

**Exploring cyber-bullying:
A retrospective study of first year university students**

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Abstract

This was a retrospective study of cyber-bullying. Students enrolled in a first year course were selected to provide opinions on the issue of cyber-bullying as it pertained to social networking sites and young people. A mixed methods approach was applied to this study. Questionnaires provided quantitative data, and a focus group provided data for qualitative analysis. It was evident that students felt that cyber-bullying was not as prevalent as traditional bullying; however, it was identified as a serious issue. In relation to gender, traditional bullying was considered to be a problem for boys, more than cyber-bullying, whereas for girls cyber-bullying was considered to be a problem, more than traditional bullying. Social networking sites, solely, were not common tools used in cyber-bullying. Generally cell phones or a combination of cell phones and social networking sites were used. It was determined the age group at most risk from cyber-bullying to be early high school. Raising awareness of cyber-bullying was considered essential for prevention.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Motivation for research	3
Research and method	4
Overview of chapters	5
Chapter Two: Literature review	8
Overseas research	8
Gender	12
Social networking sites	16
New Zealand research	17
Chapter Three: Methodology	20
Rationale	20
Theoretical framework	21
Strengths and weaknesses of constructivism	22
Mixed method research design	23
The value of a mixed method design	26
Development of research	27
Sample	28
Research approach and instruments	29
Validity	30
Ethics	31
Strengths of the research	32
Limitations of the research	33
Conclusion	34
Chapter Four: Results	35
Experiences	35
Opinions	44
Questionnaire comments	48
Focus group discussion	51
Summary	60

Chapter Five: Analysis	62
Internet use	62
Social networking	63
Traditional bullying and cyber-bullying	65
Gender	69
Advances in technology	70
Extent and Effects of cyber-bullying	71
Media	73
Chapter Six: Conclusion	74
Relevance of research	74
Going beyond the study: Prevention and intervention	78
Limitations	80
Closing statement	80
References	81
Appendix	93
Appendix 1: Sample questionnaire	93
Appendix 2: Focus group questions	102
Appendix 3: Information sheet for participants	103
Appendix 4: Information sheet for lecturer	105
Appendix 5: Consent form for focus group participants	107
Appendix 6: Consent form for lecturer	108
Appendix 7: Confidentiality form for note taker	109
Appendix 8: Ground rules for focus group participants	110
Figures	36
Figure 1: Kinds of personal use of the internet at school	36
Figure 2: Kinds of personal use of the internet at home	36
Figure 3: When the internet was used the most at home	37
Figure 4: Social networking sites used during high school	38
Figure 5: Reasons for social networking	40
Figure 6: Age groups at most risk from each bullying type	47
Tables	45
Table 1: Bullying behaviours of girls	45
Table 2: Bullying behaviours of boys	46

Chapter One: Introduction

In recent years it has become widely understood that young people are using technologies such as cell phones and the internet to bully others. This phenomenon, known as cyber-bullying, has become prevalent among young people today. So, what are the current opinions of young people about this issue?

This thesis will look at the opinions of first year university students regarding issues pertaining to cyber-bullying and young people. Nearly all of these students are part of the generation when cyber-bullying emerged as a phenomenon.

Current New Zealand research (Adolescent Health Research Group 2008; Carroll-Lind, 2009; Raskauskas, 2005) shows that technology such as cell phones and the internet are being used to bully others. To date, with the exclusion of Raskauskas, Carroll-Lind and colleagues (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Raskauskas and Prochnow, 2007), there has been little academic research carried out in New Zealand relating to cyber-bullying. This research will add to existing research, with a particular focus on the influence of social networking sites on cyber-bullying and the role of young people.

Cyber-bullying shares many similarities to traditional bullying; however, it is the differences that are more valuable in developing our understanding of the issue. The most prominent difference is that cyber-bullying unlike traditional bullying can follow children home, harassing victims day and night (Keith and Martin, 2005). Also it is easier for cyber-bullies to remain anonymous by disguising their identity; potentially the victims may never know the identity of their bully. The ability to hide behind technology puts the bullies in a controlling and powerful position over the victim (Bauman, 2007). Furthermore, the audience in cyber-bullying can be much larger than in traditional bullying. There could potentially be thousands witnessing the humiliation of the cyber-victim (Campbell, 2005). This thesis will identify the nature of cyber-bullying and as a result build on the

current research relating to the differences between traditional and cyber-bullying.

Since the initiation of cyber-bullying there have been many advances in technology and changes in cyber-bullying behaviour. Existing cyber-bullying research, especially that carried out in New Zealand (NetSafe, 2005; Raskauskas and Prochnow, 2006), focuses specifically on text bullying. Text bullying has been considered the most common form of cyber-bullying (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008; Smith et al, 2008). However, the internet has also played a major part in the rise of cyber-bullying, included in this is social networking sites. To date, we know that young people are using sites such as Facebook, MySpace and bebo for bullying activities (Kowalski and Limber, 2007; McLoughlin et al, 2009; Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler, 2007) but little is known about the influence of social networking sites on cyber-bullying. These sites are relatively new to the online world, emerging in 2003-2005, but have now become the online “hang out” among young people (boyd, 2007)¹. Although they provide people with a way to keep in touch with old friends, make new ones and to share a little bit about what is happening in their lives, cyber-bullying is an adverse reality of these sites. The availability and anonymity of social networking sites provide bullies with the ideal location to establish or continue bullying behaviours. Furthermore, young people could be considered experts of the online world and as a result cyber-bullying may be a more simple and effortless form of bullying. The influence of social networking sites is a key focus of this thesis. It will look at how young people are using these sites and whether they are being used in cyber-bullying activities.

Much of the current research on cyber-bullying indicates that girls are more likely to be involved in cyber-bullying activities both as victims and perpetrators (Campbell, 2005; Goddard, 2008; Keith and Martin, 2005; Lenhart, 2007; Powers, 2006; Smith et al, 2008). Not only do girls communicate more frequently online but cyber-bullying is also linked to female aggression, known as indirect and relational aggression, in which manipulation is used to bully their

¹ The spelling is intentionally lower case, respecting of the author’s decision to leave capitalisation out of her name.

peers. Boys and girls engage in different styles of traditional bullying, which may also be consistent in cyber-bullying. The type of traditional bullying that girls are mainly associated with is verbal and indirect bullying whereas boys are primarily associated with physical bullying. However, a more recent and under-researched form of cyber-bullying is “happy slapping”, which is a physical form of cyber-bullying and may appeal more to boys. This thesis will look at gender differences, specifically identifying those involved in cyber-bullying as well as recognising the different styles of bullying.

The media has largely been involved in the exposure of cyber-bullying in New Zealand and has influenced how it has been portrayed (Beaumont and Fitzsimons, 2009; Bonnevie, 2007; Gibson, 2008). It was the aim of this research to expand current understandings of this growing issue and explore the opinions of first year students, who are part of the same generation represented in the media, specifically in relation to media portrayals of cyber-bullying.

Motivation for research

My motivation comes from both a personal and professional level. First and foremost was an interest in young people, in particular the issues and adversities that young people deal with daily. This interest developed during the first year of my Masters, which is when I first learnt about cyber-bullying. Over this time, I began to develop my knowledge of cyber-bullying and simultaneously recognise gaps in the research. This research is intended to enhance my own understanding, provide valuable information, and add to existing research.

I also have a devoted interest in youth work. Currently, I am working with young people in a formal and non-formal setting. Consequently, it was important to me personally and professionally to ensure the voice of the young person was captured. The opinions of the students were a significant part of the research and guided the entire research process. Despite the participants being first year university students, many of the participants knew young people currently at school who had been involved in cyber-bullying.

In addition, whilst developing a knowledge of cyber-bullying it became evident that the media was significantly involved in the portrayal of cyber-bullying in New Zealand. The media interpretation of cyber-bullying mainly focused on the extremes of cyber-bullying, in other words the serious and severe cyber-bullying instances. Research on cyber-bullying is still in its infancy; there are still many unknowns concerning cyber-bullying, therefore media representations may not be accurate. A true description of cyber-bullying will proceed over time, as the research further develops in New Zealand. It was also evident in media reports, a tendency to attribute cyber-bullying with girls (Stuff, 2008; NZ Herald, 2009; Stuff, 2009). The types of bullying associated with boys are not related to cyber-bullying, but appear separate, for example, “assault posted on YouTube”, “Fight-clubs”, “fighting posted on a website” (TVNZ, 2007 & 2008). This research will offer an insight into the influence of media reporting’s on first year students opinions regarding cyber-bullying as well as identify students views on how the media depicts cyber-bullying. It will also recognise the different types of cyber-bullying, both physical and non-physical.

Research and method

The research is a retrospective study and will explore the experiences and opinions of first year university students in relation to cyber-bullying. In particular the research will look at how students view cyber-bullying, the extent of the problem, the influence of social networking sites, and discover how the issue can be addressed. Students enrolled in a first year course were selected to give a “snapshot” of opinions on the issue of cyber-bullying as it pertained to social networking sites and young people.

There were two key questions underpinning this research. These were:

- 1) What are the opinions of students enrolled in a first year course regarding cyber-bullying, the extent of the problem and what needs to be done to address it?

2) What role do students think social networking sites play in cyber-bullying and to what extent?

The research used a mixed methods approach. There were two stages to the research. In the first stage, questionnaires were used to collect mainly quantitative data. The questionnaire (Appendix 1) focused on how the internet and social networking sites were utilised by students when they were at school; the extent of cyber-bullying, and the opinions of first year students on cyber-bullying. In the second stage, a focus group provided data for qualitative analysis. The focus groups provided further insight to the questions in the survey. In particular, the group discussion (Appendix 2) focused on the student's opinions of issues relating to cyber-bullying and social networking sites. The value of a mixed methods design for this study was to discover personal opinions of cyber-bullying as well as determine the opinions concerning the extent of the issue from first year university students.

Overview of chapters

The literature review, Chapter Two, is divided into four sections. These include overseas research, gender differences, social networking sites and New Zealand research. The overseas research provided further understanding and knowledge on cyber-bullying. The key findings were that cyber-bullying differs from traditional bullying mainly because it is not confined by school walls. It can continue or develop outside of the school ground, which means that it can be constant bullying. Also, there is limited research on the effects of cyber-bullying, in particular the long-term effects. The effects of cyber-bullying can be compared to indirect and relational aggression; however potentially, because of the nature of cyber-bullying, the effects could be more severe. Cyber-bullying, unlike traditional styles of bullying, can permeate generations as messages or videos, as with all digital media, can be permanent. Girls are commonly associated with cyber-bullying; however girls and boys use different techniques to bully therefore may be involved in different forms of cyber-bullying. The existing research is limited in relation to cyber-bullying and social networking sites, but it is known that these sites are being used in cyber-bullying activities. Furthermore, New Zealand research concerning cyber-bullying is also limited.

There are a number of recent studies (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2007; Carroll-Lind, 2009), which have provided valuable information. The media has been largely involved in portraying cyber-bullying in New Zealand. This study was intended to add to the existing research as well as identify student's opinions of the way the media has represented cyber-bullying.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodology of the research. Essential to this chapter was outlining the theoretical framework and research method. This study provided actual opinions of students, therefore was centered within a constructivist paradigm. This type of paradigm is also associated with a phenomenological approach, which is concerned with understanding how people experience a phenomenon. An important aspect of this study was to understand cyber-bullying through exploration of actual accounts. The research method used in this study was a mixed-method approach. This allowed for a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, which provided a better understanding of cyber-bullying as personal opinions of cyber-bullying as well as opinions on the extent of the issue could be explored.

The results are presented in Chapter Four and looked at the findings from the questionnaires and focus group discussion. The chapter was divided into three sections, which included experiences, opinions, and discussion. The results showed that internet and social networking site use was common for many of the participants and had begun when they were at high school. Senior high school was found to be the most prevalent age group for social networking. As expected, participants had experienced traditional bullying more than cyber-bullying when they were at school. In relation to gender, the participants thought that cyber-bullying was more of a problem for girls than traditional bullying, though traditional bullying was considered more of a problem for boys. The focus group participants considered that parental involvement may make instances of cyber-bullying worse but it was important for parents/caregivers to be aware of the issue. They also felt that the media may exaggerate the problem but are also creating awareness of cyber-bullying in New Zealand, which is important.

Chapter Five further analysed the results from the questionnaires and focus group. It looked at the findings from other research and identified how they compared to the results from this study. Overall, the results were consistent with other research findings.

Chapter Six provided a conclusion of the research. More specifically, it discussed the relevance of the research for professional practice and education, young people, parents, policy, media, and research. It also identified gaps and areas for further study in New Zealand. These included: characteristics of cyber-bullies and victims, the rise of social networking sites in cyber-bullying, gender differences with the inclusion of happy slapping, changes in bullying strategies for adults, the effects of cyber-bullying, and the extent of cyber-bullying in New Zealand. The limitations of the study were also identified. The most significant limitation being that the sample size was small; therefore generalisations could not be made. However this research adds to the developing research in New Zealand regarding cyber-bullying.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter will review the literature on cyber-bullying, focusing on overseas research, gender, social networking sites, and New Zealand research.

In order to understand cyber-bullying it is important to first define traditional bullying. Sullivan (2000) defines bullying as:

A conscious and wilful act of aggression and/or manipulation by one or more people against another person or people and contains the following elements: intended harm; an imbalance of power; it is often organised and systemic; it is repetitive, and hurt experienced by a victim of bullying can be external (physical) and/or internal (psychological). (p. 11)

Traditional bullying can take many different forms but is mainly categorised into two types of bullying, which are physical and non-physical. According to Sullivan (2000) physical bullying consists of behaviours such as hitting, kicking, pinching, punching, hair pulling, spitting and damaging a person's property. Non-physical bullying consists of verbal and non-verbal behaviours. Verbal bullying includes behaviours such as abusive phone calls, name-calling, spreading false and malicious rumours, and intimidation of threats or violence. Non-verbal bullying can be direct such as mean faces and rude gestures or indirect which involve ruining friendships, ignoring and manipulating relationships (Bjorkqvist and Niemela 1992; Sullivan, 2000).

Cyber-bullying shares many similarities to traditional bullying however there are also a number of differences. Recognising these similarities and differences is valuable in developing our understanding of this issue. Cyber-bullying can be defined as:

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. (Belsey, 2004)

In comparison to traditional bullying, cyber-bullying can be divided into two types of bullying – physical and non-physical. The non-physical form includes nasty messages, hate sites, threats, and manipulation and can be associated with indirect and relational bullying. The physical form of cyber-bullying includes

happy slapping and cyber-fights and can be associated with physical forms of traditional bullying, the only difference being that these physical attacks are being displayed on the internet and cell phones. These attacks are also normally unexpected to the victim. There are a number of tools that can be utilised in cyber-bullying, such as email, cell phone, instant messaging, blogs, and social networking sites. Cell phones play a large role in cyber-bullying (Smith et al, 2008; Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008); however the internet has also contributed to the rising issue. The most prominent difference between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying is that cyber-bullying can continue day and night; it can be relentless (Dehue et al, 2008; Slonje and Smith, 2008; Li, 2007).

The audience of cyber-bullying can be very wide, much bigger than that of the school grounds. By forwarding emails to all contacts or displaying messages on a public website, there could potentially be thousands of people witnessing the humiliation of the victim (Campbell, 2005). Furthermore, comparable to forms of traditional bullying, cyber-bullies can remain anonymous. However, anonymity is a more prominent component of cyber-bullying than in traditional bullying. As cyber-bullying mainly occurs outside of the school grounds, it is harder for victims to identify the bully. The ability of the bully to hide behind technology puts them in a controlling and powerful position over the victim. The research also suggests (Raskauskas and Stoltz, 2007; Smith et al., 2008; Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004) that older adolescents are more likely to be involved in cyber-bullying than younger adolescents whereas traditional bullying is more common during the early years of high school (Rigby and Slee, 1994; Wang et al, 2009).

Research on the effects of cyber-bullying is limited. The existing research is also conflicting. Williams and Guerra (2007) propose that internet bullying prevalence and predictors are likely to be comparable to verbal bullying than physical bullying as the bullies in both these forms of bullying can remain anonymous. However, Cameron (2008) believes:

Aspects of online communication encourage people to act aggressively, prompting them to do things they wouldn't dare to try in real life. There is now the ability to reach more people, and the "always-on" culture of the

internet, means that cyber-bullying can have an even more detrimental effect on the victim than conventional playground bullying.

Because perpetrators can remain hidden they may be more likely to say things that they would not say face-to-face. The emotions and facial expression of the bullies are also hidden therefore the bullying may seem harsher and can also be misunderstood by the victim (Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008). Furthermore, the reactions from the victims are concealed from cyber-bullies; they do not see the hurt they are causing. As a result, cyber-bullies may not experience the same regret as in traditional bullying therefore the bullying may be crueller and more vicious (Keith and Martin, 2005). The effects may vary depending on the type of cyber-bullying. In a study by Smith et al. (2008) they found that specific types of cyber-bullying, such as picture video clip bullying² and abusive images, to be more detrimental to the victim than traditional bullying but the effects of other types of cyber-bullying were considered to be similar or less than traditional bullying.

Cyber-bullying has received great attention worldwide and as a result many schools have introduced new policies to deal with cyber-bullying behaviours. David-Ferdon and Hertz (2007) researched whether the considerable attention and intensified concern placed on cyber-bullying, through forms such as policies, is necessary or justified. They found an association between electronic bullying and a range of psychological difficulties and risk factors, such as problems at school and emotional distress, validating this concern. In addition, Hussmann (2007) believes that communication technologies have exposed more young people to psychological threats but have not introduced any new threats. It is evident that there are many factors that require consideration in relation to the effects of cyber-bullying.

David-Ferdon and Hertz (2007) discuss the repetition and frequency of cyber-bullying behaviours, which is important to note. For an incident to be regarded as bullying, repetition is noted as one of the essential aspects. They propose these questions:

² This is commonly known as 'Happy Slapping'

Aggressive acts are easier to quantify than those perpetrated through electronic means. For a victim of an aggressive text message or internet posting, does the experience constitute an episode of aggression even if the victim rereads the message or repeatedly logs onto the Web site?

If the message becomes widely disseminated, does it remain one incident of aggression or does it become a repeated act as the victim becomes aware the message is being viewed by more peers? (p. 53)

Quantifying cyber-bullying is another aspect of this complex issue. As our understanding and knowledge develops, these questions, as well as other uncertainties, will become clear.

Cyber-bullying may be a bigger problem than we are aware of. Kowalski and Limber (2007) suggest cyber-bullying behaviours may be difficult for students to recognise; students may not identify their experiences as a form of bullying. This may be a consequence of the lack of understanding and awareness. Furthermore, it is evident among the research that young people are not as likely to report incidents of cyber-bullying (Agatston et al, 2007; Belsey, 2005; Dehue et al, 2008; Slonje and Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). There is often apprehension of reporting incidents especially to adults because of the concern that they will make the bullying worse. Although the victims are being bullied through media technology these tools are also their means of communicating with friends and their online world. There is a fear that these tools, such as computers and cell phones, will be taken away from them which may seem inconceivable to young people (Belsey, 2005).

