

Mean Behind the Screen: Students' Perspectives on Capturing Cyberbullying in Canada

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This study is dedicated to Hunter, Declan and Camden. It is my most sincere desire they never experience virtual aggression or embarrassment in the pursuit of adulthood.

Abstract

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Mediated discourses have increased public awareness of youth's employment of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to victimise other youth. Strategies to identify, prevent and sanction cyberbullying in Canada rely on victimisation surveys. Current national self-report data is based on Statistics Canada's General Social Survey, 2009 Cycle 23 – Victimization (GSS-V). This study attempts to determine the epistemological and methodological validity of the Cyber Bullying Respondent and Cyber Bullying Children modules within the GSS-V by measuring university students' perceptions of Statistics Canada's definition of cyberbullying and the processes by which the GSS-V determines cyberbullying victimisation of multiple children in a household. Findings suggest inherent flaws in both modules resulting in a loss of critical information in determining the incidence and prevalence of cyberbullying. This study offers a more comprehensive definition of cyberbullying and a more appropriate method to capture cyberbullying victimisation of multiple children in a household, one that improves both measurement and validity of cyberbullying in Canadian contemporary society.

Keywords

cyberbullying; online bullying; peer victimisation; youth aggression

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Introduction

Considering the pervasiveness and effects of bullying, it is an intrinsically complex and potentially harmful phenomenon. On a continuum, the effects of bullying between youth range from reluctance to go to school and truancy to deliberate self-harm and suicidal ideation (Hay & Meldrum, 2010; Huffington Post, 2012). What is more, most youth remember their victimisation for life thereby perpetuating these harms (Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2008). Traditional bullying, that is to say in-person bullying, usually occurs during school hours. With the proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), resulting from the explosive growth of the Internet, the digital age has created a new form of aggression between youth that transcends locale and time; cyberbullying. The Internet, cellular phones, online gaming and instant messaging extend the venues for bullying from schools and neighbourhoods to virtual communities and bedrooms (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Mishna, Saini & Soloman, 2009).

To contextualize this form of bullying, consider for a moment a narrative of cyberbullying resulting in the most serious outcome as highlighted, by self-proclaimed cyberbullying expert Parry Aftab of www.wiredsaftey.org, on the Today Show with Matt Lauer in 2009:

Jessica was a bright, beautiful and funny teen who lived in Ohio. When she turned 18 in her high school senior year, she was dating a 19 year old and sent a few nude photos of herself to him using her cell phone. When they broke up, he sent it to at least one girl who sent it to others. The image made the rounds of Jessica's school and the other community schools. What had been a private communication became public humiliation. The students were cruel. They called

her names and made fun of her. They dubbed her the “porn queen” and she became “that girl...” Jessie had sought help from her school’s resource officer (the police officer assigned to her school). But he didn’t offer to do anything other than contact the girl who started the harassment and ask her to take down the images and leave Jessica alone. “No one would help!” Cynthia [Jessica’s mother] sobs as she tells Jessie’s story... But Jessica stuck it out and graduated with her class. To Cynthia, it looked like things would improve. When a friend of Jessica’s asked her for a ride to the funeral of a fellow student, Mitch, who had killed himself, Jessica became more troubled. The school never offered counselling for the other students after the young man’s suicide. They never offered counselling for Jessica. They said they couldn’t do anything because she was 18 and that students attended school at their own risk... [The morning after Mitch’s funeral, Cynthia] found her daughter hanging by her neck from the clothing rod... (2010).

Clearly, this example of cyberbullying exemplifies how technology empowers youth with new mechanisms to defeat traditional bullying prevention programs and break down walls. Further, through this illustration comes the understanding how cyberbullying victimisation can persist even when the bullied is physically removed from the bully, further aggravating the victim’s harm. Unfortunately, this story is typical of cases where youth take their own life because of feelings of hopelessness and dejection that result from bullying (Hay & Meldrum, 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Considerable research has measured traditional bullying incidence and victimisation since Olweus’ pioneering research in Scandinavia in the 1980s (Olweus,

1993). This research shares one general goal; to contribute to bullying discourse with the intent of enhancing prevention, developing more robust policies to deter victimisation and create meaningful consequences for those who act as bullies. With respect to traditional bullying, academics have researched occasional or chronic victimisation (Rigby & Smith, 2011), the aggressors and/or targets (Limber, 2006), and the consequences (Hay & Meldrum, 2010) of bullying. The emergence of cyberbullying research generally appeared around 2004 and coincided with the advent of popular social networking websites Facebook and MySpace (Ybarra, & Mitchell, 2007). Most of this research, based on U.S. samples, is quantitative and focuses on normative data insofar as frequency and disposition help shape youth outreach programs, anti cyberbullying programs and mental health services (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Mishna et al., 2009; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Rigby & Smith, 2011).

In Canada, only one nationally representative measure of cyberbullying incidence exists. The Cyber Bullying Respondent (CBR) and Cyber Bullying Children (CBC) modules are part of The General Social Survey – Victimisation (GSS-V) which is a random digit dial telephone survey of nearly twenty thousand households conducted only every five years by Statistics Canada. It is therefore reasonable to assume, considering the dynamic nature of ICTs, to be addressed later, a potential for loss of critical information in determining the seriousness of cyberbullying in Canada exists. Since the next survey is not scheduled until 2014, an exploration into the federal government’s methodology for capturing cyberbullying victimisation in Canadian contemporary society is of particular interest. Therefore, considering the potential for gaps in the research and that academics Mishna, Saini and Solomon assert “the exponential growth of electronic

and computer based communication and information sharing during the last decade has drastically altered individual's social interactions, learning strategies and choice of entertainment" (2009a, pp. 1222), this thesis explores the validity of Statistics Canada's operationalization of cyberbullying and questions within the cyberbullying module of the GSS-V by gauging undergraduate and graduate students' perceptions of definitions of cyberbullying and method to measure victimisation of multiple children in a household. The intent herein is to explore the reliability and validity of the methodology and epistemology of the CBR and CBC modules in their measure of cyberbullying victimisation.

The Information Age

The delineation of the Information Age is beyond the scope of this research, however, the Internet can be perceived to be the engine of the Information Age. Similar to a rotary engine, in cyclical fashion, it drives the insatiability for information that it itself makes available. According to Maurice de Kunder's algorithmic based website that utilizes several World Wide Web (WWW) search engines to determine the size of the Internet, www.worldwidewebsite.com, a user of the WWW, with a few clicks of a computer mouse or finger taps on a touch screen, has access to nearly as many pages of information as there are people on the planet; that is over seven billion pages of text, graphics and video (2012). Considering the vastness of this repository of information and the speed with which it is delivered to the end user, it is not surprising that youth and adults now favour the Internet for immediate information. Gone are the days where youth turned to the 'stacks' of a library for answers to their questions. The demise of the

brick and mortar library seems inevitable seeing as Internet Cafés now offer access to information without having to ever leave a chair. According to Perreault, in 2009, Statistics Canada reported that nearly 80% of Canadians fifteen years of age and older have used the Internet with 74% indicating recent use (2011). Further, the rate for Internet use in the USA is nearly identical with 79% of Americans spending time online. What is more, in the USA, 97% of adolescents aged twelve to eighteen use the Internet and a staggering 99.8% of Canadians aged fifteen to seventeen and 99.5% of Canadians aged seventeen to nineteen have used the Internet. Clearly, with Internet providers constantly upgrading their networks to deliver faster download and uploads, computer makers constantly developing smaller and faster processors and the advent of free collaborative knowledge sites, information within the Information Age is saturating humanity (Fuchs, 2008).

