

2017

The Online Culture of Cyberbullying: Examining the Cycle of Subcultures Through Media Constructions of Cyberbullying as a Deviant Youth Internet Phenomenon

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The Online Culture of Cyberbullying
*Examining the Cycle of Subcultures Through Media
Constructions of Cyberbullying as a Deviant Youth
Internet Phenomenon*

By

Molly-Gloria Harper

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

through the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Arts

at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada
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Examining the Cycle of Subcultures Through Media Constructions of Cyberbullying as a Deviant Youth Internet Phenomenon

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April 7th, 2017

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ABSTRACT

Youth culture today is based on the number of ‘likes’, ‘shares’, ‘retweets’, and ‘followers’ a person has on various social media sites. Reliance on technological devices, Internet connections, and a cyber presence has produced a generation where traditional face-to-face bullying has become more complex. Using the theoretical framework of cultural criminology, this paper illustrates the cultural construction of cyberbullying as a phenomenon, which emerged from the broader youth culture’s reliance on ‘being connected’, and designs the subcultures within as working in a cyclical fashion with one another to define and understand cyberbullying. Subcultures are characteristics of the entire umbrella of cyberbullying and include the subculture of the cyberbully, the cyber victim, and the cyber bystander. Through qualitative methodologies, this study aims to examine the portrayal of these subcultures of cyberbullying within popular film by analyzing and comparing both media constructions and representations of cyberbullying in popular culture films as compared to the way documentary film depicts real cases of cyberbullying that capture the Canadian public’s attention. Findings indicate that popular film’s portrayal of cyberbullying aligns with the literature associated with the construction of the cycle of the subcultures; however, largely reflects a gap in relation to the function of law, policies, and procedures to adequately address problems of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is becoming problematic in present day society due to the way it is impacting the lives of youth. This study is providing the basis for a new way of understanding such a phenomenon and its potential impact on the way individuals think and react to cyberbullying.

Key words: cyberbullying, cultural criminology, subcultures, youth, media criminology, media analysis, qualitative research, textual analysis, thematic analysis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my amazing and insightful advisor Dr. Danielle Soulliere. It has been such a pleasure to have your guidance, knowledge, and support throughout my Master's thesis project. Our trip to New Orleans to the American Society of Criminology Annual Conference would not have been possible without you. You have really had a huge role in my educational aspirations. As well, a big thank you goes to Dr. Gerald Cradock for pushing me to do my best throughout every stage of this thesis project. You really pushed me to think of everything and to ensure my thesis was very well rounded. Your scholarly background was very insightful. Last but not least, thank you to Dr. Kyle Asquith for being my external reader for this thesis project. From the moment I told you about the idea and throughout the project, your enthusiasm and encouragement were much appreciated. Without this outstanding committee this thesis would not have been possible.

Ever since I was a young girl, there was one person in my life who never let me quit, encouraged me to reach for the stars, and knew "the places I would go" would lead to achieving big dreams. Thank you to my mom for being my editor, confidant, counsellor, endless support, and biggest fan. As well, thank you to my dad for sharing his greatness with me. You never stopped supporting me and now you really can brag to your co-workers and friends because I did it! I am very lucky to have such parents who are so supportive, understanding, and willing to do anything to help me. Thank you to both of you. I love you both.

A special thank you goes to Rosemary Briscoe who has had a very positive influence on me throughout my time in university. You are truly a role model to me. Thank you for encouraging me and supporting me in regards to both my education and my dreams. My time working with you is truly one of the highlights of my university career.

University is the place to learn, grow, and make new experiences. Little did I know I would meet some of the most amazing people and that I would be privileged to call them my friends. To my best friends – thank you for keeping me somewhat sane throughout this process as without all of you I would have never been able to it! You each mean a lot to me. Ryan – you are one of the best friends a girl could ask for. Thanks for believing in me and always encouraging me even when I was ready to quit. Kristine – we made it girl! I am so grateful to have met you and become friends throughout our time in the MA program.

I consider myself very lucky to have the most loving pillar of support. To my boyfriend, Tarak – thank you for putting up with endless conversations about various topics related to my thesis. Thank you for being inquisitive about my area of interest as that led me to think, explain, and expand on my topic in new and different ways. Throughout my MA program you have always found ways to show me that the work I put in now will bring great benefits in the end. You would always keep me calm when I started to stress and always looked to comfort me when I was frustrated. I am excited to see what the future holds!

Lastly, to the youth who have ever been a victim of cyberbullying – you can make it through this. Do not let your experience define who you are. You are loved and you do matter. I want to encourage you to use your experience and turn it into something positive no matter how hard it may be. Cyberbullying is not right, just, or fair but unfortunately it happens. Do not let it be the ending of your story.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has encompassed how society connects today, causing an increasing number of youth to become dependent on the Internet. Consequently, many youths are falling victim to the depths of the Internet world. With ‘likes’, ‘shares’, ‘views’, and ‘friend requests’ determining popularity, youth are increasingly being marginalized within schools, friend groups, and the online world if they do not conform to the ‘popular’ youth dynamic. This youth culture is a breeding ground for various phenomena to arise. This is true of cyberbullying, which is viewed as a culturally constructed phenomenon only able to exist because of the coupling of technology and social media with the modern day youth culture. Cyberbullying is a concept that is difficult to define and often misunderstood. To understand it as a phenomenon means that it exists as one of the products of the youth culture that is associated with the inseparability of technology/digital devices, social media, virtual spaces, and the Internet.

Within such a cultural construction, subcultures arise where those within each subculture have a set of distinct practices, attitudes, and behaviours that define it. Cyberbullying has three main subcultures – the subculture of the cyberbully, the subculture of the cyber victim, and the subculture of the cyber bystander – that are subsections of the wider population of the youth culture where each has its own shared attitudes and cultural values (Hayward et al., 2001, p. 233). Each group is distinctly different from one another and despite being part of the larger youth culture, are not entirely understood by those both within and outside the youth culture. Based on this understanding, from a criminological standpoint, the three subcultures are treated to resemble a typical ‘criminal’, ‘victim’, and ‘witness’ mentality. By utilizing a cultural criminology perspective, the constructions of the aspects that define a youth culture and define the culturally constructed phenomenon of cyberbullying are apparent. Therefore, the development and outline

of the subcultures emerge and work in a cyclical fashion to make up cyberbullying as a type of phenomenon impacting youth in modern society.

The purpose of this research project is to answer the following research questions:

- How does cyberbullying fit within the theoretical framework provided from a cultural criminology perspective?
- In what ways is cyberbullying a culturally constructed phenomenon?
- What are the main messages within popular film in regards to cyberbullying?
- To what extent does the sample of cyberbullying films being analyzed shape or perpetuate characteristics of subcultures that exist within cyberbullying (cyberbully, cyber victim, cyber bystander)?

The aim of this research is to advance the study of cyberbullying by introducing it and understanding it within a cultural criminology perspective. Cultural criminology understands crime and deviancy according to the cultural meaning of the criminal or deviant act (Ferrell, 2015). Meaning is the key component to this theoretical model. The starting point of this research project is the development of a theoretical framework to situate cyberbullying within cultural criminology. By doing so, a framework is developed to define and characterize the term ‘youth culture’. As a result of cyberbullying emerging, the focus shifts to the role social media and technology have in the lives of the youth.

From there, the study then examines the existence of the three subcultures from a select sample of films that depict real Canadian cases of cyberbullying. These cases are then compared with the subcultural attributes uncovered within media representations of select films that were among the first to illustrate or provide a media depiction of the phenomenon being analyzed. Through this media analysis, the research uncovered any inconsistencies present within the popular

culture films that might skew the public's perception, understanding, or knowledge of cyberbullying. By utilizing qualitative techniques, this study uniquely analyzes the various elements outlined in the research questions. This allows for discussion of the future implications surrounding cyberbullying as understood from a cultural criminology perspective in the context of an evolving and ever-changing youth culture.

The reasons for undertaking this project are multiple. Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon in society. A plethora of literature exists in relation to cyberbullying specifically regarding: advancing the meaning of the term, youth perceptions around cyberbullying, comparisons to traditional bullying, case studies, prevalence in certain locations (both geographical and societal such as schools), and revaluations regarding new forms of technology. However, despite this literature, it appears that cyberbullying is still an understudied subject area and relatively little or no advancements have been made in recent years regarding cyberbullying.

Arguably, cyberbullying has yet to be perceived as criminal. After extensive research, no studies link cyberbullying with a criminological theory like cultural criminology and attempt to explain and understand cyberbullying as a deviant cultural phenomenon. The development of subcultures and a cultural criminology approach will help to further advance the subject area and provide a new way of thinking, conceptualizing, and understanding cyberbullying. This could potentially cause a shift in thinking within the wider society, more specifically to influence school policies regarding the issue. The approach this research takes is quite contemporary and presents the subject matter both in a new way and as an alternative style of thinking about cyberbullying.

2. CRITICAL DEFINITIONS & FOUNDATIONS

This section sets out to define major concepts used within the thesis. These are not exhaustive definitions; each is an outline of a critical component to cyberbullying. The purpose is to set a foundation for a common understanding of these concepts. Each are used throughout the thesis that aide in further and deeper understandings into their meanings.

Youth¹

From a criminological standpoint, youth are defined in accordance with the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which states that youth are any persons aged 12-18 (Government of Canada, 2002). Furthermore, youth make up a significant social group who are between childhood and adulthood; however, those within the ‘youth group’ are at various stages in their lives and/or levels of maturity (Frith, 1984, p. 1-2). The dynamics of being a ‘youth’ are different or change as the society itself transitions (1984, p. 2). Due to the fact that every society alters and changes differently, the specific youth culture associated with those youths alter and change as well. As Frith (1984) concludes, youth are more than an age group but rather “the social organization of an age group” (p. 2). Youth carry with them the agency to produce their own culture while simultaneously contributing to the wider society (Ito et al., 2010, p. 6).

Youth Culture²

It would be an understatement to say we all have a pretty good idea that the media environment our children are experiencing is not like the one in which we grew up (Collier, 2012, p. 1)

¹ It needs to be understood that the definitions and understandings of both youth and youth culture are relatively ‘muddy’ where the boundaries between child to youth to adult can be quite blurred. Who is categorized as a youth varies where some argue youth are between the ages of 15 to 24. The legal definition being used here aides in the narrowing down of such an age group; however, youth still may mean different things to different people.

² The focus is on North American youth and youth culture.

Associated with the age group of youth is a ‘youth culture’.³ The concept describes the “similar patterns of beliefs, values, symbols, and activities” that young people seem to share (Frith, 1984, p. 8). Youth culture is defined as the result of shared experiences where youth co-exist with one another (1984, p. 20). One of the most significant aspects of a youth culture is the association and activities of peer groups (1984, p. 22).⁴ Interactions among like-minded and similar aged peers are a defining feature of what it means to be a youth.

Youth have always been seen as a source of disorder or delinquency (Frith, 1984, p. 26). From gang involvement, hooliganism, graffiti, and other forms of trouble, youth have always displayed a sense of deviancy that was somewhat normalized (1984, p. 26). These were understood as characteristically youth activities that were subject to disapproval; however, they were anticipated by outsiders of the youth culture. I argue that today’s youth culture is characteristically different than previous youth cultures due to the vast number of social media outlets that have emerged that are being used by today’s young people. This “digital generation”⁵ practices social engagement quite differently than previous generations, which are causing systematic changes to the culture (Ito et al., 2010, p. 1) because social media is now deeply embedded into the culture where lives of youth revolve around Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Flinn, 2015p. 1).⁶

The youth culture is tied to the notion of technology where generational differences have developed over time. The current generation is of a very social and connected nature where instant communication such as texting, messenger applications, and various video messaging software, is

³ A strong example is the case of Reena Virk where both perpetrators were youth/young adults who existed within the youth culture (Vallejos 2011; Steinberg, 2009).

⁴ This is a normative and constant feature of the youth culture. Other normative practices among youth include alternative styles of dress, experimentation with drugs and alcohol, and technological advancements.

⁵ Arguably this term “digital generation” is a characteristic of the Millennial Generation as well as the newest generation – Generation Z.

⁶ Due to these technological advances and reliance on social media, today’s youth are displaying a different sense of defining who they are as individuals and as a larger culture.

become the defining feature (Ito et al., 2010, p. 11; Patchin et al., 2012, p. vii). The spaces where youth culture thrives has moved away from the schoolyard or neighbourhood ‘hangouts’ into online and virtual worlds. Generational continuity is established through the notion that youth engage in the advancement and development of technology; however, the spaces that youth occupy are vastly different from even just one generation⁷ ago. Those born in the 1990’s were users of the Internet where youth were beginning to enjoy personal computers and Internet connections that were faster than dial-up. With time, the idea of technology changed in ‘the blink of an eye’ where the ‘modern’ or present youth generation are on devices unimaginable to those born earlier than the 1990’s. This does not mean youth have monopolized the creation of new media technologies since many adults are using them⁸; however, it does indicate that youth are more so tied with their existence, continuation, and advancement (2010, p. 11-12).

To put it simply, generations change over time and space.⁹ As Frith (1984) outlines, every generation of youth revealed new aspects of ‘teenage culture’ (p. 9; Ito et al., 2010). I argue that youth today are inseparable from their devices because that is how they are advancing their generation. Forms of technology have been around for several generations where youth are usually attached to new and modern devices; however, what is changing is the ways these devices are being used. Youth culture now revolves around online communities and online interactions. As Frith (1984) states “society has become more complex” (p. 20). This is a simple explanation for

⁷ The term ‘generation’ is being used to refer to a collective group of people within society born in a particular set of years and through their ideas, actions, behaviours, etc. are characterized as a collective (Dictionary.com).

⁸ See section on Social Media.

⁹ Generations change because the youth within them figure out how to use the technology differently. They exist within a self-regulating domain that allows for youth to adapt to the technology in new, creative, and different ways. Opportunities arise where youth collectively create goals. It is important to understand this is not predetermined, rather, children and youth take what is in their environment to give it meaning. Youth are changing it (mainly the technology) to reproduce it as their own. This goes from generation to generation. Spatially, the space youth occupy to perpetuate their culture is evolving into new domains where virtual and online communities are becoming the norm rather than for previous generations who primarily engaged in face-to-face settings.

understanding what is so different about the youth culture today. This begs the questions to what extent are youth determined by technology?¹⁰⁻¹¹

Adolescence is a time where youth attempt to establish smaller communities of like-minded peers within the larger culture in attempts to gain an understanding of themselves, experiment with new things, and indulge in what is interesting to them.¹² Previously this was predominantly done in neighbourhoods, playgrounds, and school yards – anywhere youth would ‘hang out’. Youth needed to put themselves out there and expose themselves to different groups of young people in face-to-face settings. Technology was there to aide in these types of communications. It was limited, strictly purposeful, and somewhat social.¹³ Nowadays, the process of adolescence is still a period of discovery but the process is vastly different. Technology now is nearly limitless¹⁴, somewhat purposeful, and highly social. I argue previous generations might not understand youth today since the way in which ‘adolescence’ is practiced/structured is changing. Neither process is considered incorrect as they are working to achieve similar outcomes (to

¹⁰ The notion of technological determinism ought to be researched in further studies in relation to the context of this thesis.

¹¹ The idea of youth and technology tied together is not new as youth culture in its entirety has always remained in connection with the latest technology. It is the youth themselves who have followed the lead of previous generations of youth to embed themselves within the importance of having the latest gadgets and devices.

¹² In an article by Adler et al. (1995), this notion of social structure and the creation of a youth culture resembles their construction of pre-adolescent cliques. As the authors outline, cliques group pre-adolescents and shape their future socialization into adult life (1995, p. 145). I would argue that today, these cliques are being formulated online where youth belong to multiple groups; however, the structure is still relatively similar to the cliques constructed in Adler and Adler’s (1995) study. It is largely within these groups that children begin to formulate an understanding of the social world, often in opposition to adulthood. ‘Youths’ emerge to understand and manipulate their own social worlds and dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. A main outcome that emerges within this article is the idea that these pre-adolescent cliques formulate dynamics that can be translated as cyberbullying through the ways in which the children, in this case youth, function. Adler et al. (1995) determine three basic dynamics: exclusivity, status stratification and differential power, and cohesion and integration (p. 147) – all directly translate into the components of this research to understand the emergence of cyberbullying within the youth culture. The Adler et al. (1995) article mirrors notions of cyberbullying and the cycle of subcultures. The discussions of pre-adolescent cliques directly provide a strong foundation of the understanding of a youth culture and how youth function in the creation of various phenomena that emerge within their specific culture.

¹³ For example, the telephone would allow young people to make plans over the phone to meet up at a certain time for a certain purpose such as going the mall for an eight o’clock movie.

¹⁴ It is nearly limitless in the multiplicity of uses and functions the technology has and can be made to have in the lives of youth.

perpetuate the movement through the teenage years into adulthood)¹⁵ but it is important to see the implications the ‘new’ process is having on the youth culture.

The youth culture itself would still exist with the removal of technology and devices; however, aspects of technology, specifically the use of social media platforms, are increasingly shaping how youth engage with one another. An eighteen-year-old twenty years ago is still comparable in some regards to an eighteen-year-old today as traditional norms of youth behaviour still exist (Frith, 1984, p. 11). What has changed is the way youth actively interact with others where today’s social interactions are done via online websites and handheld devices rather than face-to-face. Regularities among the various youth cultures exist; however, there are varying degrees of disruption to such regularities. For example, some people may see the invention of the pager as the cornerstone in which technology impacted the way youth engage with each other, their parents, etc. Now that many more devices and software platforms exist, these regularities of being ‘connected’ are more strongly embedded into the culture and define what it means to be a youth.

Subcultures

Cyberbullying goes deeper than ‘kids just being kids’ or ‘sticks and stones breaking bones’. When you focus in on the centre point of Figure 1.1, the three subcultures are magnified in how they exist to work in a cyclical fashion (see Figure 1.2) where one subculture spills over into another in order to influence, or attempt to influence, those that exist within the other subcultures.

¹⁵ Presently, the current ‘adult culture’ is limited in terms of technology to the extent that youth engage with it but an interesting study to be done would be to really see how technology is influencing the present day youth by following a cohort of ‘modern youth’ into adulthood. When the modern youth culture ‘grows up’ it would be interesting to see if they take their practices with them or if they choose to leave them in their youth. Since, arguably, this is the first generation of youth to really develop alongside social media and the first youth culture to be so dependent and/or connected to devices it would be interesting to see if the notion of ‘adulthood’ changes in any way. As well, a point of interest is to see if the youth phenomenon of cyberbullying is perpetuated into adulthood outside its understanding presently as more of ‘cyber harassment’. The problem of delayed adulthood may be considered for further analysis.

An individual may co-exist within all the subcultures at one time where the characteristics they exude differ depending on the instance of cyberbullying being examined (see Appendix A). The role a youth takes within the cycle is dependent upon their experiences both with cyberbullying and in life outside cyberbullying. It becomes very complex because of the fluidity of the cycle and the position and instances of cyberbullying that co-exist with one another.