Today's young people are spending plenty of time accessing public life on social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook and bebo (boyd, 2007). There are many advantageous qualities of the "online world" for youth today, which should not be overlooked. Kendall (2008) agrees that social networking sites 'help kids meet social and emotional needs that aren't being met anywhere else' (p. 46). The Internet allows people to maintain exciting friendships as well as a possibility of developing new ones (Kowalski and Limber, 2007). It is important, however, for young people to be aware of the bullying activities that take place online and more importantly learn how to deal with these situations.

Cyber-bullying behaviour and activities are wide-ranging and are linked to the rise in new technology. Since the introduction of cyber-bullying there have been a number of advances in the technology and thus changes in cyber-bullying behaviour. Agatston et al (2007) state that:

It is possible that with greater ease of access to MySpace and to the internet in general with increasingly sophisticated cellular phones, we may see an increase in cyber-bullying during the school day through the use of such phones. (p. S60)

The social networking site Twitter allows users to send and receive messages (known as "Tweets") via the website or through cell phones. Tweets are commonly used to describe daily activities of the user. Since the introduction of this site in 2006 it has largely increased in popularity. Twitter differs from the social networking sites in this study in that cell phones are utilised to a greater extent. These advancements in technology could potentially create changes to cyber-bullying behaviour.

Gender

Much of the current research on cyber-bullying indicates that girls are more likely to be involved in cyber-bullying activities both as victims and perpetrators (Cameron, 2008; Campbell, 2005; Keith and Martin, 2005; Lenhart, 2007; Powers, 2006). There are aspects of cyber-bullying, distinct from traditional bullying, which may be more appealing to girls. Physical strength does not play a part in cyber-bullying as in traditional bullying. Given that size is not a factor of cyber-bullying Powers (2006) believes that girls are just as likely to participate in this form of bullying. Furthermore, cyber-bullying does not have the same constraints as traditional bullying and combined with the confidence of online communication, which girls display, it is likely that this could lead to online harassment (Shariff, 2008). Also, provided that there is little risk of being recognised, girls can behave as assertive as males (Bjorkqvist and Niemela, 1992).

The communication tools, which are being employed in cyber-bullying activities, such as email, instant messaging and social networking sites, are utilised more by girls. One explanation may be that the internet allows girls to establish and maintain relationships without the fear that their physical appearance is being judged (Kowalski and Limber, 2007).

In addition, this form of bullying is also linked to female aggression, which involves manipulation to bully peers. Female aggression, commonly known as indirect and relational aggression is a component of traditional bullying. Girls are significantly more likely to be involved in indirect forms of aggression which Bjorkqvist and Niemela perceive as:

A kind of social manipulation where the aggressor manipulates others to attack the victim, or, by other means, makes use of the social structure in order to harm the target person without being personally involved in the attack. (p. 52)

Girls may be more involved in indirect bullying because this type of behaviour can protect and maintain friendships, an important goal for girls and essentially a way of gaining control (Leckie, 1997). The nature of indirect and relation bullying can be connected to cyber-bullying and for this reason girls may also be more attracted to cyber-bullying. In contrast, developmental influences may also explain girls' involvement in cyber-bullying. During adolescence establishing friendships is essential. Bauman (2007) believes that:

Cyber-bullying may be appealing to those who believe they can garner friendships with a desired group of peers by damaging the social status of competitors. Also, building friends and belonging to a peer group makes the risk of being cyber-bullied a risk worth taking.

Corresponding to this are the findings from Lenhart and Madden's (2007) study, which found that girls use communication technologies, such as social networking sites to strengthen current friendships whereas these sites afford boys opportunities to flirt and create new friendships.

Not all studies on cyber-bullying have found gender differences (Slonje and Smith, 2008; Smith et al 2007; Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004; Raskauskas and

Stoltz, 2007). This may be connected to the ways in which cyber-bullying was measured or defined. As previously mentioned, cyber-bullying can be both physical and non-physical. If a definition fails to acknowledge one form of cyber-bullying it may also be excluding a particular gender. Some gender differences or lack of differences could be explained by the way cyber-bullying behaviours were described in the study.

A more recent form of cyber-bullying, known as happy slapping, may appeal to boys more than girls. This form of cyber-bullying involves a physical attack, usual unsuspected, on another person. The attack is recorded on a video recorder or cell phone by an accomplice and then distributed onto the internet for others to view. To date, there is little research in relation to happy slapping, but because of the similarities to physical bullying, a form of traditional bullying mainly associated with boys, this type of cyber-bullying may also attract boys.

Gender difference can also be recognised in the four main categories of cyber-bullies defined by Aftab (2005), each with a different motivation. These are the *vengeful angel*, the *power-hungry and revenge of the nerds*, *mean girls*, and the *inadvertent cyber-bully*.

Vengeful angel:

In this type of cyber-bullying, the cyber-bully doesn't see themselves as a bully at all. They see themselves as righting wrongs, or protecting themselves or others from the "bad guy" they are now victimising. This includes situations when the victim of cyber-bullying or offline bullying retaliates and becomes a cyber-bully themselves. They may be angry at something the victim did and feel they are taking warranted revenge or teaching the other a lesson.

Power-hungry and revenge of the nerds:

Just as their schoolyard counterparts, some cyber-bullies want to exert their authority, show that they are powerful enough to make others do what they want and some want to control others with fear. These are no different than the offline tough schoolyard bullies, except for their method. Power-hungry cyber-bullies usually need an audience. Often the power they feel when only cyber-

bullying someone is not enough to feed their need to be seen as powerful and intimidating. They often brag about their actions. They want a reaction, and without one may escalate their activities to get one.

Mean girls:

Typically, in mean girl bullying situations, the cyber-bullies are female. They may be bullying other girls (most frequently) or boys (less frequently). Mean girls cyber-bullying is usually done, or at least planned, in a group, either virtually or together in one room. Cyber-bullying can happen at slumber parties, after school, during breaks at school and at the mall.

Inadvertent cyber-bully:

Inadvertent cyber-bullies usually don't think they are cyber-bullies at all. They may be pretending to be tough online, role-playing, or they may be reacting to hateful or provocative messages they have received. Unlike the revenge of the nerds cyber-bullies, they don't lash out intentionally. They just respond without thinking about the consequences of their actions.

This provides a valuable insight into the behaviour of cyber-bullying. In relation to gender, the categories of cyber-bullying that could be associated with girls would include *mean girls* and *inadvertent cyber-bully* whereas boys could be connected to the *vengeful angel*, the *power hungry*, and *revenge of the nerds*.

It is clear there are gender differences in cyber-bullying; however, these differences are not only in the prevalence of cyber-bullying, as much of the research conveys, but in the type of cyber-bullying activities. The focus on gender differences should recognise how girls and boys bully and the different techniques that they use. This is illustrated in the study by Keith and Martin (2005), which found that girls inflict more abuse through instant messaging, online conversations and email; however, boys were more likely to make online threats and build websites targeting others.

In addition to gender, Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) propose specific characteristics of online harassers. They found a correlation between young

people presenting these characteristics and online harassment. The characteristics include: “poor caregiver-child relationships” and “psychological challenges” such as high substance use, delinquency and victimisation. Furthermore, Strom and Strom (2005) identify characteristics of potential cyber victims, which include obesity, sexuality (boys who were more likely to be gay), and promiscuous behaviour (girls who had slept with the most boys). Although there may be certain characteristics of young people involved in cyber-bullying, including gender, these may not entirely describe cyber-bullies or victims.

Social networking sites

To date, there has been little research regarding cyber-bullying and the influence of social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and bebo. Only a small amount of the overseas research, which focuses on cyber-bullying, incorporates social networking sites. Much research provides an abundance of statistical facts (Campbell, 2005; Keith and Martin, 2005; Lenhart, 2007; Patchin and Hinduja, 2006) but fails to look at the actual experiences of young people. The internet has played a major part in the rise of cyber-bullying, especially social networking sites. These sites have become a primary way of communication for young people and although they offer many advantages they are also being used for bullying activities (Kowalski and Limber, 2007; McLoughlin et al, 2009; Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler, 2007).

Lenhart (2007) discovered that social network users were more likely to have been cyber-bullied in some way, compared to online young people that do not use social networks. The availability and anonymity of social networking sites provide bullies with the ideal location to continue or engage in bullying behaviours. The simplicity of being able to replicate and quickly transmit digital content makes bullying easy, particularly for young people who are experts on the online world. This simplicity is illustrated in a comment by a middle school girl as she describes online bullying tactics: ‘just copy and paste whatever somebody says’ (Lenhart, 2007).

Indeed, the internet is coupled with cyber-bullying; however, it is important to acknowledge the positive qualities. Kendal (2008) suggests that social

networking sites connect young people who may be growing up in a “disconnected” culture. Social and emotional needs can be meeting in these spaces. Social networking sites are also a place where young people connect with their friends. boyd (2007) proposes:

Public spaces have many purposes in social life – they allow people to make sense of the social norms that regulate society, they let people learn to express themselves and learn from the reactions of others, and they let people make certain acts or expressions “real” by having witnesses acknowledge them. (p. 3)

These sites are also associated with identity development. They afford young people the opportunity to explore different beliefs, roles and behaviours; essentially presenting an online representation of themselves, that may resemble their offline identity (boyd, 2007; Childnet international 2007; Hinduja and Patchin, 2008).

As social networking sites become more popular, there may be an increase in the use of these sites in cyber-bullying activities. Advances in technology will also influence this as more people can access the social networking sites that they use from their cell phone.

New Zealand research

To date, with the exclusion of Raskauskas, Carroll-Lind and colleagues (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Raskauskas and Prochnow, 2007), there has been little academic research carried out in New Zealand relating to cyber-bullying with the inclusion of social networking sites. There is a great need for research in order to establish an understanding of this growing issue and discover the extent of the problem. Recently in New Zealand the issue of cyber-bullying has been intensifying. The media have been largely involved in the exposure of cyber-bullying and influenced how it has been portrayed (The NZ Herald, 2006; Manawatu Standard, 2007; Stuff, 2009).

There is an abundance of research and literature on traditional bullying (e.g. Sullivan, 2000); however, some of the current studies and literature on bullying have failed to incorporate cyber-bullying as an issue (Sullivan et al, 2004).

Existing cyber-bullying research, especially that carried out in New Zealand (NetSafe, 2005; Raskauskas and Prochnow, 2006), focuses specifically on text bullying; although, recently the focus of New Zealand cyber-bullying research has shifted with attention toward the internet. NetSafe have been the key researchers to date, on internet risk. Their on-going research and education for schools and the community provides invaluable and essential information. Recent NetSafe research projects explore cyber challenges and safety for adolescents and early childhood. The 2008 NetSafe conference on 'Cybercitizens: Risk, Rights and Responsibilities for Participation in the Information Age' covered many issues relating to cyberspace as well as raising awareness with a specific focus on cyber-bullying.

Alongside NetSafe, the Adolescent Health Research Group (2007) studied health and wellbeing issues among secondary school students across New Zealand. As part of their recent study they looked at bullying in schools, which included cyber-bullying. They found that 'one in five students reported being sent nasty or threatening messages by cell phone or internet'. Students identified the most common types of bullying as: 'spreading lies or false rumours', 'people making sexual jokes or gestures', 'calling them hurtful names' and 'threatening them physically'.

A review, by Carroll-Lind (2009) on school safety, specifically examines the issue of bullying in schools and identifies cyber-bullying as an issue and possibly the most dangerous form of bullying. This research is valuable for schools, teachers and parents as it provides an extensive study of bullying, and creates awareness of current issues concerning school safety. It also provides important information on approaches and programmes for dealing with bullying issues, which can be adopted for cyber-bullying behaviours.

A representation of cyber-bullying, in New Zealand, has been largely shaped by the media. The media may have heightened the concern and trepidation regarding cyber-bullying. Shariff (2008) provides an understanding of the role of the media, which includes identifying the "villain", discussing the "status" on issues or people in the featured news, and creating hype, thus escalating the

concern associated with the issue. This can be further illustrated in some of the headlines we see in the media associated with cyber-bullying such as: '*Bullying via internet and phones insidious*' (NZ Herald, 2009); '*Keep tabs on your kids online*' (Stuff, 2009); '*The degrading world of the cyber-bully*' (NZ Herald, 2006). Although the media offers a perspective of cyber-bullying this may be subjective and should not be the sole method by which we obtain an understanding of this issue. An academic perspective should be considered concurrently.

With technology continually advancing it is important to follow this by altering the focus of research on cyber-bullying. There is a need for further cyber-bullying research in New Zealand, specifically with a focus on the influence of social networking sites.

Chapter three: Methodology

This chapter will examine the methods used in this research. It will build from the rationale of the study to the methods for why a constructivist paradigm was adopted.

In order to explore the experiences and opinions of cyber-bullying, a retrospective study of university students enrolled in a first year course was chosen. This study looked at how students viewed cyber-bullying, and, in particular, the influence of social networking sites on the growing issue. It also asked about experiences of cyber-bullying, opinions about the extent of the problem, and discovered the opinions about how cyber-bullying can be effectively addressed. The key questions underpinning this research were:

- 1) What are the opinions of students enrolled in a first year course regarding cyber-bullying, the extent of the problem and what needs to be done to address it?
- 2) What role do students think social networking sites play in cyber-bullying and to what extent?

To date, the media has played a large part in the way cyber-bullying has been portrayed to members of the general public. For example, the media's account of the tragic deaths of Daniel Gillies in 2002 and Alex Teka in 2005, focused heavily on the bullying issues surrounding their suicides. First year university students are part of this same generation. The generation, in which, cyber-bullying emerged as a new and insidious form of bullying. Despite media portrayal not being a key question, this study was able to give some insight into the influence of first year students' opinions of media reporting. Are their opinions of cyber-bullying comparable to the media's depiction?

My motivation came from a personal interest in learning more about cyber-bullying as well as an intention to provide an insight into cyber-bullying in New Zealand. More specifically, I was interested in capturing the views of students. These views guided the focus of the research questions and methods.

Theoretical framework

Rather than repeating the methodology of previous research (e.g. NetSafe 2007), which has focused on a quantitative measure of the extent of the problem, this research provided actual opinions of students and, therefore was centred within a constructivist paradigm. Creswell (2008) argues a constructivist paradigm:

Emphasize[es] the importance of the participant's views, stressed the setting or context in which the participants expressed their views, and highlighted the meaning people personally held about educational issues. (p.50)

A constructivist approach also entails understanding, not only the opinions of first year university students but their values, thoughts, and feelings in relation to cyber-bullying. Furthermore, a constructivist approach allows participants to express their accounts about a phenomenon without imposition or dispute. Rather, the researcher's role is to provide an accurate illustration of the participants' stories. In addition, Mertens (2005) locates constructivism within what has been called the interpretive perspective. It is argued that as an 'interpretative researcher it is important to validate that the data and their interpretations are not figments of the researchers imagination' (p.359). That is, it is important to recognise the personal opinions of the researcher and distinguish these from the participants' views. Cyber-bullying was not an issue nor, as to my knowledge, did it even exist when I was at high school. For this reason, my personal opinion of cyber-bullying was created entirely from research, literature, and media reports rather than from experience or observation. Consequently, I expected my interpretations of cyber-bullying would vary from the participants.

A constructivist approach can also be associated with a phenomenological approach to research and knowledge enquires. According to this approach, researchers try to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations. The belief is that there are various ways of interpreting experiences, which are available to all of us through the interaction with others, and that it is the meaning of our experiences that shape reality. Willig (2003) more simply defines phenomenology as being 'concerned

with the ways in which human beings gain knowledge of the world around them' (p. 50). Essential to the phenomenological approach is understanding how humans experience phenomenon. Skuza (2007) utilised the phenomenological approach to study acculturation, which refers to the changes people experience as they move to a society with different cultural patterns to their own. She states:

The purpose of phenomenological research is to reveal the essential meaning of a phenomenon [here, acculturation] by distinguishing its features and to describe the meaning of a phenomenon within the context of how it is experienced. (p. 450)

A fundamental element of this research was to understanding cyber-bullying through exploration of actual accounts. These actual accounts of cyber-bullying constitute both witnessed and observed experiences. Participants' actual experiences of cyber-bullying were acknowledged but to moderate any negative effects participants only provided further insight for witnessed and observed experiences of cyber-bullying.

Strengths and weaknesses of constructivism

The most prominent advantage of a constructivist approach is the importance of participants' views and emphasis on human experience. However, the most difficult task is allowing these voices to be heard. As a researcher it is essential to provide participants the opportunity to create their understanding from personal experiences or histories. Furthermore, these understandings should not be disputed or contested. It is important to identify personal values and opinions and avoid the participants' values being shaped by these. This requires researchers to listen with 'openness to feeling and experience' to stories provided by the participants (Denzin and Lincoln, p. 525, 2000). In contrast, according to Guba and Lincoln (1981) a constructivist paradigm 'abandons objectivity...connecting directly with the participants – not discovering findings from them but rather negotiating with them to create findings'. For this research, personal opinions rather than experiences were studied in-depth. Although, many of the participants had personally experienced and/or witnessed cyber-bullying behaviour and these experiences help construct opinions. Furthermore, it is important as a constructivist researcher to

employ a role similar to a moderator where they influence the flow of the conversation, allowing for open conversation, without influencing the participants' responses or views. It could be argued that in constructivism, personal interpretations cannot entirely be removed from the participants' views. Also, researchers may, unknowingly, provide cues or information that influence a participant's response. In applying a constructivist approach, can a researcher absolutely ensure the results are not biased in some way? As a researcher, applying a constructivist approach demands specific skills. There is a need to acquire a thorough understanding of the approach when implementing such a design.

Mixed method research design:

The mixed method approach, by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), provided the foundation for the research design for this study. As a method, this kind of approach allows the mixing of quantitative and qualitative collection and analysing techniques. Combining the approaches creates a more complete picture of the problem than they do when 'standing alone', (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). This is comparable to the constructivist paradigm, which allows for the views of participants to surface and as a result achieve a more detailed picture of cyber-bullying. There are four main types of mixed method designs. Firstly, the triangulation design which is used with the intent to expand quantitative results with qualitative data. Creswell (2008) proposed that the purpose of this design is to 'simultaneously collect both quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, and use the results to understand a research problem' (p.557). Secondly, the embedded design which is when one form of data provides an auxiliary role to the other form of data. This design is used, for example, when a study is largely quantitative but qualitative data is required to help answer the research question. Thirdly, the explanatory design which Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) define as a 'two-phase design and the overall purpose is that qualitative data helps explain or build upon initial quantitative results' (p.71). Lastly, the exploratory design which is used when researchers seek to explain the relationships discovered in the qualitative data, with quantitative data. For this study the triangulation design was used.

The triangulation design is divided into four variants: the convergence model, the data transformation model, the validating quantitative data model, and the multilevel model. In the convergent model researchers first collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data individually on the same phenomenon and then the differing results are collaborated during the interpretation (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). This model clearly represents the method used for this research. It is evident that the mixed method approach is multi-layered and although it is important to understand and identify the appropriate variants for each research method, for simplicity I will refer to this research method as a “mixed method approach”.

