CYBERBULLYING: WHEN BULLIES FOLLOW YOU HOME

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Researchers have studied adolescent bullying behavior since the 1970s, however, today’s technological advances have opened the door to a new form of abuse. Teens can no longer escape the wrath of their bullies once they have left the school grounds, because bullies are following them home. Cyberbullying is a new phenomenon in which bullies use computer-mediated communication (CMC) to torment their victims. This research project focused on uncovering some of the mysteries surrounding this new means of bullying. A grounded theory analysis of stories written by victims revealed cyberbullies often use synchronous chat tools, e-mail, web sites, and cell phone text messages to reach their victims. Data analysis also revealed victims use of contextualization, descriptions of their bullying episodes, and discussions of their responses and outcomes to characterize their experiences. Interestingly, the researcher found victims of cyberbullying generally were also victims of face-to-face bullying as well.
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CHAPTER 1

CYBERBULLYING: A NEW THREAT

Introduction

Children victimized by bullies at school previously avoided the abuse within the safe environment of their home, but not anymore. Researchers have studied bullying since the 1970s (see Olweus, 1978), but in the year 2004 this phenomenon has moved from the halls of school to the Internet. Today, adolescents face the threat of being bullied 24 hours a day as bullies attack their victims at school and online. Recent news reports have detailed how these bullies operate in cyberspace. For example, one report detailed a Web site, Schoolscandals.com, used by adolescents to spread rumors about fellow schoolmates’ alleged sexual activities (Wolf, 2004). Another story told of a 15-year-old girl who discovered an entire Web page designed specifically to insult and threaten her (Cyber bullies, 2003). Other news sources report victimization using e-mail, chat rooms, as well as cell phones. One bully taunted his victim by snapping a cell phone picture of the overweight teen in the locker room and then sending a mass email to their schoolmates (Bleck, 2003). Although these instances do not take place in face-to-face interactions, they can be socially and personally damaging for the victims. Cyberbullying continues to grow as more
adolescents gain access to the Internet, therefore, researchers must study this phenomenon in order to understand how it functions as the newest means for teens to negotiate status, power, and control.

In order to understand the phenomena of cyberbullying, we must first look at a combination of factors contributing to the phenomena. In this paper, I will discuss and draw connections between socialization, adolescent friendships, bullying, and computer-mediated communication (CMC). A unique combination of these elements has paved the way for cyberbullying among adolescents. For example, children are socialized differently largely according to their biological sex. By adolescence, boys learn to behave in an aggressive and competitive manner, while girls strive to live up to the expectation they should be nice and address the needs of others (Maltz & Borker, 1982; Thorne & Luria, 1986). These expectations place both girls and boys in precarious positions when they enter adolescence. Children face extreme challenges during adolescence when friend groups and status become of utmost importance (Phillipsen, 1999); however, adolescence is also a time when teens endure the most intense criticism by their peers (Berndt, 1982). Society’s distinctively gendered socialization of children limits the tools they have to use in managing these situations (Nakamura, 2001); boys often use physical or verbal abuse in an attempt to preserve
or establish their manhood (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000), while girls use more relational tactics to preserve their social status and image as a “nice” girl (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

**Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)**

Bullies have found new technological means to seek out their victims. Most children have access to a computer and the Internet; in 2001 more than 71% of U.S. families with children under the age of 18 owned a computer with Internet service (Statistical Abstracts, 2002). In four years, the number of adolescents (ages 9 to 17) using the Internet grew from 33.2% in 1997 to 68.6% in 2001 (Statistical Abstracts, 2002). Through computer-mediated communication, adolescents experience torment outside of the school environment. However, the abuse is no less serious and often results in negative emotional, social, and psychological outcomes for all of those involved. The problem is not going away; instead, increased access to the Internet has made it easier than ever for bullies to reach their victims 24 hours a day. Cyberbullies have used e-mail, chat rooms, Web sites, instant messaging, and even cell phone to taunt their victims.

People spend a significant amount of time online. In 2002, the U.S. Census Bureau projected by the year 2005 Internet users (age 12 and older) will spend 194 hours online for that year (Statistical Abstracts, 2002). In 1998, 4 trillion e-mail
messages were exchanged in the United States alone (Haythornwaite, 2001). A group of college students reported they used the Internet because it was a convenient way to seek information and entertainment as well as maintain some of their interpersonal relationships (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Younger generations have grown up with the Internet, therefore, many are avid users. Adolescent spend an average 6 hours on the Internet per week (Haythornwaite, 2001) and the top three activities reported by users included e-mail, Instant messaging, and Web surfing (Anfuso, 2003). However, Facer, Furlong, Furlong, and Sutherland (2001) point to the fact that parents may not know their way around the Internet quite as well as their children. This may give children more freedom on the Internet because their parents are not savvy enough to understand their actions. Even if parents understand the Internet, one study showed children generally operate independently of their parents while on the computer (Orleans & Laney, 2000). If the children did talk, they spoke with siblings or friends. This study also noted children utilized e-mail, chat rooms, and interactive games during 65% of their time online. Adolescents may find internet communication attractive for several reasons including the 24-hour access to friends and the ability to be anonymous or present a false identity.
Rationale

Researchers suggest bullying occurs frequently during adolescence (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001; Glover, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). In 2000, Espelage, Bosworth, and Simon found 80% of the 558 middle school participants reported involvement in bullying behavior during the month prior to the survey. A study conducted in the United Kingdom looked at 25 secondary schools and determined an average of 75% of the student population suffered the wrath of a bully each year (Glover et al., 2000). A larger survey by the Parents’ Resource Institute for Drug Education asked 114,000 students from 28 states in the U.S. about their experiences with bullying and almost 40% reported enacting some form of physical aggression upon a peer sometime between the sixth and twelfth grade (Gleaton, 2001). This percentage did not take into account those who verbally or indirectly victimized others. A review of bullying research from 1978 to 1997 revealed the large majority of research focused on direct physical and verbal aggression, while less than a third of the work during these years looked at indirect aggression such as spreading rumors and social exclusion (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Other bullying researchers agree the prevalence of indirect bullying is relatively unknown largely because the behaviors are conducted covertly and difficult to recognize as bullying (Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2000; Espelage et al., 2000).
Whether the bullies use physical, verbal or indirect means, bullying affects children. Parents and teachers once believed bullying behavior such as teasing, name-calling and rough housing were simply child’s play, however, research indicates bullying has severe consequences (Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). Victims and bullies often suffer social, academic, and psychological consequences (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Grilo, Wifley, Brownell, & Rodin, 1994; Sharp, 1996). These consequences can lead to depression, acts of violence and crime for victims and bullies (Kaltiala-Heino & Rimpela, 1999; Roland, 2002). In extreme cases, victims have chosen to commit suicide in order to put an end to the harassment (Lipman, 2003; Bearman & Moody, 2004).

Today’s technology provides bullies with a variety of mediums (cell phones, Internet, digital cameras) for harassing their victims. For example, bullies use the Internet to reach mass audiences and often remain anonymous while continuing to torment their victims. Bullying through the use of technological means, referred to as cyberbullying,

involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online personal polling Web sites, to
support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others (Belsey, 2004, para. 1).

Belsey launched cyberbullying.ca, a Web site devoted to informing people about bullying on the Internet and through other technological means (Mitchell, 2004). Cyberbullying remains an area of bullying research untouched by communication scholars, therefore, some of the only information existing on the topic is found in popular press accounts and Web sites devoted to educating people about the phenomenon.

This paper seeks to examine cyberbullying from a communication perspective. As mentioned previously, many popular press reports have indicated cyberbullying is a serious issue facing adolescents today. Technological advances providing new means of communication have enabled bullies to torment their victims anytime of the day or night often without detection. Bullies and victims suffer severely and we can only expect negative outcomes to increase as more teens participate in and fall victim to cyberbullying. We can better understand cyberbullying by reviewing the following elements which contribute to the use of this new means of inflicting abuse: socialization, friendship, symbolic interactionism, social identity, and bullying. I begin this study by detailing how the path from socialization to cyberbullying is clearly connected.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Socialization

Through socialization, we inform children of cultural and societal views concerning their gender, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. We learn early in life what role our family, friends and society expect us to perform (Johnson & Young, 2002; Henke, Umble, & Smith, 1996). Our biological sex determines much of this script. For example, gender socialization begins the moment a mother gives birth. We talk to girls about their feelings and relationships, and we talk to boys about what they can do and who they are going to become.

Communication constructs, socializes, and perpetuates masculine and feminine stereotypes (Wouk, 1999). Even if a child’s family tries to equip them with a range of communication patterns, the media, educators, and friends may influence them to follow more gendered patterns of behavior. For example, children spend an average of 38 hours per week on electronic media such as television, video games, Internet, and music (Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, & Brodie, 1999). Research estimates that by the age of 18, a person has watched approximately 15,000 hours of television (Strasburger, 1995). Children learn a significant amount about gendered expectations from television, especially advertisements. Johnson and Young (2002) looked at the
types of verbs used in children’s advertisements and found boy’s advertisements used verbs related to competition and destruction whereas girls commercials used feelings and nurturing verb elements. The combination of these findings and the fact children view 24 advertisements per hour suggest commercials construct and reinforce gender stereotypes among young children. Another strong influence on school age children comes from their friends.

Once a child enters school, friend groups appear to have a significant effect on a child’s communication behavior. Researchers have investigated children’s communication along gendered lines in order to understand better the unique styles of interaction used by boys and girls. Many researchers use the Single World Hypothesis to help explain the gendered communication phenomenon; the hypothesis posits children generally choose same sex friendships, consequently limiting their exposure to a broad range of communication styles and behaviors (Nakamura, 2001). Thorne and Luria (1986) found segregated boys tend to play outdoors in large groups and their activities take up more space compared to girls’ activities. They also play in a more aggressive and competitive manner. Boys engage in organized sports, which encourage competition. Boys’ games generally have clearly defined rules and goals such as most organized sports; therefore, these games require less discussion about how to play them successfully (Maltz & Borker,
In contrast, girls chose to interact in pairs or small groups (Thorne & Luria, 1986). Girls’ games depend on cooperation, turn taking, and negotiation of roles such as playing school and house (Maltz & Borker, 1982).

Because of segregated play and gendered expectations, feminine communication rules are very different from masculine communication rules. Females are taught to view communication as a means to respond to the needs of others, cooperate, and deal with emotions, while males are taught to use communication to assert their identity, hold attention, and accomplish things (Thorne & Luria, 1986; Wouk, 1999; Speer, 2002). Orenstein (1994) found the expectations for females’ communication behaviors prove to be quite contradictory and difficult to meet. For example, girls are expected to be “selfless and selfish, silent and outspoken, as well as cooperative and competitive” (Orenstein, 1994, p. 36-37). In addition, Brown and Gilligan (1992) found adolescent girls have a distinct understanding of how they should act in order to portray the “perfect girl.” The participants of their study described the “perfect girl” as someone who has no bad thoughts or feelings, the kind of person everyone wants to spend time with, the girl who is worthy of praise, attention, inclusion and love (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). In contrast, society expects and teaches boys to behave as “tough guys” encouraging
the notion of autonomy and discouraging the expression of emotions, therefore, sentencing boys to a life in which they experience feelings they cannot or will not articulate (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).

Once children begin to recognize the communication and behavioral norms, they learn to sanction those who do not display the expected behaviors. For example, a boy who does not like to play sports or who is highly sensitive might be called a wimp or a sissy. In the same way, a girl who plays in a physically aggressive manner may find it difficult to make friends with other girls who are not used to such behavior. When children behave in a manner considered outside of the norm for their sex, parents and peers may reprimand or correct them for stepping outside of acceptable boundaries. In adolescence, teens focus on such differences and use them to label and segregate each other into social groups. Bullying occurs within friendships and groups often as a means to negotiate or maintain status among peers.

**Friendships**

Friendships provide adolescents with a sense of belonging outside of their family unit. As children enter into their teenage years, they seek autonomy by asserting their independence and making decisions for themselves. These efforts remove some of the control from parents and give teens more agency in their lives. Adolescents co-construct relatively egalitarian relationships as compared to the
hierarchical relationship they share with parents (Giordano, 2003). They begin to turn to their friends for support instead of their parents and during this time come to value their friendships over all other relationships (Phillipsen, 1999).

Berndt (1982) described adolescent friendships as ideal relationships enabling friends to engage in increased self-disclosure and share an intimate knowledge of each other. Giordano (2003) attributes teens increased self-disclosure and resulting closeness to the notion that they can be themselves around each other as compared to the more closed and guarded relationship they have with parents. Adolescents even use language representative of their idealistic feelings about their friendships such as “best friend.”

Hardy, Bukowski, and Sippola (2002) note the challenge adolescents face in forming and maintaining friendships as they move into middle-level school. Often children enter middle school populations significantly outnumbering their elementary school, presenting adolescents with more and varied social crowds. Students’ interests and class selection affects how frequently they see their “old friends.” Therefore, Hardy et al. (2002) found adolescents often lose old friends as they enter middle-level school and form new friendships with previously familiar and unfamiliar peers. Unlike the friend groups of primary school, adolescents segregate into specific social groups with distinct and select members. Within these groups, teens receive
feedback differing from one-on-one friendships. As Giordano states, “By virtue of direct and indirect communication processes (adulation, approval, gossip, teasing, ridicule), adolescents learn a great deal about themselves, their social worth, and the broader cultural world they inhabit through experiences beyond the confines of close friendship” (Giordano, 2003, p.267). As members of social crowds, teens begin to understand what benefits or detriments come with their membership and where they fit into social hierarchy. Adolescents’ reliance on their peer groups for feedback ultimately affects the way they view themselves and other social crowds.

Teens often categorize one another and social crowds based on similarities and differences. Berndt (1982) found adolescents form friendships with similar peers. The similarity between friends and groups of friends may be due in part to teens choosing peer groups they perceive as similar to them; however, the real catalyst causing similarity among friends may be the group’s influence on adolescents to behave as the group in order to become and remain a member. Often the name or label of a social crowd connotes which characteristics the group feels they hold collectively.

Brown, Mory, and Kinney (1994) describe a social crowd as a label representing personalities or behaviors of the members of a group. Adolescents create and designate the stereotypic labels for their peer groups. The social groups
may or may not identify with the labels’ narrow connotation. For example, if peers label a group of teens as “brains,” the group may identify with the fact that they earn good grades, however, they might also consider themselves socially and athletically inclined and therefore, label themselves as “preps” or “athletes.” Whether they identify with the labels or not, some adolescents chose to move while others are forced to move from one group to another (Urberg, Degirmencioglu, Tolson, & Halliday-Scher, 2000).

Urberg et al. (2000) found adolescents group together because of perceived similarities, and that social crowds display the most friendliness toward peer groups they perceive to be most similar. Each group inherently falls into a hierarchical framework and therefore, membership in the various crowds determines the adolescent’s social status. The battle to enter into or remain in the group with the most status, power, and control often fuels bullying behavior. Girls and boys negotiate positions of power differently because of the unique ways they interact within their social groups.

Girls and boys view their close friendships in different ways. Research indicates girls engage in much more intimate activities with their friends such as talking about thoughts and feelings (see Giordano, 2003; Berndt, 1982). Their relationships also tend to be characterized as exclusive or closed. Berndt (1982)
found girls were more likely to offer help to someone considered their friend as compared to someone they considered a classmate. Girls often operate through the use of inclusion and exclusion. Nilan (1991) found girls distinguish their friends as the girls they “sit at lunch with” or hang out with. She also suggests girls expect unity, empathy, solidarity, loyalty, mutual support, fairness, truthfulness and modesty from their friends. These characteristics often determine a girl’s inclusion or exclusion from a friendship or social crowd (Nilan, 1991; see also Giordano, 2003).

However, friendships function differently for adolescent boys. Boys tend to be members of more open social groups. Research indicates boys are just as likely to help a friend as a classmate in need (Berndt, 1982). Boys report receiving less social support from their friends (Champion, Vernberg, & Shipman, 2003). Kindlon and Thompson (2000) found boys place value on how “manly” they and their friends appear. They also note boys do not express care for friends verbally instead, they bond by participating in activities together (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).

Although male and female adolescents experience friendships differently, these relationships and memberships in social groups significantly affect their identity and adjustment. Teens hold the information they receive from their peers in high regard as they navigate the development of a more adult-like identity. Symbolic interactionism and social identity theory help explicate this process.

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Theory

Symbolic Interactionism

Humans develop their sense of self or identity through a process known as symbolic interactionism, which focuses on a person’s social and internal interaction (Charon, 1998). Throughout our lives we internalize the perspectives of others and our community in an effort to make sense of the world and ourselves in the world (Prus, 1996). Mead, a forefather of symbolic interactionism, developed the notion that one’s sense of self “must be accounted for in terms of the social process, and in terms of communication” which points to the significant impact of interaction between people (Mead, 1934, p.49). He posited interaction is a reflective process; people use exchanged viewpoints to understand who they are by comparing themselves to one another (Prus, 1996). We begin to see ourselves through the eyes of others.

Our identities arise through social interaction due to others labeling and defining us. For example, when we are young we do not fully understand our uniqueness as compared to others, but as we interact we gain insight into how others see us and develop an understanding of our individuality. Our family often gives us our first labels such as smart, kind, lazy, or shy. However, we may or may not accept these labels. Researchers note the individual’s role in symbolic interactionism as well. Gecas and Schwalbe (1983) discuss human agency and efficacy as key
elements in the development of self-concepts; they argue humans are active not passive in this process. For example, we develop definitions for ourselves through internal interaction. If we complete a task successfully, we may define ourselves as good at that type of task. We choose to internalize the labels and definitions with which we most identify ultimately adding another layer to our understanding of who we are in the world (Charon, 1998; Prus, 1996).

People also define themselves in relation to societal standards. Mead noted the relationship between self and society in developing one’s identity; he indicated people measure and adjust their behavior according to the moral expectations of society (Mead, 1934). Schnell (2001) studied symbolic interactionism in the context of conflict resolution within an organization. He found the organization operated differently than they claimed in resolving conflict. In settings where the organizations claimed to resolve conflict through consensus, during observation the researcher discovered they actually used a voting process; and in settings where they claimed to operate in an egalitarian manner, the researcher found a clear hierarchical structure. Schnell (2001) attributed the differences to the organizations symbolic interaction within the group and their attempts to manage impressions. In essence, we define and conduct ourselves based on the definitions and conduct of the social groups to which we belong. For example, during adolescence we begin shaping a new or
different identity for ourselves; our friends and peers play a more significant role than do our parents in the formation of our new identity. Adolescents look to their friends for acceptance and a safe environment where they can negotiate and explore identities as well as other changes inherent in adolescence (Giordano, 2003). Within these friendships, teens receive additional labels and definitions contributing to the formation of teens’ identities.

Social Identity Theory

According to Social Identity Theory, our identity is inextricably linked to how we perceive our group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1982; Amaral & Monteiro, 2002; Stets & Burke, 2000); we see ourselves or others see us as similar to the identity of a group, therefore, we become labeled as part of the in-group and all other people receive the out-group label (Stets & Burke, 2000). We define our social identity through self-categorization and social comparison. Stets and Burke suggest people who self-categorize emphasize their perceived similarities with the group’s values, attitudes, language and behavior, in which case, individuals place themselves in groups they expect to benefit from most. Through social comparison, we judge out-group characteristics negatively resulting in positive evaluation of the in-group’s social identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). According to Hogg and Abrams (1988), people place themselves in the more positive option of dichotomous social categories such as rich
or poor and competent or incompetent. Society has designated which categories possess power, status, and value. Birth determines some social categories for us, while we choose or are placed into others, however all memberships throughout our lives shape our sense of self (Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

Once we become aware of our membership within a certain group, we may develop an altered view of our fellow members and ourselves. We determine what it means to be a member of our in-group through a comparison of other out-groups (Festinger, 1954 as cited in Amaral & Monteiro, 2002). As we come to identity more closely with our group, the definitions and value of the group affect our self-concept and self-worth (Amaral & Monteiro, 2002). For example, an adolescent with low self-worth might change their self-definition once they become a member of the “popular crowd,” because members of this group enjoy a higher social status. We hold membership in many groups, some more salient than others, and our evaluation of each membership shapes our social identity (Amaral & Monteiro, 2002). Adolescents have learned to use bullying as a means to maintain or establish a desired social identity (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003; Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003).

Teens want to be accepted by others and feel as though they belong. Unfortunately, some adolescents have learned to use aggressive and abusive tactics in order to meet their social goals. Therefore, bullying often arises from a relationship
problem. For example, if an adolescent has a friendship with someone who is outside of their social crowd, they may choose to end the friendship or even use their power and status over that friend in order to remain a member of their social group. Bullies exert power over their victims and repeated bullying episodes serve to increase the bully’s power and decrease the victim’s power causing them to feel defenseless (Craig & Pepler, 2003). Adolescents frequently engage in and fall victim to bullying.

Defining Bullying

Researchers have studied bullying since the 1970s in order to understand this phenomenon. Olweus (1999, pp. 10-11 as cited in Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefoghe, 2002), a pioneer in bullying research, characterized bullying as a combination of the following three criteria:

(1) it is aggressive behavior or intentional ‘harmdoing’ (2) which is carried out repeatedly and over time (3) in an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power. One might add that the bullying behavior often occurs without apparent provocation.

