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## Cyberbullying: a resource for parents of elementary school-aged children

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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

CYBERBULLYING: A RESOURCE FOR PARENTS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AGED  
CHILDREN

A clinical dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Psychology

by

Lauren Broussard

May, 2021

Anat Cohen, Ph.D. – Co-Dissertation Chairperson

Drew Erhardt, Ph.D. – Co-Dissertation Chairperson

This clinical dissertation, written by

Lauren Broussard

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Doctoral Committee:

Anat Cohen, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson

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I would like to thank Dr. Farnaz Kerendi and Dr. Barbara Ingram for choosing to be a part of this committee and for taking time out of their busy schedules to provide feedback on this project.

To my loving parents, thank you for all your sacrifices and the encouragement you have shown me. You have taught me to follow my dreams and never give up. Your love and guidance have meant the world to me, and I am eternally grateful that you are in my life.

To my boyfriend, you have helped me in more ways than one. I am incredibly appreciative of all your edits to this dissertation manuscript; thank you for being the great editor that you are. Most importantly, I cherish all your love and support along this incredible journey.

To my family and friends who have encouraged and reminded me, it will all be worth it. Thank you for choosing to support me along the way.

## VITA

### EDUCATION

---

***Pepperdine University—West Los Angeles, California*** September 2017-Present

Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology

*Dissertation:* Cyberbullying: A Resource for Parents of Elementary School-Aged Children

***Pepperdine University – Encino, California*** June 2017

Master of Arts in Psychology

***University of Southern California - Los Angeles, California*** May 2014

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with minor in Forensics and Criminality

University Honors-Cum Laude

### GRADUATE CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

---

***Adult/Older Adult Psychology Intern*** September 2020-Present

DIDI HIRSCH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES– CULVER CITY, CA

*Supervisors:* Veronica Palad, Ph.D.; Giselle Collins, Ph.D.; Kalani Makanui, Ph.D.

- Provide Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy through telehealth to diverse and underserved adult clients with serious and/or persistent mental illness
- Provide case management and advocacy to adult clients with serious mental illness
- Administer a core battery of 20-25 assessments through Q-Interactive
- Score, interpret, and write up four psychological reports
- Provide consultation services to clinic therapists and psychiatrists about treatment recommendations
- Provide supervision to three practicum students from psychology and social work disciplines
- Engage in weekly Professional Issues Group/Supervision-of-Supervision
- Engage in interdisciplinary team meetings such as TAY FSP and DBT Consultation Group
- Create and deliver three outreach presentations for Altadena Senior Center for older adults
- Engage in a program evaluation project focusing on Adult Full Service Partnership Program
- Participate in weekly didactic seminars, continuing education courses, agency trainings, and presentations

***Assessment of Neurodegeneration Extern, Psy.D. Trainee*** June 2019-May 2020

UCLA SEMEL INSTITUTE FOR NEUROSCIENCE AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR – LOS ANGELES, CA

*Supervisor:* Kathy Tingus, Ph.D.

- Administered a core battery of 20-25 assessments in-person and through telehealth
- Scored, interpreted, and wrote up one neuropsychological report each week
- Performed a chart review each week



**Adult CBT-CALWORKS Outpatient Extern, Psy.D. Trainee** September 2018-August 2019  
HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER – TORRANCE, CA

*Supervisors: Lisa Bolden, Psy.D., Janice Jones, Ph.D., and Elise Yoshida, Psy.D.*

- Provided Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Prolonged Exposure, Cognitive Processing Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and Cognitive Behavioral Analysis System of Psychology Treatment to diverse and underserved adult clients
- Co-leader for Skills for Life and CalWORKS Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Group
- Provided case management to individual cases from the CalWORKS and GROW programs
- Conducted intake evaluations, including administration, scoring, and interpretation of initial outcome measures
- Wrote intake evaluation reports, including initial diagnostic and cultural case conceptualization
- Wrote weekly case progress notes and maintained current and accurate clinical documentation
- Attended weekly individual supervisory sessions to discuss intervention methods to assist clients and develop clinical skills
- Attended weekly CalWORKS team consultation meetings to discuss intervention methods
- Attended weekly didactic seminars on a variety of topics including Mindfulness, research, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Conducted a group research project related to clients' treatment outcomes

**Psychoeducational Assessment Examiner, Psy.D. Trainee** July 2018-August 2018  
BOYS HOPE GIRLS HOPE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA—IRVINE, CA

*Supervisors: Susan Himelstein, Ph.D. and Alison Vargas, Psy.D.*

- Administered a full battery of tests including:
  - Neuropsychological Functioning
  - Academic Functioning
  - Emotional Functioning
- Scored and interpreted test results
- Wrote a comprehensive report

**Intensive Outpatient Treatment Extern, Psy.D. Trainee** July 2018-August 2018  
RICH AND ASSOCIATES – LOS ANGELES, CA

*Supervisors: Erika Rich, Ph.D. and Seth Shaffer, Psy.D.*

- Led a social skills group for children between the ages of kindergarten to middle school
- Co-facilitated group activities
- Implemented interventions based on program curriculum
- Monitored client's progress with behavior charts
- Conducted daily check-ins with clients to monitor progress of goals
- Wrote daily progress notes
- Participated in daily group supervision

***Pepperdine University Clinical Psychology Extern, Psy.D. Trainee*** September 2017-May 2020  
PEPPERDINE COMMUNITY COUNSELING CENTER - ENCINO, CA

*Supervisors: Anat Cohen, Ph.D., Anett Abrahamian Assilian, Psy.D., and Tamara Levy Eromo, Psy.D.*

- Conducted on-going individual and couples therapy with children, adolescents, and adults in-person and through telehealth
- Provided CBT and humanistic therapy services at the community clinic and to residents of the Children of the Night organization
- Conducted intake evaluations, including administration, scoring, and interpretation of initial outcome measures
- Wrote intake evaluation reports, including initial diagnostic and cultural case conceptualization
- Wrote weekly case progress notes and maintain current and accurate clinical documentation
- Participated in outreach presentations focused on bullying prevention at local elementary and middle schools
- Attended weekly supervisory sessions, both individual and group, to discuss intervention methods and strategies to assist clients and develop clinical skills
- Engaged in monthly didactic seminars on a variety of topics including Mindfulness practices, Gay Affirmative Psychotherapy, Clinical Formulation Skills, Therapeutic Assessment of Children and Sex Trafficking Survivors
- Provided on-call response to clinic clients on a rotating basis

***Sexual Assault Counselor Advocate***

May 2016 – May 2017

STRENGTH UNITED – VAN NUYS, CALIFORNIA

- Answered the 24-hour crisis hotline and provided referrals if necessary
- Provided accompaniment and advocacy for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence at forensic examinations, court hearings, and police stations
- Provided follow-up calls for clients
- Attended monthly in-service supervision

**ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

---

***Peer Consultant***

September 2019-May 2020

PEPPERDINE COUNSELING CENTER – ENCINO, CALIFORNIA

- Assigned to three doctoral student therapists
- Met face-to-face weekly with each peer-consultee for one hour
- Provided initial constructive feedback on report writing, diagnosing, and treatment planning

***Graduate Assistant***

May 2016 – May 2020

PEPPERDINE COUNSELING CENTER – ENCINO, CALIFORNIA

- Children of the Night Liaison Personnel
- Maintained Children of the Night therapy schedule
- Conducted phone screenings and intakes for potential clients
- Answered the phones and direct calls
- Provided anti-bullying and parent mindfulness presentations to the Encino community
- Created, audited, and closed client charts

- Assisted therapists with day-to-day procedures
- Assisted with coordination of various clinic outreach and marketing activities
- Performed other various administrative duties at the request of the clinic director

### ***Behavioral Technician***

June 2015 – April 2016

BEHAVIORAL LEARNING CENTER - SHERMAN OAKS, CALIFORNIA

- Provided evidence-based services to clients with developmental disorders
- Integrated working knowledge of applied behavior analysis and discrete trial training techniques to assist the client in learning social, play, language, attention and self-help skills
- Tracked data through daily logs of client's maladaptive behaviors and trial responses

## **PRESENTATIONS**

---

**Broussard, L.,** Suyematsu, J., Bolden, L., and Jones, J. (April, 2019). *Barriers to Mental Health Treatment Among the CalWORKS Population*. Poster presented for Scientific Sessions Research Symposium at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, Torrance, CA.

**Broussard, L.,** Perrault, C., & Ram, Sheena. (November, 2018). *Anti-Bullying Campaign: May the force be with you*. PowerPoint presented to middle school students and faculty at Portola Middle School, Tarzana, CA.

**Broussard, L.,** & Ram, Sheena. (January, 2018). *Bullying: What parents need to know and how they can help*. PowerPoint presented at a parent seminar for Nevada Avenue Elementary School, Canoga Park, CA.

**Broussard, L.,** & Grigorian-Routon, A. (November, 2017). *Mental Health Series: Depression*. PowerPoint presented to Sigma chapter members at the University of California, Irvine, CA.

**Broussard, L.,** Krepack, R., & Voehringer, P. (October, 2017). *Anti-Bullying Campaign: May the force be with you*. PowerPoint presented to middle school students and faculty at Portola Middle School, Tarzana, CA.

**Broussard, L.,** & Grigorian-Routon, A. (March, 2017). *Bullying: What parents need to know and how they can help*. PowerPoint presented at a parent seminar for Lanai Road Elementary School, Encino, CA.

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

---

### ***Assessment of Intelligence Teaching Assistant***

May 2019- June 2019

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY- LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

- Assisted the professor in organizing and implementing classroom activities
- Double scored graduate students scoring sheets
- Met one-on-one with students to assist in testing administration

### ***Joint Educational Program Teaching Assistant***

September 2012 - November 2012

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA - LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

- Worked at affiliated USC School for Early Childhood Education
- Assisted teacher in organizing and implementing daily activities

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

---

### *Harbor-UCLA Research Team*

September 2018- August 2019

HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER-TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA

- Conducted a yearlong research project incorporating clients' treatment outcomes
- Analyzed data sets among the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy tracks

### *Social Behavior Research Assistant*

January 2013 - May 2013

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA - LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

- Attended weekly lab meetings to determine progress on various research projects
- Assisted in administrative preparation of research subjects
- Provided instructions and implemented actual study to test subjects
- Inputted data to include associated codes into research system
- Conducted follow-up interviews with test subjects at the conclusion of the study

## ABSTRACT

In recent years, the digital revolution, and, in particular, the widespread use of devices with internet access, has enabled a new form of bullying to emerge. The typical age at which youth begin using internet-enabled technology and social media continues to trend downward. Consequently, elementary school-aged children are increasingly subjected to cyberbullying. Therefore, this clinical resource is a text-based pamphlet for parents with elementary-aged children that will serve as an educational tool regarding cyberbullying prevention strategies. The development of the pamphlet included an initial literature review of the literature, gathered through searches from online academic databases, including Psychinfo, PsychArticles, and Google Scholar. Additionally, several websites and assortment of books were reviewed to identify a representative list of parent resources related to cyberbullying. The pamphlet provides empirically supported information about cyberbullying as well as prevention strategies parents can utilize with their children. The target audience for this pamphlet are parents and guardians of elementary school-aged children between the ages of 5 and 10. The following content areas were included in the pamphlet: (a) What is Cyberbullying? (e.g., Cyberbullying definition, types of Cyberbullying, Cyberbully roles, adverse impacts for victims, (b) Prevention strategies (some of which will be illustrated through vignettes), (c) Recognizing/Detecting Cyberbullying (e.g., warning signs, how to talk to your child about cyberbullying and encourage disclosure, (d) What to do next? (e.g., how to intervene at school and/or with the parents of the cyberbully), (e) Resources (e.g., websites, apps, books and community programs focused on cyberbullying). A formal evaluation of the completed text-based pamphlet is beyond the scope of this project.

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Most parents would likely agree that the internet is a valuable tool for their children. However, these same parents may not be aware of the potential adverse and even tragic consequences associated with daily social media exposure. In 2006, for example, a 13-year-old Missouri girl named Megan Meier died by suicide after being victimized by frequent cyberbullying concerning her weight. In 2010, Phoebe Prince, a 15-year-old Massachusetts teenager, died by suicide following months of cyberbullying from her classmates.

Mobile technology and the social media it enables have become ingrained in the lives of youth in the United States. Social media includes websites and applications that allow users to participate in social networking platforms by creating or sharing content. Although more stereotypically associated with adolescents, elementary school-aged children have also become avid adopters of social technology and frequent users of various social media platforms (Ito et al., 2009). There is limited information on younger children's use of technology, including the prevalence and nature of digital activity among elementary school students under the age of 10 years old (DePaolis & Williford, 2015). However, some studies have indicated an increase in the number of children accessing the Internet under the age of nine (Common Sense Media, 2013; Holloway et al., 2013). The availability of technology among youth is widespread, with researchers finding that around 92% of those between the ages of 13 to 17 report daily use of the Internet and 24% report going online repetitively (DePaolis & Williford, 2019; Lenhart, 2015).

Young children are becoming more technically savvy as they increasingly use smartphones, tablets, and laptops in their daily lives. Consequences of this high-tech adoption rate include increased mutual access between peers (through texting, messaging, and social media platforms; Mishna et al., 2009), as well as increased time spent online, whether connected

to or available to peers. According to a census from non-profit Common Sense Media (2019), “tweens” between the ages of 9-12, averaged six hours of daily media use, including both social and nonsocial media activities. One adverse consequence of these increases is the amount of time young children spend online actively communicating with peers on social media (or accessible to them) and how they become more vulnerable to cyberbullying (DePaolis & Williford, 2019).

Emerging evidence related to the prevalence and influence of cyberbullying underscores the pressing need to address prevention and intervention strategies in the United States. Such evidence may hasten the inclusion and guide the content of school-based cyberbullying prevention programs (Selkie et al., 2016). Cassidy et al. (2013), emphasizes the demand for developmentally appropriate cyberbullying prevention strategies to be applied during elementary school rather than deferring their implementation until middle school. Given that current cyberbullying prevention programs tend to target middle school students, more attention needs to be paid to addressing cyberbullying among elementary-school aged children (Cassidy et al., 2013). It is also imperative to include parents as a component within cyberbullying intervention programs to reduce cybervictimization. The rationale is that by educating parents on the negative impact cyberbullying has on children, the parents will become more aware of warning signs and have ongoing discussions with their children about cyberbullying (Hutson et al., 2018). Given the need for parent education, this author developed a resource (described in detail in Chapter 4) providing parents of elementary-school aged children a brief, clear, highly accessible pamphlet containing evidence-based guidance on detecting and responding to cyberbullying along with an annotated listing of selected cyberbullying-related resources deemed to be the most relevant for this population.