It seems fitting that triangulation would involve three different kinds of data; however, as much of the research describes, triangulation involves a minimum of two perspectives, which are used to inform a third phenomenon (Gorard and Taylor, 2004). Furthermore, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) suggest that the triangulation design involves the results from two sets of data merging during interpretation to facilitate in combining both sets of data during the analysis. This is an important point which requires acknowledgment; also with the intent to provide clarification. In this study, the data from the questionnaires and focus group were analysed and then were expanded on through literature to further our understanding of cyber-bullying.

Before deciding on a particular research method it is essential to understand quantitative and qualitative approaches individually. The differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches can be identified in the research process. Elements of the research process include: the intent of the research, how the data is collected, and how the data is analysed (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

In quantitative research, the aim, typically, is to either support or contest an existing hypothesis. The data is numerical and measureable. Instruments such as questionnaires collect data from a substantial number of individuals, normally representative of a larger population, which is then turned into numbers. The analysis is also numerical and achieved through statistical procedures with the intention to reject or fail to reject the hypotheses. In qualitative research, the

aim is to discover participants' opinions about a particular phenomenon. Generally the data is descriptive. The main methods of collecting qualitative data are: interviews, observation, participant observation and documents (Punch, 2005).

The purpose of the quantitative approach, in this research, was to identify the participants' opinions on the extent of cyber-bullying, the role of social networking sites in cyber-bullying and the opinions of first year students on cyber-bullying. The purpose of the qualitative approach was to allow for the opinions of students

A qualitative approach also provided a "thick" description of cyber-bullying. According to Conrad and Serlin (2006) a thick description is essential to establish an awareness of the participants in the research, as well as to provoke action among the participants. A thick description explains not just the behaviour but its context as well.

Data analysis in triangulation research can be achieved a number of ways however the most standard approach is to converge or compare the quantitative data and qualitative data. Following Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) the data was first analysed separately then the differing results were collaborated during the interpretation. This was achieved through a matching up of common responses between questionnaire and focus group data. Within the focus group data, thematic coding was used to analyse the data. This involved thoroughly exploring the data, and establishing themes or broad groups of ideas from the data.

Howe (2003) evokes a perspective that deviates from the majority of the literature that shaped my understanding of mixed method designs. Howe (2003) states that:

Mixed-methods designs are direct descendents of classical experimentalism. They presume a methodological hierarchy in which quantitative methods are at the top and qualitative methods are relegated to a largely auxiliary role in pursuit of the technocratic aim of accumulating knowledge of "what works". The mixed-methods

movement takes qualitative methods out of their natural home, which is the critical, interpretative framework.

For this study the qualitative aspects or focus, in particular student opinions, is what drove the entire research. The quantitative element may have been numeric but it also allowed for written responses and measured opinions by utilising Likert scales. Furthermore, the sample for this study did not correlate with a typical sample in quantitative research. The quantitative sample for this study was not randomly selected but purposefully selected and was too small to make generalisations. A small sample size provided in-depth information about each participant and their views, which could be taken from the focus group conversation. Furthermore, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) argue that in mixed methods research, researchers need to consider the 'relative weighting (or emphasis) of the two approaches in the study' (p.81). They agree that one method may take priority to answering the research questions, however this does not mean, as Howe (2004) proposed, that qualitative methods take a secondary role to quantitative methods. Quantitative and qualitative methods can be given equal weight, as in this study, or one method could have greater prominence in the study. In addition, in mixed methods research, quantitative and qualitative methods are not altered or adjusted but the strengths and tools from each method can be employed to provide a better understanding of the research problem.

The value of a mixed methods design

Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of the issue than either approach alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The primary motivation for adopting a mixed methods design was to provide a better understanding of cyber-bullying in New Zealand. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) discuss the advantages of a mixed methods design. These include: both approaches can balance the weaknesses of either approach used by itself; researchers can use all of the tools of data collection available rather than being limited to qualitative or quantitative techniques; questions can be answered that could not be by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone; separating qualitative and quantitative approaches tends to restrict the approaches and collaboration to inquiry; multiple worldviews or

paradigms can be employed, and it is “practical” because problems are solved using both numbers and words, inductive and deductive thinking, and utilise skills in observing people as well as recording behaviour (p. 9-10).

Utilising a triangulation design can augment the strengths of a mixed methods approach. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) identify three advantages of the triangulation design:

First, the design makes “intuitive sense”...it has become a framework for thinking about mixed methods research. Secondly, the triangulation design is efficient, in which both types of data are collected during one phase around about the same time and lastly, each type of data can be collected and analysed separately and independently, using techniques traditionally associated with each data type. This lends itself to team research. (p.66)

The value of a mixed methods design for this study was to discover personal opinions and views of cyber-bullying as well as determine the extent of the issue from a cohort of university students in New Zealand.

Development of the research

Despite a consistent focus on cyber-bullying, the aim of the research changed a number of times since the beginning. Initially, the research proposed to explore cyber-bullying among adolescent girls. The sample was to be comprised of Year 10 students from three accessible high schools. After contacting all high schools I found no high school that was open for research to be conducted at that point and time. This could have been due to a number of reasons such as, the level of study (Masters), the location of study (in a highly researched area), and the media release of NetSafe reports during this time making cyber-bullying a key public issue. An opportunity did arise at a national youth camp, however time constraints around gathering consent from parents two days before the camp proved difficult. Due to this, the study became a retrospective study of cyber-bullying amongst first year university students.

Sample

Commonly, in mixed methods research, the participants are the same for both the quantitative and qualitative data collection so the data can be more easily converged or compared (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). However, the sample size can be different for the quantitative and qualitative samples. This is comparable to the sample in this study. Due to the nature of Masters' research, such as time constraints and researcher experience, it was inconceivable to carry out a large scale mixed methods design. In consideration of this, students enrolled in a first year course were selected to give a "snapshot" of opinions on the issue of cyber-bullying as it pertained to social networking sites and young people. All students enrolled in the first year course made up the sample for the questionnaire stage of this study. The sample consisted of both male and female participants. The participants were categorised into two groups. These were: students who were 25 years and younger and students who were older than 25 years. The social networking sites, relevant to this study, first emerged in 2003. For this reason students who were older than 25 years would not have had access to social networking sites at school. This did not mean that the opinions of this group were not valuable as they may be parents of teenagers, have younger siblings who are currently at school or have recently left, or have friends with teenage children.

A total of 72 university students completed the questionnaire stage of the research. The sample was comprised of 58 females and 14 males. There were 66 participants who were 25 years or under and 6 participants were older than 25 years.

The focus group participants came from the sample of first year university students. With only 72 participants it was decided to go with either one or two focus groups. One focus group was conducted with the first year students. The students voluntarily participated in the focus group.

Research approach and instruments

The research was implemented in two stages. In the first stage, questionnaires were used to generate quantitative data. The questionnaires focused on how the internet and social networking sites were utilised by students when they were at school, the extent of cyber-bullying, and the opinions of first year students on cyber-bullying. Likert scales were used to discover the opinions regarding the extent of the problem. The questionnaires (Appendix 1) also allowed for participants to write comments and to expand on questions concerning cyber-bullying experiences they may have witnessed. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that data generated, from participants 25 years or younger, focused on the use of the internet and social networking sites; the experiences of bullying and cyber-bullying; the experience of another person's incidents of bullying and cyber-bullying, and the opinions on cyber-bullying. The data generated from participants 26 years or older focused on the experience of another person's incidents of bullying and cyber-bullying and the opinions on cyber-bullying. A questionnaire was a valuable instrument in this study. Punch (2005) argues that questionnaires provide a way to discover factual information and also entail measures of attitudes, values, opinions and beliefs. They are also simple, and are not time consuming; allowing for quick responses. Furthermore, collating questionnaire data is efficient and manageable.

In the second stage, the focus group solely provided data for qualitative analysis. Focus groups are commonly used when there is little known about a particular phenomenon (Stewart et al, 2007). The focus groups provided further insight into the questions in the survey and looked at the opinions of first year students on issues around cyber-bullying, in particular the internet and social networking sites. The focus group was structured as an open ended discussion alongside prompting for further discussion (Appendix 2). The participants viewed movie clips, television documentaries and newspaper articles relating to bullying and cyber-bullying and were asked for their responses and opinions to issues raised in these clips and images. A note-taker was present to help record the data and check responses at the end of the interview. At the end the focus group participants were asked to agree on the themes that developed during

the discussion. The main role of the note-taker was to record information that the tape recorder could not, such as emotions and facial expressions, as well as to record the themes that were discussed throughout the discussion. This made the data analysis less complicated as the data could immediately be separated into the themes. Furthermore, asking the participants to validate the themes, then and there, meant that they were not required to later approve the written transcripts and therefore further consent did not need to be sought. The focus group was beneficial and a significant instrument in this study. Punch (2005) proposes that focus groups create an opportunity for participants to express their views, perceptions and motives in relation to a specific topic. Moreover, focus group data can be exhibited in the participant's own words, adding meaning to the study.

Validity

Whilst it is difficult to claim external validity or reliability in a quantitative sense, ensuring that the findings were authentic to the data occurred through the overall design of this study. Creswell (2008) identifies one type of validity relevant to this study. This is *content validity*, which is the extent to which the questions on the instrument and the scores from these questions are representative of all the possible questions that a researcher could ask about the content or skills (p.172). Before administering the questionnaires a pilot study was conducted. This reinforced the clarity and structure of the questionnaire and also provided positive feedback, which resulted in some additional questions. Furthermore, a discussion was held with a group of youth workers, which offered further discussion and evaluation of the questionnaire wording and types of responses it would elicit. In addition, important to this study, is internal validity. Results are internally valid when researchers can 'draw correct cause-and-effect inferences that arise because of the experimental procedures or the experience of participants' (Creswell, 2008, p.308). There are a number of threats to internal validity that need to be accounted for in the design. One threat that applies to this study is *mortality*. This is when participants drop out during the course of the study. All participants were well informed of the study (Appendix 3) before it commenced, were given

time to ask questions, and were voluntary participants, which improved the internal validity of the study.

Furthermore, *catalytic validity*, a more thorough test of validity, refers to ‘the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1973) terms “conscientization”, knowing reality in order to better transform it’ (Lather, 1986, p. 67). One question to help measure catalytic validity is: to what extent has the research changed the people in the study so they understand the world in new ways and use this knowledge to transform it? For this study, adding a section in the questionnaire to allow participants to add further comments particularly with regard to cyber-bullying and/or social networking sites strengthened the catalytic validity. This was evident in the differing opinions between the questionnaire and focus group participants. The questionnaire participants considered cyber-bullying to be a bigger problem for girls, however once the focus group participants were informed about *happy slapping* they were unsure if there were any gender differences. As the focus group participants’ understanding of cyber-bullying increased they were able to identify the different forms of cyber-bullying and also acknowledge the difficulties in preventing cyber-bullying, which was not evident in the comments from the questionnaire participants.

Similar to catalytic validity, Guba and Lincoln (1989) identify *credibility*, which they propose is ‘an interpretive parallel to validity’. Credibility can be defined as the variation between the participant’s perceptions of a phenomenon and the way the researcher interprets these perceptions. This was balanced by triangulating the data, which reinforces the validity of the research and is a valuable strategy to enhance credibility.

Ethics

Consent for this research was obtained from the University Ethics Committee. Any possible harm to participants through the elicitation of experiences was addressed through the design of the questionnaire and focus group questions. Questions focused on responses to portrayals of cyber-bullying and close-ended questioning was employed when asking about personal experiences.

The focus on opinions meant that general discussion around the extent of the problem could occur without participants having to share personal experiences. Participants were asked to expand on experiences of witnessed bullying behaviours, rather than personal experiences. The participants were encouraged to answer all questions and could opt out at any stage.

There were two components to the research with one, the questionnaire, being anonymous and the other, the focus group, confidential. The questionnaires were strictly anonymous. Informed consent was obtained from the lecturer (Appendix 6) and participants were given an information sheet (Appendix 3). Consent from the questionnaire participants was implied by voluntary participation. The questionnaire was concise, taking approximately five minutes to complete, to ensure greater participation. Those who chose not to participate in the questionnaire were instructed to review their class notes. The focus group was confidential and informed consent was obtained through a signed consent form (Appendix 5). It was made clear to the participants that everything that they chose to share within the focus group was confidential and would not be shared with anyone outside of the discussion group. Ground rules (Appendix 8) were created to ensure a safe environment and these were discussed with the participants before the commencement of the focus group discussion. Any information used in the writing up of the research did not identify the focus group participants by name. Furthermore, the university counselling centre was informed of the research and participants were aware that this service was available to them. If participants, from the questionnaire stage, wanted to be kept informed about the results of the study they could contact the researcher via email, which was supplied to them on their information sheet. Focus group participants were automatically kept updated via email. Overall, this research was designed to ensure the safety and well-being of the participants.

Strengths of the research

Employing a mixed method design strengthened the research by combining the most appropriate aspects of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. As a result, the research explored the extent, as well as discovered the opinions of

cyber-bullying from of a cohort of first year university students. Allowing for the “voice of participants” was a strength of this study.

There is a need for research on cyber-bullying in New Zealand. With the exclusion of Raskauskas, Carroll-Lind and colleagues (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Raskauskas and Prochnow, 2007) there has been little academic research carried out in New Zealand relating to cyber-bullying. This study expanded on the current New Zealand research. Furthermore, much of the information provided to the public is through media portrayals. The media has a great deal of authority and accountability for the way cyber-bullying has been represented in New Zealand. This research offered another perspective as well as a further insight into cyber-bullying in New Zealand.

Limitations of the research

There were two prominent limitations in this study. Firstly, the research only provided a snapshot of cyber-bullying in New Zealand, not an extensive insight. Also the sample only incorporated first year university students therefore cannot be generalised to all young people in New Zealand. However, utilising a mixed method design enhanced the value of the data. Even though generalisations could not be made, this research provided some avenues for further research and the possibility of a replica study involving a larger sample.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) propose some challenges that emerge when employing a mixed method triangulation design. Firstly, the quantitative and qualitative data have different sample sizes which consequently may provide difficulties when the two data sets are converged. As the quantitative sample size was small, in this study, this was not such an issue. This made it easier to compare and contrast the different results. Secondly, combining two sets of different data and the results in a meaningful way may be challenging. This was avoided by coding the data and making comparisons between the different results during the interpretation and in the discussion. Using codes helps to organise the data and facilitates in the comparing and contrasting of different data.

Furthermore, the research was a retrospective study. Participants were required to recall bullying and cyber-bullying experiences when they were at school. This may create inaccurate accounts of events or incidents. Some of the participants had left school many years ago. However, there were only six participants older than 25 years; the majority of the participants were 25 years or younger and did not have to recall events that occurred a long time ago. In addition, implementing this research in high schools may have created similar issues. Consent from the school principal, teachers and parental consent was required. This may have generated external pressures and participants may have been involved in the study due to this pressure rather than their own willingness. As a result, this would reduce the authenticity of the data. Administering focus groups with young people may also weaken findings as younger students are more likely to be influenced by peer pressure. This is not such a concern with the increased maturity level amongst university students.

Furthermore, there are some weaknesses in questionnaire designs. The participants may misunderstand some questions, may not read the question thoroughly, or may not care about the answer they give. This would affect the findings and also weaken the validity of this study. The questionnaires were piloted, which helped to reduce any misunderstandings and clarify the questions and design.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, this study does build on current New Zealand research. The desire to obtain the opinions and perspectives of students was the predominant part of this research and guided the entire research process. A specific strength of this research was exploring the actual opinions and witnessed or observed accounts of bullying and cyber-bullying, which as a result provided a more meaningful study. The next chapter will reveal the findings from the questionnaires and focus group discussion.

Chapter four: Results

This chapter will present the results from the questionnaires and focus group discussion. The results are categorised into three sections: experiences, opinions, and discussion. These sections will be examined consecutively.

A total of 72 participants completed the questionnaire stage of the research. The participants were classified into two groups. The first group were students who were 25 years or younger ($n=66$) and the second group were students who were older than 25 years ($n=6$). Additionally, one focus group was conducted with participants who had completed the questionnaire stage of the research.

Experiences

It was important to discover the participants' use of the internet to gain an understanding of the sample and provide a point of comparison, in particular between internet use and bullying.

Internet use by participants aged 25 years or younger, whilst at high school

The participants reported on their internet use at school and at home. They indicated whether they had access to the internet at school and at home, at the time they were attending school. Only two out of the 63 respondents stated that they did not have access to the internet at school and a different two participants did not have access to the internet at home.

Further to internet access, participants ($n=61$) specified whether they used the internet at school for personal use.³ More than two thirds of the participants ($n=45$) indicated that they used the school internet for personal use. Figure 1 illustrates the kind of personal use that the internet at school was used for.

³ An assumption was made that the internet at home did encompass personal use therefore participants did not have to specify whether they used it for this purpose.

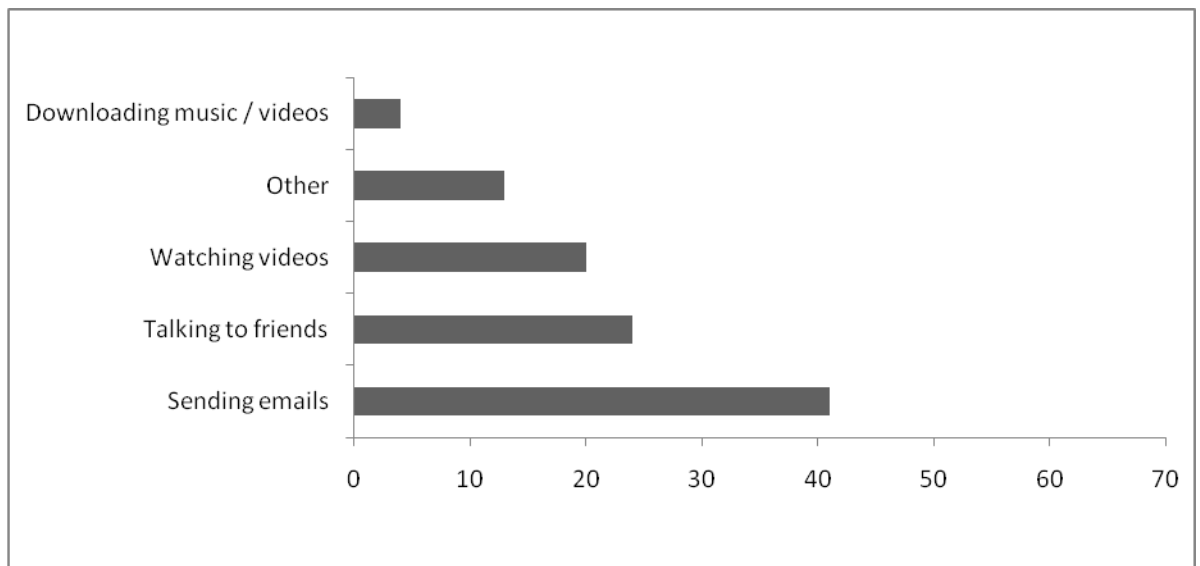


Figure 1: Kinds of personal use of the internet at school (n=45)

Sending emails was the most common kind of personal use of the internet at school. Close to all participants who responded to this question indicated that they used the internet at school to send emails (n=41). Approximately half of the participants (n=25) used the internet at school to talk to friends and watch videos (n=20). A number of participants (n=13) responded to “other”. Several of these replies (n=5) indicated that the internet at school was used to view social networking sites such as bebo and Facebook. Figure 2 illustrates the type of personal use of the internet at home.