He also added bullying behavior might take the form of physical aggression, verbal aggression, as well as less overt behavior such as nonverbal gestures and acts having social ramifications. In all forms of behavior the bullies maintain the upper
hand because they possess more physical strength, verbal capacity, or social skills than the victim (Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). Researchers also note the difference between aggressive behavior and bullying. Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, and Liefooghe (2002) describe bullying as a subset of aggression. For example, they do not consider a one time brawl between balanced opponents as a form of bullying because it does not meet two of the criteria laid out by Olweus: power differential and a frequent occurrence. In addition, Smith et al. (2002) suggest “friendly teasing,” as opposed to “nasty teasing,” does not constitute bullying either because there is no intent to do harm.

Harmful forms of bullying can be broken down into three categories: direct physical, direct verbal, and indirect (see Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000). Direct physical bullying consists of kicking, hitting, property damage or loss, and other acts involving harm to the victim’s body or belongings (Salmivalli et al., 2000; Smith et al., 2002; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2000).

Bullies in cyberspace obviously cannot resort to physical bullying while online; therefore, they rely on direct verbal and indirect aggression to taunt their victims. Researchers describe direct verbal aggression as name-calling, threatening victims, cruel teasing, as well as spreading rumors (Wolke et al., 2000; Atkin, Smith, Roberto, Fediuk, & Wagner, 2002). Only recently have scholars turned their focus to indirect
aggression used by bullies to harm their victims emotionally, psychologically, or socially (Menesini, Melan, & Pignatti, 2000; Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003). This form of bullying may have received less attention in the past because of its covert nature and consequent difficulty in recognizing an incident when it occurs (Hazler et al., 2001; Pakaslahti, & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2000). Often the bully victimizes in such a manner the victim cannot identify them (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

In general, indirect bullying consists of spreading rumors, social isolation, back stabbing, and manipulating relationships in an effort to cause detriment to the victim (Glover, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Wolke et al., 2000). Regardless of the type of aggression used, both boys and girls bully their peers.

Boys and Girls

While boys and girls both participate in bullying, their experiences are quite different; for example, scholars indicate boys bully their peers more frequently than girls (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003). In addition, girls and boys used different aggression styles; girls resorted to significantly more indirect tactics, while boys used more direct physical and verbal tactics (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000; Roberts, 2000; Schafer, Werner, & Crick, 2002).

Girls who bully have specifically come under the microscope recently. Previously, parents, teachers, and researchers alike focused on the bullying behavior
of boys, largely because boys resort to more overt, physical means of bullying. However, media attention has shed some light on the prevalence of female adolescent bullies.

Casey-Cannon, Hayward, and Gowen (2001) studied a group of adolescent girls in order to gain a better understanding of the relational aggression used to victimize their peers and explore the possibility of a relationship between this victimization and changes in the victim’s self-image and social behavior. Although they used a small sample, their findings indicated all of the participants except for one had been victimized by a bully at least one time, however, most of the participants cited numerous experiences (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001). The majority of the girls described incidents occurring while at school, identifying the aggressors as both male and female peers. The teens most commonly used overt victimization, specifically verbal abuse such as name-calling, insulting comments about physical appearance, race, and intelligence, and derogatory comments intended to single out girls’ differences. In addition to overt behavior, the girls also reported, although less frequently, indirect victimization such as spreading rumors and social isolation. Research indicates girls use certain indirect tactics as a means to maintain their status as “popular” without appearing unfriendly (Eder, 1985). Popular girls spread
gossip in an attempt to either uphold their standing or destroy someone else's status. They also learn to ignore or avoid talking to people who hold a less desirable social position (Eder, 1985).

Aggressive behaviors impact both the victim and the bully socially, academically, and psychologically (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Grilo, Wifley, Brownell, & Rodin, 1994; Sharp, 1996). Victims report issues such as feelings of loneliness, avoidance, intimidation, fear, anxiety, headaches, sleeping problems, as well as stomach aches; and bullies suffer with neck pain, fatigue, and various other psychosomatic symptoms (Dake et al., 2003; Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Often, aggressive behavior can have more extreme negative outcomes for both the victims and the bullies. Scholars suggest many victims and bullies battle with depression and suicidal thoughts as a result of their negative interactions (Kaltiala-Heino, & Rimpela, 1999; Roland, 2002). In extreme cases, victims have chosen to commit suicide in order to put an end to the harassment (Lipman, 2003).

A recent study investigating female victims’ responses to bullying found that the victims reacted both emotionally, including feeling sad, hurt, and rejected as well as behaviorally, including ignoring the bully and the behavior, retaliating physically or verbally, and least of all reporting the incidents to an adult (Casey-Cannon, Hayward,
& Gowen, 2001). The victimization seemed to have a significant impact on the girls in this study. Many of them reported having a more negative body image and the loss of friends. Although victims’ generally report lower self-esteem, bullies often perceive themselves as having relatively good self-perceptions (Johnson & Lewis, 1999; Kaukiainen et al., 2002).

Considering the differences in self-perception, researchers sought to determine how well bullies fit in with their victims and peers. In 2000, Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, and Lagerspetz investigated the relationship between types of bullying behavior and acceptance or rejection of the bullying by their peers. Both sex and type of aggression appeared to be factors in the acceptance or rejection of an aggressor. In terms of sex differences, boys accepted and girls rejected aggressive girls, whereas, both sexes rejected aggressive boys. At an age when attracting attention from the opposite sex is important, aggressive girls may sacrifice being rejected by other girls if they still receive approval from the boys. Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, and Lagerspetz (2000) also found girls most often rejected their female peers who used physical and verbal aggression, however, boys rejected their verbally aggressive male peers. We should not be surprised by girl’s rejection of physical and verbal aggression by other girls because of society’s strong message for girls to behave as “nice” girls (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Interestingly, both sexes showed a higher
acceptance of bullies using indirect means, such as social isolation, spreading rumors, and relationship manipulations in general. Bullies who use indirect aggression often use covert means to harm their victims and because of this many maintain an unknown identity.

CMC Identity

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) provides an ideal means of hiding or falsifying your identity. Face-to-face communication quickly reveals information about one’s age, sex, race, and gender helping us form conclusions about another’s identity. However, communicating through a text-based medium, such as a computer, limits the amount of information revealed due to the lack of physical and paralinguistic nonverbal cues. CMC enables users to have a significant amount of control over how they present themselves. Roberts and Parks (1999) found online users frequently controlled their identity by portraying someone of the opposite sex. The participants reportedly gender-switched out of curiosity, for fun, as a challenge, and, for many women, to avoid sexual harassment.

Creating a new identity may afford power to users whose actual identity inherently lacks the same level of power. For example, Jaffe, Lee, Huang, and Oshagan (1999) suggest pseudonyms used by women are more likely to mask their gender. They posit women take advantage of the opportunity to position themselves
on a more equal level with men by using a gender-neutral or cross-gender pseudonym. Regardless of whether the users’ pseudonyms represented their “true” gender or a masked gender, Jaffe, et al. (1999) found the users continued to leak out gender cues through their use of communication patterns. Women chose language fostering social interdependence (disclosure, support for others, restrained assertiveness), whereas, men more often used more assertive and less supportive communication patterns. These findings present results consistent with the socialized communication behavior research mentioned previously (Wouk, 1999; Speer, 2002).

Bullies choose the Internet because of the anonymity, potential to present themselves with a more powerful identity, ability to reach a mass audience, and access. Cyberbullying pervades the Internet. Frequently, news reports detail the abuse. In December 2003, The Christian Science Monitor reported cyberbullying incidents such as adolescents spreading vicious and sexually explicit rumors about fellow students on a Web site called schoolscandals.com (Paulson, 2003). The magazine also told of students sharing an e-mail with their peers containing a photograph taken covertly of a heavy classmate undressing in the locker room. An article in Parenting also detailed how teens use the anonymity of chat rooms and Instant messaging to threaten and harass other teens (Wolf, 2004). One common
scenario discussed in the article describes a group of girls Instant messaging their victim. The victim believes she is interacting one on one and the bullies befriend her. Eventually the bullies ask leading questions intended to trick the victim into saying something negative about one of the bullies. This information is then used by the bullies to indict the victim for spreading “gossip” and may lead to social isolation for the victim (Wolf, 2004).

Researchers have yet to study the phenomenon in any depth. However, scholars have conducted studies on flaming, which they define as overt attacks (Soukup, 1999; Douglas & McGarty, 2001). Thompsen and Ahn (1992) researched the prevalence of flaming in electronic e-mail and found almost 50% of their participants reported awareness of the phenomenon. Twenty-seven percent of the participants reported experiencing at least 25 flaming incidents in the past year, while a slightly larger percentage (31%) reported experiencing less than 5 flaming incidents in as much time. The people who subscribed to discussion lists reported significantly more exposure to flaming incidents (Thompsen & Ahn, 1992). The authors suggest discussion lists may be more fertile ground for flaming because of the increased anonymity this communication tool inherently provides. Like flamers, cyberbullies attack their victims in an online environment safe for the perpetrator, yet a powerful weapon to harm others.
The path from socialized behavior to cyberbullying is clear. Boys and girls learn distinctively different role expectations early in their lives, ultimately affecting how they communicate and interact especially among same sex peers. During adolescence, teens' place significant importance on evaluations from friends and social crowds as they develop new identities. Bullying is a common tool used by adolescents to negotiate or maintain an identity. In order to gain a better understanding about adolescents' battle with and participation in the cyberbullying phenomenon, this study will focus specifically on cyberbullying in chat rooms designated for adolescents. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

R1: What are the different mediums used to cyberbully?

R2: What are the different forms of cyberbullying?

R3: How do adolescents characterize their face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying experiences?

Researchers have long known and studied the threat face-to-face bullying poses for adolescents and now bullies have taken their torment online. The years of adolescence are challenging for all children as they negotiate independence from their parents, a deeper dependence on friendships, new personal and social identities, as well as other emotional and physical changes. In addition, many teens must also learn to cope with bullying at school and now every time they log-on the
Internet. In the next chapter, the researcher describes the methodology used to investigate the cyberbullying phenomenon including the search for participants, the discovery of the data source, and the method used to analyze the data.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Method

In order to study the cyberbullying phenomena, the researcher conducted a qualitative study. The qualitative methodology of grounded theory provides unique insight into communication phenomena within a culture by allowing the researcher to explore participants experiences through the expression of their feelings, thoughts, and actions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher gathered data for this study from an anti-bullying Web site, Bullying.org (www.bullying.org). By studying communication behaviors detailed by the victims themselves, the data provided information necessary in gaining a better understanding of how cyberbullying functions in the computer-mediated communication context. Before collecting any data, the researcher applied for and received approval from the University of North Texas Internal Review Board (see Appendix A).

Preparation

In preparation, the researcher sought a source from which to gather victims’ accounts of cyberbullying. Initially the researcher obtained a membership to a Yahoo chat room for teens age 13-14 (actual age of members generally encompassed a much broader range) and located a chat room named “#1 Chat-Place for Teens” (no
membership required). The researcher observed (under the screen name aepn_researcher) conversations in both chat rooms looking for instances of bullying, aggression, or abuse of any kind.

In addition, the researcher gathered information during researcher initiated group discussions concerning chat room participants’ cyberbullying experiences. The researcher asked members of a chat room to respond to a question or questions. The discussions were constructed as an informal conversation to allow for spontaneous answers from participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Unfortunately, after more than 15 hours of on-line observations and conversations, the researcher did not encounter data of the quantity or quality needed for this project. The researcher then turned to Web sites directed toward victims and bullies and ultimately found the needed data set. Familiar with numerous anti-bullying Web sites from previous research, the researcher decided to contact the creator of the Bullying.org Web site, William Belsey, to seek permission to use a database of stories posted on the site. Bullying.org is a non-profit organization which aims to educate parents, victims, bullies, and the public in general about issues related to bullying. The Web site’s motto is “Bullying.org, where you are NOT alone!” The site also provides news, information, outlets for expression, opportunities to help fight the cause, and entertainment.
Bullying.org allows some research requests by the media to be posted on the Web site. The organization has a clearly established policy in terms of using the site as a source for research.

From time to time various media from around the world ask Bullying.org to help them research the issue of bullying. If we feel that such requests represent serious, legitimate, professional journalism and are not exploitive, we will permit them to post their messages in this section of Bullying.org.

Giving the media this permission does not represent an official endorsement of these media or the stories that may be published as a result of you helping them. We will not directly contact anyone who has made a submission in confidence to Bullying.org, about such requests. We will post various media requests on this Web page along with their contact information and leave it up to Bullying.org community members to respond as they may feel is appropriate (Bullying.org, 2004).

The Web site does not specifically address issues related to research for scholarly works. The researcher for this project did not find it necessary to post a request for information, however, the researcher did seek permission to use posted stories as a precautionary measure in protecting the victims' privacy.
The story board allows victims and bullies to post their accounts of bullying and Web site visitors may read and reply to stories. After receiving permission from Mr. Belsey, the researcher used the story boards’ search function to collect only those stories which detailed at least one account of cyberbullying. The researcher used the following terms as key words in the search: IM, instant message, instant messaging, Instant Messenger™, MSN®, Yahoo®®, AOL®, AIM®, ICQ®, chat, chatroom, chat-room, chat room, cyberbully, cyberbullying, cyber-bully, cyber-bullying, cyber bully, cyber bullying, internet, net, Web site, Web-site, Website, Web, site, email, e-mail, online, on-line, computer, text message, and text messaging.

The researcher collected a total of 35 stories from Bullying.org (see Appendix B). The stories varied in length from 23 words to 4796 words. All of the authors’ and bullies’ names were removed (most had already been removed by Bullying.org) to protect their identity. Each of the stories were printed and assigned a number by the researcher.

Anderson (1987) notes “the study of human life is an interpretive science” in which “causes and consequences of human behavior are not in objectified attributes but in the meanings that are held by the individuals” (p. 244). Therefore, gathering individual participants’ experiences of cyberbullying provides data from which
researchers can describe and interpret the relationships between social practices and the system of meanings within the group (Anderson, 1987; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Using the Internet as a source for research data has become a topic of discussion among many researchers. Researchers recognize the vast potential for data collection through Internet tools (Riva, 2001). Internet research methods enable researchers to reach specific and/or difficult-to-reach populations such as adolescent victims of cyberbullying in the case of this study (Mathy, Schillace, Coleman, & Berquist, 2002). However, those seeking to understand the scope of Internet research possibilities also note the potential for ethical issues (Eysenbach, & Till, 2001). Eysenbach and Till (2001) suggest using the Internet to collect data can be done ethically once the researcher determines if the Internet community is considered a public or private space. Private spaces generally considered those areas on the Internet which require a membership or registration and that have specific codes or group norms posted on the site to indicate privacy. Spaces which often do not require membership or registration and receive hits by large numbers of users may in most cases be considered public. Eysenbach and Till (2001) advised researchers to use an informed consent if data collected from a private community has the potential to negatively affect the members.
For this project, the researcher collected narratives written by victims of bullying on a public anti-bullying Web site. The victims were not given a specific prompt to help them in writing their stories. The Web site simply provides a place for teens to express themselves through poetry, art work, and personal narratives. Teens may be expressing themselves as a means of coping with their experiences. Previous studies have used Internet narratives as a data source (Fleischmann, 2004; Hardin, 2003; Burke, 2000). Research indicates the authors of the narratives benefit from writing their experiences (Pennebaker, & Seagal, 1999). In forming their stories, the authors must organize the complex array of emotions that accompanied the experience. As a result, they may view the outcome of the experience with a more positive perspective and improved mental and physical health (Pennebaker, & Seagal, 1999).

Data Analysis

Researchers conducting qualitative research projects often use grounded theory as their method (see Cranham, & Carroll, 2003; Wood, 2001; Aronson, 1994). Cranham and Carroll (2003) used grounded theory to study whether high school bullies intended to cause harm or justified their actions as ethical. The researchers described the process as searching through data using a constant comparative framework watching for emergent patterns or themes.
The researcher chose to use a grounded theory methodology for this project due to the lack of previous research in the area of cyberbullying. Glaser and Strauss (1967) described grounded theory as a research method of discovery resulting in emergent theories grounded in reality. Grounded theorists must follow certain procedures in order to maintain the rigor and validity of their study. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), data collection is the first step in the process of a grounded theory methodology. Data collection and analysis are inextricably linked. For example, the researcher enters the collection and analysis process with no preconceived notions of what they will find. Concepts discovered in the research process become relevant when through analysis repetition of the concept is observed throughout the data set (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Repeated concepts become indicators of a potential phenomenon.

The next step in the process involves the organizing and naming of categories or themes under which the concepts fall (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). These labels are purposefully created to be more abstract than the concepts or actual activities described in the data, thus the themes can be viewed in a more generalizable context. The combination of the more general or abstract themes ultimately helps in the formation of a theory about the phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
The third procedure involves constant comparison. As the words indicate, this is not a one time process, but an ongoing procedure that occurs throughout the analysis. The researcher compares each new incident of a concept in the data with already organized groups of similar concepts in order to determine where the new concept fits in as well as challenge the existing groupings (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Ultimately, this process leads to refined categories or groupings and helps to protect against researcher bias (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Using a grounded theory approach, the researcher analyzed the data. First, the researcher examined the Bullying.org Web site for cyberbullying stories and printed out each account. Second, the researcher began the process of searching line by line through each account resulting in a list of the victims’ patterns of experiences. In the third step, the researcher identified all data that related to the previously identified patterns; new or modified patterns emerged during this process. Fourth, the researcher extrapolated themes from the patterns; the researcher connected the themes in a way that provided insight into the participants’ experiences (see Aronson, 1994).

This chapter has discussed the researcher’s approach to studying the cyberbully phenomenon. After determining the most credible source for data, the
researcher collected and analyzed the data using a grounded theory methodology. The next chapter reveals the results of the analysis process and the answers to the research questions.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

As mentioned earlier the goal of this study was to learn more about cyberbullying through experiences expressed by adolescents. To accomplish this, the researcher analyzed 35 stories ($N = 35$) written by teens about their bullying experiences. No bullies authored any of the stories used for this paper; all the stories recounted experiences from the victim's perspective. The majority of victims' stories contained details of both face-to-face and cyberbullying experiences, therefore, the results reveal information about both means of bullying. The researcher felt noting the relationship between face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying was paramount in understanding the changing picture of bullying.

Demographics

Adolescents experienced all of the cyberbullying episodes used for this research project. Of the 35 stories analyzed, twenty-seven ($n = 27; 77\%$) females told their stories, seven males ($n = 7; 20\%$), and the sex of one ($n = 1; 3\%$) storyteller could not be determined. The adolescents lived in countries from around the world including Canada, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
Research Question 1

The first question investigated by the researcher asked: What are the different mediums used to cyberbully? Data analysis revealed four mediums used in the 35 stories. Intercoder reliability was conducted and resulted in 91% agreement. Most of the bullying instances occurred through a [1] synchronous Internet communication tool such as instant messaging \((n =22; 63\%)\). The victims mentioned various instant messaging services including MSN, AOL, and Yahoo. Some teens did not name a specific service provider, but simply spoke of the tool in generic terms such as IM, instant message, the computer, and the Internet. According to the victims, bullies used instant messaging as a means to spread rumors, threaten, name call, harass, insult, and deceive the victims. Bullies also used victim's [2] personal e-mail as a medium for abuse \((n =9; 26\%)\). The victims who reported bullying through e-mail described the abuse as threats, name calling, crude or nasty e-mails. The third medium used was [3] Web sites \((n =5; 14\%)\). Specifically, victims reported disparaging pictures and texts posted on Web sites by bullies with the intent to degrade, spread rumors, and name call. The fourth medium used by bullies was [4] text messaging \((n =1; 3\%)\).
Research Question 2

The second research question sought to determine the different forms of cyberbullying. Data analysis revealed two forms of cyberbullying: [1] verbal (in text form) and [2] indirect. Victims described episodes of verbal abuse including name calling ($n=11; 31\%$), threats ($n=5; 14\%$), crude/sexual language ($n=5; 14\%$), and others ($n=8; 23\%$). Victims experienced indirect bullying such as rumors, posted pictures on Websites, blocked or disabled synchronous chat screennames, and deception by the bully ($n=8; 23\%$). Further explanations and examples of verbal and indirect cyberbullying are included as part of the victims’ characterization of bullying in research question three.

Research Question 3

Research question three asked the following question: How do adolescents characterize their face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying experiences. The data revealed three themes providing insight on teens’ online and offline bullying experiences. The victims seemed to use a similar pattern to tell their stories by [1] providing details to contextualize their experience, [2] describing the bullying episodes, and [3] discussing responses and outcomes. Subcategories arose for each of the three main themes which helped to further detail the victims’ common experiences.
Contextualization

First, we will look at how the victims contextualized their experiences. The authors of the stories contextualized their experiences in four ways: [1] relationship with the bully, [2] social status, [3] explanation for the abuse, and [4] starting point/duration. Intercoder reliability for this theme was 82%.

Relationship with Bully

In describing their relationship with their bully, the authors clearly labeled them as a friend (n =17; 49%) or a peer/schoolmate (n =9; 26%); they also provided descriptions of the level of closeness within these relationship classifications.

**Friend.** The majority of the victims described their relationship with the bully or bullies as current or former friends (n =17; 49%). One victim talked about being the target of her current friends.

*One day when I at lunch my friends were stepping on my feet under the table.*

Another victim detailed the loss of his best friend when the friend turned against him.

