullying incidents and may be further exacerbated by the unrelenting abuse.

Much of the research on cyberbullying is conducted with samples of middle school students. Until recently, the assumption was that bullying, both online and offline, was prevalent in middle school, but diminished during high school. Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & O'Brennan (2013) examined different forms of victimization in a large study with 11,408 middle school students and 5,790 high school students. The study revealed that all forms of victimization were less common in high school *except* (emphasis added) cyberbullying and sexual harassment. The findings from that study are supported by the current study, with many participants experiencing cyberbullying while they were in high school and college. It is worth noting that the young women in the current study whose cyberbullying experiences occurred during high school, college, or the workplace

identified what happened to them as harassment, not cyberbullying. Victims of sexting

incidents referred to their situations as sexual harassment. This is an important distinction

that is discussed in the implications for research section of this chapter.

Cyberbullying does not simply cease upon graduation from high school. The

current study captures the perceptions of participants who experienced cyberbullying at

some point during elementary school, middle school, high school, college, or the

workplace. Regardless of the age of the participant at the time of the cyberbullying, they

all reported diminished self-worth as a result of the cyberbullying experience. The current

study participants spoke of decreased self-worth, diminished confidence, and loneliness

as a result of cyberbullying. Additionally, they often blamed themselves for the

cyberbullying they endured. These findings are consistent with a study conducted by

Juvonen & Graham (1998) who used attribution theory of peer victimization as a

theoretical framework, and found increased social anxiety and loneliness, and decreased

self-worth in victims who blamed themselves for chronic victimization. The participants

in the current study struggled with trying to understand what they had done to warrant

being cyberbullied. Rather than blaming the perpetrators, they bore the blame themselves.

This finding is concerning and may be related to gender, as perhaps women have a

greater propensity to blame themselves for the actions of others.

Participants in this study often questioned why they had been targeted. Hoff &

Mitchell (2009) conducted research to determine the perpetrator's motives related to

cyberbullying. They found that 91% of cyberbullying was related to relationship break-

ups, envy, intolerance, and ganging up on "out group" members. Those findings are

consistent with findings from the current qualitative study as numerous participants spoke

of relationship issues either within a friendship group or a romantic relationship as possible reasons for being targeted. Feeling ganged up on or attacked was also a consistent theme throughout this study. Varjas and colleagues (2010) found that the perpetrator's negative emotions of anger, hatred, revenge, and jealousy often provided the motive for cyberbullying. The young women in this study did mention jealousy and revenge as possible reasons they were targeted. A study conducted by Law, Shapka, Domene & Gagne (2012) identified two types of cyberbullying motives as either reactive or proactive. Reactive motives included reciprocal banter between the bully and victim, or cyberbullying in response to someone else's initial comments. A number of participants did initially respond online to the cyberbully when targeted, thus participating in the reciprocal banter, or reactive type of cyberbullying. In contrast to reactive motives, Law and colleagues described proactive motives as characterized by activities such as the perpetrator setting up a Facebook page to deliberately bully someone. The participants in this study were recipients of both reactive and proactive cyberbullying and found both forms to be hurtful.

One feature that distinguishes cyberbullying is the permanence of the messages that allows the victim to compulsively read and re-read the hurtful messages they have received from the perpetrators. This is a key dynamic in the *Suffering in Silence* stage that has detrimental effects on the young women in the study. The review of literature did not find any studies that directly address why victims re-read the messages, or the subsequent effects of re-reading the cyberbullying messages. As such, exploring why the victim rereads the messages and the subsequent effects will be treated as a unique finding and discussed later in this chapter.

Reaching Out

When participants conclude they are no longer able to handle the cyberbullying on their own, they begin *Reaching Out* for help. Gahagan, Vaterlaus, & Frost (2016) conducted a study (*n*=196) of college students and found that the decision to seek support or to maintain secrecy was motivated and determined by what the victim concluded would be best for *self-preservation* (emphasis added). The participants in the current study all struggled with whether to tell someone about the cyberbullying. Some were fearful of parental reactions, while others were concerned that telling someone would escalate the already negative situation. With the exception of one participant, all told their mothers about the cyberbullying at some point while it was happening. The duration of time between the first incident and telling the mother varied among participants. In a study on social support, researchers found girls are more likely to seek help than boys. However, they also found that poor parental attachment and increased peer rejection decreased social support seeking behavior (Sevickova, Machackova, Dedkova, &Cerna 2015). The young women in the current study all spoke of having close relationships with their mothers and cited that closeness as the reason they were comfortable telling their mothers.