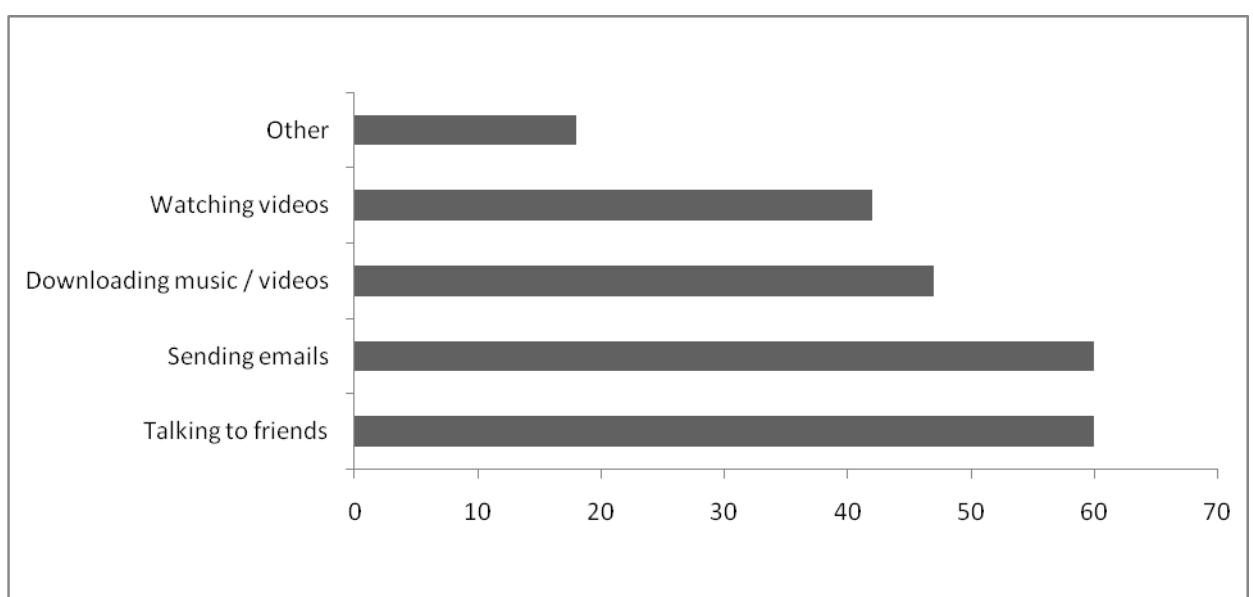


Figure 2: Kinds of personal use of the internet at home (n= 62)

Similar to school, close to all of the participants used the internet at home to send emails (n=60) and talk to friends (n=60). A greater proportion of participants used the internet to “talk to friends” at home compared to at school. There was also a large difference (more than double) in the number of participants who used the internet at home to download music/videos (n=47) and watch videos (n=42), compared to the internet at school. As expected, it is apparent that the internet at home was used a lot more for personal use than the internet at school. There was also greater variety in the kind of personal use. Of those participants who responded to “other” (n=18), there were a number of different uses specified such as, “playing games”, “applying for jobs”, “internet shopping” and “using social networking sites”.

In addition, participants (n=60) identified the kind of personal use they used the internet at home for the most. Even though internet use at home was varied, there was one type of use that was clearly prominent. The majority of the participants (n=41) specified that “talking to friends” was what they used the internet at home for the most. Alongside the type of personal use, the period of schooling, when the internet was used the most, was identified. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

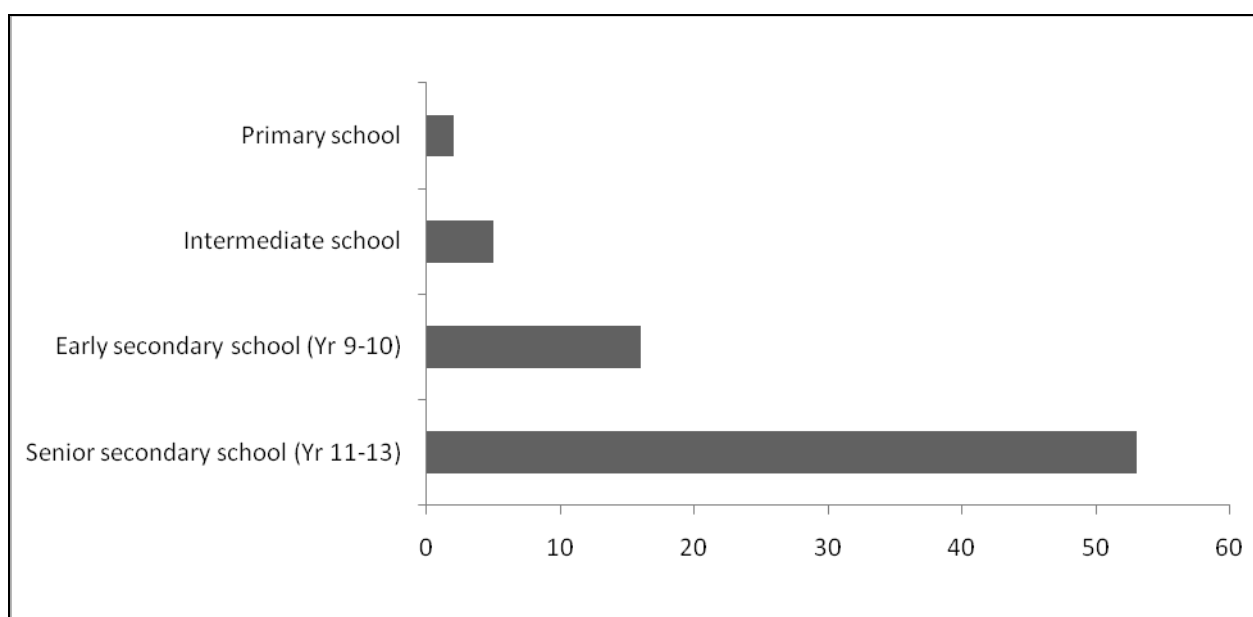


Figure 3: Period of schooling when the internet at home was used the most (n= 62)

The results undoubtedly show that during senior high school was the time when the internet was most used. The majority of participants (n=53) stated that they used the internet during this time. As expected, the results show that the internet was used all the way through school but as the years progressed, the amount of internet use increased. Given recent research (World Internet Project New Zealand, 2007) it would be interesting to see if this changes over time, as internet use may begin to increase at earlier ages.

Social networking among participants aged 25 years or younger

The majority of the participants (59 out of 63 respondents) indicated that they were currently a member of a social networking site. In comparison, there were also a large number of participants who were members of a social networking site when they were at high school (52 out of 64 respondents). As expected, the majority of the participants engaged in online social networks.

In addition, the participants (n=51) identified the stage during high school when they were a member of a social networking site.⁴ The results revealed that social networking sites were used more during senior high school (n=46), than during early high school (n=18). Figure 4 illustrates the social networking sites that were used.

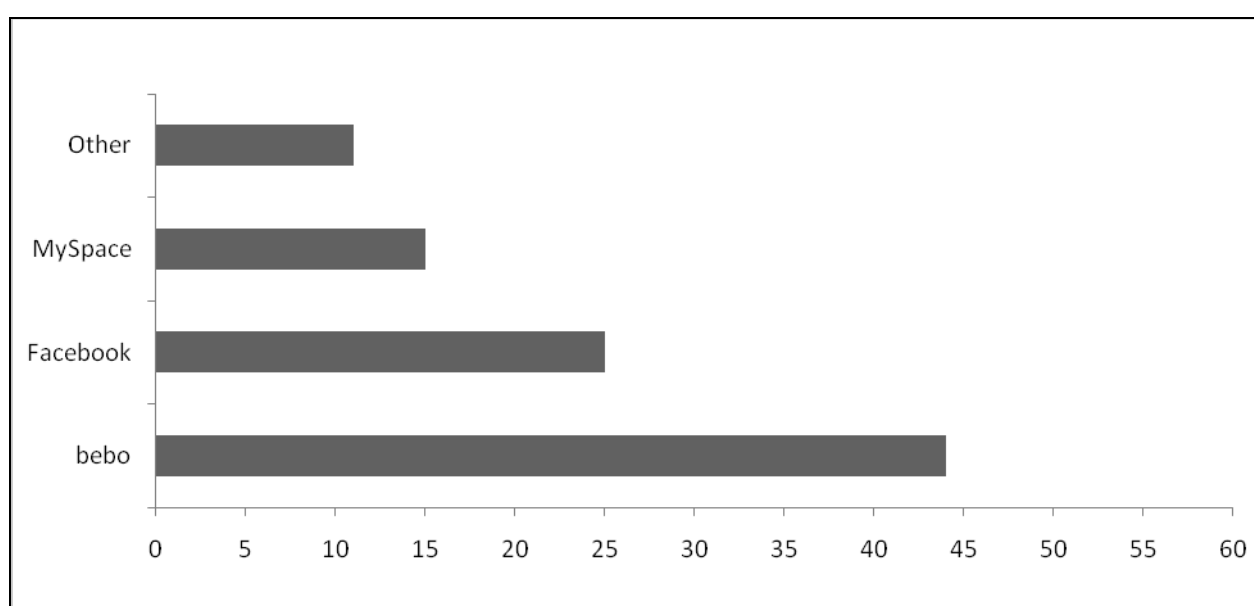


Figure 4: Social networking sites used during high school (n= 48)

⁴ As the social networking sites, relevant to this study, have only been available since 2003-2005, intermediate and primary school were not included.

The most popular social networking site that was used during high school was bebo. The majority of the participants (n=44) specified that they used this social networking site during high school, this was followed by Facebook (n=25) and MySpace (n=15). There were a variety of “other” (n=11) social networking sites utilised by the participants when they were at high school such as Hi5 and MSN.

It was also determined where the participants accessed the social networking that they used during high school. Close to all of the participants (50 out of 51) used the computer at home to access these sites. Only a small amount of participants indicated that they accessed social networking sites from the “public library” (n=7), or “other” (n=7) locations away from home. One participant did state that they accessed social networking sites from a local community centre. An alternative to these places was, of course, the school computer. Many of the participants (n=5) who responded to “other” specified that they used the computer at school to access the social networking sites to which they were members.

Opinions of social networking

The participants (n=52) stated why they used social networking sites when they were at high school. Furthermore, all participants were asked if they knew someone at high school who was a member of a social networking site. The majority responded (n=64) that they did know someone. Most of the young people they knew of that were members of a social networking site attended senior high school (n=42) compared to early high school (n=22). Participants felt that the young people they knew who used social networking sites, used them for a variety of reasons. These, as well as the participants’ use, are illustrated on Figure 5 below.

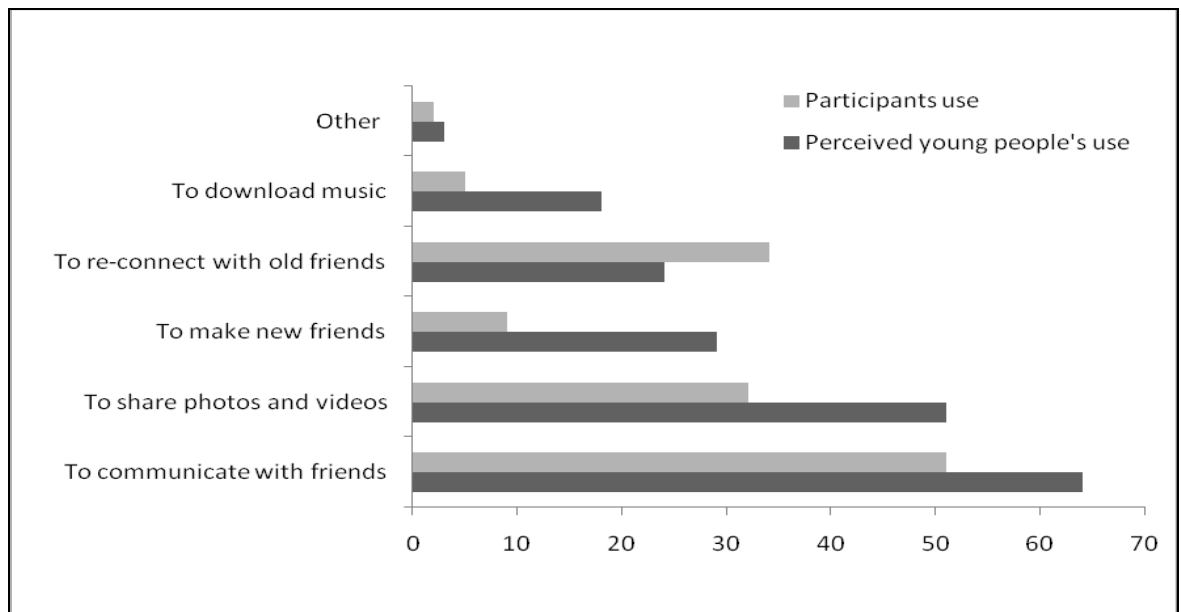


Figure 5: Reasons for social networking (n=52, n=64)

The most prevalent reason for social networking was to “communicate with friends” All of the participants (n=64) agreed that high school students use social networking sites for this reason. ‘To share photos and videos’ (n=51) was also considered a common reason for social networking. About half of the participants (n=29) felt that high school students use social networking sites “to make new friends”. This was followed by “to re-connect with old friends” (n=24). ‘To download music’ (n= 18) was not considered a common reason for using social networking sites. Only three participants specified “other” reasons for social networking and each response varied.

These results are reflected in the participants’, 25 years or younger, recall of their own reasons for social networking when they were at high school. Close to all of the participants used social networking sites “to communicate with friends” (51 out of 52). “To share photos and videos” (n= 34) was also a common reason for social networking. In contrast, the participants considered “to re-connect with old friends” (n= 32) a more common reason for social networking when they were at high school. Although, “to make new friends” (n=9) and “to download music” (n=5) were not such common uses as the participants felt they were for young people currently at high school. This was a common theme across the data. With the exception of “to re-connect with old friends”, a greater

proportion of participants believed young people at high school use social networking sites for these reasons, compared to when they were at high school.

Traditional bullying and cyber-bullying

All participants were asked if they had ever been a victim of traditional bullying when they were at school. The results revealed that about half of the participants (n=36) had been a victim of traditional bullying during school. The participants also indicated the period of their schooling when the bullying occurred. There was only a slight difference between primary (n=16), intermediate (n=18) and early high school (n=19); however, the results showed that victimisation was less common during senior high school (n=8). Furthermore, well over half of the participants (n=46) indicated that they had never bullied another person when they were at school. Only a small number of participants (n=24) felt that they had been a bully and this occurred either during intermediate school (n=13) or early high school (n=13). Traditional bullying was less frequent during primary school (n=9) and even less during senior high school (n=3). With this group, it was evident that victimisation and bullying are related and also correspond with age. Being a victim and/or bully under traditional bullying occurred more during intermediate and early high school. In general, during senior high school participants endured little traditional bullying.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants (n=50) had never been a victim of cyber-bullying when they were at school. Several participants (n=18) indicated that they had been a victim of cyber-bullying and the majority of these victims (n=14) were bullied through cell phones. The remaining participants (n=4) had been cyber-bullied through a social network site as well. The participants were more likely to be cyber-bullied during early high school (n=10) and senior high school (n=10).⁵ Only two respondents had been cyber-bullied during intermediate school.

All of the participants also reported if they knew of someone else who had been a victim of cyber-bullying by either a cell phone or through a social networking

⁵ Please note that participants could choose more than one option

site when they were at school. Approximately half of the participants (n=34) knew someone else who had been a victim of cyber-bullying. In comparison to personally being a victim of cyber-bullying the participants knew of more incidents of victimisation. The most common cases were those through both cell phone and social networking sites (n=17). Bullying via cell phone alone (n=14) was also common. Only three participants knew of someone being victimised through a social networking site only. The majority of the respondents (n=23) indicated that the person they knew, who had been a victim, was a "friend". Some of the other relationships included "sister" (n=4), "brother" (n=2) and "I heard through others" (n=6). Furthermore, in nearly all of the instances of cyber-bullying the victims were female (n=31). In approximately half of the identified cases, the victims were either of early high school (n=16) or senior high school age (n=16). Only two of the victims were of intermediate age and one primary school age. The participants (n=33) described how the person they knew was cyber-bullied and if anything was done to stop it. Here is a selection of the responses:

Firstly, how the person was cyber-bullied. The responses show a combination of cyber-bullying behaviours. Mostly occurring through, both, text message and online social networking forums.

A friend had a comment posted on a bebo page about her by a person who had also harassed her over text. (Questionnaire participant)

Constant abusive texts, huge involvement of whole year group. (Questionnaire participant)

She was bullied about an old relationship (called a slut, etc.) then was teased about her current boyfriend online through gossip. (Questionnaire participant)

Abusive texts and comments on network pages that threatened to harm her, etc. (Questionnaire participant)

Secondly, how it was stopped. The responses show that victims of cyber-bullying did seek advice. The victims reported the bullying to the social network provider, teachers, or parents, which ceased the bullying.

The bebo moderator removed the comment posted. The bebo page was closed. (Questionnaire participant)

Teachers became involved in the end and parents were contacted. (Questionnaire participant)

The parents became involved and threatened police intervention if it didn't stop. (Questionnaire participant)

Furthermore, all of the participants indicated whether they had ever cyber-bullied another person. Close to all of the respondents (66 out of 69) stated they had never cyber-bullied. Two participants specified that they had bullied another person via cell phone and one participant had bullied someone else through a social networking site. Similar to the findings concerning traditional victimisation, participants knew of more incidents of people engaged in cyber-bullying behaviours (n=23). Over half (n=14) of the participants who knew someone who had cyber-bullied recalled that this occurred by cell phone. Only six incidents of cyber-bullying happened by both cell phone and social networking site and three through a social networking site only. The participants also specified the gender of the person they knew who had cyber-bullied and the period of school when they engaged in the bullying. The majority of the cyber-bullies were also female (n=16). Bullying was more prevalent during senior high school (n=19), followed by early high school (n=7). These findings reflect the period of school when victimisation of cyber-bullying was thought to be more common, which was during senior high school and early high school. The participants described how, the person they knew, cyber-bullied another person and if anything was done to stop the behaviour.

Firstly, how the person cyber-bullied. In comparison to being a victim of cyber-bullying, these responses show a combination of cyber-bullying behaviours. It appears that the cyber-bullies targeted individuals rather than a group.

Used personal information about someone to create a bebo page insulting them and then sharing this information. (Questionnaire participant)

This person “text bombed” abusive messages to another individual. (Questionnaire participant)

They were harassing someone about what they looked like via cell phone and online. (Questionnaire participant)

It was a mean joke. She texted a guy we both didn’t like and pretended to like him. We laughed at his texts. (Questionnaire participant)

Secondly, how it was stopped. The responses show that the victims acted to stop the bullying; the bullies did not end the bullying of their own accord.