*The bullying all began when I discovered that i was homosexual. I was 14 (im now 15) when I found out and decided to tell my closest friend. He must have been scared of my decision and went and told everyone else.*
In the next excerpt, the victim described another friendly relationship with the person who bullied her.

*I was on MSN the other day, when my friend signed on. This girl was pretty close to me and so I said hi. The first thing she wrote to me was "You are a b****.*

In each of these scenarios, the authors made it clear they considered the bully to be a friend.

*Peer/schoolmate.* Not all of the victims described a friendly relationship with their tormentor. Victims also noted abuse by peers or schoolmates (*n* =9; 26%). The following victims described how peers she had known through grade school, became the bullies who haunted her in junior high.

*I noticed things were different than how they had been when school had first started. My fellow students, once cool towards me, were now mean and viscous.*

Another victim found herself being bullied by schoolmates of all ages.

*Everyone at my school bullies me including the gr. 3"s even though I"m in gr. 6.*
Classmates also filled the role of the bully.

_GIRL1 is a girl in my class. She is what the guys want, and she can get any guy she wants. Now I'm not jealous of her. In fact there's nothing she has that I want. But she is so mean._

These victims all describe a less intimate relationship with their bullies. They saw them as someone they knew of or attended school with.

_Sex of bully._ In addition to describing the type of relationship the victims had with the bullies, many also indicated the sex of the bully or bullies. Most of the relationships involved female victims and female bullies (n = 14; 40%); however, none of the male victims reported having exclusively female bullies (n =0; 0%). Many of the female victims described their bullies in gender neutral terms using words such as people, friends, they, and kids or indicated that they were bullied by both males and females (n =12; 34%); male victims also used general terms or indicated bullies of both sexes (n =5; 14%). Few male victims reported abuse by male bullies only (n =2; 6% ) and one female victim described her bully as male (n =1; 3%). One victim of unknown sex did not indicate the sex of his/her bully\(^1\) (n =1; 3%).

_Social Status_
In addition to the description of the relationship, some victims also made note of their own or the bully's social status. When status was mentioned, the discussion revolved around being popular ($n=7; 20\%$) or other social status ($n=5; 14\%)$.

**Popular.** Popularity often proved to be problematic for the victims ($n=7; 20\%)$.

As this victim discussed, her popularity was directly related to being bullied.

*I am being bullied because I am popular and I have other popular people making fights with me. I have lots of people using me so I never really have a real friend I just have people who are my friend one day then the next day I have no one.*

Another victim felt she was bullied by the popular girls because she was not popular.

**Basketball started in the winter. I joined the team, along with the most popular girls in my class. The coaches told us that the game was not about winning, but about having fun. And yet, I barely received any playing time all year. The ‘better’ (meaning more popular) players would play the whole game, or most of it. During practices and games, I was harassed constantly, and pressured to quit the team.**
Other social status. As the victim above, victims also identified with social statuses other than being popular \((n = 5; 14\%)\). They generally described themselves as having a few friends or no friends at all. This victim noted her status according to the label given to her by others.

*I was considered normal at most on the social scale.*

Another author distinguished her status through a comparison to another group.

*I might not have as many friends as they do but if have a good amount.*

Explanation for Abuse

Next, the authors provided their explanation for the abuse in order to help contextualize their stories \((n = 12; 34\%)\). Several victims attributed being a target to their appearance or the fact that they were different. This victim talked about not fitting the expected physical standard at her school.

*I was thirteen, but I felt immature. I was a little small (5"3" in the eighth grade) and skinny and I used to think I was pretty because I had straight reddish brown hair and green eyes, but everyone said I was too pale and didn’t follow the "blonde, tan" mold of what is Hot in middle school.*
Others found their values and beliefs made them a prime target.

I was all right for the beginning of the year, and then I am so positive people started bullying me because I was a Christian, and I was different from most people.

However, not all of the victims placed the blame on themselves. This victim felt he became a target because of the bully’s social goals.

We used to be best friends, but now he wants to be part of a group of guys who think they’re cool and bully other people. So I think he is doing this to impress them.

The victims’ explanations vary, but are helpful in setting the stage for why the abuse may have occurred.

Starting Point/Duration

Lastly, many authors used descriptions about the starting point or duration of the abuse to help contextualize their stories (n =12; 34%). Some of the victims used specific grades or time periods to note the starting point of the abuse. In following example, the author vividly details the beginning of her experience.

When I started school I was scared and anxious... Soon, I made friends.

Everything was fine. I still had the paranoia that has stayed with me from birth and will stay with me till probably my death, but I was fine. School
was fine. It was all a new adventure. But then one day in Year 3, my gang of friends turned on me. I didn't know the reason. I didn't know the logic but they did. I'd have them calling me names in class, not wanting to sit next to me no more... All through primary school from then on I'd be bullied. Physically and Mentally. Emotionally.

Many of the victims also talked about the duration of the abuse. This victim recounted bullying as something constant in her life.

I know how it felt to be bullied because it always happened to me.

People would call me mean names. I was thirteen when it happened.

Even after coming to the conclusion he had some control over being a target of bullying, one victim talks about the continuation of the abuse.

What I think is that it's all in your mind. You can control it by the way you can control your mind like you might think a teacher being mean to you. But it's the way you act. I still am being bullied even during school when class is going on.

The authors note the beginning as well as the duration of the bullying as a means of contextualizing their story.
Bullying Episodes

In addition to contextualizing their stories, the authors described the episodes of bullying they experienced. Two subcategories emerged in the authors' details of their experiences including [1] forms of cyberbullying bullying (online) and [2] forms of face-to-face bullying (off-line).

Cyberbullying

The researcher only selected stories for this research project which contained at least one account of cyberbullying. Analysis of these narratives revealed two forms of cyberbullying: [1] verbal (in text form) and [2] indirect. Intercoder agreement was 86% for this theme.

Verbal. The verbal abuse online was similar to that which occurred in face-to-face interaction such as name calling\( (n =11; 31\%) \), threats \( (n =5; 14\%) \), crude/sexual language \( (n =5; 14\%) \), and others \( (n =8; 23\%) \).

Name calling. Victims' accounts of name calling included attacks on their physical appearance, social status, and intelligence \( (n =11; 31\%) \). In the following example, the author endures several personal attacks by her bully.

\[ I \text{ have her name on my MSN list, and my name is } (^*) *** (^*). \text{ Well it}'s something like that. Anyway she comes on and says } "\text{ Sexy? Yah right!} \]

\[ \text{ Sexy my } *ss! \text{ Ewww! your display pic is so gross!! } "(\text{just in case you don'}t} \]
have MSN... you can have a picture of you in the conversation for the other person to see). I told her to go away and leave me alone and she just swore at me. I sent her an e-mail saying to leave me and my friends alone and that I was tired of her bullying us all the time. When she got it she came online and started swearing at me, telling me I was just jealous and that I wasn't sexy and I was ugly. She called me a fag and a geek.... and I hate to admit it but it hurt my feelings.

As this victim described, the name used by the bullies can become a more permanent label.

At the beginning of my sophomore year, a group of students labeled me the ugliest girl on a website.

Even after this victim dropped out of school, she continued to be tormented by her bullies' name calling on her personal Website.

I have a website. I still get my guestbook flooded with hate messages calling me "a ******"ugly"" ""lanky"" ""anorexic"" ""s!ag"" and loads more.

Threats. In addition to name calling, victims endured online threats (n =5; 14%). In this first example, the victim (screen name D****Cat) warms the bully (screen name vb***p****numba7) about threatening her and the bully responds with a threat.
D****Cat: what I meant was I was saying that you shouldn"t threaten me because I"m not afraid of u

vb***p****numba7: u should be

One young woman received threatening e-mail from her bully while on a vacation from school.

I was on the internet checking my e-mails on day when a girl named *** sent me a threatening e-mail saying that when she sees me at school she was going to kill me and if I saw her in the hall I should run and I haven"t done anything about this because its March break.

Bullies also used computer-mediated communication in order to threaten their victims and hide their identity

And someone that I don"t know is threatening me VIA e-mail.

Crude/sexual language. Cyberbullying proved to be a safe territory for bullies to direct crude and sexual language toward their victims as well (n =5; 14%). This victim described the bully’s use of inappropriate language as nasty.

He"s being really nasty to me on MSN at this moment.
After revealing his homosexuality, this victim was burdened with sexually charged e-mails.

_The bullying all began when I discovered that i was homosexual. I was 14 (im now 15) when I found out and decided to tell my closest friend. He must have been scared of my decision and went and told everyone else._

_To my disappointment, people began egging my house and writing me crude e-mails._

In this last example, the bully uses the victim’s e-mail account to send an e-mail to the victim’s mother that falsely appears to have come from her daughter.

_At the end of summer break, she sent a nasty e-mail to my mom from one of MY e-mail accounts, saying stuff like she [the victim’s mom] was a lesbian and she [the victim’s mom] raped me._

_Other. A number of other verbal abuses occurred online including shouting (using all capital letters in the text), teasing, and simply being mean to the victim (n =8; 23%). During one synchronous online conversation, the victim was yelled at by the bully._

_vb***p****namba7: And one more thing to everyone who"s doing this: YOU BETTER WATCH OUT IF YOU"RE THREATENING ME AND MY FRIENDS!_
Some bullies simply expressed their dislike for the victim.

_The first thing she wrote to me was "You are a b****." This hurt, but I figured she was joking. She continued to tell me that she hated me and I still thought it was a joke. Finally, I said, "Ha, ha, ha, ha, this is funny. Even if you ARE being serious." She continued to tell me that she hated me, and that she was only pretending to like me. I said, "Okay, this isn't funny anymore." She said it was and then said, "I'm being serious, I hate you"._

_Indirect._ In addition to verbal bullying online, bullies also used indirect means including spreading rumors, posting pictures, disabling the victims ability to chat synchronously, and deceiving or tricking the victim (n =8; 23%). In the following excerpt, the author described being excluded by her social crowd.

_I like to have popular friends so I just let them use me for what I got._

_Then I'm called popular because I hang out with them. I love that - but I can't keep doing this - it hurts inside. Like when I am looking at peoples web pages or I am talking on MSN and I look at there profile and I see this huge list of peoples names of friends, I am never on that lists._
This victim was tormented by the use of pictures posted by the bullies.

*I used to post on an online forum for Eminem fans. Some may think I was asking for it cuz they"re Eminem fans so they must be mean.  

Anyway, I made the mistake of posting my picture and almost everyone said I was pretty but one or two people kept making new names and going on there and posting pictures of ugly people with glasses and bucked teeth (cuz I have glasses) and saying they were me when I was younger.

Finally, one young woman was tricked into talking badly about another girl on the other end of the computer.

*About a year ago I was talking to my friend on the Internet, she asked me if I liked this girl who is really snobby and really mean. I said, “Not really. I think she’s kind of mean.” Then she asked if I was poor and I asked if it was really my so-called friend. It was and the girl I hate. I was really upset and didn’t reply to her question.

Although these bullying episodes occurred online, victims did not discount the seriousness of each offense.
Face-to-Face Bullying


Verbal. Verbal bullying included name-calling ($n=13; 37\%$), teasing/making fun ($n=4; 11\%$), crude/sexual comments ($n=3; 9\%$), and other ($n=7; 20\%$).

Name calling. Bullies used name-calling the most frequently to torment their victims ($n=13; 37\%$). As this victim experienced, much of the name calling was aimed at attacking the victim’s physical appearance.

*I have to deal with comments about how I ‘smell’ and how my hair is ‘dirty’ and how I’m not really a girl, but a ‘boy’. I am called ugly, and many other things as well.*

Another author draws a comparison between verbal and physical abuse.

*Hi my name is *** and a couple of girls at school bully me; not punching me but calling me bad names... They always say I’m ugly and that I have no friends; another lie.*

Teasing/making fun. Victims also expressed their experiences with being teased or made fun of ($n=4; 11\%$). The following author talked about how a friend turned bully would tease her.
A few weeks later, she started teasing me about the way I dress and that I
need to wear shirts with sleeves and get "actual pants." She kept this on
and would keep saying sorry.

This victim remembered the pain she felt from bullies teasing and making fun of her
They would mock me, taunt me, tease me. I don’t remember all the
insults. I just remember that they stung.

Crude/sexual comments. The abuse also came in the form of crude or sexual
comments ($n = 3; 9\%$). One victim confided in a friend she had been raped and once
the friend revealed the secret to others in their group the bullying began.

I was beaten, teased, kicked, harrassed sexually by boys who thought I
was "easy".

Another author told his best friend he was homosexual which resulted in crude verbal
attacks.

They also began pushing me at school laughing at me and telling me
dirty things. I felt violated and scared.

Other. A variety of other types verbal abuse occurred ($n = 7; 20\%$). Some victims
were haunted by phone calls.

We received prank phone calls as well.
Another victim received a letter from her bullies.

\[
\text{[T]hey would make me cry and even once they actually wrote me a letter.}
\]

\[
I \text{ tried being their freinds but it wouldn"t work.}
\]

The next author provided an example of a threat as verbal abuse.

\[
\text{Hi. My name is ***** and I always get picked on. ***** usually calls me }
\]
\[
"\text{ugly" until one day I stood up for myself and now ***** still looks at me, }
\]
\[
\text{threatens to beat me up and, of course, closes the door on me.}
\]

Physical. In addition to the authors accounts of verbal abuse, many also
detailed episodes of physical bullying. Physical abuse occurred in two forms: bodily
harm \((n =14; 40\%)\) and harm to property \((n =5; 14\%)\).

\[
\text{Bodily harm. The victims who experienced bodily harm described incidents in}
\]
\[
\text{which the bullies made physical contact with the victim \((n =14; 40\%)\). The following}
\]
\[
\text{victim experienced numerous episodes of physical abuse. He details one incident in}
\]
\[
\text{this expert.}
\]
\[
\text{The teacher went out of the room I was pulled out of my chair and forced}
\]
\[
\text{outside the window. Bare in mind this is a tower; it has 3 floors and I was}
\]
\[
\text{at the top. he tried so hard to push me outside the window… then the}
\]
\[
\text{teacher came in. Boy4 said I was going outside the window myself and}
\]
he was stopping me. I stood up and said he was pushing me outside the
window but I was beaten down by the class when they backed Boy4 up.

One victim’s story details a form of physical bullying which may not be as obvious as a punch or kick, instead the bully could possibly cover up the attack as an accident.

A couple of my friends and I went to a party, and I saw this girl, who was kind of my friend, was cheating on her boyfriend, I decided to tell him, because I really liked the guy, and him and I were pretty close too. She found out it was me! Then she started slamming me into lockers, walls, let’s just say, it was to the point that I was getting physical abuse, not punching or anything, just shoving and pushing me into walls, bathroom stalls, and lockers.

The bullies in the next story chose a means of physical abuse which most likely would not leave a bruise or hurt the victim’s body as much as her pride.

One of them threw a sandwich at me and got butter all down my top so I threw some water at him. He then got two of his friends to rub chocolate spread sandwiches on me and throw sandwiches at me and in my hair.

Property. The victims also endured abuse to their property (n =5; 14%). The following author told of his most recent experience which involved a combination of harm to his body and property.
For example, today, for no reason at all, he jabbed me with a pencil, scribbled all over my work, and punched me in the head and stomach. It hurt so bad that I went to the office and had to report it to the principal. I went home sick.

Other victims recounted damage done to personal belongings.

One time I had a girl pull my necklace and then she pulled even harder until it broke. She knew it was my favourite necklace and she done this to hurt me for no reason.

Bullies even left their mark in more public ways.

To my disappointment, people began egging my house ...

Indirect. As seen in these teens’ stories, physical and verbal abuse can be severely damaging. Although it can be harder to detect, indirect bullying is almost as prevalent and arguably as harmful. The accounts of indirect bullying told by the participants revealed three common forms of abuse: nonverbal (n =8; 23%), rumors (n =6; 17%), framing (n =3; 9%), and other (n =3; 9%).

Nonverbal. The nonverbal form seemed to actions which occurred in a more covert manner (n =8; 23%). For example, this victim was affected by being left out.

So, for the next couple of days some of the people in other house groups start ignoring me, they laughed at me and whispered when I walked by.
One young man ended his school year with a final abusive gesture by the bullies which he was the last person to see.

_The end day was when people have their shirts written over with congrats to the new school. I had one or two “good lucks” and the rest was abuse, which I didn’t see ‘til I got home._

The following author was the subject of a secretive conversation between the bullies and the target of their dirty looks.

_Then she and the kid that I liked and all of their friends ganged up on me and my new friend. They were passing notes and giving looks and all of that …_

_Rumors_. The next most common form of indirect bullying was rumor spreading (n =6; 17%). One young man was disappointed to find out a person he considered a friend started a destructive rumor about him.

_To this day I still don't exactly know why he did this, but he spread a rumour that I was gay, which I'm not. At the time I had a lot of close friends, this was a small community and we hung out every day. I literally went home one day at the top of the world, and came back the next day with almost no friends._
Rumors were not only directed at the victim, but sometimes at the victim’s friends as well.

Finally, in the middle of my seventh grade year, I made a friend, *****

*******. Kids stooped so low as to start nasty rumors about us, even as a couple.

Several of the victims described rumors related to having romantic feeling for a classmate.

He started a rumour that I was hitting on him and that I was desperate.

Framing. Bullies also used their ability to frame the victims for things they did not do (n =3; 9%). For example, one author told of being framed for a crime he did not commit.

I got framed for stealing a GameBoy from a girl. This girl was very popular; the game boy was planted in my bag to frame me. The teacher called a bag search for the game then it came to my bag and as the teacher opened my bag it fell out. I could do nothing with it I just stood back as the class shouted at me continuously calling me a thief and some really nasty stuff. The teacher just watched and let the class do it.
Another victim was accused of physically harming younger children under her care at school.

*Everyone at my school bullies me including the gr. 3''s even though I''m in gr. 6. Like I''m soposed to babysit(u no what I mean) their class but , they always say I''m being mean and pinching them, although I don''t...*

*And now I''m baned from their class because they kicked me and said it was because I pinched them.*

*Other.* Indirect bullying also occurred in other forms including notes stuck on victims' backs, bullies telling other student not to like the victim, and revealing private or personal information about victims (*n*=3; 9%). This victim details her experience.

*If it wasn''t that then I''d come home with sticky notes on my back saying ""I smell"" or something.*

The bullies used indirect bullying largely to damage the victims socially.

**Response/Outcome**

The final theme to arise from the data analysis involved detailed accounts of the victim's response to the abuse and the outcome of their situation. This theme was divided into three subcategories: [1] reason for writing, [2] reactions, and [3] future outlook. The researcher and her assistant arrived at 83% intercoder agreement for this theme.
Reason for Writing

Victims provided one of two reasons for writing their stories. They were either [1] looking for advice ($n = 11; 31\%$) or [2] giving advice ($n = 3; 9\%$).

Looking for advice. Due to the nature of Bullying.org as an anti-bullying Web site, many teens posted stories hoping for a helpful reply ($n = 11; 31\%$). Clearly, the victim in this first example expressed a desire for some guidance.

*I am a really nice person inside, people just use me and use me. I don't want to have this life any more. I feel like I want to go die and there is no reason for me to be here if I am just being used. Please help me before something bad happens.*

This victim apparently had sought advice from others before seeking advice by posting her story.

*My best friend said to tell the police and that what they are doing is harassment. Can you help me and tell me what to do?*

Finally, some victims were less direct with their requests for advice.

*I moved schools and have now decided not to tell anyone about my choice to be gay, because I don't want the same kind of erruption to happen again. I feel so ashamed to be gay, I'm not sure what I should do.*

*i'm sick of being ridicled.*
Not all of the posted stories, including some of those seeking advice, received replies from readers.

Giving advice. Victims also used this forum to give advice ($n=3$; 9%). For example, one victim expressed her advice for dealing with bullying in one sentence.

Speak up because I wish I did sooner.

Another author described how she had learned from her experience and encouraged others to do the same.

It was a horrible experience, but I learned a lot from all this Like next time the same situation happens I will no what to do, and I hope everyone out there who is getting bullied can take a stand for themselves and say you know what, I"m not going to take this anymore and tell someone, before it"s too late!

In this last example, the victim tried to convince readers they have control over the situation and detailed how to use that control to change the circumstances.

What I think is that it"s all in your mind. You can control it by the way you can control your mind like you might think a teacher being mean to you. But its the way you act.
Reactions


Verbal. Verbal reaction consisted of telling someone about the abuse ($n=8; 23\%$), confronting the bully ($n=8; 23\%$), and refuting the bullies’ accusations ($n=7; 20\%$).

Tells someone about abuse. Some victims chose to report the abuse they experienced to school authorities, parents, or friends ($n=8; 23\%$). For example, this victim described her resistance to telling her mom about the abuse.

*My mom kept asking me what was wrong, I always said, nothing, but I knew deep down I was in so much pain and to the point I was getting panic attacks, like every night! I was in a depression mood. Then finally I told my basketball coach/guidance counsellor first, and then he told my vice-principal. They talked to the girl and I never really told my mom, they called my mom and told her I was getting bullied...I was crying so many Kleenex boxes at this time. My mom finally asked me what was wrong and kept asking me constantly, then I got to the point that I could NOT keep it in any longer, I was having a panic attack at this time and I*
was telling her everything. I told her I was getting bullied, but I left out

that I was getting physical abuse, but then my ball coach/guidance
counsellor told her, she was shocked!

