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The use of technology and electronic media in adolescent dating violence

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN ADOLESCENT DATING
VIOLENCE

by

Katherine Reif

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology

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Abstract

Electronic communication and social media have dramatically changed the way in which individuals communicate with one another. Through this shift, they have opened the doors for inappropriate and damaging behaviour to take place. Cyberbullying occurs when the internet is continuously used to insult or intimidate a person or persons in order to hurt them in a deliberate manner (Valkenburg et. al., 2010). In adolescent dating relationships, the online environment facilitates the way in which individuals who are or were dating continue to correspond. This closer proximity between individuals, however, enables abusive and controlling behaviours within these relationships to occur outside of face-to-face contact. This study examined adolescents' perceptions of the severity of cyberbullying, motives, and the point in a dating relationship at which it is likely to become most severe. A mixed methodology was utilized within this study, using a sample of 70 grade 12 students at a high school in southwestern Ontario. It was found that cyberbullying behaviours are most likely to occur upon termination of a dating relationship, revenge is perceived as a common motive, and the severity of cyberbullying tends to be minimized.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, bullying, gender, grade, age, violence, dating, adolescent, mixed-methods, focus groups

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The Use of Technology and Electronic Media in Adolescent Dating Violence

Electronic communication and social media have profoundly altered the way in which individuals interact with one another. These venues have replaced personal, face-to-face communication and have also been a place where adolescents have been awarded the opportunities to construct and explore their identities (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). They have aided in their social development, through allowing them to develop and maintain meaningful relationships (Valkenburg & Peter, 2010), gain empowerment through expressing personal opinions, and take calculated risks (Alvarez, 2012). By the same token, however, electronic media has also enabled the perpetration of deviant behaviour, as it has served as an easily accessible means of expression that has opened the door for cyberbullying. The following study examined this phenomenon within the context of adolescent dating relationships and seeks to answer the following questions: At what point in an intimate relationship is cyberbullying most severe? Is revenge a common motive? How are the consequences of these behaviours perceived among adolescents?

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying, an issue that has become increasingly more pressing in today's digital age, occurs when the internet is used to continuously insult or intimidate a person or persons in an effort to hurt them in a repeated and deliberate hostile manner (Valkenburg et al., 2010). The most common methods of cyberbullying include: posting damaging information on websites, sending unwanted text messages or instant messages, sexting, posting inappropriate photos or videos online and excluding an individual through social networking sites (Alvarez, 2012). There are often misperceptions with the definition of cyberbullying and confusion related to

determining which terms fall under its umbrella. Other terms that are perceived as belonging to this category are mentioned below.

Cyberstalking and Cyberharassment

Cyberstalking and cyberharassment are terms used to refer to inappropriate online behaviours perpetrated by individuals towards other individuals (Whitty & Carr, 2006). Cyberstalking has been used to describe behaviours that involve repeated threats and/or harassment through the use of computer-based technology, which would cause reasonable fear or concern for safety. Examples of these include: monitoring an individual's email communication, sending threatening, insulting and/or harassing emails, posting inappropriate content about the individual on the internet, flooding an individual's email box, falsely using an individual's email identity, and using the internet to find personal information on the victim that can then be used to harass them (Southworth, 2007). The main difference between cyberstalking and cyberharassment is marginal; cyberstalking has the intent to produce a sense of fear and/or dread in the victim whereas cyberharassment is recognized by the perpetrator's repetitive behaviour (Alexy, Burgess, Baker & Smoyak, 2005). Sexual harassment, by definition, consists of any form of undesired sexual behaviour by a perpetrator that is said to interfere with the victim's life (Bennett, Guran, Ramos & Margolin, 2011), such as gender harassment, unwelcome sexual attention, or sexual coercion (Whitty et. al., 2006). Many of these inappropriate behaviours are similar to those that are perpetrated offline.

Online vs. Offline Bullying

There are many commonalities between online and offline forms of bullying. Both of these involve repetitive behaviours and psychological violence (Valkenburg et. al., 2010). The

primary way through which online aggression differs from offline harassment is through the rapid speed and ease at which it can be perpetrated, as well as the ability for private information to become public. In order for an individual to aggress against an intimate partner offline, they must be in the same geographical location at the same time, whereas through the use of electronic communication, they are able to send threatening and harassing messages instantaneously from any location (Melander, 2010).

It is estimated that 4%-15% of students have been involved in cyberbullying, compared with 25%-30% of youth who have been involved in more traditional forms (Alvarez, 2012), although given the relative novelty of the literature pertaining to this topic, rates are discrepant. In a study comparing traditional schoolyard bullying with cyberbullying, the former was related to a higher risk of experiencing the latter. Youth who reported bullying others in traditional offline settings in the past six months were 2.5 times more likely to also do this online. The same held true for victims of bullying (Hinduja et al., 2008). Cyberbullying has also been linked to violence at school (Alvarez, 2012). It was found that those who report being victimized online by friends or dating partners also report being victimized in these relationships through traditional means (Bennett et al., 2011). It was also reported that individuals who were victimized by traditional dating violence were significantly more likely to also be victimized by violence through electronic media than those individuals who were not victimized offline. In a study involving 4400 11-18 year olds, it was found that youth who are victims of cyberbullying are 3.6 times as likely to experience electronic dating violence. Similarly, individuals who admit to perpetrating dating violence, both in person and through electronic means, also admit to participating in cyberbullying (Hinduja, 2010). The variables that are thought to contribute to

traditional delinquent behaviour, such as a low commitment to school and substance abuse, are also significantly related to cyberbullying (Hinduja et al., 2008).

Adolescents who are victimized online are also more likely to be victimized offline. In addition, research has found that online dating violence often co-occurs with other forms of violence. In one study, half of the victims of sexual and non-sexual online dating violence, were also victimized by physical violence, and a majority also experienced other forms of psychological abuse. A majority also experienced online sexual coercion, and were seven times more likely to have been victims of it than individuals who had not experienced online sexual violence (Zweig, Dank, Yahner, & Lachman, 2013). Both victims and perpetrators of online violence were approximately three and four times as likely as non-victims and non-perpetrators to also report having experienced or perpetrated these types of behaviours against an intimate partner (Zweig, Dank, Lachman, & Yahner, 2013). These findings suggest that there may be a seamless transition in bullying and harassment from offline to online environments and that it can occur in both contexts.

Influences of Online Environment on Behaviour and Relationship Dynamics

For many young people, communicating online is another way for them to connect with their peers in a manner that connects with their life offline. Maintaining a casual friendship on a social networking site can aid in initiating an intimate relationship through the mediated environment that is provided by such a site. Adolescents report that being in love is the strongest emotion that they feel. As a result, dating and romance transgress to their media environments. They meet other individuals, flirt, create and maintain relationships and break up in these social networks, all of which meshes with the social nature of their relationships. The independence

offered by electronic communication allows youth to form relationships away from the control of adults and uninhibited by geographical location, allowing them the freedom from dating only those individuals who are within their immediate vicinity (Pascoe, 2011).

There are certain norms regulating social networking correspondence within intimate relationships. Through mediation, youth form new relationships and experience breakups. In the initial phase of a romantic relationship, where youth get to know one another, the nature of electronic communication allows an individual to save face, to have continuous contact with another individual, and control the way in which they present themselves. Particularly for young men, it allows them the ability to manage displays of vulnerability that threaten their masculinity, which are often part of the process of flirting and forming new relationships. Individuals tend to meet offline and then use online means to pursue the relationship. Breakups in relationships are also mediated. For example, one study found that breaking up via a social networking website was seen as being the worst option, whereas the best option was doing so in person or at least over the phone. Thus the vulnerability that may have been deemed inappropriate in the beginning may be seen as necessary in the end stages of an intimate relationship. The public nature of these types of environments also translates to their intimate relationships. It is expected that the relationships themselves will be publicly acknowledged online through social networking sites. Youth typically showcase their affection towards one another on these networks and passwords to each other's accounts may be shared. When relationships are terminated, youth may remove pictures they have online, de-friend their partners, and change their passwords if they were shared, similar to the traditional ways of ridding one's life of physical memorabilia of the relationship (Pascoe, 2011).

There are two important skills that adolescents need to develop as they start forming their identity: self-presentation and self-disclosure. The former involves being selective in which aspects one reveals of oneself, and the latter pertains to showcasing intimate aspects of oneself. They are both important in adolescent development (Valkenburg et al. 2010). It has been suggested through several studies that these skills take place in internet interactions with peers. Approximately one third of adolescents prefer communicating online instead of in person about sensitive topics such as sex, love and their vulnerabilities. Many teenagers prefer the use of text messaging or emailing over talking on the phone. Texting, posting in blogs, tweeting, and instant messaging are some of the principle modes of communication between intimate partners (Alvarez, 2012). Communicating online offers more control over self-presentation and self-disclosure (Valkenburg et al. 2010). The larger social network that is provided by social media websites, however, can also provide a means of harassing, humiliating or threatening another individual (Dimond, Fiesler & Bruckman, 2011).

There has been a growing trend in “sexting,” where individuals create, forward and share sexually explicit images to one another through the use of a mobile phone. Individuals can upload images or videos and then distribute them with ease to other cell phones or email applications and websites. This is typically done to blackmail, dominate and control a partner. Adolescents can distribute “sexts” to others who were not meant to receive them, especially following the termination of a relationship. These images can also be distorted into pornographic ones in order to cause further humiliation to the victim (Fascendini & Fialova, 2011). The permanency of the internet allows inappropriate and demeaning postings to leave digital footprints in the culmination of violent events (Draucker et al., 2010).

Findings suggest that technology has influenced the dynamics of relationships and dating violence and has redefined the boundaries of these relationships in such a way as to provide the breeding ground for aggression and abuse (Draucker & Martsof, 2010). It was found that perpetrators of cyberstalking were much more likely to threaten committing suicide than perpetrators of offline stalking, suggesting that the use of electronic communication may allow for the expression of more dramatic behaviour (Alexy et al., 2005). The anonymous nature of online interactions can contribute to stimulating impulsive reactions, potentially resulting in insulting and aggressive messages and harassment.

Most online communication allows adolescents the opportunity to alter their messages before they send them, hence it can be used inappropriately to structure messages so as to make them more damaging to a victim online (Valkenburg, 2010). The physical and social cues that are visible in personal interactions are not present in cyberspace and so an individual may not be made aware of the reactions of another person who has received their messages and whether or not they were correctly interpreted (Melander, 2010). This means of communication is also widely accessible through the use of new technology such as smart phones, iPads and other portable devices (Alvarez, 2012). Youth can easily locate peers whom they have not seen in a while or individuals they have difficulty interacting with in everyday life. Through instant messaging applications, they can impersonate someone else in order to monitor a partner's activities and get information about them from other online contacts (Fascendini & Fialova, 2011). They can also spread information about themselves across a wide range of people (Draucker et al., 2010).