The individual rang Telecom and had their number disconnected. (Questionnaire participant)

Eventually they were sought out by their own parents and were banned from using a cell phone and the internet. (Questionnaire participant)

He eventually figured out who we were and stopped texting back. (Questionnaire participant)

Opinions

The participants rated their opinion from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” about statements concerning traditional bullying, cyber-bullying, and in particular, bullying on social networking sites and cell phones. The statements were also categorised by gender. The results are displayed in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Bullying behaviours of girls

	STRONGLY AGREE (1)	AGREE (2)	NOT SURE (3)	DISAGREE (4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (5)	MEAN	STD DEV
Traditional bullying is a problem facing girls	17	37	9	5	1	2.05	0.88
Cyber-bullying is a problem facing girls	24	35	6	2	1	1.77	0.72
Bullying on social networking sites is a problem among girls	15	34	19	1	0	2.08	0.74
Bullying on cell phones is a problem among girls	17	39	12	1	0	1.95	0.70

Overall, the participants' views regarding bullying and cyber-bullying for girls deviated toward general agreement for each statement. There were more participants who disagreed with the statement that traditional bullying is a problem for girls ($m=2.05$, $s.d=0.88$) than there were for cyber-bullying ($m=1.77$, $s.d=0.72$). Participants considered cyber-bullying a more prominent issue for girls. This is interesting as there appears to be greater uncertainty amongst girls for bullying on social networking sites ($m=2.08$, $s.d=0.72$) and cell phones ($m=1.95$, $s.d=0.70$).

Table 2: Bullying behaviours of boys

	STRONGLY AGREE (1)	AGREE (2)	NOT SURE (3)	DISAGREE (4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (5)	MEAN	STD DEV
Traditional bullying is a problem facing boys	24	36	7	1	0	1.77	0.68
Cyber-bullying is a problem facing boys	4	25	29	7	0	2.57	0.76
Bullying on social networking sites is a problem among boys	3	24	34	6	0	2.63	0.71
Bullying on cell phones is a problem among boys	2	27	32	7	0	2.64	0.70

The participants' opinions regarding bullying and cyber-bullying for boys largely conflicted with their views pertaining to girls. Traditional bullying was identified as a prominent problem for boys ($m=1.77$, $s.d=0.68$). In contrast is the number of participants who disagreed with the statements concerning cyber-bullying. Compared to the statement that cyber-bullying is a problem for boys, in which there was some agreement ($m= 2.57$, $s.d= 0.76$), the participants tended to move slightly toward "not sure" for the statements relating to bullying on social networking sites ($m=2.63$, $s.d=0.71$) and cell phones ($m=2.64$, $s.d=0.70$).

The results for the different genders varied although the majority of the participants tended to agree with each statement. Overall, the participants considered cyber-bullying to be a greater problem for girls and traditional bullying to be a greater problem for boys.

Furthermore, participants identified the age groups they thought were at most risk from traditional bullying, cyber-bullying, and more specifically bullying on social networking sites. This is illustrated on figure 6.

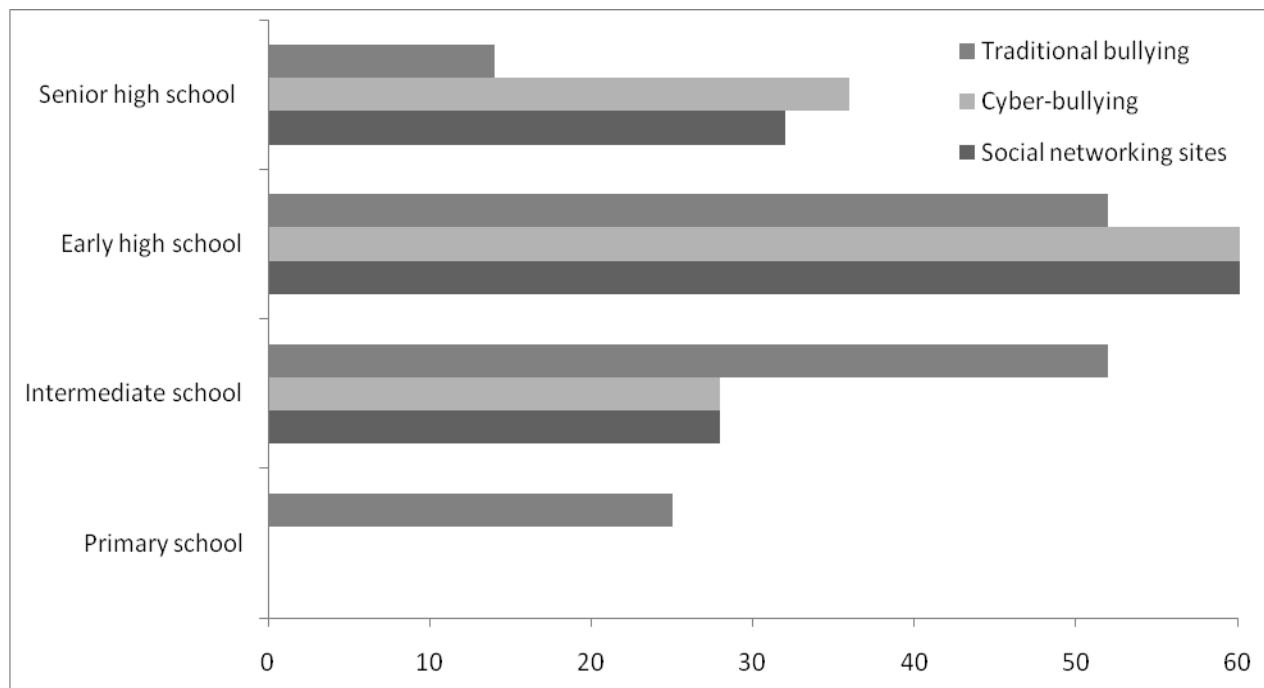


Figure 6: Age groups at most risk from each bullying type (n=69)

Early high school (n=52) and intermediate school (n=52) were considered to be the age groups at most risk from traditional bullying. Further to this, primary school (n= 26) was identified as being at higher risk from traditional bullying than senior high school (n=14). Intermediate school was considered to be at a much greater risk from traditional bullying (n=52) than cyber-bullying (n=28) or bullying on social networking sites (n=28). These findings reflect the results relating to traditional victimisation and bullying as the participants felt traditional bullying to be more common during early high school and intermediate school as seen here.

There were some variances between the age groups at risk from traditional bullying and cyber-bullying. Firstly, senior high school (n=36) was considered a period of greater risk from cyber-bullying, including bullying on social networking sites (n=32) than traditional bullying (n=14). Also, in contrast to traditional bullying, none of the participants believed that primary school was an age group vulnerable to cyber-bullying. However, similar to traditional bullying, early high school (n=65) was considered to be the age group at most risk from cyber-bullying.

When it comes to bullying on social networking sites, the participants had very similar opinions to the age groups at risk from cyber-bullying. Early high school (n=65) was considered the age group at most risk, this was followed by senior high school (n=32), and intermediate school (n=28). Overall, the participants felt that early high school was the age group more susceptible to traditional and cyber-bullying.

Questionnaire comments

In the questionnaire the participants (n=60) offered advice, which they would give someone who had been cyber-bullied. There were a few common themes throughout the responses. The prevailing advice was to talk to someone about it and not deal with cyber-bullying on their own.

For example, one participant suggested that victims of cyber-bullying should seek advice from others. By talking to friends and family, the victim will receive more support and as time goes on the victim will be able to move forward.

Strength comes in numbers (friends, family), so my advice would be to let the person know that they are not alone, and that no matter how bad things look or seem there is always a better day coming. (Questionnaire participant)

Another participant built on from the idea of telling other people and suggested that ignoring the bully would be a good approach.

To try and ignore it, move away from the bullies. They can get support and move on to new friends, but you have to talk to someone about it. There's no way you'd get through serious malicious personal bullying on your own. (Questionnaire participant)

The participant considered cyber-bullying to be detrimental to the victim, therefore it may be difficult to cope with on your own. They thought that the support of friends is important for victims of cyber-bullying.

It was agreed by another participant to ignore the bullying. It was also recommended for the victim to avoid the bullying by changing their number or social networking page.

Ignore the messages. Talk to your parents and/or teacher. Change your cell phone number. Close and/or change your social networking site.
(Questionnaire participant)

One participant noted that ignoring the bullies might be difficult. They suggested keeping social networking pages private and blocking cell phone numbers would help to deal with cyber-bullies.

Though it is hard to ignore, do not reply to any types of cyber-bullies. Make profiles on social network sites private – only accessible by friends and people that you know (who you want to have access to your profile). Get numbers blocked on your cell phone if they are harassing you. Tell an adult or someone who can do something about it.
(Questionnaire participant)

The participant commented that the victims of cyber-bullying should talk to someone who can offer guidance. If young people are unsure of how to stop or prevent the cyber-bullying, telling someone who can help is fundamental.

Another participant acknowledged the importance of seeking advice, especially when the bullying first begins. Also, the participant advises young people to be mindful when distributing their phone number.

Seek help from parents or guardians next time so it is stopped before it gets out of hand. Be careful who you give your number out to, etc.
(Questionnaire participant)

Furthermore, participants (n=15) conveyed other thoughts that they had, especially about social networking sites and cyber-bullying. Some of the comments reflect aspects such as the severity of cyber-bullying, differences between traditional and cyber-bullying, generational differences, and the popularity of technology for young people.

One participant acknowledged the dangers of social networking sites as well as the devastating effects of cyber-bullying. They also recognised the school's role and ability to prevent bullying.

Facebook is all very well for connecting with friends, old, new, around the world, but can be a hideous tool for bullying. Having come from a primary school where bullying just didn't exist (because of the wonderful principal and teachers and feel of the school) it was scary to realise what some kids can do to others. The story of the mum who got involved in cyber-bullying and ended in a teenage girl's suicide was sickening. (Questionnaire participant)

It seems that the participant's opinion has been formed from information about cyber-bullying rather than experience through her reference to a story (possibly reported in the media).

In comparison, another participant commented on the dangers of social networking sites and the effects of cyber-bullying. Furthermore, they consider cyber-bullying to be more common than traditional bullying, which may be a result of the accessibility of social networking sites.

Today cyber-bullying is way more popular than traditional bullying because teenagers have easier access to social networking sites than before. There is a real problem with this because of more and more teenagers are committing suicide because of cyber-bullying via social networking sites especially bebo and MySpace. (Questionnaire participant)

The next participant offers a perspective from a parent. One issue that is discussed is the generational gap concerning the online world.

As a parent I find it really difficult to discuss with my children as they consider "I wouldn't understand" and "don't get it" especially if I try to stop them posting photos, etc. or try to make rules. I don't feel very empowered to deal with it or knowledgeable. (Questionnaire participant)

It can be difficult for parents to understand the online behaviours of their children. As aforementioned, social networking sites are the online "hangout" for many young people and also a place that many adults are unfamiliar with.

Further to this, one participant discussed the role of technology in a young person's life. They note that the dependability young people have on technology may lead to negative consequences.

It is difficult especially with text bullying as kids I've seen depend on their phones to keep connected and attempt to fit in. When bullying happens it seems to them their worlds – both cyber and reality – among their peers are falling apart. And so they try to re-create themselves on these sites and make an alternative image for themselves – harming themselves and others. (Questionnaire participant)

It was these responses alongside the qualitative data, such as the Likert observations and the descriptions of cyber-bullying behaviours that provide a further insight into cyber-bullying.

Focus group discussion

The focus group provided data to supplement the questionnaires. In particular, the group discussion focused on participants' opinions of issues relating to cyber-bullying and social networking sites.

There were seven themes that emerged from the focus group discussion. These were: cyber-bullying is different than traditional bullying because the identity of the bully can be hidden and because it can follow you home; there are no gender differences concerning cyber-bullying; it is not always best to get parents involved in cyber-bullying cases but it is important for parents to be aware of the issue; internet on cell phones may make it easier for bullies but may not necessarily make the problem worse; the media does not make the problem worse, they just raise awareness, which is a good thing; the long term effects may not be any different than traditional bullying, however, cyber-bullying techniques may be used to deal with issues later in life; and cyber-bullying cannot be stopped but awareness is key for prevention.

There were three short videos played during the focus group discussion. The first video clip was a clip from YouTube, which provided a general description of

cyber-bullying. It also provided accounts of actual experiences of cyber-bullying from three young people who had been victims of cyber-bullying via the internet and cell phones. Furthermore, the video clip discussed the “cyber-fight club”, the differences between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying and cyber-bullying prevention. The second video clip was also a clip from YouTube, which followed the experience of a young boy who was being cyber-bullied on the internet and cell phone. The video allows the viewer to understand cyber-bullying from the perspective of a victim and see how he stopped the bullying. The third video clip was a documentary from 60 Minutes (2008), which revealed cyber-bullying not only from a young person’s perspective but also discussed parental involvement and how it affects them. One mother confronted the bully and their mother about the behaviour and distress that it was causing her child, which resulted in a physical and verbal fight between the two mothers. The young girl described the bullying she endured and also her friends (three other young girls) discussed their experiences of cyber-bullying. Furthermore, the video examined the difference between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying, and also discussed prevention. Newspaper articles were also discussed and these focused on representations of cyber-bullying in New Zealand.

The focus group participants acknowledged that there were differences between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying. The participants gave their opinions on the nature of cyber-bullying. One felt that:

You could see what the bully was saying to the victim and then what the victim was saying back, the helplessness of the victim. They were saying “stop stop”, but couldn’t really do anything about it. They were almost trapped and to read it and see it again, things like that. (Focus group participant)

What is evident in this comment is that the focus group participant discovered the reality of cyber-bullying. Victims may be required to use a variation of approaches to stop the cyber-bullying behaviour. Simply asking for the bullying to stop may not suffice. Furthermore, written words can be read over and over by the victim, allowing for further scrutiny.

Another focus group participant acknowledged that there were also different types of cyber-bullying, with specific reference to happy slapping and other forms of cyber-bullying. They commented that:

It kind of comes across, that you have the “fight kind” of bullying, and then you have the other kind, which seems a weaker form of bullying for people who want to say stuff but then not act on it. It just comes across as soft. (Focus group participant)

Here the participant described non-physical forms of cyber-bullying as “soft” in comparison to happy slapping or the “fight kind” of cyber-bullying. They consider the cyber-bullies who are involved in the non-physical forms of cyber-bullying as “weaker” than the bullies who physically attack their victim. They argue that cyber-bullies are “weak” because they do not approach the victim face-to-face.

None of the focus group participants had experienced cyber-bullying but they had all heard of or witnessed cyber-bullying when they were at high school. One participant commented that:

There was something between girls texting. I think it is just that girls often operate with words, it’s just what they use, so there was a few “text gang ups” on one person, and there was also a girl, a few years younger than me, who I know was on a bebo site and she had to delete her page due to bullying because she eventually showed her mum what was happening. I’m not sure if she knew who the people were but they were saying hurtful things. It wasn’t continual, just things she didn’t like. (Focus group participant)

There is a clear gender reference in this quote. The participant acknowledged the way girls bully, which they relate to the cyber-bullying. The cyber-bullying that was described happened on cell phones and through social networking sites. In one instance the victim discussed the bullying with their mum, and in the end the bullying was stopped when the victim deleted their social network page.

One participant discussed how cyber-bullying may have evolved and acknowledged cyber-bullying as a relatively recent issue. They note that:

When phones first came out it didn't happen straight away (cyber-bullying) but it was the next step up to that pretty much...at the beginning everyone is trying to make friends (on social networking sites) or whatever and making updates and then you see someone that you might not like and for a bit of fun you personally attack them.
(Focus group participant)

This comment describes the development of technology. Initially, technology was used for its intended purpose and now it is being used to harm others.

In relation to gender differences, the participants agreed that it may be worse for girls but further to this there may be differences in the way boys and girls deal with issues:

I think with the boys versus girls thing, girls may be more likely to talk to someone about it than boys would be. So I am not sure if that's why everyone thinks that girls are worse than boys. (Focus group participant)

It is apparent that the participant was unsure why people felt there were gender differences in cyber-bullying. They thought that girls may be more likely to tell someone if they are being bullied, therefore there may be more known cases of cyber-bullying involving girls. As a result, it may appear that girls are more involved in cyber-bullying than boys.

Another participant suggested that the behaviour of boys and girls may influence the way they bully. They are quoted as saying:

I think boys are like "I can deal with it myself". I do think that girls are more wordy in general. (Focus group participant)

The participant identifies the forms of bullying that boys and girls are typically associated with, which are physical bullying and verbal bullying respectively.

Similar to the quote above, another participant acknowledged the way boys bully. They state that:

A lot of the time boys tend to have a fistfight and then it is, maybe not done, but the end. They may not talk to each other anymore but they will have the fight and then that's it. Now with people posting it on the

internet it makes it worse. Without that, the fight would be done when it's done, but with the internet, for whoever loses the fight, it is more embarrassing. (Focus group participant)

The participant noted the type of bullying that boys are mainly associated with, which they consider to be physical bullying, known as happy slapping in cyber-bullying. Furthermore, the participant considered the consequences of cyber-bullying to be more harmful than traditional bullying. For the reason that cyber-bullying can be more enduring than the traditional form as the victim can view their fight over and over again once it is posted on the internet.

Focus group participants queried whether parental involvement is beneficial in cyber-bullying activities. Parents may appear to over react, as shown in one video clip. The participants felt that they could understanding why young people did not want to tell an adult if they were being cyber-bullied but that to seek advice was a good idea. One participant commented that:

If you involve parents sometimes you might think that other people may see you as weaker than everyone else because you can't solve your problems yourself, you have to go and get your parents or the counsellor or someone. I think that's why people don't do it until it's at such a stage that it has to be done. (Focus group participant)

This comment is reflective of traditional bullying. The participant acknowledged that it could be embarrassing for young people to initially seek advice when they are targets of bullying.

Another participant suggested that parental involvement may make the situation worse. They stated that:

There could be the fear for the victim, like if the victim's mother is going to confront the bully's mother that could make the bully angry and the victim could be scared that it's going to get worse because maybe you have upset the bully. (Focus group participant)

The participant refers to one of the video clips that was viewed, which involved a physical fight between two mothers.

It was also discussed whether cyber-bullying is worse for different age groups. This was the opinion of one participant:

I think that maybe the pre-teens through to mid-teens because that is when people are doing “identity finding” and there is also a whole lot of other stuff that they are having to deal with at the same time. I don’t know, but maybe because a lot of stuff is happening around that time that may be a worse sort of time and younger than that it’s more like “your not invited to my party anymore” and then older than that you’d hope that people kind of grow out of it or will just talk face-to-face.
(Focus group participant)

Similar to the findings from the questionnaire, the participants considered early-mid teenagers to be more involved in cyber-bullying. They also acknowledged that during this time young people are establishing an identity and also experiencing other issues associated with development, which may be why they are attracted to cyber-bullying. Furthermore, it is suggested that younger children’s style of bullying would not be as advanced as cyber-bullying and older adolescents would display more mature behaviour.