Since the turn of the century, we have seen an explosive growth of ICTs beyond the Internet. Wi-Fi, smart phones, and websites such as chatroulette.com are just a few examples of the most recent ICT advancements that target all demographics including youth. According to Hinduja & Patchin, commensurate to this growth are the increasing modalities for youth to interact. Online gaming, social networking, text messaging and blogging have supplanted schoolyards and residential streets, the prevalent mediums for youthful exchange prior to the World Wide Web (2009). Moreover, several academics illustrate youth now utilize portable gaming systems such as the PlayStation Vita or Nintendo's Wii U; netbooks, smart phones, and either Android or iOS based tablets to instantly exchange personal messages, update friends on their everyday activities, solicit membership in exclusive groups and battle fictional guilds for supernatural dominance

(Kowalski et al., 2008; Sengupta & Chaudhuri, 2010). Furthermore, as Thierer highlights, the proliferation of youth targeted social networking websites, smart phone technologies, freely shared online collective knowledge repositories and the architecture of peer-to-peer data sharing underscore ICT advancements within the information age (2007).

Youth and ICTs

Buckingham asserts that within a digital framework, the exchange of personal information between youth is not only a matter of convenience it is now critical to their social development (2008). Consider 68% of American youth above nine years of age used instant messaging in 2005 and 55% of American youth above the age of eleven years old used social networking in 2007 (Kowalski et al., 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008). Anecdotally, technological advancements in the Information Age are perceived to be a major benefit to youth considering the demonstrable increase in use of interpersonal organizing principles such as Timeline in Facebook and real-time updates of a youth's daily life through Twitter (Fowler, 2012; McGiboney, 2009).

Indeed, according to MacPherson, in some respects, digital media is an invaluable tool to empower youth innovatively and has even had unintended positive outcomes resulting in enhanced film making and family life dynamics (2008). These positive outcomes were documented through the Digital Youth Project of 2008. This research combined quantitative and qualitative data, in the U.S., employed twenty distinct research designs including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observation, vignettes and a questionnaire. Findings from this project indicate that by and large the interaction

between youth and digital media, or otherwise ICTs, is for the most part positive (Ito et al., 2010).

Unfortunately, negative electronic interaction between youth in the digital generation has the potential to emulate all things fantastic. Although youth experience with ICTs is generally positive, these new methods for interaction increase the modes for pervasive aggression, abuse, unwanted sexual solicitation, and criminal harassment (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008; Mishna, Saini & Soloman, 2009; Shariff, 2009). Considering the speed of the spread of electronic information and the connected audience, the potential for harm is greater than ever before (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008; Rigby & Smith, 2011).

Traditional Bullying

To understand the issues surrounding cyberbullying, one needs to have a general understanding of the in-person or traditional bullying problem. Traditional bullying research is multifarious; several aspects of the phenomena have received more attention than others. Perception; commonality; age differences, gender similarities, racial and ethnic issues; geography; and bully/victim, bully and victim characteristics tend to be the most researched (Kowalski et al., 2008). In the contemporary context, traditional bullying usually occurs in the school environment and on residential streets; it has persisted for decades (Rigby & Smith, 2011).

Traditional Bullying Defined

Principally, the word *bully*, synonymous with harassment/embarrassment is meant to invoke strong emotional responses in the most pejorative sense. Although the term bully has been used by adults for adults, Parry Aftab of the website www.wiredsaftey.org asserts that bullying is only between minors; if an adult is involved, it then becomes harassment (2012). Although some researchers use the terms ‘bully’ and ‘harassment’ interchangeably, exploring their juxtaposition is beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, for this research, these two terms will remain dichotomous, that is to say bullying is between youth and harassment is between adults. Many scholars, non-governmental organisations and governmental entities have attempted universal definitions of bullying. What these efforts usually produce is a definition that highlights essential elements with reoccurring themes. In academia, aggressive behaviour, intent and an imbalance of power are common defitional elements (Olweus, 1993; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Kowalski et al., 2008; Rigby & Smith, 2010). Some government organizations assert repetition, a pattern, and victimisation are necessary for the realization of actual bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Privitera & Campbell, 2009). Regardless of the source, considerable literature asserts bullying is difficult to universally define as perceptions of this insidious behaviour vary (Mishna, 2004; Martin, 2005).

In developing a definition of bullying, Beran and Li use Social Dominance Theory to assert that only the demonstration of power and dominance through the use of force is necessary to victimise (2005). Smokowski and Kopasz include codified criminal offences such as vandalism and theft in their bullying definition (2005). Hay, Meldrum and Mann employ Agnew’s General Strain Theory and examine the internalizing and

externalizing effects of bullying for their definition. They contend that four conditions need exist:

it should be perceived as unjust, it should be perceived to be high in personal magnitude, it should not be associated with normal social control, and it should expose the strained individual to others so as to not exclude anyone... (2010).

Public Safety Canada, defines bullying as:

acts of intentional harm, repeated over-time, in a relationship where an imbalance of power exists. It includes physical actions (punching, kicking, biting), verbal actions (threats, name calling, insults, racial or sexual comments), and social exclusion (spreading rumours, ignoring, gossiping, excluding) (2011).

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (USDHHS) defines bullying as:

unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking

someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose (n.d.).

It is interesting to note that both the federal governments of Canada and the USA include the criminal act of assault within the framework of bullying; this inclusion exacerbates inherent difficulties in universally defining bullying.

Traditional Bullying Victimization

Measurement of bullying victimization reveals diverse results. Olweus (1993) discovered an incidence of approximately 15% among 150,000 children and youth in Norway and Sweden in the 1980's. Tonya Nansel discovered an incidence of 17% among 15,000 students in grade 6 through 10 in the U.S. in 2001 (Nansel et al., 2001). Although considerable research indicates that bullying is prevalent, just how prevalent varies internationally. A comparative analysis of international bullying victimisation in several countries, conducted by Eslea, Menesini, Morita, O'Moore, Mor-Merchan, Pereira & Smith (2003) reports that on the low end Ireland reported nine percent of its youth were involved in some fashion with bullying, whereas Spain reported forty-nine percent youth involvement.

In Canada, Statistics Canada data reported 25% of elementary students and 17% of secondary school students self-reported being bullied in 2009 while Public Safety Canada revealed 22% of students report being bullied in 2010 (Craig & McCuaig-Edge, 2011). Although it is unclear exactly how many youth are bullied on a given day, these statistics suggest that, traditional bullying victimisation affects approximately 1 in 4 Canadian youth. Victimization effects can most certainly last a lifetime; however, the

traditional bullying event must occur while the bully and victim interact in the physical in-person context in places such as schools and playgrounds or other such venues as malls and neighbourhood hangouts (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Traditional bullying can affect both the mental and physical health of not only those youth that are victims, but also youth that are both bully and victims as well as bullies themselves. Based on a cross-sectional study of nearly three thousand youth, Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-VanHorick (2004) report that anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, bed-wetting, stomach pain, trouble sleeping and poor appetite affect bullied children three times more than non-bullied children. Those youth that bully regularly are at increased risk for persistent negative attitudes and early aggressive behaviour (Pepler, D. & Craig, W., 2007). Public Safety Canada, through the National Crime Prevention Strategy, reports self-reported delinquent behaviour is far more common with boys who bully (40%) compared to 5% of boys who never or infrequently bully (2011). On the more extreme end, according to research conducted by Hay & Meldrum (2009), all of which is statistically significant $p = <.001$, bullying victimisation is positively associated with self-harm and suicidal ideation with standardized coefficients between .32 and .39 respectively. However, these associations can be mitigated down to .13 by high quality parenting or high self-control.

Combating Traditional Bullying

Some of the more easily administered mechanisms to eliminate bullying involve zero tolerance policies, school assemblies, seminars for parent/guardians and professional development days for educators (Kowalski et al., 2008). On a more individual level,

intervention including family based therapy and peer-based group therapy enhance general anti-bullying efforts (Hawton, Rodham & Evans, 2006). Additionally, according to Hay & Meldrum, cognitive behavioural therapy that attempts to resolve deviant and maladaptive behaviour through interpretive and experiential change to aversive events is emerging as “perhaps the most promising approach” (2010, pp. 456). On a more elementary level, one recent method to raise awareness of this insidious behaviour was the deployment of ‘pink’ t-shirts. This campaign began in Nova Scotia in 2007, and spread to a nationally proclaimed Anti-Bullying Day across Canada. Originating in the small community of Cambridge, two grade 12 students took action after learning a young boy in grade nine was bullied for wearing a pink polo shirt on the first day of classes at Central Kings Rural High School. According to CBC news, David Shepherd and Travis Price “went to a nearby discount store and bought 50 pink shirts, including tank tops, to wear to school the next day” (2007). The intent was to show solidarity, through a ‘sea of pink’ students, to the bullied student, however, what resulted was much more than local activism. Not only did hundreds of students wear all pink, cable television talk show host Ellen DeGeneres politicized the action internationally resulting in overwhelming support from school boards and districts far removed from initial school effort. As a result, a large number of school boards throughout Canada now participate in Anti-Bullying Day through the wearing of customized pink t-shirts, school assemblies, parades, rallies, concerts, and more (Pinkshirtday.ca, 2012, Canadian Red Cross, 2012).