Reaching out for help required courage because the participants were in a vulnerable position. When they reached out, they expected someone would help them. That expectation of help is a key dynamic of the concept of trust. In their respective definitions of trust, Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman (1995) and Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer (1998) include the expectation that another party will behave in an expected manner as one component of trust. Similarly, Rotter (1967) described interpersonal trust

as a generalized expectancy that the promises of others could be relied upon. The findings from this study indicate that when participants reached out to someone in the academic environment, they often felt disbelieved and judged. Of note, the young women felt most negatively judged, disbelieved, and dismissed when they reached out to a male counselor, coach, teacher, or school administrator. Conversely, the participants felt more supported when they reached out to an adult female. This is another important gender related finding. It could be hypothesized that men and women have different perceptions about bullying and cyberbullying that can affect how they respond when approached for help. Additionally, there may be generational differences present if the person being asked for help does not understand the significance of technology in the lives of young people. Often adults tell young people to simply stop using social media and texting to communicate with friends, presuming that turning off the computer or phone will eliminate cyberbullying. Sivishanker (2013) makes a powerful statement on this lack of understanding by saying, "to continue treating online identities as disposable, even in the face of cyberbullying, is to misunderstand the shifting nature of 'self' in the digital era". Parents, teachers, counselors, nurses, and physicians should heed that advice when intervening with young people being targeted by cyberbullying.

When met with negative responses from adults who were supposed to provide support, the young women in this study were let down and their trust was shaken. Undeterred, they continued to search for someone who would believe them and offer support. Current study participants found that having a pre-existing relationship with a counselor or teacher was beneficial and created an environment in which they felt comfortable sharing their problems. This finding supports research ($n = 5,064$) showing

that staff-student connectedness is a protective factor from the negative effects of cyberbullying on academic achievement (O'Brennan, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2014), and is also a protective factor for the student's overall mental health by reducing internalizing behaviors especially in girls (Morin, Bradshaw, & Berg, 2015). A number of the young women in this study were self-described loners and spoke of the lack of solid friendships. In a study about loneliness among school children in Norway ($n=119$), researchers found that having a trusted class advisor (main teacher) fully mitigated the association of loneliness with later school well-being. In other words, a trusted adult in the school environment who can be called upon in negative situations, decreases the burden of loneliness and improves well-being in school (Lohre, Kvande, Hjemdal, & Lillejef, 2014). The current study supports this finding and further illustrates the importance of establishing stable, long-lasting relationships with students prior to the occurrence of a negative event like cyberbullying.

Receiving Support

The concept of social support has been studied across disciplines. Social support comes from many sources and is essential in recovering from the detrimental effects of cyberbullying. During the *Receiving Support* stage, participants told their mothers about the cyberbullying and received ongoing support. This finding is consistent with a Spanish study on different types of social support (Hambrados-Medieta, Gomez-Jacinta, Dominguez-Fuentes, Garcia-Lieva, & Castro-Trave, 2012) that found the mother is the main provider of emotional support. Similarly, Fanti, Demetriou & Hawa, (2012), found in a longitudinal study that family social support was a protective factor against not only cybervictimization, but also perpetration of cyberbullying. In discussing differing types

of family support, participants in the current study reported that fathers and siblings, when present, provided support but to a lesser degree than did mothers. Fathers did not intervene directly with the schools, but rather provided support by offering diversions, such as going out for ice cream, and participating in or suggesting physical activities that would remove the daughter from the computer for a period of time. Siblings provided moral support for the victim but did not directly intervene with the perpetrators.

In addition to family, participants also received support and spoke of friends "being there" for them and emphasized the importance of that type of support. Friends provided support both online and offline. Participants described what it meant for someone to "be there" for them. The support given in the offline environment consisted of being present with the victim. Walking to classes, having lunch, participating in activities, and "hanging out" were identified as helpful types of support. The importance of social support should not be underestimated. Mishna and colleagues (2016) studied social support and adolescent self-perception and found that the stronger the support system, the lower the exposure to bullying and cyberbullying victimization. Additionally, adolescents with stronger support systems had higher self-perceptions of social acceptance, physical appearance, and global self-worth. These findings can be used to inform cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies.