The current literature on cyberbullying addresses a variety of topics, such as definitions of cyberbullying, victimization, perpetration rates, and the influence of demographic variables on likelihood of victimization. The next chapter will provide an overview of bullying, a summary of forms of cyberbullying, platforms it occurs on, cyberbullying roles, risk factors for victimization, unique features of cyberbullying, prevalence, developmental trends, impact of cyberbullying on victims, detection of victims, current prevention and intervention resources, a rationale and aims for the development of the resource.



## **Chapter II: Review of the Literature**

### **Overview of Bullying**

Bullying is defined as being a repeated intentional aggressive act or behavior by an individual or group against a victim who is defenseless (Olweus, 1993). Bullying involves a power imbalance between the bully and the victim. Traditional forms of bullying are categorized into several types including physical, verbal, relational, and indirect (Smith et al., 1999). The physical form of bullying is designated by pushing, hitting, and any other direct physical contact with a victim. Verbal bullying consists of name-calling or crude comments made directly towards the victim. Relational bullying comprises social exclusion, deliberately hurtful letters, silent treatment, and withdrawing a friendship in connection to the victim. Indirect bullying refers to bullies who try to undermine the victim's reputation through spreading rumors and gossiping without the victim's knowledge.

In recent years, the digital revolution, and, in particular, the widespread use of devices with internet access, has enabled a new form of bullying to emerge. Social technology platforms such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/>), and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/>) enable people to connect with others regardless of distance. These social platforms, which have become increasingly ingrained into the daily lives of billions of people across the globe, can provide a wealth of positive experiences such as keeping connected with distant relatives or sharing pictures with friends (North et al., 2008). However, these same platforms also carry serious risks for the ever-increasing numbers of youth who use them. Indeed, the ability to use online platforms to deliver messages and disseminate pictures, videos, and conversations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, has created new means of expressing hostility toward and aggression against others.

## **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is an intentional aggressive act performed by an individual or group against a specific person using digital devices such as cell phones and computers (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2016; Smith et al., 2008). Negative, false, and harmful information about a specific individual can be sent, posted, or shared through text, social media, or on-line gaming platforms (Smith et al., 2008; Stop Bullying, 2020). Cyberbullying involves sharing private information with the purpose of causing harm, embarrassment or humiliation. Cyberbullying behaviors are not limited to name-calling; they can include other forms of teasing, defamation, intimidation, rumor spreading, displaying unflattering, or compromising photos without consent, hacking into an individual's computer, and spreading viruses (Aricak et al., 2008). Depending on the prevailing state laws, discipline can include expulsion, criminal charges, or civil lawsuits (Stop Bullying, 2020).

### ***Forms of Cyberbullying***

According to Willard (2007), there are several forms of cyberbullying including:

- *Flaming*- sending angry or vulgar messages to an individual or group.
- *Harassment*- sending insulting messages to an individual.
- *Denigration*- sending untrue or unkind statements about someone to other people.
- *Cyberstalking*-threatening to harm someone or using intimidation tactics.
- *Masquerading*- impersonating someone and sending information that puts that person in danger or casts them in a negative light.
- *Outing and trickery*- accessing embarrassing information about an individual and releasing it to the public.

- *Exclusion*- purposefully excluding an individual from an online platform.

### ***Platforms***

In today's social media era, the most popular platforms used by school-aged children to engage in communication or curate their lives are Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter. However, children are using a wide range of social media platforms. According to Stop Bullying (2020), the following platforms are commonly used among the youth:

- *Askfm* is a website that allows individuals to ask questions secretly.
- *Chatroulette* is a chat site that allows users to chat with other users randomly.
- *Discord* is a voice-over-IP app, which allows users to video chat with other users in public and private chat rooms.
- *Facebook and Facebook Live* are commonly used sites that allow users to connect with others through messages, photos, or videos. In addition, Facebook Live allows users to livestream videos from Facebook's mobile app.
- *Instagram* is a photo and video sharing app.
- *Kik* is a messaging app, which allows users to message anonymously.
- *Line* is a messaging app, which allows users to utilize the free services of making calls, voicemail, and texting.
- *TikTok* is an app where users can create and view videos.
- *Reddit* is a comprehensive website highlighting popular social media news, web content, and discussion threads.
- *Sarahah* is a messaging app, which allows individuals to send anonymous messages.
- *Snapchat* is a photo messaging and sharing app.

- *Steam* is an online gaming platform that allows users to play with friends or strangers using their console, web, or computer-based game.
- *Telegram* is a messaging app, which allows users to share photos, videos, and files. In addition, it allows the user to conduct phone calls or send text messages using a timer.
- *Tumblr* is a social networking site that allows users to create blogs.
- *Twitter* is a microblogging site that allows participants to send, read, and reply to short messages.
- *WeChat* is an app that allows the user to communicate with friends or individuals who are nearby.
- *WhatsApp* is a private messaging app that allows users to compose texts and share photos, videos, or their locations to their contacts.
- *Yolo* is an anonymous question and answer app affiliated with Snapchat.
- *YouTube* is a video sharing platform that enables users to share and view videos.

This above mentioned list is ever evolving, as application developers continue to compete for the attention of children and teens, platforms begin to change. The availability of technology among youth is apparent through constant interaction with smartphones and social media sites that are continuously creating new platforms for youth to communicate with others (DePaolis & Williford, 2019).

Short Message Service (SMS), which is more commonly known as text messaging, is also a vehicle for cyberbullying. Text messaging appears to be the most widely used platform for cyberbullying among middle and high school students, followed by online gaming (Smith et al., 2008). DePaolis and Williford (2015), found that 11% of elementary school children under the age of ten reported weekly victimization through online gaming. The social media sites used for

cyber victimization included Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The least utilized platforms for cyberbullying included instant messaging, email, and chat rooms.

### ***Cyberbully Roles***

The following classification of cyberbullying roles has been extrapolated from the bullying literature to encompass the use of technology to deliver hostile or aggressive content.

A *cyberbully* is considered the aggressor by initiating aggressive behaviors without any provocation from the victim.

*Cybervictims* are considered to be individuals who are victimized by others (Olweus, 1978). These cybervictims may or may not know the identity of their cyberbully.

*Cyberbully-victims* are designated as individuals who respond to being a victim of bullying by being aggressive via cyberbullying. Most bully-victims are believed to engage in reactive aggression, meaning the individual is impulsive and aggressive in response to being bullied but displaces the hostility towards other victims (Dodge & Coie, 1987). According to Salmivalli et al. (2002), cyberbully-victims tend to be more aggressive than cyberbullies or cybervictims, presumably due to being provoked by their victimization.

There are additional classifications for cyberbullies. For example, Feinberg and Robey (2015), identify four main types of cyberbullies. The *Vengeful Angel* seeks self-perceived justice. *Power-Hungry* applies to an individual who exerts control over others through fear. *Mean Girls* occurs in a group context where the individuals are seeking entertainment by excluding the victim. *Inadvertent cyberbullies* do not intend to cause harm but engage in cyberbullying as an impulsive reaction in social settings. For example, an individual may be acting tough online or responding angrily to a hateful message without understanding how

serious their actions can harm someone. Additionally, *cyberbullying bystanders* are individuals who witness cyberbullying and do not report it to an authority figure.

## **Descriptive Statistics**

Researchers have explored various aspects of cyberbullying, including where it occurs, what ages are affected, and duration. Findings regarding children's use of smartphones and the internet are also relevant since such use makes cyberbullying possible. Roberto et al. (2014) found increased technology access coincided with increased cybervictimization. The concern raised by this association is exacerbated by data suggesting just how widespread such access now is. For instance, a study of 660 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students across six schools found that 90% use the Internet at home with 39% reported using the Internet daily, while 46% reported using the Internet weekly (DePaolis & Williford, 2015). Thus, it appears highly likely that elementary school-aged children are at increased risk of being cybervictims given the rising numbers who regularly use the internet and have a presence online.

Smartphone ownership has increased among elementary aged children. Recent data suggests that about 19% of eight-year-olds and 69% of twelve-year-olds have their own smartphones (Common Sense Media, 2019). The percentage of smartphone ownership has dramatically increased to 41% among eight to twelve-year olds. These individuals average 4.44 hours of daily screen time, excluding coursework (Common Sense Media, 2019). Among eight to twelve-year olds ("tweens") are more likely to own a tablet compared to teenagers (53% vs. 37%) (Common Sense Media, 2019). Furthermore, by age 11, about 53% of elementary-aged children have their own internet-enabled technology (Common Sense Media, 2019).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), 71% of children ages 3 to 18 use the Internet, with 86% of that group using the Internet while at home, 65% using it at

school, and 27% using it in public places such as libraries or community centers. Among children ages five to ten-years-old, 54% used the Internet at home. Students who reported at least three hours of internet use per day were seven times more likely to be cybervictims (Rice et al., 2015). According to Rice et al. (2015), students who are cybervictims spent more time online than other individuals who were not involved in cyberbullying.

It seems that the prevalence of cyberbullying among elementary school aged children is already at a concerning level and likely to continue increasing. Indeed, DePaolis and Williford (2015) found that 17% of children under the age of ten reported being cyberbullied. In general, however, research providing descriptive statistics on cyberbullying among the elementary-school age group is limited. However, it is possible to extrapolate from the more abundant research pertaining to adolescents. For instance, the National Crime Prevention Council (2016) found that 33% of American adolescents were cyberbully victims. Moreover, one in four students had been cyberbullied at least once or knew someone who was a victim (Aricak et al., 2008).

The cyberbullying victimization rate for school-aged children appears to be moderated by several factors, including demographics, technology platforms utilized, and location. Findings suggest age- or grade-related trends, with cyberbullying increasing over the course of elementary school, peaking in seventh grade, and slowly declining during high school (Tokunaga, 2010). With respect to the increase over the course of elementary school, 14% of third graders, 15% of fourth graders, and 22% of fifth graders reported being victims of cyberbullying (DePaolis & Williford, 2015).

Research has examined gender differences with respect to cyberbullying. In one study focused on elementary students, Ackers (2012) found no statistically significant gender differences between students aged 7-9 in cyberbullying perpetration. Moreover, the study found

that females were more likely to be victims of cyberbullying compared to males. In another study focused on older students, it found females were more likely to be both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying than males (Roberto et al., 2014). However, male students were more likely to be victimized through online games compared to female students, while female students were more likely to be victimized through text messaging. Nevertheless, these studies concerned older students highlighting the need for more research addressing gender differences in cyberbullying among elementary school aged students.

Rates of cybervictimization have also been found to vary with the type of technology platform used. Children were 67% more likely to be victimized through online games than other platforms. Moreover, 32% of the total number of cyberbullying victimizations occurs through texts, followed by 21% of occurring on various social media sites. Additional platforms on which cyberbullying was found to occur include instant messaging (19%), email (13%), and chat rooms (12%; DePaolis & Williford, 2015).

The limited data on where elementary-school age children are cyberbullied suggest that it most typically occurs outside of school. DePaolis and Williford (2015) found that 83% of elementary-school students who were cyberbullied were victimized outside of school, with only 13% reporting that the cyberbullying occurred at school or on the way to school.

Research has also shed light on the typical contextual origins of cyberbullying and on its variable duration. Multiple studies suggest that cyberbullying tends to start with an in-person negative interaction, which then transfers over to the online world (Davis & Koepke, 2016; Slonje et al., 2013). Concerning the duration of cyberbullying, Smith et al. (2008) found that about three-quarters of cyberbullying incidents ceased after a month, while one-quarter of cases extended to several months or years. DePaolis and Williford (2015) found that a significant



minority (viz., 17%) of cyberbullying victims date the onset of their victimization to the beginning of the school year.

### ***Risk Factors for Victimization***

A number of factors impacting a child's risk of being cyberbullied have been identified. Some of these factors relate to the adoption of technology discussed above. As noted, access to the internet is a prerequisite for cyberbullying. Additionally, the more active a youth is on social media, the greater the risk for cyberbullying. The location of the computer in the home can impact risk of cyberbully victimization. Increased risk appears to be associated with use of the internet in one's bedroom or other private area of the home as opposed to a family room or other "public" place (Mishna et al., 2012). Elementary school-aged children who are anxious, have low quality friendships, and have been victims of traditional bullying also appear to be more vulnerable to cyber victimization (DePaolis & Williford, 2015). On the other hand, low levels of anxiety, high-quality friendships, and low levels of aggression have been identified as factors that protect adolescents from future victimization (Goldbaum et al. 2003; Hodges et al., 1997).

### ***Risk factors for Cyberbullying Perpetration***

Cyberbullying perpetrators are more likely to have behavioral, emotional, and social problems. Campbell et al. (2013) found that cyberbullies reported higher levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and social difficulty compared to their peers. Risk factors for becoming a cyberbully also include deficient social skills, poor self-esteem, and higher social anxiety, as well as aggression (Arıcak et al., 2008; Harman et al., 2005). In particular, those who aggress via traditional bullying appear more likely to perpetrate cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Li (2006) found that about 30% of youth in grades 4 -12 who reported being a bully also reported being a cyberbully.

Developmental theory suggests children's attitudes and beliefs are strong predictors of behavior (Bandura, 1986). Consequently, an individual's beliefs about aggression influence their acceptance of bullying behavior which, in turn, impacts their likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying (Ang et al., 2010). Werner et al. (2010), assessed normative beliefs about aggression by analyzing the acceptability of aggressive behaviors on a 5-point Likert scale among 330 students in grades 6-8 between the ages of 11-14. Favorable views of relational and physical aggression were correlated with an increase in aggressive behavior. Additionally, Elledge et al. (2013) found positive beliefs regarding relational aggression to correlate with victimizing others via the Internet. On the other hand, youth who believe that bullying is unacceptable and who value defending victims are at lower risk for cyberbullying perpetration.

Numerous studies have found that low levels of empathy are linked to increased bullying behavior (Olweus, 1993), and this relationship appears to extend to cyberbullying as well. Studies have suggested a lack of empathy to be associated with both cyberbullies and cybervictims (a finding which may relate to the fact that some subjects reported being both victims and perpetrators; Schultze-krumholz & Scheithauer, 2009).