Cyberbullying

Youth, in twenty-first century developed societies, are fundamentally immersed in ICTs. In fact, this immersion starts unwillingly before they are born with prenatal sonographs and foetal heart monitoring technologies. Post partum applications involve the deployment of crib-based audio/video baby monitors, motor-skill-development devices for toddlers and even preschool-oriented toy computers. Once school aged, youth begin to develop the faculties to manipulate keyboards and joysticks; it is here their interactions with ICTs substantially explode considering the ever-increasing advancements in online video gaming, peer-to-peer messaging, and Internet consumption. As Cassidy et al. put it, “Youth of the digital age generation are interacting in ways our fore-mothers and fathers never imagined...” (2009, pp. 383).

At some point around the turn of the millennium, it became apparent that some youth could embrace ICTs to extend the reach of their aggressive behaviour. In 2004, researchers Michele Ybarra and Kimberly Mitchell analyzed characteristics of online aggressors, targets and aggressors/targets with a sample population of the Youth Internet Safety Survey conducted in 1999 and 2000. Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) report 19% of respondents self-reported being involved in online aggression. It seems that the increasing consumption of traditional computers by youth, self-report surveys indicating a trend of aggressive behaviour through electronic mediums along with large transnational corporations like Nokia targeting youth with cellular phone technologies generated an interest among academic and governmental explorations of the ‘cyber’ in the bullying phenomena (O’Leary, 2003).

With all this in mind, it is not difficult to appreciate that the application of electronic technologies in contemporary society invariably complicates traditional bullying research (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Cassidy et al., 2009). Remembering the difficulties in defining traditional bullying within the youth aggression/embarrassment sphere, the modalities of the bully-victim dynamic uniquely increase in proportion to advancements in the Information Age and exacerbate measurement difficulties.

Cyberbullying defined

Let us first recognize the inherent difficulties in defining cyberbullying.

According to Public Safety Canada cyberbullying is:

the use of information and communication technologies (email, cell phones, pager text messages, internet sites, instant messaging) to physically threaten, verbally harass or socially exclude an individual or group (2011).

Whereas the USDHHS defines cyberbullying as:

bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites. Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles (n.d.).

Disparities of inclusiveness and victimisation highlight the inconsistencies between the Canadian and United States' governmental definitions. Further adding to the fray is the US' redundancy in listing social networking sites on top of their grand narrative

‘websites’. By their very nature, social networking sites are part of the Internet and are therefore included in the website label. It is also extremely important to highlight that neither definition incorporates online gaming where youth virtually congregate in games of competition and skill en masse. This is especially disconcerting because the globalized gaming industry is sizeable and still growing. According to The Entertainment Software Rating Board report, using U.S. Federal Trade Commission data, the video game industry generated \$10.5 billion in revenue, which equates to 273 million video games sold in the U.S. in 2009. Within the ‘gamer’ demographic, youth comprise 25% of the population in 67% of US households spending an average of eight hours a week (ESRB, n.d.). While not all video games allow multiplayer interlinking of devices, many do, and the trend is growing this suggests that ‘gaming’ deserves inclusion in both countries’ definition of cyberbullying.

Self-professed cyberbullying experts, Bill Belsey, an elementary school teacher in Canada, and Parry Aftab, a privacy lawyer in the U.S., have contributed significantly to the cyberbullying discourse. From the Canadian perspective, Belsey, a winner of the Prime Minister’s Award for Teaching Excellence and founder of www.cyberbullying.ca and www.bullying.org asserts:

Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others (n.d.).

Upon immediate glance, the open texture of this definition can easily be construed as capturing all elements of cyberbullying. Descriptors such as ‘hostile’ rather than ‘aggressive’ and the inclusion of willful intent insofar ‘deliberate’ are more decisive.

However, this definition excludes singular episodes of cyberbullying. Furthermore, employing willful intent excludes those who inadvertently cyberbully or cyberbully by proxy (Kowalski et al., 2008).

American lawyer and child advocate Parry Aftab approaches defining cyberbullying from another angle. Much more exacting, she asserts:

"Cyberbullying" is when a child, preteen or teen is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child, preteen or teen using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. It has to have a minor on both sides, or at least have been instigated by a minor against another minor. Once adults become involved, it is plain and simple cyber-harassment or cyberstalking. Adult cyber-harassment or cyberstalking is NEVER called cyberbullying (n.d.).

It is interesting to note that Aftab has dedicated a significant amount of her definition to demographics, global disparities in age of majority notwithstanding. Essentially, the overwhelming principle conveyed here is cyberbullying is reserved for youth and her definition lends a measured amount of weight to the anecdotal perception that 'bully' is a contemporary term coined for children. Furthermore, Aftab's relative comprehensiveness of the types and modalities of victimization, still maintains a semblance of open texture, through the employment of 'interactive' and 'digital' terminology thereby encompassing lesser-known methods, current or otherwise. As such, she achieves a greater level of inclusiveness than other attempts to resolve the inherent difficulties in defining cyberbullying. That said, this definition does beg the

question, what happens when technology, if it has not already, advances beyond the ‘digital’?

Clearly, conceptualizing cyberbullying is challenging in all respects. Recognizing the various types and methods of cyberbullying and declaring them without excluding unrecognized forms of cyberbullying or including playful teasing, which ought not to be included, has the potential to disenfranchise some youth or punish others that are undeserved of punitive measures. Although the above definitions are but a few, they represent the diverse nature of attempts to conceptualize cyberbullying.

One possible resolution to issues of conceptualizing cyberbullying, although it is beyond the scope of this research, requires epistemological abstractness; an application of mid-twentieth century philosophical insight into what Ludwig Wittgenstein referred to as language games in 1953. Simply stated, [cyberbullying] need not be so precisely defined, as language can be disconnected from reality, in order to be meaningful (Jago, 2007). Rather than exhaustively defining the concept, all communication modalities may be encompassed by framing them within ICTs and victimization maybe considered on a range of severity, where alleged ‘harmless’ teasing and suicide are possible extremes. Although this continuum most likely applies equally to traditional bullying and cyberbullying, different dynamics in methodology and modality separate traditional bullying from cyberbullying regardless of intent to harm others.

For instance, Kowalski et al. (2008) ramp up the cyberbullying continuum by asserting flaming, which is a brief heated exchange between two or more individuals via ICTs that creates an imbalance of power usually in public settings like chat rooms and online forums, is at the lower end of the spectrum. Moving up the scale, harassment,

which involves repetitive offending communication like aggressive e-mail or threatening text messages via ICTs, can be viewed as an extension of flaming as the harassing behaviour lasts longer and is one-sided (Kowalski et al., 2008). The deliberate act of posting derogatorily false information on the web, such as the creation of a fake online profile on social networking, is labelled denigration. Impersonating another by posing as the victim, through the theft of a password for instance is of particular importance as well considering the harm it can have on others who perceive the imposter as the impersonated. This type of bullying is unique to the cyber world because of the anonymity of the Internet (Kowalski et al., 2008) despite the revelation that most cyberbullying is really not that anonymous (Mishna et al., 2009; Baines, 2012). These are but a few of the methods that victimise youth through cyberbullying and therefore constitute some of the substance that comprises the range of severity that may be a more meaningful way to capture cyberbullying than precisely defining it.