An interesting finding in this study was the use of anonymous online groups as a source of support for the victims. The very medium in which they were bullied became the medium through which they received support. A recent study (Carrier, Spradlin, Bunce, & Rosen, 2015) examined "virtual empathy" as a means of providing social support in young adults ($n=1390$) and found that virtual (online) empathy was positively

correlated to feelings of social support. The current study supports this finding. In the online environment, the young women received support through kind words, positive affirmations, and encouragement from friends and strangers alike. It is plausible that seeking support in an anonymous online forum with others who have endured similar experiences, allowed the cyberbullying victim to express thoughts and feelings more freely and without fear of further humiliation.

As they benefitted from ongoing support, the young women in this study adopted new coping strategies. Without effective coping strategies, victims are at greater risk for continuing victimization (Smith, Shu, & Madsen, 2001). Although a lengthy examination of coping is beyond the scope of this study, a basic understanding of coping styles is helpful in understanding the responses of study participants. Coping styles include problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused strategies. Problem-focused coping involves the victim actively addressing the problem to prevent it from happening again, for example, by confronting the cyberbully or seeking help from a trusted adult or peer (Parris, Varjas, Meyers, & Cutts, 2012). Conversely, emotion-focused and avoidance-focused coping employs more passive strategies such as internalizing the negative emotions from the cyberbullying, or mentally or physically separating from the situation (Raskauskas & Huynh, 2015). Research shows that victimized youth tend to use more passive and avoidance based strategies (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2011). The current study supports those findings, as the young women initially internalized their emotions and withdrew from people and activities to avoid further victimization. When their passive and avoidance strategies proved unhelpful, they exhibited more positive coping by actively seeking support. Additionally, participants

used music, art, poetry, and writing to cope with the cyberbullying. Coping is a process rather than a static event, and as with any other skill, requires time and practice to develop.

Part of the coping process meant developing new friendships to replace those that had been destroyed by cyberbullying events. This was difficult for some participants because their trust in others was still wavering. Participants spoke of being on guard and in a self-protective mode as they were recovering from cyberbullying victimization. The young women began to discern the trustworthiness of individuals within their social circles. Relying on the support from trusted family members, adults in the school environment, and friends, the young women were able to move forward in healing.

Becoming Empowered

The final stage of the social-psychological process, *Becoming Empowered*, is characterized by the young woman reflecting on her experiences, recognizing that she has become strong enough to renounce the negative messages she had once internalized, and becoming focused on advocating for herself and others. Bullying is about power. The target often feels stripped of her personal power and loses confidence and trust in herself. To become empowered is to reclaim the personal power, self-confidence, and control that had been relinquished to the perpetrators. According to Uner and Turan (2010), empowerment encompasses control, ability, competence, self-efficacy, autonomy, knowledge, self-determination, and strength. Participants in the current study spoke of feeling stronger and more confident. They also demonstrated social self-efficacy by seeking help with their experiences. Social self-efficacy is the perceived ability to develop supportive social relationships that provide a buffer against stressful events

(Caprara, Gerbino, Paciello, Di Giunta, & Pastorelli, 2010). By trusting others to help them through the cyberbullying trauma, the participants became stronger and experienced positive outcomes.

The degree of empowerment varied among participants. Personal empowerment led some participants to become vocal advocates for other young women experiencing cyberbullying. Several participants now speak to schools and community members about their cyberbullying and sexting experiences. Other participants are beginning to regain their self-confidence, but continue to work on trusting others. This may be a result of the timing of the event to the actual interview. If the cyberbullying was relatively recent, it is possible that the participant was still processing the events and had not fully recovered from the trauma. It is also plausible that the degree of empowerment is related to the individual's resilience. Resilience is the ability to adapt to adversity. A correlational study exploring stress resiliency and empowerment revealed a significant correlation between high empowerment scores and high resilience scores (Pines, Rauschhuber, Norgan, Cook, Canchola, Richardson, & Jones, 2012). Resilience to stress and personal empowerment strengthen the ability of an individual to respond to stressful situations. A study by Papatraianou and colleagues (2014) reported on a conceptual model of online resilience using an ecological framework. They identified the risk and protective factors within the individual, family, school, and public contexts that impact the development of resilience to online adversity. Among other factors, they found high self-esteem, strong relationship with the mother, strong peer relationships, and problem-solving skills to be protective factors for online resilience. The current study supports those findings. Further research on the relationship between trust and resilience in cybervictimization would be

beneficial.