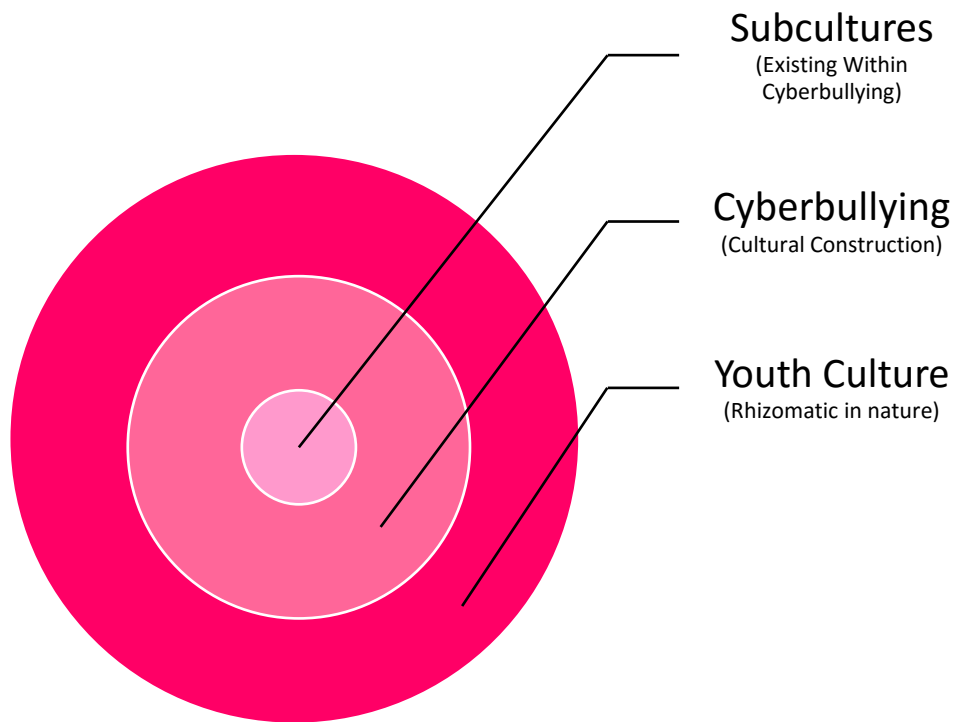


Figure 1.1 – An illustration of the wider youth culture and how cyberbullying is produced both within and as a result of the youth culture that exists characterized by the dependency on technology (mainly social media software)

There will never be a perfect, singular case of cyberbullying since multiple cases of cyberbullying are occurring at one particular moment. Each case needs to be understood critically and through a cultural lens in order to understand the roles those involved take. I am arguing that this cycle of the subcultures can aide in understanding instances of cyberbullying both on an

individual, case-by-case basis and on a more macro level in understanding the phenomenon as a whole.¹⁶

I have chosen to represent the subcultures in a cyclical fashion because each comes to exist with the development of the other. One subculture would not exist without the others – the cycle would inevitably break down or cease to exist. For example, the cyberbully would not exist if it did not have at least one cyber victim who fell into that subculture. The co-existence generates subcultural behaviours, norms, attitudes, and values among those who are within the specific subculture. The roles of the cyberbully, the cyber victim, and the cyber bystander are all distinctively different.

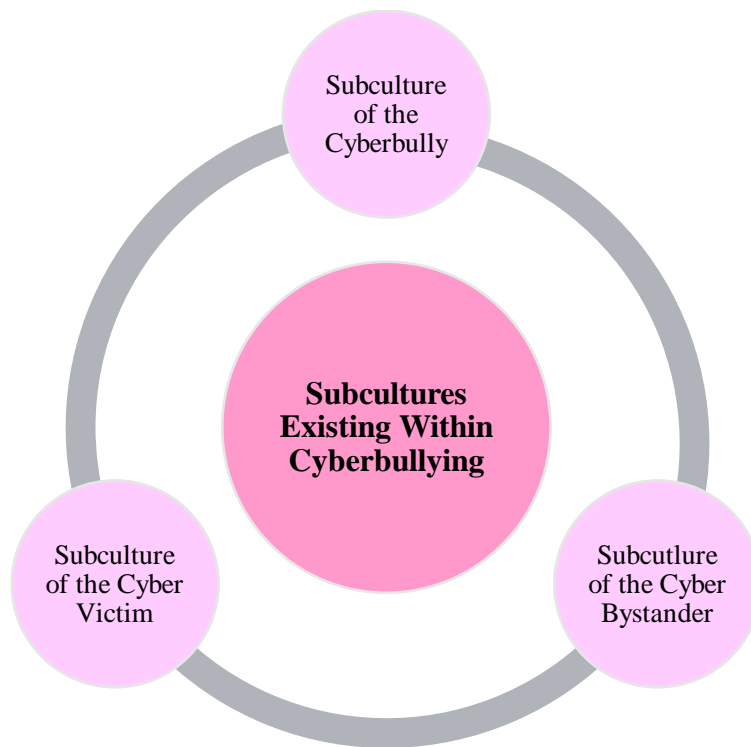


Figure 1.2 – Illustration focusing on the centre of figure 1.1 that magnifies the centre of the subcultures that emerge and exist within cyberbullying as a culturally constructed phenomenon – see a cyclical nature of the three emergent subcultures

¹⁶ The development of such an approach is quite unique to understanding the way cyberbullying is situated within the youth culture and can become vastly instrumental to assessing cyberbullying.

Depending where youth position themselves within the cycle of cyberbullying as it relates to their various experiences, different cultural components emerge to categorize them. When examining the wider youth culture, various phenomena arise, such as cyberbullying, and I argue that within that specific phenomenon three distinctive subcultures emerge including the subculture of the cyberbully, the cyber victim, and the cyber bystander. As Nwalozie (2015) states, "...subcultures share elements of the main culture, while at the same time [are] different from it" (p. 3). Each of these carries their own set of distinct practices, values, experiences, and roles within the phenomenon.

Analytical sub-groups first developed with the Chicago School; however, I argue within cyberbullying, the subcultures are much more than analytical groups.¹⁷ Subcultures are defined as sub-groups of a particular culture in which the members share similar identities, experiences, values, and beliefs (McArthur, 2009, p. 62-63; Nwalozie, 2015, p. 2). Traditional understandings of what a subculture is reflect the notion that certain groups of people engage in alternative behaviours through their practices and interests that are distinctive from the rest in the same culture (Nwalozie, 2015, p. 2). This is true of the subculture of the cyberbullies because they are the ones who initiate a specific act of cyberbullying where the cyberbully is directly targeting others within the larger youth culture. The cyberbully subculture is defined as a subculture because not all of those within the youth culture become cyberbullies; therefore, only a segment of the entire population engage with such practices, making those individuals part of the same cohort. For example, cyberbullies often share the same traits, characteristics, and have similar beliefs and/or motivations as to why they engage in such behaviour (see Appendix A).

¹⁷ It is important to critically define each subculture specifically and understand how and why it is different from an analytical grouping because the subcultures are much more than this.

Reconceptualising the term ‘subculture’ has allowed for it to be applied to the cyber victims; making them more than an analytical grouping. Nwalozie (2015) comments on the work of Miller (1958) who redeveloped various ideas brought forward from the Chicago School. It is possible that norms and values are not always deemed subculturally relevant, which implies that life experience causes people to adopt certain measures and/or patterns of behaviours (Nwalozie, 2015, p. 4); further supporting the argument that cyber victims are in fact a subculture. This is because cyber victims “share in a cultural subset of values regarding victimization and how these can impact their life style...” (Wolfgang, 1978, p. 387). The experience of victimization bonds together those who have been victimized by any instance of cyberbullying.¹⁸

The third subculture is that of the cyber bystanders who fall somewhat between the cyberbully and the cyber victim. Their subculture can fluctuate between both definitions dependent upon the cyber bystander(s) role within a particular instance of cyberbullying. On a whole, I argue that they are closer to the traditional definition of a subculture where they share norms, values, and characteristics (see Appendix A). When examining the subculture of the cyber bystander, it is important to define what a bystander is within the context of the online domain as this differs from the more common definition. This difference comes from the cyber environment providing a different form of communication where the role of the bystander changes to suit the new environment (Quirk et al., 2015, p. 432). The cyber bystander is neither the cyberbully or the cyber victim but a ‘witness’ to the activity who gauges the acceptability of the behaviour of cyberbullying based on their reaction to it (Quirk et al., 2015, p. 431).

¹⁸ For example, cyber victims may come together to formulate awareness campaigns or erect Facebook memorial pages for other cyber victims. Through this, there is a communal bond between victims when they interact with one other. I argue that these shared experiences, values, beliefs, and/or practices are something those outside that subculture may not fully understand in the same way as a cyber victim would.

In a comparative study analyzed by Quirk and Campbell (2015)¹⁹, there were four distinctive types of bystanders that can be adapted to suit the context of the online domain. These include:

- *Outsiders*: take no action despite awareness of the situation
- *Reinforcers*: positively encourage the cyberbully
- *Assistants*: join in the cyberbullying but do not start it
- *Defenders*: actively intervene in attempts to stop or disrupt the cyberbullying

Depending upon the role a cyber bystander takes, they have the ability to change or alter the outcomes in matters of cyberbullying; however, the problem lies with cyber bystanders not taking effective action against the behaviours (Quirk et al., 2015, p. 431-432).

Within the online domain, there is still the notion among bystanders that ‘I won’t do something because someone else will’; however, during this time everyone is relying on someone else to stand up to the bully. This is the Internet version of the diffusion of responsibility (Barlinska et al., 2013, p. 39). As confirmed by the Quirk and Campbell study (2015), this is worse within the online domain (p. 433) because, although it is very public and visible, it is easy for a cyber bystander to simply close, block, or scroll past any cyberbullying taking place. Cyber bystanders can easily ignore the events that are going on within their social networking platforms by limiting their exposure to them through enhanced features on those websites/platforms. Often cyber bystanders are unaware of the actual harm that is caused to the victim due to their involvement or lack thereof because of the lack of face-to-face contact and/or non-verbal communication (Barlinska et al., 2013, p. 39). This is all due to the notion that individuals behave differently in

¹⁹ In this study, the authors aimed to understand the roles bystanders took in both types of bullying – traditional and cyber – in order to better understand the complex roles within the phenomenon. The study tested and analyzed the categories of bystanders within traditional bullying as well as cyberbullying.

the online domain than they do offline (Quirk et al., 2015, p. 442) because of the nature of the way youth interact.²⁰

The cyber bystander holds the role that is the most interchangeable and flows throughout the other two subcultures to make the entire understanding of cyberbullying very complex. Cyber bystanders are always in flux within the cycle and transform more rapidly. For example, in a single case of cyberbullying, one cyber bystander may change from being closer to the cyberbully and within seconds change their position to be closer to the side of the victim. They may freely shift back and forth, or even possibly multiply. In some cases, the cyber bystander may overlap to assume the role of the cyberbully or cyber victim dependent upon the level of involvement. If this occurs, the entire cycle can be re-examined where new cyber bystanders emerge. The subcultures of the cyberbully and the cyber victim are more static than the cyber bystander; however, they do experience some movement where the possibility exists that a cyber victim can become a cyberbully and so on. Members of the subcultures may co-exist within two subcultures at one time. This is possible because of the flow within the cycle where movement can be experienced constantly with no identifiable end because the cycle always remains in motion and cyberbullying continues to exist.²¹

Social Media

Although some may argue that the media industry, including social networking websites, were simply created for their immense profits (Frith, 1984, p. 9), the way they have developed and become so intrinsic to youth and their culture makes it worthwhile to explore the role of media beyond profit making. Social media refers to the sites, software, and services that have emerged

²⁰ An issue that warrants further investigation in the notion of fatigue and how realistic it is for youth to keep up with every possible instance of cyberbullying. The online domain virtually never ‘shuts off’, so the question becomes how do you possibly keep up?

²¹ This parallels the arguments put forth in the Adler et al. (1995) article.

since the early 2000s, which are made up of social networking sites, video sharing sites, blogging platforms, and other related tools that allow users to create, view, and share content (Boyd, 2014, p. 6). A key feature of social media is that it is expanding within time and space.

As Boyd (2014) indicates, social media is a cultural phenomenon that is reshaping the information and communication system among teens (p. 6). The advent of social media appears to be giving youth today agency²², especially when it comes to cyberbullying since youth are much more active in communicating online and less passive than previous generations who did not have the same type of software or digital devices (Collier, 2012, p. 1, p. 9). However, I argue that it is actually doing quite the opposite due to the strict and rigid expectations youth have in relation to their engagement on social media. Contemporary youth are much more confined and have less spatial agency than in previous generations. Although the appearance of interconnectedness and communication provided by social media gives the essence of agency to youth, the youth culture's sense of an 'always on' nature and manipulation of the content being posted is actually limiting the agency youth have – especially when youth are given certain norms with how they should be engaging online outlined by the wider youth culture. The notion of youth bullying is not new but the means in which they do so are. Sites and apps are continually changing (Boyd, 2014, p. 8), which is generating cyberbullying to emerge; thus, limiting the agency youth have to engage online in the ways social media could be utilized to grant youth such agency.

Participating in social media via technological devices and software has become a normative practice among today's youth where the two coincide with one another as virtually inseparable (2014, p. 7). Social media platforms are helping to define this culture through their many uses, with each one exhibiting a different function. These social media outlets are one of the

²² Youth already have agency; however, youth today are more confined so they use their agency and turn to social media and technology to deal with structural confinement.

main hints at a cultural mindset that emerged after the 2000s that was referred to as Web 2.0 (2014, p. 6; Arntfield, 2015). According to an article by Milanovic (2015), some of the most popular social media platforms in 2015 were:

- Facebook is centered on creating a personal profile to share photos, updates statuses and post thoughts, and join groups with people of common interests. Users add ‘friends’ to whom they receive updates about and with whom their updates get shared.
- Twitter’s platform is to share short thoughts, links, or pictures in 140 characters or less. Users are able to follow friends, organizations, and celebrity endorsed accounts.
- Instagram allows users the ability to post aspects of their lives through photos or short videos with a small caption. Often this account is linked with Twitter and Facebook.
- Snapchat, the app, is a means of sharing brief videos or pictures with friends and other users for a chosen span of 1-10 seconds. Users can send these to users privately or share them on their ‘story’ for all their friends to view. After the time runs up, the picture and post is no longer viewable by the receiver.
- Tumblr is a blogging website where users create and follow blogs based on their interests. It consists mainly of text and pictures but is open to videos, GIFs, and other viral content. Arguably, Tumblr is a culture of its own.
- WhatsApp is an alternative messaging style app where users primarily text their friends without cost to avoid paying texting fees. Pictures and videos are able to be shared with friends and phone calls can be made through the app.

Many of these websites/applications have become part of the mainstream culture where the sharing of information and interacting with friends became an integral part of daily life for teens (Boyd,

2014, p. 7). By no means is this list exhaustive as new social media apps, platforms, and networks are emerging on a daily basis.

Social media are not new as the 1990s brought the wiki-era and early social media platforms; however, their popularity and capabilities has transformed to what social media is today (Fuchs, 2014, p. 36). In its first years of existence, websites could be viewed as gardens where individuals tended to their own gardens, only coming together when needed in the shared space, but now, at the heart of the social media era, networks are more powerful (2014, p. 36). There is this notion that people, in this case youth, are “making and doing culture” by making and sharing their own media culture (2014, p. 36). Based on this notion, I would argue that young people who are known to engage with these types of platforms more regularly, are generating their own cultural phenomenon within their online words. Amongst other things, this produced cyberbullying. Young people exist within their own culture, partially defined by the social media that produces various phenomena, such as cyberbullying.

Harm

Digital software is only the instrument of harm (Bryant, 2011, p. 411). Since the software or digital device acts as a barrier, “perpetrators are physically removed from their victims” which is causing a new notion of harm where physical presence is no longer mandatory (2011, p. 415). I argue that this is problematic and more harmful than traditional bullying because there are no barriers – cyberbullying can happen anywhere; it is inescapable even when the device is turned off because the cyberbullying continues to exist. The unfortunate aspect is that youth and nearly everyone else is expected to use social media, but this expectation means exposure to cyberbullying is nearly inevitable.

It is important to define harm and the way harm is situated within cyberbullying. In this context, I am choosing to define harm as any emotional, physical, or psychological impact on a person's well-being as a result of words, actions, or behaviours. Harm is the outcome of such actions, intentional or not, that does not require any physical contact to produce said harm. This definition is based on the notion that words harm people which include, but is not limited to: obscenity, insults, profanity, abuse, harassment, and hate (Jay, 2009, p. 81). I think that many people tend to turn to the online domain as a way to state their opinions, thoughts, beliefs, etc. for the world to see or read because they can hide behind a keyboard with little to no regard for how their words or actions are influencing the people reading or viewing them. When applying this definition to cyberbullying, the notion of unintentional harm becomes void. I would argue that engaging with cyberbullying produces intentional harm because those who are posting, sharing, liking, or commenting on harmful content on social media sites do so with the knowledge that one or more people are the target of the words, videos, or photos that are 'viral'.

With that being said, cyberbullying remains an intentional practice rather than 'something that just happens' where youth engage in such behaviours online to intentionally harm others. The behaviour itself is not normative as that would indicate 'normal' behaviours can be criminalized. In this sense, while youth may think cyberbullying is normal and accept it exists, the outcomes of the practice of cyberbullying has not reached a point that they are 'normal'.²³ When harm occurs as a product of cyberbullying, it captures the attention of the public or at least a few within the scope of the incident. Harm as the product of cyberbullying, such as a suicide for example, still holds 'shock value' unlike the incident of cyberbullying which is treated as something that is a

²³ Normal here refers to the function of the cultural whole and how youth define the practices that are considered 'normal' within their own youth culture.

regular part of the youth culture. Therefore, the action of cyberbullying is becoming normalized among youth.²⁴

When an action is normalized there are no legal consequences because that behaviour is ‘normal’ and widely accepted by society as such. When the action is deviant or against the norm, there are an array of consequences faced by those who deviate from the norm. Therefore, cyberbullying is not yet normalized in today’s wider societal culture because cyberbullying carries with it certain and specific consequences.²⁵ In this regard, I feel it would be necessary to state that for this reason, if harm was intentional, laws, regulations and statues would become void because harm would be considered an everyday occurrence widely acceptable by society. This is just not the case. Responsibility and consequences for the behaviour are needed.

As seen in a 2011 mandate issued by Toronto Police along with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) website, there is a stronger police presence within schools where many school boards are partnering with the police to ensure deviant and/or criminal activities, including those that occur online and outside the school walls (that have implications for the safety of students within schools) are being handled accordingly (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2016; Police/School Board Protocol, 2011, p. 20). For example, just a few years ago a student would be sent home for punching another student in the nose; however, nowadays the police are called to intervene in such situations. There is a movement toward a criminalization of these ‘deviant’ actions youth are engaging in. This is paving the way for responsibility for actions and treating

²⁴ This status has not yet been achieved within the broader society and I am doubtful it ever will.