The focus group participants were shown an image of the social networking site twitter. The participants discussed how advances in technology would affect cyber-bullying. They agreed that advancements in technology would not make cyber-bullying worse but may change cyber-bullying behaviour. The participants commented that:

It would probably make it easier in some senses because they can do it, like you said, wherever they want. They could just be walking down the street and send messages or whatever so it won’t make it better.
(Focus group participant)

I think it could make it easier yes, but I don’t know if it would make it worse because at the end of the day if the bully really wants to succeed in upsetting this person they are going to do it and whether it’s through texting or anything else. It would just mean another way of doing it but they are going to do it anyway. It can’t help though to have more ways to cyber-bully. (Focus group participant)

The participants commented on how advances in technology would make cyber-bullying easier and that it would not help in reducing cyber-bullying, but was unsure if the problem would get worse. Furthermore, it was suggested that if the bully was committed to harassing the victim then it wouldn't matter how they bullied; they would find a way know matter what. Advances in technology may allow for more ways to cyber-bully but this does not mean that more people will become involved.

The next discussion concerned the role of the media in portraying cyber-bullying. The overall consensus was that the media may exaggerate the problem but at least they are creating awareness of cyber-bullying in New Zealand. Here are some of the comments from the participants regarding the media:

Even if it did make it worse I think raising awareness is always a good thing for things like that. You know how there are copycat crimes and things like that, you have to raise awareness or it's not going to get better. Maybe it has to get worse first. (Focus group participant)

It was noted by the participant that the media may contribute to an increase in cyber-bullying but the positive of raising awareness outweighs any negative.

Another participant commented that:

I think it is a good thing for parents and teachers and the young people themselves to be aware of it so they know if something's starting, if you're the victim. It's hard because you can't filter now who is going to take it more in an awareness way or who is going to take it as an opportunity, like an idea. (Focus group participant)

The participant suggested that raising awareness of cyber-bullying may help young people identify cyber-bullying when it is happening to them. Also, they acknowledged that reporting on cyber-bullying may give some people the idea to engage in cyber-bullying but it is impossible to avoid and understand everyone's response to media reporting.

The participants agreed that there would be negative effects, later in life, for the victims and bullies who had been involved in cyber-bullying. One participant thought that:

It depends how it gets handled but if you are a victim of something like that it can affect your feelings of self worth and things like that can be hard to get back. It would take time to get back after something like that had happened. For the bullies, I'm sure that some people who have done it [bully] before to other people and then have grown up and then looked back and felt really bad about what they did and wish they could take it back. I don't think that most people are innately bad and want to hurt other people so I think it would be traumatic for them too in a way to have to realise what they have done. It is just an age growing up thing. (Focus group participant)

The participant considered that victims of cyber-bullying would psychologically be affected by their experience and therefore recovery may take longer. However, the effects may be different for each person, as everyone adopts different coping strategies. Also, the effects may be influenced by the type of bullying, such as personal attacks, threats, and manipulation, as well as how long the bullying continues. Furthermore, the participant suggested that the bullies may also have negative effects later in life. The bullies may experience guilt and anguish for their involvement in cyber-bullying, especially as they get older and have further insight into bullying.

Another participant commented that cyber-bullies may also use this type of bullying to deal with issues later in life. They commented that:

I think for the actual bully that it would mean that if they don't like someone, or they disagree with someone they will get use to hiding behind technology more and not deal with things face-to-face. Say if later when they are working and they don't like a colleague or something they may abuse them through email and not talk to them because that's how they have been dealing with it. If they don't get help as well as the victim then that's just how they will learn to deal with things. (Focus group participant)

The participants specifically discussed bullying in the workplace and how technology may change the way adults bully. Further research is required to discover whether workplace bullying among adults has been influenced by cyber-bullying techniques.

Furthermore, one participant commented that the effects of traditional bullying and cyber-bullying may be similar; however cyber-bullying may last longer, which could be more detrimental for the victim. They noted that:

Because it's pretty much the same as bullying (traditional) except that it's to a worse extent at times, this can influence someone very negatively if they can't get over it. They may think they are not worth it and you read stories about people committing suicide. (Focus group participant)

The participant suggested that cyber-bullying may negatively affect victims, especially if they have difficulty dealing with the issue. The participant also refers to media reporting, in particular the devastating cases resulting in suicide. To date, there is limited research concerning the long-term effects of cyber-bullying, therefore it is difficult to affirm the differences between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying.

Finally, the participants examined how cyber-bullying could be prevented. In general, the participants considered that cyber-bullying may not be able to be prevented, however raising awareness was important. One participant commented that:

I think that once something's started it's hard to completely take it down to non-existent again but we were talking about the awareness thing before and maybe that could be detrimental in some ways, so I don't know how to stop it. This article says "keeping tabs on your kids online" and you said before about taking away their profiles is like taking away their identity so it's hard. I think that what is probably more important then is to make people aware at a young age of what it is and how it happens and make sure that they know they can talk to someone; you don't just have to face it by yourself, and you're not weak if you don't want it to

happen to you, no-one does. I think that it's important that they know they can get help. (Focus group participant)

The participant thought that cyber-bullying would always be an issue; it may never be able to be completely prevented. It was suggested that raising awareness at a young age was important, so young people can identify cyber-bullying. Also, it should be expressed to young people that dealing with cyber-bullying alone may be difficult; they should discuss cyber-bullying with someone else.

Another participant thought that due to the nature of social networking it may be difficult to prevent cyber-bullying but raising awareness is essential. They thought that:

The prevention thing would be quite hard because on social networking sites you can make your account and as many as you want. You could have an account and you could drag a picture off the internet and say it's this person and start attacking someone and they don't know who it is. I don't think you can prevent it but you do need to raise awareness about it. (Focus group participant)

They noted that it is possible to create more than one account on social networking sites; therefore if one account gets closed another can be used. Also, the participant suggested that the tools that technology offers, contribute to the ease of cyber-bullying, such as "cut and paste". However, on the contrary, the nature and ease of cyber-bullying also adds to its complexity, as it becomes difficult to manage and monitor. There are a variety of tools offered by technology, which can all be utilised to cyber-bully. Therefore, there is a large array of cyber-bullying behaviours available.

Summary

In summary this chapter indicates that use of the internet and social networking sites were a common activity for the many of the participants at the time of the research, and also when they were at high school. Senior high school was found to be the most prevalent age group for social networking. Furthermore, as expected, participants had experienced traditional bullying more than cyber-bullying when they were at school. In relation to gender the participants thought

that cyber-bullying was more of a problem for girls than traditional bullying, though traditional bullying was considered more of a problem for boys than cyber-bullying. The questionnaire comments and focus group discussion provided further insight, in particular relating to gender differences, parental involvement, advances in technology, media portrayals, long-term effects, and cyber-bullying prevention.

Chapter five: Analysis

This chapter will further examine the results from the questionnaires and focus group discussion. In particular, the themes from the previous chapter will be analysed and comparisons will be made to findings from other studies.

Internet use

It was not surprising that most of the participants had access to the internet when they were at school and at home. In 2007, WIPNZ (World Internet Project New Zealand) studied 1,430 New Zealanders about their use of and attitudes to the internet. They found the 78% of New Zealanders use the internet and the majority have access to the internet at home (Bell et al, 2007). The internet can be considered the agent for facilitation and promotion of communication (Aslanidou and Menexes, 2008). The internet has become a necessity, as part of an online culture. Many participants, in this study, identified that they used the school internet for personal use, which reflects international results. The Pew Internet and American Life project (2005) discovered that school internet use had significantly increased from 2000-2005. Their results showed that 78% of teenagers, who use the internet, accessed the internet at school for both personal and educational reasons.

Furthermore, as expected, the results from this study show that the internet at home was used for a lot more personal purposes than the internet at school. The most common purpose of the internet at home was to talk to friends. In contrast, Aslanidou and Menexes (2008) studied students' use of the internet at home and found that they search for information for their personal use rather than for educational purposes and the most common use was "searching for images".

It could be predicted that there would be differences between the types of personal use of the internet at home and at school. The most common purpose for personal use of the internet at home was "talking to friends" and at school "sending emails". During school it is not necessary to talk to friends via the

internet, as conversations can be face-to-face, but at home conversations between friends happen more online. This reflects research by Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) who found that online communication tools were used as an alternative to face-to-face talking with friends. The results from this study discovered that senior high school was the period during school when the internet was used the most. These results support other findings (Lenhart et al, 2005; Cole et al, 2003), which found that older adolescents used the internet more frequently than younger adolescents. There may be a number of explanations for the relationship between age and internet use, however one possible explanation is the purpose for using the internet. Lee (2009) discovered that, 'frequent online communication was associated with cohesive friendships' (p525). This can be connected to the results in this study, which found that older adolescents more frequently use the internet and the most common use of the internet at home was to "talk to friends".

Research suggests (Juvonen and Gross, 2008; Smith et al, 2008; Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004) that internet use and cyber-bullying are related. Although internet use and cyber-bullying were explored in this study, no comparisons were made. However, it is not surprising that there is a relationship between internet use and cyber-bullying considering that most young people use the internet, but to further understand this relationship other factors need to be acknowledged. Internet use, solely, is not a defining factor of cyber-bullying; there may be a number of other factors, such as frequency of use and type of internet use, which combined, may increase the chance of being involved in cyber-bullying activities.

Social networking

For the majority of the participants, who were 25 years or younger, social networking was identified as a common activity, both now and when they were at high school. Students who have left high school may use social networking as a way of keeping in touch with people when they leave home to travel overseas or may study in another city. Consequently, face-to-face communication is impossible. In a study by Coyle and Vaughn (2008), they found that college (high school) students used Facebook mainly to maintain

their 'social capital'. The participants, in this study, stated that they used social networking sites when they were in high school mainly to communicate with friends, and thought the most common use of social networking for young people currently at high school to be the same. These results reflect other research findings (boyd, 2007; Coyle and Vaughan, 2008; Lenhart and Madden, 2007) that looked at young people's use of social networking sites. Furthermore, the findings, from this study, revealed that social networking sites were used more frequently during senior year, than any other period in high school. The social networking sites, relevant to this study, first emerged in 2003-2005. Over the next few years these sites progressively became more popular with young people in New Zealand and all over the world. It is possible that for many participants of this study, senior high school coincided with the "craze" that was social networking. Furthermore, during this time young people are developing an identity and research suggests that social networking sites are associated with establishing identity. boyd (2007) discusses *The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life*. She states that:

Through profiles, teens can express salient aspects of their identity for others to see and interpret. They construct these profiles for their friends and peers to view. While what they present may or may not resemble their offline identity, their primary audience consists of peers that they know primarily offline – people from school, church, work and sports teams, etc. Because of this direct link between offline and online identities, teens are inclined to present the side of themselves that they believe will be well received by these peers. (p. 13)

It is uncertain if online behaviours are promoting identity development, especially positive development. There are concerns that the ability to switch between identities may hinder, not help, adolescent development (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield, 2008).

Furthermore, as Chapter four showed, there was some variation in the reasons for social networking between the participants' opinions of why they used social networking sites when they were at school and why young people they know, currently at school, use these sites. One possible explanation may be that the participants' responses were influenced by their current social networking

behaviour. In addition, gender differences may have played a part. The results from a survey conducted by Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) show that girls and boys use social networking sites for different reasons. They discovered that 'girls use social networking sites to reinforce pre-existing friendships whereas boys use them to flirt and make new friends' (p.125). The most common reason for social networking for both the participants and perceived young people's use was to communicate with friends. The majority of the participants in this study were female and the high instances of relationship building reflect Subrahmanyam and Greenfield's (2008) observations.

Traditional bullying and cyber-bullying

The findings revealed that being a victim of traditional bullying was more common than it was for cyber-bullying. Also more participants had traditionally bullied, than cyber-bullied another person. Cyber-bullying was not a common form of bullying for the participants, although they knew of more instances of cyber-bullying that someone else was involved in as a victim or bully. Since cyber-bullying has emerged it has become more common and likely to still be on the rise. The latest report by the Adolescent Health Research Group: Youth 07 (2008) found that traditional bullying in schools had decreased since 2001. Cyber-bullying was also included as part of the survey and the results showed that one in five secondary school students reported being sent nasty messages by cell phones or the internet. Some of the participants, in this study, were at school during the 2007-2008 research and although the results for this study may slightly diverge from the Youth 07 findings it appears that the difference is small as just over one out of six questionnaire participants had experienced cyber-bullying.

There are many differences between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying. The most distinguishing characteristic is that there is no safety zone for victims of cyber-bullying. The bullying can continue day and night; it can be relentless. Also cyber-bullies can remain hidden, concealing their identity from the victim with, perhaps, with greater ease than in traditional styles of bullying (Dehue et al, 2008; Slonje and Smith, 2008; Li, 2007). Another type of cyber-bullying, which was discussed in the focus group was *happy slapping*. This typically

involves an initiator who approaches the target (victim), unexpectedly, and attacks them physically in some way while another perpetrator records the incident on a phone or camera (Bauman, 2007). Another example of this type of bullying is known as the cyber-fight. Happy slapping and the cyber-fight were not referred to by name in the questionnaire; therefore this research cannot provide any expansive insight. However, in the focus group this type of bullying was discussed and was considered to be destructive. Cyber-bullying, like traditional bullying, can also be divided into two forms of bullying – physical and non-physical. The physical includes happy slapping and the cyber-fights. The non-physical includes nasty messages, threats, manipulation, rumours and hate sites – forms of bullying that can be related to indirect and relational bullying. Cyber-bullying originally displaced the perception of traditional bullying in that it has exposed the reality of the non-physical form of traditional bullying; a form of bullying that was once hidden. Cyber-bullying has provided an insight into the true nature of indirect and relational aggression. Here is one example (Strom and Strom, 2005):

Donna attends eighth grade at school in Montreal, Canada. She and her Mother travelled to Toronto to visit her Grandmother, who was recuperating from cancer surgery. When Donna returned to school, a cyber bully circulated a rumour alleging that Donna had contracted SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) during the course of her stay in Toronto. Donna's girlfriends were scared and unwilling to be around her or even talk to her on the phone. Without exception, her classmates moved away from Donna whenever she went near them. (p.38)

The experience that Donna endured and the types of experiences evident in the questionnaires and focus group comments are comparable to indirect and relational aggression as both utilise social relationships to cause harm to another person or group. This example also demonstrates how detrimental this type of bullying can be. However, once contended with happy slapping and cyber-fights the focus group participants they were quick to describe other forms of cyber-bullying as “soft” in comparison.

This form of cyber-bullying, experienced by Donna, also correlates with the type

of cyber-bullying Aftab (2005) termed Mean Girls. This type of bullying is also captured in the movie *Means Girls* (2004), which is about a group of girls at high school, the social structure surrounding the group, and how their social status is used to bully others. New technologies, such as the internet and cell phones, foster indirect and relational styles of bullying. Ludwig (2007) suggested that, 'email, social networking websites, cell phones, and other interactive and digital technologies are quickly taking relational aggression to a widespread level' (p.33).

Traditional bullying has expanded and developed from the school grounds to the computer, however many of the old bullying techniques live on in the cyber world. In general it would seem that the ways girls and boys cyber-bully has not changed from traditional styles of bullying. What has changed though is the visibility of bullying. The internet has afforded the opportunity to see different types of bullying more clearly as cyber-bullying is not contained by school walls.

The participants, in this study, identified the age groups at most risk from bullying. For traditional bullying, intermediate and early high schools were considered to be at most risk. The findings discovered that both victimisation and bullying were more common during these times. Further to this are findings from a study by Healey et al (2006), which found that bullying increased from primary school to the early years of high school, in which bullying was most prevalent, and then decreased during the later years of high school. For cyber-bullying the age groups that were considered to be at most risk were early high school and senior high school. This is also consistent with other research. Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) found that youth aged 15-17 were more likely to engage in cyber-bullying activities than any other age group. More specifically, participants identified the age group at most risk from bullying on social networking sites as early high school. One explanation for this is what Bauman (2007) has named the 'teen appeal'. It is proposed that during adolescent development establishing friendships is eminent and cyber-bullying may be appeal to those who wish to ruin the "social status" of other competitors, in order to establish friendships with a desired group of peers. The age groups

considered to be at most risk from cyber-bullying are also consistent with the period during school when the internet was used the most.

In addition, the results in this study showed that social networking sites alone were not used for bullying activities but rather a combination of social networking sites and cell phones were more common. As the research on cyber-bullying with the inclusion of social networking sites is limited, it is difficult to make parallel comparisons; although, there were a number of studies that looked at the different tools used in cyber-bullying. Smith et al (2008) found that bullying on cell phones and through instant messaging to be the more prevalent. Similar to these findings are the results from Juvonen and Gross (2008) which found most online instances of cyber-bullying took place through instant messaging.

Furthermore, Carroll-Lind et al (2008) found that emotional violence was the most prevalent type of bullying in comparison to other forms of traditional bullying. Considering that cyber-bullying is associated with indirect and relational forms of traditional bullying, presumably cyber-bullying too could become more common than traditional forms.

In addition, Hinduja and Patchin (2007) suggest that for young people social networking sites may be preferred to email and instant messaging as a means of communicating. They propose:

In recent years the commenting and messaging functionality built into web sites that allow users to create personal profile pages and then link them to others has begun to supplement (even replace) those traditional methods. (p 127).

Further research would determine the rise in cyber-bullying, including the influence of social networking sites. In particular, research involving young people in school should include forms of cyber-bullying associated with indirect and relational bullying as well as forms of cyber-bullying associated with physical bullying.

It was discussed in the focus group that cyber-bullying may change the style of bullying in the workplace as well as strategies for dealing with issues. Face-to-face interaction may become secondary to online communication as a strategy to deal with problems. This may lead to a number of negative outcomes. For example, it is easier to retaliate to written comments because facial expressions are hidden; it does not take as much effort, for most people, which may be motivation for more people to confront their issues. Retaliation or confrontation can occur immediately, not allowing for time to comprehend any consequences or to regain composure. Potentially, by losing face-to-face interaction, there could be a substantial increase in cyber-bullying behaviours as more people deal with issues through technology. Further research is required to determine the changes in bullying strategies for adults and whether cyber-bullying has continued through to the workplace.

Gender

The participants in this study agreed that traditional bullying was a problem facing boys. With regard to cyber-bullying, in particular bullying on social networking sites and cell phones, the participants were more indecisive. Cyber-bullying was considered to be a bigger problem for girls than traditional bullying. Furthermore, the participants of the study were asked if they knew someone who had been a victim of cyber-bullying as well as a cyber-bully and to identify their gender. The majority of the victims and cyber-bullies were female. It is possible that these results are misleading as the majority of the participants were also female. However, these results do reflect findings from other research (Campbell, 2005; Lenhart, 2007; Keith and Martin, 2005, & Powers, 2006). Goddard (2008) agrees that cyber-bullying entices girls and states that, 'girls are bullying more than ever before and it's gone electronic. An expert in cyber-bullying – as the latter is now called – suggests that girls are particularly drawn to electronic meanness' (p.4). The nature of cyber-bullying, such as anonymity, communication, manipulation, and use of social structure may be more appealing to girls. Furthermore, girls who may have been more compliant in traditional bullying may not feel so restricted by online harassment. The familiarity and confidence girls exhibit with online communication may elicit cyber-bullying behaviour (Shariff and Goulin, 2005, p.6).