Unique Findings

Dynamic of Trust

The discovery of this empirically derived theory, Restoring Trust, is the first time the concept of trust has been theoretically linked to the social-psychological process of cyberbullying (see Figure 1). Interpersonal trust was a continuous psychological dynamic throughout the process of cyberbullying for the young women in this study. When they became targets of cyberbullying, the trust these young women had in themselves and others was threatened especially when the perpetrator was a presumed friend. The resultant loss of trust and confidence in themselves led them to believe the cruel words of the cyberbullies. Trust was further eroded when participants reached out expecting that an adult would help them when they were no longer able to handle the cyberbullying alone. Only after finding a trusted adult and receiving support were the participants able to restore their sense of trust in themselves and others. Recognizing the trust dynamic as an essential part of the social-psychological process in cyberbullying is a unique and important finding that will expand the theoretical knowledge and inform intervention strategies that may minimize the detrimental effects of cyberbullying.

Re-reading the Messages

The permanence of cyberbullying messages is a feature unique to the cyberbullying phenomenon, and provides victims with limitless opportunity to re-read the negative messages. This is the first time that the obsession with re-reading the messages, and subsequent re-experiencing the raw emotions has been explored in any depth. The participants in this study all re-read the negative messages that they received. Each time

they re-read the cruel messages, they re-experienced the trauma. Participants expressed "wanting" or "needing" to re-read the messages, almost to obsession. The more they read the messages, the more they internalized what was being said, and began to believe what was being said, even in the face of evidence to the contrary. The power of the spoken and written word to break the human spirit is no more evident than when listening to the young women in this study describe the visceral reactions they had when reading and re-reading the cyberbullying messages. It is not at all surprising that a recent study of adolescent Emergency Department patients (n=353) found a strong correlation between cyberbullying victimization and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with nearly one fourth of participants reporting symptoms of PTSD (Ranney, Patena, Nugent, Spirito, Boyer, Zatzick, & Cunningham, 2016). Moreover, the combination of cyberbullying and in-person bullying further increased the chances of experiencing PTSD symptoms. Given that technology and exposure to cyberbullying is unlikely to go away, greater emphasis on development of positive coping strategies is essential.

Strengths and Limitations

Classical grounded theory methodology ensures that the emerging theory is derived directly from the personal experiences of the participants. The findings are not interpreted by the researcher, but rather the researcher follows the data to generate a theory that explains the specific social-psychological process and concern being researched. One strength of the current study is that it provides an "inside look" at the social-psychological process of cyberbullying from the perspective of the young women who were targeted, rather than framing cyberbullying as an incident or static event.

Although most cyberbullying research is conducted with students in middle

school and high school, another strength of this study is the inclusion of young women whose experiences with cyberbullying occurred in elementary school, middle school, high school, college, or the workplace. The inclusion of a range of experiences provides a broader scope for the study of cyberbullying across developmental stages and age groups.

There are limitations in all studies. In grounded theory, a potential limitation is generalizability. The purposive sample in the current study were all Caucasian females. Although the study was designed to specifically research the insights of young women, this may limit the generalizability of the findings to males and other races and ethnicities. Further study into cyberbullying among males may be beneficial. Another potential limitation was the difficulty in recruiting this sample. The majority of participants were recruited through the use of social media including Facebook and Twitter. It is possible that young women who had experienced cyberbullying had already removed themselves from social media and therefore were not aware of the study. Another limitation was the use of the word "cyberbullying" in the study announcements. The age range for this study was women 18-30 years old. It became apparent during the interviews that the older participants did not relate to the term cyberbullying, but rather referred to what they had experienced as "harassment". Some found the term cyberbullying to be an outdated term. Moreover, if the participant experienced a sexting incident, she referred to her experience as sexual harassment, not cyberbullying. It is possible that using the term cyberbullying in recruitment announcements inadvertently limited the response rate. Future research with older participants should include several different terms to ensure that participants who have experienced cyberbullying, harassment, sexual harassment, and/or electronic

aggression will identify themselves as candidates for future research.

Implications for Nursing Practice and Nursing Education

The findings from this study identify implications for nursing practice and nursing education. Students of all ages interact with nurses in a variety of settings including the pediatrician's office, women's health centers, school health offices, college and university wellness centers, emergency departments, and mental health services. Nurses within those specialties need to be knowledgeable regarding cyberbullying, its effects, appropriate interventions, and available resources.