The following victim described how her report of abuse was not taken seriously.

I told the teacher. But the teacher just told me everything would be Ok.

But it wasn"t.

Another victim experienced a much more positive result after reporting her bullies.

I went to a teacher I gave her their names and then a few weeks later on

MSN, one apologized to me for what she had done.

Confronts bully. Some victims chose to confront their bullies (n =8; 23%). This
victim demanded she and her friend be left alone.

And I turned around and said, "Leave us alone!".

While others approached their bully in order to try to talk things out.

I walked off crying, [I] went back to go and tell him how much he"d hurt
me and he said some really nasty stuff to me; reducing me to tears
again.
Confronting the bully did not seem to be a successful approach for many victims.

But she hates my best friend Girl2 and she always calls her names when she is near. I told her to stop and told her how I felt when she called Girl2 names but she just snapped at me.

Refutes accusations. A number of victims used their stories as a means to set the record straight and refute the bullies’ accusations (n =7; 20%). In this first excerpt, the victim was follows his description of the accusation with his denial of its validity.

He went on the Internet, specifically MSN, and spread a rumour that I was racist towards the native people in my city, which I am not.

Another victim calls the bullies’ accusations a lie.

They always say I’m ugly and that I have no friends; another lie.

In this final example, the victim describes an erroneous rumor being spread by her bullies.

Then they spread a false rumor about me that I had been videotaped having sex with several boys.

Emotional. Victims also reacted emotionally to the abuse they endured.

Emotional reactions ranged from crying (n =10; 29%), feeling hurt (n =7; 20%), feeling scared (n =5; 14%) and a variety of others (n =11; 31%).
Crying. Many victims expressed their pain through tears (n =10; 29%).

*I really could not handle it, I was to the point I was crying a Kleenex box

a night because I was in a lot of pain!*

One young man described hiding while he cried.

*After all that people just wouldn’t leave me alone. I sat in the corner of the

playground crying nobody saw or heard me; the tears just poured out

like a tap.*

The next author detailed her concern about her classmates seeing her cry.

*Usually in school at lunch I usually just go in the girls bathroom if no one

is there sit on the counter and cry. I try to look like I"m happy all the time

but, it just doesn"t work. I end up almost crying and asking to go to the

bathroom so I can cry. I know I can"t cry in front of my class because

they"ll make fun of me for it.*

*Feeling hurt. Victims also reported feeling hurt by their bullies’ harassment (n

=7; 20%). As one victim described, the bullies used jokes about her family to cause

the victim pain.*

*My mother’s name is ******** but kids have nicknamed her ‘****'. Our

van has been dubbed ‘the Jack-mobile’ and there are several

entertaining stories about its supposed escapades.* (Chasing certain
former students through snow banks, for example.) My father is not so much the target; there are few stories about him, and he does not yet have a nickname. While all of this is amusing, it still hurts.

Another victim described trying to hide her hurt.

She really hurts my feelings sometimes, but I try not to let it show that it bugs me.

The following victim expressed being hurt by a bully’s words that she discounted.

Well her reply to that was to say that I’m dirty. It really hurt that she said that and she doesn’t know me so she does not have the right to say that!

Feeling scared. Several of the authors reacted to their bullying experiences with a sense of fear (n =5; 14%). For example, some victims expressed their fear of having to face the possibility of future wrath by their bully.

I feel very unsafe about this because before March break she would nudge me and give me dirty looks in the hall! I don’t know what to do tell someone or keep it to myself because if I tell it will just get myself into more trouble:

Another author expressed his concern after receiving threatening phone calls and e-mails from the bully.
The principal said he would handle it, and I guess he talked to him because now I'm getting phone calls and e-mails saying they'll be plotting something to fix me. I'm worried.

Other. In addition to crying, feeling hurt and feeling scared, victims also expressed feelings of anger, loneliness, shame, depression, stupidity and worthlessness (n =11; 31%). This first example demonstrates the anger the victim experienced.

They would even use my e-mail like some girl did to call me names like loser and other mean ones and it got me mad.

Other victims lost all of the friends and expressed their loneliness.

The end of sixth grade was coming. I was utterly miserable. I cannot think of any other words to describe it. I was lonely; I had no friends. I didn’t go out and do things, like other kids do.

Finally, this author depicted the worthlessness she felt as a victim of bullying.

The bullies made me feel ashamed, worthless, dirty, like I wasn't worth my own life.

Withdrawal. For many of the participants, they chose to withdraw in order to avoid further abuse. The victims withdrew by avoiding face-to-face interaction (n =7;
20%), avoiding cyberbullying (n =6; 17%), and transferring or leaving school (n =5; 14%).

Avoiding face-to-face interaction. In an effort to protect themselves, victims used a variety of methods to keep their distance from the bullies (n =7; 20%). Victims avoided contact with their bullies often by skipping school.

I no longer have thoughts of suicide but it is getting harder and harder to go to school, I usually miss at least 1 or 2 days a week.

One young man found he could retreat to the library to avoid interaction with his enemies.

I found my place, the place where I was going to live at break times and that was going to be the library.

Another victim turned to more extreme means to get away from the abuse.

[I] wrote a suicide letter than ran away.

Avoiding cyberbullying. Victims also told stories of avoiding online interaction with their bullies (n =6; 17%). Most synchronous chat services (instant messaging) provide users with a blocking function. This allows the user to halt incoming messages for designated screen names. Some victims opted to use this function.

I blocked her and never really heard from her since.
Another method used involved ignoring the bullies requests to chat.

*I was really upset and didn’t reply to her question.*

This last example allowed the victim to regain some privacy when chatting online.

*They also did something to my AOL Instant Messenger so that I couldn’t chat with a bunch of people in a chat room without having them appear in the room as well. I had to change my screen name and everything.*

_Transferring or leaving school._ Finally, in extreme cases victims moved to different schools or dropped out of school completely \(n=5; 14\%\). This first victim’s mother decided to remove her from school to put an end to the bullying.

*My mobile wouldn’t stop ringing. I turned it off. It annoyed them. So they tried my house phone. My Mum picked up. They swore at her and gave her abuse. They shouted about me and that was when my Mum said.*

"****, you’re never going to that school again" That was a relief.

Other victims moved to a new school in hopes of a more pleasant environment.

_The gossip got so bad that I finally had to transfer to a different school._

One author decided to avoid expressing his true self which lead to abuse at his former school.
I moved schools and have now decided not to tell anyone about my choice to be gay, because I don’t want the same kind of erruption to happen again.

_Self destruction._ One extremely unfortunate reaction victims chose was self destruction. This reaction encompasses suicide ideation/attempts ($n=7; 20\%$) and self cutting ($n=3; 9\%$). The authors who wrote about their self destructive behaviors often expressed believing suicide and self cutting were the only ways to relieve the extreme pain they harbored.

_Suicide ideation/ attempts._ Teens who felt they could not escape the wrath of their bullies often thought about or attempted suicide as a means of escape ($n=7; 20\%$). A number of victims talked about experiencing suicide ideation.

_I’d break down in tears every night. All the abuse was getting to me so much I wanted to kill myself. I knew I didn’t smell but after about a year and a half I think I almost believed them._

This authors detailed how one incident grew into continuous bullying which ultimately pushed him to attempt suicide.

_I literally went home one day at the top of the world, and came back the next day with almost no friends. I never found out why all my former friends made fun of me and called me gay until the winter of grade 6. It
was hard on me, I just wanted to die. That continued into junior high. It wasn’t the same people, but the bullies in the school all liked to pick on me for some reason. After every passing day I wanted to die even more, and I eventually tried to kill myself.

Another young man described feelings socially isolated and turning to suicide as his answer.

Year 5 came… first day back everyone is saying hello and invitations are going out to everyone, apart from me, to this party. I felt hurt; a sharp pain like a big point cutting straight through me. That day went very slowly; people asking if I was going to this party and me saying “No”.

They all ran off cheering and me, well, this was going to be the first night I attempted suicide. I was going to hang myself. I had it all setup; the rope, everything. It was on my light on the ceiling and as I jumped off the chair with the rope round my neck I pulled the light out of the ceiling.

Tired and upset I went to bed thinking about how I would explain this to my parents. I told them that it just came out in the night, they believed it.

Each victim expressed a sense of having no other options but to take their own life.
Self cutting/harming. A few victims also used self cutting to help them cope with their experiences ($n = 3$; 9%). The following victim turned to self harm as a response to her pain.

I cut myself because I felt so hurt.

Here, one victim described the evolution of the process for her.

I started cutting myself, lightly at first, but then deeper, near my wrist veins, trying to see how close I could get to death.

In this last example, the young man discussed the seriousness of his choice to cut himself.

Most of that was self-harming. I still have the scars; they will never leave.

The pain I felt from doing it gave a sign of relieving. I felt much better after I had done it but when I woke up the next morning I felt so stupid. I looked at my arms to see blood, burns and stabs all in my right arm never the left. I look at my arm today and I wish I had never done it.

When I had woke up my pillow was wet from crying and my sheets stained with blood from my arm. I told my mum it was a nose bleed but I really knew the truth about it.

Other. Bullying evoked other reactions for many victims. Some of these reactions included trying to befriend the bullies, starting a petition against bullying,
allowing grades to drop, seeking counseling, and choosing not to react violently \((n = 11; \text{31\%})\). For example, the following victim chose to create awareness and get her entire school involved.

> So I started a petition against bullying and got lots of signatures.

One young man expressed his belief in passivism.

> P.S. I think my views on non-violence are very important. None of my friends can understand how I could just stand there and let people hit me and not fight back, but if you think about it, I am now a better person than they will ever be, because I refused violence when I could have easily accepted it.

Lastly, some victims reacted by seeking counseling.

> I used to trash my room and leave a path of destruction where my temper had been. I didn’t want to do it but I had no control over it at the time. I have control over it now because I have a counselling and temper management to sort these things out.

**Future Outlook**

Beyond discussions of reactions to bullying behavior, the participants noted their outlook on their situations. The outlooks were either [1] positive \((n = 10; \text{29\%})\) or [2] negative \((n = 7; \text{20\%})\).
Positive. Victims with positive outlooks reported having friends, feeling as though the abuse had ceased, and even having learned how to cope with being a target of bullying (n =10; 29%). One victim described the present improvements in his life and his hope for the future.

*It is getting better though; I have plans for the future, and good friends.*

*So for me at least, things did get a little better.*

This victim talked about her changed outlook once she entered high school.

*Thank god I left that place. I got to High School and am having the time of my life. I have a lot of new friends and old ones I haven"t seen in the longest time.*

Another author recounted the new environment she found at a new school.

*I transferred from public to a small private school, where I was accepted.*

*I am in 10th grade now, and finally happy.*

Negative. Not all of the victims wrote a happy ending to their story. Victims with negative future outlooks spoke of their lack of friends, feeling out of control, wanting to seek revenge, and disliking the life they are forced to live (n =7; 20%). One teen wrote about his desire to seek revenge.

*Mabye I"ll build the respect-o-matic to take my revenge on my school.*
The next excerpt shows the victims feeling of hopelessness.

*I am stuck.*

Finally, a young woman wrote of her despair and the feeling that her problems could not be solved by ignoring them.

Teachers and other adults have told me to ‘toughen up’ or ‘ignore it’ and it will ‘go away’. It won’t. That much has been proven. What none of these people understand, though, is that not everyone can have the same reaction to this sort of treatment. I can’t ignore it, and it hurts a great deal.

I have watched as my fellow students have tried to strip me of my confidence, my pride, my dignity. This is my last year at ******** School, I am in the eighth grade now. In roughly nine months, I will graduate.

While I harbor no hopes of my social status improving, I do hope that I have enlightened you as to the events that seem to take place, unnoticed, right under the staff’s noses.

After thorough examination of the data, the researcher began to see the common experiences shared by the victims. Categorization of these experiences revealed a unique characterization of the teens’ lives as victims of bullying. Although this study focuses mainly on cyberbullying, it must be noted that victims reported incidents of both cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in most cases. Victims rarely
told exclusively of their cyberbullying experiences which leads the researcher to conclude a relationship exists between the two forms of abuse. The next chapter will examine and discuss the importance and implications of the results detailed in this chapter.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Computer-mediated communication has revolutionized the way in which teens communicate. Through the Internet, adolescents have instant access to one another and information about one another. However this ease of access has opened the door for a new type of bully, the cyberbully. This study aimed to investigate the cyberbullying phenomenon from a teen’s perspective. Through the analysis of stories written by teens about their cyberbullying experiences, the researcher uncovered details about which computer-mediated communication tools bullies use as well as how teens characterize their experiences with cyberbullying. Analysis of the data revealed cyberbullying occurred through four computer-mediated communication tools: synchronous chat tools, email, Websites, text messages; data analysis resulted in the emergence of three main themes which characterized the victims experiences: contextualization, bullying, and response/outcome. Each theme and related subcategories for the themes are discussed further.

Cyberbullying Medium

Cyberbullies most frequently used synchronous chat tools such as instant messaging to torment their victims. The overwhelming majority of the experiences
described by the victims detailed the use of this medium. Instant messaging is most like face-to-face conversations in that the users interact simultaneously. There is only a slight delay between the exchange of messages while the users wait for their partner to type a response. Synchronous chat tools often provide users with the ability to speak privately or publicly through a multi-user chat function (see Leung, 2002). The victim may be a participant in the chat or they may be the topic of the chat.

   Victims reported receiving threatening and abusive e-mails as well. E-mail may have been chosen by cyberbullies because of the benefits it inherently possesses due to being an asynchronous medium. For example, the bully was able to send messages to the victim 24 hours a day because the victim did not have to be on-line in order to receive the messages. Also, the bully can take as much time as they want to plan and write the message; they do not have to worry about the victim sending them an instant response to which their instant response is expected. E-mail provides the cyberbully with both direct and indirect means of bullying their victim. The cyberbullies can keep their messages private by sending them exclusively to the victim (direct bullying) or they can send the messages to an entire mailing list of people without the victim ever knowing this has occurred (indirect bullying).

   Some cyberbullies chose to victimize their peers through the use of Web sites. All of the victims who reported being abused on a Web site described their bullies use
of visual elements such as pictures as part of the abuse. For example, one common method used by cyberbullies was posting pictures of their victims. Some of these pictures showed the victims in compromising positions. Bullies used actual pictures of the victims however they also posted images which were not pictures of the victims, but presented them as though they were in order to degrade or embarrass the victim. Web sites are a unique CMC tool because they are available for viewing by all who possess the Web address.

One last cyberbullying tool described by victims was text messaging. Some bullies would send abusive messages through the use of cell phone text messaging. Similar to e-mail, this medium is asynchronous, therefore allowing the cyberbully to send messages anytime day or night to the victim or to others about the victim. Although none of the authors detailed receiving anything but text messages, many cell phones today have cameras which can be used inconspicuously to take pictures which can then be sent from cell phone to cell phone.

All of the cyberbullying mediums, inherent in computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools, enable the bullies to hide or change their identity. For example, instant messaging and e-mail both require the use of a user ID (screen names for IM and e-mail addresses for e-mail), therefore, allowing users to create an identity which disguises their true identity. In most cases, user IDs can take any form
and do not have to contain a persons given name. Some cyberbullies may create
screen names intended to make others believe they are someone else. Text
messages provide another unique challenge in trying to determine the sender. The
only evidence of identity is the phone number from which the message was sent.
However, victims may have an easier time identifying the owner of the phone number
by calling it, asking questions of the person who answers, or listening for identifying
information heard in the senders recorded outgoing voicemail message. Cyberbullies
may find Web sites the easiest medium to use and keep their identity concealed. In
general, Web sites do not require the creator to reveal their identity. The only possible
exception to this might be if the cyberbully is using and existing Web site to post a
message on a Web-log, then they may be required to use a screen name.

Data analysis of the victims stories revealed more than the mediums used in
cyberbullying, their accounts also revealed how they characterized their bullying
experiences. Within the victims’ descriptions emerged consistent discussions of
contextualization, the bullying experiences, as well as responses and outcomes.

Contextualization

Many of the adolescents accounts of bullying contained information which they
used to help contextualize their story. This information often provided elements of
who, what, when, where, and why. The theme of contextualization encompassed
descriptions of the victim’s relationship with the bully (who), issues of social status (what), explanations for the abuse (why), and notation of the starting point or duration of the abuse (when and where). In terms of their relationship with the bully, the authors of the stories described the bully as a friend or a peer/schoolmate. This designation is significant because of the important and unique roles friends and peer groups play in the lives of adolescents. According to Shucksmith, Hendry, Love, and Glendinning (1993), adolescent friendships provide teens with support and security as well as a safe space to explore their emotions, exchange ideas and beliefs, and develop an evolved sense of self. Peer relationships play quite a different role in teens lives. Adolescents look to peers to help shape their values and attitudes about clothing, music, language, leisure and acceptable behavior; reciprocally, peers determine acceptance of each other according to the values and attitudes they possessed (Shucksmith, Hendry, Love, Glendinning, 1993).

Interestingly, the majority of the authors who defined their relationship with their bully considered them friends. However, many made distinctions between whether they considered the bullies to be current friends or former friends. Some of the authors admitted to enduring the abuse in order to maintain friendships, while others noted a direct link between the bullying behavior and the termination of friendships. In 2003, Champion, Vernberg, and Shipman found victims of bullying may be involved in
friendships, but they often engage in conflict with these friends. These adolescent often lack the social skills of cooperation, self-control, and assertion and therefore are unable to successfully negotiate conflicts with friends finding themselves rejected by their friends and ultimately lacking social competence (Champion, Vernberg, & Shipman, 2003).

Not all the victims identified their abusers as friends. Some victims described their relationship with the bullies in much more impersonal and distant terms such as peer, classmate, older or younger schoolmates, and even someone they knew through a friend. The classifications of relationships with the bully could arguably have different effects on the victims. Prior to adolescence, parents influence children most, where as after adolescence, romantic relationships increase in importance; during adolescence, teens find interaction with and the influence of friendships most valuable (Phillipsen, 1999). Therefore, abuse by a friend as compared to abuse by a peer could leave deeper wounds for the victim because of the increased levels of trust, commitment, investment, and perceived similarity (Berndt, 1982).

In addition to noting their relationship with the bully, victims also made references to social status. People gain social status through social group memberships with those on top influencing all others below them (Giordano, 2003). As mentioned previously in the paper, adolescence is a period of change. Teens are
exploring new identities and developing a sense of self more independent of their parents. Teens find their social crowd to be one of the most significant influences on this process (see Social Identity Theory). Therefore, the researcher did not find it surprising when victims reported their perspective on their social status. Victims described social status from the perspective of either being popular, having only a few friends or being a loner.

Victims were more likely to discuss issues of popularity. Popularity presented problems for victims who considered themselves to be popular or were somehow associated with someone who was considered popular. Eder (1985) found popular middle-school girls face the challenge of appearing friendly and kind while managing to keep their distance from unpopular crowds. Consequently, these girls may find themselves being label by others as a snob which ultimately devalues her status from the perspective of the unpopular crowds (Eder, 1985). For some victims, holding a position within the popular crowd meant enduring abuse in order to maintain their status. Research suggests popular crowds within school make up a very small part of the student population, however, they have great influence on those inside and outside of their group (Giordano, 2003). Many stories from victims in this study confirmed this finding. The authors often found themselves victimized because of their
interactions with members of the popular crowd or because they lacked interaction with those considered popular.

Not all the authors considered themselves to be popular, a portion of them distinctively noted in their stories that they possessed only a few friends. These victims often made a clear distinction that they were not popular, but not loners either. These findings are consistent with social identity theory which posits humans define themselves according to group memberships and through comparing their groups identity to others (Turner, Hogg, Oaken, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). For these victims, they could not identify with the popular crowd or the loners, however they did see themselves fitting into a middle ground category in which they at the least possessed a few friends. Not all of the victims could claim even a few friends; a handful of victims labeled themselves as loners and detailed the fact they had no friends. Beyond descriptions of friends and social crowds, victims felt it important to divulge their feelings about being a victim.

Victims used explanations for becoming a target of bullying as a way to help the reader understand their perspective on the abuse they endured. The explanations revolved around topics such as the victims appearance, others viewing the victim as different, jealousy by the bully, and a character flaw of the bully. As mentioned earlier, similarity is a highly important factor in friend selection and social group placement for
adolescents (Shucksmith, Hendry, Love, & Glendinning, 1993). Consequently, victims who did not “fit in” found this characteristic to be a catalyst for abuse. Research suggests teens are targeted for factors such as their race religion, gender, socioeconomic status, school attitudes and aptitudes, being different, relationship problems, and a failure to comply with peer pressures (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). By providing an explanation for the abuse, victims attributed the bullying to something about themselves or outside of themselves. Attribution theory suggests people make causal inferences about behavior; these attributions may be related to internal causes (inside us or directly related to us) or external (outside of us and out of our control) (Harvey, Orbuch, & Weber, 1992). By providing explanations, victims position themselves and the bully within the bullying experience.