The use of electronic communication can allow an individual to limit the access a former intimate partner has to them following a breakup. For example, they may be deleted on Facebook

or blocked on instant messaging services. They can also set their phone on “silent”, hang up on a telephone conversation or not respond to text messages. These same services, however, can also be used to reconnect with a former partner. In one study, some participants reconnected with former significant others after a violent episode or aggressive incident. Sometimes this reconnection can take place under the guise of “staying friends.” Thus, communication technologies can facilitate access to estranged dating partners, increasing the risk of future violence (Draucker et al., 2010).

Online Aggression in Dating Relationships

Cyberbullying can include relational and psychological aggression in an ongoing romantic relationship (Alvarez, 2012). Relational aggression consists of behaviours that involve damage to an individual’s reputation, ostracism, manipulation, or exerting social control over another person. Common examples include: social exclusion, spreading rumours, gossip, and within dating relationships, purposely creating jealousy in a partner or threatening to terminate the relationship (Prather, Dahlen, Nicholson & Bullock-Yowell, 2012). Psychological aggression within the context of dating aggression includes behaviours that cause emotional harm and that can make the victim afraid of possible implications of greater harm, such as through insults, threats and excessive monitoring (Bennett et al., 2011), all of which can be done through electronic means. Arguments between dating partners can become public and so internet sources can be used to embarrass and demean former partners, with the ability of family and friends learning about the argument and even joining in (Melander, 2010).

Incidents have been reported where perpetrators of electronic violence have blackmailed or extorted their partner into committing physical or verbal acts against their will through the use

of audio, textual, picture or video information stored on their cell phone or computer. Such content can be shared with a large audience and due to its viral nature, it can magnify the suffering of the victim. Violations of privacy are facilitated through the ease with which current or former partners can monitor, check up on or stalk their significant others if they have relatively easy access to their computer or cell phone (Hinduja, 2010). Research has found that victims of stalking most often identify their former romantic partner as their stalker.

Approximately 1 in 6 of the victims felt that the stalking occurred in order to keep them in the relationship with the perpetrator. More than 1 in 4 individuals victimized by stalking indicated that some form of electronic media was utilized to enact the stalking behaviour, such as email (83%) or instant messaging (35%). Electronic monitoring through tools such as video, digital cameras, listening devices or bugs was used to stalk 1 in 13 victims (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). Within a coercive controlling relationship, the perpetration of online aggression diminishes empathic feelings on the part of the abuser, provides a means of surveillance, and enables them to retaliate quickly against perceived breaches of conduct (Schnurr, Basche & Mahatmya, 2013).

Abusive partners are able to feel connected to their significant other through electronic media. The victimized partner may instead feel as though they are unable to escape from the torment. Adolescents typically have their cell phone with them throughout most of the day, which increases the ability for abuse to be manifested, as it is often used as a lifeline between partners. According to an online survey of adolescents, 36% of youth indicated that their boyfriend or girlfriend checked up on them up to 30 times per day and 17% of the adolescents reported that they were afraid of not answering their phone calls, text messages, or emails. In another poll, 22% of adolescents between 14 and 24 years of age reported that their dating

partner made false statements about them online or through text messaging. The results of this survey also indicated that 22% of adolescents believed that they were checked up on too often either online or through their cell phone by their partner (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011). In the study of 11-18 year olds mentioned before, 10% of the participants indicated that they were prevented from using a computer or cell phone by their partner, 6% of the youth reported that their significant other made a public post online that was meant to ridicule, embarrass, or threaten them, 5.4 % of males and 3.4 of females stated that their partner uploaded or shared a harassing or embarrassing picture of them on the internet or through their mobile phone, and 10.4% of males and 9.8% of females indicated they received a threatening text message from their significant other (Hinduja, 2010).

Potential Causes and Correlations

Relational aggression has been shown to be much more common in college students' dating relationships than physical aggression. Correlations between relational aggression and rejection from peers, insecure attachment formation, substance abuse, anxiety, depression, psychopathic personality traits and antisocial behaviour, have been found. A study found that those respondents who are more likely to experience anger, are more acceptant of couple violence and are more privy to traditional sex roles, were more likely to employ relational aggression in romantic relationships. With regard to aggression through electronic means, significant correlations were found between frequency and time spent online and both cyberbullying perpetration and victimization (Hinduja et al., 2008).

Johnson's typology on intimate partner violence (IPV) can also be used to account for aggression through technological means. It identifies four different types of aggression within

couples based on the amount of control and violence that is present in a relationship: situational couple violence (SCV), intimate terrorism (IT), mutual violent control (MVC) and violent resistance (VR). SVC refers to aggressive behaviours that occur in particular situations that infrequently escalate to more extreme forms of violence and are not linked to a general pattern of control. In the study, many respondents indicated exchanges of communication through technological means which often served as a predecessor to conflict. Reading text messages that a partner received from someone else could lead to a violent occurrence, for example. IT refers to the use of a broad array of strategies to perpetrate violence and control within a relationship, such as economic dependence, threats, physical aggression and seclusion. Individuals in these relationships may also monitor behaviours through the use of cell phones and social networking sites, tracking the location of their partners through global positioning systems (GPS), or continuously communicating and sending excessive text messages. Technology thus makes it easier for intimate partners to stay connected throughout the day. MCV occurs when both partners in the relationship engage in violence and control one another. This can also translate to exerting control through social networking websites. VR occurs when one partner employs violence and control, and the other partner's use of violence is utilized for self-defense. Through electronic media, a partner may feel more empowered to retaliate online through the safety and security offered by the anonymity of a computer screen (Melander, 2010).

Motives

There are a range of possible motives that can contribute to intimate partner aggression and violence through the employment of technological means. It has been found to play a significant role in many relationship issues, including infidelity, intimacy, control of one's independence, and conflict resolution (Draucker et al., 2010). One study found that some

individuals thought that monitoring was influenced by feelings of care and concern, however most partners who employed control tactics indicated that they had insecurities about the relationship and concerns about their partner's fidelity. Many of them went through their partner's voicemail recordings or cell phone text messages in order to find out who they had been communicating with. If they discovered what they thought was evidence of infidelity, violence often occurred. If a female partner's fidelity came into question, producing feelings of guilt and utilizing emotional blackmail can be used as strategies aimed at retaining her (Sesar, Pavela, Simic, Barisic & Banai, 2012).

Motivations for violence in adolescent dating relationships were reported to include anger and a need for the exertion of power. Individuals can rapidly send harassing messages online to their romantic partner solely based on negative emotions that are experienced at the time, without taking adequate time to calm down and react in a rational manner and without considering the implications these messages can have (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011). Regarding perpetration of verbal or emotional aggression, most often verbal abuse by a partner would occur over the phone (such as through leaving threatening messages) and some would occur over public domains (i.e., harmful and threatening messages on websites (Draucker et al., 2010)). O'Keefe (1997) found that common motives for intimate partner violence were anger, control and jealousy.

According to a study, the more likely that a situation within a romantic relationship was perceived as negative, the more likely it would result in an aggressive behavioural response (Prospero, 2006). The lack of bystander intervention and potential for information to be viewed by a wider audience has also been identified as being particularly harmful (Alvarez, 2012). Jealousy has been identified as an emotion that serves as motivation behind behaviour seeking to

retain an intimate partner and remove threats to the existing relationship. In surveys conducted on adolescents in the United Kingdom and the United States, revenge was identified as the most common motive in cyberbullying (Alvarez, 2012). Two thirds of a sample in another study experienced some victimization through electronic means related to humiliation (73.2%), hostility (72.3%) and intrusiveness (73.5%). Humiliation was reported to more likely occur from friends than dating partners (Prospero, 2006). The most common actions aimed at retaining a partner were: threats of punishment, exerting control, expressing affection, publicly displaying ownership and threatening potential rivals. Jealousy is based on insecurity, however it may be misinterpreted as feelings of love and it can be used as an excuse to control an intimate partner (Sesar et al., 2012). It was also found that some use electronic communication venues to monitor previous intimate partners in order to obtain closure or information regarding their current dating lives (Pascoe, 2011).

Characteristics

It was found that victims of cyberstalking were more likely to have suffered at the hands of an intimate partner than by a stranger. Individuals who were cyberstalked were also more likely to suffer from other threatening behaviours, such as physical and sexual harassment (Alexy et al., 2005). A study on bullying subtypes found that individuals who were both bullies and victims reported much more physical violence victimization by an intimate partner and more emotional abuse in the relationship than victims of bullying and individuals with no history of either being an aggressor or victim (Espelage & Holt, 2006). One study found that the perpetrator of cyberstalking was most likely to be a former romantic partner (Alexy et al., 2005). Estimates of 9%-34% prevalence have been found for victimization among youth through electronic aggression and 4%-21% for perpetration (Draucker et al., 2010). Other data have

found victimization rates ranging from 15%-40% for this population (Bennett et al, 2011). Some findings suggest that there are certain characteristics that are unique to some individuals which may increase their risk of being victims or offenders. Respondents of a study who reported having had recent school problems, substance use or perpetrated acts of assault were more likely to experience cyberbullying as both a perpetrator and victim (Hinduja et al., 2008). Experiencing victimization might also place an individual at risk for future victimization (Espelage et al., 2006). In the surveys on adolescents in the US and UK, it was found that the victims frequently knew their cyberbully, sexual material was the most common and they were upset by their experience (Alvarez, 2012).

Gender Differences

Findings on the prevalence of male and female victimization and perpetration of dating violence through electronic media have been mixed. According to research findings, dating violence perpetration is symmetrical among genders, but only at lower levels of violence. With increased severity, abusers tend to be male with regard to physical violence. Abuse tends to be reciprocal between genders when accounting for psychological violence, though one partner may perform higher levels of violence than the other. Men may be more likely to perpetrate inappropriate behaviours such as stalking and other forms of coercion, whereas women may be at a higher likelihood of engaging in relational aggression (Schnurr et al., 2013). One study found no significant differences between respondent experiences with cyberbullying as either a victim or offender with respect to gender and race (Hinduja et al., 2008). A study of perceptions of dating aggression revealed that both boys and girls had the same perceptions of various dating scenarios, however the boys were more likely to react in an aggressive manner (Prospero, 2006).

A study consisting of 500 MySpace profiles of 18-year old individuals that were accessible to the public revealed that males were more likely than females to showcase references to violence and less likely to present references relating to sexual behaviour (Pujazon-Zazik & Park, 2010). Some studies have shown that males were more often the perpetrators of cyberbullying and others have been inconclusive (Alvarez, 2012). Findings from another study have suggested that females are more likely to use electronic aggression against intimate partners, whereas men are more likely to do so against their friends. Some reports of gender differences in the use of the internet have been found, with adolescent males reportedly placing greater emphasis on entertainment opportunities offered by the internet, and females focusing more on the relational aspects. The latter group was found more likely to use social media as a way of communicating online with their friends about topics such as dating relationships, secrets, and intimate feelings (Pujazon-Zazik et al., 2010).