Study participants were asked if they sought help from the school nurse during their experiences with cyberbullying. None of the young women sought support from the school nurse. When asked why, participants responded that they did not perceive the school nurse as someone they would or could ask for help with cyberbullying. One participant said she never thought about the school nurse as a resource for bullying or cyberbullying until she participated in a clinical rotation with a school nurse and became immersed in the role. Strawhacker (2002) posits that designating the nurse's office as a safe space to go, and building therapeutic relationships with students over time are probably the most important interventions a school nurse can implement as prevention against school violence, including bullying and cyberbullying. Moreover, Strawhacker posits that students will seek out the school nurse when they perceive that the school nurse can be trusted to intervene. Participants in the current study reported going to the school nurse with physical complaints such as a headache or stomach ache related to the cyberbullying, hoping they would be sent home from school. One participant discussed knowing that if she went to the nurse complaining of a headache she would be instructed

to lay down in the nurse's office until the headache subsided. However, if she complained

of stomach problems, she would be sent home. She admitted to frequently using that

excuse to leave school. Most school nurses know particular students, "frequent flyers",

who utilize the nurse's office more than others. For those students, the presenting

physical symptoms may be related to other issues, including bullying or cyberbullying.

School nurses have the knowledge and skills to assess all areas of the student's life. Part

of that assessment should include asking the student if he or she is experiencing bullying

either offline or online. If asked the question, the student may actually feel relieved and

be open to receiving support from the school nurse. Students cannot learn effectively

when they are burdened by other issues, and the school nurse is in the ideal role to help

identify those issues.

The role of the school nurse should be clarified for the students, parents, teachers,

counselors, and administrators in the school community to enhance utilization of the

nurse for assistance with bullying and cyberbullying incidents. School nurses should be

included in student assistance programs to offer insights on student issues from a nursing

and wellness prospective. Moreover, the school nurse should be included in the

discussions when policies are being developed to address bullying and cyberbullying in

the school community. According to the National Association of School Nurses (King,

2014):

> ...many school administrators and personnel view the school nurse role as a provider of 'Band-Aids and ice' rather than a key player in identifying and creating prevention and intervention strategies, thus missing the opportunity to utilize school nurse knowledge and expertise in this current crisis of violence.

Until the school nurse is recognized as a knowledgeable and highly skilled resource on

the physical, psychological, social, and emotional well-being of students, the role will

continue to be underutilized.

Mental health issues among students of all ages are becoming more prevalent.

The psychiatric nurse practitioner has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to address all of

the mental health issues often experienced as a result of cyberbullying, including

depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Findings from the Youth Risk Behavior

Survey (n=1491) indicate that depression mediated the link between face-to-face bullying

and suicide attempts across genders. Furthermore, depression mediated the link between

cyberbullying and suicide attempts for females only (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker,

2013). The need for better detection of depression among young people, along with a

greater emphasis on suicide prevention is essential in addressing the effects of

cyberbullying. A recent article (Carpenter & Hubbard, 2014) discussed the role of the

psychiatric nurse practitioner in providing support for students who are targets of

cyberbullying. Simply asking the adolescent about cyberbullying acknowledges its

existence and opens communication to stop the abuse. The psychiatric nurse practitioner

can also serve as an expert resource for parents, schools, and communities in identifying

and intervening with bullying and cyberbullying to create a safer environment. In his/her

role as advocate and educator, the psychiatric nurse practitioner can raise awareness of

cyberbullying and its detrimental effects by providing patient, family, and community

education programs.

Nurses who interact with young people in primary care or pediatric practices

should incorporate questions about bullying and cyberbullying into routine visits. Just as

screening questions related to domestic violence have been added to routine assessment

of all patients, screening questions related to bullying and cyberbullying should be added to the assessment of all young people. It is just as easy to ask "do you feel safe at school and online?" as it is to ask "do you feel safe at home?"

The topics of bullying and cyberbullying, internet safety, and the need for help-seeking should be included in the mental health, pediatric, and public health coursework in nursing school curriculum. Furthermore, workplace bullying and lateral violence within the nursing profession should be addressed during nursing school, as well as the orientation process for nursing employees. The detrimental effects from all forms of bullying, including anxiety, depression, and suicide, cannot be overlooked. Nurses in all specialty areas are in an ideal position to inquire about exposure to bullying in any form, and may ultimately save a life.