‘Cyber’bullying Research

The neo-liberal shift from, or check of, parental responsibility in the name of child autonomy notwithstanding, various scholars through a variety of means have gauged cyberbullying incidence, modality and victimisation, among other things, to expose the enveloping harm of cyberbullying. The existing body of literature incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research designs capturing data from non-specific to very specific groups, such as lesbian and gay youth (Mishna, et al., 2008) and cyberbullying among adults, contrary to Aftab’s definition, in the workplace (Privitera & Campbell, 2009). On the quantitative side, to measure cyberbullying frequency, the

survey reigns supreme. In fact, in most cases, the survey is the design of choice considering the inherent ethical implications and difficulties of recreating cyberbullying in a laboratory setting (Kowalski et al., 2008). On the qualitative side, focus groups (Mishna, Saini & Solomon, 2009) or semi-structured interviews (Mishna, et al., 2008) are prevalent among the research designs. There is, however, one aspect of cyberbullying research that may stem from The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's (UNCRC) assertion, that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance (United Nations, 1989). Contrary to the majority of other areas of primary research that attempt to measure incidence depending on demographic, sample population and research design, the actualization of precise frequency among different studies of cyberbullying is considered less important than determining the root and problematic nature of cyberbullying, with prevention in mind (Kowalski et al., 2008). The supposition here is that regardless of how preventable cyberbullying is, if even one incident of cyberbullying is reported in a particular community, it deserves the full force of authoritative intervention given adult responsibility to protect children from all forms of violence. Unfortunately, this sentiment is naïve as preventative funding in a distinct area is usually commensurate to reported rates of bullying victimisation; a "hot spot" gets more funds (Public Safety Canada, 2011). With that in mind, an appreciable amount of current and relevant research into Cyberbullying has contributed significantly to youth-peer aggression discourse.

Patchin & Hinduja (2006) illustrate that bullying as youthful violence has evolved to encompass the sudden and dramatic use of cyberspace. This new medium, Patchin and Hinduja argue, extends the reach of bullies therefore allowing their aggression and threats

to reach a greater audience especially considering the widespread popularity of cellular phones as status symbols. Through a quantitative Internet survey of 384 youth under eighteen years of age ranging from grade 2 to 12, Patchin and Hinduja show that, similar to other studies, nearly one-third of respondent's self-report victimization by cyberbullying, which is to say they were harassed in various ways. Cassidy, Jackson & Brown's (2009) study on youth aged eleven to fifteen, using a survey administered to 365 students in grades six to nine in urban British Columbia, find that engaging in clandestine behaviour while sitting in front of a keyboard is far easier and intrusive than physical confrontations. Also, cyber-bullying is most likely to start at school and then continue at home by the same students. Alarming, Cassidy et al. also report that almost one-third of cyber-bullying victims fear retribution from the cyber-bully for disclosing their harmful behaviour. This finding is particularly important because it challenges commonly held notions that cyber-bullying is committed anonymously. Reinforcing this finding is a body of literature reporting that cyberbullying is not all that anonymous despite the anonymity of the Internet as a whole (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Baines, 2012).

Cyberbullying research began to look at social networking sites as an instigator of bullying in 2009. Ybarra and Mitchell focus on the spaces created where children and adolescents are able to create online profiles in order to determine whether social networking sites actually represent more of a risk to the safety of youth than other online venues. Further recognizing that these social networking sites often integrate all of the online communication tools, such as instant messaging, blogging and chatting, to name a few, available to youth, Ybarra and Mitchell ask "... are social networking sites

unhealthy for youth, as defined by a place where Internet victimization is most likely to occur?" (pp. 352). They analyse Youth Internet Safety Surveys (YISS 1 & 2) of 1588 youth aged ten to fifteen and report that social networking sites do not necessarily create particularly risky places for youth and further assert that parents should not focus specifically on their children's use of these sites.

Sengupta & Chaudhuri (2009) add to this research by exploring social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn. Recognising that the common perception is that these sites contribute to the online medium already fraught with signatures of bullies and victims alike, they use the 2006 Pew Internet American Life Survey's Online Teen Survey, and draw from 935 teens aged twelve to seventeen for their sample. They find that, despite common belief, social networking sites do not necessarily serve as a hub for cyberbullies. They argue that online attitudes and teen behaviour determine whether youth become victims of cyberbullying. Furthermore, simply having a profile does not imply a higher likelihood of facing online harassment. None the less, this study does report that youth who use computers away from watchful parents or guardians are more likely to be bullied.

Hay, Meldrum & Mann (2010) analyse data collected from approximately 400 students ranging from ten to twenty-one years of age. Working within the framework of strain theory, Hay et al. report that bullying has a consistent and relatively strong association with delinquency, self-harm and suicidal ideation and that this is especially true for cyber bullying. Hay et al. further report that outcomes of delinquency from both bullying and cyber bullying are nearly identical for males and females but that the effects

of cyber bullying on males significantly increases the internalizing responses of self-harm and suicidal ideation.

Clearly, an appreciable amount of time, energy and resources has been devoted to advancing the repository of knowledge surrounding technological bullying. Current cyberbullying research is by no means exhaustive. Despite limited research dedicated to conceptualizing cyberbullying, which is of deserved interest, research has identified the most common characteristics of online aggressors, targets and aggressors/targets, the modalities and means within which youth cyberbully and its internalizing and externalizing effects. As a result, as legal philosopher John Austin put it, “we are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of, though not as the final arbiter of, the phenomena.” (1962).

Identifying a Gap in Cyberbullying Literature

Research findings suggest that one-third of youth are at risk or have suffered cyberbullying victimization (Limber, 2006; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Mishna et al., 2009; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Rigby & Smith, 2011). This estimated incidence is based on research reporting anywhere from 4% to 53% of youth surveyed self-report being cyberbullied. The disparity in precise replicable frequency is attributable to demographics and types of measure. For instance, on the extremes, the Youth Internet Safety Survey measured online aggression and reports only 4% of those surveyed reporting victimisation (Kowalski et al., 2008). This relatively low incidence rate may be attributable to the infancy of social networking websites and mobile technologies in the very early twenty-

first century. In contrast, Wired Safety, a website where victims of can go for tips and help with online safety, conducted a survey of its users and reported an incidence rate of 53% (Kowalski et al., 2008). This markedly high rate of cyberbullying victimization may be attributable to a skewed sample population considering the audience of the website are most likely to be those who have already been victimized.

The implications of under-reported or over-reported statistics cannot be overstated considering the majority of resources dedicated to combating cyberbullying are directly the result of applicable research; bullying polices vary dramatically from municipality to municipality (Kowalski et al., 2008; Public Safety Canada, 2011). In Canada, the cyber bullying module in the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS), Cycle 23 – Victimization, a nationally representative measurement of approximately 91% of the Canadian population (Stat Can, 2011), “gather[s] data on social trends in order to monitor changes in the living conditions and well-being of Canadians over time [and] provide[s] immediate information on specific social policy issues of current or emerging interest” (Stat Can - GSS Cycle 23 - User guide, pp. 8).

With this in mind, it is reasonable to suppose that municipalities, especially those that do not enjoy metropolitan populaces, rely on Statistics Canada data to shape preventative strategies to combat cyberbullying as smaller municipalities with smaller school boards usually have less access to resources to conduct their own research. If this is the case, these communities would be designing their preventative strategies on markedly low reporting since, according to Statistics Canada, in 2009, 7% of adults reported victimisation and 9% of adults reported their children’s victimisation (Perreault, 2011). This Statistics Canada data suggests considerably less cyberbullying than what is

reported in scholarly research and media articles in and around the same year (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Digizen, 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007(1); Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007(2); Kowalski et al., 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Mishna et al., 2009; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Rigby & Smith, 2011; Poeter, 2011; Economic Times, 2012; Huffington Post, 2012). It is this disparity that is of particular interest in this thesis and that led to an exploration of the epistemological and methodological implications of the 2009 GSS-V survey of cyberbullying.