### ***Demographic Risk Factors***

A number of studies have examined whether demographic factors impact a child's risk of being cyberbullied or a cyberbully. Findings related to gender differences among victims of cyberbullying have been somewhat mixed. For example, Hinduja and Patchin (2009) found no gender differences in cyberbullying offending or victimization, whereas Dempsey et al. (2009) found that adolescent males tend to cyberbully more frequently than female adolescents. Multiple studies have found that girls are more likely than boys to be cyberbullying victims, including victims of relational cyberbullying (Dempsey et al., 2009; Rice et al., 2015; Ybarra &

Mitchell, 2007). Relatedly, females are more likely than males to report having hurtful comments posted about them and having rumors spread about themselves online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Boys, on the other hand, have been found to be three times more likely than girls to be frequent perpetrators of online harassment and less likely to be cyberbully victims (Rice et al., 2015). However, according to DePaolis and Williford (2015), boys were significantly more likely than girls to have experienced cyberbullying through online games. Furthermore, the mixed findings regarding gender and cyberbullying may be linked to the inclusion of overt and relational aggression studies (Dempsey et al., 2009).

There is limited data related to ethnicity and cyberbullying among children, and the data emerging from studies involving adolescents have been mixed. Some studies have found no differences in the rates of cyberbullying victimization based on ethnicity (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Other studies, however, have found African American and Latino adolescents were more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than Caucasian adolescents (Wang et al., 2009). Low and Espelage (2013) assessed racial differences in cyberbullying among students between 10-15 years old. Additionally, around 60% of the sample population were considered to be low-income students, meaning that families were receiving public aid or were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches. In the study, it found that African American youth in Grades 5-7 experienced higher levels of cyberbullying than White youth. Kowalski et al. (2020) suggested that African American youth may have a heightened risk for cyberbullying victimization due to increased risk factors and few protective factors. Moreover, these increased risk factors, such as family conflict, and limited protective factors, like parental monitoring could make the effects of cyberbullying incidents worse.

Only a few studies have addressed cyberbullying among youth with disabilities. Nonetheless, it appears that children with various disabilities are at greater risk of being cyberbullied (Stop Bullying, 2020). Some studies have shown youth with particular types of disabilities (e.g., autism) to be at increased risk of becoming bully-victims (Swearer et al., 2012).

### ***Unique Features of Cyberbullying***

There are a number of aspects of cyberbullying that distinguish it from traditional bullying and either amplify or create unique consequences for victims. Notably, unlike traditional bullies, cyberbullies are often anonymous. This anonymity affords a lack of accountability for and deindividuation from one's actions which, in turn, facilitates disinhibition, more frequent aggression, and greater adverse outcomes for victims of cyberbullying (Mehari et al., 2014). Deindividuated individuals tend to have more dysregulated behavior and decreased concern for others' evaluation (Zimbardo, 1970).

Electronic communication and social media apps allow for anonymity, as individuals can commit aggressive acts without the cybervictim learning their identity (Mehari et al., 2014). Additionally, cyberbullies can use anonymous names or pseudo profile accounts to attack peers, increasing the victim's sense of helplessness (Slonje & Smith, 2008). The anonymity allows cyberbullies to be more direct, harsh, and even brutal with their language towards their victims. Numerous studies have reported that half of the cybervictims reported not knowing the identity of their cyberbully (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). A troubling aspect of cyberbullying anonymity is that not only does the cybervictim not learn of the perpetrator's identity, but authority figures may not either. Therefore, anonymity not only intensifies the severity of cyberbullying, it also may help to sustain it as it reduces the likelihood that the cyberbully is identified.

In many instances, traditional bullying incidents are often prevented or interrupted through the presence or intervention of an adult authority figure. However, another distinctive feature of cyberbullying is that the arena in which it occurs (e.g., platforms or electronic devices) are typically free of adult supervision. The lack of oversight among electronic devices impacts the environment by facilitating more frequent, prolonged, and possibly more intense and damaging aggression.

Another distinct characteristic of cyberbullying is the increased accessibility of cybervictims to cyberbullies. Cybervictims are generally accessible 24/7, as long as they maintain access to their devices. In contrast to traditional bullying, where victims' homes typically are deemed a safe haven where victims of traditional bullying can feel protected, cyberbullies can strike at any time, regardless of their proximity to the victim or the victim's physical location. Due to the lack of protected time or physical locations, cyberbullies create a sense of inescapable threat and chronic vulnerability for the cybervictims, which increases their stress. This increased accessibility, along with the unique features discussed above, may increase the likelihood and severity of adverse outcomes among cyberbullying victims (DePaolis & Williford, 2019).

### **Impact on Cybervictims and Cyberbullies**

There have been several studies identifying the impact of traditional bullying on victims. Children who are victims of traditional bullying have negative effects on their psychological and physical health (Ttofi & Farrington, 2008). With respect to apparent adverse consequences of traditional bullying, victims have been found to be more prone to exhibit internalizing behaviors, such as being withdrawn, depressed, anxious, and prone to suicidal ideation (Conners-Burrow et

al., 2009; Craig, 1998). Moreover, victims' experienced higher rates of psychosomatic symptoms (e.g., headaches, gastrointestinal problems, bed-wetting, sleep issues, and feeling exhausted).

Longer-term effects identified by victims reporting on their status several months and even several years after being bullied included being less socially accepted, lonely, dissatisfied, and isolated by their peers compared to children in other (non-victim) bully groups (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003; Goodman et al., 2001; Hanish & Guerra, 2002; Perren et al., 2010). Furthermore, bully-victims have been found to experience an increase in physical health issues and emotional problems, which identifies them as the most high-risk individuals in the months following their victimization (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009).

More recent studies are examining the impact of cyberbullying as compared to traditional bullying. These studies suggest that cyberbullying victimization is associated with various short and long-term effects, such as increased social anxiety and behavioral problems. According to Kowalski and Limber (2013), individuals who were victims of online bullying endorsed higher rates of anxiety and depressive symptoms, behavior problems, and increased use of alcohol or drugs later in life compared to individuals who have not been cyberbullied. Children who endure ongoing cyberbullying lasting over a year report an increased risk of psychiatric problems in childhood. Academic functioning also appears to be adversely affected (Mezulis et al., 2004) as children who were victims have been found to show higher rates of absenteeism, avoiding school, dissatisfaction with school, and unsatisfactory grades (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). Longer-term effects of cybervictimization appear to include decreased self-esteem and increased life challenges compared to non-victims (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007). The cyberbullying itself and/or the cascading effects of its adverse consequences over time appear to negatively impact victims' status in adulthood across health, behavioral, social, and financial

domains (Wolke et al., 2013). As adults, victims of childhood cyberbullying tend to exhibit signs of anger, frustration, loneliness, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Additionally, they experience higher rates of delinquency, self-harm, and suicidal ideation (Hay et al., 2010).

In comparing traditional bullying and cyberbullying, there appears to be some overlapping impacts as well as some unique impacts of cyberbullying. According to Kowalski and Limber (2013), individuals who were victims of cyberbullying endorsed similar rates of social anxiety compared to individuals who were victims of traditional bullying. Other overlapping impacts include depressive symptoms, psychosomatic symptoms, and behavior problems. However, researchers have suggested that cyberbullying might be more detrimental to one's psychosocial well-being than traditional bullying (Ho et al., 2017; Perren et al., 2010). Supporting this view is the finding that, at least for males, the apparent negative effects of cyberbullying were more detrimental than for traditional bullying in terms of physical, psychological, and academic impacts (Kowski & Limber, 2013). Some have speculated that the more chronic, inescapable stress associated with cyberbullying may lead to persistent hyperarousal, fear, and perception that one is helpless to protect oneself from ongoing threat that may increase the risk for both physical and mental health problems (Perren et al., 2010).

Although relatively little research has examined possible moderators of the impact of cyberbullying, parent involvement and support have been correlated with a reduction in negative outcomes among cybervictims (Connors-Burrow et al., 2009). This parallels findings among victims of traditional bullying, where victims with parents who provided warmth and support in response to their stress have been shown to have fewer adverse outcomes (Connors-Burrow et al., 2009). Furthermore, parental mediation, which occurs when parents intervene by restricting or co-viewing technology, has helped to reduce a youth's risk of cybervictimization (Wright,

2017). The potential for parents to mitigate some of the adverse consequences of cyberbullying underscores the need to include or even specifically target parents as part of cyberbullying detection and intervention efforts, particularly for younger children.

Compared to the robust literature on traditional bullies, the research focused on cyberbullies is quite limited. A few studies have identified elevated rates of behavioral, emotional, and school-related issues among cyberbullies including aggression (Gradinger et al., 2009), risky behavior (37%), depressive symptoms (16%), and dropping out of school (39%; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Wang et al. (2011) found that cyberbullies reported lower rates of depression symptoms as compared to traditional bullies but higher than individuals who were not involved in any aspect of cyberbullying. Campbell et al. (2013) suggest that cyberbullies may be unaware of the adverse effects cyberbullying has on their victims, in part due to the perception that their bullying behavior was not harsh or lack of recognition that it would even have an effect on victims. Researchers have suggested that this tendency to dismiss the negative effects of their behavior is influenced by cyberbullies' lack of empathy and moral disengagement, expressed through minimizing the consequences or externalizing responsibility for their behaviors (Campbell et al., 2013; Steffgen et al., 2011). Therefore, although longitudinal data on outcomes for cyberbullies is lacking, being a cyberbully does appear to be associated with low school retention rates, increased aggression and risky behaviors, depressive symptoms, lack of empathy, and moral disengagement.

### **Detection and Identification of Victims**

Given significant adverse impacts of cyberbullying, prevention and early identification efforts are critically important. A common prevention strategy is to develop resources (e.g., websites, apps, books) to disseminate information to students, parents, and school officials on the



nature and forms of cyberbullying and strategies to restrict, limit, or actively monitor youngsters' online presence and activity. For parents, early identification efforts include closely monitoring their child's use of technology (e.g., computers, cell phones) and noting any behavior that seems atypical for their child, with particular attention to warning signs that may indicate cyberbullying. Observing emotional withdrawal as well as behavior changes at home and/or at school might also lead parents to investigate whether their child may be under stress, perhaps due to cyberbullying. Additionally, parents may observe in their children a reluctance to attend school, being upset or quiet following the use of an electronic device, and being secretive with respect to content on their devices. Other indications include an atypical disinterest in social activities, changes in mood, behavior, sleep, or appetite, and unexpected decline or cessation in the use of electronic devices. A child may appear anxious when receiving electronic messages, become isolated or withdrawn from their friends and family, or avoid discussions regarding bullying topics (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Some parents may be prompted by these emotional and behavior changes with their child to investigate the possibility of cyberbullying, but detecting cyberbullying often relies on victim disclosure. Parents can increase victim disclosure by modeling open and effective communication to their children, such as using child appropriate language, actively listening, making eye contact, showing empathy, and eliminating distractions while communicating. They can gently raise the subject of cyberbullying and initiate a general discussion of it that allows their child to engage the topic without initially feeling pressure to personally disclose their own experience with it. Subsequently, the parent can gently invite their child to share their experience with cyberbullying (whether with the parent or a trusted other) while underscoring their desire to be part of protective efforts to help stop it.

A child inclined to disclose a cyberbullying incident tends to gravitate towards an individual who provides empathy and support. Hunter et al. (2004) found that nine to fourteen-year-old students were more likely to disclose to a friend or family member rather than teachers, with most feeling more comfortable reporting cyberbullying to a friend. There are a number of possible reasons why cyberbullying victims are most inclined to disclose to friends. These may include children seeking more autonomy from their parents, valuing friendships over family members, and perceiving friends as more capable of understanding what they are experiencing and less likely to blame them for it. The expectation that friends might be more understanding might relate to perceiving peers as more technologically savvy than their parents and more informed with respect to social media, technology, and the complexities of cyberbullying (Beale & Hall, 2007).

### **Current Resources**

Given the escalation of cyberbullying incidents, the need for resources aimed at ameliorating this problem has been amplified. In response to the rising awareness of cyberbullying and its adverse impacts, numerous resources pertaining to cyberbullying have been developed. These resources aim to provide psychoeducation regarding cyberbullying, prevention, and detection to help reduce victimization. The target audiences for these resources include parents, youth (cyberbullies, cybervictims, witnesses who may be aware of cyberbullying incidents), and teachers. The majority of resources that target youth focus on middle to high school students. An extremely limited number of resources include elementary school aged children. Most resources do not specify clear, concise tips for parents of the elementary school aged students, instead the authors discuss “youths” in general, which makes it harder to distinguish what recommendations should be considered. These cyberbullying resources

comprise a variety of formats, including books, websites, apps, and school-based curriculums. An exhaustive review of these resources is beyond the scope of this chapter, but some representative resources reflecting the target audience, format types, and aims will be reviewed, followed by an overview of the outcome research pertaining to cyberbullying resources.

There are multiple youth-directed resources in the format of books or handouts, websites, apps, and school curriculums. For example, cybervictims can read the book, *Cyberbullying: Bullying in the Digital Age* (Kowalski et al., 2012), which outlines an extensive review of academic research on cyberbullying for youths, its unique challenges, and how parents as well as students can discourage cyberbullying. Authored by academics with expertise in the area, the resource provides logically sequenced discussions of various aspects of cyberbullying. Reviews of research findings and empirically-based recommendations are accompanied by anecdotal stories emerging from interviews with students and parents. Content identifying cyberbullying warning signs for parents is illustrated with quotes from student interviews so as to increase parents' awareness of the specific type of statements that suggest victimization. Although authoritative and helpful, accessing and reading the book or eBook does require users to invest both time and money.

In regards to websites directed towards children, Stop Bullying website ([www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)) offers a wide range of information and practical strategies related to bullying and cyberbullying. Among its offerings are tips on how to treat others online, protecting oneself from cyberbullying, steps to take if you're being bullied, standing up for others, and getting involved by joining a school safety committee or creating awareness posters to display around the school. In addition to the text-based information, this website offers webisodes to illustrate prevention strategies (e.g., What to do when online gaming gets mean).

The site is well organized and provides brief but wide-ranging content for multiple audiences in an accessible manner. Notably, however, the website has only one section, “Digital Awareness for Parents”, that focuses solely on parents and how to protect their adolescents.