Finally, many authors set their stories within a time frame. Bullying by definition must be reoccurring intentional harmdoing (Olweus, 1993). Victims often pinpointed exactly when the bullying behavior began and many discussed the duration of the abuse as well. Many of these victims have not found relief from the bullying or did not until they were out of the school environment in which it occurred. They described being abused throughout their formative years of adolescence. As a result of bullying, victims may be fearful, anxious, and withdrawn (Bastche & Knoff, 1994), suffer from depression and suicidal ideation (Kaltiala-Heino & Rimpela, 1999; Roland, 2002).
lack social skills (Lipman, 2003), think negatively of themselves (Hawker & Boulton, 2000) or have difficulty resolving conflict (Champion, Vernberg, & Shipman, 2003). Together, details concerning the victim/bully relationship, issues of social status, explanations of abuse, and the starting point/duration of the abuse help to set the stage for the victim to tell their story as well as help them look for a way to understand their experiences.

**Bullying Experiences**

Data analysis revealed a second major theme involving the victims’ depiction of their bullying experiences. The descriptions detailed both cyberbullying and face-to-face incidents. Each type of bullying was broken down according to the form of abuse used by the bully. Within the cyberbullying experiences, the victims provided examples of verbal and indirect abuse, where as the victims experiencing face-to-face bullying noted verbal, indirect and physical abuse. For both types of bullying, the description of verbal abuse involved name calling, teasing, threats and crude/sexual comments which is consistent with previous research (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000; Atkin, Smith, Roberto, Fediuk, & Wagner, 2002). Bullies called victims names which insulted their physical appearance such as smelly, dirty, ugly, and fat. However, they also used names such as bitch and liar which insulted the victims’ character. Victims also described being teased by bullies about their clothes, parents, and by
mocking them. Bullies used threats to intimidate their victims. Victims also endured crude and sexual comments such as being sexually harassed, sworn at, and called easy or a slut. Verbal bullying appears to occur more frequently than physical bullying (Demaray & Malecki, 2003). Research indicates verbal bullying is more than just child’s play, such abuse can cause distress, social and psychological harm to victims (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000; Atkin, Smith, Roberto, Fediuk, & Wagner, 2002).

Although often more subtle, indirect bullying was present in both cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. However, bullies used this form of bullying slightly differently for each medium. Cyberbullies took advantage of the anonymity which computer-mediated communication inherently provides by deceiving their victims about their identity as well as posting pictures anonymously on Web sites. For victims of face-to-face bullying indirect abuse often took the form of dirty looks, exclusionary behaviors such as whispering about and laughing at the victims, rumors, and framing victims (See Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000). As a result of indirect bullying, victims are often less equipped to negotiate social situations; they are often rejected by peers (Schafer, Werner, & Crick, 2002). In addition, indirect bullying has proven to be a difficult form of bullying for teachers and other outsiders to detect (Pakaslahti &
Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2000; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). Therefore, indirect bullying may be harder to stop or control as compared to more overt verbal or physical forms of bullying.

One obvious difference between the face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying was the bullies’ ability to abuse their victims physically. Victims reported physical abuse aimed at their bodies and property. Bodily harm included nudging, pushing, hitting, punching, tripping, kicking, pinching as well as throwing items at the victim (See Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000; Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). However, bullies abused the property of the victims as well by destroying their homework, breaking personal items, and egging their homes (See Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). Consistent with research, a higher percentage of male than female participants reported some form of physical abuse (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, and Karstadt, 2000; Xie, Farmer & Cairns, 2003).

In comparing cyberbullying to face-to-face bullying several interesting factors can be noted. The majority of the story tellers experienced both forms of abuse and in many cases the victims noted a clear relationship between a bullying episode of one form lead to an episode of the other form. For example, one bully used a victim’s confession of a secret as ammunition for a rumor she spread through IM the night
after the victim confided in her. The use of computer-mediated communication seemed to provide bullies with a means to spread information to a mass audience much easier and far more quickly than face-to-face communication.

Another disadvantage seemed to be the ease at which a bully could disguise or hide their true identity (See Roberts & Parks, 1999; Waskul & Douglas, 1997; Soukup, 1999; Amichai-Hamburger, Wainapel, & Fox, 2002; Whitley, 1997). Victims often could not determine who was on the other end of the computer because of the use of unidentifiable screen names. It appears bullies also may have used stolen screen names and passwords as a way to pose as someone else. Although most computer-mediated communication tools have mechanisms to block unwanted messages or e-mails, victims indicted bullies who found themselves blocked simply changed their screen names and were able to torment the victim again. Ultimately, the victim was the one who was forced to change their screen name and redistribute it carefully to their friends in an attempt to block the bully. However, as this paper suggests, often victims’ friends are also their bullies which leaves victims susceptible to abuse if they cannot identify their bullies in person.

Some cyberbullies did not try to hide their identity according to the victims. Instead, it seems they used cyberbullying because of the protection it provides. For example, several victims told of bullies who taunted them on-line and then when they
had to face one another at school, the bullies seemed to down play their on-line behavior by saying they were joking. Other bullies apparently denied their participation in a cyberbullying episode if they were confronted by the victim; they might suggest someone else was wrongly using their screen name. Again, victims indicated cyberbullying provided the bullies with a way to manipulate and deceive the victims.

Lastly, cyberbullying may prove to be fertile ground for gender researchers. The majority of the authors wrote about being bullied by females. Recent research has turned its focus toward the study of mean girls (See Batshce & Knoff, 1994; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, Karstadt, 2000; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001; Pakaslahti & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2000). The difference between male and female bullying lies in the type of bullying used. Girls are more likely to use more covert means than boys (Schafer, Werner & Crick, 2002; Xie, Farmer & Cairns, 2003; Olweus, 2003). As a result, researchers often find females are more likely to be considered prosocial by their peers, where as, males are more likely to be considered bullies (Warden & Mackinnon). By using less overt methods to bully their victims, girls can continue to follow the rules of ladylike behavior as they have been socialized to do. In this study, cyberbullying provides an ideal means for girls to avoid public awareness of the fact they are acting outside of the expected behavior guidelines for their gender. As previously discussed, CMC tools inherently enable users to protect themselves more
than face-to-face interaction and the knowledge of this protection may lead girls to feel more empowered to act out behavior they might not in person. As seen in much of the data collected for this project, female adolescent bullies displayed much more aggressive characteristics on-line than one might have expected. While we must also note similar behavior by male cyberbullies, their actions did not place them outside of gendered expectations for them.

Response/Outcome

Regardless of the form or medium used to bully, the victims consistently reported being affected by the abuse. The authors often described their reason for writing about their bullying experiences, their reactions to the abuse, and their outlook on the future (See also Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). The victims’ wrote looking for advice or looking to provide advice for others. This finding is not surprising because the stories were posted on a Web site designed to educate and support victims of bullying. More authors were looking for advice than those offering advice. The Web site enabled readers to respond to the victims’ stories and requests. Many of the those seeking advice had received at least one response from a reader, however, determining the specific rate of response was not an element investigated by this project. Often the writers offering advice made mention of the notion victims are not alone and have the power to do something about the abuse they endure.
Another response discussed in the victims’ stories was their reaction to the bullying experiences. Reactions included verbal responses, emotional responses, withdrawal, and self destruction. Many of the victims chose to report the abuse to school authorities, friends, or family. Interestingly, victims often expressed that their claims were not taken seriously by teachers or parents until the abuse became severe. Research indicates victims most often turn to friends for help with bullying followed by school authorities (mostly teachers) and parents (mostly mothers) (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000), however, victims often report feeling little social support from these individuals (Demaray & Malecki, 2003). Victims also described how reporting the abuse often angered the bully and provoked them to continue the abuse. Other victims responded to the bullying by confronting the bully themselves. Most reported failed attempts at resolving the issue.

Another interesting verbal response arose from the data. Victims frequently refuted claims or accusations made by their bullies. For example, if a victim’s story detailed a name they had been called, the victim would follow that description by noting the fallaciousness of the accusation. Victims may have chosen to refute the accusations in an attempt to set the record straight or simply tell their side of the story to a potentially sympathetic audience.
In addition to verbal responses, victims responded emotionally as well. Emotional responses included crying, feeling hurt, scared, angry, worthless and lonely. In order to avoid their bullies and the subsequent results of the abuse, some victims used methods of withdrawal. Victims avoided face-to-face interaction with the bullies by running away, skipping school, and hiding from them when at school. Adolescents who avoid school or lack the sense of connectedness gained through involvement in school activities, often find making and maintaining friendships difficult, which perpetuates the isolation they feel and bullies prey on (Giordano, 2003). Victims may also find themselves feeling isolated from communication with peers and friends at home. In order to avoid cyberbullies from reaching them at home, victims stopped responding to bullies' IMs and e-mails, blocked bullies, and changed their screen names, not only making it more difficult for bullies to communicate with them on-line, but also for friends. In more extreme cases, victims transferred school in an effort to escape their bullies' wrath, however, this form of withdrawal did not always prove successful, some victims encountered new bullies at their new school.

Unfortunately, victims resorted to extreme measures in order to relieve the pain and frustration of being bullied. Victims engaged in self destructive behaviors such as suicide ideation, attempts and self cutting. Recent research seems to indicate a relationship between self destructive behavior and an adolescents’ perceived lack of
friends. Bearman and Moody (2003) found teens who felt isolated from their peers were more likely to engage in suicide ideation or attempts. Victims turn to extreme measures of violence against others or themselves when they no longer see any socially acceptable alternatives to ending the bullying; they ultimately feel helpless, hopeless, and worthless (Hazler, 2000). Many of the victims described feeling relieved after releasing their pain either through a suicide letter or self cutting; others simply felt further frustration by failed attempts to commit suicide.

The final response discussed by the victims entailed their outlook for the future. The outlooks were either positive or negative. Surprisingly, more authors described positive outlooks than negative. Positive outlooks generally consisted of the belief that the situation was improving. These victims often noted the existence of friends in their lives, reconciliation with their bully, having learned to stop or manage the abuse, and having come out of the situation as a better person. However, not all the victims’ views were positive; those with negative outlooks described feeling powerless to change the situation, lacking friends or support, and wanting to an end to what seemed like a never ending situation.

Victims of bullying may have to deal with the effects of being abused even after they have left the school environment. Some researchers have discovered school bullying victims have the highest risk of becoming victims of bullying within the
workplace especially if the victim is unable to learn successful coping strategies while in school (Smith, Singer, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003). In addition, many victims are left with emotional and psychological scars which make forming and maintaining relationships a challenge (Lipman, 2003; Roland 2002; Kaltiala-Heino & Rimpela, 1999).

Limitations

As all research projects do, this study has some limitations. While the use of victims online narrative provided ample qualitative data for analysis, the study may not have gained an entirely accurate picture of cyberbullying experiences for boys because of the low quantity of stories the researcher was able to collect. The significant difference of female as compared to male participants also made analysis of gender difference quite challenging. Had the quantities been more equal the researcher could have compared many aspects of the project from a gender perspective.

The researcher's use of qualitative analysis of the victims stories enabled her to gather a organized understanding of victims’ interpretations of their cyberbullying experiences (Smith, 1991). However, one limitation for this study was the researchers
inability to interview the authors of the stories in order to seek clarification or additional details. In most cases, additional questions were not necessary. The use of focus groups in addition to the stories may have provided even more fruitful data.

Personal and often intimate stories, such as those told by the victims in this paper, are written from a retrospective and subjective position. The researcher recognizes the authors’ self-selection of details and the lack of outsider insight in order corroborate or dispute the details of the narratives. However, the researcher feels the stories represent the victims’ perception of the experiences and therefore are valid and worthy of study as the victims’ reality. The researcher’s focus for the study was to determine how victims’ characterize cyberbullying, not to determine if there characterization agrees with the perspective of other involved parties or onlookers.

Future Research

After a thorough search of published literature, the researcher was unable to identify a single research study concerning the topic of cyberbullying. A significant amount of information on cyberbullying exists on the Internet in the form of news reports and general information on Web sites dedicated to educating the public about cyberbullying. Therefore, the researcher sees the study of cyberbullying open to head in a number of directions.
Following the results of this project, it may be necessary to conduct a study which focuses in on specific aspects of cyberbully as compared to the broad overview provided in this paper. Additional methodologies beyond qualitative grounded theory should be used to validate this projects findings and shed light on additional information the researcher was unable to determine for example quantifiable results about the prevalence of cyberbullying. The researcher also believes using a methodology in which participants are interviewed might yield even more insight into victims’ cyberbullying experiences as well as bullies’ motivation to choose cyberbullying as a means to abuse their victims.

Bullying.org, the Web site from which data was collected for this paper, may prove to be fertile ground for future research. One aspect of the Web site is the readers ability to reply to posted stories. Not all of the stories elicit replies, however some incite replies almost dialogic in nature. In addition to studying the replies, one might consider searching the Web site for stories posted by bullies in order to gain perspective on their experiences.

One last realm for future research lies in the challenge of establishing who has jurisdiction over cyberbullying offenses. Cyberbullying most often occurs outside of the school setting, yet, it often directly effects the victim at school. Research may
provide solutions for prevention, intervention, and control of cyberbullying (See Olweus, 2003; Dake, Price, Telljohann, & Funk, 2003).

Conclusion

Teens today and in the future will benefit from technological advances and learn to incorporate them into their daily lives. Computer-mediated communication is one such advance that has made the world smaller for our adolescents. Unfortunately, computer-mediated communication has its downside as well. Teens taken bullying from the hallways of school to the Internet. Cyberbullying is a real concern and must be treated accordingly.

As shown in this study, analyzing victims’ stories about their bullying experiences can help shed light on bullying from a variety of angles. Specifically for this study, the researcher sought to uncover details concerning cyberbullying. A grounded theory analysis of victims’ stories which they had posted on an anti-bullying Web site (Bullying.org) revealed which CMC tools were most frequently used in cyberbullying and how the victims characterized their experiences with cyberbullying.

Bullies used a range of CMC tools including instant messaging (synchronous chat), e-mail (asynchronous), Web sites, and text messaging. Victims reported being cyberbullied the most while they were involved in synchronous chats. The reason for this could be two fold; instant messaging mediums create a communication
environment most similar to face-to-face communication and it is an incredibly popular communication tool among teens. Research indicates adolescents spend an average 6 hours on the Internet per week (Haythornwaite, 2001) and the top three activities reported by users included e-mail, Instant messaging, and Web surfing (Anfuso, 2003). In many ways Internet communication tools are a central part of teens’ lives today as the telephone was for teens ten years ago.

Analysis of the stories also revealed a clear picture of how teens experience cyberbullying. Using a grounded theory approach, three theme emerged from the data: contextualization, bullying experiences, and response/outcomes. Together the three themes and the subsequent categories within each offer an insiders view of being a victim of bullying. Victims contextualized their stories by detailing their relationship with the bully, the social status of themselves and the bully, explanations for the abuse, and the starting point and duration of the abuse. Victims may have found it important to contextualize their stories so that the reader would better understand the surrounding people, events, and environment or they may simply have been trying to make sense of the situation themselves.

The second theme increased our understanding of victims’ bullying experiences. The victims’ shared accounts of cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. Each form of bullying broke down into types of abuse; cyberbullies used verbal and
indirect methods, whereas, face-to-face bullies used physical, verbal and indirect tactics. Both forms, cyberbullying and face-to-face, revealed similar results, especially in terms of verbal bullying. Victims fell prey to name-calling, threats, teasing, and crude or sexual comments. Indirect bullying varied slightly, in that cyberbullies were more deceptive and they used Web sites to post pictures to insult to embarrass the victim; however victims reported bullies use of indirect bullying such as spreading rumors and social exclusion for both forms of bullying. Victims also gave accounts of physical abuse they had received in face-to-face encounters with their bullies. As discussed further within the third theme, all of the bullying episodes whether cyberbullying or face-to-face seemed to have a significant impact on the victims. Victims were effected enough so that they would seek out the Bullying.org Web site and post their stories.

Finally the third theme consisted of victims’ responses to their experiences and descriptions of the outcomes. The authors responses included requesting advice, giving advice, reporting the offenses, refuting bullies’ accusations, emotional responses, withdrawal from social interaction and school, as well as self destructive behavior. The victims’ responses seem to indicate the serious nature of bullying. For example, the common reports of emotional distress and extreme behavior such as self-cutting and suicide attempts reveal the depth at which these victims were effected
by bullying. In terms of outcomes, some of the victims reported a positive outlook for the future, while others expressed a feeling of despair. Victims who reported high hopes for the future often also reported a change had occurred in their situation such as intervention by an adult, they had moved into a new environment, or they had simply learned to cope with the situation. For those reporting negative future outlooks, they often described feeling alone, helpless, and hopeless. It is important to understand both of these view points in order to learn how to move more victims to a positive future.

Cyberbullying is a new area of study. Research in this area can help yield valuable information which will aid teens, parents, educators, and counselors in the battle against bullying. Although there cyberbullying resembles face-to-face bullying, it is far more unique than similar and consequently is an area warranting its own space in research. Without a deeper understanding of cyberbullying, we will not be able to help teens stop bullies from following them home.
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL
April 12, 2004

Ann Phillips
Department of Communication
University of North Texas

Re: Human Subjects Application No. 04-098

Dear Ms. Phillips:

As permitted by federal law and regulations governing the use of human subjects in research projects (45 CFR 46), the UNT Institutional Review Board has reviewed your proposed project titled “Cyber-bullying.” The risks inherent in this research are minimal, and the potential benefits to the subject outweigh those risks. The submitted protocol and informed consent form is hereby approved for the use of human subjects. Federal policy 45 CFR 46.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only.

It is your responsibility according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit annual and terminal progress reports to the IRB for this project. Please mark your calendar accordingly. The IRB must also review this project prior to any modifications.

Please contact Shelia Bourne, Compliance Administrator, at ext. 3940 or Boyd Herndon, Assistant Director for Compliance, if you wish to make changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Scott Simpkins, Ph.D.
Chair
Institutional Review Board

SS: sb
1. Female/Canada

There is something that has been bothering me for awhile now. My classroom has gone crazy. One kid was in jail and his parents had to go to court because he (the kid) beat up a guy in my class. Then some girls in my class are talking back to the teachers and bringing lighters to school. I was alergic to some of the stuff they were burning and that night I got a little fever. Anyway, then some other girls in my class were trying to commit suicide in class and I though that was ridiculous. I can not help the people, because if I do people in another class gets mad at me, because I am not hanging around them. If I do help my class people in the other class are going to post a picture of me on the internet (I look like I am going to throw up in the picture). I am stuck. Also today some kid threw a rock at some teacher''s car and broke a window and the school is making rumours about who did it. I am scared. People are threatening to kill other people. What should I do?

2. Male/Canada

I am now in grade 10 and I have been bullied ever since I was in grade 4. Before grade 4 I was one of the most popular kids in my school of about 100 kids. One day a new kid came to my school and we became friends for about a year, or into the fall of grade 4. To this day I still don''t exactly know why he did this, but he spread a rumour that I was gay, which I''m not.

At the time I had a lot of close friends, this was a small community and we hung out
every day.

I literally went home one day at the top of the world, and came back the next day with almost no friends. I never found out why all my former friends made fun of me and called me gay until the winter of grade 6. It was hard on me, I just wanted to die. That continued into junior high. It wasn"t the same people, but the bullies in the school all liked to pick on me for some reason. After every passing day I wanted to die even more, and I eventually tried to kill myself. My parents and me decided to go to a counsellor to find help. I was put on an antidepressant. It helped to keep me in school, but not with my suicidal thoughts. I was physically attacked once in grade 8 by a bully, but it wasn"t that bad.

It wasn"t really anything physical until last summer. I got into a fight with my friend, not physical, just an argument. This was a friend I had my whole life, lately he was changing for the worse but I still trusted him, I was wrong to do so. He went on the Internet, specifically MSN, and spread a rumour that I was racist towards the native people in my city, which I am not. Although, you would be surprised how many people would believe that it was true, even native teenagers that I knew and used to hang out with suddenly wanted to beat me up. They were trying to defend their culture against racists, which I think they should, but it was more like a witch-hunt. They found me twice, and no matter what I said, they didn"t believe me. I am a passivist, I believe in non-violence so much that I was not prepared to throw away my morals on a stupid street fight. The first time I was beaten wasn"t that bad, I think it was because I told him that if he hit me, no matter what, I was not going to hit him back. He just replied, "Well that's no fun." The second time I was beaten however, I was jumped. There
were a lot of them and they were pumping each other up. Again I told them that I would not fight back. They punched me in the face quite a bit, and nearly broke my jaw, but eventually they got tired of beating somebody that wouldn't fight back.

I still have people after me, although they don't know what I look like, they only know my name. So I don't go downtown that often and try to stay in the background at school. There is no possible way for me to get rid of this "racist" label. I no longer have thoughts of suicide but it is getting harder and harder to go to school, I usually miss at least 1 or 2 days a week. I still get picked on every once in a while at school, but not that often. I think it is because in my school we have very strict rules on the subject. If you are even caught calling somebody stupid, and the victim complains, that's an automatic suspension. This is very effective in stopping bullying.

It is still hard for me however to live my life in fear that somebody might see me and say, "Hey, that's that little racists kid, lets go kick his ass."

It is getting better though; I have plans for the future, and good friends. So for me at least, things did get a little better.

P.S. I think my views on non-violence are very important. None of my friends can understand how I could just stand there and let people hit me and not fight back, but if you think about it, I am now a better person than they will ever be, because I refused violence when I could have easily accepted it.