Defining the problem

Statistics Canada's markedly low rates of cyberbullying may be attributable to two modules, Cyber Bullying Respondent and Cyber Bullying Children, in the Internet Victimization section of the 2009 GSS-V. One potential problem pertains to the Cyber Bullying Respondent module. Participants who indicated that they used the Internet once or more would enter this module and be told, "The following questions are about cyberbullying, which is the use of the Internet to threaten, antagonize or intimidate someone" (StatCan, 2009, pp. 236). The highly delimited nature of this first part of their definition leaves space for the loss of critical information in measuring cyberbullying. The respondent may have been cyberbullied however they may have indicated in the negative because the method in which they were victimised was not included in Statistics Canada's definition of cyberbullying. Statistics Canada's first question in this module (Q110) asks "*Have you ever received threatening of aggressive e-mails or instant messages?*" (2009, pp. 236). Their second question (Q120) asks, "*Have you ever been the target of hateful comments spread through e-mail, instant message or postings on*

Internet sites?” (2009, pp. 236). Their third question (Q130) asks, “*Have you ever had someone send out threatening emails using your identity?*” (2009, pp. 236). Restricting victimization to threatening or aggressive e-mails or instant messages or hateful comments posted to internet sites may fail to capture the various modalities actually available to victimize youth. A review of the relevant literature within the area of cyberbullying, indicates at least half a dozen other means in which youth can cyberbully, without using the Internet such as online collaborative gaming on dedicated video game consoles; short text messaging on mobile phones, personal digital assistants and tablets; picture and video messaging, and videophone calls on software like Skype, iChat and FaceTime.

Another potential problem pertains to the Cyber Bullying Children module. Providing the Statistics Canada respondent is eighteen years of age, had children aged eight to seventeen living in the same household, and indicated that a child had used the Internet and been the target of cyberbullying, the respondent would then be asked a series of questions with the following lead-in question (Q143): “*[t]hinking of the child who was most recently cyber bullied...*” (2009, pp. 241). A question designed to measure cyberbullying victimization of multiple children in a household that only refers to the child who was most recently cyberbullied may be flawed as the omission of child specific cyberbullying for households with multiple victimisation may allow for a loss of critical information.

With the understanding that the literature surrounding cyberbullying discourses reports about one third of children at risk for victimisation have been victims whereas Statistics Canada reports “slightly less than one in ten adults (9%) reported cyber-

bullying against at least one child...” (Perreault, 2011, pp. 5), the pertinent research question is: Does Statistics Canada’s definition of cyberbullying and method to measure cyberbullying of children in the GSS-V limit our ability to obtain an accurate measurement of the cyberbullying of children in Canada? The implications of this question, considering the perceptions of high authenticity and external validity of Statistics Canada data, cannot be overstated. To test the conceptual validity of Statistics Canada’s measurement of cyberbullying of children, I devised a research project designed to ask university students to evaluate their perceptions of a variety of definitions of cyberbullying and methods to measure cyberbullying of multiple children in a household, including those used by Statistics Canada in the GSS-V survey.

Methodology

Participants and Methods

This pilot study endeavours to explore potential epistemological deficiencies of the cyber bullying modules in the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS), Cycle 23 – Victimization. To accomplish this, a survey was designed to collect data through survey participant’s recollection of possible cyberbullying victimising/victimisation, exposure to cyberbullying literature or discourse through academic study and information of cyberbullying from mediated discourses. Considering that substantial research has determined that poor research designs can render data unreliable and suffer low response rates (Bryman et. al., 2009), the survey went through iterations to optimize its efficacy.

This research utilized a voluntary, anonymous, short, pencil and paper quantitative survey of a small convenience (non-random) sample of Saint Mary's

University undergraduate and graduate students within the Sociology and Criminology department of the Faculty of Arts. The sample population was solicited verbally in class from students in the combined 6000/4000 level Advanced Theory class and undergraduates in the 2000 level Social Research Methods class. Students who were interested in participating were provided a manila envelope containing the survey (Appendix A), an informed consent form indicating that their participation was completely voluntary (Appendix B), a participant feedback letter both thanking the participant for their participation and providing them with the opportunity to receive the results of the survey directly (Appendix C), and various pamphlets of SMU’s counselling services outlining services available on and off campus should they experience an adverse event from participating in the research. As well, a blank envelope was provided for returning the survey and informed consent form. Students were instructed to seal the anonymous survey in the envelope provided and drop the envelope into a secure mailbox in confidence. The instructions on how to submit the anonymous survey were outlined in the informed consent form. This method generated a sample of thirteen students of which eleven were female students (Table 1).

Table 1 - Sex

	Frequency	Percent
Male	2	15.4
Female	11	84.6
Total	13	100.0

The majority of the sample fell in the twenty to twenty-four years of age category with the remaining participants indicating their age between twenty-five to thirty-nine years old (Table 2).

Table 2 - Age

	Frequency	Percent
20 to 24	8	61.5
25 to 29	2	15.4
30 to 34	2	15.4
35 to 39	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

Measures

The questionnaire queried two aspects of cyberbullying: student opinions on various definitions of cyberbullying and measures of cyberbullying victimization of multiple children in a household. In addition, two demographic control variables, age and sex, were included to gauge how close the sample replicates the known population as the more closely the demographic distribution of survey respondents matches the population, the more confidence the data enjoys (Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009). Furthermore, survey demographics allow for analysis of sub-groups of those responding to the survey. A Likert scale was deployed as the measurement in the survey. According to Bryman et al., this type of measure “is a widely used format in which respondents are typically asked their degree of agreement with a series of attitude statements that together form a multiple-indicator measure” (2009, pp. 344).

The survey – Part 1

The questions in the first part of the questionnaire measured student views of the definitions that ‘best describes the concept of cyberbullying.’ Three pre-existing definitions were presented representing academic and governmental attempts to conceptualize cyberbullying and one definition was created for the purposes of this

research. The pre-existing definitions of cyberbullying presented in the survey came from public sources: (1) the Ontario Ministry of Education's definition that cyberbullying involves:

spreading rumours and hurtful comments through the use of cell phones, e-mail, text messaging and social networking sites (2011);

(2) www.cyberbullying.ca's definition that cyberbullying involves:

the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others" (n.d.); and

(3) Statistics Canada's definition found in the Cyber Bullying Respondent module of the GSS-V that cyberbullying includes:

receiving threatening or aggressive messages; being the target of hate comments spread through e-mails, instant messages or postings on Internet sites; or threatening e-mails sent using the victim's identity" (2009).

The fourth definition I created from a fusion of governmental and academic sources and defined cyberbullying as:

offensive, threatening, aggressive or embarrassing online language; instant messaging; text, picture or video messaging meant to abuse, harass, defame, impersonate, trick, exclude or make public personal information via e-mail, bulletin board services, blogs, online gaming, websites or social networking sites on the World Wide Web, by means of a mobile phone, game console, personal computer or tablet computer" (2012).

The respondents were not made aware of the source of these definitions.

Respondents were asked to rate each one of the four definitions of cyberbullying by circling a number on a scale. Using a typical five-level format, the scale, in ascending order, recorded whether the participant felt the corresponding description: (1) does a poor job of describing cyberbullying; (2) does a fair job of capturing cyberbullying; (3) does a good job of capturing cyberbullying; (4) does a very good job of capturing cyberbullying; or (5) does an excellent job of capturing cyberbullying.

The survey – Part 2

The questions in the second part of the survey measured student approximation of the validity of Statistics Canada's GSS-V questions designed to gauge cyberbullying victimisation of multiple children in a household. Referring to Cyber Bullying Children module question 143:

Thinking of the child who was most recently cyber-bullied... (2009)

asks the respondent about the child who was most recently cyberbullied. To ensure a full response rate in this part of this survey, I gave the respondents a scenario:

You are answering these questions as if you are an adult in a home with multiple children between the ages of 8 and 17 and two or more of those children are victims of cyberbullying (2012)

to contextualize the family dynamic required to answer the Cyber Bullying Children module in the GSS-V.