There are several community-based cyberbullying curriculums that provide students with education as well as prevention and response strategies. I-SAFE is an internet safety curriculum which aims to create awareness about avoiding inappropriate interactions and educating the students on unlawful online behavior. This curriculum aims to target children from grades K-12. Another example is Seattle Public Schools’ chosen cyberbullying curriculum, *Second Step: Steps to Respect* (Committee for Children, 2013). The curriculum predominantly focuses on face-to-face bullying prevention for elementary students; however, the website notes that those bullying prevention strategies can overlap with cyberbullying prevention techniques. The curriculum contains lesson samples, videos, classroom activities, and take-home exercises. Although some of the content may generalize, the focus on traditional bullying renders this resource less relevant for youth, parents, or educators seeking guidance related to preventing cyberbullying.

Teacher-directed resources include a variety of formats, including books, websites (e.g., training courses), and adopting school curriculums. The CyberBullyHelp website (<http://www.cyberbullyhelp.com/>) offers a free PowerPoint on how to prevent cyberbullying that educators can download to present to students, information regarding full-day trainings on cyberbullying for educators, and cyberbullying curriculums for students in grades 3-5 and 6-12. These facilitator-led curriculums inform students about the effects of cyberbullying, equip students with skills on how to treat others online, and teach students how to use technology appropriately. The website provides a central access point for multiple helpful resources but also prominently features promotional content related to speaking engagements by the authors. The

lack of clearly organized content for specific audiences (e.g., youth, teachers, parents) detracts from the effectiveness of this website, particularly when compared to some competing sites.

There are multiple sources for parents educating them on cyberbullying, prevention strategies, and how to respond if cyberbullying is detected. Websites and books present robust information for parents in an easily accessible manner. There are several cyberbullying books with a focus on helping parents. The books provide lengthy descriptions of cyberbullying, cyberbullying warning signs, prevention strategies, laws and policies, and ways of increasing communication with healthcare providers and education personnel. *Cyberbullying: Bullying in the Digital Age* (Kowalski et al., 2012) focuses on concerns and challenges parents face when raising middle-school children but not elementary-school children in the digital era and offers cyberbullying prevention strategies. Additionally, psychologists with expertise in cyberbullying offer strategies to reduce a victim's psychological distress. It is questionable whether concerns and challenges relevant for middle-school children is relevant to elementary-school children. *Mobile Learning Mindset: The Parent's Guide to Supporting Digital Age Learners* (Hooker, 2017) educates parents about mobile devices, cyberbullying, and guidelines for screen time. The book aims to provide tools and scenarios for parents to use with their children to help them to understand, prevent, and respond to cyberbullying. It focuses on basic technology concepts while providing definitions for parents to understand the trends, devices, and typical functions of these social media platforms. Despite being informative and inexpensive, this book's focus on educating parents on technology in general makes it a less practical option for parents seeking information and help with respect to cyberbullying. *Reducing Cyberbullying in Schools: International Evidence-Based Best Practices* (Campbell & Bauman, 2018) offers interventions to parents, mental health providers, and school administrators. The book helps inform parents of the

available evidence-based programs that can be implemented into their child's school. It provides an exhaustive look at cyberbullying ranging from definitions to technological solutions for cyberbullying, laws, prevention programs, as well as a specific section devoted to coping strategies for parents. However, the length and relatively high price of this book may impede access for many parents. *What to Do When Your Child is Cyberbullied: Top Ten Tips for Parents* (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018a), and *What To Do When Your Child Cyberbullies Others: Top Ten Tips for Parents* (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018b), provide a technology use contract for parents to sign with their children, and cyberbullying scripts for parents to promote dialog. These documents are easily accessible, concise, and practical for parents who are limited with respect to finances and time. However, the resources do not specifically state for use with elementary aged children. The CDC issued an *Electronic Media and Youth Violence: A CDC Issue Brief for Educators and Caregivers* (Hertz & David-Ferdon, 2008) that included a focus on providing caregivers with knowledge about technology, adolescents, and aggression. More importantly, this resource does not focus on elementary aged children. The report was developed to guide caregivers (and educators) to both understand the implications of cyberbullying and to become familiar with several action steps they can take to prevent it.

There are several essential websites parents can use to gain a better understanding of cyberbullying. One prominent example is the Stop Bullying website (<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>), which helps define bullying and digital awareness among school-aged children. It provides information on relevant research, prevention strategies, and resources to help parents address difficult situations, such as their child acting differently or experiencing harassment. The website's content also includes a definition of cyberbullying, prevalence estimates, relevant laws, and discussions regarding the difficulty of detecting

cyberbullying and the permanence of electronic communication. This website provides real-life examples of cyberbullying tactics to further facilitate a parent's understanding of the content. The preventing cyberbullying section educates parents about the warning signs that may suggest a child is being cyberbullied. It also identifies the steps to take following a cyberbullying incident. The website also provides a list of popular social media platforms among children and adolescents to raise digital awareness among parents as well as several digital monitoring apps that may help them to track their child's online activity. Overall, this website is organized, easily accessible, concise, and practical for parents. The sections provided are appropriate for providing clear steps for parents to take on various critical situations not limited to bullying, such as if the child is feeling suicidal or if the school is not adequately handling any harassment issues. Another notable website is PACER Center (<https://www.pacer.org/>), which provides free, concise, and empirically-supported cyberbullying information and resources to parents under the Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center. There are also various websites providing important cyberbullying-related knowledge to multiple audiences. Examples include the American Psychological Association's Beware of Cyberbullying Website (<https://www.apa.org/topics/bullying/online>) and iKeepSafe (<https://ikeepsafe.org/>), which provide valuable information on cyberbullying (e.g., how to report cyberbullying) and internet safety. Although highly accessible, these sites only offer brief synopses of how distressing cyberbullying victimization can be for young individuals.

There are mobile apps that help parents attempt to prevent cyberbullying through parental controls, such as blocking internet activity, setting time limits, and YouTube filtering. One mobile app, Mobicip (<https://www.mobicip.com/>), includes parental controls based on whether a child is in elementary, middle, or high school. Some of the features include managing all family

devices, scheduling screen time limits, tracking a child's location, and blocking specific websites or apps. This app, which can cost less than ten dollars a month depending upon the chosen plan, appears effective for parents who want to monitor and impose some limits on their child's screen time and Internet access. My Mobile Watchdog App (<https://mymobilewatchdog.com/>) allows parents to receive notifications about their child's questionable texts, photos, videos, and unauthorized phone numbers. It is easily accessible by creating an account and registering devices and appears to be effective in helping parents monitor their child's online activity. Net Nanny (<https://www.netnanny.com/>) notifies parents when alarming keywords are used when texting; however, this product can be expensive depending on the selected plan.

Some suggestions consistently aimed at parents across various sources include encouraging communication with school administrators regarding cyberbullying to increase the likelihood of prevention as well as the appropriate reporting of cyberbullying. Recommended action steps involve reporting cyberbullying incidents to online service providers, law enforcement, and school officials. Furthermore, the CDC recommends that parents talk to other parents to increase a sense of community, to stay informed on the newest electronic devices, and to gain insight on the latest technology (Hertz & David-Ferdon, 2008).

Although the growing number of cyberbullying-related resources for various targeted audiences is encouraging, they tend to be characterized by some limitations that may reduce their effectiveness. The majority of resources (books and websites) offer extensive information related to cyberbullying but are often lengthy and require payment, making them less practical for parents of limited means and free time. Others focus on multiple audiences (i.e., children and teens, teachers) making large segments less relevant for parents. In fact, lengthy resources and those with dense content that does not pertain to them might even create increased stress in



parents or feelings of overwhelm, thus reducing potential utilization. However, there are several resources, which appear effective, concise, and brief that focus on cyberbullying terms and warning signs. Those tend to fall short on describing the harmful impact of cyberbullying and on what parents can do to intervene and protect their children. Finally, many of the resources described above do not specifically address the needs of parents of elementary-aged children.

The resource developed as part of this dissertation study includes a variety of positive attributes that parents may find appealing. The current resource is a brief, parent-focused, readily accessible resource covering multiple important topics related to cyberbullying for parents of elementary-aged students. A limitation of currently available brief resources is that they do not cover the scope of topics that would be beneficial for parents nor do many provide empirically based, peer reviewed data. For example, some brief resources only discuss cyberbullying terms, while others are limiting it to the topic of recognizing cyberbullying. The current resource, a text-based pamphlet, provides a thorough, yet brief introduction to a range of important content related to cyberbullying. It provides information on cyberbullying, prevention strategies, recognizing cyberbullying, and how to intervene, while providing high-quality, scholarly resources focused on parents. This resource will save busy parents from having to engage in time consuming searches for appropriate resources or reviews of lengthy or dense existing resources. The text-based pamphlet highlights the most important content in a condensed manner to ensure readability and understanding of the topic in a quick time frame.

### ***Efficacy/Outcome Research***

As reflected in the resources discussed above, a common cyberbully prevention strategy is to disseminate information to students, parents, and educators through school-based curriculums, websites, tip sheets, and books. These resources include education on what signifies

cyberbullying and how to prevent being a victim. There have been two systematic reviews of the efficacy data on cyberbullying prevention programs (Mishna et al., 2009; Selkie et al., 2016). The studies included in these systematic reviews began more than twenty years ago and have slowly progressed to include more detailed information regarding reducing cyberbullying. Only a few studies have evaluated the efficacy of interventions aimed at preventing cyberbullying and providing aid to victims. These studies vary in methodologic quality, employing both a two-group quasi-experimental design as well as experimental designs, which included a minimal treatment control group. A discussion of the results of the two systematic reviews of cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs follows.

Mishna et al. (2009) conducted a systematic review of studies of three school-based cyberbullying programs (two in the United States, one in Canada): I-SAFE cyber safety program (Chibnall et al., 2006), Missing cyber safety program (Crombie & Trineer, 2003), and a program called Help, Assert Yourself, Humor, Avoid, Self-Talk, Own it (HAHASO; Salvatore & Weinholz, 2006). The three studies all used a quasi-experimental, between-group comparison designs with participants being assigned to intervention or control groups through the natural separation of classes within the schools. The outcome measures included variables such as Internet safety knowledge and risk behavior (e.g., disclosing personal information online) for I-SAFE and Missing cyber safety program, and knowledge of internet safety, knowledge of social skills, the frequency of bullying behaviors (at school, on the Internet, or on a cellphone), and reactions to bullying for the HAHASO cyber safety program.

Following are brief descriptions of the three programs evaluated in the Mishna et al. (2009) review and the respective findings for each. The U.S.-based educational cyberbullying prevention program called I-SAFE is a school-based curriculum (Chibnall et al., 2006). It

comprises five lessons covering topics such as Internet safety, cybersecurity, and intellectual property. These 40-minute, teacher-led lessons were provided over the course of six weeks to fifth and eighth graders during school hours. The sample for the study evaluating I-SAFE's efficacy included 796 students in the treatment group and 528 students in the control group. Results of pre-post testing for the two groups showed that the students receiving I-SAFE demonstrated significantly greater improvements than did the control group with respect to intellectual property knowledge (pertaining to both media and theft), internet safety knowledge, risk management, computer viruses, mentoring, email protocols, inappropriate online behavior, and comfort level with on-line acquaintances. Effect sizes computed for the primary dependent variables revealed that the I-SAFE program was particularly effective in increasing students' knowledge of internet safety ( $d^{trt} = 0.88$ ). This large effect size indicates that the Internet Safety Knowledge of the students participating in the I-SAFE program increased by .88 standard deviations from pre- to post-test.

The Canadian *Missing* program is a school-based curriculum focused on educating sixth and seventh grade youth about Internet safety through a computer game. In the game, the youth assumes the role of a police officer to solve a series of puzzles to locate a missing teenager. The students using the game discover how their actions of revealing personal information can increase their vulnerability to Internet victimization. The program alerts the youth about chat rooms, e-mail communication, and other electronic means to perpetrate cyberbullying. In addition to the computer game, the *Missing* program provides teachers and parents with supplementary information such as a documentary video, posters, and a book to help navigate cyberbullying. Teachers supervise the students participating in the computer game and afterwards facilitate discussions with the class on how to develop Internet Safety guidelines.

Facilitators administered this program in four separate classes of students for 40 to 50 minutes each. The efficacy study reviewed by Mishna et al. (2009), compared 57 youth assigned via segmentation based on classroom to receive the *Missing* program with 55 students assigned to the no-intervention control group. The Missing program findings suggested non-significant results at the .05 level between the treatment and control groups. Therefore, the researchers could not designate if the results were by chance or due to participation in the *Missing* program. Overall, the program did not change student's online behavior or Internet safety attitudes, however it slightly reduced the frequency of individual's disclosing personal information, such as their gender, age, and city residence (Mishna et al., 2009). Furthermore, although this program did not formally evaluate the effectiveness of the parental component, it did offer several general suggestions on how to educate parents. Some suggestions included having parents become more knowledgeable about technology, more understanding of the importance of technology in their child's life, and more informed about schools' anti-bullying policies.

The HAHASO program (Salvatore & Weinholz, 2006) is a researcher-led, school-based intervention comprising five classes on anti-bullying strategies pertaining to both bullying and cyberbullying. The efficacy study of HAHASO reviewed by Mishna et al. (2009) had 276 participants between the ages of 10-12 and examined a variety of outcomes including knowledge of social skills, the prevalence of traditional bullying and cyberbullying behaviors (at school, on the Internet, or on a cellphone), and reactions to bullying. The results indicated a moderate treatment effect ( $d^{trt} = 0.62$ ) on social skills, reflected in increased positive social behaviors. No treatment effects were found with respect to the prevalence of traditional bullying and cyberbullying behaviors or students' reactions to bullying. Furthermore, the results from the

HAHASO program suggested that the anti-bullying intervention did not change the number of reported cyberbullying victimizations.

In addition to the several programs mentioned above, there has been an updated review by Lancaster (2018) examining the efficacy of eleven United States cyberbullying programs and interventions. Eight of the programs were empirical, peer-reviewed journal articles, while two interventions were from doctoral dissertations, and another from a report for the United States Department of Justice. Nine of the interventions were amongst school-aged children and adolescents, while two programs were targeting college students. Among the programs, the sample sizes ranged from 25 to 3,651 with the exception that one study did not specify a sample size. The findings of the review suggest that there was no change in cyberbullying behavior reduction. However, one study by Doane et al. (2016) indicated that there was a change in perpetrating cyberbullying behavior. Therefore, the programs that focused on empathy training through cyberbullying reenactments may decrease cyberbullying behavior. Overall, the review indicated that the United States is deficient in evidence-based treatment models that reduce cyberbullying behaviors.