²⁵ This argument begins to tease out a large gap in the literature and ought to be examined further outside the scope of this thesis research. Cyberbullying presents an intricate argument when assessing its ‘normality’ in relation to the wider society. Although cyberbullying is thought to be a normal, everyday practice among youth it is important to understand it really is not normative. This is because when a practice is considered normal it voids the notion that there are consequences and the deviant status is removed. This is simply untrue about cyberbullying. By removing the notion that cyberbullying is normative it opens it up to analysis from a consequentialist perspective to assess the notion that punitive consequences are existent, thus making it not normative. Further research is needed to expand on this argument.

these ‘harmful’ actions in accordance to the law rather than a tolerable ‘thing’ or merely just ‘boys will be boys’. This is a step in the right direction because it is showing that these normative practices among youth ought to have some sort of accountability; however, when it comes to the online domain, accountability is often difficult to produce. Even though the cyberbullies are children/youth, they need to be held responsible for their actions (Parker, 2004, p. 243) because if not, I argue, the phenomenon will only become more detrimental to those who are involved, mainly the victims.²⁶

Recognition should also be given to the idea that some cyberbullies or even some cyber bystanders may attribute their actions as defending themselves. Harmful words and actions should not be a retaliation to initial harmful words or actions because, as the age old argument states, ‘two wrongs do not make a right’. As well, the cyberbully might try to justify what they did or said by saying ‘it was only a joke’. These instances should still be regarded as serious when various harms are inflicted upon the victim(s). This argument can circle back to place blame on the victim for being too sensitive, not having a sense of humour, etc. All in all, it comes down to the notion that youth need to recognize that words and actions have the ability to cause various levels of harm to others. Specifically, when these actions and words are said or done intentionally, as in the phenomenon of cyberbullying, they are never acceptable or tolerable even if the cyberbully, for example, was just trying to be funny.

The consequences of the harm will differ for each party involved. In my opinion, the victim holds the most severe consequences since they are the direct target of such action. In severe cases

²⁶ Accountability in the online domain presents a gap in the literature as to where cyberbullying fits within the law and how it is treated based on the circumstances of the incident. I would suggest further examination into this argument by examining the laws, regulations, policies, school protocols, and statutes as they pertain to cyberbullying and online deviance/crime. A reworking of criminal responsibility ought to be conducted in order to account for ‘cyberbullicide’ after a certain threshold of victimization.

of cyberbullying the victim may resort to taking their own life, referred to as ‘cyberbullicide’ (Hinduja et al., 2010, p. 207-208; Penn, 2011), which is an inability to cope with the various levels of harm and trauma they experience as a result of the victimization. This is the most serious level of harm within the context of cyberbullying. Cyberbullicide is when a cyber victim takes their own life as a result to the victimization they experience through the words and/or actions of the cyberbully and cyber bystanders within the online domain (Hinduja et al., 2010, p. 207-208). I propose that in no situation is the harm justified by the cyberbully or the cyber bystander(s) who help to perpetuate the cycle of harm and repeated exposure to the cause of the harm through the abilities of the technological social platforms youth are engaging with.

Within the work of Arendt (1969) the concepts of force, violence, authority, and power are defined. Each concept is relevant to the understanding of how harms are generated through the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Force is the physical act (Arendt, 1969, p. 44-45). Violence is implemented through tools and used purposefully (1969, p. 46). When referring to authority, Arendt (1969) means authority of office and not personal authority such as relating to the power dynamic of parties involved (p. 45). Each of these elements ultimately relate to and describe power. Power is both public and consensual since it belongs to ‘the group’ (1969, p. 44). Generally, this means that someone has gained empowerment or strength (1969, p. 44).

In relation to force an example would be a punch in the nose or a physical altercation more so seen in traditional bullying. In the phenomenon of cyberbullying, violence is conducted through the technology. The device allows for the distance between the parties involved in any case of cyberbullying. This is essentially the removal of the need for the cyberbully and cyber victim, for example, to be face-to-face or in close proximity to one another. Authority is slightly more complex as authority is given to a person based on their positioning. For example, a doctor holds

authority over the practice since s/he is the doctor. Authority can easily be lost through behaviours and/or equality (where one is no longer of more authority than the other) (1969, p. 45). Cyberbullies are not given authority and are not authorized to do the cyberbullying. What the cyberbullies are doing and what the cyber bystanders are further perpetuating is an act of violence. Cyberbullying is a symbolic punch in the nose that is carried out by a cyberbully who uses technology to do the act of violence. This 'punch in the nose' is amplified by the technology that is being utilized. Therefore, the harm is a product of the act of violence and violence, according to Arendt (1969), is illegal.

As Arendt (1969) indicates, power is a group dynamic that is only legitimized when the entire group comes together (p. 44). Since power is not individual it cannot be granted to the cyberbully. This notion of power is diminished once the cyber bystanders dismantle. Essentially the cyber bystanders are collectively capable of choosing how they will act in specific cases of cyberbullying. This is where it becomes complex. On an individual basis these cyber bystanders hold strength, not power. The strength one individual bystander has can easily be overpowered by the majority (1969, p. 44). For example, when one individual cyber bystander goes against the group, let's say by supporting the cyber victim over the cyberbully, their strength of independence is overturned by the majority. Essentially, although the cyberbully may think they hold the ultimate power, it really is the group of cyber bystanders who do so. Without their involvement the posts that are classified as cyberbullying hold little to no value because then it would be meaningless and the entire phenomenon would collapse.

When harm is treated as a product of violence, it is easy to conceptualize the notion of harm as a result where technology is the medium in which such harm takes place. Essentially cyberbullies are polluting and degrading the online environment when they engage in acts of

cyberbullying because this ‘violence’ is fundamentally public. It is sufficiently intrusive to the environment even when there is no harm to any individual because cyberbullying is ‘harming’ the entire online domain in which it is existent within.²⁷ Any harm to the environment itself poses a harm to those who exist with or engage in that specific environment. Cyberbullying itself is harmful to the society – not only because of the ways it harms individuals who are targeted but also because it goes against or threatens to harm the ideals of the society in its entirety. Due to this notion, it is difficult to predict the ways in which society will respond to such harm especially when the use of technology becomes even more prevalent than it is today.²⁸

Risk

A risk is simply an attribute, varying in severity, associated with various events and activities. Risks essentially pose an indication of the predicted and/or potential outcome having a varying degree of harm within a particular outcome. Green (1997, p. 120) has indicated that we are all engaged in surveillance of risk within the environments we exist (p. 120). I think people tend to engage with the online domain knowing that there is a risk that the content they generate, share, like, post, or upload has the ability to reach far beyond the intended audience; however, I would argue that very few people, especially youth, take this seriously. Since not everyone

²⁷ The argument can be made that a simple solution is to make the online environment safer as then it would indicate that the cyberbullying that exists would be less impactful or virtually non-existent. Some might even suggest that it would begin to make these cyberbullies more aware of their actions and potentially begin to change their actions and behaviours. However, there is such a notion of being ‘too safe’, which would still be problematic. Being guaranteed cyberbullying-free is not the solution to the problem. I would argue this would only transfer the deviancy into other channels or convert it into other forms. This argument warrants further exploration outside the context of this thesis; however, it still holds relevancy within it. This greatly parallels the R v. Sharpe case in the Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling regarding pornography (R v. Sharpe, 2001).

²⁸ The concept of anticipatory nuisance as discussed by Sharp (1988) is quite fitting for this notion. Sharp (1988) introduces the term as a way in which people are able prevent such harms by recognizing them at the forefront and seeking remedy prior to any major harm occurring (p. 630). Although this seems relevant in theory, it may be hard to achieve online. As well, this could create problems for the online domain such as rigid restrictions to online activities or an intense notion of ‘policing’ the online domain. Largely this reverts back to the question of where the online domains fits within such laws and regulations.

becomes victimized as a result of their online presence, this notion of surveillance of the risks present may not always occur to users despite the fact that the risks never really ‘go away’.

Harm can occur when cyber victims miscalculate the risks associated with the situation – that being the content associated with their presence in the online domain – by underestimating the potential risks it could have (Green, 1997, p. 125). Green (1997) uses the example of tripping over a rock where the person, let’s say a construction worker, has the right equipment and clothing to prevent slips, falls, and job-related injuries but this does not prevent injury to them from tripping over said rock (p. 125). Furthermore, Green (1997) states that these ‘accidents’ that occur are because people fail to calculate or are miscalculating risks (p. 126, 129). It is important to note that the term accident is inappropriate when referring to cyberbullying. No instance of cyberbullying is ever an ‘accident’ but rather it is an incident that was intended to occur although its consequences may not be intended.

When applying Green’s (1997) argument to cyberbullying it becomes complex. A cyber victim can essentially amour or attempt to protect themselves in every possible way but the risk of being cyberbullied will never be zero (Green, 1997). For example, this could be because cyberbullying incidents are not always based on true facts or on real events. It is easy for a cyberbully to create an entire ‘rumour’ or falsified story at the expense of the cyber victim. A cyber victim and any others within the youth culture can only protect themselves so much. One implication this could have is that the cyber victim, maybe even the entire youth culture, is then forced conform to a specific standard in which individuality and uniqueness are no longer present because they become so fearful of being victimized and try to avoid harm even though the risks will never be eliminated. Ultimately, there are risks to participating in the online and virtual worlds; however, I argue this risk is more favourable than the risks a young person takes by not

establishing an online presence.²⁹ This would be ‘abnormal’ within the youth culture and potentially still not shield a young person from being cyberbullied. Cyber victims do not need to be online in order to be victimized.³⁰

Green (1997) suggests the home is one of the most dangerous spaces (p. 136) for a youth.³¹ Although the home is a highly regulated environment, there is rather limitless risks that can seep into a youth’s home that make them vulnerable to cyberbullying. Cyberbullying has definitely caused a shift in the location of the action where children are no longer safe in their own homes. For example, if a youth was being bullied at school their home was their safe haven where they were away from the risk of being bullied; however, today cyberbullying is occurring on devices that youth use within various spaces including the home. There is no longer the notion that the home is risk-free from the ‘danger’ because wherever the devices are, the cyberbullying is present. I argue that even environments where there are regulations and rules it still may not be enough to eliminate risks. Due to cyberbullying occurring online and not happening ‘out in the open’ where it is easy to prevent and regulate, this is causing a shift in the way the home could be viewed leading to questions as to how cyberbullying is able to exist in such a highly regulated environment.³² All in all, to advance Green’s (1997) argument, yes the home is still one of the

²⁹ This argument is implied for the mere vulnerabilities and ‘other’ risks youth expose themselves to when they are not involved with the online world. A youth who is not online becomes an easy target for traditional bullying with little to no social currency or hierarchical value because of their lack of participation in the online youth culture. By not engaging online, there is little to no meaning for that youth in the wider construction of the youth culture’s movement to the online domain.

³⁰ Youth who are not involved online are not somehow excluded from being victimized online. Others within the youth culture can easily spread content without their knowledge or regardless if the cyber victim is able to view the content or not.

³¹ Arguably the home is a private space that can be considered to be rapidly transforming into a less private of a space and more so public like other spaces youth occupy such as school or the playground all because of the boundary-less online domain, which is increasingly finding its way into these ‘regulated’ environments. Transformations are taking place where youth are no longer ‘safe’ or ‘free from risk’ in their private spaces.

³² Even in a regulated environment like the home, where parents attempt to safeguard their children from the threats of the Internet, youth find ways around such barriers. As seen in the Amanda Todd story, youth often are very sneaky and hide their online activity from their parents. Thus, indicating the home may no longer be as regulated as it once

most dangerous places; however, nowhere else is much safer since the online domain really has no limits. Devices that are able to access social media are everywhere and can be used at any time thus making cyberbullying inescapable. The overarching concept is that risk is a ‘cultural construction’.

Youth are often expected to take certain risks that are usually socially acceptable (Green, 1997, p. 137-138); however, this is not a justifiable ‘excuse’ to rationalize or legitimize engaging in the deviant activity of cyberbullying. Green (1997) uses the example of the cigarette. Smoking a cigarette can play an important cultural function where it is not about the health risks associated with it but more about the ‘style’ of the risk that is taken to gain a certain status and/or the social function of smoking the cigarette within the subculture one belongs to (Green, 1997, p. 138). This metaphor can be applied to cyberbullying. The activity itself is deviant and youth often participate in and/or initiate cyberbullying as a way to fit in with the subcultures they are seeking membership into or are already a part of. The risks of being the cyberbully are outweighed by the function of the action and the meaning that action has in the eyes of the cyberbully. The entire activity holds a certain function within the youth culture. The risks of being the cyberbully are outweighed by the cyberbully in attempts to achieve some sort of goal, which is often to harm the cyber victim in some way.³³

Risk taking is a normative stage in the processes of adolescence but when the risks of the behaviour reach the point of excess, the behaviour or activity becomes problematic (1997, p. 139).

was since the introduction of such technology and devices that are relatively small, easy to use, and features that can block, hide, or ‘remove’ traces of such activity. Further analysis on this notion is warranted.

³³ The concept of risk warrants further analysis due to the complexity of the concept. Within this paper I am arguing that risks of using the Internet and social media, in relation to cyberbullying, will likely never be zero. However, what cyberbullying is creating is a different kind of risk – they are risks that are taking place within a cultural construction. Risk will never be absolute – there will never be no risks; however, it is the nature of the risks and the level of risks activities pose to youth that are being described and outlined in relation to cyberbullying. Risks are associated with probability and the odds that an outcome will take place – thanks to perception, risks can be distorted.

I will argue that cyberbullying in today's youth culture has gone past the threshold of acceptability where many of the instances of cyberbullying pose excess risks to both the youth culture and largely to the cyber victims. The risks are starting to, and arguably have in some cases (such as where the cyber victim committed suicide), signify danger (1997, p. 140). This can largely be attributed to the evolution of the means in which bullying is completed. With online and virtual worlds, the risks faced are being produced in such a way that the dangers posed may not be controllable (1997, p. 148) due to the large scope and limitless ability technology provides.

Traditional Bullying

Bullying has been around for many generations as nearly everyone has had an experience with bullying at some point in his/her lifetime, mainly in childhood on the schoolyard playground. There are three main groups involved within bullying: the bully, the victim, and the bystander. One of the main features of bullying involves power where bullies assert their dominance and/or power over others through aggression, physical size, strength, and status (Tepperman et al., 2013, p. 175; Holt, 2011, p. 176). Traditional bullying involves face-to-face contact or indirect contact through peer groups (2013, p. 175). Regardless of being direct or indirect, in almost all cases, the bully knows their victim and vice versa.

Bullying can be physical, emotional, psychological, and/or mental, which provokes fear and many other negative effects on the victim (2013, p. 175; Hinduja et al., 2009, p. 185). Bullying behaviours can range from physical threats, such as assault, to more subtle forms of aggression such as spreading rumors (Hinduja et al., 2009, p. 185). As well, bullying can range from a one-time incident to more often, repeated and deliberate harassment (2009, p. 185; Tepperman et al., 2013, p. 175-176). Incidents of bullying are not isolated. What I mean by this is that a single bully can have multiple victims at one time and a victim can be subject to multiple bullies at one time.

Generally, bullying has been seen as a youth phenomenon (2009, p. 185). Overtime, new types of bullying have emerged as the dynamics of youth began changing. Cyberbullying first emerged as an extension of traditional bullying; however, I argue that it ought to be considered in its own rite as an entirely separate phenomenon.

Cyberbullying

Today's youth are much more 'online' focused, which has resulted in the common-placed occurrence of bullying within online software. The abuse and manipulation of technology is becoming more prominent with the modern development of digital software that youth are increasingly making use of. For this reason, I will argue that cyberbullying has become a cultural phenomenon that has emerged as a product of the present day youth culture, which is becoming more problematic now that it is becoming a more widespread phenomenon.

Frith (1984) argues that youth symbolize certain pleasures and risks associated with their culture such as fashion, consumption, pop music, and fun (p. 14). I will propose that youth are symbolizing the phenomenon of cyberbullying since it has developed extensively in recent years despite elements of it and traditional bullying being present in previous youth cultures. It was not until the early 2000s that cyberbullying really made itself known as a problematic practice within the wider society (Patchin et al., 2006). With such a close connection, I can make a reasonable inference that there is a correlation between the rise in social media use, youth reliance on technology, and the pervasiveness of cyberbullying in the youth culture – this thesis will prove this hypothesis. Since bullying, and the early development of cyberbullying, has always existed it becomes associated with youth even more so today because the youth culture failed to stop it but rather let it evolve and continue to expand into what cyberbullying is today.

Defining cyberbullying has been a problematic area throughout much of the literature as scholars have not been able to come to an agreed upon definition – most likely because cyberbullying continues to evolve, change, and expand. As well, it largely depends on who is defining it. For example, youth often distinguish drama³⁴ as being distinctly different from cyberbullying whereas adults, such as parents, teachers, and scholars, would include drama, such as gossip, as a type of cyberbullying (Boyd, 2014, p. 137). Evidently, this concept is very complex. Patching and Hinduja (2006) first defined cyberbullying as “wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text” (p. 152). However, the changing dynamic of cyberbullying from what it once was to its present day existence, makes this definition inadequate. Cyberbullying is often defined in relation to traditional bullying, which is inherently problematic. As Davis, Randall, and Orand (2015) outline, there are distinct properties and dynamics of online environments where cyberbullying occurs that differentiates it from traditional bullying (p. 359) and the two must be understood as distinct. Unique qualities of cyberbullying introduce a new level of intensity and complicate the dynamics of bullying through the characteristics of an ‘always on’ nature and ‘anonymity’ (Davis et al., 2015, p. 359).

In simple terms, cyberbullying is one of the many outcomes of electronic communication (Patchin et al., 2012, p. viii). For the purpose of this research and in the context of a cultural criminology framework, cyberbullying is defined as a deviant phenomenon existing as a product of the present day youth culture “that is perpetuated through the use of electronic media” (Rachoene et al., 2015, p. 304). By defining cyberbullying in this way, I propose that it is leaving

³⁴ According to Boyd (2014), drama is referred to as a range of behaviours of interpersonal conflict from ‘insignificant joking around’ to serious, jealousy-driven aggression (p. 137). Teens themselves saw cyberbullying as drama where parents may be more apt to classify it for what it is – cyberbullying. Based on her study, Boyd (2014) defined drama as “performative, interpersonal conflict that takes place in front of an active, engaged audience, often on social media” (p. 138). Drama does not necessarily assume there is a victim and a perpetrator. This is the distinguishing difference between drama and cyberbullying (Boyd, 2014, p. 138). Social media, according to Boyd’s study, was a key factor to the escalation of drama that is producing cyberbullying (2014, p. 138).

room for other emergent criteria and cultural changes that might alter or further shape what cyberbullying is and how it relates to the modern youth culture. Patchin and Hinduja (2006) failed to account for changing technology by specifically isolating cyberbullying to electronic text. This is problematic because cyberbullying today takes on many forms such as texts, pictures, and videos across a range of software and devices. Through my definition and overall research project, my aim is to lay the groundwork for a better and new understanding of cyberbullying that garners an awareness among society to change the way incidents of cyberbullying are understood and treated.