Three of the lead-in questions were designed to test the validity of Statistics Canada's lead-in question. Variable CBC_Q143 of the Statistics Canada's GSS-V asks:

(1) thinking of the child who was most recently cyberbullied... (2009, pp. 248).

The remaining lead-in questions I created asked:

(2) thinking of the child that was cyberbullied the most...;

(3) thinking of the oldest child that was cyberbullied...; and

(4) thinking of all the children who have been cyberbullied in the home... are there any differences between their victimization... if so, think about what the differences are...

The respondents were not made aware of the origins of these lead-in questions.

Respondents were asked to individually rate these four lead-in questions by circling a number on a scale. The scale recorded whether the participant felt the corresponding lead-in question: (1) does a poor job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home; (2) does a fair job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home; (3) does a good job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home; (4) does a very good job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home; or (5) does an excellent job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home.

Results

Part 1

Based on percentages, when it came to measuring students' perceptions on definitions of cyberbullying, almost one-half of respondents reported the Ontario Ministry of Education's definition did a poor (23%) or fair (23%) job and only eight percent of respondents reported it did an excellent job (Table 3).

Table 3 – Ontario Ministry of Education

	Frequency	Percent
Poor Job	3	23.1
Fair Job	3	23.1
Good Job	3	23.1
Very Good Job	3	23.1
Excellent Job	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

www.cyberbulling.ca's definition of cyberbullying was not perceived by the respondents as doing an excellent job rather more than half (54%) said it did only a poor or fair job and a quarter of the respondents reported equally that it did either a good (23%) or very good job(23%) (Table 4).

Table 4 – www.cyberbullying.ca

	Frequency	Percent
Poor Job	3	23.1
Fair Job	4	30.8
Good Job	3	23.1
Very Good Job	3	23.1
Excellent Job	0	0
Total	13	100.0

A majority of respondents reported that Statistics Canada's GSS definition did a good (31%) to very good job (31%) at describing cyberbullying. None of those students surveyed thought it did a poor job, however a quarter of respondents (23%) reported it did an excellent job at describing cyberbullying (Table 5).

Table 5 – GSS-V

	Frequency	Percent
Poor Job	0	0
Fair Job	2	15.4
Good Job	4	30.8
Very Good Job	4	30.8
Excellent Job	3	23.1
Total	13	100.0

The fourth definition was the newly conceptualised definition I created through the fusion of relevant literature. Over three-quarters of respondents reported this description of cyberbullying did an excellent job (77%) with the remaining respondents (23%) reporting it did a very good job (Table 6).

Table 6 – Newly conceptualised definition

	Frequency	Percent
Poor Job	0	0
Fair Job	0	0
Good Job	0	0
Very Good Job	3	23.1
Excellent Job	10	76.9
Total	13	100.0

Part 2

When it came to evaluating the lead-in question in the Cyber Bullying Module, the majority of the respondents (46%) perceived that Statistics Canada’s GSS-V question does a poor job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home with nearly half of the respondents indicating this. The remaining respondents reported unevenly between fair (23%), good (8%), very good (8%) and excellent job (15%) (Table 7).

Table 7 – Statistics Canada-GSS-V

	Frequency	Percent	
Valid	Poor Job	6	46.2
	Fair Job	3	23.1
	Good Job	1	7.7
	Very Good Job	1	7.7
	Excellent Job	2	15.4
	Total	13	100.0

Changing the Cyber Bullying Module’s adjective in Statistics Canada’s GSS-V lead-in question from ‘recent’ to ‘most’ led to the second lead-in question measured. Over one-half of the respondents (54%) reported that this lead-in question did a poor or fair job, with the remaining reporting it did either a good (23%) or an excellent job (23%) of measuring victimisation of multiple children (Table 8).

Table 8 – Thinking of the child cyberbullied the most...

	Frequency	Percent
Poor Job	2	15.4
Fair Job	5	38.5
Good Job	3	23.1
Very Good Job	0	0
Excellent Job	3	23.1
Total	13	100.0

Changing the Cyber Bullying Module’s adjective in Statistics Canada’s GSS-V lead-in question from ‘recent’ to ‘oldest’ led to the third question in part 2. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) reported this lead-in question did either a poor or fair job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home (Table 9).

Table 9 – Thinking of the oldest child cyberbullied

	Frequency	Percent	
Valid	Poor Job	5	38.5
	Fair Job	3	23.1
	Good Job	1	7.7
	Very Good Job	3	23.1
	Excellent Job	1	7.7
	Total	13	100.0

The fourth question in part 2 was a radically altered version of Statistics Canada’s lead-in question. Rather than simply changing the adjective, a newly conceptualised lead-in question was created. It asked the respondent to consider all the children in the home rather than one specific child. Overwhelmingly, the respondents reported that this lead-in question did both a very good job and an excellent job (84%) at measuring victimisation of multiple children in a single home (Table 10).

Table 10 – Newly conceptualised lead-in question

	Frequency	Percent	
Valid	Poor Job	0	0
	Fair Job	1	7.7
	Good Job	1	7.7
	Very Good Job	4	30.8
	Excellent Job	7	53.8
	Total	13	100.0

Discussion

The purpose of this pilot project was to examine the validity of current measures of cyberbullying. To accomplish this, I elicited undergraduate and graduate students’ perceptions of definitions of cyberbullying. The results of this study point to a number of key issues regarding existing definitions of cyberbullying and measuring victimisation of multiple children in a household.

Analysis of the survey results suggests that methodologies used to capture cyberbullying in Canada are perceived by university students as second-rate. Two key findings emerge from the analysis of the data. The first finding is that while governmental and academic definitions, as presented in this survey, are perceived by students to capture elements of the cyberbullying phenomenon, none of the definitions of cyberbullying merited a very good rating. This study finds that my reconstructed definition of cyberbullying seemed more valid to survey participants with a mean score of 4.8 out of 5 (Table 11). Whereas current attempts by Statistics Canada GSS-V to conceptualize what constitutes cyberbullying, does between a good and very good job with a mean score of 3.6 out of 5 (Table 11). Attempts by the provincial government of Ontario, through their Ministry of Education, are perceived as doing between a fair and a good job of describing cyberbullying with a mean score of 2.7 out of 5 (Table 11).

Table 11 – Part 1 - Score out of 5

	Ontario Ed.	Cyberbullying.ca	GSS-V	New Definition
Mean	2.6923	2.4615	3.6154	4.7692
N	13	13	13	13
% of Total N	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Attempts to generalise all forms of digital and electronic devices, and the modalities to use them, into a grand narrative of cyberbullying to maintain an open-textured definition is not perceived as a valid definition of cyberbullying. As noted earlier, there is reason to suspect that the dynamic nature of ICT's will problematize a precise conceptualization of cyberbullying. The data suggests a more comprehensive definition, one emphasizing a learned understanding of the modalities and mechanisms available to

cyberbully and a listing of the ways in which youth can cyberbully, will allow for a more valid conceptualizing of the phenomenon at this time.

The second key finding is that Statistic Canada’s current lead-in question employed in the Cyber Bullying Children module is clearly suspect as a valid measure. The data shows that the lead-in question referring to the most recent victimised child in a home with multiple children where more than one of them is victimised, generated a mean score of 2.2 out of 5 (Table 12). It would seem that the rationale of drawing from the most recent memories of victimisation is not perceived as the greatest way to gauge actual victimisation. In fact, the data shows that replacing the adjective of the lead-in question to reflect the child in the home that was cyberbullied with the most or the oldest child, the second and third lead-in questions measured, is also seen as inadequate. When asked to consider all the children and think about their differences, the respondents overwhelmingly scored the fourth lead-in question 4.3 out of 5 (Table 12). Similar to the first key finding, students may perceive the existing question wording of Statistics Canada’s GSS-V as too exclusionary with their rating of slightly better than fair.