In a study that used a sample of 5, 647 youth from 10 schools in three northeastern states, one out of ten adolescents indicated that they perpetrated online dating violence, with males more likely than females to report having perpetrated sexual abuse online. It was found, however, that females reported a much greater likelihood of having perpetrated physical and sexual dating violence (Zweig et al., 2013). In other research, more females reported having engaged in physical violence (40%) than having been victimized by it (30%). In contrast, fewer males indicated that they perpetrated this form of violence (24%) than having been victimized by it (31%) (O'Leary, Smith Slep, Avery-Leaf, and Cascardi, 2008). A study on four types of electronic victimization (hostility, intrusiveness, humiliation and exclusion) revealed that females rated hostility from friends and dating partners as the most distressing, whereas men rated hostility from friends as the most upsetting. Both males and females found exclusion from

friends to be the least distressing, and for males, exclusion from an intimate partner had even lower results (Bennett et al., 2011).

Present Study

The current study examined the extent to which cyberbullying relates to dating violence and aggression within the adolescent population. Cyberharassment and cyberstalking have been included in the term “cyberbullying.” Moreover, terms such as “intimate partner violence” and “electronic violence” will be used interchangeably, alongside “cyberbullying.” Limited research has been done on the effects of technology on dating relationships, especially among adolescents (Alvarez, 2012), although research in this area has been steadily increasing. Most of the research to date has focused on the negative effects of bullying in general on victim wellbeing and few studies have examined the antecedents and effects of cyberbullying specifically (Pujazon-Zazik et al, 2010). There is also limited research on gender differences with respect to the use of social media environments (Hinduja, 2010).

A mixed methods approach has been utilized in this study. A quantitative analysis was conducted based on data that was obtained from a survey on cyberbullying that was completed by students from a high school in southwestern Ontario. Qualitative data was obtained from semi-structured focus groups with the same participants. Both quantitative and qualitative data was used in order to provide more comprehensive information with regard to high school students’ perceptions and attitudes on cyberbullying, and the ways in which it is used to perpetrate dating violence. Quantitative data provides generalizable results that can be easily analyzed to determine whether or not statistically significant relationships exist. It was the hope of this researcher that qualitative data used in conjunction with quantitative data can provide

deeper insight on students' experiences and personal feelings. In addition, the combination of the two approaches helps to offset the weaknesses inherent in using each approach in solitude. It also allows for the potential for triangulation, whereby the same data can be assessed from various angles. For example, the data can be viewed through the lens of different researchers and can utilize the employment of various techniques (FoodRisc Resource Centre, 2014). Furthermore, it invites the use of an assortment of data collection techniques, thereby increasing the validity of the findings by allowing the results to be examined in different ways.

Research Question: Part I

At what point in a dating relationship does intimate partner violence among adolescents through the use of electronic communication become most severe?

Hypothesis: Part I. Results will indicate that dating violence perpetrated through the use of technology is more severe upon termination of the relationship. Within dating violence, there is usually a need to exercise control over a current or former partner and instill a sense of fear in them. Acts of violence can ensue as a way of maintaining power over the other individual, stopping them from partaking in undesirable behaviours, forcing them to partake in others, and employing punishment when their demands are not met (Bastow, 2014). The termination of a relationship is often the time when feelings of resentment are present, and particularly in a violent relationship, this may be the time when abuser feels a loss of control. The period after terminating such a relationship is often cited as being the most dangerous, whereby an abusive partner may utilize various tactics in order to re-establish a sense of power and control (University of Texas, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2006).

Research Question: Part II

Is revenge perceived to be a common motive for cyberbullying perpetration in adolescent dating relationships? Does this perception differ by gender?

Hypothesis: Part II: A common motive for perpetrating cyberbullying in a dating relationship will be revenge. Both males and females will identify this as being a motive. Some research suggests that cyberbullying can be reciprocal in nature. Among couples in violent relationships, both partners are likely to be perpetrators (Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin, and Kupper, 2001). Research has found that in a relationship marked by physical aggression, both partners were likely to be aggressive (O’Leary et al., 2008). In addition, the anonymity and distance from another individual that cyberbullying provides may allow an individual to perceive themselves as being immune to retaliation. Thus, they may choose to commit an act of cyberbullying out of revenge while subsequently minimizing the perceived likelihood of facing retaliation (Konig, Gollwitzer, & Steffgen, 2010).

Research Question: Part III

How are the consequences of cyberbullying perceived among adolescents?

Hypothesis: Part III: It will be shown that the consequences of cyberbullying are minimized among individuals in dating relationships. Social media and technology have become highly intertwined in the lives of young people, and consequently it may be difficult to separate oneself from the online world. It appears as though certain actions conducted online may be viewed as being a “rite of passage,” with the consequences of these actions being minimized in the eyes of the individual. Furthermore, cyberbullying behaviour may be coupled with victim-blaming, or dismissed as merely an online disagreement (Bastow, 2014).

Method

Participants

The participants in the present study were comprised of 70 male and female grade 12 students (ages 16 and over) in various classes of a secondary school in southwestern Ontario. Participants were given a questionnaire on cyberbullying and were asked to provide their age, grade, and gender. Semi-structured focus groups were arranged in order to complement the quantitative data generated by the survey. Participants were selected through convenience sampling. Permission was granted to conduct research within the school board (see Appendices B and C, respectively) after approval from Western University's Research Ethics Committee and the school board, and teachers were contacted and presented with the details of the present study. Those teachers who expressed an interest in having their classes participate, along with consenting students, were selected to participate in the study. A total of six focus groups were conducted within various classrooms. Of the seventy students who participated, 42 (60%) were female and 28 (40%) were male.

Measures

Cyberbullying Survey. A survey was created to obtain more information on students' understanding of cyberbullying, which was administered prior to the facilitation of the semi-structured focus groups. The first part provided demographic information (i.e., age, gender and grade level) and additional items addressed topics such as: the use of cyberbullying, awareness of the issue, the likelihood of reporting an incident involving cyberbullying, the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, and what constitutes inappropriate behaviour. Most questions were in multiple choice format and three and four-point Likert scales were also used to

address some questions (e.g., Very Likely, Likely, Unlikely; Not Serious, Neutral, Serious, Very Serious).

Semi-structured focus groups. Semi-structured focus group questions were utilized in order to generate discussion on the topic of cyberbullying and obtain more comprehensive information. Among the questions included were ones pertaining to the relationship between the victim and perpetrator (e.g., Do you think cyberbullying occurs within dating relationships?), knowledge of cyberbullying in the media (e.g., What have you seen in the media recently concerning cyberbullying?), cyberbullying in relation to dating violence (e.g., At what point does cyberbullying occur within a dating relationship?), factors responsible for reporting the issue (e.g., Why would you be more likely to report to one source over the other?), and perceptions and awareness of social supports that are available (e.g., Which sources would you be more likely to report to: parents, teachers, police, or peers?) With each set of questions, there were also probing questions that were used to elicit further information from the participants.

Procedure

After permission was granted by the school board and through the Western University ethics review board to conduct the study, teachers from a secondary school in southwestern Ontario were contacted and provided with the details of the study. Those teachers who expressed an interest in participating were provided with a form containing information on the present study, along with a consent form that the students were required to have signed by their parent if they were under the age of 18.

Cyberbullying survey. Two researchers attended the same secondary school on three separate days. Both parties introduced themselves and collected the consent forms from the

students. All participants were told about the details of the study and instructed that they did not have to participate in the discussion if they experience any discomfort. Following this, they were given a survey with questions related to the topic of cyberbullying, given instructions, and were invited to ask questions if they arose. The students were instructed not to provide any identifying information (of themselves or others) in the survey. Students who did not participate in the study were asked to sit in the back of the room and occupy themselves with other work, or they went to the library. Following a time frame that ranged from 10-15 minutes, the surveys were collected from the participants.

Semi-structured focus groups. One researcher facilitated discussion around the focus group questions, while the other was responsible for note-taking. The same script was used for each classroom, which contained the instructions and questions that were posed during the focus groups. The note-taker used a laptop to type student responses, along with the gender of each student who made a response. The researchers kept the same roles throughout the study in order to ensure consistency. The discussion generated by the semi-structured focus groups was completed approximately in 30-40 minutes. At the conclusion of each focus group, participants were debriefed and provided with an information sheet about valuable resources on cyberbullying. They were also encouraged to seek support if any discomfort was experienced during their participation in the study.

Data Analysis

This study utilized a mixed method approach. Quantitative data from the survey on cyberbullying along with qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured focus groups form the foundation of this research. High school students' knowledge, perceptions and attitudes with

regard to the topic of cyberbullying in the context of dating relationships were examined, inclusive of topics such as perception of consequences, gender differences, and severity of behaviours in relation to time. The use of a descriptive analysis was employed in order to examine the frequencies of responses made. A univariate analysis using chi square was performed in order to analyze the quantitative data generated by the survey and to account for gender differences in the responses that were made. A 2 x 2 factorial design was implemented. Given the small number of frequencies generated by certain responses, some response options were combined, as the chi-square test is inappropriate for frequencies below 1 or for expected frequencies below 5 if they are present in more than 20% of cells (Preacher, 2001).

The semi-structured focus groups provided information with regard to students' perceptions, feelings, attitudes and past and current experiences with the issue of cyberbullying. Data was collected by informal note-taking of student responses. Creswell's procedure was employed in conducting the qualitative analysis. The transcripts of the interviews were read through thoroughly and separated into "meaning units." A descriptive analysis was conducted of the data in order to determine common trends that arose, which were then grouped into major themes. Both the researcher and the co-researcher involved in the study analyzed the data separately, and then compared results and collectively grouped the data into major themes in order to improve accuracy. The data was then analyzed once again separately by this researcher and further segregated into major themes. Particular attention was paid to responses that were especially meaningful or interesting (Creswell, 2003). Care was taken to ensure that themes were not constructed based on the number of responses that matched a particular theme, but rather, on the overall significance and meaning of each response.

Results

Quantitative Data

The present study utilized a survey with an assortment of questions pertaining to the topic of cyberbullying, which was then complemented by semi-structured focus groups. A sample of 70 grade 12 students participated, between the ages of 16 and over 18, of which 42 (60%) were female and 28 (40%) were male. A summary of key results obtained from the survey is presented below.

Perceptions of Cyberbullying Perpetration by Gender

Participants were asked to indicate who they feel perpetrates cyberbullying more often. The response options were “males,” “females,” and “same.” A higher number of males indicated that females are more often the perpetrators (75%). An equal number of females (50%) expressed their belief that both males and females are perpetrators. Only males (21.4% vs. 0%) indicated that males and females both use cyberbullying to the same extent. The frequencies were then grouped into another table, identifying the responses by a “yes” or a “no.” The option “same” was included under the category “no” in order to allow for a Chi-Square test to be utilized. The test revealed significance, as $\chi^2(1, N=70)= 3.40, p=.03$, indicating that males are more likely than females to perceive females as more frequently being perpetrators of cyberbullying. The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1
Frequency of Cyberbullying Perpetration by Gender

Who uses cyberbullying more often?	N(%)	
	Male	Female
Males/Same	7 (25%)	21 (50%)
Females	21(75.0%)	21 (50%)

Table 2

Frequency of Cyberbullying Perpetration by Females

Do females cyberbully more than males?	N(%)	
	Male	Female
Yes	21 (75%)	21 (50%)
No	7 (25%)	21 (50%)

Likelihood of reporting an incident of cyberbullying based on relationship to the perpetrator

Participants were asked to report on their likelihood of reporting a cyberbullying incident, given various response options for the identity of the perpetrator. The possible answer choices were “very likely,” “likely,” and “not likely.” “Very likely” and “likely” were then grouped together during data analysis to form the category “yes,” and “not likely” was grouped as “no.” Table 3 displays the frequencies of the responses that were made. Overall, more participants indicated that they would be likely to report an ex-partner (70%) and slightly more also indicated that they would not report an existing dating partner (52.9%). A Chi-square analysis revealed no significant relationship, as $\chi^2(1, N=70)=0.69, p=.20$, indicating that there were no differences in the likelihood of reporting cyberbullying between males and females.