In addition, another explanation for the gender differences is that girls may be more likely to report instances of cyber-bullying than boys. Rigby and Bagshaw (2001) found that girls were likely to 'report being hurt or upset more than boys when they are treated negatively by their peers' (p. 40). Perhaps this is because they are more vulnerable to peer abuse or because girls are more willing to report their feelings than boys. Furthermore, it may be more socially acceptable to girls to report instances of bullying than boys. Generally, girls openly share, discuss, and express their feelings and emotions more than boys. This may also be related to verbal expression, which girls are superior at (Goldshmidt et al, 2000, & O'Kearney and Dadds, 2004).

There is evidence that boys are more drawn to physical forms of bullying (Goddard, 2008 & Viljoen et al, 2005), therefore it is likely that boys may also be more attracted to "happy slapping" and the "cyber-fight"; the physical forms of cyber-bullying. These forms of cyber-bullying are equivalent to the traditional physical bullying except that the bullying is recorded and distributed on the internet or through cell phones.

The traditional styles of bullying associated with girls and boys are consistent with cyber-bullying. It is evident that the styles of bullying have not changed; however, they are now happening in cyber space.

Advances in technology

Cell phones and the internet have influenced bullying in a number of ways. There is much uncertainty as to what effect advances in technology will have on cyber-bullying. Potentially, people could cyber-bully wherever and whenever, as it is now possible to access the internet on cell phones. Cyber-bullies would not be confined to a room with a computer – they could harass their victim/s while on the bus, at the park or from the beach. The common theme from the focus group discussion regarding advances in technology was that the problem may not get worse but it would definitely make it easier to cyber-bully. Already, advances in technology have influenced bullying – this influence being cyber-

bullying. Cyber-bullying may also be affected by changes in technology, but to what extent is unknown.

Extent and effects of cyber-bullying

There is little New Zealand research on the extent of cyber-bullying. To date, research indicates (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008; Carroll-Lind, 2009) that cyber-bullying is not a prominent issue in schools; however, cyber-bullying incidents are not absent. Cyber-bullying should be considered a serious issue. Although it may not be as common as traditional bullying, the saddening cases of Daniel Gillies in 2002 and Alex Teka in 2005 are reminders of the negative effects of cyber-bullying. In addition, over time, cyber-bullying may become more prevalent. Cassidy et al (2009) studied students' experiences of cyber-bullying and found that many students considered cyber-bullying to be 'more of a problem today than it was a year ago' (p.397).

Overseas research has largely contributed to our understanding of the effects of cyber-bullying. Research suggests that the consequences of cyber-bullying may be more severe than traditional bullying (Campbell, 2005; Strom and Strom, 2005). The nature of cyber-bullying contributes to this. Firstly, the audience of cyber-bullying can be much larger than in traditional bullying. Potentially there could be thousands of people witnessing the humiliation of the victim, which may be very degrading. This type of bullying does not allow for any privacy. Secondly, written words can be read over and over again – words that may be forgotten when the abuse is verbal. Campbell (2005) proposes that, 'written words may seem more concrete and "real" than spoken words' (p 71).

Victims of cyber-bullying endure the effects for longer as the abuse can be persevered. Furthermore, cyber-bullying can be relentless. Victims of cyber-bullying are not protected to the same extent, as in traditional bullying. The home was previously a safe haven, a place to escape bullying. Cyber victims can be tormented day and night. Powers (2006) agrees that cyber-bullying is a lot more personal as a person's computer, cell phone, or bedroom can be encroached by threats and taunts. In addition, cyber-bullying can be a more cruel and vicious form of bullying because the bullies do not see the reaction

from the victim or the possible harm they are causing. They may not feel the same guilt, sympathy or regret toward the victim, as in traditional bullying (Strom and Strom, 2005). As a result cyber-bullies may be more likely to say things that they would never say face-to-face.

Another aspect of cyber-bullying, which may contribute to the effects, is the unknown intentions of the (potential) bully. This is also connected to the fact that cyber-bullying is not face-to-face. Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) propose that:

There might be a difference between the way things were intended and the way things were perceived. What some perpetrators considered an innocent joke might be considered an aggressive attack by the victim (or even the other way around). (p. 501)

This is another characteristic of cyber-bullying that would not prevail as an issue in traditional bullying. Misunderstanding of a situation and/or comments could potentially lead to “accidental” bullying. If facial expressions were identified it is likely that this would not be an issue.

Furthermore, research suggests that the effects of indirect and relational aggression are more damaging than other types of bullying such as, physical bullying (Rigby and Bagshaw, 2001, Carroll-Lind et al, 2008). Crothers et al (2007) identify psychosocial effects of relational aggression, such as social difficulties, depression, social anxiety, and loneliness. Crothers et al (2007) suggest that psychological effects from relational forms of bullying can be just as detrimental, if not more, than physical forms of bullying, such as low self-esteem, decreased levels of happiness and post traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, Strom and Strom (2005) propose that intentional bullying, such as harmful messages, aimed to destroy reputations can be more damaging than face-to-face bullying. Considering the similarities between indirect, relational aggression, and cyber-bullying, it can be expected that the effects would also be consistent.

Media

The media has played a large part in the portrayal of cyber-bullying in New Zealand. This study offered an insight into students' opinions of the way the media has represented cyber-bullying. To date, there have been many reports regarding cyber-bullying and it could be argued that the media creates additional hype on topical events. Overall the focus group discussion focused on the media raising awareness of cyber-bullying. The participants' did not think that the media had made the problem worse and that it was impossible to know how the general public would react to such representations; it could be negative or positive. It was suggested that the media have been valuable in raising awareness of cyber-bullying in New Zealand.

The next chapter will provide a summary of the previous chapters and look at the implications for professional practice and education, young people, policy, media and research.

Chapter six: Conclusion

This chapter will provide a conclusion by discussing the relevance of the research, providing a summary of the previous chapters, examining the overall results of the research and identifying the limitations of the research.

The research supplements current New Zealand research on cyber-bullying with the inclusion of social networking sites. The main focus of the research being the opinions of first year university students.

Relevance of the research

Firstly, the research is beneficial for professional practice and education as it highlights the need for further research, in particular on the prevention and long-term effects of cyber-bullying. It also provides information that may be relevant for anyone working with young people. Furthermore, the research offers information on cyber-bullying that contributes to a collection of research that is emerging in New Zealand. It adds to current New Zealand research as well as contributing to an academic perspective of cyber-bullying. The descriptions of cyber-bullying situations provide real examples of cyber-bullying, which offer an insight into cyber-bullying behaviour. It appears that cyber-bullying is prevalent among young people, particularly for girls and those who are of early high school age.

Next, the advice offered by participants, regarding managing cyber-bullying reflects the advice given in recognised research (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Smith et al, 2008). It is important for young people to be aware of cyber-bullying, particularly how to deal with it. The advice comes from people who have been involved in or witnessed cyber-bullying and that are also part of the online world; therefore the advice is both practical and insightful. The prevailing advice was for young people to tell someone if they are involved in cyber-bullying.

The descriptions by participants of cyber-bullying experiences, both from a victim and bully's perspective allow young people to comprehend the nature of cyber-bullying. There are many different types of cyber-bullying and young people may not be able to recognise what constitutes cyber-bullying. The details of cyber-bullying experiences contribute to raising awareness of cyber-bullying.

The research found that the computer at home was where many young people accessed the internet and social networking sites. A commonly held belief among the participants was that parents/caregivers involvement may make the bullying worse; however it is important for parents to be aware of cyber-bullying and be educated about effective prevention strategies. This belief reflects international research (Juvonen and Gross, 2008; Smith et al, 2008).

Parents/caregivers play an important role in preventing cyber-bullying. Research suggests that cyber-bullying mainly occurs outside of school grounds (Smith et al, 2008). However, it is evident among the existing research, and from the focus group discussion, that young people are not informing adults about their experience of cyber-bullying. It is possible that the advice parents/caregivers have received is not valuable or beneficial. Parents/caregivers may have been dealing with cyber-bullying ineffectively and deterring their children from seeking advice. For example, young people rely on their cell phone and internet to connect to their friends; therefore when parents/caregivers take these privileges away it is more detrimental than beneficial for the young person. It is important for parents/caregivers to be educated about appropriate ways to manage cyber-bullying. This may encourage more young people to talk to an adult if they involved in cyber-bullying. The advice given to parents/caregivers is likely to be more informative and appropriate coming from an academic perspective rather than, for example, the media.

In addition, this research is important for policy as it provides further insight of cyber-bullying in New Zealand. It is evident that the school computer is being used for personal use, including accessing social networking sites. Supervising

school computer use would assist in preventing cyber-bullying. Monitoring cyber-bullying at school is difficult as the bullying can continue or eventuate outside of the school grounds. Schools are responsible for ensuring the safety of children while at school, however to effectively manage cyber-bullying a *Whole School Approach* would be the preeminent approach. Furthermore, raising awareness was identified as key for prevention. Schools play an important role in this.

Furthermore, the research examined students' opinions concerning media portrayals of cyber-bullying. It was apparent from the responses that a number of the participants' opinions were shaped by information in the media. Even though it was the devastating instances of cyber-bullying that were recalled, the media portrayals were identified as deterring cyber-bullying; therefore aiding prevention. Also, it was considered that the media plays an important role in raising awareness, especially for parents/caregivers and the general public. Although the media provides information about cyber-bullying, which assists in the detection of cyber-bullying, the media should not be the only source for learning about this issue.

Lastly, the research identifies gaps and areas for further study in New Zealand. These include characteristics of cyber-bullies and victims, the rise of social networking sites in cyber-bullying, gender differences with the inclusion of happy slapping, changes in bullying strategies for adults, the effects of cyber-bullying, and the extent of cyber-bullying in New Zealand.

Characteristics of cyber-bullies and victims:

Internet use is associated with cyber-bullying; however it is not the sole defining characteristic. There are many other factors that contribute to cyber-bullying involvement. Although not all bullies and victims exhibit similar characteristics, there may be several risk factors that are connected to cyber-bullying. It is also important to identify the difference in characteristics of traditional bullying and cyber-bullying.

The rise in the use of social networking sites in cyber-bullying:

The research was a retrospective study; therefore social networking sites were relatively recent when the participants were at school. Over time social networking sites have become more and more popular especially for young people. There has also been an increase in the number of sites available and in the number of sites being utilised. Over the course of the research Twitter became another online 'hangout' for young people. What we do know is that social networking sites are being used to bully others but with changes in technology this could make cyber-bullying accessible to more young people. The research on social networking sites being used for cyber-bullying is limited and this research intended to provide an insight into how young people are using these sites, however accessibility was an issue. Instead, this research was a retrospective study and the recollections of the participants' experiences were not completely reliable or valuable.

Further examination of gender differences with the inclusion of happy slapping:

There is limited research on happy slapping. It was difficult to find studies or literature that included happy slapping as a form of cyber-bullying. Happy slapping was discussed in the focus group but was not referred to specifically in the questionnaire. Gender differences were reported, especially in the types of cyber-bullying which girls and boys are involved in but only when the focus group participants were informed of happy slapping. It was evident that the participants did not know about this type of cyber-bullying until they were shown a video clip. Perhaps happy slapping should be more closely linked with cyber-bullying so young people can identify it as a form of cyber-bullying and therefore recognise what it is.

Determine changes in bullying strategies for adults:

The research only examined cyber-bullying pertaining to young people; however, it was suggested, in the focus group discussion, that cyber-bullying may influence how people deal with issues later in life. The discussion referred to, in particular, workplace bullying, and how technology may also affect how adults manage conflict. This is would provide an interesting topic of study that so far has not been covered.

Further examination of the effects of cyber-bullying:

The research identified cyber-bullying as a serious problem and considered the effects to be more severe than traditional bullying. Much of what we know about the effects of cyber-bullying has come from overseas research, although the research is limited especially for long-term effects. In order to effectively manage cyber-bullying it is important to identify the effects, both immediate and long term. Furthermore, this is valuable information for young people, schools, parents, and anyone working with young people.

Extent of cyber-bullying in New Zealand:

The research discovered that one out of six participants had been cyber-bullied when they were at high school, which reflects figures from other research. The research only provided a 'snapshot' of opinions on issues of cyber-bullying. The results could not be generalised to the entire population. Furthermore, as identified in this research, the participants were unfamiliar with happy slapping as a form of cyber-bullying; therefore the extent could be larger than is known.

Going beyond the study: Prevention and intervention

Much of the research offers ways to prevent cyber-bullying. Bullying was largely the responsibility of the school. However, cyber-bullying is harder to monitor and manage as the majority of the bullying takes place outside school grounds. A responsibility of the school is to ensure the safety of each child, while at school; however, the nature of cyber-bullying creates difficulties for schools to effectively deal with cyber-bullying. The *School Safety* report (Carroll-Lind, 2009) offers valuable recommendations for managing bullying in schools. One approach discussed was the *Whole School Approach*, which is a collaborative approach including students, teachers, principals, board of trustees, parents, and the wider community (Carroll-Lind, 2009). Rather than schools managing cyber-bullying alone, this type of approach would be more effective when dealing with cyber-bullying as solutions can be found collectively. Furthermore, schools can help to educate, in particular teachers, parents/caregivers, and students on cyber-bullying. It is important to know how to identify cyber-bullying

as well as how to effectively manage it.

Educating students about cyber-safety is also crucial in preventing cyber-bullying. Smith et al (2007) suggest that:

While some traditional methods for reducing bullying may be useful for cyber-bullying too (such as curriculum work, and peer support), some more specific interventions will be helpful, including how to contact mobile phone companies and internet service providers, and legal rights in these matters. (p.384)

NetSafe are leading experts on internet safety. Essentially, their focus is on cyber-safety, which includes cyber-bullying. Their website offers beneficial advice to young people, parents and teachers about cyber-bullying. They have also created an *Internet Safety Kit* for schools, which supplies guidance for schools to establish safe internet practices. The kit also provides a number of valuable resources for schools, students and parents (Butterfield, 2002).

As this study found, the participants accessed the social networking sites they used from the computer at home. One of the major issues of cyber-bullying is a lack of parental supervision as well as a lack of knowledge. Many parents/caregivers are not aware of the dangers online and also do not know who their children are communicating with. The computers at home are often hidden from adult eyes. This study found that parent education needed to be done with caution. One predicament noted was separating awareness with panic; how do you make parents aware of cyber-bullying and ensuring that they do not over reaction to situations? A common issue of cyber-bullying is the lack of awareness and understating from parents/caregivers. Parents/caregivers play an important role in the prevention. One of the main guidelines offered to parents/caregivers, throughout the research, is to enhance their understanding of cyber-bullying (what it is and how to identify if their child is involved) and how to positively manage cyber-bullying issues.

Parents need to become more educated in cyber-space; understanding what their children are doing online and to recognise any dangers. Increasing awareness would also contribute to avoiding any dramatisation or negative consequences from parental involvement. A valuable piece of advice, for parents and caregivers, would be that young people consider their cell phone

and the internet to be an important tool for them to communicate with their friends and is also part of their identity, therefore taking away their phone and internet privileges would be detrimental to them (Campbell, 2005). Another action to help contend cyber-bullying is for parents to ensure the home computer is in a visible area. Consequently, providing more ease in monitoring cyber-bullying. Furthermore, following the same philosophy of Computers in Homes (Craig, 2004), could help in preventing cyber-bullying. Computers in Homes was developed to help overcome the digital divide, by which parents were learning, alongside their children, computer literacy. This idea could be developed to teach families; specifically parents/caregivers, about the online world that young people are a large part of, as well as the dangers, such as cyber-bullying. Also, recognising cyber-bullying behaviours and learning how to deal with this issue.

Limitations

The most prominent limitation of the research is that it only provided a 'snapshot' of cyber-bullying pertaining to young people and social networking sites. The sample size was small, therefore the results could not be generalised. Also, there was a disparity in the sample, as the majority of the participants were female. Furthermore, the research was a retrospective study. As a result, the authenticity of the study was reduced.

Overall, the research added to the developing research on cyber-bullying in New Zealand. It provided some insight into cyber-bullying with the inclusion of social networking sites. A replica study with a larger sample size would provide an extensive insight of cyber-bullying in New Zealand, which would be very valuable. The questionnaires in this study proved to be effective. The questions were clear and the responses were reliable. The questionnaire would be a good example or prototype for a larger study. Furthermore, the research identified some avenues for future research in New Zealand.

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Appendix

Appendix1:Sample questionnaire



Exploring cyber-bullying: A retrospective study of first year university students

A study into cyber-bullying by Katrina Parsonson

Thank you for participating in this research. This questionnaire is an opportunity for you to share your opinions about cyber-bullying and use of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace in cyber-bullying. Some of the questions will ask you to recall bullying experiences at school but you will not be asked to go into detail. If you finished school more than seven years ago (2002) you may not have experiences of cyber-bullying through social networking sites but I am still interested in your opinion about the subject and if you know of anyone who has experienced cyber-bullying such as your child, friend's child or friend. All questionnaires will be anonymous. My supervisor, Dr Fiona Beals, and I will not be able to identify you.

Please answer the questions by ticking a box.

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

2. What is your age?

- ☐ 25 years or under
☐ 26 years or more (Please go to question 16 on page 4)

3. When you were at **school**, did you have access to the Internet?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Please go to question 6)

4. Did you use the Internet at **school** for personal use?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Please go to question 6)

5. At **school**, what kind of personal use did you use the Internet for? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Talking to friends
☐ Sending Emails
☐ Watching videos
☐ Downloading music/videos
☐ Other (please write) _____

6. When you were at school, did you have access to the Internet at **home**?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Please go to question 10)

7. At **home**, what kind of personal use did you use the Internet for? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Talking to friends
☐ Sending Emails
☐ Watching videos
☐ Downloading music/videos
☐ Other (please write) _____

8. What did you use the Internet at **home** for the most? (Please tick only one box)

- ☐ Talking to friends
☐ Sending Emails
☐ Watching videos
☐ Downloading music/videos
☐ Other (please write) _____

9. When did you use the Internet the most at **home**?

- ☐ Primary School
☐ Intermediate School
☐ Early Secondary School
☐ Senior Secondary School

10. Are you **currently** a member of a social networking site such as Facebook and MySpace?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

11. When you were at **high school**, were you a member of a social networking site?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Please go to question 16)

12. At what stage during **high school**? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Early high School (Year 9 -10)
☐ Senior high School (Year 11-13)

13. At **high school**, which sites were you a member of? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Bebo
☐ Facebook
☐ MySpace
☐ Other (Please write) _____

14. At **high school**, what did you use social networking sites for? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ To communicate/chat with friends
☐ To re-connect with old friends
☐ To make new friends
☐ To share photos and videos
☐ To downloading music
☐ Other (please write) _____

15. At **high school**, where did you access the social networking sites that you used? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ From home
☐ From the public library
☐ From the community centre
☐ Other (please write) _____

16. Do you know someone who is **at high school** and is a member of a social networking site such as Facebook or MySpace?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Please go to question 19)

17. What is their age group?

- ☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

18. What do you think they use social networking sites for? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ To communicate/chat with friends
☐ To re-connect with old friends
☐ To make new friends
☐ To share photos and videos
☐ To download music
☐ Other (please write) _____

The next questions will ask you about two types of bullying – traditional bullying and cyber-bullying. I have defined what each one means for you below.