Boyd's (2014) characteristics of technology can easily be applied as the main characteristics of cyberbullying. The phenomenon relies on each of these aspects for it to be carried out and for its continued existence. These include:

- Persistence: permanence of context and expressions online (Boyd, 2014, p. 11) means that messages, even after they are deleted or removed, still hold space in the online and virtual world often through records of that particular website or from a screenshot of a person who viewed it
- Visibility: the massive scope and potential audience who can be considered witnesses and viewers of content and posts (2014, p. 11) because viewership has the ability to expand wide beyond the intended audience
 - "...Interactions are public by default, private through effort" (p. 12); however, with the rapid ability of online content to spread, private exchanges may not always be completely private
- Spreadability: content is able to spread with ease through the 'forward', 'repost', and 'share' functions on many social media platforms (2014, p. 11-12)

- Searchability: the ability to search and find content through search engines and the search function on many websites, including social media, allows a plethora of posts, for example, related to the search terms to arise (2014, p. 11-12), which is not limited to a certain geographical area or group such as a friend's list – meaning that anyone, anywhere can search and gain access to content on the Internet

Each of these components help to characterize what cyberbullying is and has become since the shift away from traditional bullying. What is important to understand is that youth use this technology to make themselves public³⁵ (Boyd, 2014, p. 13-14) and do so through means of technology without often considering the feelings of others. Thus, I am arguing that cyberbullying emerges and is very much intentional.

Due to the popularity of smartphones and devices that encompass a variety of uses, including both cellphone and Internet functions, cyberbullying can be seen as a “single construct” unlike in previous research which distinguishes cyberbullying into two distinct categories – Internet bullying and cellphone bullying (Smith et al., 2013, p. 5). This is no longer necessary since technology is continually surpassing expectations where a single device can carry out a multiplicity of functions, thus enhancing the means of what can be accomplished using a single device which hosts a variety of software platforms.

The range of actions that can be carried out are worth focus. Behaviours that constitute cyberbullying include: flaming (use of angry and vulgar language to provoke a fight or aggression), harassment, threats, impersonation, outing, trickery, and exclusion (Smith et al., 2013, p. 5; Patchin et al., 2006, p. 152; Feinburg et al., 2009, p. 12; Miller, 2012, p. 268). In recent years these have even evolved to provoke new terminology exclusive to the cyberbullying world where ‘sexting’,

³⁵ This is in comparison to the arguments presented by Arendt (1969) where the concept of power is both public and consensual as it belongs to a ‘group’.

‘trolling’, and ‘griefing’ are gaining popularity to describe and put a name to a behaviour that is apparent in various virtual worlds or spaces (Smith et al., 2013, p. 5-6). It is important to note that these types of cyberbullying are not an exhaustive list, because as technology develops, so will cyberbullying (Smith et al., 2013, p. 5).³⁶

Marcum (2011) indicates that cyberbullying is largely a phenomenon associated with youth and generally occurs between minors as similar types of behaviours involving adults would constitute different variations of cyberbullying including cyber harassment and cyber stalking (p. 177). For the basis of this thesis research, I have made the choice to specifically focus on youth and their roles within cyberbullying. I fully acknowledge and understand that other groups in society, especially celebrities and adults, can find themselves in various subcultures related to the phenomenon as well. Those groups will not be explored in this thesis research since I am exploring the topic specifically from a cultural criminology perspective as cyberbullying relates to the present day youth culture. Future research as to the dynamics of cyberbullying and how it impacts other groups outside youth in society would be warranted in other research projects. Since the topic I have chosen is understudied, it is complex enough for me to focus entirely on youth. From my perspective, youth are the backbone to understanding cyberbullying.

Deviance

It is clear that youth culture did not develop in a vacuum (Frith, 1984, p. 15). Since the early 1950s, possibly even earlier, middle class youth culture was becoming more “self-consciously rebellious” (Frith, 1984, p. 14). I would argue that in the modern society, this has transformed into some, but not all, youth being self-conscious of their deviance as it relates to their

³⁶ Technology previously did not allow for trickery; however, there is now more elaborate technology with a vast array of capabilities making it become highly complex. I am arguing here that the plethora of types of behaviours that can constitute cyberbullying fall into an array of categories and classifications that warrant recognition; however, this is not an exhaustive list.

involvement in cyberbullying. Each culture of youth had specific social norms and generates a sense of normalcy that continues into today. For example, it is 'normal' for youth to experiment with drugs and alcohol without being labelled as deviant (within certain limitations). There are boundaries; however, which generate deviancy when the behaviour is pushed passed a certain threshold. For example, it is a 'normal' part of childhood and the teenage years to experience social exclusion, name calling, and bullying and/or cyberbullying.

What is problematic and deviant, is when the cyberbullying goes too far to the point that there is a serious level of harm involved. Deviancy is breaking the norm or the acceptable level of tolerance within a specific society, or in this case the youth culture. Deviant behaviours are often patterns of behaviour acquired through cultural and/or subcultural exposure (Bryant, 1990, p. 293). Based on this notion, I think that today's youth culture has taken that sense of bullying and changed what exactly it is to reflect their own cultural dynamics and generational mindset. Bullying as deviance shows purpose and function (1990, p. 27). This is also true of cyberbullying where youth are engaging in the deviant behaviour for some type of purpose (1990, p. 27-28).

The concept of deviance was originally intended to categorize violations of norms and encompass behaviours of people that were not widely accepted among the larger society. This term in modern times carries many negative connotations where those who are 'deviant' or engage in 'deviant practices' are treated in accordance with criminal and judgemental demeanors (Jensen, 2011, p. 11). Deviancy is a set of behaviours or practices that the wider population sees in a negative light. However, I am doubtful that the youth who engage in cyberbullying would see themselves as deviant. It is hypothesized that cyberbullying has become a normative, cultural practice among youth due to the culture's interconnection with the Internet, social media, and technology. Youth might actually view cyberbullying very differently, and dependent upon their

role in the cycle of the subcultures, may disregard the deviant nature of the practices they are engaging with or possibly not understand or acknowledge the harmful implications of cyberbullying.

Deviancy varies across time, space and cultures so particular examples of deviancy might be acceptable in some instances and not in others (Best, 2011, p. 17). Throughout generations, bullying has been a normative practice whereas, with the adaptation of social media, software, and technology dependency, bullying has developed into something much larger which carries undertones of deviancy with it – cyberbullying. When the phenomenon first emerged, it was not treated as harmful in its own right; rather it was treated similar to or even the same as traditional bullying. Over time cyberbullying has been able to develop and become a significant youth cultural phenomenon.

The way it is understood as a deviant practice needs clarification. Cyberbullying is a type of normalized deviancy (Arntfield, 2016); however, not all instances are equal in deviancy ‘levels’ and not all the levels of deviancy are normalized. For example, the severity of a cyberbully posting a death threat video on YouTube aimed toward “Jill” far exceeds the level of deviancy as a Facebook comment saying “Jill is ugly” on “Jill’s” recent profile picture update. It is the level of threat that determines the level of deviancy. The technology is not what is deviant here – I am arguing that it is the ways in which youth are utilizing the technology, mainly the social media software, which is deviant. The level of deviancy is determined by the severity of the action.

Youth are continually shifting within their cultural space to cultivate and maintain online connections and relationships in the virtual world. I suggest that this is opening youth up to negative virtual exchanges where youth begin to participate in deviant practices like cyberbullying (Chapman et al., 2012, p. 56).

...The thought of being able to get away with it lures even those who may not really wish to hurt someone, to lash out at anyone who has annoyed them in some fashion. To humiliate someone just because they are an 'easy' target and because you can get away with it is part of the evil cyberbullying has brought to the table... (Li, 2007, p. 449)

Much like other deviant and/or criminal acts, there is something alluring to committing an act or acts of cyberbullying. Engagement within such cultural practices denotes a certain mentality among the youth who are involved. This perpetuates or alters the way social norms are understood among youth where they begin to think and treat cyberbullying as 'normal' or not inherently problematic without realizing any implications on such behaviours or subcultural membership.

The Internet has "revolutionized social life" for many young people and changed the landscape of what it means to be deviant and how deviant activities are practiced and/or carried out (Durkin et al., 2011, p. 453). The Internet and advent of social media/social networking applications has created space for innovation by opening up new possibilities for young people to pursue deviant behaviour, including cyberbullying (2011, p. 453). Cyberbullying is harmful as a phenomenon and holds the potential to go beyond traditions notions of bullying that are more impactful on youth today. Additionally, it holds the potential to be linked to other deviant or criminal behaviours such as hacking, terrorist networking, cyber harassment, cyber sexual activities, and other cybercrimes (2011, p. 453). Engagement in the subcultures of cyberbullying, specifically the cyberbully and possibly the cyber bystander, is a direct link to deviancy among the youth culture through the means of the online domain. This does not mean the entire youth culture is deviant; however, it has the potential to signify that the youth are understanding deviancy in a different way – *tolerable deviance*. Therefore, the phenomenon of cyberbullying ought to be treated unlike other phenomenon that emerge.

What is happening among the youth culture is that those within are treating cyberbullying as a type of ‘tolerable deviance’ (Stebbins, 2011, p. 24), where youth are simply accepting the behaviour for what it is without labelling it as deviant or choosing to treat it as something else. Cyberbullying, from a youth culture insider perspective, might be given this special status as ‘tolerable deviance’ because with its existence, the welfare of the entire youth online community and/or culture is still upheld (2011, p. 25). With the interconnectedness of technology, dependency on the Internet, normalization of traditional bullying for generations, changes in the youth culture, and advancement of social networking, I propose that cyberbullying is a deviant by-product³⁷ (Hinduja et al., 2008, p. 131). It is only from an outsider perspective that one might classify the practice of cyberbullying as deviant in nature. Those engaging in the practice may acknowledge it as fun, harmless, a part of growing up, or ‘kids just being kids’ since they have come to tolerate the deviance (Stebbins, 2011, p. 25). It is doubtful that youth, other than those who fall within the cyber victim subculture, see the real implications that result from engagement with this kind of deviant practice.

As Best (2011) outlines, cultural changes lead to shifts in deviancy regarding what is deviant, appropriate responses to deviant behaviours, and the circumstances under which a practice is to be considered deviant (p. 21). I argue that cyberbullying largely depends on the youth culture for its continued existence because of the youth culture’s ties to technology and social networking software. It seems to me that without youth, the phenomenon of cyberbullying would be considered ‘something else’ and not be what it is today. If youth were to boycott social media, their cultural construction would be entirely different and generate a new understanding to where technology and the Internet fit within society.

³⁷ Refer back to the section on risk.

Cyberbullying, as it currently exists, can only be as deviant as the youth who are engaging in the phenomenon. Youth are continually changing the threshold of tolerable online practices and behaviours and since the phenomenon is a product of the youth culture. Due to their proximate relationship within the phenomenon of cyberbullying, youth are in the best position to provide a definition of these thresholds of what is harmful and what is tolerable, which tends to be accepted by outsiders. The more the youth is deviant, the more deviant the act of cyberbullying. Again, it is not the youth culture in its entirety that is deviant; it is those who engage in cyberbullying that makes it a deviant cultural practice because, despite the opinions or misunderstanding from some youth, cyberbullying, as it presently exists, should never become a social norm.

The Fighting Words Doctrine, Freedom of Speech, & Privacy

The Fighting Words Doctrine originated in 1942 in *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire* and established that ‘fighting words’ are words that provoke the target to imminent violence and are addressed to an individual (Jay, 2009, p. 83). It was determined that ‘fighting words’ do not constitute speech and therefore are not protected under the law (Mannheimer, 1993, p. 1527). In Canada, hate speech encompasses fighting words (Criminal Code, 1985). The problem of where the online domain fits into these laws and what instances of cyberbullying are considered ‘fighting words’ arises. I begin to explore how the laws, rights, and protections we have today do not adequately account for such changes in youth culture or the broader society where virtual exchanges are immensely harmful to those on the receiving end.

As citizens, certain rights and freedoms are guaranteed under the law such as the freedom of expression/free speech; however, this is not a right to victimize others through the words and text on online networking websites or applications (Marcum, 2011, p. 187). However, the online domain complicates such rights people have as citizens. As Citron (2014) outlines, there are certain

categories of speech, such as what gets posted online, that needs regulation because it has the ability to bring with it serious harm (p. 26-27). The debate then comes down to how this can be regulated and what the threshold of tolerance is for cyberbullying speech.

Eliminating anonymity is not a viable option since that would violate self-expression and the ability of people with unpopular views to express themselves online (2014, p. 27). As well, by not being protected by anonymity, various groups, such as those with questioning sexual identities, would be forced to remain silent (2014, p. 27-28). A counter argument could be made that anonymity's protection is limited because hackers could easily access poster's real names, etc.; however, without anonymity rights are being violated. It is up to society to determine the level of risk or harm that is tolerable before rights and freedoms are justifiably revoked. Rather than eliminating rights and freedoms, I will argue it all comes down to a simple solution – accountability.³⁸ When an individual's self-expression is directly targeting another's freedom of speech, it does not deserve protection (2014, p. 196).

Along with freedom of speech comes issues of privacy. Privacy involves scope where a poster, for example, intends a certain audience for what they are saying or sharing online (Beye et al., 2010, p. 12-13). Problems arise when cyberbullies gain access to sensitive information that they manipulate to victimize the initial person who posted the content to a specific audience. I will strongly argue that nothing in the online domain is really private (Boyd, 2014) as the content that is sent via any electronic means is held within databases as part of a person's online footprint. With the ability to easily gain access to information online, it is clear that individuals should be cautious of what they are sending, sharing, texting, or posting. On the contrary, it would be unfair to limit a victim's ability to engage in social media or social networking in fear that their content will be

³⁸ Accountability here is referring to the notion that the laws, rules, and regulations in place are adequately addressing and dealing with the problems and outcomes of cyberbullying.

accessed and manipulated. Once again, there needs to be reasonable laws and accountability in the online domain, especially when it comes to cyberbullying and the harms associated with such victimization.

Each of these three notions – The Fighting Words Doctrine, Freedom of Speech, and Privacy – has been briefly explored and is by no means exhaustive. Although these concepts are quite useful and directly relevant to the thesis research project, they will not be explored in great depths as I feel it would complicate the main arguments being made. This is a brief overview of these concepts as they relate to cyberbullying; however, this would warrant a much more complex project. Unfortunately, this is not within the scope of this project's timeline. Each of these topics suggests further research in their own right as they present various details about the issue of cyberbullying where 'grey zones' emerge. The online world is vastly complicated and the phenomenon of cyberbullying is equally as complex.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW³⁹

In the earlier years when cyberbullying was first developing, Patchin and Hinduja (2006) were among the first researchers that began to examine cyberbullying as an extension of traditional face-to-face bullying. Their work can be viewed as the cornerstone that took the scholarly examination of bullying into the modern era as cyberbullying began to evolve. The authors began to situate the use of cellphones and other communication devices into the equation of bullying and examined how the changing ‘space’ among youth was evolving (Patchin et al., 2006, p. 148-149). Patchin and Hinduja (2006) begin to introduce the notion of harm and cyberbullying as a link to these devices as a secondary contribution to their original and primary intention – to better society (p. 149). This concept became critical to understanding how cyberbullying has actually allowed the use of devices to become something detrimental to society, more specifically the youth culture.

Patchin and Hinduja (2006) focused more on how traditional bullying can lead to online forms of harm and the connection between victims and self-esteem levels (p. 149). Their study was conducted to analyze how youth Internet users perceived the problem of and their perceptions around cyberbullying (2006, p. 156). There has been much more development within this area over the years and despite holding some truth today, other scholars have come to re-examine the forms of harm caused by online bullying and have discovered that the origins of cyberbullying might not always be an extension of traditional bullying (Boyd, 2014; Davis et al., 2015; Rachoene et al., 2015, p. 304; Feinberg et al., 2008, p. 11).

³⁹ The literature review portion outlines relevant and current research relating to cyberbullying and begins to touch upon relations to the field of criminology. Through an examination of the literature, I begin to outline the ‘bones’ of my thesis to situate myself within the literature to provide a foundation to expand upon and elaborate on what has already been done. Due to the nature of this research project, there is relatively little scholarly literature that situates cyberbullying within the context of criminology; therefore, what exists is crucial as a starting point to build upon. This chapter is distinctly different than Chapter 2 – Critical Definitions & Foundations because the latter outlines key terminology used throughout this research without focus on specific scholarly works to assess the literature they exist within.

Throughout the literature there is a reoccurrence of the concept of Web 2.0 (Arntfield, 2016, p. 500; Boyd, 2014), which becomes central when understanding and constructing exactly what the youth culture is and how it is formed in modern society. Web 2.0 shows a reliance on new media – termed new because of the online computer mediated component relying on digital means (2016, p. 511) – for carrying out acts of cybercrime and cyberdeviance. In the development of outlining a youth culture and what exactly it means in relation to present society, the concept of Web 2.0 (Arntfield, 2016; Boyd, 2014) becomes a central component. Many parallels can be made to the work of Boyd (2014) in relation to understanding Web 2.0; however, Boyd (2014) tends to focus specifically on youth without a criminological focus. By merging the two works together, there is a great foundation and basis for a cultural understanding of technological dependency on youth, which is of great benefit to the theoretical component and framework of this thesis project.

By attempting to couple a criminological understanding with cyberbullying, Arntfield (2016) is beginning to lay the groundwork for terminology, classifications, and a starting point to situate the research within the criminology framework. Arntfield (2016) provides a good foundation for understanding cybercrime and cyberdeviance in a world where the Internet has become integral to human existence and contact with others. The Internet and technology ought to be seen as key components to changing the “landscape of criminality” where it is now easier to see beyond traditional approaches to understanding criminality, offenders, and decision making (Arntfield, 2016, p. 501). This notion becomes central to emergent modern phenomenon, like cyberbullying, which is only able to exist to the high degree it does today, with the dependency and reliance on technology among youth. Cybercrime is too broad of a concept (Arntfield, 2016, p. 501), and in this case, may be too bold of a categorization for cyberbullying at this stage since it is a relatively understudied and misunderstood phenomenon. Arntfield (2016) provides key

distinctions between cybercrime and cyberdeviance in relation to cyberbullying. Cybercrime has a very broad definition and tends to include Internet or online mediated criminal activity including cyberterrorism, unlawful technological activities, computer mediated offences, and cyberviolence (2016, p. 500-502). This categorization may not be the most appropriate for classifying cyberbullying because the harm and nature of the cyberbullying may not reach this level; however, it does hold potential to be considered a cybercrime.