Implications for Future Research

The current study findings add to the theoretical knowledge of cyberbullying by identifying trust as the primary dynamic that drives the basic social-psychological process. Creating an empirically derived instrument to measure cyberbullying and trust would be beneficial in addressing the current lack of conceptual clarity for this phenomena. An empirically based definition for the term "cyberbullying" is necessary for researchers to conduct further research that is congruent with the reality that cyberbullying victims experience. For example, the term "cyberbullying" might be appropriate when conducting research with middle school and young high school students. However, the terms "electronic harassment" or "electronic aggression" may be more acceptable and therefore more effective for research with upper high school and college-aged populations. Conducting interdisciplinary research with nursing, education,

psychology, social work, and law enforcement may provide a broader scope of expertise to address cyberbullying as a public health issue. Mitchell & Jones (2015) suggest that cyberbullying be researched within a broader peer victimization framework to better capture the experiences of youth which will inform the development of effective prevention and intervention efforts. Based on the findings from this study, it would be important to study cyberbullying from a gender studies framework. It will be beneficial to determine interventions and prevention strategies as they relate to gender differences rather than approaching intervention strategies as "one size fits all". Additional evaluation research is necessary to measure the outcomes of current school-based anti-bullying programs and intervention efforts. More longitudinal studies into the phenomenon of cyberbullying will provide valuable data regarding the effects over time, as well as identification of chronic victimization patterns. Additional qualitative research studies will provide an opportunity for cyberbullying victims and perpetrators to give voice to their experiences. Finally, research into the role of bystanders is lacking and needs to be addressed. Bystanders are the largest proportion of individuals in the bully-victim-bystander triad. Finding out why and how young people do or do not intervene when they witness cyberbullying will be an integral part of resolving the problem.

Conclusion

The substantive theory that emerged from the data conceptualizes trust as the primary dynamic that moves the basic social-psychological process of cyberbullying forward. Trust is initially lost as a result of cyberbullying. When victims do seek help, they are often not believed. Being believed is the gateway to restoring trust. When victims seek support and are believed, they begin to understand that they are experiencing

a loss of trust, that with work they will recover, and subsequently trust others as their own sense of trust is restored. The trust that is restored is no longer a naïve trust, but rather a more calculated trust that facilitates healing.

This theory will be useful for nurses in various settings who interact with young women who have been the target of cyberbullying. It will also benefit teachers, coaches, school counselors, school administrators, and law enforcement personnel who need to understand and provide support for young women affected by cyberbullying. Adults in a position to provide support need only ask, listen, and believe the young woman in order to help restore her sense of trust, become empowered, and overcome the cyberbullying. When one participant was asked by her sister why she never told her she was being cyberbullied, the participant stated, "You never asked." We need to ask.

APPENDIX A

APPROVAL LETTERS

From: IRB@lumc.edu
Sent: Friday, July 19, 2013 10:29 AM
To: Hogan, Nancy
Cc: Hogan, Nancy; jcaldw@lumc.edu; rkennedy@lumc.edu; Keough, Vicki
Subject: IRB Research Project 205370

NOTICE OF FULL APPROVAL OF A RESEARCH PROJECT Date: 07/19/2013 Investigator: Hogan, Nancy LU Number: 205370 TITLE: Cyberbullying Among Young Adult Women ITEMS SUBMITTED FOR REVIEW:

- 05/15/2013 205370.051513
- 05/15/2013 Interview Questions
- 06/07/2013 Dissertation Proposal Document
- 06/07/2013 Demographic Data Sheet
- 07/03/2013 Study Abstract

Dear Investigator,

The above-referenced research project was given Full Approval by the Institutional Review Board on 07/19/2013. YOUR PROJECT MAY NOW BEGIN. Results from the Board Review and required conditions applied to the project can be accessed through the online Research Portal or by clicking this link: http://portal.luhs.org The following is for your information and will help you meet local and federal IRB requirements.