3. Female/Canada

I was on the internet checking my emails on day when a girl named *** sent me a
threatening email saying that when she sees me at school she was going to kill me and if I saw her in the hall I should run and I haven’t done anything about this because its March break. I feel very unsafe about this because before March break she would nudge me and give me dirty looks in the hall! I don’t know what to do tell someone or keep it to myself because if I tell it will just get myself into more trouble :( ?!? I don’t know but I think I’m going to tell!

4. Female/China

I started my first year of secondary school at ****….. I was little miss thang…. not as if I was the popular gal or anything. I was the "girly girly" that was mega self-conscious. It all started when my boyfriend of two months, dumped me because he thought that I only wanted him for popularity…. I was devastated. So, for the next couple of days some of the people in other house groups start ignoring me, they laughed at me and whispered when I walked by. Then, one day when I was waiting outside the music classroom for my lesson, one of the year 9 people came up to me and said, “Oh my god! It’s the popular group” in a really girly voice, this continued for a month. Then a few days later some of the year 9s got to me in MSN messenger and started being mean to me and ‘dissing’ me on the Internet. I went to a teacher I gave her their names and then a few weeks later on MSN, one apologized to me for what she had done. We aren"t on a proper talking base or anything but in the hall on the way to class she looks at me, straight into my eyes and then turns away as if to say, I"m sorry….

5. Female/United States
One day when I at lunch my friends were stepping on my feet under the table. Then when we were walking back to class one of my other friends said they were talking about me and calling me names, so in my 4th hour I wrote them a note and then I gave it to them. At the end of the day I was walking out of the school and then they started yelling CORKY at me to make fun of my name. I was walking over to my little sister’s school crying and when I got there my uncle came and got us. When I got home my mom had me listen to a message they’d left me. They said my dad’s a drunk and we beat our dog, which is not true. I started crying again for the longest time. When the message was finished I found out all the stuff they think it wrong with me and it made me feel like the lowest thing on the face of the earth. But now when I am on the Internet on yahoo messenger they’re sending me all these messages and they won’t leave me alone. My best friend said to tell the police and that what they are doing is harassment. Can you help me and tell me what to do?

6. Female/Canada

About a year ago I was talking to my friend on the Internet, she asked me if I liked this girl who is really snobby and really mean. I said, “Not really. I think she’s kind of mean.” Then she asked if I was poor and I asked if it was really my so-called friend. It was and the girl I hate. I was really upset and didn’t reply to her question. Five minutes later she asked again and I said, “No.” because I’m not. I asked her why the *** would she ask me that question. She said that it was the way I dressed and looked. I might not dress as well as she does but no way am I going to buy $60 tops and $x. Well her reply to that was to say that I’m dirty. It really hurt that she said that and she doesn’t
know me so she does not have the right to say that! It made me so upset then every
time I pass her she give me dirty looks. If looks could kill I’d be dead. In one day I lost
a friend and gained two enemies.

7. Unknown/Canada

What I think is that it"s all in your mind. You can control it by the way you can control
your mind like you might think a teacher being mean to you. But its the way you act. I
still am being bullied even during school when class is going on. I now you guys
think its hard but really I have been threatened at school, at home, and on the
internet. But I realized that I am how I am. If people do not like me, will who
cares. And if people like me will I am happy.

Key word = chat room

8. Female/ United States

Have you ever been a victim of bullying on the net? I used to post on an online forum
for Eminem fans. Some may think I was asking for it cuz they"re Eminem fans so they
must be mean. Anyway, I made the mistake of posting my picture and almost
everyone said I was pretty but one or two people kept making new names and going
on there and posting pictures of ugly people with glasses and bucked teeth (cuz I
have glasses) and saying they were me when I was younger. Eventually I did just
leave because I was sick of it all, but I always had this fear that they were still talking
about me. They also did something to my AOL Instant Messenger so that I couldn"t
chat with a bunch of people in a chat room without having them appear in the room as well. I had to change my screen name and everything. I"m over it now and I feel kind of stupid for letting something like that hurt me

Key Word = email

9. Female/UK

I am being bullied because I am popular and I have other popular people making fights with me. I have lots of people using me so I never really have a real friend I just have people who are my friend one day then the next day I have no one. I mostly get horrible texts or emails from people who want to make fights with me so they will be popular! I can’t wait till the Easter holidays so I can be alone and just be by myself and not have lots of people surrounding me!

10. Female/Canada

GIRL1 is a girl in my class. She is what the guys want, and she can get any guy she wants. Now I"m not jealous of her. In fact there"s nothing she has that I want. But she is so mean. One time, me and my friends were at a dance, and me and my friend GIRL2 were wearing the same skirt, except I had a different belt and chain on mine, so GIRL1 probably didn"t notice. She and her friend walked right up to GIRL2 and told her her skirt was "outta style" and "ugly". My friend GIRL2 felt bad so she called her mom and her mom brought her pants. When we walked by GIRL1 she said "oh my gosh she finally changed! Thank god!" And I turned around and said, "Leave us alone!". Well that was when it started. I have her name on my MSN list, and my name
is (*) *** (*). Well it"s something like that. Anyway she comes on and says " Sexy? Yah right! Sexy my *ss! Ewww! your display pic is so gross!!"(just in case you don"t have MSN... you can have a picture of you in the conversation for the other person to see). I told her to go away and leave me alone and she just swore at me. I sent her an email saying to leave me and my friends alone and that I was tired of her bullying us all the time. When she got it she came online and started swearing at me, telling me I was just jealous and that I wasn"t sexy and I was ugly. She called me a fag and a geek.... and I hate to admit it but it hurt my feelings. I blocked her and now I am so angry. I feel sad and mad at the same time. Why does she have to be so mean? What did I ever do to her?

11. Female/Canada

I think bullying should be stopped. I know how it felt to be bullied because it always happened to me. People would call me mean names. i was thirteen when it happened. They had no respect for me or my stuff. they would make me cry and even once they actually wrote me a letter. I tried being their freinds but it wouldn"t work. i wrote a suicide letter than ran away. they would even use my email like some girl did to call me names like loser and other mean ones and it got me mad. I was about to freak out and well the teacher came in. i think every bullies victim should be helped and put bullies to end.

Key Word = MSN

12. Female/Canada
Okay I was on Msn and I was asking this girl a joke and I asked, "Where do cows live?" she she's like "your face". That was really mean! What should I do about it? And I'm not going to let her get away with it. She probably was saying I'm ugly. Please send back to me ASAP!

13. Male/UK

When I started primary school I was bullied, soon as I entered the school people picked on me, I didn’t have any friends anything. I tried to make friends but was pushed away from the other groups, so I sat everyday in the corner of the playground I watched the others play. I was never invited to play with them. I even asked if I could play but was turned down by the other kids.

As the years went past the bullying carried on getting and got worst. I had tried so hard to make friends but still didn’t succeed, I carried on sitting in the corner of the playground watching the others play over and over again with their happy smiles and laughter, by now I had become a loner without any friends all, I had begun to get nasty with my mum and dad. I had picked up a nasty temper and I would lash out. I was 6 when my mum took me to the doctor’s about my temper. The doctor said I was hyperactive and from then on I was banned from drinking anything with sugar in it.

That made me worse; I lashed out more. I was only in year 3 and I was in the infants’ side of the school – year 4 was going to be the big move to the Juniors; everyone was very happy, apart from me, what was I to look forward too? More bullying.

The first day of year 4 everyone was happy; smiling faces and a new teacher. This was to be my worst teacher of my schooling so far, 2 weeks after year 4 started four
people started picking on me. There was nowhere to escape. You can't go inside you get pushed back outside by the teachers. I had to take it the pushing and hitting. It just wasn't right. Then people changed, they got worse. Halfway through the year 3 boys put my head down the toilet and flushed continuously. They held me in so I got soaked.

In the classrooms, people near enough in the class threw stuff at me. I was forced to sit on a chair of thumbtacks. If I refused I got hit and then pushed onto them; I refused. I got framed for stealing a GameBoy from a girl. This girl was very popular; the game boy was planted in my bag to frame me. The teacher called a bag search for the game then it came to my bag and as the teacher opened my bag it fell out. I could do nothing with it I just stood back as the class shouted at me continuously calling me a thief and some really nasty stuff. The teacher just watched and let the class do it.

After all that people just wouldn't leave me alone. I sat in the corner of the playground crying nobody saw or heard me; the tears just poured out like a tap. The parents’ evening was a very bad day for me. The teacher told lies to my mum and dad saying that I swore at him and that I was very bad. Mum and Dad took me home. I walked into my room and 5 minutes later my mum walked in. she went mental at me shouting and shouting; banning me from things, taking all my electronics, so all I had was a bed. It was a form of discipline. I guess I had nothing.

I see my brother, he’s perfect, he always gets me in trouble; spoilt brat. The next day I went to school everyone was bragging about how they got good marks and how they’re parents treat them to presents and McDonalds. Me, I just sat at my table until a boy came along his name was Boy1. I didn’t trust him, he was one of the three who
had put my head down the toilet along with 2 other boys Boy2 and Boy3, Boy2 had already been expelled from another school and it was only year 4; he wasn’t going to go far in life.

Boy3 smoked already and had tried drugs and everything. He is now a big gang leader… still out to get me. So Boy1 asked what had my mum said about my score. I said she didn’t say much then he shouted to the whole class a load of BS. The whole class laughed and humiliated me; the teacher joined in too. Mr *** that name will be stamped into my brain forever.

Year 4 the kids carried on not letting me into their fun; pushing me away. I even tried joining the girls but they weren’t interested either. So I carried on walking round the playground day in and day out until one day I bumped into 3 boys. These were to be my first friends since starting school. It had taken 3 years to get noticed. So I talked these boys; we walked about the school talking and enjoying ourselves until one day a new kid came along bragging about how he got a Playstation and 50 games. He was loaded his parents were both teachers and he stole my first friends.

I tried, over and over again, to get my friends back but didn’t succeed, I gave up. I was back to square one; a loner. People found a new use for me… when someone did something wrong they said it was me and everyone backed him up so I had a new home “standing at the walk”. It’s what they made you do if you were bad. I tried to say it wasn’t me but in the end I went along with it.

People stood behind me provoking me. I couldn’t do anything about it; you weren’t allowed to move away from the wall. One day, when I was in lesson the bell rang; it was break time I hadn’t spoken to anyone that day. I met by 4 boys 3 of them were the
boys that put my head down the toilet the other one was Boy7. Apparently I had called him some nasty stuff and he was threatening to beat me up so I ran to the teacher to tell her. She said I would be OK.

Minutes after she went inside a massive circle formed around me, a circle of people and then in front of me stood Boy7 who was very angry with me. I didn’t know what was going to happen because at the time I had never even seen a fight. I had never been in a fight; this was to be my first. Boy7 punched me, pushed me, kicked me, tripped me up then left leaving me on the floor with a bleeding nose and cuts all over. I opened my eyes and looked into the sky and said “Why me?” a teacher came walking over to me and asking what had I done. As I was about to say Boy7 punched 10 kids came along saying I was spinning around then I tripped up. The teacher believed them.

Where are my parents in all this you’re thinking, well I didn’t really have anything to do with them. I was closest to my mum but my dad hardly ever talked to me. Today that is still the same. It was coming to the end of year 4 and a school disco was coming up and a girl, a really nice one, asked me to go to the dance with her so I did, then she ripped my heart out and threw it away like a piece of paper.

Year 5 came… first day back everyone is saying hello and invitations are going out to everyone, apart from me, to this party. I felt hurt; a sharp pain like a big point cutting straight through me. That day went very slowly; people asking if I was going to this party and me saying “No”. They all ran off cheering and me, well, this was going to be the first night I attempted suicide. I was going to hang myself. I had it all setup; the rope, everything. It was on my light on the ceiling and as I jumped off the chair with the
rope round my neck I pulled the light out of the ceiling. Tired and upset I went to bed thinking about how I would explain this to my parents. I told them that it just came out in the night, they believed it.

Some of this stuff I am typing up I have never told anyone and never my mum and dad. I went to school and was met by the usual bullying; pushing, shoving, and hitting that had become normal for me. The teacher, as normal, just watched it happen to me. In the end I didn’t bother to tell them, I just let it happen to me. All this carried on all the way ‘till year 6, every day ‘till the end day. The end day was when people have their shirts written over with congrats to the new school. I had one or two “good lucks” and the rest was abuse, which I didn’t see ‘till I got home.

The first day of secondary school, I was hoping this was going to be a major breakthrough; a life changing experience for the good, but no, it didn’t turn out like that. I walked in, all scared, seeing these really tall people walking about who where 3 times as big as me. I found my place, the place where I was going to live at break times and that was going to be the library. I walked into the library and I met this year 9. He was into computers like me.

He knew a lot too he showed me some of his killed while I showed him my web skills. We were friends and got along all right. My first lesson, of year 7 I met a lot of new people; nice people and bad people I was thinking to myself that this was going to be a really good life, how wrong I was.

Two weeks into year 7 people started tell the new people from other schools about me a lot of BS. To make it sound worse, rumours then started making people very angry and then go after me. If anything was stolen I was to blame. Even though I never
did it in year 4. We had a form tutor, she was American she taught French and always picked on me. She would take me out of the room and shout so much for something I hadn't done. The amount of times I was sent to the head's office was amazing. In any lesson I had at least 2 things lobbed at me pens, pencils, rulers, rubbers anything. I had all my stuff nicked and smashed and then returned. I told my form tutor about it but nothing was done about it.

A boy called Boy4 moved to our school he had been excluded for bullying, I was his next target; it was during a lesson in RE. The teacher went out of the room I was pulled out of my chair and forced outside the window. Bare in mind this is a tower; it has 3 floors and I was at the top. he tried so hard to push me outside the window… then the teacher came in. Boy4 said I was going outside the window myself and he was stopping me. I stood up and said he was pushing me outside the window but I was beaten down by the class when they backed Boy4 up.

The class finished and Boy4 kept me behind, waited for the floor to empty and beat me up, kicking me and bruising me, then when he was done, he left me there to crawl home. The next day it wasn’t any better. Boy4 hit me more, got me in trouble more put me through hell. PE became a thing I didn’t do because I was scared what people would do to me. The last time I did PE I had my stuff nicked and chucked out of the window and my shoes were never to be seen again.

So I wore trainers but that's against school rules so the school made me take them off and walk barefoot. That was a very painful day; people on purpose stamped on my feet. The next day my bike was vandalised I had to walk home while others shouted abuse.
From that day I bunked school. I had to get away from school it was so bad but there was more to come. Eventually I was found out and made to go back to school. Dad took me there in the car; there was no way I could bunk. From then on the bullying carried on straight in to year 8. I still didn’t have many friends and bullying had got worse. I no longer did PE, I refused to do it. I couldn’t do it. I wouldn’t do it. I didn’t want to take the risk of getting beat up, the changing rooms have very bad memories I want to forget but instead are hammered into my brain when I walk into that room they hit me like stones.

Classes were still the same; people lobbing stuff at me, hiding behind a book or something to help protect me from pen and pencils all aimed at me with my name on it. The teacher comes in the room they all blame it on me. I had to pick all the stuff up all the time, then the kids would laugh at me, nicking my bag, emptying it on the floor watching me pick it all up again. “Why do people do this?” I always wondered. I never found out why though. In year 9 I became more computer literate. I taught myself how to do things. This took my mind off the bullying that had taken place in my life so far. It hurt me and in this year I had tried to commit suicide 3 times. Most of that was self-harming. I still have the scars; they will never leave. The pain I felt from doing it gave a sign of relieve. I felt much better after I had done it but when I woke up the next morning I felt so stupid. I looked at my arms to see blood, burns and stabs all in my right arm never the left. I look at my arm today and I wish I had never done it, When I had woke up my pillow was wet from crying and my sheets stained with blood from my arm. I told my mum it was a nose bleed but I really knew the truth about it.

I always hid my arms from public. I didn’t want anyone to see the mess I had made to
myself. I let it heal and a few weeks later I would be doing it again. In My temper had gotten worse. I used to trash my room and leave a path of destruction where my temper had been. I didn’t want to do it but I had no control over it at the time. I have control over it now because I have a counselling and temper management to sort these things out.

One time I flipped. I was pinned down to the floor by my mum, dad and my nana while my granddad rang the doctor. He came over and gave me a pill to knock me out and make me sleep. From then on I was put into counselling once every fortnight. My counsellor talked me through my problems with my temper. I didn’t tell her about my other things in life like my self-harming and suicide attempts, it was for the best. I was shown how to control my temper, which has made me into the better person you see today. If I hadn’t had help I would have become… and might have been in juvenile if I carried on how I was, or I would have been dead. I still think today how did I live through this? Year 9 had passed I have one incident where 2 year 11 boys bullied me in the toilets. They made me pick up paper towels in the urinal tray soaked in piss and put it in the bin. If I didn’t they was going to smash my head in, so I did then walked out of school and went to my nana’s. Then they discussed what was going to happen next. The school sorted the boys out but the boys never said sorry.

I found a “friend” called Boy5. We were never seen apart. We walked around the school together and one was never seen without the other close by. We were two peas in a pod. I had taken my options for year 10: History, Business, and Graphics, Graphics was to be the worst, followed by History, then business. The year had gone OK for 3 weeks… so far no trouble. Until a girl moved to the school her name was
Girl1. Boy5 and me became mates with her, talked to her on MSN, had a great time. Until one night as I was talking to Girl1, we got flirting she was flirting too. The next day I walked into school to find 7 boys standing in front of me. Then circling around me, then the leader came along, Boy6. He used to be all right, same with his mate Boy7, but Boy6 got into the wrong crowd, the bullies, and with his 7-man crew they pushed me about. Pushing me up against a walk, warning me not to flirt again, so I didn’t. I think she set me up. A few days later I was in graphics talking to Girl1. No flirting just talking until Girl1 asked if I would get my dick out for her. I turned away, I didn’t want a part of this and all then her mate shouted to the class, “Tom wants to get his dick out for Girl1”. The class laughed and laughed then someone shouted out, “Let’s go tell Boy6”, my heart stopped, it came to a halt and a gulped. This wasn’t good, then a few minutes later I found out Boy6 was going out with Girl1. I was dead meat. It was a 2 hour lesson and when the 1st hour had passed everyone was allowed out for a drink or toilet, me and Boy5 went out of the room to go discuss what we was going to do. There was nothing I could do but wait. As we came out of the toilets we were met by the whole class and Boy6. He was in front. He was in another lesson but had come out specially to find me. Boy5 stopped Boy6 from doing anything to me, that time. I went to the Department head to explain what had happened, but he didn’t understand. Nobody did, so from that day on I hid from him. I knew he was after me and this was going to very bad indeed. A few days later I went to my lesson in Business studies, it seemed a good lesson at the time. I couldn’t stand the teacher
but it had computers in the room; my favourite. I waited in line for the teacher then I found out that she was away.

I went to see the system Admin who was just opposite GNVQ. I went into his room to talk about stuff then there was a knock at the door asking for me. I told him that they were after me but he pushed me outside his room into this circle of people. This was bad. Everyone was around me. I couldn't get out. I was in the circle of death as I call it. Then Boy6 appeared. I told him “I didn’t do it”, over and over again “I didn’t do it”, “I didn’t do it”, “I didn’t do it”, “I didn’t do it”, ‘till I was nearly crying then whack! Boy6 had hit me in the face once; then whack, whack, whack, whack. I felt the pain as he did it, then I felt someone holding my arms back so I couldn’t fight back. Then he hit me in the stomach twice, the teacher came round the corner, I kind of crawled away then got up all bruised, cut, bleeding and walk/ran/limped away while Boy6 went the opposite way. I swore at the teacher then I got to the door stood up about to walk out of school when I blacked out, collapsed on the floor. Then the teacher dragged me to the first aid. I had been in that room many times before. Boy5 walked in front of me while I was dragged. I kept telling him it was Boy6. I can’t remember that. There are still parts that I can’t remember even now and it was over a year ago when this happened. The head and my mum came to the room. The head explained the problem and basically said it was my fault, the kids had backed Boy6 up. When I got home my white polo shirt was completely RED with blood; my nose was clogged up with blood, the floor where I had been beaten up was covered with blood, where I had blacked out was a puddle of blood and where I had been dragged there was blood. That was a very messy day.
I showed I was strong though the next day. I came back to school and carried on my hell life. from then on it kept getting mentioned and people messed me about with it. Then at the end of the year there was a very serious incident. This was to be the one that freaked me out. I was in Graphics when someone threw a pair of scissors in the back of my head. They were aimed at me too. The whole class gathered 'round; looking at me. I had blood pouring out and running down my neck. The teacher, who was in charge, sent me to office with a bully. I didn’t care anymore, I wanted to be dead. I wished they had killed me there and then.

The office told the person who took me down to the office to clean me up. He did and I thank him for that but the first aid should have done it. It was cleaned up in the toilets. It was a head injury, the office called my dad who picked me up and took me to the doctor’s. That wouldn’t be the first time I’d been there either. The school got the police involved. I had never been questioned by the police before but then I was as well. As everyone in the room was interviewed nobody dobbed anyone in so the boy went free. Today the boy brags about it. I knew it was him from the start.