Table 3

Likelihood of Reporting Cyberbullying

Likelihood of Reporting, if the Perpetrator is a:	N(%)			
	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	11(39.3%)	17(60.7%)	22(52.4%)	20(47.6%)
Ex-Boyfriend/Girlfriend	16(57.1%)	12(42.9%)	33(78.6%)	9(21.4%)

Perceptions of Motives for Cyberbullying

Students who participated in the survey also answered a question pertaining to their perceptions of potential motives for cyberbullying. The possible response choices included

“prank,” “accident,” “revenge,” “it is not really harmful,” due to being “emotionally distressed,” and “other.” The most common motives indicated by males were: “not really harmful” (57.1%), “prank” (53.6%), and “revenge” (46.4%). Females indicated these to be: “revenge” (83.3%), “prank” (73.8%), and “not really harmful” (66.7%). A table was then constructed to analyze the number of males and females who reported that revenge is a motive for cyberbullying, categorizing the responses by a “yes” and “no. A Chi-square analysis revealed that the results are statistically significant, with $\chi^2(1, N=70)=8.97, p=0.001$, indicating that females may be more likely to perceive revenge as a motive for the perpetration of cyberbullying, whereas males are less likely to do so. There were no significant differences between males and females on perception of cyberbullying as harmful, as $\chi^2(1, N=70)=0.308, p=0.29$. The frequencies are listed in Tables 4, 5, and 6, respectively.

Table 4
Motives for Cyberbullying by Gender

Motives	N(%)	
	Male	Female
Prank	15(53.6%)	31(73.8%)
Accident	3(10.7%)	6(14.3%)
Revenge	13(46.4%)	35(83.3%)
Not really harmful	16(57.1%)	28(66.7%)
Emotionally distressed	12(42.9%)	19(45.2%)
Other:	7(25.0%)	8(19.0%)

Table 5
Perceptions of Revenge as a Motive

Is revenge a potential motive for cyberbullying?	N(%)	
	Male	Female
Yes	13(46.4%)	35(83.3%)
No	15(53.6%)	7(16.7%)

Table 6
Perceptions of Severity of Cyberbullying

Can cyberbullying be meant to be perceived as not being harmful?	N(%)	
	Male	Female
Yes	16(57.1%)	28(66.7%)
No	12(42.9%)	14(33.3%)

Ratings of Severity of Various Cyberbullying Behaviours

Participants were asked to rate the severity of various cyberbullying behaviours. The possible response options were “not serious,” “neutral,” “serious,” and “very serious.” In order to allow for a chi-square test to be performed, for the purposes of the analysis, the “not serious” and “neutral” and “serious” and “very serious” were grouped together. Frequencies revealed that a majority of the respondents rated “spreading inappropriate pictures online” (98.6%), as “serious/very serious.” All females (100%) and a majority of males (85.7%) perceived an “ex-boyfriend/girlfriend wanting to constantly know your whereabouts” as “serious” or “very serious,” and the relationship was shown to be statistically significant through a chi-square test, with $\chi^2(1, N=69)=3.877, p=0.02$, indicating that both males and females rate these behaviours as being serious. All other relationships were found to be non-significant, indicating no gender differences with respect to perceptions of severity. The frequencies are displayed in Table 7 below.

Table 7
Gender Differences in Reported Frequencies Regarding Severity

Rate seriousness of the following	N(%)			
	Not Serious/Neutral		Serious/Very Serious	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Spreading rumors about someone online	3(10.7%)	2(4.8%)	25(89.3%)	39(95.2%)
Spreading inappropriate pictures online	1(3.6%)	0(0.0%)	27(96.4%)	41(100%)

Boyfriend/girlfriend wanting to constantly know your whereabouts	14(50%)	11(27.5%)	14(50%)	29(72.5%)
Ex-boyfriend/girlfriend wanting to constantly know your whereabouts	4(14.3%)	0(0.0%)	24(85.7%)	41(100%)
“Creeping” someone on a social networking site, everyday	13(46.4%)	21(51.3%)	15(53.6%)	20(48.8%)

Perceptions of Potential Prevention Strategies

In the survey, participants were asked to indicate possible prevention strategies for cyberbullying. Among the options listed, participants were asked to check the boxes of the strategies they felt can help stop individuals from cyberbullying. The tactics they felt would be most effective included: discussion with peers (58.6%), the media (51.4%), discussion with parents (48.6%), and discussion with teachers (45.7%). The results are listed in Table 8. It appears as though the adolescents in this study feel that involving those who are in close proximity to them would be beneficial towards preventing incidences of cyberbullying.

Table 8
Reported Frequencies for Prevention of Cyberbullying

What can stop individuals from cyberbullying	N (%)	
	Yes	No
Discussion with peers	41(58.6%)	29(41.4%)
Discussion with parents	34(48.6%)	36(51.4%)
Discussion with teachers	32(45.7%)	38(54.3%)
Discussion with a(n) Adult(s) in your community	19(27.1%)	51(72.9%)
School assemblies	20(28.6%)	50(71.4%)
The media	36(51.4%)	34(48.6%)
Public service announcements (PSA’s)	18(25.7%)	52(74.3%)
Nothing	17(24.3%)	53(75.7%)

Qualitative Data

As part of a mixed-methods approach, semi-structured focus groups were conducted at a secondary school in southwestern Ontario, in order to gain a more in-depth perspective on students' perspectives of cyberbullying. In total, 10 focus groups were conducted in grade 12 classrooms, yielding 70 participants, of which 42 were female and 28 were male, ranging in age from 16 to over 18. Each focus group was conducted in a classroom with a teacher present. Two researchers were present, and various questions pertaining to the topic of cyberbullying were asked, including but not limited to: motives for cyberbullying, likelihood of reporting an incident, gender differences related to perpetration and victimization, as well as prevention strategies. Through a descriptive analysis, major themes emerged, which include the following:

Theme #1: Common motives for perpetrating cyberbullying include revenge and jealousy

Various responses were generated among students in relation to the question regarding potential motives for cyberbullying. Some of the responses included teasing and defending another person. The most common responses, however, included revenge and feelings of jealousy. Among these, revenge was seen as an act of self-defense, a result of feeling angry and desiring retaliation, and/or retaliating against an individual and wanting them to experience the same hardships that they themselves caused. "Jealousy" was viewed as stemming from feeling bad about oneself and consequently wanting to make another individual feel worse about themselves, even when that individual is not well known to the person. Both male and female students identified these as the primary motives. The following are some example statements that were made:

“It may be to get back at the person, or out of jealousy. Maybe the person is getting more friends, so trying to put them down, to make them look bad” (female)

“Usually the person evokes the other person. You have to be doing something that pisses them off” (male)

Theme #2: Cyberbullying has different typologies

Most students indicated that cyberbullying constitutes a continuous and repetitive action on the part of the perpetrator. It was also viewed as falling under the category of bullying if it is meant to cause harm to another individual, or if the individual feels offended by the action. Other responses indicated that it does not have to be an intentional or repetitive act in order for it to cause harm to another individual. The following are some examples of responses that were given:

“If the person is offended by it, they’re obviously feeling victimized” (female)

“If rumors are being spread about them, and they are not aware of it” (male)

Minor forms of cyberbullying have generally been identified as being more akin to teasing or posting negative comments on a social networking site. The students reported that major forms of cyberbullying typically include more of a threat, such as sending photographs of an individual, threatening someone, or spreading rumors about another person. There were no real differences found in the responses based on gender. The following are some examples:

“Say if you had a rough night before and someone posts your picture...and they just do it because they think it’s funny” (female)

“When your blackmailing someone...kind of like sexting” (male)

“Severe - when people tell you to harm yourself” (female)

“If someone was gay, and being bullied for their sexuality, that could lead to suicide. But again, I think anything severe could lead to suicide, because that has happened before” (female)

Theme #3: Reporting an incident of cyberbullying to one source over another depends on the context and severity of the incident

Based on the responses that were generated, some students indicated they would report to someone they felt comfortable with and some indicated they would prefer to speak to someone with whom they were not well acquainted in order to avoid embarrassment or being reminded of the incident. Furthermore, some indicated they would not like to make a “big deal” over it and so would report the incident only if it was serious. Other students stated that if it was concerning a serious incident, they would report to someone in authority in order to have it resolved. The following are some examples of statements that were made:

“Sometimes you might report to someone you feel most comfortable with...but then sometimes you may report to someone whose actions may have more of an effect (e.g., principle or guidance counsellor)” (male)

“It depends like sexting and nude photos...it’s something you don’t want to tell your parents, so you go to the police-so it depends what the bullying is about” (female)

Theme #4: Prevention efforts should include strategies that are realistic, personal, and emotional

Generally, female students spoke about the impact that cyberbullying has on victims as a potential prevention strategy (i.e., making use of advertisements that provide the victim’s point

of view). Male students spoke more about increasing awareness of consequences in relation to cyberbullying. Some students indicated that nothing could be done to prevent or stop cyberbullying. With regard to what they have seen in the media, the responses of the students were similar, in that frequently it showcases a portrayal of the victims. From the responses, it appeared that students generally agreed that stories of cyberbullying become sensationalized in the media. Interestingly, some students mentioned bullying of public figures (i.e., Miley Cyrus, Rob Ford) as also belonging to the category of cyberbullying and as also being frequently captured in the media. The following are some examples of responses:

“Further education on the topic, educate people on what to do if they see it happening. If someone is the bully maybe there is something behind that (e.g., problems at home)” (male)

“Assemblies (emotional ones, actual stories of people) may help about cyberbullying; they make an impact” (female)

“Make the consequences more aware...if you choose to cyberbully or make fun of someone, there’s a possibility to go to jail” (male)

“Only if it’s insanely bad, if someone commits suicide, this is all we hear about. When it’s not response-provoking (e.g., someone cyberbullied to an extreme extent but able to recover from it), it won’t be in the news, even though that’s what should be in the news because that’s what happens more often. The non-response-provoking ones are more reflective of what actually happens, and those are ignored” (male)

Theme #5: Cyberbullying is often not perceived as being serious, especially when it is perpetrated by a friend

Among the responses that were generated, students indicated that cyberbullying is often excused as a joke and intended to be harmless. It may be used as a form of attaining status in a social hierarchy at a younger age and may not be perceived as causing serious harm. Other responses indicated that intoxication could be used as an excuse, or that it could be intended as a prank that was not meant to be taken seriously. The following are some examples of responses that were made:

“It’s changed...a lot of people used to do it for status to put them before it, but when people get older, it’s more casual joking” (male)

“In grade 12 you realize it doesn’t matter what people think of you. You feel more free (e.g., you don’t have to be with these people later)” (female)

Generally males and females both agreed that cyberbullying can be interpreted as being merely a way of joking around when it is committed by a friend of the person. The common consensus was that this was a form of teasing and would not be taken seriously if a friend was a perpetrator. Common examples included making a negative comment that was meant to be perceived as a joke, or posting an embarrassing photo of a person. The following are examples of statements that were made:

“When it’s friend to friend e.g., ‘you’re looking a little slutty today, winking face,’ you won’t take this seriously because you know your friends” (female)

“On facebook when someone tags you in a photo that you don’t want to be tagged in” (male)

Theme #6: Cyberbullying perpetration differs between males and females

It was found that girls tend to perpetrate more acts of relational aggression, such as through calling each other names and holding grudges, whereas males can use more physical means and be quicker to resolve the dispute. It was a common consensus among both males and females that females are more likely to cyberbully in friendships. Some females indicated that girls may also cyberbully in relationships, however most males said that the perpetrator would most often be male. The following are some examples of statements that were made:

“I feel like for guys... I’m not a guy...but I feel like for guys it’s more joking...guys are more physical. Girls are more catty...they don’t want to say it to each other’s face” (female)

“If a guy bullies a girl – it’s something about that that just bothers me; its abuse basically”
(female)

“Two guys end up in a fight, then the next time you see them it’s over” (male)

“It falls on to gender cliché. For example, if a guy bullies someone for lacking in manly characteristics, or if a female says you don’t have these female characteristics” (male)

Theme #7: It is generally easier to report a stranger who is a cyberbully than it is a friend

Most students identified that they would find it easier to report a stranger who perpetrates cyberbullying than to do so when it is a friend. Some males identified that they would confront an individual who is a cyberbully if it were a friend or an acquaintance or stranger. Females generally indicated they would do so if it were an acquaintance or stranger, but would be less keen to do so if it were a friend out of a fear of tarnishing the friendship in some way. The following are some examples of responses that were collected throughout the discussion:

“It’s different for guys and girls. For some girls, if your friend hates someone, so do you...but guys they look the other way on it. I know you should tell them to stop, but the reality is you look the other way” (male)

“I would try to tell them in the nicest way I can, probably just drop hints, and hope they pick up on the fact. I probably won’t be completely straight up with them, because the chances are they will cyberbully me” (female)

“With a friend you can be upfront with them and if they’re a good friend to you they will take what you’re saying with reason” (male)

“If a stranger was bullying your friend you would stand up for your friend. But when your friend is bullying someone else you may not say anything. It would be harder” (female)

Theme #8: Cyberbullying is most likely to occur in a dating relationship when some form of control is obtained over a partner, or after a break up

Male and female students identified that cyberbullying can occur in dating relationship. According to their responses, it was most likely to occur after some control has been obtained over a partner (i.e., through knowing their whereabouts constantly), or through pressuring a partner to do certain things (i.e., sexual activity). This was viewed as something that may not be apparent to the partner during the relationship, however it may become more noticeable after a break up occurs. It was commonly perceived that cyberbullying is more likely to occur after a break up by both males and females. Common motives for cyberbullying in relationships included jealousy, insecurity, and wanting to have control over the other individual. Associated with this, an element of fear had also been identified. The following are some examples of statements that were made:

“After you’re sexual with them...they might pressure you. Or after they have evidence of you guys being sexual, they can use this against you to do more things” (female)

“Once they have them wrapped around their finger. Your feelings are so attached you can’t drop them off, that’s when it could happen” (female)

“If it’s a possessive factor, like ‘let’s see where have you been’, it’s like the commanding aspect of it” (male)

“In a relationship if it begins to affect personal security, or when they are focused on their partner and no one else” (male)

“At the end – it could be more intense when someone is still holding on to the other person. At the end of a relationship that’s when issues arise” (female)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the context, motives and perceptions of severity of cyberbullying in dating relationships among the adolescent population. Participants were composed of 70 students in grades 12 and 13, ranging in age from 16 to over 18, at a high school in southwestern Ontario. Research questions sought to examine the point in a dating relationship at which cyberbullying becomes most severe, whether or not revenge is a common motive for its perpetration, and how seriously its consequences are perceived. Data from quantitative and qualitative investigations was analyzed, the results of which will be further discussed.

Quantitative data was obtained through the use of a cyberbullying survey that was provided to participants at the commencement of the study in each classroom. The survey asked

participants a variety of questions, addressing areas of focus such as: the likelihood of reporting and involvement in cyberbullying, common motives, prevention strategies, and perceived severity of various cyberbullying behaviours. The data was analyzed descriptively through an examination of frequencies, along with chi squares in order to account for gender differences.

Upon administration of the cyberbullying survey, semi-structured focus groups were constructed within the classrooms. The same sample of students participated in these discussions. Discussion was facilitated based on questions pertaining to topics such as, gender differences among cyberbullying typologies and perpetration, motives, prevention strategies, prevalence, likelihood of reporting, severity of various behaviours, and the point at which it is most likely to occur within a dating relationship. Descriptive analysis was performed, and the data was grouped into major themes that arose out of the responses that were made.

Severity of Cyberbullying. Descriptive analysis revealed that 62.9% of participants indicated a possible motive for cyberbullying was that it was meant to be perceived as harmless, although gender differences were not found to be statistically significant. The analysis also revealed that a large majority of participants rated spreading inappropriate pictures online as being the most serious form of cyberbullying (98.6%). All females and a majority of males perceived that an ex-boyfriend or girlfriend wanting to constantly know their ex-partner's whereabouts as something that is serious or very serious. This indicated that adolescents in this study felt that it is especially inappropriate when an ex-partner continues to monitor and control their former partner. Participants also distinguished between major and minor forms of cyberbullying, indicating that some types may be perceived as being less severe than others. For example, posting a negative comment on a social networking site was identified as a minor form, and an example of a major form was making a threat towards another individual. These findings

indicate that adolescents may perceive certain forms of cyberbullying as being more harmful than others, and that they are able to differentiate between severe and less severe types.

In terms of severity, most males perceived the motive for cyberbullying as being something not meant to be significantly harmful (57.1%), and this was also one of the most common motives reported by females (66.7%). These results indicate that an incident of cyberbullying can be intended as something harmless, and that the perpetrator may not be aware of the impact that their actions may have. Themes generated by qualitative data demonstrated that some participants felt that cyberbullying does not have to be an intentional or repeated act in order for it to cause harm to another individual. This indicates that these participants may have some recognition and cognizance of potential consequences that may result due to cyberbullying behaviours, even if the intent was not to cause harm. Participants also indicated that cyberbullying is often perceived as a joke, one that is intended to be harmless, or as a result of intoxication. Online interactions lack the verbal and nonverbal cues that are present in face-to-face interactions, hence it may not be entirely possible to determine how one's message came across to another individual and whether or not it was correctly interpreted (Melander, 2010). As a result, cyberbullying may be intended as being harmless by the perpetrator, however it may be misconstrued and interpreted in a more harmful way by the receiver.

Gender Differences in Perceptions of Cyberbullying Perpetration. Analyses of results revealed that males perceive females as perpetrators of cyberbullying more frequently, whereas females perceive both males and females as perpetrating relatively equally. There was a common agreement among males and females that females are more likely to perpetrate cyberbullying in friendships, whereas in relationships, the perpetrator would most often be male. This may be due to common perceptions of females being more likely to perpetrate relational aggression over

their friends, and males being more likely to be aggressors in a dating relationship. Research has found mixed results with regard to gender differences in the perpetration of cyberbullying (Alvarez, 2012). One study found that females may be more likely to use online aggression against their dating partners, whereas males may be more likely to do so against their friends (Pujazon-Zazik et al., 2010). This finding contrasts with the results that were obtained in this study, therefore, it appears that individuals' perceptions of gender differences in the perpetration of cyberbullying may not always be accurate.

Revenge as a Motive. It was found that a majority of the participants (70%) indicated that they would be likely to report an ex-partner who cyberbullied, although no statistical significance was found for gender differences. Results showed that females were more likely to perceive revenge as a motive for cyberbullying (83.3%), whereas males appeared less likely to perceive it in this manner (46.4%). Qualitative data indicated that both male and female participants identified revenge as a major motive for cyberbullying perpetration, along with jealousy. Revenge was seen as encompassing an act of self-defense, resulting from anger and a desire for retaliation, as well as wanting an individual to experience the same hardships that they themselves caused. Similarly, some studies have identified revenge as being a common motive for cyberbullying (Alvarez, 2012). Individuals can utilize the internet in order to embarrass and demean former dating partners (Melander, 2010). This is consistent with other research that has shown that in relationships marked by dating violence, both partners are likely to be perpetrators of violence (Halpern, Oslak, Young, Martin, and Kupper, 2001), which may be a form of revenge by both partners on one another.

Occurrence of Cyberbullying Following a Break-Up. Qualitative data generated by focus group discussions revealed that participants felt that cyberbullying in a dating relationship

is most likely to occur following termination of the relationship. This was generally agreed upon by both males and females in the discussions. Some respondents indicated that it was most likely to occur after some form of control was obtained over a partner, or as a means of employing coercion (such as pressuring a partner to do something). Since break-ups can cause feelings of distress and frustration with a former partner, this can also be related to a desire to seek revenge following a break up. Electronic media can be used to keep track of a former partner and maintain some form of control over them. The termination of a relationship is often perceived as being the most dangerous time for an individual who was a victim of dating violence (University of Texas, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2006). Since research has shown that victims of traditional dating violence are also more likely to be victimized through electronic means (Hinduja, 2010), it can be assumed that the same patterns of violent behaviour would occur in both offline and online dating relationships.

Prevention Strategies. A majority of participants indicated that prevention strategies they felt would be most effective include: discussion with peers (58.6%), the media (51.4%), discussion with parents (48.6%), and discussion with teachers (45.7%) (see Table 8). These results indicate that adolescents may be more comfortable speaking to someone who is close to them about the topic of cyberbullying and potential prevention tactics. Female participants spoke about utilizing prevention strategies that demonstrate the impact that cyberbullying has on victims, whereas males were more apt to identify increasing awareness of its consequences as another tactic. These findings indicate that there is a need for a more personal and direct approach to utilize in prevention strategies.