Table 12 – Part 2 Score out of 5

	Lead-in # 1	Lead-in # 2	Lead-in # 3	Lead-in # 4
Mean	2.2308	2.7692	2.3846	4.3077
N	13	13	13	13
% of Total N	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Implications

The implications of these findings ought not to be overlooked. Current methodologies employed by the Government of Canada to gauge cyberbullying victimisation through the GSS-V are restricting the disclosure of actual rates through Statistics Canada’s epistemologically deficient definition. What is more, a potential loss

of critical information in the Cyber Bullying Respondent module is further perpetuated by the deficiencies in the Cyber Bullying Children module that attempts to measure victimisation of families with more than one child; concern is warranted. It is vital that adults, school principals, school board superintendants, policy makers and legislators recognize the importance of taking all reasonable measures to deter, detect and deal with cyberbullying with impactful systems of prevention and meaningful consequences. It is crucial that administrators or facilitators fundamentally understand what cyberbullying truly is so it can therefore be measured with accuracy. The inclusion of a youth that either, a) didn't cyberbully; b) may be more appropriately restored through divisionary measures due to a criminal code violation; or, c) the exclusion of a youth that cyberbullied but isn't sanctioned due to a lack of understanding of emerging technologies or modalities not yet mainstream may have serious consequences for effectively addressing the issue.

With that said, one important policy implication relates to capturing cyberbullying in Canadian contemporary society. It is reasonable to assume there are some communities in Canada that do not have the resources to survey their own demographic and determine the local incidence of cyberbullying. Therefore, when allocating resources to combat cyberbullying, the municipal authorities within these communities may be basing their funding envelopes to detect, prevent and eradicate cyberbullying on Statistics Canada GSS-V data that is flawed. This in turn may diminish the efficacy of these communities' counter-cyberbullying strategies, particularly in rural populations.

Instead of restricting their operationalization of cyberbullying, Statistics Canada needs to re-evaluate their measurement validity through an examination of their

epistemological and methodological processes. This examination should endeavour to resolve deficiencies in conceptualizing cyberbullying. Furthermore, the use of multiple indicators of a variable within the Cyber Bullying Children and Cyber Bullying Respondents module to capture victimisation of multiple children in a single household and increasing the range of sources of information used to create an enfranchising definition of cyberbullying, would allow Statistics Canada to enhance the validity of their findings to better reflect the reality of cyberbullying.

Limitations of the Current Study

The most notable limitation of this study relates to the sample population. This study would have benefited from a larger sample population to make more generalizable assertions regarding students' perceptions on the validity of current methodologies to capture cyberbullying in Canadian contemporary society. Existing research on cyberbullying however provides support for the present findings (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Digizen, 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007(1); Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007(2); Kowalski et al., 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Mishna et al., 2009; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Rigby & Smith, 2011; Poeter, 2011; Economic Times, 2012; Huffington Post, 2012). Replication is also necessary in the social sciences to more fully understand a phenomenon.

Directions for Future Research

There are several themes that future research in cyberbullying must address. Although a large survey to measure cyberbullying incidence based from a sample

population that is random would represent Canada as a whole, it is important to elicit the perceptions of students, particularly youth, who are immersed in Information and Communication Technologies; this would allow a greater understanding of the world that the millennial generation lives in. The current study highlights the inherent difficulties of paralleling the dynamism of emerging technologies and therefore future researchers must be cognizant of the effects of ineffectually conceptualizing cyberbullying. This is particularly important considering it is safe to assume that youth today have become reliant on digital technologies to remain current and relevant in their social world and may even become more immersed as time progresses. Therefore, researchers must endeavour to understand the types and methods of cyberbullying, at the point in time of their research before relying on earlier definitions.

In addition to gauging cyberbullying incidence at a given point in time, future researchers ought to consider more longitudinal research designs to capture larger trends in cyberbullying modalities. The lack of longitudinal research of cyberbullying, even internationally, was evident at the outset of this study and prevented the creation of an even more comprehensive definition from the literature. Clearly, longitudinal studies are required to decrease the ambiguity of static definitions through the tracking of the evolution of cyberbullying.

Unfortunately, there is no universally recognized pre-existing definition of cyberbullying that does a thorough job of capturing the phenomenon. According to Schrock and Boyd (2008), studying the cyberbullying phenomenon is like studying a moving target and Livingstone and Haddon (2008) add, “research in this field becomes quickly out of date, as the technologies, institutions that promote and manage them and

children's own practices all continue to change" (pp. 317). The dedication of resources to exploring the relevancy of precisely defining the dynamic cyberbullying phenomenon while balancing the notion that it need not be so precisely defined to be meaningful is of particular interest.

Conclusions

There should be no doubt that Information and Communication Technologies, in the twenty-first century, have impacted our lives greatly. Some communities have stopped printing the white or yellow pages; some schools have eliminated printed text in favour of digital e-books. It is with these examples that comes the appreciation that youth are growing up in a rapidly evolving technological world. The preceding study highlights both the dynamic nature of cyberbullying and the current epistemological deficiency of the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS), Cycle 23 – Victimization maybe underreporting the seriousness of cyberbullying. Indeed, seventy-seven percent of students in this study report that the new definition of cyberbullying presented in the questions did an excellent job of describing the phenomenon whereas only twenty-three percent reported Statistics Canada's definition did an excellent job describing cyberbullying.

To overcome the problems identified with Statistics Canada's attempts to capture cyberbullying in contemporary society, this study suggests a greater understanding of the phenomenon is necessary. Once a more fundamental appreciation of the nature of cyberbullying occurs, one possible solution to reduce the loss of critical information may be the creation of a universal definition to serve as a baseline and then report on the

trends of the phenomena considering the dynamic nature of ICTs. This may reveal that youth favour more instantaneous forms of communication than e-mail to victimise other youth and this may account for the majority of the disparity between Statistics Canada low reporting of victimisation compared to current academic literature. This approach may also alleviate the loss of critical information regarding the omission of child specific cyberbullying for households with more than one child if all children are reported on. This approach however would not address whether the parent is aware of their child/children's cyberbullying experiences.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is unmistakable in recognizing that for the full and harmonious development of a youth's personality, they should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding, and are entitled to special care and assistance (1989). With the cyber world becoming more and more prevalent and the preponderance of youth employing ICTs everyday, adults, especially those in positions of trust and authority, ought to take all reasonable measures to understand, report, prevent, detect and sanction cyberbullying to reduce victimisation as much as possible. If even one child's suicidal ideation becomes reality, we adults have genuinely failed in our obligations to the digital generation.

This failure can be no more evident than the recent case of a British Columbia youth, Amanda Todd. According to international mediated discourses, at the age of 12 she was persuaded to expose her breasts on a webcam (CBC, 2012; Time, 2012; The Telegraph, 2012). For nearly four years after that moment of naivety, she was cyberbullied relentlessly. What is particularly horrendous about her story is that her

peers joined in her torment rather than banding together against the cyberbully. Todd became depressed and anxious and her life spiralled downwards where she turned to alcohol and drugs as vehicles for respite. She sought help and even published a desperate plea for help on YouTube. After several failed suicide attempts, she successfully hanged herself on Oct 10th, 2012; scores of people now question the actions of those people in her life that failed to prevent her self-destruction. At last count, her YouTube video received more than twenty million international views and even generated the fury of the online hacking collective 'Anonymous' to discover the child pornographer. The grievous nature of Amanda Todd's story is typical in cases of cyberbullying that end with adolescent self-harm. It poignantly illustrates that cyberbullying is insidiousness and adults need to do everything conceivable to eliminate this harmful phenomenon.

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CYBERBULLYING SURVEY

This pilot survey is designed to measure the validity of survey questions pertaining to cyberbullying. It will take no more than 15 minutes to complete and your participation in my research will contribute to a greater understanding of the methodology of studying cyberbullying. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Please seal your completed survey in the envelope provided and drop it in the letter mail slot “DROP-OFF MAILBOX” outside McNally South 424.

Age:

- 18 to 19
- 20 to 24
- 25 to 29
- 30 to 34
- 35 to 39
- 40 to 44
- 45 to 49
- 50 to 54

Sex:

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

Part 1 – Descriptions of Cyberbullying

The questions in this section will measure your approximation of the definition that best describes the concept of cyberbullying.