The efficacy of several other programs developed outside the United States has also been evaluated. These education-focused programs, developed in Germany, Spain, Italy, and Finland, include a range of strategies, including peer educators, social skills training, and information disseminated to teachers and families. Their agendas focus on delivering information to middle school and high school students about technology risks, empathy, social responsibility, Internet safety tips, and hypothetical situations to help them defend themselves or others against cyberbullying. The review conducted by Van Cleemput et al. (2014) included 15 anti-cyberbullying programs in their systematic review and six overlapping programs in their meta-

analysis. The systematic review concentrated on the program aims, components of the cyberbullying prevention program, and the target audience, whereas the meta-analytic techniques were implemented to assess for the efficacy of the six overlapping cyberbullying prevention programs.

*Media Heroes* is a German school-based psychoeducational anti-cyberbullying program that has been evaluated by different researchers in several separate studies. Over the course of ten weekly 90-minute sessions, this program uses hypothetical scenarios to educate middle and high school students on topics including cyberbullying, its impact, and Internet safety tips. More importantly, it provided peer-to-parent tutoring regarding cyberbullying strategies. Results from two randomized controlled trials indicated that the program significantly decreased cyberbullying perpetration (Hedge's  $g = 0.19$ ; Van Cleemput et al., 2014).

*Surf-fair* is a briefer German curriculum that has had its efficacy evaluated. Developed for 11 to 12-year-olds, *Surf-fair* comprises either one 90-minute session covering information about cyberbullying and coping strategies or two 90-minute sessions addressing online safety, laws regarding cyberbullying. This program did not include a parent component as part of the curriculum. The program also uses a film regarding a cyberbullying case to raise awareness among the students. The researchers found that although there were significant decreases in cyberbullying victimization (Hedge's  $g = 0.49$ ), the program was less effective in decreasing perpetration (Hedge's  $g = 0.08$ ) (Pieschl & Urbasik, 2013). Van Cleemput et al. (2014) indicated that incorporating teachers, school staff, and families as well as youth is critical to preventing cyberbullying and that efforts to do so should address Internet safety, responsible technology use, parental monitoring, and cyberbullying school policies.

The youth focused *ConRed* program in Spain has also been evaluated empirically. *ConRed* facilitators focused on educating the teachers and parents of schoolchildren first, followed by educating the students. It consists of two training sessions for teachers, one training session for parents, and eight sessions for youth (ages of 11-19 years). The topics covered include privacy on the Internet and social networks, improving prosocial online behavior, Internet addiction, and cyberbullying. The results of a large ( $n = 893$ ) quasi-experimental, longitudinal design, two-group comparison study indicated significant intervention effects on cyberbullying victimization for cybervictims and cyberbullying perpetration for cyberbullies as the experimental group had a general decrease in cyberbullying perpetration (Hedge's  $g = 0.15, 0.06$ ; Del Rey et al., 2012; Espelage & Hong, 2017; Van Cleemput et al., 2014).

Efficacy has also been demonstrated for *Non Cadiamo Intrappola*, an Italian-based program that trains peer educators to provide, either through face-to-face or online interactions, cyberbullying information to students between the ages of 14-19 years old. A parent component was not included in this program. The peer educators also raise awareness at school events through short films, meeting with school administrators, and distributing a guide on email and cell phone safety. Menesini et al. (2012), in an experimental design study involving 375 participants, found that the program yielded a significant reduction in cyberbullying (Hedge's  $g = 0.15, 0.06$ )

Finally, Williford et al. (2013) evaluated the Finland-based *KiVA* school-based program that educates teachers, parents, families, community leaders, and students about cyberbullying. This multi-component program integrates providing information for parents through a guide, teacher training, student lessons, and informational meetings to address cyberbullying. Results of

the quasi-experimental study involving 5,651 participants indicated the *KiVA* program yielded a moderate reduction in cyberbullying (Hedge's  $g = 0.23$ ).

Overall, the still fairly modest literature on cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs primarily revolve around school-based curriculums. These programs aim to increase knowledge of appropriate Internet use, safety, and awareness regarding cyberbullying trends. The systematic and meta-analytic reviews and additional individual studies indicate that the programs generally appear to have small effect sizes with respect to outcomes such as increasing cyberbullying knowledge and reducing cyberbullying behavior. The programs employ a variety of interventions (e.g., social skills training, education on technology use, empathy, social responsibility, and methods to decrease cyberbullying victimization) and formats (e.g., peer educators, teacher training, parent training, and films). Additionally, multiple programs incorporated social skills training as a component of their intervention. Assertiveness training, which is often included among the target skills, is optimal for children who may be passive or withdrawn when interacting with other children (Bower et al., 1976; Buell & Snyder, 1981). Given the limited research on cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs, it appears that the vast majority of current anti-cyberbullying resources are not yet empirically supported research (notably, many of the resources distributed to parents are promoted by organizations that sell products; Espelage & Hong, 2017). Furthermore, few current anti-cyberbullying programs focus specifically on elementary school aged children, even though increased technology and social media adoption among this age group has made them more vulnerable to cyberbullying. Lastly, there are relatively few current resources specifically developed for parents of elementary school aged children.



The literature on the efficacy of cyberbullying programs that incorporate a parental component is extremely limited. To date, only one systematic review of cyberbullying interventions has been published. Huston et al. (2018) examined 17 studies of cyberbullying programs from several countries employing both randomized controlled- and quasi experimental designs with sample sizes ranging from 16 to 18,412. Nine studies identified programs leading to a significant reduction in cyberbullying whereas ten programs were found to produce a significant reduction in cybervictimization. The most effective programs included the following individual components: social skills training, empathy training, coping skills, and parent training. Of relevance to the current project is the fact that only 7 of the 17 studies reviewed included any form of a parental component. When present, these components tended to be live group training sessions involving education about cyberbullying and distributing educational information to parents via email or mail. Notably, the programs found to be most successful in reducing cyberbullying included parent education (Hutson et al., 2018). However, studies designed to directly compare programs with and without a parental component as well as those that include different parental components, while clearly indicated, have yet to be conducted.

### **Rationale for Developing the Current Resource**

The typical age at which youth begin using internet-enabled technology and social media continues to trend downward. Consequently, elementary school-aged children are increasingly subjected to cyberbullying. Given that cyberbullying victimization is well established to be associated with a range of short- and long-term adverse impacts across social, academic, emotional, psychological, and physical health domains, developing effective cyberbullying prevention programs for elementary school-aged children is a critical and urgent concern.

Cyberbullying prevention efforts can target different audiences (e.g., youth, teachers, parents). For elementary school-aged children, however, there are reasons to believe that prevention efforts might be most effectively targeted to parents. For elementary school aged children, unlike adolescents, parents typically represent the people who spend the most time with the child, are most intimately familiar with their activities, have the most access to content on their devices, are most likely to observe emotional and behavioral changes that constitute warning signs of cyberbullying, have the greatest impact on and control over the child's behavior, and who are the most trusted and supportive figure in the child's life. Therefore, parents are likely the best target audience for resources aimed at prevention and early detection of cyberbullying among elementary school-aged children.

Despite being in many ways optimally positioned to help prevent cyberbullying among young children, several factors may compromise parents' ability to do so. These include discomfort or unfamiliarity with technology (including devices, apps, and web-based platforms where cyberbullying occurs), and unfamiliarity with the nature and forms of cyberbullying. These factors may impede not only prevention but early detection of cyberbullying. A child's perception that the parent is unfamiliar with the very nature of social media activity and the existence, nature, or forms of cyberbullying may deter the child from disclosing their victimization.

Even when cyberbullying is detected, parents may often feel helpless concerning how best to proceed to help their child. Such parents would benefit significantly from resources aimed at assisting them in understanding cyberbullying, the steps they can take to prevent it, warning signs that it may be occurring, and how to best help their elementary school-aged child should

she or he be victimized. Unfortunately, very few resources of this type are currently available to parents.

### **Project Aims**

The project involved producing a text-based pamphlet for parents that serves as an educational tool regarding cyberbullying prevention strategies. Efforts were made to render the information provided clear and engaging through the use of vignettes, graphics, summary boxes, and changing fonts. The target audience for the current resource was parents of elementary school-aged children who want to reduce the likelihood of their child from being victimized by cyberbullying. In an effort to provide parents with information relevant to preventing, detecting, and initially responding to the occurrence of cyberbullying among this specific elementary school-aged group, the following content areas were included: (a) What is Cyberbullying? (e.g., Cyberbullying definition, types of cyberbullying; cyberbullying roles; possible adverse impacts for victims); (b) Prevention strategies; (c) Recognizing/Detecting cyberbullying (e.g., red flags/warning signs; how to talk to your child about cyberbullying and encourage disclosure); (d) What to do next? (e.g., how to intervene at school and/or with parents of cyberbullies on behalf of your child); and (e) Resources (e.g., websites, apps, and community programs relevant to cyberbullying education, detection, prevention, and intervention).

## **Chapter III: Methods**

### **Overview**

The clinical dissertation project aimed to develop a text-based pamphlet for parents with elementary-aged children that would serve as an educational tool regarding cyberbullying prevention strategies. The pamphlet content focused on providing information about cyberbullying as well as prevention strategies parents can utilize with their children. The rationale for the development of the pamphlet was to increase parents' knowledge about cyberbullying, to help prevent and detect cyberbullying, and to guide parents on what steps to take upon discovering that their child is a cybervictim. The target audience for this pamphlet was parents and guardians of elementary school-aged children between the ages of 5 and 10 who have access to smartphones and/or other internet-connected devices in a variety of settings, including school and home. The pamphlet focused on parents because they are well-positioned to play a critical role in the prevention and early detection of cyberbullying for elementary-aged children.

### **Rationale for the Current Project**

Cyberbullying is a growing epidemic among elementary-aged students. The rapidly increasing number of children who are victimized by cyberbullying face multiple possible adverse short- and long-term impacts across social, academic, emotional, psychological, and physical health domains. Therefore, developing a range of effective strategies to prevent and detect cyberbullying among elementary school students was a pressing concern. This project aimed to contribute to those efforts by developing a psychoeducational cyberbullying resource designed to increase parents' understanding of cyberbullying, including how they can prevent it, how they can detect it, and adaptive steps to take if they do. The developed resource aimed to

address some of the limitations of existing resources by providing parents with a highly accessible, concise, and practical pamphlet highlighting critical information and guidance regarding cyberbullying. Importantly, wherever possible, the content of the resource (including guidance for parents on detection and response strategies) was informed by the most relevant and reliable scholarly literature. Furthermore, the last section which provided an annotated list of recommended resources would spare parents the considerable time and effort that might otherwise be necessary to discern which resources are the most credible and helpful.

There were multiple factors that led to choosing parents as the target audience for the resource developed in this study. For instance, there are reasons to believe that prevention and early detection efforts might be most effectively targeted to parents. Parents of youth in this age range have the most access to and control over their children's activities and devices and are most likely to detect physical, emotional, and behavioral changes in their children that constitute warning signs of cyberbullying. They are also the best positioned figures in a child's life to take adaptive steps to protect their child (and other potential victims) and terminate the victimization once cyberbullying is discovered.

### **Goals of the Current Project**

The purpose of the developed resource was to reduce cyberbullying and its adverse impacts among elementary school-aged children by increasing parents' understanding of cyberbullying, steps they can take to prevent it, warning signs that may suggest their child is a victim, and adaptive steps they can take if they discover their child is being cyberbullied. The components of the resource focused on cyberbullying education, defined cyberbullying, and discussed different types of cyberbullying, cyberbullying roles, and its possible short- and long-term adverse impacts. Moreover, the resource included sections describing strategies to prevent

cyberbullying, to recognize when it may be occurring, and to respond adaptively when it is detected, along with providing a variety of cyberbullying-related resources. These recommended resources, which included websites, apps, and community programs, focused on cyberbullying education, detection strategies, and helpful responses that parents can use when they determine or suspect their child is a victim of cyberbullying.

### **Method for Developing the Resource**

The project involved producing a text-based pamphlet for parents. The following sections described the strategy for developing this educational resource, including discussion of a literature review, the format for the resource, its content, and its evaluation.

#### ***Literature Review***

A comprehensive literature review was performed to ground the author in the current scientific literature pertaining to cyberbullying and to inform the rationale, aims, and likely content of the current project. The information was collected for an overview of multiple aspects of bullying, each reflected in a section of the previous chapter of this dissertation. These sections included bullying, cyberbullying, descriptive statistics, the impact of cyberbullying on victims, detection/identification of victims, current resources, and efficacy/outcome research. The first section focused on summarizing background knowledge on traditional forms of bullying. The second section aimed to inform readers about cyberbullying, cyberbully roles, social media/technology platforms on which it occurs, risk factors for victimization, as well as unique features of cyberbullying. The third section focused on the prevalence and developmental trends of cyberbullying. The fourth section targeted information on the impact of cyberbullying on victims. The fifth section concentrated on the detection and identification of victims as well as reasons as to why cyberbullying often goes unidentified. The sixth section highlighted the nature

and quality of existing cyberbullying resources by referencing some representative examples. The seventh section focused on summarizing the efficacy research on anti-cyberbullying programs. The final sections provided the rationale for targeting parents of elementary-aged students and identified the aims of the current resource.

The initial literature review was gathered through searches from online academic databases, including Psycinfo, PsychArticles, and Google Scholar. The following bullying- and cyberbullying-related search terms were used alone and in various combinations to conduct the literature review: *bullying, cyberbullying, cyberbullying victimization, risk factors, distinct features of cyberbullying, prevalence, gender differences, ethnicity differences, special groups, minorities, developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, developmental trends, impact on victims, moderators and cyberbullying, parental involvement, school curriculums, parent communication, warning signs, physical impacts, psychological impacts, academic correlates, media use, social outcomes, outcome evaluation, efficacy, middle school students, elementary school students, long term effects, short term effects, internet harassment, cyberbullying attitudes, internet aggression, nature of cyberbullying, and disclosures.*

Additionally, several websites were reviewed to identify a representative list of parent resources related to cyberbullying. These websites included Stop Bullying (<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>), Kidshealth (<https://kidshealth.org/>), Pacer (<https://www.pacer.org/>), Connect Safely (<https://www.connectsafely.org/>), and Common Sense Media (<https://www.common Sense Media.org/>). These websites provided valuable information regarding currently advocated cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies.