So for weeks people took the piss out of me. I got called scissor head over and over again. It really drives you mad after a while after you’ve heard it the first 100 times. Back into the classrooms… my work was always being destroyed and to one point I gave up doing my work. There were no regular teachers, only supply teachers, and none of them knew what the students were like as soon as a teacher goes out of the room. I was the target of books, the newest thing they started throwing. I didn’t have a book it was thrown in the sink in the science lab then they turned the tap on... months of work lost.
I used to be good at all my lessons but since year10 I have given up. I used to be A* Science now I am a D, maybe a lot lower. I had really come to the point where I had given up with my work, because it was destroyed so often. My graphics coursework was stolen when I was hit with the scissors… that was never returned so I got a new folder. that was poured out over the classroom then put into the bin. I got another folder, I did my work all over again, it was all-complete until two male classmates came along and guillotined it straight through the middle.

I did it for the forth time and kept it at home. It has stayed there ever since. I don’t dare to take it to school. It’s the only thing I am proud of. So that takes us to the last year of my schooling… year11, this year was going to be the last year of school. I finished earlier than anyone else.

At the end of 2003 I was eating during my break when I was push into a wooden box about a metre by a metre. It’s where everyone sticks their bags in, in my case it was me. I asked to be pulled out but instead a ton of bags were pushed on top of me and then a wooden chair. The chair was very close to my face and other places. I tried to get out but I couldn’t. I tried to force the side out but I couldn’t. I was stuck in there without air. Someone male moved a bag, I looked up and he poured Coke on me then chucked more bags on me. I was in that box for over 10 minutes without air before I fell into a deep sleep. I was woken up by being pulled out of the box by a teacher. I was pulled out and then I collapsed on the floor. I was then dragged and put into the recovery position. I shook and shook as my body woke up from the deep sleep; from then I knew that this was to be the last day of school for me. A week later my
counsellor, Mum, and Head of Educational Welfare came in to pull me out of school, for me to do home study. That was the last time I was to enter the school as a student. On every Monday I have to come in to school to pick up some work for me to do for the week, but this started to fail this week. I haven’t got any work so I typed this up when I went to school this week. Since I started home study my friends have turned against me and have been threatening me. I no longer have any school friends. I have a girlfriend. I love her. I have been with her for just over 4 months and I am enjoying every bit of it. She’s the only thing I live for if she broke up with me I wouldn’t be here after at least 3 months and she knows it. We are hoping to stay together forever.

Thanks for reading

Tom

Small Notes: Things I didn’t mention in my story is that’s just the main problem that has happened in my life

- on the 11/11/02 I had my phone stolen at school,
- I’ve hacked my school"s network for revenge twice,
- I made a Unofficial School website disssing the school and loads of other things to do with computers,
- Violent behaviour to a teacher because he humiliated me in front on a class breaking a window and fire door costing over £200 damage.

I have had weeks of being provoked by other students; they want make me lose it but I won’t. I no longer self harm; I don’t see the point of it anymore. So far this has made 2
girls cry I don't mean it to but it has. Please don't self harm you will regret it in the morning.

I found out that I was never hyperactive when I was 14; I wasn't very happy.

I can no longer walk into school alone. I am scared of the school and would never go back to it. My school has messed my life up. They say they don't have a bullying problem in the papers. I know their scams to get special certificates.

I cannot go outside anymore and never at night. If I do run a big risk of having something happen to me so I stop in day in day out. I am happy doing that too.

I see my girlfriend every weekend. She is the little light in my life.

14. Female/Canada

Hello my name is …and I'm in grade 6. In my class is this girl named Girl1 she was always nice to me and I was always nice to her. But she hates my best friend Girl2 and she always calls her names when she is near. I told her to stop and told her how I felt when she called Girl2 names but she just snapped at me. So one day I was on MSN messenger and Girl1 comes on and we started to talk and all of a sudden she starts being mean to me. she made fun of my family my best friend and my brother. I said, "Girl1 I thought you liked me". So I started a petition against bullying and got lots of signatures. Believe it or not I have to sit next to Girl1 at school and it makes me uncomfortable. But I have to deal with it. I try not to be mean to people. But sometimes I can"t help it. Sometimes in our lives everyone is a bully.

15. Female/UK
On Friday me and my boy mates were having a water fight on the basketball court. One of them threw a sandwich at me and got butter all down my top so I threw some water at him. He then got two of his friends to rub chocolate spread sandwiches on me and throw sandwiches at me and in my hair. I walked off crying, if went back to go and tell him how much he"d hurt me and he said some really nasty stuff to me; reducing me to tears again. He"s being really nasty to me on MSN at this moment. I cut myself because I felt so hurt. I don"t want to go to school tomorrow but I know I'll have to face it one day.

16. Female/Canada

Hi I"m Jenny. I have just entered a new skool this year and I was just so happy to meet new people. Now I"m just sick of people. I just want to go in my room and cry most of the time. When I made some popular friends I thought we were so tight and stuff; all they do is use me. I like to have popular friends so I just let them use me for what I got. Then I"m called popular because I hang out with them . I love that - but I can"t keep doing this - it hurts inside. Like when I am looking at peoples web pages or I am talking on MSN and I look at there profile and I see this huge list of peoples names of friends, I am never on that lists. I have only 2 good friends they are ***** AND ****** they support me all the way. But if I"m in class I am the one always being ditched because all the people that say they are my friends just go with *****. So with projects I"m always alone. I am a really nice person inside, people just use me and use me. I don"t want to have this life any more. I feel like I want to go die and there is no reason for me to be here if I am just being used. Please help me before
something bad happens.

Key Word = AOL

17. Female/US

Because it is more like high schEveryone says that high school is every teen’s nightmare. Hardly. Middle school (aka Jr. High) is easily a million times worse, especially those extremely tiny schools. You know, the extremely tiny schools where everyone literally knows everyone. Middle school is more like High school than it is grade school. It’s the transition between the two. That’s why it’s called middle school, after all. ool, it is something totally new, and that makes it harder to adjust to than high school. The kids are horrible. Imagine being confined in a classroom with the same students, all day, five days a week. Make one mistake, or make a fool of yourself, and all your friends (and enemies) know. There is no escaping it. For me, Jr. High has been more than a nightmare. It’s my nightmarish reality. Since I have started Jr. High, I have faced nothing but cruel jokes, insults, taunts, and mockery. School starts the third week of August, never fail. In August, 2001, I entered Hell, commonly known as Junior High. It was my sixth grade year. I had been in class with most of these people since kindergarten; I’d known them for years. While not the best of friends, they were not openly hostile towards me, like they were to my older sister. I started sixth grade thinking, “Okay, this can’t be too bad. I can get through it.” Oh how wrong I was. Granted, most of my teachers were cool. There was a lot of homework, but I could deal with it. But as the weeks dragged on, my life in jr. high took a turn for the worse. I noticed things were different than how they had been when school had first started. My
fellow students, once cool towards me, were now mean and viscous. They would mock me, taunt me, tease me. I don’t remember all the insults. I just remember that they stung. My grades began to slip. I couldn’t keep up with the work. I would study for hours to get C’s on my tests, if I was lucky. My grades were just barely above failing. Basketball started in the winter. I joined the team, along with the most popular girls in my class. The coaches told us that the game was not about winning, but about having fun. And yet, I barely received any playing time all year. The ‘better’ (meaning more popular) players would play the whole game, or most of it. All season this continued. It is the perfect example of hypocrisy. The few people who had spoken to me before Jr. High, even hung out with me (I will not call them friends, we were never close enough for that) now turned on me. They did not speak to me, unless it was to make scathing comments. But what of those students who come to ***** school during the school year? They are corrupted by what my sister calls ‘the ***** influence.’ This has cost me, and both my sisters, quite a few potential friends. Within two weeks, these new students understand that I am a social outcast and if they are to preserve their popularity, it is best to stay away from me. By the end of the third quarter, I was tested and placed in Mrs. ***** room for additional help in math and reading. I didn’t really care. I got extra help with my homework, and the students in her classes didn’t harass me. (At least, they didn’t while they were in Mrs. ***** room. Outside her classroom is another story) I was grateful for that small bit of peace. The students in my regular classes didn’t hassle me about going to Mrs. ***** , and while that did not improve things, it certainly did not make them worse. The end of sixth grade was coming. I was utterly miserable. I cannot think of any other words to describe it. I was lonely; I had no
friends. I didn’t go out and do things, like other kids do. Our house was egged, and someone found it funny to jump all over my dad’s car with muddy shoes. (That last bit we did not discover till morning.) We still don’t have any actual proof as to who did it, but we do have a shrewd idea. The end of 6th grade came, finally. Summer break was there. Three months of freedom. Sadly, three months is not so long a time, and when you live in a small village like we do, it’s not always possible to avoid everyone. I stayed in the house, not wanting to see those people. But they can’t be ignored forever. Sometimes I would see them as I walked to ***** house, or during the occasional bike ride or late night walk. We didn’t talk though, unless you count having insults shouted at you from across the street talking. Summer vacation came to an end. I had no choice but to return to my little niche of hell. Ironically, it had become even more like hell. The hatred and grown over the summer. Kids from school, from all grades, somehow got our screen names for AOL Instant Messenger (AIM). We could not sign online without receiving insulting Instant Messages from them. This went on for weeks. We received prank phone calls as well. Finally, as we were all sick of blocking screen name after screen name, we switched to different screen names, and we got Privacy Manager. The prank calls stopped. After about 6 weeks of constant harassment, all through July and August, it all stopped. But now there was school to deal with. Not only were my sister (now a freshman at ***** *****) and myself the targets, but my parents, and occasionally, my younger sister as well. My mother’s name is ******** but kids have nicknamed her ‘****’. Our van has been dubbed ‘the Jack-mobile’ and there are several entertaining stories about its supposed escapades. (Chasing certain former students through snow banks, for example.) My
father is not so much the target; there are few stories about him, and he does not yet have a nickname. While all of this is amusing, it still hurts. I am a member of choir. I have been since the second semester of sixth grade. In seventh grade, when certain girls joined choir, it became rather unpleasant. On one occasion, one of those girls hit me. I went home that day with a handprint on my arm. My mother talked to Mrs. ****, and I think the girl might have gotten a detention. That was not the first time I have been hit at school. Nor was it the last. None of the other left marks, though. Now, besides the insults to my family, and the physical abuse, I have to deal with comments about how I ‘smell’ and how my hair is ‘dirty’ and how I’m not really a girl, but a ‘boy’. I am called ugly, and many other things as well. I have had paper, balls of foil, and other things thrown at me. They have put gum in my hair, in the middle of class. The teacher did nothing. They never do, it seems. Again, in seventh grade, I joined the basketball team. While I like the sport, I do not believe that I deserve the treatment I received. During practices and games, I was harassed constantly, and pressured to quit the team. I was lucky to play a minute and a half during any given basketball game. Finally, in the middle of my seventh grade year, I made a friend, ***** *******.

Kids stooped so low as to start nasty rumors about us, even as a couple. She has endured taunting because of her friendship with me, but of a different kind. Through it all, though, she has remained my loyal friend. Teachers and other adults have told me to ‘toughen up’ or ‘ignore it’ and it will ‘go away’. It won’t. That much has been proven. What none of these people understand, though, is that not everyone can have the same reaction to this sort of treatment. I cant ignore it, and it hurts a great deal. I have watched as my fellow students have tried to strip me of my confidence, my
pride, my dignity. This is my last year at ******** School, I am in the eighth grade now. In roughly nine months, I will graduate. While I harbor no hopes of my social status improving, I do hope that I have enlightened you as to the events that seem to take place, unnoticed, right under the staff's noses. For the most part, no names have been given, nor have any dates. But this story has not been exaggerated, nothing is made up. Everything I have told you is the truth, and that I swear.

18. Female/United States

At the beginning of my sophomore year, a group of students labeled me the ugliest girl on a website. Then they spread a false rumor about me that I had been videotaped having sex with several boys. The gossip got so bad that I finally had to transfer to a different school.

19. Female/Canada

I went to a Private school from Kindergarten to grade 6, then my parents wanted me to try a Public school. So I went to a public school for grade 7. I was all right for the beginning of the year, and then I am so positive people started bullying me because I was a Christian, and I was different from most people. I got called names for my weight; they would call me wide-load and some other stuff. Then grade 8 just rolled along, I was still at the same school, and it got pretty bad! I was to the point I was crying every single night and having panic attacks like twice a week! Then I transferred in the end of November. It was going great, until January! A couple of my friends and I went to a party, and I saw this girl, who was kind of my friend, was cheating on her
boyfriend, I decided to tell him, because I really liked the guy, and him and I were pretty close too. She found out it was me! Then she started slamming me into lockers, walls, let’s just say, it was to the point that I was getting physical abuse, not punching or anything, just shoving and pushing me into walls, bathroom stalls, and lockers. I really could not handle it, I was to the point I was crying a Kleenex box a night because I was in a lot of pain! I was getting so many panic attacks; like constantly. My mom kept asking me what was wrong, I always said, nothing, but I new deep down I was in so much pain and to the point I was getting panic attacks, like every night! I was in a depression mood. Then finally I told my basketball coach/guidance counsellor first, and then he told my vice-principal. They talked to the girl and I never really told my mom, they called my mom and told her I was getting bullied. Then after they talked to that girl, it died down at the end of February. Then in the middle of March, her good friend started bullying me, she called me fat, b****, and some other harsh names! I thought for sure it was going to get worse. I was crying so many Kleenex boxes at this time. My mom finally asked me what was wrong and kept asking me constantly, then I got to the point that I could NOT keep it in any longer, I was having a panic attack at this time and I was telling her everything. I told her I was getting bullied, but I left out that I was getting physical abuse, but then my ball coach/guidance counsellor told her, she was shocked! Then, my vice principal called this second girl and told her that he wanted a meeting with her and her parents, and she thought it was about me. So she told all her friends I got her suspended for 2 days, and then on Monday afternoon she found out it was about another situation. But by this time after spring break I didn"t go to school 2 weeks afterwards! I was so scared to go back! And then that Monday when
that bully got a phone call, that was after school she talked to the vice principal and her mom, and during the day, one of my good friends told me that she overheard lots of people saying they wanted to jump on me (beat me up). But this time, I was so scared. I have never been beaten up before! I never thought it would get this worse. Then I went onto MSN, and a bunch of people kept calling me fat and all this. And that bully called me and was threatening me and telling me I should go on Slim Fast! By this time I really did NOT want to go to school! So I told my mom everything! I was to the point that I did not ever want to go to school, but my mom was going to make me, but then I told her, I could NOT hold it in anymore. She told my vice principal. Then they arranged a meeting with this guidance counsellor outside my school, to teach me how to deal in situations like this. When my mom and I went to school that Wednesday afternoon, after that bully went to see the vice principal, the Wednesday in the same week, I went to get my stuff out of my locker, to finish some homework in stuff. I was terrified to walk in the hallways alone! I told my mom to come with me! I was so scared that I was going to get beaten up or something was going to happen. Then when we were in that meeting, I was still completely depressed, I was just about to cry because I was really scared to go back to school. (We didn"t have school on that Thursday and Friday - Parent teacher Interviews) So I made an effort to go to school that following Monday. My mom walked in with me to get my stuff, and I was still completely scared to go to school, to just walk in the hallways. But the second bully, if she bullied me or the other girl then she would get expelled, I felt a little bit better. But then, my vice principal, me, and that second bully that Tuesday we talked. The bully said that the first bully"s friend wanted to beat me up and just beat the **** out of me.
And the bully said no because or else she would be expelled because she was held responsible. Ever since that talk, I"ve been a lot better! I see people talking about me behind my back, but I ignore it! I really could care less now if people talked behind my back or what not. I really learned to stick up for myself. I told my mom a little bit to late, but I told her eventually! And now I learned to stick up for myself! I was in a complete depressed mood before all this happened. I had panic attacks constantly! It was horrible, I cried every night, but ever since I told my mom, things have lightened up! It feels like I have taken such a heavy load off my shoulders. I think if I didn"t tell anyone what had happened, I would probably be beaten up badly and probably in the hospital. I really have the confidence to stick up for myself and for my friends now, because I don't want anyone to go threw what I went threw. It"s a horrible experience, and it makes me cry when I look back on it, or hear someone else in the same situation or worse. It was a horrible experience, but I learned a lot from all this Like next time the same situation happens I will no what to do, and I hope everyone out there who is getting bullied can take a stand for themselves and say you know what, I"m not going to take this anymore and tell someone, before it"s too late!

20. Male/Canada

Holy MSN, this guy he hit me and he’s mean... and on MSN all the girls say I’m ugly and I should die

21. Female/Canada
My friend liked this one guy and he liked me: one problem. My other best friend liked this one guy, he liked me: two problems. My other best friend was going out with this guy, he dumped her, he liked me: 3 problems. We all got over it in time. Now I’m going out with this great guy, he is kind and sweet and loves everything I love. Every time I am with him I have fun, we are best friends. One of my best friends (first problem) was getting jealous, she started lashing out on me because I have made a ton of new friends (I’m very outgoing and I love meeting new people). She started saying things like I never talk to her anymore, which isn’t true; she does this to me all the time. I told her that, it made it worse. I tried making it better; I apologized, she didn’t accept it, I tried talking to her, she ignored me. Every time we talked on MSN, when she had to go I’d always say "Good bye, and have a good night luv ya" and stuff, the basic, just in case something happened to her and I didn’t want to leave on a bad note, she’d say "Bye" and she hated me because "every one loves you". I try being nice to people. Maybe she should try treating her own best friend with the respect I give her and others. She is not a very good friend, but I would rather have friends than enemies. I talk to her now and she acts like nothing has ever happened. She has done this to me...hummm about 14 times now in counting. This has been the worst. We have known each other since J.K. and I am only in grade eight. I let people walk all over me, but only people who aren’t my friends. I am very fortunate to have more than 4 very good friends; very best friends. I know they will always be there for me, even if their boyfriend does like me. They know I will never do anything to hurt them. They know I love them (as people) and I know they love me.... Sometimes all you need is one good friend, and I have 6. I find myself very fortunate, I just wonder why my friend***(don’t
want to name) can't focus on friendship instead of jealousy

22. Female/US

Hi, my name is Claire and I'm 12 years old. I'm going to paste an online conversation that I had with the girl who HATES me. I tried to lighten the conversation a few times, but it didn't work. It's kinda long. Here it is:

DimpyCat: hi

DimpyCat: u there *****?

vballplayanumba7: I have a question, why will you talk to me on the net, but not at school? r u like allergic to me or something?

DimpyCat: no

DimpyCat: u really don't seem to want to talk to me except when typing

DimpyCat: that's all

vballplayanumba7: and what is this supposed to mean?. . .

vballplayanumba7: And one more thing to everyone who's doing this: YOU BETTER WATCH OUT IF YOU'RE THREATENING ME AND MY FRIENDS! :-*****

DimpyCat: u said the same thing in your away message yesterday

vballplayanumba7: o, so u coppied me? nice way to be a trend setter *****

DimpyCat: no

vballplayanumba7: no, what?

vballplayanumba7: also I have another question?

vballplayanumba7: ........................................

DimpyCat: what I meant was I was saying that you shouldn't threaten me because I'm
not afraid of u

vballplayanumba7: u should be

vballplayanumba7: question....................

DimpyCat: yeah right

DimpyCat: what's your question?

DimpyCat: ?

vballplayanumba7: well my question is...... who do u like in the class? anyone cool??(like me) dorky??(like u) or just playing in the middle...........

vballplayanumba7: so what's ur answer and I want a name please

DimpyCat: My friends are nice, but I don't like like anyone. Our class is mostly nice, but not in a like like way.

DimpyCat: so there

vballplayanumba7: do uy like n y oine out side of skool

DimpyCat: Prince William- hotty, and my dance friends (who are so nice.)

vballplayanumba7: oh, I like King Kyle

DimpyCat: who's King Kyle?

vballplayanumba7: my BF

DimpyCat: I thought your best friend was Lyss.

vballplayanumba7: BF meaning boy friend u loser

DimpyCat: You don't have a boyfriend that's a king or do u?

vballplayanumba7: yeah, we r like tight mon

vballplayanumba7: evilbondchick666 who is this?

vballplayanumba7: WHO IS IT?
DimpyCat: someone

vballplayanumba7: like, I asked 4 a name

DimpyCat: like okay

vballplayanumba7: who?

DimpyCat: ummmmm... Fred

DimpyCat: sorry

DimpyCat: jk

vballplayanumba7: tard, tell me

vballplayanumba7: who is it?

DimpyCat: okay cyrible paulicy person

DimpyCat: who is it?

Vballplayanumba7: pleeze tellme

DimpyCat: ooooooo

DimpyCat: ?

vballplayanumba7: r u following this?

DimpyCat: yis. Is your brain named Bob? Mine is.

vballplayanumba7 signed off at 10:40:09 PM.

She really hurts my feelings sometimes, but I try not to let it show that it bugs me.

Thanks for your time. Bye!

23. Male/Canada

Hi. My name is Branden ***** and I always get picked on. ***** usually calls me "ugly"
until one day I stood up for myself and now ***** still looks at me, threatens to beat me up and, of course, closes the door on me. ***** was being a pain last time when I was on the computer. Mabye I'll build the respect-o-matic to take my revenge on my school.

24. Female/Canada
When it was summer vacation I went to L to see my grandparents. I went to play games with my cousins on the computer and they kept making fun of me and calling me names. I was playing a computer game for the first time and I ended up dying sometimes. They'd write to me on the computer and make fun of me because I wasn't that good.

Please reply.