Limitations

The use of a mixed methods approach in the present study allowed for a comprehensive and balanced analysis, however there are several limitations associated with its use. Qualitative analysis, although it provided an understanding of personal perspectives and experiences, had its shortcomings. The nature of the focus groups that were used as part of the qualitative analysis may have made it difficult to obtain all of the responses that were generated. This researcher initiated discussion and another co-investigator made notes on a laptop based on the responses that were made. The script that was used may have been slightly altered in each class that participated and there may have been variations in the prompts that were used to initiate discussion. Given the speed with which the responses were made, it was not always possible to transcribe each response word-by-word. The responses of students who may have answered in a more quiet tone may have been inaccurately represented. Furthermore, some students were more vocal than others and stood out as the main contributors to the discussion in some classrooms. There was also some overlap in the classes, and so the same students may have participated in the study on more than one occasion (although care was taken to ensure that these students did not take the survey more than once). The qualitative analysis focused on looking for themes among the responses that were generated, and responses that were particularly interesting were often included. These may not have necessarily come from the majority, as qualitative analysis does not seek to search for the number of individuals who made a particular response, but rather, the quality of the responses. As such, certain themes that were generated may not have been representative of the views of the majority of the participants.

Sample size and effect size also warrant consideration. Although initially the study aimed to recruit 100 participants, the total number of students who participated in the study was 70. There were also more females than males (42 vs. 28), which may have had an effect on the types

of responses that were generated, along with the climate of the discussions that took place during the focus groups. The quantitative data revealed several weak relationships largely due to the small sample size and consequently, it had to be re-evaluated to look for meaningful relationships using larger chi square measures. The results therefore may have yielded more significant relationships had a larger sample been utilized.

The classrooms that participated in the study were selected based on convenience sampling. Only students whose teachers expressed willingness for their class to participate were involved in the study. Although each student was provided with details of the study and given a consent form to sign by their parents if they were under the age of 18, these students may have felt pressured to participate. The teachers who expressed an interest in the study may also have had a particular interest in the topic of cyberbullying and may have had discussions of it in their respective classes. Students from these classrooms may have differed in their responses from the students who did not participate based on prior knowledge on the topic.

Implications

This study provided a glance at adolescents' understanding of and experiences with cyberbullying within the context of dating relationships. Information from the survey and semi-structured focus groups a unique and wholesome perspective on adolescents' perceptions with regard to this topic. Participants were given the opportunity to express their thoughts and were treated as main contributors to this research.

A common theme that arose throughout the semi-structured focus groups was that cyberbullying is often not taken as seriously as it should be. There is often a fine line between making a joke that is meant to be perceived as harmless, and harming someone with an act of

cyberbullying. Evidently, the message that cyberbullying can have serious implications has not been effectively delivered. Prevention efforts should aim to be more specific and realistic and speak to the seriousness of the issue. Although students have generally appeared to be aware of the meaning of cyberbullying, they appear to not consider the consequences closely. Adolescents should be encouraged to voice their concerns whenever an incident of cyberbullying occurs involving either them or another individual.

Research has shown that adolescents may not be keen on reporting cyberbullying incidents. One study found that fewer than one in ten individuals victimized by dating violence reported seeking help (Zweig et al., 2013). Qualitative data in the present study revealed that individuals may be more apt to report an incident if it is severe. However, even minor forms of cyberbullying can be harmful, and perhaps can escalate to more severe forms. Gender differences in reporting may exist as well. Research has found that females may be more likely than males to speak to someone regarding dating violence. It was also identified that victims were most likely to speak with and seek the support of their friends (Jackson, Cram, & Seymour, 2000). It is important to build on this finding and continue to raise awareness of the harm that can be caused by cyberbullying through a focus on prevention, as well as strategies that can assist peers with intervening. The Fourth-R, for example, is an interactive curriculum with a focus on healthy dating relationships. It was found to contribute to reducing physical dating violence (Wolfe, Crooks, Jaffe, Chiodo, Hughes, Ellis, Stitt, & Donner, 2009). This highlights the significance of using interactive tools and educating students in classroom settings about healthy relationships and dating violence. The importance of reporting incidents of cyberbullying should be emphasized. Every student should be encouraged to not engage in cyberbullying and schools should have a welcoming environment and the message that cyberbullying is

unacceptable should be pronounced. Adolescents should also be taught how to deal with their friends making disclosures of victimization and the resources that are available to them.

The participants in this study were engaged in the discussions and had many valuable points to contribute. As such, this speaks to the relevance and importance of inviting these forms of conversation in the classroom. If students are given the opportunity to speak their minds, many appear to be willing to do so. Thus, it may be beneficial to employ prevention efforts that provide students with a leadership role both within and outside of the school. Since this is an issue that is highly pronounced within the adolescent population, their perceptions of strategies that may work should be given high regard and consideration. Dating violence in adulthood may have its roots in childhood and adolescence. Individuals who perpetrate violence at a younger age may continue to do so as adults. A study found that the prevalence of dating violence has been shown to increase with age (Halpern et al., 2001). Similar findings have been found for victims. One study found that both males and females who were victimized by sexual harassment at the beginning of high school were more likely to face victimization in the future by both friends and dating partners (Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes, & Jaffe, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to tackle this issue early on through effective prevention strategies before it reaches a continuum. Furthermore, given the widespread use of social media among today's adolescent population, it may be beneficial to use this means as a form of connecting and informing them on issues pertaining to cyberbullying and dating violence. Opportunities can be created through the use of the internet, such as online counselling or public education (Jackson et al., 2000).

Recommendations for Future Research

Literature related to the topic of cyberbullying is continuously being updated and the issue has continued to gain prominence. Given the significance of technology and social media in everyday communication, one does not have to venture far in order to gain accessibility into the lives of others. However, even with growing awareness of cyberbullying and its implications, there are still certain areas that are lacking in research.

Limited research exists on the nature of cyberbullying as it pertains to diverse groups of individuals. There is a paucity of research on cyberbullying in adolescent same-sex relationships. Although it may not always be feasible to determine the sexual orientation of participants, it may be beneficial to examine the nature of cyberbullying across these relationships, and whether or not differences exist. There is also minimal research that has been conducted with respect to cyberbullying across various cultural groups. Although there is research on dating violence and the dynamics that are involved within certain cultures, minimal research exists that evaluates the use of online media such as social networking sites across different cultures. There is also a need for more research on effective prevention programming on cyberbullying, particularly programming that is culturally specific, in order to ensure that prevention efforts target specific needs of individuals. Research on prevention efforts should focus on effective strategies that directly target the issues that today's youth deal with, with a message that they can easily relate to.

In addition, it would be beneficial to have more longitudinal studies on the topic of cyberbullying, particularly as it pertains to the experiences of victims and perpetrators over time. Such research can examine beliefs and perceptions of cyberbullying in younger adolescents, and once again when adulthood is reached. It may be intriguing to compare the experiences of adolescents in dating relationships to those of the same individuals as adults involved in a dating

relationship or marriage. Furthermore, future research should seek to examine the overlap between perpetration and victimization of cyberbullying (such as risk factors and commonalities between these two groups).

Conclusion

The present study examined adolescents' perceptions of cyberbullying within the context of dating relationships. Within the definition of "cyberbullying," terms such as "cyberstalking" and "cyberharassment" were included. Cyberbullying in intimate relationships also fell under the category of "dating violence." A total of 70 participants were involved in the study, and were composed of grade 12 students in a high school in southwestern Ontario. Participants were invited to participate through convenience sampling. A survey on the topic of cyberbullying was distributed, which was then followed by semi-structured focus groups in six classrooms. A mixed methods approach was utilized, with quantitative and qualitative analysis procedures. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively through frequencies and with the use of chi squares. Qualitative data was analyzed descriptively through looking at major themes that were generated from student responses throughout the discussions.

The results provided insight on adolescents' perceptions of cyberbullying, including gender differences in likelihood of perpetration, perceptions of severity, motives, likelihood of reporting, and prevention strategies. The results revealed that generally females are more often perceived as perpetrators of cyberbullying, however this is more explicitly in the context of friendships, whereas males are more thought of as perpetrators of cyberbullying in dating relationships. Revenge was implicated as a potential motive for cyberbullying, and this was observed in both the quantitative data generated by the survey and in the focus group

discussions. It was also reported that cyberbullying can be intended as something that is not meant to be harmful (such as a prank or a joke). Participants agreed that cyberbullying can occur in a dating relationship, and indicated that it is most likely to occur upon termination of the relationship. In terms of potential prevention strategies, participants rated the involvement of peers as being the highest, followed by the media. With the latter, tactics that provide awareness on the consequences of cyberbullying along with the impact on victims were suggested.

Although the topic of cyberbullying has gained prominence and is spoken about more frequently, it appears as though adolescents may not firmly grasp the consequences that are associated with these types of behaviours. There is a need for more education and awareness of the issue, and it is important for adolescents to be directly involved in the process.

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APPENDIX A

Student Consent Form

Study: Adolescents' Experiences with Cyberbullying and Dating Violence: A Mixed Methods Analysis

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

Your name (please print)

* Signature

Date

Principal Investigators:

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

Research Assistants:

Nasim Shojayi, M.Ed Counselling Psychology Candidate
Western, University

Katherine Reif, M.Ed Counselling Psychology Candidate
Western, University

APPENDIX B

Student Assent Form

Study: Adolescents' Experiences with Cyberbullying and Dating Violence: A Mixed Methods Analysis

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

Your name (please print)

* Signature

Date

Principal Investigators:

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

Research Assistants:

Nasim Shojayi, MA Counselling Psychology Candidate
Western, University

Katherine Reif, MA Counselling Psychology Candidate
Western, University

APPENDIX C

Student Cyberbullying Information Letter

Name of Study: Adolescents' Experiences with Cyberbullying and Dating Violence: A Mixed Methods Analysis

Investigator:

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

Research Assistants:

Nasim Shojayi, MA (candidate) - Western University

Katherine Reif, MA (candidate) – Western University

As a student in [school name], you are invited to participate in a research project being conducted with the Thames Valley District School Board. We are seeking your agreement to participate in a research study, as described below.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a short survey on your knowledge of cyberbullying. You will also be asked to participate in a focus group during regular school hours which will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. You will participate in a discussion among your peers within a classroom/cafeteria setting. There will be questions about your understanding of cyberbullying, experiences, factors related to victimization and perpetration, and help seeking and reporting implications. The information will be recorded through informal note taking, which will later be translated in to major themes and trends.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. The completed hardcopy materials will be stored in a cabinet in Dr. Jaffe's locked office, and the data files will be secured with password protection on the researchers' (Nasim Shojayi and Katherine Reif) computer until May 1, 2014, at which point they will be destroyed. The data files will also be retained by Dr. Jaffe on a password-protected computer in his office for at least seven years from the conclusion of the study (April 1, 2014) or from the date of this study's publication, in accordance with American Psychological Association ethical standards. Your name on your consent form will be kept separate from the other information you provide. At the end of the study we will shred any papers with your name on it. The information will only be reported in terms of group findings.

Risks

There are no known risks to participating in this study. However, it is possible you might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about answering questions in the focus group. You will not be required to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. The researchers will provide you with information on cyberbullying at the end of the focus group. If you do experience distress please talk to the researchers. They will provide you with information on community supports and/or supports within the school that you can access. Discussions will centre on your general

opinions about cyberbullying rather than disclosures about individual experiences with students in your class or school.

Please respect the confidentiality of your peers in the focus group by not repeating personal information outside of the group.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status.