Arntfield (2016) points out that criminology must change and reflect society and culture, hence the use of cultural criminology for this research, because, since the rise of social media, these social networks carry with them their own distinct cultures, social norms, habits, and behaviours (p. 504). Changes in technology sparked cybercrime and cyberdeviance to develop because the culture shifted to suit such technologies where the abuse or misuse of them could be deemed inevitable (2016, p. 505). As a result, it is logical to present cyberbullying as a phenomenon within the youth culture driven by the concept of Web 2.0 where cultural components make these youths distinctly different and categorically dissimilar to previous youth cultures.

The landscape for committing criminal acts has changed. Since this change, new terminology has been developed to help classify and understand these cyber acts. Cyberactivities can be defined as acts that require a computer and Internet connectivity where Arntfield (2016) includes cyberbullying as a type of deviant cyberactivity (p. 505). Cyberbullying is classified as being more deviant than criminal in nature because its anti-social behaviours are often provoked by social media networks and because cyberbullying itself is not inherently illegal but more so frowned upon (2016, p. 505). This deviancy has the potential to lead to a criminal conviction, depending upon the specific case of cyberbullying, and the degree of escalation of events past the threshold of deviant cyberactivities.

Arntfield (2016) is one of the only researchers that begins to discuss and develop the term “deviant cybercommunities”, which are subcultural networks facilitated by instant access, altering the user experience, anonymity, intensified deviancy, and anti-social impulses (p. 508). This is directly in line with the notion of subcultures that are emergent within the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The social intention of the cybercommunity turns sour when deviancy is mixed into the subcultural practices and existence of the cybercommunity. These can range in their scope of cyberdeviancy where some actions are more intense or closer to being a cybercrime than others; however, all are deviant in some manner (2016, p. 508). Digital media has resulted in cyberbullying becoming inseparable to understanding digital culture and is breaking down barriers to show a colliding of online groups or individuals (2016, p. 514). Durkin and Patterson (2011) point out that the nature of the Internet and the ability of various groups to communicate is one of the major driving forces behind cyberbullying. Anti-normative conduct is being encouraged mainly by anonymity (2011, p. 453). To better understand cyberbullying, even as Arntfield (2016) suggested, requires stepping outside the traditional sense of criminology (p. 511) to expand and explore new ways criminal and deviant actions are carried out because of the increased dependency on technology/digital devices and the development of Web 2.0.

Although Boyd (2014) has no roots in criminological elements in her work, her research provides a great foundation for understanding and constructing the present day youth culture, the existence of cyberbullying, the relevance of social media, and the bedrock of issues from a non-criminological point of view. Social media and technology are seen as a lifeline for teens who believe their lives are over when they cannot utilize, engage, or participate in some sort of online world (Boyd, 2014, p. 5). As Chapman and Buchanan (2012) indicated, “for many youth, technology is part of their everyday lives and [a youth culture] must be examined in this context”

(p. 60; Durkin et al., 2011, p. 453). Boyd (2014) characterizes youth as a unique form of community who have expanded their youth culture into online communities where youth have the desire to make themselves relevant. Boyd (2014) does this by comparing the present day youth culture with that of previous generations, which is useful in helping to establish and characterize what makes youth different today by bringing in the argument of online communities, social media, and technology as the cornerstone of change (p. 6-10, 20-22). The framework aides in the analysis of a youth culture, and provides a foundation for establishing a youth culture within this research by melding Boyd's (2014) key features with that of other sources and with the work of Ferrell (2015).

There is a global culture of social aggression that is perpetuated through electronic media existing as a product of cyberbullying where there are new opportunities for youth to become victimized (Rachoene et al., 2015, p. 304; Durkin et al., 2011, p. 452). Rachoene and Oyedemi (2015) are amongst the first scholars to address cyberbullying in relation to a youth culture. Despite their focus being on South African youth, many of their initial developments can be useful for this research project by emphasizing the understanding of cultural boundaries and where exactly technology fits within youth culture as one of the main, if not most important, defining features. Two main aspects to take away from this piece of research are the concepts of 'power' and 'repetition' (2015, p. 306). These two elements are critical to cyberbullying and are two characteristic traits of cyberbullying; more specifically this research project's analysis of emergent subcultures within cyberbullying. As Rachoene and Oyedemi (2015) begin to examine, the concept of 'power' and 'repetition' gain an entirely new meaning and purpose when applied to cyberbullying over traditional bullying (2015, p. 306).

Chapman and Buchanan (2012) indicate that “you are what you share” meaning that everything that exists in the Internet world that is tied to your name, including text, images, and videos, define who a youth is (p. 63). The social norms and rules among youth for their appearance in an online space is changing and evolving by the minute as technology and online socialization changes with the release of the latest applications or social platforms (2012, p. 63). This is what can make cyberbullying so potentially devastating for the victims caught in the cross-hairs – their identity becomes distorted by the impression given by the incident(s) of cyberbullying consumed by a mass online audience. The cyber youth culture is one that entangles these dangers within it; however, unfortunately, this is not likely to dismantle anytime soon as technologies continue to develop and cyberbullying continues to exist and intensify.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural Criminology & the Rhizome

The theory of cultural criminology best suits this type of research project for its adaptability as a theory and ability to incorporate such modern social norms or phenomena in relation to the way crime can be perceived outside of ‘traditional’ understandings of deviancy and criminality. Drawing on the work of Ferrell (2015), cultural criminology’s founding concept is that “cultural dynamics carry within them the meaning of crime” (p. 2). This theory explores the meanings, representations, and power in the constructions of crime and moves beyond narrow notions of crime to incorporate symbolic displays of transgression and emotion emerging from criminal events (2015, p. 2). Cultural criminology explores the deeper meanings of crime, or events that can be deemed criminal, and how those actions or events are viewed in terms of dominant, mainstream cultural constructions⁴⁰ of criminality or crime. It takes a deeper understanding of criminal activity to the level of the cultural bedrock society is founded upon. I argue that the most important analysis within this theory is the concept of meaning given to the many actions in day-to-day life that can be interpreted as criminal or a type of deviancy. Cultural criminology explores a specific phenomenon that is culturally constructed and understood in a cultural context by examining the norms, structures, behaviours, and attitudes toward a particular group, subculture, or area of activity.

Most importantly, cultural criminology holds the principle that “crime and deviance constitute more than the simple enactment of a static group culture” where culture always remains in motion (Ferrell, 2015, p. 3). Culture is continuously changing and so are the cultural constructions that exist within it; however, this does not mean regularities do not exist. Meanings

⁴⁰ Cultural criminology draws on social constructionism in its framework.

can become blurred when cultural boundaries are pushed and crossed. These boundaries of conventional and accepted understandings, within a cultural framework, should become dissolved in order to garner a better understanding of meaning (2015, p. 5). Further, the discussion of culture has roots in the understanding of subcultures within criminology (2015, p. 5). This is critical to the understanding of cyberbullying as a culturally constructed phenomenon that arises from a shift in the cultural meaning of youth to the reliance of technology (Boyd, 2014, p. 132). Putting this all together, the cultural criminology approach is best suited for explanations and analysis of modern or current critical issues as it attempts to develop notions of culture within “a world always in flux” (Ferrell, 2015, p. 6), especially when examining phenomena in the online domain.

Cultural criminology’s reliance on meaning recognizes harm as integral to larger issues and that a confrontation of the consequences ought to take place to evaluate their cultural complexity (Ferrell, 2015, p. 12). An understanding of cyberbullying in relation to the wider youth culture comes meaning and outside cultural representations. Outsiders are not directly immersed in the youth culture or the phenomenon of cyberbullying so they attempt to understand what it is by looking into it from their own cultural perspective.

In different contexts and subcultures actions and behaviours are not always what they seem. As Ferrell (2015) discusses, the action of a punch provokes different reactions based on who was punched because it would mean something different to strike a partner than it would to punch a police officer (p. 8). By looking at the larger youth culture and focusing on cyberbullying, cultural aspects come to light as to how meaning is given to the act based on who is doing the bullying, the people who are viewing it with or without direct engagement, and who is receiving it. This can channel a bigger debate as to what is viewed as cyberbullying and how it gets treated by those involved directly and indirectly. Aside from parents, I argue one of the most important cultural

shapers – ‘the media’ – skews perceptions through reporting cases or media representation in films.⁴¹ It is important to understand and develop the aspects that make up a youth culture in the modern world and how that youth culture is viewed by those who exist within it. Additionally, it is important to also examine the different meanings to various sets of behaviours, actions and attitudes amongst the subcultures.

Culture is essentially the root that can spread and be connected to many different areas with the potential to grow, change, and develop. In a multicultural or global environment, the notion of culture and interconnectedness can bring about cohesion and expose similarities including attitudes, beliefs, and values. The concept of a rhizome, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, is used to understand cyberbullying and emerging technological and social media networks in the work of Henriksen and Miller (2012, p. 438). A rhizome is a specific type of root allowing for growth and expansion that leads to new plants where entanglements have no specific start or end points, just points in the middle which connect to other points (Henriksen et al., 2012, p. 438). In a cultural criminology framework, I argue that the youth culture is seen as a root that is allowed to emerge and grow – the rhizome – allowing for the growing and expanding of new plants, such as cyberbullying.⁴² The entanglements produced have no starting or end points, similar to the emergence and cyclical nature of the subcultures that are developed within cyberbullying. There are many points that can be developed, connected, and entangled where the subcultures within further perpetuate the phenomenon, allowing it to grow, change, and become even more complex.

⁴¹ An aspect of cultural criminology is a focus on representations within the mass media. This fits within the theoretical outline of media criminology discussed.

⁴² A modification that could be made to this theoretical metaphor is the notion that unlike in traditional thinking where the plants reproduced are identical, with cyberbullying they do not have to be. Rather, I would suggest that the new reproductions merely resemble what cyberbullying is as they emerge through the classification of cyberbullying rather than for their ‘identical’ status being carried out.

The metaphor of the rhizome deals with flux and flow and is best used to describe the evolving and ever changing youth culture within a cultural criminology perspective.

Culture is very dynamic and fluid where differences between the past and the future are generated. This shift can be seen throughout the cultural criminology framework in how cyberbullying is being understood and analyzed as something modern and relatively unfamiliar to previous youth cultures who may have engaged in traditional bullying. Utilizing a criminology theory and approach, I argue that cyberbullying is a type of deviancy within the youth culture where those involved reflect the broader categorization of crime: the cyberbully is seen in a similar light as the offender, the cyber victim remains the victim and target of the action, and the cyber bystander takes on the very complex role of a witness. Cyberbullying is taking the notion of crime and cybercrime to an entirely different level – one that is relatively misunderstood and underdeveloped. This is why cultural criminology is suited for this research project to advance and alter the way cyberbullying is being understood by linking it to a criminological approach and framework.

Interpretive Reproduction

As Corsaro (1992) indicates, children produce their own series of peer cultures through early knowledge and practices that are gradually transformed into the skills and knowledge required to function and participate in the adult world (p. 162). In relating this to cyberbullying, it is through an understanding that while children, youth begin to learn key abilities in producing a sense of a shared world without directly depending on adult. This has allowed them to transform their understanding of the world and the process of socialization (Corsaro, 1992, p. 162). As a result, culture arises through daily practices of youth through the ways they account for who they are and how they understand the movements of others (1992, p. 162). Corsaro is indicating that as

children individuals learn to engage with one another online and largely adapt to their surroundings in order to produce their own distinct culture with little reliance on adults.

The process of socialization is a key attribute of culture that has progressed into the online domain in the present day youth culture. The notion of culture is not static, rather it is “produced and reproduced” through public negotiations (1992, p. 164). Through the generating of cultural dynamics, actors link shared knowledge and experience to specific situations in order to generate meanings (1992, p. 164). Simultaneously, individuals are contributing to the collective nature of a culture through the knowledge and pursuit of goals (1992, p. 164). Corsaro’s (1992) understanding of culture directly links to Ferrell’s (2015) understanding that meaning is a central component to understanding and developing culture.

Beginning in childhood, youth are continuously participating in the wider social dynamics in order to “continually produce and share a sense of membership in their peer culture” indicating that youth create their own versions of their culture as they continue to grow and develop, which is often distinct from adult culture (1992, p. 168). Children are learning from the world they exist within to “creatively appropriate” their own unique peer cultures (1992, p. 168) – which I argue is later translated as the wider youth culture. While doing this, contributions to the reproduction of youth and adult culture are made. This process is called *interpretive reproduction* (1992, p. 168).

Youth are constantly reproducing their own ‘versions’ of the broader adult culture as a way to replicate cultural routines (1995, p. 170). It is reproductive because youth are not merely internalizing the external adult culture around them but rather they become a part of that culture and creatively produce their own youth culture alongside or in addition to it resulting in smaller peer cultures within it (1992, p. 169). In today’s society, this is largely being done alongside the existence of technology and social media, which allows youth to utilize such devices and software

to generate and reproduce their own culture through such means. Not all elements of culture have positive effects on the lives of those within it where developments of fear, concern, and conflict arise (1992, p. 171). One of these outcomes, I would argue, is the creation of cyberbullying especially since the use of social media and technology are being utilized by youth in the production and reproduction of peer relations and a collective group culture.

Media Criminology & Constructions of Cyberbullying

Another theoretical element to this study is media criminology where media are playing a critical role in shaping public perception around crime, criminal justice, and deviancy (Haney, 2009, p. 690). Media criminology has become deeply penetrated into the popular culture as media constructed 'crime fighter' figures have gained icon status and the criminal justice system values they represent are broadly influential (2009, p. 706). Based on media's wide scope and ability to reach a wide audience, distorted or 'untrue' representations may negatively influence this audience, which may not critically evaluate what is being seen to realize 'it is just a movie or TV show' (2009, p. 724). The line between fact and fiction is becoming increasingly blurred (2009, p. 705). Viewers might feel as though they are being given the 'raw' truths about crime and the justice system (2009, p. 710). When viewers internalize what they are seeing, especially in regards to criminal or deviant behaviours, it can characterize the public understanding of such behaviours and how they are viewed, treated, understood, or carried out among the general population.

Although various types of media influence different groups in different ways, I think that more accurate representations within popular film would help to garner a better and more accurate understanding of any given phenomenon allowing people to come to a mutual understanding of regarding that phenomenon. Media outlets can distort a phenomenon to the point its nature within that particular media outlet falsifies how it exists in the real, or in this case the virtual, world

because it is sensationalized (2009, p. 703). Although Haney (2009) exclusively looks at ‘traditional crime’, the argument can be transferred through to other activities deviant in nature such as cyberbullying where what is viewed in popular film surrounding the given phenomenon may influence the way it is perceived, understood, and perpetuated.

Based on Haney’s (2009) work surrounding media, the death penalty, and the understanding of criminal justice among crime show viewers, it is worthwhile to examine the portrayal of cyberbullying within popular film through coverage of Canadian cases and fictional films depicting the phenomenon. By uncovering media representations of cyberbullying, it can potentially reveal how popular culture may or may not reflect how the youth culture is present in society. Youth consuming various types of media surrounding cyberbullying may get mixed messages about what it is, its severity, and how to combat it as a problematic phenomenon. Those outside the youth culture might also get various messages from media pertaining to cyberbullying such as how to identify it, what to do about it, or how problematic or detrimental it can be.

Media outlets reinforce the dominant cultural narrative surrounding origins and ongoing of criminal or deviant activities and/or behaviours (Haney, 2009, p. 727). This is true of cyberbullying in addition to the plethora of examples Haney (2009) utilizes that are evident within the television and film crime genre. For example, depicting suicide as a means for the victim to end the bullying is often not apparent. Despite a limited number of box office hits taking on the newer phenomenon of cyberbullying, *The Duff* (2015) ends with Bianca, a cyberbullied high school senior, confronting the cyberbully and winning over the school’s most popular football star. In many instances of cyberbullying, there is no happy ending as shown by the documentary films relating to the Canadian stories of cyberbullying victimization, such as Amanda Todd’s suicide. Characteristics of cyberbullying subcultures must be apparent within media because cyberbullying, fictional or

not, has these vital elements. However, I do question how adequate and accurate the media representations are of cyberbullying depicted in popular film media. Based on media's vastly influential role, especially in relation to youth and channelling elements of the youth culture, this study will explore the nature of popular film's representations of cyberbullying.

5. METHODOLOGY

Ultimately, this is a media analysis of how the phenomenon of cyberbullying is portrayed within ‘the media’. It needs to be acknowledging that ‘the media’ encompasses far more than film; however, I am using the term to mean fictional and non-fictional film. Uniquely, this study employs qualitative techniques in order to attempt to understand the prevalence of the subcultural cycle of cyberbullying within popular film in order to detect how accurately or inaccurately film media is depicting the phenomenon of cyberbullying. A comparison will be made between documentary film’s representations of real cases of cyberbullying victims in Canada with that of fictional media depictions of cyberbullying through both ‘box office’ and ‘televised’ films. A strong point of caution is to recognize and understand that mediated accounts being analyzed hold a range of bias due to the nature of the sources. Despite a bias being embedded within the popular films, utilizing such sources can still help to uncover crucial information surrounding the phenomenon being analyzed. Unlike any previous study, this research project is the first of its kind to do such an analysis, especially since the subcultural cycle of cyberbullying is a new understanding/approach to such a phenomenon.

The methodology choices made assist in answering the research questions:

- What is the main message within popular film in regards to cyberbullying?
- To what extent does the sample of cyberbullying films being analyzed shape or perpetuate characteristics of subcultures that exist within cyberbullying (cyberbully, cyber victim, cyber bystander)?

This research project’s goal is to uncover how accurately popular film represents the subcultures of cyberbullying and through doing so, reveal the implications this could potentially have on the way the public – mainly youth – understand the cultural phenomenon. Through two types of

analyses, textual analysis and thematic analysis, I aim to reveal a new way of understanding cyberbullying and uncover any inconsistencies presented within popular film which would hinder such an understanding from gaining popularity in regards to cyberbullying as phenomenon existing within the present day youth culture.

Data Collection & Analysis – Textual & Thematic Analysis

Textual analysis allows for the collection of data about how humans make sense of the world to help researchers understand various components of cultures and subcultures (McKee, 2003, p. 1). This methodology allows for interpretations of texts, including visual mediums, to begin to unpack the ways in which a specific culture is understood at a specific time (2003, p. 1). In this study, I focus on cyberbullying as depicted through both fictional and non-fictional media constructions. Attention is given to how the subcultures are constructed through the stories being depicted and how youth culture perpetuates cyberbullying to exist. Each culture has a different way of making sense of the world, which is why textual analysis will help to uncover the meanings behind the texts being analyzed (2003, p. 4).

Textual analysis is used as the starting point to reveal the tones behind the texts and attempt “to find out what *were* and what *are* the reasonable sense-making practices of cultures” (2003, p. 19). First the texts are critically viewed and read to uncover the message behind how the broader culture is constructing cyberbullying within the stories being told. Not all texts are created equal as some have a larger impact on culture than others, which the use of textual analysis can aid in uncovering (2003, p. 48-49). From here, I conducted a preliminary analysis to identify how and in what ways this adheres to the theoretical understanding of a youth culture, cyberbullying as a deviant practice, and how the subcultures are relevant. Examining multiple texts provides a variety

of different meaning and sense-making statements about how cyberbullying is depicted in popular film. One text alone could not adequately speak to the phenomenon as a whole (2003, p. 29).