In addition, an assortment of books were reviewed to gather knowledge on cyberbullying terms, trends, and interventions. These books included *Cyberbullying* (Scherer, 2011),

*Cyberbullying: Bullying in the Digital Age* (Kowalski et al., 2012), and *Making Your Primary School E-Safe* (Katz, 2015). These books were identified based on inputting key search terms of *cyberbullying* and *parents* in an online search of the WorldCat Discovery database.

Furthermore, ongoing updates to the literature review were conducted as the parent resource was being created to integrate the latest scholarly information pertaining to cyberbullying. These ongoing literature searches were conducted through online academic databases such as PsycInfo and Google Scholar.

### **Format for the Pamphlet**

The resource was designed as a printed pamphlet. The pamphlet was intentionally brief so as to increase the likelihood that it will be read by its target audience. It was organized into logically sequenced sections, each summarizing a topic discussion in the literature review (Chapter 2 of this dissertation). Efforts were made to provide clear and engaging information through vignettes, graphics, summary boxes, and changing fonts. This educational information presented to parents is relevant for their understanding in preventing, detecting, and addressing cyberbullying among the elementary school-aged group. A desktop publishing application, *Adobe InDesign*, was utilized to create the pamphlet.

### **Content Included in the Pamphlet**

The pamphlet was created as an educational tool for parents with elementary school-aged children to familiarize them with critical aspects of cyberbullying. After thorough review of the literature, an outline was created to identify the important aspects that should be included into the pamphlet. The initial content and structure of the pamphlet were chosen based on an extensive review of existing resources and the identification of concepts and themes that were deemed central to cyberbullying and cyberbullying prevention. Following several revisions, the content



areas were selected to maintain the effectiveness and ease of use of the pamphlet. The following content areas were included in the pamphlet: (a) What is Cyberbullying? (e.g., cyberbullying definition, types of cyberbullying, cyberbully roles, adverse impacts for victims, (b) Prevention strategies (some of which will be illustrated through vignettes), (c) Recognizing/Detecting Cyberbullying (e.g., warning signs, how to talk to your child about cyberbullying and encourage disclosure), (d) What to do next? (e.g., how to intervene at school and/or with the parents of the cyberbully), (e) Resources (e.g., websites, apps, books, and community programs focused on cyberbullying). The author attempted to make the pamphlet engaging through graphics.

Therefore, the author utilized *Unsplash*, which is a free images and photos website that grants users nonexclusive universal copyright license to download, copy, and distribute for commercial and non-commercial projects. The photos selected in the pamphlet were chosen based on several keywords including *diversity, technology, textured backgrounds, children, parents, bullying, and cyberbullying*. The photos were carefully selected to ensure the quality images fit the overall central theme of the pamphlet as well as promoting diversity. The photos chosen were public domain pictures that can be used for commercial and non-commercial purposes. The author gave acknowledgements to the photographers whose photos were selected in the citations section of the pamphlet. After incorporating the images and designs, additional revisions were made to the pamphlet based on the dissertation chair's feedback on overall appearance and content.

Moreover, the author updated the resources to reflect the most up to date resources following the preliminary orals approval of this project. Once the project was finalized and approved by the author's chair, the author produced a high quality print version of the pamphlet to present at the final dissertation orals, as an example of the final product.

## **Evaluation of the Resource**

A formal evaluation of the completed text-based pamphlet was beyond the scope of this project. However, a plan for assessing the target population's satisfaction with the resource, its content validity, and its efficacy was described in the Discussion chapter.

## Chapter IV: Results

The results of this project encompassed a text-based educational pamphlet for parents of elementary-aged students dealing with cyberbullying. The purpose of this pamphlet was to increase the parents and/or guardians' understanding of cyberbullying prevention strategies, further their skillset towards addressing cyberbullying among their children, and provide easily accessible resources.

The project was a text-based pamphlet targeted towards parents and/or guardians of elementary school-aged students between the ages of 5-10. This pamphlet aimed to be intentionally brief to ensure that the target audience would read the entirety of the document. The pamphlet was designed to be engaging by utilizing *Adobe InDesign* features, such as graphics, various font changes, colors, and summary boxes. The graphic design features and principles aimed to make the pamphlet appealing and user friendly. A central theme and color scheme were utilized to create a professional look. Additionally, the sequence of the sections were intended to be organized in a manner that would be optimal for the parents by introducing the cyberbullying topic, followed by orienting the individual towards recognizing types of cyberbullying with specific examples for better illustration of the concepts. Types of commonly used platforms were also listed along with minimum age requirements, so parents were informed about what platforms are age appropriate for their children. Moreover, vignettes were utilized throughout the resource to make the information applicable to common situations with which parents might be faced. The pamphlet focused on adverse impacts of cyberbullying on cybervictims and cyberbullies. Parents were able to locate a list of common behavioral outcomes of cyberbullying, as well as recommendations on how to encourage disclosure from children along with detailed action steps. Lastly, specific resources were annotated with links. The pamphlet was divided into

five logically sequenced sections including: (a) What is Cyberbullying? (e.g., cyberbullying definition, types of cyberbullying along with specific examples, platforms with age requirements, cyberbully roles, and adverse impacts for victims), (b) Prevention strategies (e.g. clear, specific action steps for parents with some being illustrated through vignettes), (c) Recognizing/Detecting Cyberbullying (e.g., warning signs, how to talk to your child about cyberbullying and encourage disclosure), (d) What to do next? (e.g., how to intervene at school and/or with the parents of the cyberbully), (e) Resources (e.g., websites, apps, books, and school programs focused on cyberbullying).

*The Cyberbullying: A Resource for Parents of Elementary School-Aged Children* pamphlet can be found in its entirety in Appendix B.

## **Chapter V: Discussion**

### **Overview**

Today, many young students face cyberbullying and its negative consequences. Existing literature suggests that 3rd to 5th graders exhibit some form of cybervictimization, with 5th graders representing a larger proportion of the victimized individuals (DePaolis & Williford, 2015). Among elementary school children, there has been a growing trend of technology use (DePaolis & Williford; 2019). Additionally, the number of children under the age of 10 accessing Internet-enabled devices has increased. Therefore, these same children are at risk for cyberbullying victimization. Cyberbullying can cause detrimental effects in various aspects of a youth's life including psychological, social, and physical effects. Cyberbullying is also problematic because it can be conducted anonymously, 24 hours a day, seven days a week; it is widespread; and it may lead to various negative health and mental health outcomes. In a study by DePaolis and Williford (2015), only 54% of students who were victimized reported it to someone. Additionally, a study by Bauman (2010) assessing United States Youths and Internet rules enforced by their parents suggested that 44% of parents do not consider implementing a time limit for computer use, 55% of parents do not look at their child's most visited websites, 62% of parents do not install Internet filters, and 31% do not have open discussions about cyberbullying with their children. Barlett and Fennel (2018) suggest that parents are unaware of their child's online behavior. In addition, children who fear reporting cyberbullying because certain online privileges may be revoked, such as access to electronic devices, might be reluctant to disclose those incidents to their parents (Dennehy et al., 2020). Those statistics are alarming; therefore, increasing parents' ability to detect and intervene when their children are involved in cyberbullying would be beneficial in reducing victimization and aiding the parents in modeling

effective communication and disclosure. Furthermore, it is important for parents of elementary school age specifically to have accessible and empirically supported content depicted in a clinical resource.

The clinical resource developed as part of this dissertation takes the form of a text-based pamphlet, which enables parents or guardians to easily read the content of the resource in a condensed format, when they may be unable to spend time and/or money to access books and other literature. The resource aimed to provide a helpful summary of various resources that was both informative and empirically supported. Providing parents or guardians with cyberbullying information might be the most effective prevention strategy, as parents are more likely to notice warning signs or subtle behavioral changes from their children, since they spend a majority of the time with them. Additionally, parents can have ongoing discussions with their children about cyberbullying; therefore, setting guidelines within the family regarding appropriate online behavior may ultimately reduce cybervictimization. Finally, parents can learn and understand all aspects of cyberbullying through logically sequenced sections of the resource aimed at covering vast information in a condensed manner.

### **Purpose and Goals of the Project**

The purpose of developing this clinical resource was to increase parents' knowledge of cyberbullying, prevention strategies, warning signs, and steps to take when their child has been cyberbullied. As many education programs utilize print materials for parents and students, it is important to note that print materials can be effective in changing an individual's knowledge after reading the print material. Additionally, print materials can increase an individual's knowledge, change their attitudes, and even alter their behaviors as it relates to health issues (Paul, 2003). The goal of this dissertation project was to increase parents' knowledge of

cyberbullying by utilizing print material for this clinical resource. It was assumed that increasing parents' knowledge would help to reduce victimization and minimize its adverse impact of cyberbullying among elementary school-aged children. The pamphlet consists of five sections targeting specific content for easy, digestible information. A common cyberbullying prevention strategy is to disseminate information to parents about the definition of cyberbullying and how to reduce cyber-victimization so that they may be able to respond to a cyberbullying situation (Espelage & Hong, 2017). Therefore, the sections in the pamphlet include the definition of cyberbullying (education), prevention strategies, recognizing/detecting cyberbullying, recommendations for parents, and resources. The education section focused on providing definitions to common cyberbullying terms, as well as depicting short- and long-term adverse impact for victims, while providing vignettes or examples to further illustrate the concepts reviewed. Including vignettes in the pamphlet increased readability and applicability of the information provided, as it is important for the intended audience to comprehend the content of the resource (Adkins & Singh, 2001). The prevention strategies section targeted parents' understanding of a range of tactics, from simple to complex, that may help reduce victimization. These strategies included learning about the various social media platforms, as well as recommendations for parents' communication strategies when addressing cyberbullying with their children, since parents play a critical role in combating cyberbullying (Espelage & Hong, 2017). In this section, clear action steps were provided to the parent to ensure effectiveness and practical application. The third section, recognizing/detecting cyberbullying, introduced examples of behavior changes a parent might observe when their child is faced with cyberbullying. Moreover, it focused on providing step-by-step guidelines to increase effective communication between a parent and their child around the issue of cyberbullying. The

following section provided recommendations for parents to follow in the event their child has been cyberbullied. The last section provided a short list of credible sources for parents, to eliminate the need to invest time and effort in searching for resources independently. Of note, in the last section it was important to provide reliable resources, since parents may not be aware that some online resources are linked to the sale of commercial products that are not necessarily grounded in empirical research (Espelage & Hong, 2017). These resources included a variety of formats (e.g., print books, websites) to accommodate various consumer preferences.

The goal of this project was to develop a printed resource that provided thorough yet condensed information in an accessible manner for parents. Additionally, the end goal was for parents to feel more confident in discussing cyberbullying topics with their children and in managing cyberbullying incidents. To achieve these goals, several considerations were instrumental in developing the text-based pamphlet, including: a) providing up-to-date, clear, and concise information; b) increasing parents' engagement with the resource by providing graphics, summary boxes, and various fonts; and c) providing current, evidence-based resources that focus on elementary-aged students.

### **Development of the Pamphlet**

The development of the pamphlet began with an exhaustive literature review of the current literature regarding bullying and cyberbullying. Additionally, the literature review was expanded to include relevant research on types of bullying, cyberbullying roles, cyberbullying trends among children, adverse impacts, current anti-cyberbullying programs, and efficacy of those programs. The anti-cyberbullying programs reviewed were both from the United States as well as other countries. By including international programs, the aim was to provide quality content for parents as these programs have all been evaluated and deemed effective in reducing



cyberbullying (Lancaster, 2018). The outcome research for each of the included international intervention programs yielded an overall consensus that cyberbullying programs combined with assertiveness, empathy training, and parent education had a substantial decrease in cyberbullying victimization (Hutson et al., 2018; Lancaster, 2018). Therefore, this notion was incorporated in the development of the pamphlet's content, particularly in the sections on Detecting Cyberbullying, What to do next, and Resources. Moreover, the author conducted research on current resources that were available for parents of elementary-aged students through books, websites, and apps for the development of the pamphlet. In researching these resources for parents, several factors were considered for inclusion into the pamphlet. These factors included scholarly driven information, accessibility, applicability to the target audience, time and effort needed to review independently, price, and effectiveness. Furthermore, *Adobe InDesign* software was utilized to increase the parent's engagement and readability of the content.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Current Pamphlet**

One of the strengths of this pamphlet is that it informs parents about cyberbullying as well as cyberbullying prevention strategies in an abbreviated format. Along with being accessible, the format enables parents to easily consume the empirically supported information in a short amount of time. In comparison, other resources (e.g., books and websites) reviewed were time consuming, costly, and focused primarily on bullying, as opposed to cyberbullying specifically. Likewise, these same resources focused more broadly on adolescents as opposed to elementary school-age children. Although there were a limited number of resources that emphasized research on elementary-aged students, some of those same sources were problematic because the resources focused on selling consulting or speaking services. Therefore, this pamphlet was designed as a clear and concise resource in hopes it offers parents well-defined

steps to take when their child is being cyberbullied, as well as tips on how to effectively communicate with their child regarding cyberbullying experiences.

To enhance the reader's experience, the pamphlet was designed to be visually engaging. The design focused on utilizing a color scheme throughout the document, along with an assortment of fonts, summary boxes, and graphics to bring life to the vignettes. The American Psychological Association Services Incorporation (2004) recommends that psychologists who develop print brochures for marketing purposes choose graphics carefully and include relevant content in a straightforward and concise manner. In applying this recommendation to a psychoeducational brochure, the selected graphics aimed to produce a professional pamphlet while also promoting various cultural backgrounds in an effort to encourage a diverse representation within the pamphlet. There are several other advantages to having a text-based pamphlet, including its ability to be distributed at school functions or mailed and its appropriate nature for the targeted audience.

Additionally, the pamphlet is logically sequenced in a manner that adds to the organization and conciseness of the information. Print materials should prioritize ease of use for the audience so that they may understand the content in its entirety (Adkins & Singh, 2001). Moreover, using short sentences and a conversational writing style may enhance readability (APA Services, 2004). The pamphlet's sequences were created to enhance the reader's understanding of the information and create a sense of flow throughout the pamphlet.