Potential Benefits Associated with Participation

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

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University at 519-661-3036 or ethics@uwo.ca. If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

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

or

Nasim Shojayi, MA Counselling Psychology Candidate
Western, University

or

Katherine Reif, MA Counselling Psychology Candidate
Western, University

APPENDIX D

Parent Information Form

Study: **Adolescents' Experiences with Cyberbullying and Dating Violence: A Mixed Methods Analysis**

Investigators: **Peter Jaffe, Ph.D., C. Psych – Western University**

Research Assistants:

Nasim Shojayi, M.Ed. (candidate) - Western University

Katherine Reif, M.Ed. (candidate) – Western University

TVDSB contact: Robyn Michaud-Turgeon, Acting First Nations Metis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Advisor, Thames Valley District School Board

As a parent of a child in grade 12, your child is invited to participate in a research project being conducted with Western University in partnership with the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB). The study seeks to examine students' understanding of cyberbullying in the context of friendships and adolescent dating relationships. The goal is to gain an understanding of these issues from the perspective of adolescents in order to promote awareness and develop strategies aimed at targeting cyberbullying.

We are seeking your consent and that of your child to participate in the research aspect of this program, as described below. Approximately 100 Grade 12 students will be asked to participate in this study, which is a collaborative effort of TVDSB and Western.

Program Description and Procedure

Students are invited to participate in a research project being conducted with the Thames Valley District School Board. We are seeking your agreement to for your child participate in a research study, as described below.

Study Procedures

Students will be asked to complete a short survey on their knowledge of cyberbullying and dating violence. Furthermore, students will also be asked to participate in a focus group during regular school hours, which will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Students will participate in a discussion among their peers within a classroom/cafeteria setting. There will be questions about their understanding of dating violence and cyberbullying experiences, factors related to victimization and perpetration, and help seeking and reporting implications. The information will be recorded through informal note taking, which will later be translated in to major themes and trends.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The information your child gives us is confidential, and this confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Confidentiality will be breached if your child reports that he or she is in danger of harming themselves or others, or if there is a disclosure of sexual or physical abuse.

Information collected during the focus groups and reflection is not linked to student names. The information collected during this research may be used for educational purposes or become part of a published scientific report. This information will only be reported in terms of group findings. NO information will be reported that would allow anyone to be identified individually.

Risks, Benefits and Voluntary Participation

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary. There are minimal risks involved in this research. Students may feel uncomfortable answering some questions. Your child will not, however, be required to answer any question that makes him or her uncomfortable. Your child may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the research at any time with no effect on his or her program involvement. You may decline to have your child participate, if you wish. Choosing not to participate in the survey will not affect your child's participation in health class or their grades. This research will provide significant social and scientific benefit through the knowledge that will be gained about the impact of a new health curriculum aimed at helping students manage stress and develop positive, healthy relationships.

Additional Information: This letter is yours to keep. If you have any questions about this

Thank-you

Principal Investigator: Peter Jaffe, Ph.D., C. Psych – Western University

Research Assistants:

Nasim Shojayi, M.Ed. (candidate) - Western University

Katherine Reif, M.Ed. (candidate) – Western University

APPENDIX E

Parent Consent Form

Study: **Adolescents' Experiences with Cyberbullying and Dating Violence: A Mixed Methods Analysis**

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

Research Assistants:
Nasim Shojayi, M.Ed. (candidate) - Western University

Katherine Reif, M.Ed. (candidate) – Western University

_____ I DO give consent for my child to participate in this survey

_____ I DO NOT give consent for my child to participate in this survey

Parent Name (Print) _____

Student Name (Print) _____

Parent Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX F

Cyberbullying Student Survey

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

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

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

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Gender:

_____ Male

_____ Female

Grade: _____

Age: _____

Please read this definition carefully before completing this survey.

Cyberbullying "Cyberbullying, which is also referred to as cyberharassment, cyberstalking, and online bullying, is when a person is threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another person on the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. This type of behavior can occur among friendships, acquaintances, or strangers, and its often done in a repetitive manner" (cyberbullying.org).

Dating relationships: "We define 'dating' as two people in an intimate relationship. The relationship may be sexual, but it does not have to be. It may be serious or casual, straight or gay, monogamous or open, short-term or long-term. Some of the most commonly used words to describe dating are: going out, seeing each other, hanging out, dealing, and friends with benefits" (loveisrespect.org).

How likely are you to report cyberbullying, if the perpetrator is:

Please select one response for each statement.

	Very likely	Likely	Not Likely
Friend			
Stranger			
Acquaintance			
Boyfriend/Girlfriend			
Ex-Boyfriend/Girlfriend			
Other			

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

Please select one response for each.

	Very likely	Likely	Not Likely
One of your friends is cyberbullying			
A group of your friends is cyberbullying			
Your Boyfriend/Girlfriend is cyberbullying someone else			

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

Please check all that apply.

- Your Peers
- Your Teachers
- Your Parents
- The Police
- Adults in your Community
- Your boyfriend/girlfriend
- No one

Who uses cyberbullying more often? Please check one response.

- Boys
- Girls
- Same

Have you ever been cyberbullied? Please check one response.

Yes

No

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

Yes

No

Have you ever stopped a cyberbullying incident?

Yes

No

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

Prank

Accident

Revenge

Not really harmful (i.e., “isn’t a big deal”)

Emotionally distressed

Other: _____

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

Discussion with Peers

Discussion with Parents

Discussion with Teachers

Discussion with a(n) Adult(s) in your community

School assemblies

The media

Public Service Announcements (PSA’s)

Nothing

Rate seriousness of the following:

1= Not serious 2 = neutral 3= serious 4=Very serious

1. Spreading rumors about someone online _____
2. Spreading inappropriate pictures online (e.g., nude photos) _____
3. Boyfriend/Girlfriend wanting to constantly know your whereabouts _____
4. Ex-Boyfriend/Girlfriend wanting to constantly know your whereabouts _____
5. “Creeping” someone on a social networking site, everyday _____

APPENDIX G

Focus Group Script and Questions

- *Enter classroom → Nasim and Katherine*
- “Hello everyone, [state our names], we are from Western University, in the Masters of Education, Counselling Psychology program
- HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: Research showed that within the Thames Valley District School Board, cyberbullying seems to be an issue, and although survey data was collected it may not necessarily mean the same thing to everyone. We want student’s views on the issues of cyberbullying and we would appreciate it if you would share your thoughts and feelings with us, but don’t feel like you have to share. And if at any point you would like to leave, please feel free to do so. If you don’t already know:

Cyberbullying, which is also referred to as cyberharassment, cyberstalking, and online bullying, is when a person is threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another person on the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. This type of behavior can occur among friendships, acquaintances, or strangers, and its often done in a repetitive manner” (cyberbullying.org).

Dating relationships: “We define “dating” as two people in an intimate relationship. The relationship may be sexual, but it does not have to be. It may be serious or casual, straight or gay, monogamous or open, short-term or long-term. Some of the most commonly used words to describe dating are: going out, seeing each other, hanging out, dealing, and friends with benefits” (loveisrespect.org).

- “Before we start, we would appreciate it if you would all take a minute to fill out a brief questionnaire asking for your thoughts on cyberbullying”
 - *Allow class to take a few minutes to complete questionnaire*
 - *Once completed collect from each student and begin focus group discussion questions*

Focus Group Questions

Repeat definitions:

Cyberbullying: which is also referred to as cyberharassment, cyberstalking, and online bullying, is when a person is threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another person on the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. This type of behavior can occur among friendships, acquaintances, or strangers, and its often done in a repetitive manner and the intent is to harm” (cyberbullying.org).

What do think about this definition?

- *Probing question: Is there anything you would add to the definition? Is there anything you would remove from the definition?*

Dating relationships: “We define “dating” as two people in an intimate relationship. The relationship may be sexual, but it does not have to be. It may be serious or casual, straight or gay, monogamous or open, short-term or long-term. Some of the most commonly used words to describe dating are: going out, seeing each other, hanging out, dealing, and friends with benefits” (loveisrespect.org).

What do think about this definition?

- *Probing question: Is there anything you would add to the definition? Is there anything you would remove from the definition?*

- *If someone is a victim of cyberbullying, why would they also be a perpetrator of cyberbullying?*
 - *Probing question: Would it be a form of retaliation/revenge?*
- *How does someone know they are cyberbullying? What do you have to do to be a cyber-bully? What makes someone a cyber-victim?*

- *Why would you be likely to report to one source over the other?*
 - *Probing question: Which sources would you be more likely to report to? Parents, teachers, police, friends/peers?*
 - *Probing question: What should a victim do if they have experienced or are experiencing cyberbullying?*
- *What do you feel can be done to prevent or stop cyberbullying?*
 - *Probing question: What do you think your school can do? What about your parents or your teachers?*
- *What have you seen in the media recently concerning cyberbullying?*
- *What are some examples of minor forms of cyberbullying?*
 - *Probing question: What are some examples of severe forms of cyberbullying?*
- *When might cyberbullying be a way of just joking around?*
- *How might girls and guys be cyberbullied differently?*

- *Probing question: How might cyberbullying be different if a girl bullies another girl, if a girl bullies a guy, if a guy bullies another guy, or if a guy bullies a girl?*
 - When a friend is a cyberbully, what do you do?
 - Probing question: If an acquaintance or stranger is a cyberbully, what do you do?
 - Do you think cyberbullying occurs within intimate relationships?
 - Probing question: if so, at which point in the relationship do you think it is most likely to occur.
 - Who do you think is most likely to cyberbullying, males or females?
 - Probing question: In friendships, dating?
 - What are the possible reasons to cyberbullying in a relationship?
 - Probing question: What are the possible motives?
 - At what point do think cyberbullying becomes severe?
 - Probing question: Within friendships, within dating relationships
 - How prevalent do you think cyberbullying is?
 - When cyberbullying does happen, what are the most common excuses?
 - Probing question: control, jealousy, revenge, accident, meant as harmless
 - How often do you report cyberbullying if it were friend, boyfriend/girlfriend, stranger, or family member?
 - At what point does cyberbullying happen within a dating relationship?
 - Probing question: Beginning, middle, end of relationship
- *At conclusion of focus groups:*
 - PowerPoint Presentation
 - “Thank you so much for your participation in our study. If any of you have any questions please let us know. We know that some of you may have had bad experiences, so please feel free to meet with your teacher, guidance counsellor, or counselling service’s afterwards to discuss any concerns. Thank you once again”
 - Hand out cyberbullying resource sheet

APPENDIX H

Cyberbullying Resource Sheet

CYBERBULLYING AND DATING VIOLENCE:

Name of Study: Adolescents Experiences With Cyberbullying and Dating Violence: A Mixed methods Approach

RESOURCES

Who can you go to when you need help or have questions?