Traditional bullying = is when you cause harm to others on purpose, through saying mean things, physically hurting someone, or doing something behind a person back like manipulating others.

Cyber-bullying = is when you use information and communication technologies, such as the Internet or cell phones, to intentionally cause to harm others.

19. Were you ever a **victim of traditional bullying when you were at school?**

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Please go to question 21)

20. When were you bullied: (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Primary school (Year 0-6)
☐ Intermediate (Year 7-8)
☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

21. Did you ever **traditionally bully** someone else **when you were at school**?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Please go to question 23)

22. When did you engage in bullying?

- ☐ Primary school (Year 0-6)
☐ Intermediate (Year 7-8)
☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

23. Were you ever a **victim of cyber-bullying** by either a cell phone or through a social networking site **when you were at school**?
(Please tick only one box)

- ☐ Yes, only by cell phone
☐ Yes, only through a social networking site
☐ Yes, by both cell phone and social networking site
☐ No (Please go to question 25)

24. When were you cyber-bullied? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Primary school (Year 0-6)
☐ Intermediate (Year 7-8)
☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

25. Do you know someone else who was a **victim of cyber-bullying** by either cell phone or through a social networking site **when they were at school**? (Please tick only one box)

- ☐ Yes, only by cell phone
☐ Yes, only through a social networking site
☐ Yes, by both cell phone and social networking site
☐ No (Please go to question 30)

26. How is that person related to you?

- ☐ Child
☐ Brother
☐ Sister
☐ Friend
☐ I heard through others

27. What is their gender?

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

28. What age group were they?

- ☐ Primary school (Year 0-6)
- ☐ Intermediate (Year 7-8)
- ☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
- ☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

29. Can you please briefly describe how this person was cyber-bullied and if anything happened to stop it: (please write below)

30. Did you yourself ever **bully** someone else by cell phone or through a social networking site **when you were at school**? (Please tick only one box)

- ☐ Yes, only by cell phone
- ☐ Yes, only through a social networking site
- ☐ Yes, by both cell phone and social networking site
- ☐ No (Please go to question 32)

31. When did you engage in cyber-bullying?

- ☐ Primary school (Year 0-6)
- ☐ Intermediate (Year 7-8)
- ☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
- ☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

32. Do you know someone else who has **bullied** another person by either cell phone or through a social networking site **when they were at school?** (Please tick only one box)

- ☐ Yes, only by cell phone
- ☐ Yes, only through a social networking site
- ☐ Yes, by both cell phone and social networking site
- ☐ No (Please go to question 36)

33. What is their gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

34. When did they engage in cyber-bullying?

- ☐ Primary school (Year 0-6)
- ☐ Intermediate (Year 7-8)
- ☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
- ☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

35. Can you please briefly describe how this person cyber-bullied another person and if anything happened to stop it: (please write below)

For the next eight questions can you please read the statement then tick the box that matches your opinion.

36. **Traditional bullying** is a problem facing girls:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

☐☐☐☐☐

37. **Cyber-bullying** is a problem facing girls:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

☐☐☐☐☐

38. Bullying on **social networking sites** is a problem among girls:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

☐☐☐☐☐

39. Bullying on **cell-phones** is a problem among girls:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

☐☐☐☐☐

40. **Traditional bullying** is a problem facing boys:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

☐☐☐☐☐

41. **Cyber-bullying** is a problem facing boys:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

☐☐☐☐☐

42. Bullying on **social networking sites** is a problem among boys:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

☐☐☐☐☐

43. Bullying on **cell-phones** is a problem among teenage boys:

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

☐☐☐☐☐

44. In your opinion what age groups are at most risk of **traditional bullying**? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Primary school (Year 0-6)
- ☐ Intermediate (Year 7-8)
- ☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
- ☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

45. In your opinion what age groups are at the most risk of **cyber-bullying**? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Primary school (Year 0-6)
- ☐ Intermediate (Year 7-8)
- ☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
- ☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

46. In your opinion what age groups are at the most risk from bullying on **social networking sties**? (You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Primary school (Year 0-6)
- ☐ Intermediate (Year 7-8)
- ☐ Early high school (Year 9 -10)
- ☐ Senior high school (Year 11-13)

47. What advice would you give someone who has been cyber-bullied?

If you have any further comments, especially about social networking sites and cyber-bullying, please feel free to write in the space below:

Thank-you for participating in this research. I really appreciate your answers 😊

Appendix 2: Focus group questions



Focus group questions:

1. Introductions – name and your opinion on cyber-bullying
2. (Show video clip – Cyber-bullying project / Cyber-bullying on bebo) What are your reactions to this clip? (Is it mean, dangerous, nothing to worry about)
 - Did social networking sites play a part?
3. (Show video clip – Mean girls -4.30) Do you think it is a problem among teenage girls? What about the fist fight we saw the video clip before? Do you think it is a problem among teenage boys?
 - In this clip the parents are quite aggressive, do you think parents can, at times, make the problem worse?
4. (Show twitter) Do you think that twitter may be used to cyber-bullying (connect with cell phone – facebook too)
5. (show newspaper articles) What are your thoughts on the way cyber-bullying is talked about in the media? Some would say that the media exaggerates the problem, what do you think?
6. Research tends to focus on text bullying (cell phones). Do you think that cell phones are the real problem? What about social networking sites? (not as bad, not a problem?) (% of text bullying in studies)
7. Do you think text bullying and cyber-bullying may have an influence on the victims and bullies later in life? If so, how?
8. How do you think cyber-bullying could be prevented?

Appendix 3: Information sheet for participants



Exploring cyber-bullying: A retrospective study of first year university students

Researcher: Katrina Parsonson

Supervisor: Dr Fiona Beals

Information sheet for participants (Questionnaire and Focus Groups)

This information sheet will provide the details of the research which I would like to invite you to be part of. I hope this answers any questions you may have. Please take your time to read the information.

This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University College of Education Ethics Committee.

What is cyber-bullying and why do this research?

Cyber-bullying is the use of the Internet and cell phones, to intentionally cause harm to others. Cyber-bullying can continue day and night and the bullies can easily remain secret which puts them in a powerful position. To date, little research has been carried out in New Zealand on cyber-bullying therefore this research will help give us a better understanding and extent of the problem.

What is the aim of this research?

The aim of this research is to investigate how first university students view cyber-bullying; determine the influence of social networking sites on cyber-bullying and discover the opinions, of first year students, about the extent of the problem.

Who is the researcher?

My name is Katrina Parsonson and I am a Masters of Education student at Victoria University. I am a member of a few different social networking sites and I have an interest in the ways others use these sites.

What do I have to do if I participate?

The first stage of this study is an anonymous **questionnaire**. The questions will be mainly tick box questions with some space for your comments. By filling in the questionnaire you are showing your consent.

The second stage is a **focus group**. If you are interested, I will be posting an invitation on your class blackboard page and you can contact me via email. You will receive a movie voucher for your time and to show my appreciation. A focus group involves a small group of approximately 4-6 students, meeting with me to further discuss the cyber-bullying issue. There will be no more than two focus groups. If there is a large response of willing participants I will randomly select the participants for each focus group (a total of 12 participants). The focus groups are confidential and informed consent will be obtained through a signed consent form. Focus groups will be held at a confirmed time and place at Victoria University. The focus groups are an addition to the questionnaire. The questions will not ask about personal experiences but will ask you what your responses are to some pictures, newspaper articles and movie clips of bullying. If this research brings up any issues for you the counselling centre at the university knows about my study and is available to you to use.

How long will the study take?

The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The focus groups will take place at the University and will take approximately one hour.

Will what I say be confidential and private?

The **questionnaires** will only be seen by me and my supervisor Dr Fiona Beals. They will always be kept in a locked drawer or lockable bag. The questionnaires are anonymous, neither I nor my supervisor will know who you are if you choose to take part. The **focus group** discussion will be audio tape recorded which will only be heard by me and my supervisor. A notetaker will be present in the focus group to help record the data and information shared. The notetaker will be aware that the focus groups are confidential and will sign a confidentiality form. All recordings will also be locked up in a drawer or bag. Everything that you choose to share with the focus group will be confidential and not be shared with anyone outside of the discussion group. At the end of the focus group all participants will be asked to agree on the themes that developed during the discussion and permission to use the recorded content relating to these themes will be requested. Any information used in the writing up of the research will not identify you by name. Victoria University will also not be named in the final report.

Can I choose to stop being part of the study?

You do not have to answer all the questions in the questionnaire and if you change your mind you can withdraw at anytime during the focus group interview.

What happens to the information you collect?

Any information that you share will be used to write a thesis (research report). The report will include statistics gathered from the questionnaires and quotes from the focus group discussion with the names changed.

After the report is written (approx. 3 years) I will destroy all information I have researched and wipe the audio recordings for the focus groups. In that time, some information will be written up in articles or be used in conference papers.

How will I know what is happening with this study?

If you would like to be informed about the results of the study please send me an email. I will then keep you updated via email. If you choose to be in a focus group I will automatically keep you updated.

Contact details:

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you have any questions. If you will like to be updated of the study please send me an email.

C/-School of Education Policy and Implementation
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600
Wellington

Katrina Parsonson
p. 021 121 0220 (through Fiona Beals)
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Fiona Beals
p. 021 121 0220
e. fiona.beals@vuw.ac.nz

Victoria University counselling centre:
Kelburn Campus -
2 Wai-te-ata Road, behind the Library and next to Student Health
Monday to Friday 8.30am - 5.00pm
Phone 463 5310

Appendix 4: Information sheet for Lecturer



Exploring cyber-bullying: A retrospective study of first year university students

Researcher: Katrina Parsonson

Supervisor: Dr Fiona Beals

Information sheet for Lecturer

This information sheet will provide the details of the research which I would like to invite your students to be part of. I hope this answers any questions you may have. Please take your time to read the information and feel free to ask me any questions you may have.

This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University College of Education Ethics Committee.

What is the aim of this research?

The aim of this research is to investigate how students enrolled in a first year course view cyber-bullying; determine the influence of social networking sites on cyber-bullying and discover the opinions, of students, about the extent of the problem and what can be done to resolve it.

Who is the researcher?

My name is Katrina Parsonson and I am a Masters of Education student at Victoria University. I am a member of a few different social networking sites and I have an interest in the ways others use these sites.

What is cyber-bullying and why do this research?

Cyber-bullying is the use of the Internet and cell phones, to intentionally cause harm to others. Cyber-bullying can continue day and night and the bullies can easily remain secret which puts bullies in a powerful position. To date, little research has been carried out in New Zealand on cyber-bullying therefore this research will help give us a better understanding and extent of the problem.

What do the participants have to do?

The first stage of this study is an anonymous questionnaire. The questions will be mainly tick box questions with some space for comments. The second stage is a focus group. This involves a small group students (approx. 4-6) meeting with me to further discuss the cyber-bullying issue. The focus groups are an addition to the questionnaire. The questions will not ask about personal experiences but will ask for responses to some pictures, newspaper articles and movie clips of bullying. We will not discuss personal experiences of cyber-bullying, but if this research brings up any issues the counselling centre is aware of my research and is available if they need it.

How I will conduct the study?

I will arrange with you a suitable time and place to conduct the survey during class time. During this time participants will be invited to take part in the survey and each participant will be given an information sheet. Once they have had sufficient time to read the information sheet the participants will be informed that the questionnaire is anonymous and informed consent is implied by voluntary participation. The focus group participants will be obtained by posting a message on your blackboard page asking willing participants to make contact via email. There will be no more than two focus groups. If there is a large response of willing participants I will randomly select the participants for each focus group (a total of 12 participants). Information

sheets will be provided to all participants. The focus groups are confidential and informed consent will be obtained through a signed consent form. Focus groups will be held at a confirmed time and place at Victoria University.

How long will the study take?

The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete, which will occur during the lecture. The focus groups will take place at the university, outside of class time, and will take approximately one hour.

Will the research be confidential and private?

The **questionnaires** will be anonymous. My supervisor Dr Fiona Beals, and myself will be the only people to see the questionnaires. They will always be kept in a locked drawer or lockable bag. The **focus group** discussion will be audio tape recorded which will only be heard by my supervisor and myself. All recordings will be locked up in a drawer or bag. A notetaker will be present in the focus group to help record the data and information shared. The notetaker will be aware that the focus groups are confidential and will sign a confidentiality form. Everything that is shared with the focus group will be confidential and not be shared with anyone outside of the discussion group. At the end of the focus group all participants will be asked to agree on the themes that developed during the discussion and permission to use the recorded content relating to these themes will be requested. Any information used in the writing up of the research will not identify your students by name. Your class details will not be on data and will not be mentioned in final report. Victoria University will also not be named in the final report.

Can the participants choose to stop being part of the study?

Your students do not have to answer all the questions in the questionnaire and if they change their mind they can withdraw at anytime during the focus group interview.

What happens to the information you collect?

Any information that is shared will be used to write my thesis. The report will include statistics gathered from the questionnaires and quotes from the focus group discussion with the names changed.

After the report is written (approx. 3 years) I will destroy all information I have researched and wipe the audio recordings for the focus groups. In that time, some information will be written up in articles or be used in conference papers

How will I know what is happening with this study?

If you would like to be informed about the results of the study then please indicate this on the consent form and provide contact details.

Contact details:

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you have any questions

C/-School of Education Policy and Implementation
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600
Wellington

Katrina Parsonson
p. 021 121 0220 (through Fiona Beals)
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Fiona Beals (supervisor)
p. 021 112 0220
e. fiona.beals@vu.ac.nz

Victoria University counselling centre:

Kelburn Campus - Monday to Friday 8.30am - 5.00pm - Phone 463 531
2 Wai-te-ata Road, behind the Library and next to Student Health

Appendix 5: Consent form for focus group participants



Exploring cyber-bullying: A retrospective study of first year university students **Consent Form: Focus group participants**

I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the proposed study by Katrina Parsonson. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw myself at anytime during the focus group interview, as well as any information that I have provided and will not have to give reasons and will not be disadvantaged by this.

I understand that any information that I share with Katrina will be confidential. I understand that Katrina and the notetaker will be the only other people present, besides the other participants, during the focus group. I understand that the focus groups will be recorded and only heard by Katrina and her supervisor Dr Fiona Beals. I acknowledge that the purpose this information is being collected is for an investigation of the opinions of university students relating to the issue of cyber-bullying.

I understand that I am not expected to provide information of my personal experiences but my opinion on cyber-bullying will be valuable.

Please indicate, in particular, what you agree to, understand and would like in this research by ticking the boxes below:

- ☐ I agree to participate in the focus group.
- ☐ I understand that the focus group is confidential and the information will not be shared with others outside of the discussion group.
- ☐ I agree to be audio tape-recorded.
- ☐ I understand that only the researcher and her supervisor will hear the recorded focus group discussion.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will use this information to write her thesis.

Signed:

Name:

(Please print clearly)

Date:

Katrina, the researcher, can inform me through the following:

My contact details are:

Email:

Appendix 6: Consent form for lecturer



Exploring cyber-bullying: A retrospective study of first year university students

Lecturer Consent Form for Research

My name is Katrina Parsonson and I am a Masters of Education student at Victoria University. This is a retrospective study of cyber-bullying of students enrolled in a first year course. The aim of this research is to investigate how students view cyber-bullying; determine the influence of social networking sites on cyber-bullying and discover the opinions about the extent of the problem. Cyber-bullying is the use of the Internet and cell phones, to intentionally cause harm to others.

If you agree, all first year students, enrolled in this course, will be invited to participate in the questionnaire stage of the study. If you agree, this stage will occur during the lecture and will take approximately 20 minutes. The questionnaires are formed in a way so participants will only have to indicate 'yes' or 'no' as a response to personal experiences of cyber-bullying. Participants are asked to expand on experiences of cyber-bullying however, not personal experiences but specific bullying behaviour they may have witnessed. All questionnaires will be anonymous.

The second stage of this research is a focus group. I will invite all students enrolled in your class to be part of a focus group. This will be achieved by posting a message on your blackboard page asking willing participants to make contact via email. Information sheets will be provided to all participants. Focus groups will be held at a confirmed time and place at Victoria University. The focus groups are confidential and informed consent will be obtained through a signed consent form. The focus groups will have a notetaker present to check the responses at the end of the interview. Any information used in the writing up of the research will not identify your students by name. Your class details will not be on data and will not be mentioned in final report. Victoria University will also not be named in the final report.

Please indicate your consent by ticking a box below:

- ☐ I give consent for my students to partake in this research
- ☐ I give consent for the research to happen during class time
- ☐ I give consent for the use of blackboard to obtain focus group participants
- ☐ I understand that my class will not be named in the final report
- ☐ I understand that Victoria University will not be named in the final report

Signed: _____

Name:
(Please print) _____

Date: _____

If you would like to be informed about the results of the study please indicate below:

I would like to be informed through the following:
☐ Email Address: _____

Appendix 7: Confidentiality form for notetaker



Exploring cyber-bullying: A retrospective study of first year university students

Researcher: Katrina Parsonson

Supervisor: Dr Fiona Beals

Confidentiality form for notetaker

Cyber-bullying is the use of the Internet and cell phones, to intentionally cause harm to others. Cyber-bullying can continue day and night and the bullies can easily remain secret which puts them in a powerful position. To date, little research has been carried out in New Zealand on cyber-bullying therefore this research will help give us a better understanding and extent of the problem.

The aim of this research is to investigate how first university students view cyber-bullying; determine the influence of social networking sites on cyber-bullying and discover the opinions, of first year students, about the extent of the problem.

A focus group involves a small group of approximately 4-6 students, meeting with me to further discuss the cyber-bullying issue. The questions will not ask about personal experiences but will ask for responses to some pictures, newspaper articles and movie clips of bullying.

The focus group discussion will be audio tape recorded but I would like you to take notes during the focus group which will be read back to participants at the end to see if they agree with gathered responses. Everything that is shared with the focus group will be confidential and not be shared with anyone outside of the discussion group. As the notetaker, it is expected that the confidentiality clause applies to you. You will not share with anyone else the contents of the session, or the names of the participants in the session.

Please indicate that you understand by ticking the box below:

- ☐ I understand that the focus group is confidential and the information will not be shared with others outside of the discussion group.
- ☐ I will not share the names of participants in the focus group with anyone else outside of the discussion group.

Signed:

Name:

(Please print clearly)

Date:

Appendix 8: Ground rules for focus group participants



Exploring cyber-bullying: A retrospective study of first year university students

Researcher: Katrina Parsonson

Supervisor: Dr Fiona Beals

Ground rules for focus group participants

- This focus group is confidential. Everything that you choose to share with the focus group will be confidential this means that you need to respect the confidentiality of others and avoid sharing the contents of the group outside of this discussion.
- Please do not interrupt others while they are talking; be respectful.
- Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks. You do not have to always agree with others – this discussion is about hearing and exploring different perspectives.
- Please avoid side conversations with your neighbour.
- Please be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words.
- If necessary, the focus group will be stopped to allow participants to take a break.
- You do not have to answer all the questions but your opinion is very important to me. There are no wrong answers.
- It is ok for you to change your mind during the discussion because of something you hear or see.
- If you feel like you need to withdraw at any time during the focus group interview, excuse yourself from the group and quietly leave.