Thematic analysis is arguably a methodology in its own right (Braun et al., 2008, p. 78). This type of analysis draws on patterns or themes that are emergent within the data and interprets it according to the research topic (2008, p. 79). As Braun and Clarke (2008) state, “a theme captures something important about that data in relation to the research question” and represents levels of patterned meaning within the data (p. 82). The themes should reflect the characteristics of the subcultures as seen in Appendix A and provide a more nuanced account as to how the subcultures work within cyberbullying itself.

Thematic analysis has a variety of ways in which it can draw out themes (2008, p. 83). This is done through a latent level analysis where themes went deeper than simply what was being said or written at the semantic level where underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations were identified and built off the semantic themes (2008, p. 84). Interpreting the text came later within the textual analysis; however, thematic analysis can take the textual analysis one step further and look at the data in a different way to provide even more meaningful interpretations and analysis surrounding the given phenomenon.

In order to carry out the thematic analysis for the entire data set, this research project adhered to the six step method outlined in the work of Braun and Clarke (2008). These include:

- Step 1: Becoming familiar with the data (2008, p. 87)
 - During this phase I actively read through the data to search for meanings and patterns at both the semantic and latent level. I made note of any thoughts, assumptions, or connections made among the data sets for reference at later stages

(2008, p. 87). Each film is then transcribed to assist in seeing themes and drawing connections.

- Step 2: Generate a list of codes and organize them in meaningful groups (2008, p. 88-89)
 - In this phase it is critical to bear in mind that the main focus of the thematic analysis is the subcultures. Although other themes may become apparent when conducting this analysis, the focus and purpose of this project is to analyze the given subcultures to generate a depiction of cyberbullying's media portrayal. During this process it is critical to make choices – what to include and what to exclude.⁴³
- Step 3: Search for themes by organizing the codes into potential themes and combine any similar codes into an overarching theme (2008, p. 89)
 - To make this step easier, I chose to employ the analytic tool of thematic networks (see 'Data Processing & Analysis – Thematic Network Analysis'). Within this stage, the themes are broken down into sub-groups that align with the subcultures. It is laid out in accordance to the categories of 'cyberbully subculture', 'cyber victim subculture', 'cyber bystander subculture', 'youth culture', and 'other important emergent themes'. Organizing the themes this way allows for the data to be kept neat and organized; however, I remained cautious to recognize and address the potential of overlapping of themes within the various categories. This is to be

⁴³ Throughout steps two and three of the transcribing/coding process, I allowed the themes to emerge in their own right. Going into the analysis I had some pre-determined ideas/notions of what the major themes were – the subculture categorizations – however, it is throughout the transcribing/coding process these became clearer. Additionally, other themes emerged that I had not considered prior to the transcribing/coding process, such as the themes included in the 'other emergent themes' portion of the analysis. These were too prevalent not to include, which is why I chose to do so. Therefore, it is made clear that although I had some indication from the literature and theoretical analysis of what themes were likely to be prominent, the themes being illustrated through this section, the methodology, as well as the final analysis emerged from the transcribing/coding process.

expected as the subcultures work in a cyclical fashion with one another; therefore, the themes should reflect the same type of treatment.

- Step 4: Review the themes and eliminate or re-organize any that are not really themes on their own, collapse themes with each other where possible, and break down any themes that might be too complex (2008, p. 91)
- Step 5: Organize themes even further to ensure they are accurately reflecting the meaning within the entire data set and ensure that the themes work and have not been misinterpreted (2008, p. 91)
- Step 6: Finalize themes with re-coding when necessary. The themes have been given names to describe and speak to the overarching meanings they carry with them
 - This is the process Braun and Clarke (2008) call ‘define and refine’ that identified the ‘essence of the theme’ without demanding too much from one specific theme (p. 92). Here is where the themes are considered in relation to the others that have been produced, generating sub-themes if necessary, especially within a larger, complex theme (2008, p. 92). Upon completion of this process, a report/analysis would be generated where the themes are compared with one another, contrasted, and both conclusions and implications have been drawn in order to come full circle with the research project by providing a final discussion and conclusion.

It needs to be recognized that this is a very in-depth and lengthy process; however, by narrowing the focus of the themes to the cycle of the subcultures, it is more manageable. As well, it is unnecessary to analyze the entire data set word by word in search of meaning but rather in a systematic way that allows the analysis to be quick, detailed, efficient, and meaningful. Employing

a thematic analysis in addition to the textual analysis aided in providing a richer, better, and stronger research project.

Data Processing & Analysis – Thematic Network Analysis (Addition to Step 3)

What makes this research different is that it is relying mainly on visual texts as the documents that are analyzed. These texts then are transcribed into movie scripts. This is where I began to conduct a thematic analysis. Within completing a thematic analysis, the analytical tool of ‘thematic networks’ is employed in order to better organize and understand the themes emergent within the data set. Thematic networks are web illustrations that visually summarize the main themes within the documents (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 386). Due to the complexity of the subcultures as well as the number of texts being analyzed, these web-like diagrams aided in the connections made among themes from a variety of texts being analyzed as well as to ensure that themes are being developed in a systematic way. This type of analytical tool proved to assist in achieving the underlying meaning of the themes present within the texts at a deeper level by structuring and depicting the themes in the most accurate way possible (2001, p. 387).

Within thematic network analysis, there are three classes of themes: basic theme, organizing theme, and global theme (2001, p. 388-389). The basic theme is the premise of the piece of data, generating initial meaning when coupled with other basic themes (2001, p. 389). This is how the organizing theme is generated. Organizing themes are ‘clusters of significance’ that summarize the assumptions or meanings within the basic themes by revealing what is going on in the text at a more abstract level (2001, p. 389). Lastly, global themes are those themes that encompass principal metaphors within the entire piece of data (2001, p. 389). At this class there is a summary of the main themes as well as interpretations to be drawn. These three classes can be applied at both the individual text level and to the entire data set.

As Attride-Stirling (2001) noted, the use of thematic networks is not the analysis itself but the foundation to organize and illustrate themes present in the data by organizing the classes of themes into a hierarchy (p. 389). The research moves from the basic themes to the organizing themes in order to generate a global theme. This process continues until the global themes have been exhausted in all of the documents and then an analysis can be produced. One benefit of utilizing thematic network analysis is the fluidity and emphasis on interconnectivity throughout the networks being developed (2001, p. 389). This will allow for cohesion among the themes being produced within the entire data set as well as a way for the themes to become better organized to reflect the data as a whole and not just as individual texts.

Similar to the methodology of thematic analysis, thematic network analysis as an analytical tool outlines specific steps that ought to be completed in order to reach the final level of interpretation. A note to be made is that the use of thematic network analysis has replaced step four within the larger umbrella of thematic analysis. Once the networks are completed and finalized, I returned to the remaining steps, five and six, provided within thematic analysis. Attride-Stirling (2001) provides six steps in order to achieve a complete network analysis where interpretations are encouraged at every stage; however, throughout the stages the interpretations and patterns become more abstract (p. 390). Since the coding and preliminary identification of themes is already going to be done within the thematic analysis, step three acted as the starting point.

- Step 3: Construct the networks by arranging the themes that have been previously identified
 - The themes are grouped according to the subcategories laid out within the larger thematic analysis, which include: ‘youth culture’, ‘cyberbully subculture’, ‘cyber victim subculture’, ‘cyber bystander subculture’, and ‘other important emergent

themes'. These groupings are what become the thematic networks (2001, p. 392). Each group helped to produce distinct global themes along with supporting themes evident throughout the organizing and basic themes (2001, p. 392). The process of this step is as follows: basic themes were derived from the text(s) and assembled into specific groups derived from the themes that codes and initial themes that have been developed (2001, p. 392). The basic themes are then rearranged into organizing themes that depict a larger or shared issue (2001, p. 392). From here the basic and organizing themes are transferred into claims, assumptions, arguments, etc. These becomes the global themes (2001, p. 392-393). The global theme becomes the "core, principal metaphor that encapsulates the main point in the text" (2001, p. 393). Throughout this process the text is being summarized into global themes that speak to the larger picture by unifying themes and condensing similar concepts at lower levels to garner meaning making and to draw conclusions and/or implications the text is making (2001, p. 393).

- Step 4: Explore thematic networks and describe them by returning to the original text to aide in interpretations (ensuring nothing is lost throughout the coding and classifying of themes)
 - This paved the way for the summarizing and interpretations of patterns. The networks constructed allow for development to begin to make explicit emergent patterns evident with the aim to underpin the arguments/patterns within the theoretical backbone of the analysis. These steps are a way to double check the networks formed and ensure that the research being produced is sound and rooted in a theoretical direction.

After these steps have been completed within the tool of thematic network analysis, it became critical to return to steps five and six within thematic analysis to finalize the names of the networks and their implications in order to draw conclusions and present the findings in such a way that convey the themes accurately. Utilizing this tool proved to be a lot of work; however, it provided an additional method of analyzing and organizing the data to draw conclusions across the data set to provide answers to the research questions being explored. Overall, this complex choice of analysis proves to be best suited for this research project due to the adaptability and flexibility of the process.

Sample – Fictional & Non-Fictional Cyberbullying Films⁴⁴

For this particular analysis, it is important to understand that when using media sources, such as films, there is still a bias present even within documentaries. This needed to be acknowledged in order to move forward with the analysis. As the researcher, my role is to objectively analyze and employ qualitative techniques to garner the underlying meanings within such films that attempt to speak to the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

The sample consisted of three box office/television media sources that I analyzed for the purpose of this research which reflect fictional accounts of cyberbullying. These include:

- “*The Duff*” (Bello & Sandel, 2015) is a popular box office movie and among the first of its kind to illustrate a more ‘Hollywood’ version of cyberbullying. This movie is seen as an extension of traditional movies about bullying like “*Mean Girls*” (Messick & Waters, 2004) where, even within popular film, there is a shift toward cyberbullying as the youth

⁴⁴ Within each film chosen, it becomes apparent that throughout the literature and confirmed by media portrayals of cyberbullying, the phenomenon is heavily gendered. In each film the cyber victim is a young female. Cyberbullying is heavily gendered where males and females present different variations of the phenomenon; however, this will not be included in this study. It is recommended that future research into this notion be completed, possibly among scholars with interests in feminism and gender studies.

phenomenon that needs to be addressed. This movie is chosen for analysis because of its impact to reach a wider audience regarding the issue of cyberbullying, which could potentially resonate with a youth community similarly to the way “*Mean Girls*” (Messick & Waters, 2004) did during its times of popularity with the previous group of youth who seen it as a cultural identifier.

- “*Cyberbully*” (Prupas, Rice & Biname, 2011) is a TV movie that did not make it to the box office but still aired across many television sets to reach a wide audience; however, this movie would not have had the scope of attention or ability to influence youth in the same way “*The Duff*” did. “*Cyberbully*” is a more accurate depiction of cyberbullying because it is based on true events. This film was chosen because of its more accurate presentation of what cyberbullying is and how youth function within such a phenomenon. This film is going to be able to provide a better comparison point with the realities of real life cases than a box office hit might.
- “*The Cyberbully*” (Bond & Chanan, 2015) is a British TV movie depicting a young girl named Casey who is forced into doing various activities by a computer hacker who has gained accessed to compromising photos of Casey that he will release if she does not comply. This hacker is claiming he helps victims of cyberbullying but throughout the process is forcing Casey to see how her actions on her online accounts have gained her the title of a cyberbully. The recognition of being a cyberbully is very critical to Casey’s experience and could speak volumes to the experience of cyberbullying. This film was chosen because it goes through the emotional process Casey experiences and reveals how cyberbullying can control the lives of those who are victimized.

Each of these films, especially *The Duff*, targeted youth specifically. With *The Duff* it can be seen as to how the ‘Hollywood’ genre is attempting to bring cyberbullying to the big screen in a way youth can ‘enjoy’ through fictional stories and comedic accounts. In the latter two films the targeted audience is still youth; however, a different approach is taken. The films play on suspense, emotion, and empathy as the story unfolds on the screen. Since these two films were shown largely on television screens rather than the box office, the audience may also have been targeted toward parents to show them the phenomenon of cyberbullying in a ‘truer’ form than as it often gets shown at the box office.

In addition, two documentary films are being analyzed that outline two of the most famous Canadian cases of cyberbullying victimization (NoBullying.com, 2015). They are:

- “*No Place to Hide: The Rehtaeh Parsons Story*” (Rau, 2015) depicts the Rehtaeh Parsons case. Rehtaeh Parsons case is a very controversial one in the Canadian history of cyberbullying as it produced many documents around the way her case was handled by the police. This case has been chosen for this reason and because it is a rather popular one in the Canadian narrative around cyberbullying. Utilizing this case can open up the doors for analysis and issues surrounding policies and the potential implications for future research as to why the law is an important component to cyberbullying.
- “*Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man in the Shadows*” (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014) depicts the tragic story of Amanda Todd. Amanda Todd is one of the most famous cyberbullying cases in Canada as it marked a general awareness and outcry regarding the issue of cyberbullying, which essentially brought it to the forefront of the public’s attention. Her story has been deemed unforgettable and it seems as though a research project

surrounding cyberbullying would be incomplete without including her story as part of the analysis.

For these films the intended audience includes youth (especially those involved in cyberbullying), parents (ability to recognize the phenomenon, speak to their children/teens about it, and show implications of such behaviours), and policy makers (attempts to influence the law and policies surrounding cyberbullying). These films were trying to garner awareness for the phenomenon based on true events. Both documentaries attempt to show the raw details behind the stories as, for example, interviews from family members are shown.

My film choices were rather sparse since not many have a focus on cyberbullying. Each film I chose reflects the arguments being made throughout the thesis project which is why I argue they are best suited for this analysis. Throughout each film, messages of the subcultures as well as cyberbullying as a youth cultural phenomenon are evident which ensured the analysis remained holistic in attempting to gain an understanding of how popular film is portraying cyberbullying.

6. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

As a result of the methods employed, several critical points of discussion came to light regarding each category of analysis: the youth culture in its entirety, the subcultures (the cyberbully, the cyber victim, and the cyber bystander), and other emergent themes (laws/policies, outsider involvement, and links to traditional bullying). The employment of qualitative measures yielded meaningful results where the findings greatly speak to the phenomenon of cyberbullying. I explicitly made the choice to organize the findings into significant themes to better organize the data. This proved to be a strong means of analysis. The findings are presented in subgroups according to the larger, overarching thematic networks that were established.⁴⁵ The following analysis includes only the major emergent overarching themes within the popular films chosen for this study. Although much more could be included in the analysis, only the most important, dynamic, and significant global themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389) were discussed in greater depth and detail as, I argue, they were much more impactful to the overall research questions and aim of this study.

1. The Youth Culture

1.1 Youth Cultural Construction – It's a Youth Phenomenon

Cyberbullying is largely associated with the youth culture, explicitly the modern day youth culture since the rise in technology use amongst youth – specifically the Internet and a multiplicity of social media platforms. This message appeared to be at the heart of each of the storylines within the films used for analysis where adults tended to play a secondary role in the phenomenon. However, *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows* and *The Cyberbully* were

⁴⁵ Largely the films focused on the cyber victims by bringing them to the forefront where other aspects surrounding cyberbullying, including the other subcultures, the phenomenon itself, and the youth culture were viewed in relation to the experiences and stories of the cyber victims.

exceptions where each of the main cyberbullies were thought to actually be adults or someone disconnected from the youth culture.

Adults having an active role within cyberbullying proved to be quite rare. Often adults are classified as online predators who use the Internet to attempt to find and contact vulnerable youth. They turn to these platforms knowing that youth are highly engaged on social media and share information publicly on their online profiles (Wolak et al., 2008, p. 111).⁴⁶ In *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows* there are links to other sorts of malicious online activities including child pornography and stalking. In this film these are seen as by-products of the cyberbullying that only intensified the cyberbullying Amanda was experiencing. The way she was victimized by this adult ‘cyberbully’ was distinctively different in comparison to how she was being cyberbullied by those within the youth culture.

In *The Cyberbully* it remains unknown who exactly the cyberbully was; however, Casey, the main cyber victim, makes a strong argument as to why she thinks it is an adult on the other side of the screen. “‘I know you’re over 30. It’s the way you speak. With the BFF’s and the lols? You sound like a parent...’” (Bond & Chanan, 2015). Casey is highly representative of the broader youth culture who often engage in specific ways online making it somewhat noticeable when something, even as small as the latest ‘slang’ language, is not quite ‘normal’.

Casey’s experience can be compared to youth within the other films where each youth knew the cyberbullying was being done by others within their own culture. This was illustrated through multiple methods including: using aliases to indicate their identity such as ‘LindsayLuv’

⁴⁶ The role of adults within cyberbullying is merely being recognized in this research product as it came to light within two of the films chosen for analysis. In no way it is one of my main focuses; however, it warranted recognition. As seen within *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows*, there are other issues at play including when adults were actively preying on young females who were online and coaxing them into taking nude photographs and posting them online for further exposure. These types of activities are taking cyberbullying to another realm and are not something that fits within this current research project. Other theorists within the field of criminology may want to divulge further into this.

in *Cyberbully*, be inferred through who had access to the content being spread about them such as the photograph circulating in *No Place to Hide: The Rehtaeh Parsons Story*, or through explicitly indicating they were the one generating and spreading content and talking about it actively to the cyber victim as shown in *The Duff*. Even when the identity of the cyberbully and/or the cyber bystanders could not be identified, youth seemed to be able to indicate it was occurring within their own culture. This is through the language and words being used, the ways of interacting on social media platforms, and how they were choosing to cyberbully.

1.2 The Many, Many Platforms Youth 'Need' to be Signed Into

The characteristics of the youth culture presented within popular film greatly parallel those previously discussed throughout the literature where popular film appears to accurately depict the development and extensions of the youth culture. Flinn's (2015) argument that social media is embedded into the culture where the lives of youth revolve around a multiplicity of social media platforms (p. 1) comes to life within popular film. The youth culture has changed from previous generations where today, youth culture experiences rapid access where the lives of youth are "moving at the speed of the Internet" (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014). Within the sample of films, youth were actively engaging on multiple online platforms. Each held a degree of importance in the lives of the youth who were active on them.

Specific focus is given to the cyber victims.⁴⁷ Amanda Todd started a YouTube channel to showcase her signing; however, she quickly found herself sharing this content across other platforms such as Facebook and Blog TV. This was because there was an underlying 'norm' that the more platforms a youth was on, the more popular they appeared to be. The online world consumed Amanda much like it did for Taylor in *Cyberbully*. Taylor's online presence consumed

⁴⁷ Focus is on the platforms the cyber victims were active on because it would be necessary to assume that the cyberbullies and the cyber bystanders are active on the same platforms in order for the cyberbullying to be occurring.

her – before, during, and after victimization. Amanda and Taylor actively read the comments on the content that was being spread about them.