25. Male/Canada
You ever heard of a web journal incident? Well you are about to learn now. There was a board I’m not going to name, they are a bunch of disgusting low mannered people who go and cause mayhem at every place. These guys are crazy. They will spread their dirty message and pictures at any site they find but what makes them extremely low was the web journal incident where they found my web journal and put their disgusting comments and pictures on it. I hope this will raise awareness about people about these cyber gravediggers.

26. Male/US
The bullying all began when I discovered that I was homosexual. I was 14 (im now 15) when I found out and decided to tell my closest friend. He must have been scared of my decision and went and told everyone else. To my disappointment, people began egging my house and writing me crude e-mails. They also began pushing me at school laughing at me and telling me dirty things. I felt violated and scared. I moved schools and have now decided not to tell anyone about my choice to be gay, because I don't want the same kind of erruption to happen again. I feel so ashamed to be gay, Im not sure what i should do. i"m sick of being ridicled.

27. Female/US

I was thirteen, but I felt immature. I was a little small (5'3" in the eighth grade) and skinny and I used to think I was pretty because I had straight reddish brown hair and green eyes, but everyone said I was too pale and didn't follow the "blonde, tan" mold of what is Hot in middle school. I was "smart" and was always placed in gifted classes at school. I had friends, but they weren't great friends and I felt like I had no one to talk to. In the beginning of eighth grade, I decided I wanted to become popular. At first this was next to impossible because I was considered normal at most on the social scale. However, I began to dress differently, wear more makeup, talk to the popular people in class, but I still wasn't getting anywhere. Then, one day in December, one of the really really popular boys started to take an interest in me. He was so cute...tall, kind of skinny, black spiky hair, bright blue eyes, smooth skin....I thought he was amazing. He was a "skater boy" who usually dated popular girls and was really smart but didn't pay much attention in class. I"ll call him *Ross* here but
that is not his real name. I noticed him staring at me during the school day. He started
to talk to me separately from other people, and then would start calling me for
homework but would talk about other things, and then he asked if I would go to a party
with him and the rest of the popular group. I said yes and later learned that none of my
old friends had been invited. Naively, I thought I was in the popular group! At the party, I
came alone wearing my cutest outfit. I still remember what it was....short terry cloth
pink skirt, tight tanktop with rhinestones, and jean jacket. The clothes were designer
and I had borrowed them from another popular person. I got there and saw everyone
dancing and making out on the couches. There was some alcohol being passed
around but I didn't take any because I didn't want my parents to get mad. After a while,
*Ross* came over and talked to me. He asked me to dance for one of the slow songs
and we did. At the end he kissed me. It was my first kiss and I felt amazing. I couldn't
believe it. He whispered in my ear that we should go upstairs and I lingered by his
side, agreeing. Quickly we found a room and started making out, heavily. He leaned
over me, pushing me over. Soon he put his hand up my shirt. Before I knew it, he
covered my mouth, pulled up my shirt, down my skirt, and raped me. I wanted to
scream but I couldn't make a sound. I couldn't talk, couldn't speak. Afterwards, he
said "thanks" and left me there, naked on the bed. I wanted to cry, but there were no
tears to be shed. I didn't tell anyone for the next week. I felt sick and like I was going to
throw up. I fainted in the hall one day. One day, one of my "popular friends" asked me
what was wrong. I took a deep breath, and because I trusted her, told her about what
happened with *Ross* and me at the party. I thought she would be horrified and
would comfort me or something but instead she looked at me and called me a liar.
"What is your problem, Evie? Ross would never do something like that. Why don"t you mind your own ******* business?" She told everyone in our grade on Im that night. Everyone thought I was lying, that I was just a slut who wanted it and was sorry afterwards. I wanted to kill myself. The rest of the year, I had no friends. No one would talk to me. NO one would look me in the eye. My grades dived from the A range to the D range and I was pushed out of the smart classes with Ross and the kids who thought I didn"t belong there to the normal classes with the popular kids. I was beaten, teased, kicked, harrased sexually by boys who thought I was "easy". I grew afraid of people touching me, including my own parents. I tried to commit suicide but I threw up the pills. I started cutting myself, lightly at first, but then deeper, near my wrist veins, trying to see how close I could get to death. Eventually, I told a counsellor. I kept anonymous at first, and didn"t want to press charges. After talking to her, and realizing ROSS WAS WRONG, not me, I finally agreed to see him in court. The trial was so difficult for me. All of the popular people in the school were for his defense. They made signs in the school that said "Evie is a Slut and she knows it". They weren"t allowed to come to the trial but stood outside the courthouse waving the signs. I won and Ross had to go to a special school for juvenile deliquents. I transfered from public to a small private school, where I was accepted. I am in 10th grade now, and finally happy. If you say no, or he forces you, or you can"t say anything, ITS NOT YOUR FAULT. Speak up because I wish I did sooner. xoxo E

28. Female/UK

Hi. My name is Emma and it has taken me alot to write this and I want to share my
story. When I started school I was scared and anxious. I've always had quite low self-esteem and it was my first day. The first time I'd be seperated from my Mum, Dad and small sister 5 days a week to be in another building with no-one to hold my hand. So when my Mum, Nan and little sister left I felt anxious... But like most other kids, I wasn't the only one. Soon, I made friends. Everything was fine. I still had the paranoia that has stayed with me from birth and will stay with me till probably my death, but I was fine. School was fine. It was all I new adventure. But then one day in Year 3, my gang of friends turned on me. I didn't know the reason. I didn't know the logic but they did. I'd have them calling me names in class, not wanting to sit next to me no more. One time I had a girl pull my necklace and then she pulled even harder until it broke. She knew it was my favourite necklace and she done this to hurt me for no reason. She laughed and called me names along with everyone else. I told the teacher. But the teacher just told me everything would be Ok. But it wasn't. All through primary school from then on I'd be bullied. Physically and Mentally. Emotionally. I'd be kicked and punched. I'd be pushed. The reason? Nothing. There was a time when they kept hurting me so I told the teacher on duty. They denied it. There was a book called the "'naughty book'". It meant names were wrote down if you were naughty and if your name appeared more than three times there would be a letter to your parents. The teachers described me as a shy quiet and pleasant girl. But one day the year 6's had the naughty book and were in charge. They found out I told on them and told the year 6's I'd been hurting them. I was put in the naughty book and being in year 3 it made me cry. They just laughed. To put it simply I was tortured for nothing, for 4 years. I had one friend but she didn't have school dinners so I'd sit on my own at lunch. She also
had friends who didn"t want to talk to me like everyone else so most of the time I didn't get to talk to her anyway. But after 4 years I stuck it out. I'd made it. It was a new adventure. Scary but it was the end...or so I thought. I'd be in year 7 and make new friends at a new school. At the year 6 leaving party most people cried about not being able to see their friends everyday because they'd be going their separate ways. Me? I didn't really have any friends so I didn't cry. I'd cried enough over the 4 years about these people, I wasn't going to miss them. I might as well not have gone to the leaving party. No-one wanted me there. No-one would have missed me if I hadn't come. I was just someone to make fun of. Have a stab at when they wanted. My first day at secondary school. Three girls from my school went to the same school. Two of these were in my class. I didn't have anyone to eat lunch with so I asked them if I could eat with them since I knew them. They knew some girls they'd made friends with so I thought they'd introduce me to them. Reluctantly they agreed I could sit with them for lunch. What a mistake. They just sneered at me and told their friends how they didn't like me. I just ate my lunch quietly and put on a brave face. They even had an older friend in a few years above us who they were nasty to me with. I finished my lunch and went to cry in the toilets. Soon the same thing happened as my junior school.. not many people liked me. They soon realised they could pick on me, they knew my past. They knew they could hurt me. Nice people spoke to me but they didn't want me to be their friend- it would be uncool. I made one friend, she was my only friend. Then, in year 8 the teachers decided to add an extra class to make classes smaller. Guess who got put there? Me and my only friend and some other people from other classes. I thought I'd get a chance to make new friends. But everyone from my old class knew
the other people in this newly formed class and no-one wanted to talk to me. One day in science, we were put into tables by the teacher. My best friend was placed on the other side of the room. Everyone else was split up too. I was put on a table with 3 very popular girls and one average girl. They all got on like a house on fire. But they didn't include me in the conversation. If I tried to ask them something or join in they'd just say "'Emma, shut up'" Or "'Get lost, are we talking to you?'" So I got on with school dreading the whole entire class including my old one. In Science, one day, they were all talking and we were asked to measure or own heights for an experiment. They had all finished measuring themselves taking ages. When I asked if I could be measured or use the tape to measure myself. Their response was "'NO'" and "'*** ***The teacher after a while asked if everyone was finished. Everyone replied yes except me. I just sat there. She asked me. I said that I hadn't and she had a go at me asking why not, I just said that I didn't get the chance to. The teacher told the other girls to measure me. They just looked and me and sneered and grudgingly done it. Not properly of course. One of them got annoyed with me. She didn't want to measure me. She started giving me nasty looks and then sung "'Smelly Cat'" from Friends. I love Friends, its a great programme, until nowadays that is. I can't stand the song. When she finished she stopped paused and looked at me. Then she said... "'I know Emma can be our smelly cat!'" and laughed and sneered. She sung the song louder and then went around rushing round the tables when the teacher had gone saying to everyone "'Emma's a smelly cat! Smelly cat, smelly cat, she smells!'" And from that day on, I had been given a reason for people to hate me. Now apparently it was because I smelt. My best friend didn't help and after a year I think she found it funny.
too. Everyone who knows me knows I don't smell. Far from it. I wash daily, use beauty
products, skincare, deodorants, enjoy pampering myself with gorgeous products, just
like any other teenager. But it was a good reason for them to hate me I suppose.
They'd get into a classroom and sit down before the teacher got in and suddenly one
of them would stand up get out a deodorant and squirt it all over me and the class
would shriek with laughter. I wore my own deodorant, I didn't really fancy any more.
But most days I'd come home not only smelling of mine but a sample of other girls on
me too. If it wasn't that then I'd come home with sticky notes on my back saying "'I
smell'" or something. I'd break down in tears every night. All the abuse was getting to
me so much I wanted to kill myself. I knew I didn't smell but after about a year and a
half I think I almost believed them. But I've realised now if someone is told something
long enough by bullies they can almost believe it. You might be the most beatiful
person in the world but be told your ugly for years and you might even start to believe
it. My Mum found out eventually about my bullying. I couldn't tell anyone for years. The
bullies made me feel ashamed, worthless, dirty, like I wasn't worth my own life. But
she found out and she moved me classes. I thought this might help since my old
class- although they didn't really like me, they didn't know about my harsh intense
bullying in the other class. Until one day. Everything was OK. I had a few friends.. if I
could call them friends. And one day they found out. The next day it was "'Emma
smells'" Surely if I smelt so bad wouldn't they have realised months before? No, they
had been told I did. Now they believed it. Maybe if during those years people would
have liked me enough to want to sit next to me, they might be able to see for
themselves. But if it was good enough for one class it was good enough for them. So I
had torturous long days at school. Not one day without someone being nasty. I made a new best friend but a few months later she broke her leg. She wouldn"t be at school for 3 months. So I stuck it out, now suicidal. I took one week off because I had the flu. I did generally have the flu. My Mum has always made me go to school unless I"m ill and have a temperature. Then the phone calls came. Some so-called "friends" from my class phoned me and started leaving abusive phone calls to me saying I was skiving. I was crying. Why were they doing this? But after a couple of days they got worse and worse. My mobile wouldn"t stop ringing. I turned it off. It annoyed them. So they tried my house phone. My Mum picked up. They swore at her and gave her abuse. They shouted about me and that was when my Mum said. ""Emma, you"re never going to that school again"" That was a relief. After years of bullying, the bullies had won. But at least I could move schools. The only problem then was dance. A couple of girls in my class wanted to join my dance classes. I gave them the info and they joined. They had always been civilised to me outside school. But not my Mum knew who made the abusive threatening phone calls. One of these girls who went dance. Along with more girls and others listening and laughing during the phone call. My Mum told the teachers. She said since I was leaving school I might as well give names. I didn"t. So she did. At the next dance lesson, the girls whispered and were nasty about me. At the end of the dance lesson one of them hurled abuse and me and said I grassed her up and that the police had given the class a talk about abusive phone calls. I told her it wasnt my fault. I didnt give names and that I didn"t know the police were involved. She was furious. She swore and hit me. At this point in time I don"t go to school. The reason- bullies. My Mum has tried 3 schools for me to go to
but they all didn"t accept me because I haven"t moved areas and they blame my mum for taking me out of my old school. They say they have no reason to find me a new place. My Mum is still trying for a school. I'm in my GCSE years and I need to spend this last 1 and a half a year in school so I can finish my education until 16. I haven"t been at school for 3 months. I still get abuse when I see girls from my year down town. I have a website. I still get my guestbook flooded with hate messages calling me ""a *****''''ugly'''' ''''lanky'''' ''''anorexic'''' ''''slag'''' and loads more. I got more today. I still cry. I feel worthless. Its also hard to find me a new school because loads of my bullies know other bullies in the schools around my area and they would bully me when they found out. I am getting to the point where I am at the end. My one and only dream in life is to be famous, an actress or singer maybe. I signed up with a model agency a few years back and had a portfolio. I was so proud I put the photos on my website. The bullies had the address and they laughed at me. Why? I don"t know. I don't think their jelous because I don"t see any reason why anyone should be jelous of me, the girl who got bullied out of school and hates herself. My Mum reckons they could be jelous of my looks but to be honest lots of girls are tall with long legs, blonde hair and blue eyes. I like my looks but I do not think they are jelous. My whole life has gone wrong. I don't know what will happen. But the bullies are still out there. And they want to get me back. I"d love to go to a performing arts school in London but my dad doesn''t want to borrow the thousands they ask for in money because he doesn"t want debts. I"d love to move- get away from this place. I know I can"t run all my life. But they"ve made my life hell. Sheer hell. Its affected me, my parents and my sister. I avoid certain towns because of them. I know they"ll be there hanging around on weekends
so I don"t go there. Simply because I know they'd want to hurt me. All I ever wanted to do was finish my education. Study performing arts and try to achieve my goals. At the moment I am stuck in a time warp. I can"t finish my education until they give me another place at another school. I can"t save up for a drama school in London because I ought to wait until I"m 16. I"ve been waiting 3 1/2 months without an education. Without true friends. I pray to God he will help with my future. I don"t know where to turn. I feel useless. I feel I should kill myself and save the world hassle. But I want to achieve my dreams. I want to show everyone I CAN DO IT. I want them to know that ""useless worthless no-one"" has MADE IT. I want them to see they"ve missed out on someone who could have been a friend to them. Instead they didn"t give that someone a chance. Not one. I want to show the world I can stand on my own two feet again and I AM worth it. I don"t feel worth it. But hopefully my faith in God will help me in my path of life. Hopefully, one day people will give me a chance. My boyfriend and my family are the only people who love me. But my boyfriend doesn"t know of my past and what happened at school. And until he knows or finds out one day, I"ll never know whether he loves me as I am, the unpopular girl or whether he loved me before he knew my past. Could someone please help me. I am begging for help. Does anyone have any tips? Well, this is my story. I know its long but believe me I tried to cut out most of the long bits! I just want to also say thank you to whoever made this site. I thought I was the only one but there are so many lovely people who have been bullied and they don"t know why either. I am hoping one day I can make it big and start a massive anti-bullying campaign. I am hoping one day I can prove the bullies wrong. I am trying my best to build up strength. Thank you for reading my story. It feels much
better to know I've told some-one what I've been through. I haven't even been this open with my Mum or anybody. What you have just read, has been told by me, for the first time ever.

29. Female/Canada

I was on MSN the other day, when my friend signed on. This girl was pretty close to me and so I said hi. The first thing she wrote to me was "You are a b****."This hurt, but I figured she was joking. She continued to tell me that she hated me and I still thought it was a joke. Finally, I said, "Ha, ha, ha, ha, this is funny. Even if you ARE being serious." She continued to tell me that she hated me, and that she was only pretending to like me. I said, "Okay, this isn't funny anymore." She said it was and then said, "I'm being serious, I hate you". Then she either got off or blocked me. I got off too. At first this didn't really hurt, but soon it started to sink in and I began to cry. I told my mom and called my best friend. She had no idea why she would do something like that and said she'd hug me 100 times when she saw me. The next day, I talked to her and she said this was a joke and she didn't know I'd take it that hard. Now I'm still mad, and I don't know what I should do. This really hurt me, but I still somewhat like her. Please help.

30. Female/Canada

Just before I entered grade 8, I took one of my friends on a vacation to a place up north. We had a blast, and told everyone at school about our trip. A few weeks later, she started teasing me about the way I dress and that I need to wear shirts with
sleeves and get "actual pants." She kept this on and would keep saying sorry. At Graduation, she told me that now that school"s out, she"d kick my behind. I wasn"t afraid, because I would be nowhere near her in the summer OR in High School. At the end of summer break, she sent a nasty e-mail to my mom from one of MY e-mail accounts, saying stuff like she was a lesbian and she raped me. NOT TRUE. My mom loves me and is never getting comitted in a relationship again after what happened with my dad. We proved it was her, and she got in trouble with her parents and the police gave her a warning. Another time, a boy I liked in my class was a friend of mine, up until I stopped helping him with his work. He sent me e-mails saying he didn"t love me and that I was stupid. I ignored them and deleted his name from my list. He started a rumour that I was hitting on him and that I was desperate. Thank god I left that place. I got to High School and am having the time of my life. I have a lot of new friends and old ones I haven"t seen in the longest time. It"s not as bad as I thought.

31. Female/ US

MY STORY. Well it all started in fourth grade. I was best friends with this girl and she was best friends with me . One day this one girl that looked really nice ended up sitting by me and we talked every day !! She was so funny !! But my best friend got really and I mean REALLY mad and jealous !! Then she and the kid that I liked and all of their friends ganged up on me and my new friend. They were passing notes and giving looks and all of that . ..... NEXT SUMMER we are now friends again and hanging out like we used to do. NEXT YEAR now I was back in school and there was this new girl and she looked really nice and friendly and we became friends. But then the same
thing happened this school year my best friend got jealous!! And then we had another
big fight . There they were passing notes and giving looks and all of that. NEXT
SUMMER we are now friends again and hanging out like we used to do. But now this
time there was more. My best friend sent me an e-mail, a really nasty e-mail and it
made me cry!! Really hard!! NOW both of my new friends are now my best friends and
that girl continues to be mean and rude to me.

32. Male/ Canada

Hi,
When I am at school there is one boy who likes to pick on me for some reason. We
used to be best friends, but now he wants to be part of a group of guys who think
they"re cool and bully other people. So I think he is doing this to impress them. For
example, today, for no reason at all, he jabbed me with a pencil, scribbled all over my
work, and punched me in the head and stomach. It hurt so bad that I went to the office
and had to report it to the principal. I went home sick. The principal said he would
handle it, and I guess he talked to him because now I"m getting phone calls and e-
mails saying they"ll be plotting something to fix me. I"m worried. If anybody out there
has had this kind of problem and can suggest what I should do next, I"d like to hear
from them.

Thanks

33. Female/Canada

This girl started asking me questions on IM like, “am I pretty” or “am I popular?” and
then all of a sudden she"s like on a scale of 100 your 20 of popularity out of the blues! Except one person Girl#2 but she gets in fights with people every day. So she told me, “i could make you popular” and I said okay. She told me to give some of my friends’ e-mails out to her and I refused so she insulted or blackmailed me and said I won"t make you popular! Out of the blue I said, "Well I’m already popular thank you very much" she said, “whatever!” after she said whatever I said, “I’d rather be normal than popular because people don"t get off your back so good-bye!” I blocked her and never really heard from her since. You know just because someone"s older doesn"t mean you have to act popular or stuff like that you know what I’m saying?

34. Female/Canada

Hi my name is Amy and a couple of girls at school bully me; not punching me but calling me bad names. I’m getting pretty scared to go to school because I’m scared they will make fun of me in front of the friends that I do have. This one girl e-mails me and calls me not very nice stuff, stuff that I’m not and I want them to stop. I might not have as many friends as they do but if have a good amount. They always say I’m ugly and that I have no friends; another lie. Please give me some advice and help me stand up for myself.

35. Female/Canada

Dear anyone, hello my name is Staci ***** I am 11 yrs. old I am in gr. 6 at *****elementry school in Cranbrook B.C.. Everyone at my school bullys me includeing the gr. 3"s even though I"m in gr. 6. Like I"m soposed to babysit(u no
what I mean) their class but, they always say I"m being mean and pinching them, although I don"t. And if they do something I go to talk to them and they run away and another one comes up behind me and kicks me. And now I"m baned from their class because they kicked me and said it was because I pinched them. And everyone in my class bullys me especially 1 certain girl in my class. She"s always saying I"m too fat and too ugly and that my hair is too messy even if it isn"t. All the boys call me names and insult me. In the whole school I only have two friends, they are my absolute best friends. Even at home my brother beats me up and everything and the only person thats my friend at home is someone that kicks you when your down and goes with whoever is up. Usually in school at lunch I usually just go in the girls bathroom if no one is there sit on the counter and cry. I try to look like I"m happy all the time but, it just doesn"t work. I end up almost crying and asking to go to the bathroom so I can cry. I know I can"t cry in front of my class because they"ll make fun of me for it. P.S. Sorry I forgot to metion another girl in my class always pinches me and punches me for no reason. My mom is thinking of calling her mom and telling on her. And someone that I don"t know is threatenig me VIA e-mail.
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