There are also some limitations to the current pamphlet. The pace of advancement in technology is rapid and the ways in which children can bully online are always evolving. As a result, the research on cyberbullying is constantly expanding. Therefore, the pamphlet will require the developer to invest time and effort into updating the resources, as necessary. This

involves ongoing literature searches for the latest research on cyberbullying and effective prevention strategies. Depending on parents' access to other resources, a text-based pamphlet may come across as outdated when compared to online resources. In addition, careful consideration must be given to accessibility when disseminating the pamphlet. The utility of the pamphlet is only as good as its accessibility by the intended audience. For example, additional means of distribution, such as sharing the document via a hyperlink to parents' emails or mailing the pamphlet to their residence should be considered. Furthermore, the need for ongoing parent training rather than a one-time review of the pamphlet experience is important to note. Encouraging parents to continuously seek out up-to-date education on cyberbullying, increases their engagement with the subject matter, refreshes their knowledge, and helps them be better prepared to handle cyberbullying situations.

Another important limitation is that the current resource primarily targets cybervictims. In the future, it would be helpful to add additional information on cyberbullies and cyberbully-victims to inform the parents of steps to take if their child falls into any of those categories. The additional resources would help prepare parents to have ongoing discussions about cyberbullying, reflect on their parenting styles, and to model effective empathy skills for their children.

Moreover, an additional limitation of the current resource is the lack of specific cyberbullying examples as it pertains to different types of children from different backgrounds. It is important to note that the examples provided in the pamphlet were not exhaustive. Therefore, more attention could be paid in future versions of the pamphlet to illustrating more specific and varied examples of cyberbullying for individuals who identify as people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+, individuals with disabilities, and other special groups. Adding specific examples

throughout the pamphlet could improve its utility. Specifically, including examples that apply to their own child's identity helps parents increase their awareness of potential cyberbullying and how to respond to it.

Another limitation of the pamphlet is that it did not specifically address cyber-racism. According to Bliuc et al. (2018), cyber-racism is defined as "any form of communication via electronic or digital media by groups or individuals which seeks to denigrate or discriminate against individuals (by denying equal rights, freedom and opportunities) or groups because of their race or ethnicity" (p.76). Cyber-racism, much like cyberbullying, is a relatively new focus of research. However, given current socio-political circumstances in the United States, and the importance of alerting parents to escalating expressions of racism on social media, addressing cyber-racism in a future version of the pamphlet would be critical. One suggestion would be to discuss it as a specific form of cyberbullying, although more research on the similarities and differences between the two concepts is warranted. Nonetheless, addressing cyber-racism in the pamphlet and utilizing specific examples to illustrate its goals, how it is perpetrated, and its harmful effects, would be a helpful addition to the developed resource.

Furthermore, a formal evaluation of the pamphlet, including an expert review and evaluation, was outside the scope of this dissertation. The content of this pamphlet was based on cyberbullying websites as well as books authored by cyberbullying experts. At the same time, as is the case with any resource development, a formal evaluation of the resource by experts in the field is needed prior to distribution to parents. Such evaluation can help establish the relevance and accuracy of the information included in the pamphlet.

Lastly, there are other aspects of cyberbullying prevention that the pamphlet did not include and/or cover in greater depth, such as parenting styles, empathy, and assertiveness

training. According to Young and Tully (2019), parents of cybervictims and bullies are often confused about the expected action and are unlikely to involve schools if the parents do not believe it will be effective. Moreover, this lack of knowledge and guidance could lead to parents feeling worried, confused, or even disappointed. Addressing parenting styles and the need for empathy training (for cyberbullies) and assertiveness training (for cybervictims) are better addressed through parent training and family therapy services and are beyond the scope of a psychoeducational, text based resource.

## **Future Directions**

### ***Potential Improvements to the Current Pamphlet***

There are several improvements to the current pamphlet that were previously discussed in the limitations section. One important improvement is adding information for steps parents can take when their child is a cyberbully or a cyberbully-victim. Incorporating the other two cyberbullying roles would enhance the prevention of cyberbullying and, overall, could possibly reduce cybervictimization. Some parents may be hesitant to discuss issues regarding their child being a cyberbully or are unaware of their child's behavior. Therefore, the pamphlet could be a source that leads them into greater awareness of the situation and appropriate action steps. Addressing all possible roles that children can have in cyberbullying would enhance the psychoeducation portion of the pamphlet.

Additionally, the pamphlet could be converted into an online resource that is frequently updated and offers interactive information for users. As access to technology continues to expand, the accessibility of the information presented in the pamphlet continues to rise and might increase parent involvement (Olmstead, 2013).

### ***Plan for Evaluation***

Although a formal evaluation of the current version of the pamphlet was beyond the scope of this project, a plan for an evaluation assessing the target population's satisfaction with the resource, its content validity, and its efficacy was considered in this evaluation plan. Leading experts on cyberbullying would be approached to conduct a formal evaluation of the pamphlet. Specifically, they would be asked to rate the content, format/design, usefulness for the targeted audience, strengths, and limitations of the pamphlet, as well as its potential contributions to cyberbullying prevention. The experts' review and suggestions would be incorporated into a revised version of the pamphlet. The next step in the evaluation process would be to assess the target population's satisfaction with the revised version of the pamphlet. The pamphlet would be distributed to a focus group of parents of elementary-aged students. The focus group members would assess the format/presentation, content, readability, and overall usefulness and satisfaction. Each member would be asked to provide feedback on the previously discussed criteria as well as initial reactions. Based on these reviews, the author would consider further revisions to the pamphlet.

### ***Plan for Dissemination***

Following a formal evaluation of the pamphlet and revisions, efforts would be made to disseminate the pamphlet to parents of elementary school-aged children. First, dissemination through elementary schools in the nearby county, school newsletters, anti-cyberbullying programs, mental health clinics as well as through mental health and educational professionals working with the target audiences would be considered.

## Conclusion

Cyberbullying has detrimental consequences and affects countless youths. Current research has focused more on middle and high school students rather than children in elementary school. Therefore, this disparity leaves parents with a lack of information and knowledge on how to manage cyberbullying appropriately with their elementary school-aged children. It is important for parents to gain the knowledge to prevent and hopefully reduce cybervictimization. This is especially important given indications that elementary school-aged children are now among consumers of social media and participate regularly in online interactions. The author proposes that “knowledge is power” and that the pamphlet would educate parents and allow them to help guide their children in effective communication, empathy, and assertiveness so they can learn to use their voice. Prevention is instrumental in decreasing cybervictimization and this pamphlet aimed to provide the necessary steps in addressing a growing societal issue. In addition, cyberbullying is a global phenomenon which must be addressed on multiple levels. Therefore, as cyberbullying continues to be researched and addressed, psychoeducation on intervention would be ideally taught in a multifaceted manner. Preferably, intervention programs would target three audiences: parents, teachers, and children. By introducing psychoeducation early on, the long-standing effects of cyberbullying victimization might be mitigated. Having an individual become informed empowers them to take action.

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## APPENDIX A

### Non-Human Subjects Determination Notice



# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

## Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

May 12, 2020

Protocol #: 51220

Project Title: Cyber Bullying: A Resource for Parents of Elementary School-Aged Children.

Dear Lauren:

Thank you for submitting a "GPS IRB Non-Human Subjects Notification Form" for *Cyber Bullying: A Resource for Parents of Elementary School-Aged Children* project to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review. The IRB has reviewed your submitted form and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above titled project meets the requirements for *non-human subject research* under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protection of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the form that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved project occur, you will be required to submit *either* a new "GPS IRB Non-Human Subjects Notification Form" or an IRB application via the ~~eProtocol~~ system (<http://irb.pepperdine.edu>) to the Institutional Review Board.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at <https://community.pepperdine.edu/irb/policies/>.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval.

On behalf of the IRB, we wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
Pepperdine University

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research  
Dr. Judy Ho, Graduate School of Education and Psychology IRB Chair

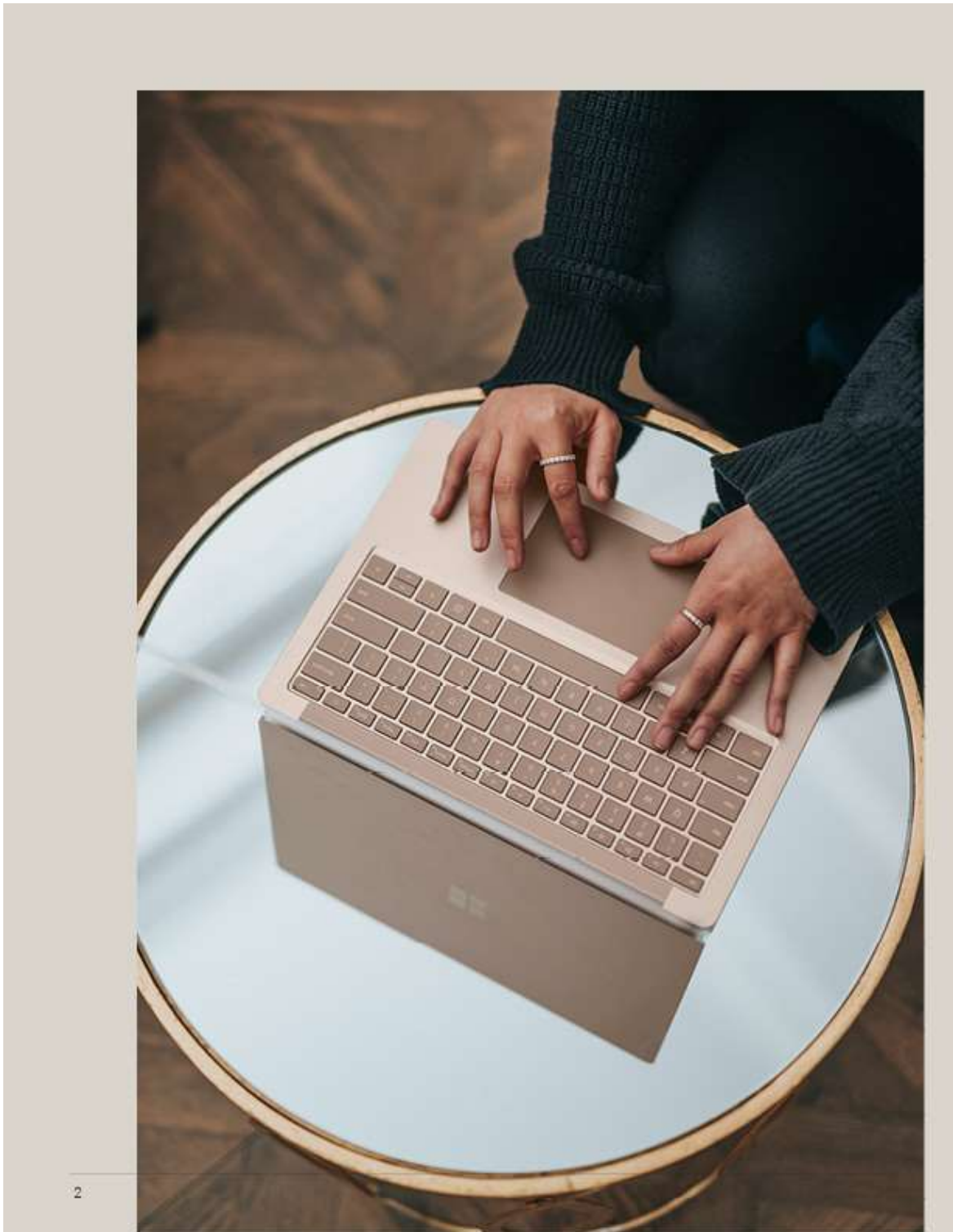
## APPENDIX B

### Cyberbullying: A Resource for Parents of Elementary School Children



CYBERBULLYING: A RESOURCE FOR  
PARENTS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
CHILDREN

LAUREN BROUSSARD, M.A.  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY  
PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY



## CONTENTS

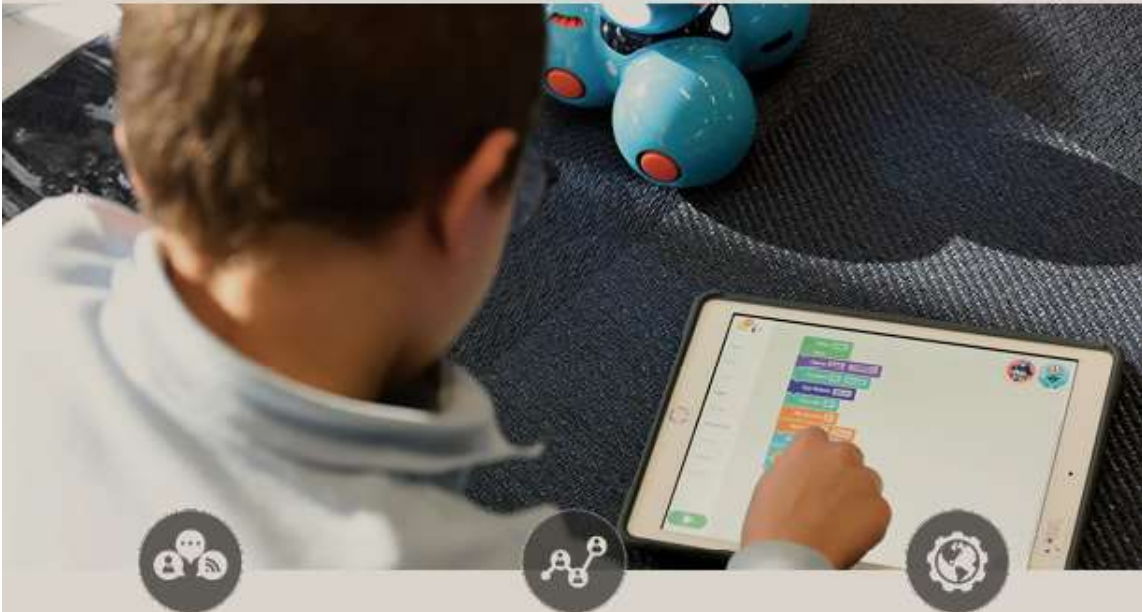
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## CYBERBULLYING

Negative, false, and harmful information, as well as images, posted and shared online or sent to an individual through digital devices, social media, or online gaming platforms. The purpose is to cause harm, including embarrassment or humiliation.



## FORMS OF CYBERBULLYING



- **Flaming:** sending angry or rude messages.
- *Example: James and Evan are talking online about their soccer game they lost. James messages Evan that he is a "loser" and blames him for losing the game.*
- **Harassment:** sending repeatedly offensive messages.
- *Example: Jamila posts a selfie on her Instagram. She then receives consistent offensive messages like, "You're so ugly" and "You shouldn't be allowed to post."*
- **Denigration:** sending untrue or cruel statements.
- *Example: Martha receives text messages stating, "You cheat on tests" and "You are dumb."*

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## ADDITIONAL FORMS OF CYBERBULLYING

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- **Cyberstalking:**

threatening to harm someone or using intimidation tactics.