For Rehtaeh Parson, it was a little bit different. The film focused first on the physical victimization then shifted focus to the aftermath and how the cyberbullying intensified. Without her knowledge, a ‘notorious photo’ of Rehtaeh half naked and vomiting out a window while being sexually assaulted quickly spread across multiple social media platforms. Here, the scope of the victimization bares testament to the ability of the content to go far beyond places known to the cyber victim, including on websites and platforms that they did not even know existed.

To further illustrate, at the beginning of *The Cyberbully*, Casey is shown engaging with Skype, Facebook, Instagram and a second set of accounts with the alias ‘ChronicYouth’ within a matter of minutes into the film. For many youths today this is the reality (Boyd, 2014; Flinn, 2015). Comparable to *The Duff*, when Bianca is arguing with her best friends and removing each other on social media, they list six social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Snapchat, and Tumblr that they are each active on where each presented a different way of interacting with one another.

Documentary film tended to focus more so on the life of the cyber victim and how multiple social media platforms were impacting the youth, but how they still engaged on them, whereas the other films showed a more holistic view in establishing key characteristics of the youth culture. These films did this through honing in on specific aspects of the cyber victim’s experiences. Popular film played on various aspects of the cyberbullying, mainly through the cyber victim, to really reflect characteristics that were established throughout the literature in relation to the youth culture.

1.3 *The Social Hierarchy*⁴⁸ – *Adding & Removing ‘Friends’*

Within popular film the concepts of ‘adding’ and ‘removing’ friends appeared to be particularly important and meaningful amongst youth. The practices had a high level of significance because they are often used to understand the way youth position themselves within the phenomenon as well as the youth culture as a whole. This is because the value of ‘friendship’ has also transitioned to the online domain. Arguably, the online social circle now holds more meaning and power in determining the ‘social hierarchy’ in the ‘real world’ than the way youth interact and exist offline. As a result, this becomes a strong indicator in aiding in the argument that the youth culture is changing from what it once was where face-to-face interactions and in-person associations determined the social order as to where youth belonged amid specific groups.

A key feature of social networking platforms is building profiles created by the users that not only describe the individual, but show likes, interests, and lists of ‘friends’ within that particular platform (Boyd, 2007, p. 6). Online youth are capable of searching for ‘friends’ to add them to their social networks. To become friends requires mutual confirmation from both the sender and the receiver; however, there is no requirement that the two users know each other outside social media (2007, p. 6). This practice of adding and removing friends is now the way to determine inclusion and exclusion.⁴⁹

Due to the fact that online friendships are not always ‘solidified’, meaning they are not always ‘in-person’ friendships, I argue they ought to be referred to as ‘online-ships’. ‘Online-ships’

⁴⁸ (Wegge et al., 2016, p. 87-89)

⁴⁹ The function of adding and removing friends online holds strong symbolism indicating the welcoming or denying of someone into the person’s social circle – their online world. What this means is that when a youth adds someone online, who they may know or who they may not know, they are choosing to invite them into their ‘private’ domain to access the content they generate, share, post, like, and comment on. On the other hand, removing someone from having this ‘privilege’ indicates a social breakdown of that particular friendship. Loosing access to another youth’s content online symbolizes a breakdown of that ‘friendship’. This loss of access has the potential to indicate a breakdown in the social standing of one or more parties involved.

indicate that the individuals are only known to each other online but not necessarily so in ‘real life’ outside the online domain.⁵⁰ This is another example as to how the youth culture is changing and transforming the concept of friendship in regards to how friends and enemies are made and how those interactions are maintained.

Three of the five cyber victims within popular film befriended a person they did not know online. Casey, in *The Cyberbully*, fails to unfriend a cyberbully who hacked her friend’s instant message and video account; however, upon discovering this, she still continued to engage with the unknown. Similarly, in *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows*, Amanda was quite connected with an unknown person online who she felt indebted to because Amanda knew he had more nude photos of her that could be released online. Lastly, in *Cyberbully*, Taylor added ‘James’ simply because he showed what appeared to be genuine interest in her writing, which was displayed publicly on her online profile, and because she thought he was good looking. Taylor was also looking to expand her online social circle because she was not overly popular, which was incentive to her to add other users to her social network.

In each instance, these unknown online users made compelling cases to their cyber victim as to why they should become or remain part of their social circle. They began by showing interest in their lives and it continued to the point the cyber victim became somewhat trapped or too engaged to end the ‘online-ship’. Based on the stories told within these popular films, youth were quite quick to add and engage with unknown ‘friends’ to formulate ‘online-ships’. They seemed to take it for granted that the unknown individuals were who they said they are.⁵¹

⁵⁰ ‘Online-ships’ are existent both in addition to or instead of in-person contact.

⁵¹ Youth ought to be more critical prior to adding others online – they are putting themselves at risk; however, unfortunately, being popular online appeared to take precedence as that is what they are being led to believe within the modern youth culture. In all of these incidents the cyber victim and the unknown individual became quite involved indicating that it was almost ‘too late’ to unfriend the unknown because the cyberbullying was already in full force and the cyber victims were fearful of the outcomes should they unfriend them at that point.

Although the ‘unknown’ played critical roles in the cyberbullying, this may not be as true outside popular film. Popular film portrayed the notion that in every case when the ‘unknown’ was added to a social network or became an ‘online-ship’, cyberbullying occurred where the unknown was a cyberbully and/or a cyber bystander. This may not always be the case since many online social platforms encourage users to connect with like-minded individuals from all over the world. This seems to be becoming a feature of using social media platforms, particularly amid youth – they are less concerned with knowing the people on their ‘friends list’ rather focus on growing the number of ‘friends’. It depends on the social platform being used. For example, youth may use Facebook to engage with their school circle or immediate peer groups, whereas on Tumblr youth generally create screen names and follow blogs based on their interests. All in all, the unknown may not be as threatening to youth as portrayed within popular film; however, caution should be exercised among youth as virtually anyone can be on the other end of a keyboard.⁵²

The Duff illustrated one example in particular that displayed the importance of adding and removing friends and how that can impact a youth’s social standing. Bianca has an argument with her two best friends, Jess and Casey, that they have been ‘duffing’ her. As Wes, the school’s football star, pointed out to Bianca, ‘the duff’ was the “Designated Ugly Fat Friend”. Wes told Bianca she was the one of the three that was the lowest social standing or least desirable. It is through this scene that the notion of the social hierarchy among youth exists both in the ‘real’, non-virtual world as well as the online domain.

⁵² The notion of unknowns to youth is not the focus of this research but appeared as a by-product of cyberbullying through the analysis of the popular films. I would argue that this holds potential to be an issue in and of itself, which warrants further analysis to help understand the role unknowns play in the entirety of the youth culture relating to the online domain. Unknowns lie outside anonymity and screen names because of the fact they are appearing to explicitly be of no connection to the youth they are trying to befriend. Further research into this area is encouraged in relation to how they found that particular youth they are trying to befriend presenting issues relating to the characteristics of technology, particularly searchability, as laid out by Boyd (2014). As well, further analysis could link the notion of unknowns to the risks youth are exposing themselves to within their youth culture all because of the need to be online.

Bianca: Yeah, go ahead and check them (referring to the beeps on Casey and Jess' phones)
Jess: Did you just unfriend me?
Bianca: You bet your ass I did.
Jess: Well, fine. Then I am taking you off Instagram...
Bianca: Guess what else. Unfollowed y'all on Twitter.
Casey: Oh, perfect. No more of Bianca's almost-ironic tweets for the day.
Bianca: Oh that's rich, coming from this guy, who's RT'ing (retweeting) them all day long.
Casey: They're pity RT's. You know what? I'm taking you off my We Heart It and my Vine feed.
Bianca: And you know what else? I'm blocking your ass on Tumblr. And you're off my Snapchat.
Jess: Well, fine.
Casey: Fine.
Bianca: Fine. I'm a free woman. And don't you dare be creeping my Pinterest...

This example indicates a breakdown between the three friends. This is not uncommon to happen to 'online-ships' as well. This breakdown sparked various events to follow including cyberbullying. It is when Bianca became conscious and aware of her position within the social hierarchy due to her social status both online and offline being affected. This indicates that the online and offline world have the ability to reflect one another.

Similar to traditional bullying, popularity continues to determine the social order (Boyd, 2014; Willard, 2007, p. 28). This remains true even when youth are existent within their own social networks amongst like-minded youth and are outside the more 'accepted' culture that youth propel forward. What this indicates is that youth who disengage from the 'popular group' or their own cultural groups, such as with close friends or their school cohort, and engage in alternative virtual online worlds or culture can be subjected to a lower social status. This comes as a result of little to no effort to tap into what is deemed 'popular' amongst the rest.

The social hierarchy comes into existence because youth are able to use social media to share and generate information to develop and maintain social categories and cliques (Boyd, 2014, p. 142). Youth can appear as popular by using various social media to dis someone else (2014, p. 142). An interesting element is that even though youth may not like someone, they tend to keep

them on their friends list, which helps to maintain the perception of popularity. The social hierarchy is attributed to the ways youth present themselves online through the content they share, like, view, post, and generate. This is in addition to social media accounts youth utilize, the groups they belong to, and how much they interact online overall. Failing to maintain such an online presence is one of the main ways youth damage their social standing. The harsh reality that is presented through both the literature and reinforced within popular film is that those who are of a lower social standing are at a greater risk to be cyberbullied.

As Bianca questions, “did any of these people know where they stood in the social hierarchy?” (Bello & Sandel, 2015) The answer: likely not because youth are so engaged with their own culture that they tend to be oblivious until cyberbullying affects them. Conformity overtook youth who questioned the structure of the social order. Bianca was subjected to cyberbullying because she was attempting to break down or ignore the very foundation that was set both in school and online regarding how specific individuals should act. This meant that a ‘duff’ could never reach the social standing of the ‘popular princess’.

The offline world greatly begins to reflect the online world and vice versa because of the vast influence the online world has, particularly in regards to how youth see one another and the outcomes of such attitudes, thus cyberbullying is continually perpetuated.⁵³ Amanda Todd was terrified to step foot inside her own school because of the cyberbullying she was experiencing. Largely this was due to the photo of her half naked already going viral, indicating a tarnished reputation. This experience can be resembled in the Rehtaeh Parsons story. After the infamous

⁵³ Largely the online world is the predicting factor of how youth fit within the social hierarchy because their online profile and/or presence is crucial for them to have social standing in the offline world. Essentially without a vast popularity online, these youths are subjecting themselves to the harsh realities of the online world – mainly cyberbullying because they no longer are fitting into the youth culture for one way or another, which is determined by the quality of the content online that they engage with across a wide array of social media platforms.

photo went viral, Rehtaeh's friends stopped coming around, confirming that the content that is spread, shared, etc. online holds the vast amount of power to breakdown and erode friendships in addition to the implications on the lives of those who are victimized by cyberbullying. Both girls were no longer Amanda or Rehtaeh but rather they become known as 'the girl in the photo'.

The social hierarchy is reinforced and reconfigured based on what is being seen and formulated in relation to the online world.⁵⁴ Online activity, including 'online-ships', are structuring the social hierarchy. Popularity is determined by the scope, magnitude, and 'likeability' of online profiles and activities – the more active online, the higher the social status. If youth do not like their position within the social hierarchy, to some extent they are able to manipulate their profiles to reflect the 'normal' standard amongst others with the same networks and wider youth culture (Boyd, 2007, p. 10). This is largely done in relation to what is trending.

Trending is when specific content becomes rapidly popular in a short period of time (Blakey, 2012). What is different about this is that various groups of youth are able to generate their own trending topics without necessarily conforming to the 'popular group's' interests – indicating that online allows the power to shift from group to group without necessarily conforming to the social hierarchy that once existed on the playground. Since content and trending topics change quite regularly, youth must keep up and continually engage online or face the risk of falling behind, thus losing social status – this is the risk associated with 'signing off' or not even signing on in the first place.

By not keeping up with social media, not being overly active online, or, 'heaven forbid', not having one or any of the accounts youth 'should' have, can severely impact a youth's social

⁵⁴ An important note to be made, as will be discussed in later sections of this analysis, the breakdown of these 'online-ships' and in-person friendships throughout the course of an instance of cyberbullying is not solely attributed to the social hierarchy aspect but can be in addition to other reasons such as fear of their own victimization, unsure about their role as a cyber bystander, etc.

standing. Without an online presence, a youth might as well not exist (Boyd, 2007, p. 1)– this is the attitude among many youths today depicted in the popular films when it comes to the importance of the online world in their lives and how they engage with others. Even when you are not active or not even signed onto the plethora of social media platforms, they are still subject to cyberbullying. No account(s) or no screenname(s) does not veto victimization.

1.4 The Social Hierarchy & Social Currency Online

Cyberbullying tends to be carried out because youth are generating, spreading, sharing, and forwarding content that targets one or more individuals. This information that spreads is a type of social currency (Boyd, 2007, p. 142) between each of the subcultures. For example, cyberbullies may get content from the cyber victim, any of the cyber bystanders, through online searches, or they can make it up. This currency can be, among others, to assert status, get attention, or relieve boredom (2014, p. 144). An importance is placed on the way this information is situated in relation to the instance of cyberbullying and how it used to act as social currency on and amongst the online domain.

Gossip and rumours are a type of social currency (2014, p. 142) that are used at the expense of the cyber victim(s). Presently, social currency can take on many more forms, such as YouTube videos or Tumblr GIFS, and is not limited to the offline world. While the online and social world allows for maintenance of social ties and contact much more easily, that also means that the ease of information being spread is limitless.⁵⁵

The generating of social currency is in conjunction with the development of the social hierarchy where youth can actively ‘groom their profiles’ by checking who and what is posted amongst their ‘friends’ list (Barbovschi et al., 2015, p. 19). The concept of ‘likes’ is vastly

⁵⁵ Refer to the four characteristics outlined by Boyd (2014) that are applied to social media.

important because youth use functions such as this to acknowledge a particular post in some way. Social currency is then further generated through commenting, sharing, tagging, etc. to give validation and feedback in relation to what is seen online (2015, p. 19-20).

Social currency can be positive or negative; however, each have the ability to influence the youth the content is directed toward. Not all social currency is used positively. With cyberbullying, social currency is often gathered and manipulated by cyberbullies and sometimes cyber bystanders in order to directly target one or more cyber victims – indicating that social currency can be ammunition. Therefore, the status or standing in relation to the social hierarchy, comes from the interactions youth have with others within their culture and are directly based on the social currency that is existence in the online domain.

In both *Cyberbully* and *The Duff*, the social currency was an edited video made by the cyberbullies that told an untrue story or representation of the cyber victims. Social currency was gathered by the cyberbullies and cyber bystanders and manipulated to be taken out of context to further generate online content that directly targeted the cyber victims.⁵⁶ Due to the low social standing amid the social hierarchy, both cyber victims had little capability to attempt to salvage what was being spread about them online and offline. This is because the social currency the cyber victims used to attempt to tell the ‘truth’ did not have the same value as the social currency of the cyberbullies or cyber bystanders. In both of these films, the cyberbullies initiated the content that further perpetuated development of additional untrue and negative social currency from the cyber

⁵⁶ The content that is generated by the cyberbullies and the cyber bystanders (in some cases) was given immediate attention in these films. The cyberbullies appeared to have the highest value of social currency based on their position within the social hierarchy. Attention was given to what they were posting. As a result, within popular films, youth were shown to continually check their online accounts so they did not miss anything ‘important’ that was being generated online.

bystanders. This was to reinforce and increase the value of the initial social currency in attempts to devalue and undermine the cyber victims' attempts to speak up.

Within the documentary films, the social currency was explicit photos of both Amanda and Rehtaeh. These photos push the boundaries and gain attention online. Due to the nature of the content, the value this social currency had was monumental in both influencing the rate the content spread across the Internet and being detrimental to the social standing of the cyber victims⁵⁷ who became known as the girls in the photographs. As seen in these films, the act(s) and action(s) of the cyberbullies and cyber bystanders is to aim to circulate content of high value.⁵⁸ This is due to the vast amounts of social currency that circulate the Internet; therefore, the social currency must resonate with youth in order to become cyberbullying.

Overall, the popular films illustrated a diverse range of types of social currency, both positive and negative, in relation to cyberbullying and how it can reflect a youth's social standing in the social hierarchy. For example, traditional social currency would have been spoken words on the playground; however, this has now transformed with the tool of social media. The online domain makes it easier for communication, which in turn allows for a transformation of much more rapid and widened scope of social currency. As made evident throughout popular film, social currency online holds much more value and resonates more with youth, especially the cyber victims.

⁵⁷ Largely what impacts the cyber victims is knowing the scope and audience of the online content. For example, they may have friendships breakdown due to the social currency that is spreading. This was illustrated within *The Cyberbully* where the content that the cyberbully was spreading was nude photos of Casey's best friend, which was being done through the cyberbully's control of Casey's account. Casey was greatly concerned over losing this friendship in addition to the implications the cyberbullying could have on her social standing and overall well-being.

⁵⁸ The cyberbully knows the value of the social currency they possess and; therefore, know how to manipulate the cyber victim using this social currency they have or could obtain. What is evident across each film analyzed, is that the cyber victim may feel forever indebted to the cyberbully since they can never 'pay' for their wrongs. The cyber victim feels they need to continually provide more currency for the cyberbully in order to protect themselves from future incidents even though they are actually providing the ammunition the cyberbully needs.

1.5 Deviant & Criminal Elements

The way deviancy and transgression are existent within the present youth culture has changed and moved into the online domain. The majority of youth, if not all, are partaking in cyberbullying in some way. Popular film aided in the development of deviancy levels through the vast array of examples of deviant elements that were portrayed through the instances of cyberbullying.

The Duff appeared to be an outlier amongst the sample and presented deviancy differently than the other films.⁵⁹ Cyberbullying was presented in a more ‘relaxed’ way that may not first appear as something that is deviant. Elements of deviancy were embedded within the cyberbullying that took place; however, the extent of the deviancy was not ‘high’ as in the other films. *The Duff* did not have any real examples of high level deviancy, but rather it maintained a sense that cyberbullying was much more normalized amongst the youth culture constructed within the film. What *The Duff* presented was tolerable deviancy (Stebbins, 2011).⁶⁰

In *The Cyberbully*, Casey’s attitudes toward her online activities in the role of a cyberbully greatly reflect an attitude amongst youth in relation to tolerable deviancy. Casey felt she was not accountable as a cyberbully because she was “just sharing what is out there” and that the number one rule is to “not feed the trolls”. An underlying message was this sense of normalcy, reinforcing that youth engage with cyberbullying and may not think critically about the ways they engage

⁵⁹ The wider societal audience may not have the knowledge or understanding to link cyberbullying to such deviant undertones; therefore, this is likely why the TV films embedded it within the script rather than overtly throughout the film. As well, it may be why it appeared to be omitted in *The Duff*. Due to the nature of the documentary films, deviancy and criminality was a large role the cases of both Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons, which is likely why such elements were present within the script and storyline of the films.