Please read all the following descriptions below. You will rate them on the next page:

1. Cyberbullying involves spreading rumours and hurtful comments through the use of cell phones, e-mail, text messaging and social networking sites.
2. Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.
3. Cyber bullying includes receiving threatening or aggressive messages; being the target of hate comments spread through e-mails, instant messages or postings on Internet sites; or threatening e-mails sent using the victim's identity.
4. Cyberbullying includes offensive, threatening, aggressive or embarrassing online language; instant messaging; text, picture or video messaging meant to abuse, harass, defame, impersonate, trick, exclude or make public personal information via e-mail, bulletin board services, blogs, online gaming, websites or social networking sites on the World Wide Web, by means of a mobile phone, game console, personal computer or tablet computer.

Now that you have read the above descriptions, please turn the page to rate them on their comprehensiveness.

Individually rate each one of the 4 descriptions by circling the scale number to the right of the same descriptions below.

Refer to the scale on the bottom of the page to select the scale-rating most consistent with your evaluation.

A description of Cyberbullying	Scale				
1. Cyberbullying involves spreading rumours and hurtful comments through the use of cell phones, e-mail, text messaging and social networking sites.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Cyberbullying includes receiving threatening or aggressive messages; being the target of hate comments spread through e-mails, instant messages or postings on Internet sites; or threatening e-mails sent using the victim's identity.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Cyberbullying includes offensive, threatening, aggressive or embarrassing online language; instant messages; text, picture or video messages meant to abuse, harass, defame, impersonate, trick, exclude or make public personal information via e-mail, bulletin board services, blogs, online gaming, websites or social networking sites on the World Wide Web, by means of a mobile phone, game console, personal computer or tablet computer.	1	2	3	4	5

SCALE

1	Does a <u>poor</u> job of describing cyberbullying
2	Does a fair job of describing cyberbullying
3	Does a good job of describing cyberbullying
4	Does a very good job of describing cyberbullying
5	Does an excellent job of describing cyberbullying

Part 2 – Cyberbullying Victimization of Multiple Children

The questions in this section measure the validity of survey questions designed to measure cyberbullying victimization of children in a household.

The statements below are just the first part of a question sentence found in a different survey designed to determine cyberbullying victimization of multiple children in a household.

SCENARIO: You are answering these questions as if you are an adult in a home with multiple children between the ages of 8 and 17 and two or more those children are victims of cyberbullying.

In the question that follows, you are asked to:

1. Think of the child who was most recently cyber bullied...
2. Think of the child that was cyberbullied the most number of times...
3. Think of the youngest child that was cyberbullied in the home...
4. Think of all of the children who have been cyberbullied in the home... are there any differences between each child's victimization... If so, think about what the differences are...

Now that you have read the first part of a longer question found in different surveys, please turn the page to rate them.

In response to the following task, think of the appropriateness of the following lead-in statements as a valid measure of cyberbullying victimization of multiple children in a household.

Refer to the scale on the bottom of the page to select the scale-rating most consistent with your evaluation.

Cyberbullying victimization of multiple children in a household	Scale				
1. Thinking of the child who was most recently cyber bullied...	1	2	3	4	5
2. Thinking of the child that was cyberbullied the most	1	2	3	4	5
3. Thinking of the oldest child that was cyberbullied	1	2	3	4	5
4. Thinking of all of the children who have been cyberbullied in the home... are there any differences between their victimization... If so, think about what the differences are...	1	2	3	4	5

SCALE

1	Does a <u>poor</u> job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one
2	Does a fair job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home
3	Does a good job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home
4	Does a very good job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home
5	Does a excellent job of measuring cyberbullying of more than one child in a home

You have now completed the survey.

Please seal your completed survey in the envelope provided and drop it in the letter mail slot "DROP-OFF MAILBOX" outside McNally South 424.

Thank you.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Mean Behind the Screen: Cyberbullying Victimization in Canada REB File # 12-191

**Alex Moore / Dr. Sandra Bell
Department of Sociology and Criminology
Saint Mary's University, 923 Robie Street, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3**

I am Alex Moore, an honours student in the Criminology program of the Faculty of Arts at Saint Mary's University and as part of my honours thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Sandra Bell.

My research focuses on the methodology of studying cyberbullying victimization. More specifically, what we still don't know about cyberbullying in Canada. The only real mechanism to test for cyberbullying victimization throughout Canada is the General Social Survey – Victimization, conducted by Statistics Canada. This survey has been around since 1985 and specific topics are repeated every five years while the modules relating to cyberbullying started in 2009. Despite significant research into this area of study in the United States, there are aspects of cyberbullying victimization that we do not know about in Canada. Your participation in my research will contribute to a greater understanding of the methodology of studying cyberbullying.

The sample population for my pilot project is undergraduate and graduate students in the Sociology & Criminology department of the Faculty of Arts in Saint Mary's University. Participants must be over 18 years of age.

Participation in my research involves a quantitative survey designed to take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Once you have read and signed this consent form, you will complete the anonymous survey, seal it in the envelope provided and then drop it in the letter mail slot "DROP-OFF MAILBOX" located in the Sociology & Criminology hallway, McNally South 424. The completed surveys will be collected and secured confidentially until I pick them up and use them for my research. Your anonymous survey will be secured in locked filing cabinets for the duration of my research where they will be then shredded until destruction.

The questions in the survey revolve around the definition of cyberbullying and cyberbullying victimization. There is, potentially, a risk of psychological harm. You may recollect experiences of cyberbullying or traditional bullying victimization and this may trigger a negative emotional response. I am providing you with pamphlets from Saint Mary's University's Student Services. They are located on the 4th floor of the Student Centre and in the event that you experience of an adverse event to this survey, please call the Help Line 24/7 at (902) 421-1188 or visit the Counselling Centre during regular business hours. You will find free and confidential counselling services from professional clinical therapists and/or psychologists. As well, Saint Mary's' University offers free and confidential Chaplaincy Services located on the 1st floor of Loyola across from Tim Hortons.

You may withdraw at any time without penalty. If you have not yet started the survey simply recycle it at your convenience. If you partially completed the survey, seal it in the envelope provided and drop it off at MS 424. All incomplete surveys will be shredded confidentially.

Again, participation is anonymous and the surveys are confidential. Completed questionnaires will be stored in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. Only Dr. Sandra Bell and I will view completed surveys.

If you would like a summary of the results, please let me know by providing me with your e-mail address below. When the study is completed, I will send it to you. The study is expected to be completed by August 2012 and will be available in Saint Mary's University's library.

Questions, comments or concerns can be addressed to:

Alex Moore, MS 404 – 880-2236 or alexander.moore@smu.ca

Dr. Sandra Bell, MS 407 – 420-5889 or sandra.bell@smu.ca

Certification:

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about ethical matters, you may contact the Chair of the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca or 420-5728.

Signature of Agreement:

I understand what this study is about and appreciate the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can end my participation at any time.

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

E-mail : _____

March, 2012

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study.

As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to survey students on cyberbullying victimization. The data collected through the survey may contribute to a better understanding of cyberbullying victimization in Canada.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing the results with my supervising professor, Dr. Sandra Bell and it will be included in my honours thesis.

If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at the email address listed at the bottom of the page.

If you have provided me with your e-mail address I will send you a summary of my results when the study is completed. The study is expected to be completed by August 2012 and will be available in Saint Mary's University's library.

Again, I have provided you with pamphlets from Saint Mary's University Student Services. They are located on the 4th floor of the Student Centre. You may call the Counselling Centre's Help Line 24/7 at (902) 421-1188 or visit during regular business hours. You will find free and confidential counselling services from professional clinical therapists and/or psychologists. As well, Saint Mary's' University offers free and confidential Chaplaincy Services located on the 1st floor of Loyola across from Tim Horton's.

As with all Saint Mary's University projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by and received research ethics approval through the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns about ethical matters, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at 902-420-5728 or ethics@smu.ca.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned or my supervisor, Dr. Sandra Bell at 420-5889 or sandra.bell@smu.ca .

//osb//

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