- ✓ **Parents**
- ✓ **Teachers**
- ✓ **Guidance counsellors**
- ✓ **Trusted peers**
- ✓ **Trusted community members**
- ✓ **Police and other authority members**

OTHER RESOURCES

- **Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868**
– www.kidshelphone.ca
- **Stop-A-Bully (Safe and Anonymous)**
– www.stopabully.ca
- **Cyberbullying**
– www.cyberbullying.ca
- **Wired Safety**
-- www.wiredsafety.org
- **Teen Abuse, the hotline: 1-800-799-7233**
-- www.thehotline.org

Safety Tips for Socializing Safely

- Never give out personal information (e.g., home phone number, address, school location)
- Do not post pictures or videos that are violent or humiliating
- Do not respond to unknown emails, text messages, Facebook messages etc.
- Do not retaliate, report incidences of violence and bullying
- Treat others with respect



If you have any questions regarding the study please email

Peter Jaffe

Nasim Shojayi

Katherine Reif

Katherine Reif

EDUCATION

Graduate

M.A. Counselling Psychology (Candidate '14)

Western University, London, Ontario, Canada.

Master's Thesis Supervisor: Peter Jaffe, Ph.D.

Thesis Title: The use of technology and electronic media in adolescent dating violence

M.Ed Educational Psychology, Conferred October 2012

Specialization in Special Education

Western University, London, Ontario, Canada.

September 2011-October 2012

Undergraduate

B.Sc. (Hons), Conferred June 2010

Major in Psychology, Minors in Philosophy and Political Science

University of Toronto, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

September 2006-June 2010

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Clinical Internship (2013-2014)

Student Intern at the Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System

Clinical Supervisor: Dr. Karen Bax

London, ON

Responsibilities include: Providing counselling and support services and advocacy to young offenders and youth-at-risk in various community and youth justice agencies, as well as conducting assessments, making referrals to psychiatric and psychological services, and collaborating with various mental health professionals and agencies to support the needs of the youth.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant-Paid

Supervisor: Dr. Immaculate Namukasa, Faculty of Education, Western University

Research Assistant for the School Board-University Research Exchange (SURE) Network

October-November 2013

Tasks include: facilitation and coordination of an upcoming festival, marketing and promotion of the event, preparation of registration materials, and facilitation of discussion

Research Assistant-Paid

Supervisor: Ian Kerr, Project Manager, Applied Research and Education

Research Assistant for the Child and Parent Resource Institute
June 2013-Present

Tasks include: Preparation of research and mental health assessment materials, data analysis, and literature reviews

Research Assistant-Paid

Supervisor: Dr. Peter Jaffe, Director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children

Research Assistant for the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children

Summer Position (April-June 2013)

Tasks included: Preparation of research materials, literature reviews, and other research tasks

Research Assistant-Volunteer

Supervisor: Piya Sorcar, Stanford University

Research Assistant for Stanford University's Word Acquisition Study in London, ON

Summer Position (April-May 2013)

Tasks included: Data collection and preparation, collaboration with prominent researchers, and running participants.

Research Assistant-Paid

Supervisor: Dr. Immaculate Namukasa, Faculty of Education, Western University

Research Assistant for Dr. Namukasa's work on Mathematics Education

September-April 2013

Tasks included: Data analysis, organization and storage, editing and formatting scientific research reports, and conducting and transcribing oral interviews.

Event Planner & Coordinator-Volunteer

Western Research Forum Committee

Western University

London, Ontario

October 2011-April 2012

Tasks included: Planning, coordinating, and facilitating an annual graduate research event aimed at promoting graduate-level student research.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Group Co-Facilitator

Provincial Parole and Probation

Middlesex County Youth Justice Services

London, Ontario

October 2013-Present

I have developed programs and manuals for group counselling with male and female youth. I was responsible for organizing, coordinating and co-facilitating these groups on a weekly basis.

Group Co-facilitator
Holt Counselling and Consulting
Provincial Parole and Probation
St. Thomas, Ontario
January 2014-Present

I have collaborated with a licensed psychotherapist and co-facilitated weekly groups with mandated adult male sex offenders.

Group Co-facilitator
Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre
London, ON
January-March 2014

I was responsible for co-facilitating a parenting group for caregivers of school-aged children dealing with custody issues, and planning and implementing a program for weekly sessions.

Student Counsellor
Wait-List Clinic
Canadian Mental Health Association
London, Ontario
September-December 2012

I worked with adults with mental illness who have been placed on a wait list for counselling services. I was supervised by Dr. William Newby, Ph.D., Registered Psychologist.

Editor & Chairperson
Western Graduate Review
Western University
London, Ontario
October 2011-April 2012

I helped plan, organize, and contribute to an online magazine that spotlights graduates students and student life at the university.

Youth Services Coordinator
St. Christopher House
Toronto, Ontario
January-August 2011

I provided counselling and educational support and advocacy to youth of diverse backgrounds in the greater Toronto area. I also aided newcomer youth in their transition to Canadian culture and in dealing with acculturation issues.

Student Resource Worker
Philip Pocock Catholic Secondary School
Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
Mississauga, Ontario
January 2009-June 2011

I assisted youth with behavioural and learning disabilities and other exceptionalities by providing educational and one-on-one support, assessment design and modelling via the school's Student

Success Program initiative, the Special Education department's Planning for Independent Progress (PIP) program, as well as the school's Academic Resource program. I also assisted staff members in the preparation and review of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and in the Identification, Placement & Review Committee (IPRC) process.

Mentor

Youth Assisting Youth (YAY)

Toronto, Ontario

July 2010-July 2011

I mentored a 12-year-old child with disabilities through weekly meeting aimed at improving the child's cognitive thinking, problem-solving, and critical thinking skill set. I also organized and spearheaded interactive activities with a focus on improving adolescent participation and socialization among various youth groups.

Facilitator

Parkdale High Park Ontario Early Years Centre

Toronto, Ontario

January-November 2011

I supervised and challenged small children (1-3 years old) through a variety of educational games and teaching tools. I also promoted social interaction between parents and children through various innovative cognitive strategies and initiatives.

Tutor

Frontier College

The Boys and Girls Club of Canada

Toronto, Ontario

January-March 2010

I tutored, supervised, and worked one-on-one with elementary school-aged children. I helped design and implement innovative, interesting and challenging classroom activities with a focus on developing cognitive thinking and problem solving skills from an early age.

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Personal Tutor

Mississauga, Ontario

September 2008 –March 2009

I provided personalized tutoring services to an elementary school-aged child with a hearing impairment and facilitated interactive activities to promote learning.

Teaching Assistant

Heritage Language Program

St. Claire Elementary School

Mississauga, Ontario

September 2007-June 2008

I assisted a heritage language teacher with classroom activities and providing one-on-one support to students.

NON PEER-REVIEWED POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Reif, K. (April, 2013).

The use of technology and electronic media in adolescent dating violence: Projected outcomes.
The 2013 Robert MacMillan Graduate Research in Education Symposium
Western University
London, Ontario, Canada

Reif, K (November, 2013).

The use of technology and electronic media in adolescent dating violence: Projected outcomes.
IGNITE: Research-to-Practice Festival
Western University
London, Ontario, Canada

PUBLICATIONS

Jaffe, P., Straatman, A., Harris, B., Georges, A., Vink, K., & Reif, K. (2013). Emerging trends in teacher sexual misconduct in Ontario 2007-12. *Education and Law Journal*, 23(1), 19-39.

Reif, K., Arbeau, K., Vilijoen, J., Stewart, S. L., Leschied, A. W., & Cunningham, A. (In Preparation). Criminality prevention collaborative action plan for children and youth. In Stewart, S.L., Theall, L.A., Morris, J.N., et al. *interRAI Child and Youth Mental Health Collaborative Action Plans (CAPs) for use with the interRAI Child and Youth Mental Health (ChYMH) Instrument, Research Version 1*. Washington, DC: interRAI.

Reif, K., Arbeau, K., & Stewart, S. (In Preparation). YJ-Control interventions in custody or detention. In Stewart, S.L., Arbeau, K.A., Theall, L.A., Morris, J.N., Berg, K., Björkgren, M., Declercq, A., Finne-Soveri, H., Fries, B.E., Frijters, D., Gray, L., Hawes, C., Henrard, J.C., Hirdes, J.P., Ljunggren, G., Meehan, B., Smith, T., Steel, K., Szczerbinska, K., Topinková, E. (2013). *interRAI Youth Justice Custodial Facilities Collaborative Action Plans (CAPs) for use with the interRAI Youth Justice Custodial Facilities Instrument, Research Version 1*. Washington, DC: interRAI.

Reif, K., Arbeau, K., & Stewart, S. (In Preparation). YJ-Exploitation by others in custody or detention. In Stewart, S.L., Arbeau, K.A., Theall, L.A., Morris, J.N., Berg, K., Björkgren, M., Declercq, A., Finne-Soveri, H., Fries, B.E., Frijters, D., Gray, L., Hawes, C., Henrard, J.C., Hirdes, J.P., Ljunggren, G., Meehan, B., Smith, T., Steel, K., Szczerbinska, K., Topinková, E. (2013). *interRAI Youth Justice Custodial Facilities Collaborative Action Plans (CAPs) for use with the interRAI Youth Justice Custodial Facilities Instrument, Research Version 1*. Washington, DC: interRAI.

Reif, K., Arbeau, K., & Stewart, S. (In Preparation). YJ-Support system for release from

custody or detention. In Stewart, S.L., Arbeau, K.A., Theall, L.A., Morris, J.N., Berg, K., Björkgren, M., Declercq, A., Finne-Soveri, H., Fries, B.E., Frijters, D., Gray, L., Hawes, C., Henrard, J.C., Hirdes, J.P., Ljunggren, G., Meehan, B., Smith, T., Steel, K., Szczerbinska, K., Topinková, E. (2013). *interRAI Youth Justice Custodial Facilities Collaborative Action Plans (CAPs) for use with the interRAI Youth Justice Custodial Facilities Instrument, Research Version 1*. Washington, DC: interRAI.

FORUMS & CONFERENCES ATTENDED

IGNITE: Research-to-Practice Festival

School Board-University Research Exchange (SURE), Western University

November 23rd, 2013

London, Ontario

Social Media and Sexual Violence Conference

Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women and Children

November 7th & 8th, 2013

London, Ontario

Research-to-Practice Festival: Ethical Teachers, Ethical Researchers

School Board-University Research Exchange (SURE), Brock University

November 2nd, 2013

St. Catharines, Ontario

The 2013 Robert MacMillan Graduate Research in Education Symposium

April 18th, 2013

London, Ontario

Human Trafficking Forum

Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women and Children

March 5th, 2013

London, Ontario

University of Western Ontario Research Day

March 17th, 2012

London, Ontario

WORKSHOPS ATTENDED

Fear & Self-Loathing: Youth, Anxiety, & Trauma

November 19th & 20th, 2013

Toronto, Ontario

Substance Abuse & Addictions:

Unique Cultural, Legal, and Clinical Considerations for First Nations Families

November 13th, 2013

Sarnia, Ontario

Introduction to DBT: Skillful Living

October 24th, 2013

London, Ontario

FASD: All in This Together-Supporting Professional Capacity in Our Communities

September 27th, 2013

London, Ontario

Working Together to Support Children and Youth with Sexual Behaviour Problems

February 11, 2014

London, Ontario

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association

Student Member, 2012-2013

Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counseling

Student Member, 2012-2013

International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services

Student Member, 2013

Youth Justice Ontario

Student Affiliate, 2013