- *Example: Amita threatens to "beat up" Ana if she doesn't share a secret with all their friends. She doesn't stop the group text even after Ana asks Amita to stop messaging her.*

- **Outing and trickery:**

accessing and posting embarrassing, private information about an individual.

- *Example: Henrietta sends a message on Instagram letting Otis' close friends know he has a crush on Lily, when Otis is not ready to share the information.*



- **Masquerading:**

impersonating someone and sending information that puts that person in danger or a negative light.

- *Example: Finn's friend, Ian, peer pressured him into giving Ian his Snapchat password. Consequently, Ian used it to post embarrassing images of Finn.*

- **Exclusion:** excluding an individual.

- *Example: Clara and Zoe excluded Mindy from their Close Friends discussion on Instagram.*



# PLATFORMS

## Commonly Used Apps:

Common Sense Media (2015) found that 8- to 12-year olds use an average of about six hours worth of entertainment media daily.

- **Instagram** is a photo and video sharing app. (Minimum age: 13)
- **TikTok** is an app where users can create and view videos. (Minimum age: 13)
- **GroupMe** is a group messaging app. (Minimum age: 16)
- **Kik** is a messaging app, which allows users to message anonymously. (Minimum age: 13)
- **WhatsApp** is a private messaging app that allows users to compose texts, videos, or send their locations to their contacts. (Minimum age: 16)
- **Discord** is a voice-over-IP app, which allows users to video chat with other users in public and private chat rooms. (Minimum age: 13)
- **Tumblr** is a social networking site that allows users to create blogs. (Minimum age: 13)
- **Twitter** is a microblogging site that allows participants to send messages. (Minimum age: 13)
- **Short Message Service (SMS)** allows users to compose a text message to send to others. (Minimum age: Varies)
- **Facebook** is a social networking site that allows users to connect with others through messages, photos, or videos. (Minimum age: 13)
- **YouTube** is a video sharing platform that enables users to share and view videos (Minimum age: 13). Children under the age of 13 must use YouTube Kids.
- **Snapchat** is a photo messaging and sharing app. (Minimum age: 13)
- **Yolo** is an anonymous question and answer app affiliated with Snapchat. (Minimum age: 17)
- **Steam** is an online gaming platform that allows users to play with others using their console or personal computer. (Minimum age: 13)
- **Askfm** is a website that allows users to ask questions. (Minimum age: 13)
- **Telegram** is a messaging app, which allows users to share photos, videos, and files. (Minimum age: 17)
- **Chatroulette** is a chat site that allows users to chat with other users randomly. (Minimum age: 18)
- **Line** is a messaging app, which allows users to call, text, and leave voicemails for free. (Minimum age: 12)
- **Reddit** is a comprehensive website highlighting popular social media news and content. (Minimum age: 13)
- **Sarahah** is a messaging app that allows users to send anonymous messages. (Minimum age: 17)
- **WeChat** allows users to communicate with friends or individuals nearby. (Minimum age: 13)
- **Messenger Kids** is a free messaging app. (Minimum age: 9)

## CYBERBULLY ROLES



### **CYBERBULLY**

A cyberbully is considered the aggressor by initiating aggressive behavior with the victim.



### **CYBERVICTIM**

A cybervictim is an individual who is victimized by others online. They may or may not know the identity of their cyberbully.



### **CYBERBULLY-VICTIM**

A cyberbully-victim is designated as an individual who responds to being a victim of bullying by being aggressive.

## ADDITIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

Feinberg and Robey (2015)

- "Vengeful Angel" seeks self-perceived justice
- "Power-Hungry" exerts control through fears
- "Mean Girls" seek entertainment by excluding the victim
- "Inadvertent cyberbullies" do not intend to cause harm but engage in cyberbullying as an impulsive reaction
- "Cyberbullying bystanders" witness cyberbullying but do not report it to an authority figure

## Let's introduce Sofia!

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Sofia is a 10 year-old girl in the fourth grade. She is the middle child of Julian and Gabriella. She has an older sister and a younger brother (ages 13 and 5, respectively). Sofia has been active on social media platforms such as, Instagram, TikTok, and text message. She usually posts Instagram stories and creates TikTok videos with her older sister, Sabrina. Recently, she added several mutual friends and friends of friends of her older sister on Instagram. However, she recently uploaded a photo of herself at a family party to her stories. Ever since, she has been receiving rude messages (flaming) via Instagram such as “Oh wow, I’m surprised you got invited to a party, you’re not popular. You’re like a zero.” As well as more hurtful messages. She doesn’t recognize the username of the messages being sent. She’s at a loss. We will return to Sofia’s story throughout this pamphlet.

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## PREVENTION STRATEGIES

### SOFIA'S STORY

LET'S FOCUS ON SOFIA'S CYBERBULLYING EXPERIENCE. SOFIA TELLS HER SISTER WHAT HAPPENED TO HER BUT DOESN'T WANT TO TELL HER PARENTS. HER SISTER ENCOURAGES HER TO SPEAK TO THEIR PARENTS. YET, SHE IS HESITANT OVER FEAR THEY WILL TAKE HER ELECTRONIC DEVICES AWAY.



Parents must build trust with their child. They should educate and inform, not punish help-seeking behavior. "We are glad you came to us for help. That's very brave of you."

Parents should learn and understand how to use the various social media platforms. Become a familiar user. If need be, create your own account.

Keep the computer in a common area of the home. Privacy is an earned privilege that only applies when developmentally appropriate.

Parents should begin by having discussions about appropriate online behavior, the positives and risks of being online, and family guidelines for using electronic technology.

Parents should establish a written contract about monitoring their child's devices with their child.

Parents must continue to actively monitor their child's use and have ongoing discussions about social media and the various platforms.



#### ADVERSE IMPACTS

- Children are more prone to exhibit internalizing psychosocial behaviors, such as being withdrawn, depressed, anxious, and prone to suicidal ideation (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Craig, 1998).
- Higher levels of chronic stress may lead to hyperarousal, fear, and the perception of helplessness. Additionally, psychosomatic symptoms include headaches, sleeping problems, abdominal pain, bed-wetting, and feeling fatigued.
- Longer-term effects include poor self-esteem, higher social anxiety, higher rates of absenteeism, avoiding school, lower academic functioning, and dissatisfaction with school.
- As adults, victims of childhood cyberbullying tend to exhibit signs of anger, frustration, loneliness, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, higher rates of delinquency, self-harm, and suicidal ideation (Hay, Meldrum, & Mann, 2010).
- A cyberbully tends to be associated with low school retention rates, depressive symptoms, increased aggression and risky behaviors, lack of empathy, and moral disengagement (Campbell et al., 2012; Steffgen et al., 2011).

## RECOGNIZING/DETECTING CYBERBULLYING

### WARNING SIGNS

Observing emotional withdrawal as well as behavior changes at home and/or school might lead parents to consider what stressors their child may be facing.

Parents may notice their child is being secretive with respect to the content on their devices. Other indications include an atypical disinterest in social activities, changes in mood, behavior, sleep, or appetite, and unexpected decline or cessation in the use of electronic devices. A child may appear anxious when receiving electronic messages, become isolated or withdrawn from their friends and family, or avoid discussions regarding bullying.

Some parents may be prompted by these emotional and behavior changes with their child to investigate the possibility of cyberbullying, but detection is challenging because it relies heavily on the victim's willingness and comfort in disclosing.

#### **Psychosocial behaviors:**

- Being quiet
- Withdrawn from activities or family life
- Depressed
- Anxious
- Suicidal ideation
- Being upset

#### **Psychosomatic behaviors:**

- Headaches
- Sleep issues
- Abdominal pain
- Bed-wetting
- Exhaustion

.....  
SOFIA'S PARENTS HAVE NOTICED SOFIA IS WITHDRAWN FROM FAMILY ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS PLAYING MONOPOLY. SHE ALSO APPEARS ANXIOUS AND COMPLAINS OF CONSISTENT HEADACHES AND GASTROINTESTINAL ISSUES. HER PARENTS CONTEMPLATE WHAT THEY SHOULD DO TO CONFRONT THESE BEHAVIORAL CHANGES.



## HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT CYBERBULLYING AND ENCOURAGE DISCLOSURE

- ◊ Notice any behavior changes.
- ◊ Model open and effective communication.
- ◊ Actively listen.
- ◊ Use appropriate language.
- ◊ Make eye contact.
- ◊ Show empathy.
- ◊ Eliminate distractions while communicating.
- ◊ Be direct in educating your child about cyberbullying and initiate a general discussion about it.
- ◊ Invite your child to share their experience with cyberbullying while emphasizing the need to protect them and others.
- ◊ Discuss if he or she has been a victim of cyberbullying or witnessed someone being cyberbullied.
- ◊ Develop a plan of action (who to talk to and what some of the effects can be).
- ◊ Create and maintain technology rules and explore your child's most frequently visited sites.
- ◊ Continue ongoing discussions about cyberbullying and technology use.
- ◊ Talk to other parents about strategies they have used to talk to their children.
- ◊ Access resources listed in this pamphlet and learn new strategies to talk to your child about cyberbullying.



## WHAT TO DO NEXT

### HOW TO INTERVENE

- Validate your child's experience and prioritize their safety by emphasizing the goal to protect them.
- Talk to your child and listen to their experience to learn what actually happened.
- Collect evidence. Print out screenshots of the messages or pictures and/or create recordings of the videos that were used to cyberbully your child. Keep diligent notes about the frequency, dates, intensity, duration, witnesses, and your child's experience.
- Contact the content service provider (website, apps, and online gaming platforms) as cyberbullying violates the Terms of Service. Even if your child is unable to identify the cyberbully, the service provider can take action.
- Contact the school administrators if the cyberbully attends the same school as your child. Your child's safety is a priority. All schools have a bullying prevention policy and most extend to cyberbullying as well. Therefore, you should know and understand the policies.



- Do not contact the cyberbully's parents, as they may become defensive and it may make the situation worse.
- Seek therapy, your child may benefit from speaking to a mental health professional about his or her experience and focusing on assertiveness training.
- Discuss preventive measures to limit another cyberbullying incident (time limits, privacy controls, blocking the cyberbully, and encourage disclosure).
- Contact the police if the cyberbullying escalates to physical threats.
- Stay up to date on technology devices and terms of use.

## SOFIA'S STORY Continued....

Sofia decides to tell her parents about the cyberbullying incident. Her parents are in shock and angry that someone would do this to their daughter. They begin by comforting their daughter. Afterwards, they take a screenshot of the hurtful messages and record the date and username involved. They block the user and report them to Instagram via their daughter's profile. Next, they have a family discussion regarding the guidelines for using social media platforms. Here is their conversation:

*Julian (Sofia's father):* "Sofia and Sabrina, given the cyberbullying that occurred, we want to establish family guidelines. First, in this household, the use of social media will be limited to thirty minutes per day. Second, all social media accounts must be made private. Third, we can either periodically check your accounts by being your friends on all social media platforms or you can show us what you're posting."

*Sabrina:* "I'll add you as my friend."

*Sofia:* "Same."

*Gabriella (Sofia's mother):* "Okay, we want you girls to be safe. Also, remember you can always come to us if there are any issues or if you have any worries. We love and care about you."



## RESOURCES

Websites

Books

Apps

School-based programs

In response to the rising awareness of cyberbullying and its adverse impacts, numerous resources pertaining to cyberbullying have been developed. These resources aim to provide psychoeducation regarding cyberbullying, prevention, and detection to help reduce victimization.

## WEBSITES

- **STOPBULLYING.GOV**

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

Offers a wide range of information and practical strategies related to bullying and cyberbullying. Among its offerings are tips on how to treat others online, protecting oneself from cyberbullying, and steps to take if your child is being bullied.

- **PACER CENTER**

<https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/cyberbullying/>

Provides free, concise, and empirically supported cyberbullying information and resources.

- **CYBERBULLY RESEARCH CENTER'S WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD IS CYBERBULLIED: TOP TEN TIPS FOR PARENTS (HINDUJA & PATCHIN, 2018)**

<https://cyberbullying.org/what-to-do-when-your-child-is-cyberbullied>

Provides a technology use contract, cyberbullying scripts for parents to promote dialog and discussion.

- **CDC'S ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND YOUTH VIOLENCE: A CDC ISSUE BRIEF FOR EDUCATORS AND CAREGIVERS (HERTZ & DAVID-FERDON, 2008)**

[https://www.sccgov.org/sites/cac/Documents/training/electronic aggression brief for parents.pdf](https://www.sccgov.org/sites/cac/Documents/training/electronic%20agression%20brief%20for%20parents.pdf)

Provides caregivers with knowledge about technology, adolescents, and aggression.

## BOOKS

- **CYBERBULLYING: BULLYING IN THE DIGITAL AGE (KOWALSKI, LIMBER, & AGATSTON, 2012)** outlines a review of academic research on cyberbullying, its unique challenges, and how parents and students can discourage cyberbullying.

- **MOBILE LEARNING MINDSET (HOOKER, 2017)** the parent's guide to supporting digital age learners: educates parents about mobile devices, cyberbullying, and guidelines for screen time.







## APPS

- **MOBICIP APP:** includes parental controls based on whether a child is in elementary, middle, or high school. Some features include managing all family devices, scheduling screen time, tracking a child's location, and blocking specific websites or apps.

- **MY MOBILE WATCHDOG**

**APP:** allows parents to receive notifications about their child's questionable texts, posts, videos, and unauthorized phone numbers.

## SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS

- **I-SAFE CYBER SAFETY PROGRAM (CROMBIE & TRINEER, 2003),**

is a United States school-based curriculum for 10-to-14-year-olds covering lessons on internet safety, cyber community, cybersecurity, personal safety, intellectual property, and law enforcement. Additionally, it provides social skills training to students. [https://auth.isafe.org/outreach/media/media\\_cyber\\_bullying](https://auth.isafe.org/outreach/media/media_cyber_bullying)

- **KIVA (SALMIVALLI ET AL., 2011; WILLIFORD ET AL., 2013),**

A Finland based program for nine-to-15-year-olds was identified as effective in educating teachers, parents, families, community leaders, and students in primary and secondary school on bullying and cyberbullying by increasing empathy (Williford, Elledge, and Boulton, 2013). <http://www.kivaprogram.net/parents-guide/>

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