1. You must use the final IRB-approved version of the Consent Document. Spelling and grammatical changes may be made as necessary, but any other changes require prior review and approval.
2. You are required to maintain complete records of this project. Any changes in the protocol and the Consent Document must receive prior IRB approval. Use the online Research Portal's Project Amendment form to report changes. A change to the protocol necessary for the immediate safety and welfare of a research participant may be implemented prior to IRB review and approval.
3. Federal Regulations require that projects undergo periodic review of research activity at least once a year. This review must be substantive. The frequency of review and next scheduled date of periodic review for your project can be found under the "Annual Review" tab in the Research Portal's IRB section. You will receive notification 4-8 weeks prior to the scheduled date of review. At that time, you must provide information regarding the status of the project. If the information is not received, the project will be suspended. It is important that you not let approval lapse.
4. The IRB must be notified any time that the project temporarily or permanently stops enrolling participants along with the reason. Use the online Closure form to submit these notifications.
5. Any notices or advertisements soliciting participation must receive prior IRB approval. Use the online Amendment reporting form.

6. The IRB must be notified PROMPTLY of all serious and any unanticipated adverse events associated with the project (or the device or the drug). This includes any notification received of adverse events occurring at other performance sites. Further guidance on adverse event reporting may be found at the Office for Human Research Protections web site; http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/AdvEvntGuid.htm#Q5 Reportable events include, but are not limited to:
   a. A serious adverse event (including events that produce injury or death, an event leading to hospitalization or lead to prolongation of a current hospital stay);
   b. the enrollment of a patient on a study that is no longer enrolling participants;
   c. pregnancy occurring on the study where the study excludes pregnancy;
   d. any patient reporting a billing problem as a result of project participation;
   e. any participant who has voiced a complaint about some aspect of the project or the consent document;
   f. any unanticipated, untoward, or unexpected adverse event not covered above including rare adverse events or adverse events that occur at an unexpected rate;
   g. protocol deviations;
   h. investigational drug/device brochures, revisions Adverse Protocol Events are reported through the online Research Portal.
7. The IRB may suspend the project to new participant enrollment or may suspend the participation of current subjects if there is a perceived safety and/or regulatory issue.
8. Prospective consent must be obtained from all research participants.
9. The IRB may review your records relating to this project, including signed consent documents.
10. The Institutional Review Board of Loyola University Medical Center is appropriately constituted and has been granted Federal Wide Assurance Number FWA00009471.
11. If you are unsure of your reporting requirements or of what is expected of you during the conduct of this research, please call the IRB Office (708-216-4608) or Dr. Kenneth Micetich (708-327-3144).
12. The Loyola Institutional Review Board is appropriately constituted as stipulated in 45cfr46 and is in compliance with Good Clinical Practice Guidelines insofar as those guidelines are consistent with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR Parts 50 and 56) and the Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR 46) pertaining to the protection of human subjects in research. Thank you for your cooperation.

Kenneth Craig Micetich, M.D.
Chairman Institutional Review Board
for the Protection of Human Subjects
Loyola University Health Sciences Division

From: "IRB@lumc.edu" <IRB@lumc.edu>
Date: Monday, June 30, 2014 at 11:14 AM
To: Nancy Hogan <nhogan@luc.edu>
Cc: Nancy Hogan <nhogan@luc.edu>
Subject: IRB Research Project 205370

NOTICE OF CONTINUING/ANNUAL REVIEW OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

Date: 06/30/2014

Investigator: Hogan, Nancy
LU Number: 205370
TITLE: Cyberbullying Among Young Adult Women

Dear Investigator,

Continuing (or Annual) Review #1 of the above-referenced research project was
performed on 06/30/2014 by Expedited Review.
The project was assigned a status of "Full Approval".

Details of this Board review can be accessed through the on-line Research Portal or by
clicking the following link:

http://portal.luhs.org

If you have any questions regarding this review action, please call the IRB Secretary
(708-216-4608) or Dr. Kenneth Micetich (708-327-3144).

Kenneth Craig Micetich, M.D.
Chairman
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Loyola University Health Sciences Division

From: "IRBportalprocess@luc.edu" <IRBportalprocess@luc.edu>
Date: Wednesday, June 10, 2015 at 2:43 PM
To: Nancy Hogan <nhogan@luc.edu>
Cc: Nancy Hogan <nhogan@luc.edu>
Subject: IRB Research Project 205370 Amendment

NOTICE OF REVIEW OF A RESEARCH PROJECT (Amendment)

Date: 06/10/2015

Investigator: Hogan, Nancy
LU Number: 205370
TITLE: Cyberbullying Among Young Adult Women

Dear Investigator,

An Amendment to the above-referenced research project has been reviewed by the
Institutional Review Board.
The Amendment was assigned a status of Full Approval.

Details of this Board review can be accessed through the on-line Research Portal or by
clicking the following link:

http://portal.luhs.org
If you have any questions regarding this review action, please call the IRB Secretary
(708-216-4608) or Dr. Kenneth Micetich (708-327-3144).

Kenneth Craig Micetich, M.D.
Chairman
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Loyola University Health Sciences Division

APPENDIX B

STUDY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cyberbullying among Young Women

Are you a female 18-30 years old who has experienced electronic harassment or cyberbullying at any time in your life?

I invite you to share your story to help other young women.

I am conducting dissertation research on Cyberbullying among Young Women.

This research project is conducted using phone interviews to listen to the stories and experiences of young women who have been the target of cyberbullying at any point in their lives.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a **$25 gift card** after the interview has been completed.

If you are interested in being interviewed for this study, please contact:

Nancy Camp, MSN, RN
PhD Candidate in Nursing
Loyola University Chicago
ncamp@luc.edu

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT FORMS

Loyola University Chicago
Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing

Participant Information Sheet

Cyberbullying among Young Women

You are being asked to participate in this study of cyberbullying victimization among young women, conducted by Nancy Camp, Nursing Doctoral Candidate at Loyola University Chicago.

You will be asked to describe your experiences with being the target of cyberbullying, in your own words. The interview will last approximately one hour and will take place either in person, by phone, Skype, or Face Time, or via email. You may also be contacted by phone after the interview to briefly confirm or clarify information gathered during the interview.

You may withdraw from this study at any time. You are free to refuse to answer any questions. If during the interview you become uncomfortable, you have the option to stop and withdraw from the study, or to reschedule.

The interview will be audio recorded. Your interview will be transcribed word for word from the audio recording, and your identifying information and interview will be stored in a locked cabinet. Once this study is completed, the audiotapes will be destroyed.

Your name will not appear on the paper or electronic transcripts, reports, or any published papers. However, quotations about your experience being the target of cyberbullying may be used anonymously in the reports or publications of this study.

Your descriptions of your experiences may contribute to the understanding of the experience of being the target of cyberbullying, which may help nurses, teachers, and counselors provide more effective interventions.

You will receive a $25 gift card at the conclusion of the interview as a token of appreciation for your time.

You may call Nancy Camp, MSN, RN (630) 844-5135 or Dr. Nancy Hogan (773) 991-2930, dissertation adviser, to discuss concerns. You may also contact the Compliance Manager at Loyola University Chicago at (773) 508-2689 with questions about your rights as a research participant.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Participant Number: _____   Date ____/___/_____

Gender: Female_____   Male_____

Age: _____   **Date of Birth:** _____

Race/Ethnicity:

_____ African American   _____ Caucasian   _____ Indian

_____ Asian   _____ Hispanic   _____ Native American

_____ Other (please identify) _____

Religion:

_____ Catholic   _____ Protestant   _____ Jewish

_____ Muslim   _____ Other (please specify) _____

Highest Level of Education:

_____ High School Diploma/GED   _____ College (4 year)

_____ Trade/Vocational School   _____ Graduate School

_____ College (2 year)   _____ Other (specify)_____

Currently Attending School: _____ Yes   _____ No

Current Occupation: _____

What methods do you use to communicate with your friends? (Check all that apply)

_____ Text   _____ Facebook   _____ Chat room   _____ E-mail

_____ Twitter   _____ Phone call   _____ Tumblr   _____ Pinterest

_____ Instagram   _____ Snap Chat   _____ Vine   _____ Ask.fm

_____ Other (specify) _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

1. Please tell me about your experience(s) with being the target of cyberbullying.

2. How did it make you feel?

3. How has this experience affected you?

4. What helped you to deal with this experience?

5. What kinds of things made it difficult for you to deal with this experience?

6. Did you tell another peer or adult about the cyberbullying? If so, who did you tell? What made that person someone you wanted to share your experience with? Please describe their reaction. If you did not tell anyone else about your experience, what prevented you from telling someone?

7. Please tell me about any support you received from others regarding your cyberbullying experience.

8. What advice do you have for other young women, parents, teachers, school nurses, school administrators, or counselors regarding cyberbullying?

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VITA

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