⁶⁰ See the section on tolerable deviancy. Due to this film being a box office film, the viewership is likely much higher than the other films. Arguments brought forth throughout media criminology come into effect much more so in relation to this film where the audience, particularly youth, may believe or ‘buy into’ this notion that cyberbullying is not as bad as it may seem or that is it something that happens within the youth culture. *The Duff* really fails to show the effects of cyberbullying in the same ways the other films do. Rather, *The Duff* has a much more positive ending where youth may be misinformed about the harm, risks, and elements of deviancy that are associated with cyberbullying.

online. In one instance in particular, Casey follows a link to hack into her ex-boyfriend's Twitter and posts a falsified status out of retaliation for targeting her in an earlier post. Later, Casey's cyberbully reveals that, like many youths online, she "didn't even stop to question it" (Bond & Chanan, 2015). The argument of tolerable deviancy is reinforced indicating that cyberbullying as a part of engagement with the online world is 'normal' and embedded within the youth culture today.

Deviancy levels ought to reflect the instances of cyberbullying where different examples allow the levels of deviancy to move about the scale. As a product of this analysis, I am able to develop a scale of deviancy.⁶¹ On this scale there is movement from low to moderate to high level deviancy where the cyber victim experiences some level of harm at each deviancy level. Similar to the cycle of the subcultures, the deviancy levels may exhibit fluidity and movement.⁶² As the cyberbullying moves up the deviancy scale, the scope of harm increases.⁶³ Each level of deviancy ought to be examined to provide a clearer understanding.

Low Level Deviancy includes preliminary and/or minor harmful actions occurring online such as name calling, rude comments, spreading rumors or false information, sharing embarrassing photos, etc. Acts of low level deviancy cause the least amount of harm. One of the most prominent

⁶¹ The article "Shades of Harm" (Langos, 2015) makes similar distinctions; however, the author is using the harm principal to evaluate the levels of harm a specific action linked to cyberbullying has. Langos (2015) acknowledges that harms can be ranked according to the varying degrees of harm that action has on a particular cyber victim.

⁶² Each example of deviancy is not confined to its place on the scale as with each case of cyberbullying, it may be different; however, this scale is a mere general overview developed in accordance with the examples presented in the popular films.

⁶³ The level of harm a cyber victim experiences should not and cannot be grouped into one specific category; however, in relation to the scale of deviancy and levels of deviancy in relation to harm, definitions of each were constructed in accordance with the films being used for analysis. To account for different reactions and outcomes is dependant on a specific cyber victim, the levels of deviancy and scope of harm was made to be fluid where one cyber victim's reaction may be moderate as compared to a similar occurrence where that cyber victim's reaction was associated with actions of low level deviancy. What is important to bear in mind is that often to move through the scale to high level deviancy, cyberbullying events build off one another where majority of instances begin with low level deviancy and progress through to high level deviancy as the cyberbullying escalates. Not every instance of cyberbullying will progress throughout the entire scale.

examples of low level deviancy is seen in *Cyberbully* when Taylor and her friend Samantha laugh off a comment, “Lardo and Dog Face”, from the cyberbully on a recent photo update on Cliquesters.⁶⁴ Taylor and Samantha are not greatly impacted by this act of cyberbullying. Similarly, in *The Cyberbully*, Casey is exposed as a cyberbully who engaged in low level deviancy when her cyberbully reveals comments Casey posted with the online alias ‘ChronicYouth’.⁶⁵ Not only did Casey use an alias but she did so to hide her identity when commenting on and sharing videos that targeted various youth.

In *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows*⁶⁶, sometimes youth engage in low level deviancy in order to exist online. Amanda would often engage online with anonymous individuals, including her cyberbully, after her parents went to bed. As the narrator indicated, “...Chances are right now there is a teen girl in her room on your street or in your neighbourhood live streaming on a webcam doing something her parents are completely oblivious to” (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014). These types of behaviours are not uncommon among youth as the other popular films used for analysis show. In doing so, it may appear that the cyber victim is opening themselves up to cyberbullying and actions that are moderate to high levels of deviancy by engaging with the online world.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Cliquesters is the film’s version of Facebook.

⁶⁵ Although Casey did not escalate the cyberbullying from these comments, others did. Casey is unsure why her cyberbully thinks she should be held accountable. As the cyberbully says, “But you started it Casey. You threw the grenade and ran” (Bond & Chanan, 2015). In this circumstance, Casey initiated a comment that was a low deviancy level but this initial act of deviancy is what ignited further, more intense cyberbullying. Casey’s comments were likely irrelevant to the well-being of the youth that were targeted; however, Casey’s actions led to worse and more intense cyberbullying and ultimate to moderate and high deviancy levels.

⁶⁶ Similar examples can be seen in the other films, specifically *Cyberbully*. Taylor kept her online activity and the cyberbullying she was experiencing a secret until it became too much for her to handle and she needed her mother’s support.

⁶⁷ Although this may sound like victim-blaming, it is not and goes deeper than this. The cyber victim may have trouble disengaging with the online world based on being curious, for example, of what is being said about them online. This is similar to Taylor’s behaviours in *Cyberbully*. All youth ought to consider that they are at risk of being cyberbullied when they engage in social media and online social networking platforms. Youth may experience difficulties separating themselves from the online world despite their experience of cyberbullying victimization. The practices the

Moderate Level Deviancy includes any escalation of low level deviancy such as deceptive actions, creation of fake accounts, hacking, alias use, spreading explicit content, exposing personal or intimate details, etc. Acts of moderate deviance are too severe to be low level deviancy and may lead to high level deviancy. Most popularly, a moderately deviant act within popular film was the use of aliases largely by the cyberbullies and cyber bystanders. I argue that the use of aliases is deceptive and deviant because youth appeared to be taking advantage of the tool of anonymity that can be provided by the online domain. In three of the five films the cyberbully was anonymous.

As *Cyberbully* indicates, the use of an alias can fluctuate between moderate and high deviancy depending on the way in which the alias is used. Within *Cyberbully*, Taylor's friend Samantha is deceptive by using an account on Cliquesters under the name 'James'. 'James' befriends Taylor and engages in cyberbullying as both a cyberbully and a cyber bystander. Another way this shift between the two deviancy levels can occur was seen in *The Cyberbully* through Casey's use of two separate sets of social media accounts – one as Casey and one as 'ChronicYouth'. Under this alias, Casey directly engages in low to moderate deviancy through comments, sharing of videos, etc. However, her actions escalate to high level deviancy upon the discovery that one of the cyber victims she targeted, Jennifer Li, committed suicide as a response to the cyberbullying she experienced through time. What these two films indicate is that the ways aliases are used can imply shifts in the levels of deviancy based on the events of the cyberbullying.

High Level Deviancy is any act that causes immediate harm as a result of cyberbullying such as self-harming and suicidal behaviours. Often the cyber victim lets their emotions build up to reach this point. High level deviancy is a result of low and moderate deviancy having a severe impact on the cyber victim. Acts may include comments that indicate a cyber victim should kill

cyber victim engages in may also exhibit various levels of deviancy depending on how the cyber victim positions themselves in relation to the cyberbullying and the online world.

themselves, posts that directly target the well-being of a cyber victim, or imagery or video that escalates the cyberbullying to extreme levels, etc. With high level deviancy, an important note to be made is that when cyberbullying leads to suicide, it indicates that the cyber victim was pushed past a certain threshold of tolerance and that the cyberbullying continued to a point that there was an element of intent to harm even though the cyberbully and/or cyber bystanders may never have intended suicide to occur.⁶⁸ When a cyberbullicide occurs, the threshold of deviancy is pushed past a point of tolerability.

Amongst popular film, excluding *The Duff*, high level deviancy was very much incorporated into the cyberbullying that was occurring. As popular film showed, self-harm and suicidal behaviours are not the result of one rude comment, for example, but is a response to a culmination of the cyber victim's entire experiences with cyberbullying. In looking at the documentary films, it was made very clear that both the cyber victims, Amanda and Rehtaeh, attempted to address their victimization before it ever got to a point where they self-harmed or took their own lives. There was much more to their experience than the photos being leaked online⁶⁹ – it was the aftermath when cyberbullying continued to escalate.

In both films, *The Cyberbully* and *Cyberbully*, Casey and Taylor were relatively alone throughout their experiences of cyberbullying. Casey was being coaxed by the cyberbully to take extra dosages of her anti-depressant medication where she began to take them one by one in attempts to protect herself and friend, Megan, from having their private pictures posted online. Throughout the culmination of her experience, Casey's tolerance was lessened; however, in the

⁶⁸ See the section that outlines harm. A lack of policies that outline accountability in the online domain are needed in order to adequately account for suicides committed because of the online domain, specifically cyberbullying.

⁶⁹ One shortcoming within the documentary films was the lack of detail throughout the cyberbullying. Both films tended to tell the story and how the cyberbullying came to be and then switched to focus on the aftermath. Very little detail in relation to the posts, comments, etc. that occurred online were given to compare the experiences of Amanda and Rehtaeh to the other cyber victims within the televised films.

end she stood up to the cyberbully, threw up the pills she took, and shut down her computer. On the other hand, Taylor was targeted by Lindsay, the popular girl in school, who eventually escalated the cyberbullying by posting a video of about Taylor working on a street corner trying to give herself away to random men. Online comments suggested Taylor should kill herself because the world would be a better place. Ultimately, Taylor attempted suicide. Both of these are examples of high level deviancy because, although they did not successfully commit suicide, it was an attempt brought on from the experiences of cyberbullying where the cyberbullies and cyber bystanders actively led the cyber victims to the position of wanting to end their lives.

2. The Subcultures⁷⁰⁻⁷¹

Throughout the sample of popular films, the subcultures continually moved, expanded, and fluctuated depending upon the instance of cyberbullying being examined. This aided in proving that the subcultures are continually in flux – they are not static but rather they have the ability to change, alter, move, etc. freely within the phenomenon. The cyber bystanders exhibited the most flux and flow throughout the examples within popular film. It is the cyber bystanders who were more likely to become a cyberbully and/or cyber victim than the other two subcultures.

Within *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows* the subculture of the cyber victim remained rather static as it was not made clear if Amanda ever engaged as a cyberbully or cyber bystander in any capacity. It was made apparent that Amanda and another cyber victim were targeted by the same cyberbully – a mysterious man who went by dozens of aliases online. It was

⁷⁰ Refer to figure 1.2. In this section I will focus on specific instances that illustrate examples of the movement of the subcultures. In no way is this exhaustive but it is meant to utilize major examples in the film where the larger themes spoke to the movement the subcultures exhibit throughout specific instances of cyberbullying. Results can easily be applied to the phenomenon as a whole using a similar technique of analysis.

⁷¹ Although a vast amount of information was available in each film as it relates to the subcultures as a whole and individually, I made the explicit choice to focus on the most prominent themes related to each subculture. This provided a much more guided and meaningful analysis to aide in understanding and developing the subcultures of cyberbullying.

highly likely that this cyberbully fluctuated closer to and possibly within the subculture of the cyber bystanders. This is due to the involvement of this man on an online website where predators, ‘cappers’ as called within the film, exchanged and shared photos of young girls where he likely would partake in cyber bystander behaviours. The broader subculture of other cyberbullies within this film continually refracted toward and away from the cyber bystander subculture. Many of the cyber bystanders were former friends of Amanda. Tess and Shyla were former best friends of Amanda’s who discussed within the film that often young girls engaged in behaviour like Amanda’s for attention. Their lack of support for Amanda positioned them within the more neutral, un-active cyber bystander subculture.

A similar storyline was shown within *No Place to Hide: The Rehtaeh Parsons Story*. However, there were two active bystanders who illustrated a split from the rest of the subculture to position themselves close to Rehtaeh. Even though these two friends admitted to feeling helpless at times, they stuck by Rehtaeh through the cyberbullying. Additionally, the group Anonymous played a large part in seeking out justice for Rehtaeh as a group of active cyber bystanders. Despite this, many of the cyber bystanders were positioned in opposition to Rehtaeh.⁷² When looking at the cyberbully subculture, plenty of movement could be seen where many of the cyberbullies interchanged between cyberbully and cyber bystander and vice versa. In particular, the night the infamous photo was taken of Rehtaeh, a young girl was present who did nothing to stop this from being taken. This young girl illustrates a traditional bystander who also became a cyber bystander and a cyberbully for the role she played in doing nothing to stop the spreading of the photograph. Ultimately, this illustrates how complex the subcultures can be.

⁷² Based on the examples within this film, a metaphor could be seen to represent and further explain the movement among the subcultures, mainly that of the cyber bystanders. The subcultures often functioned like magnets. Depending upon the film, situation, or instance of cyberbullying being examined, the subcultures would repel back and forth where they could be pulled into various directions and repelled back and forth between the two other subcultures.

Although movement was shown within the documentary films, much more movement was seen throughout the other films used for analysis. This is largely because of the multiple storylines occurring through the films rather than on one cyber victim in particular. Within *The Cyberbully*, Casey alone held a role within all three subcultures where her position differentiated depending on what element of the storyline was being portrayed. Parallels were strongly evident between this film and *Cyberbully*, specifically when looking at the role of Samantha who also appeared to have a place in all three subcultures. *Cyberbully* really gave focus to the cyber bystanders and the complex role they have within the phenomenon. From scene to scene, the cyber bystanders were often repositioning themselves.⁷³ Additionally, some cyberbullies remained static whereas others within the same subculture drove movement. This was seen with the role of Lindsay in *Cyberbully* and Madison in *The Duff*. Both these cyberbullies remained quite static in their position; however, they relied on close cyber bystanders to further perpetuate the cyberbullying forward. It was these segments of cyber bystanders who also became cyberbullies.

As made evident, the movements of the subcultures are very dynamic, reiterating that fluidity is a critical element to cyberbullying.⁷⁴ It is important to note that in all of these popular films the setting of the school played particular importance. Emphasis was placed on the schools as collectives that aided in determining the positioning of individuals within the cycle. Most of the schools' populations were positioned somewhere between the cyber victim and cyberbully subcultures as cyber bystanders. All in all, there is much to be considered when utilizing the

⁷³ This particular film uncovered an interesting element and theme of the cyber bystander subculture that can be loosely applied to the other two subcultures as well and seen within the entire sample of films. The subcultures of cyberbullying greatly resemble a pendulum where those within, even amongst the smaller cohorts of the subculture that multiply to move closer to another subculture, swing back and forth between the other two – they never stop moving. In thinking of the subcultures, more so the cyber bystanders, the element of movement is much more clear. Within this particular film, this theme was much more prevalent.

⁷⁴ Although many more examples could have been included, the choice was made to give a brief overview of the main elements of fluidity seen throughout the popular films analyzed.

cyclical model of the subcultures as instances of cyberbullying are examined as a whole and/or examined on a case-to-case basis.

2.1a The Subculture of the Cyberbully

2.1a.1 The Metaphors of the Cyberbully

In assessing the characteristics of the cyberbullies within popular film, two main metaphors were uncovered to really capture the way the cyberbullies were being presented. These included: the cyberbully as animalistic – the hunters of the online world and the cyberbullies as producers of storms. Each of these captured the essence of the characteristics cyberbullies exude.

The Cyberbully as Animalistic – the Hunters of the Online World⁷⁵

In the animal kingdom, generally size and/or strength are characteristics animals need to overpower their prey. Patchin (2016) discusses a scene right out of the animal world where he witnessed a bald eagle being “harassed” by two small crows – cyberbullying was being resembled. The question is – how? How do bald eagles in their natural habitat reflect cyberbullying in the online domain? As Patchin (2016) outlines, the eagle could have attacked the two crows since it was twice the height and size of the two crows combined, but it chose not to. Much like in cyberbullying, the cyberbully relies on the power and strength of the cohort of cyber bystanders who advance or “back up” the cyberbully. If left on their own, the cyberbullying may not carry as much meaning, thus the cyber victim could easily fight back.

At its very basic form, traditional bullying involves a power imbalance among the two or more parties involved. This is exactly what was going on between the eagle and the crows –

⁷⁵ In relation to the characteristics outlined in Appendix A, this metaphor of animalistic behaviours can be seen in thinking or reflecting on examples of cyberbullies where the cyberbully asserts their dominance, stalks their prey, or believes they are at the top of the ‘food chain’. Within the films, specific examples of such behaviours are made evident where the language used reflects the underlying theme of the metaphor of animalistic language and the cyberbully as a hunter of the online world.

strength and power in numbers generates a different situation than if there was only one crow in the story. Due to the online world having the barrier of a computer screen and connectivity allowing users to be virtually anywhere, the physical size or strength of a cyberbully is void. These behaviours are paralleled within the youth culture. While youth are engaged on social media, they create a power dynamic that constructs the social hierarchy. What is important is how the cyberbully uses their position within this hierarchy to overpower the cyber victim(s) via the Internet.

The notion that the eagle could over power the crows is not relevant. It is about how the cyber victim chooses to react or their lack of response that has the ability to indicate a certain power dynamic in regards to the cyberbullying. As Patchin (2016) outlines, much of the power that the cyberbully carries is transferred from size to the use of the tool of anonymity. Online the mass audience has much more of an impact where the witnesses have the ability to see what is happening and then make the choice to engage or not. Power is established through sheer numbers (Patchin, 2016).

Within the animal world, it is sometimes unknown if the act was bullying, playful banter, or conflict (Patchin, 2016). This may be true of cyberbullying. As seen in *Cyberbully*, Taylor and Samantha would often mock the cyberbullying that was being directed toward them. This causes a disconnect between tolerable and intolerable deviance – youth accept some forms of cyberbullying and not others. This is because it is easier to laugh off comments of cyberbullying between friends but has a different dynamic when it is a cyberbully.

Through popular film the language used greatly reflected this metaphor. For example, in *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows* it was said that the cyberbully was stalking their prey and waiting for the right time to pounce. This language is suggestive and can reflect

tenants of media criminology where media are presenting phenomena in a specific way and leading viewers to formulate specific opinions and beliefs (Haney, 2009). As well, the cyberbully was described as “a new breed of cyber predator⁷⁶” (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014).⁷⁷⁻⁷⁸ This implies cyberbullies are evolving, changing, and perhaps becoming more powerful.

The cyberbully as a hunter suggests that in the online world, the cyberbully seeks out their target and actively engages in cyberbullying much like a hunter where the actions are specific, intentional, and purposeful. Just like a hunter posting a photo of their big game on Facebook, the cyberbully shows a similar sense of pride and accomplishment for the content they initiate (Elicksen, 2015, Chapter 9). Each of the films depicted the cyberbully seeking out the cyber victim where they would then actively ‘hunt’ or prey upon them. With each instance of cyberbullying there was a ‘thrill’ or ‘reward’ by seeing the cyberbullying was having some type of impact on the cyber victim. This was largely seen in *No Place to Hide: The Rehtaeh Parsons Story* where the three young males who sexually assaulted Rehtaeh took a picture of her and posted it to social

⁷⁶ The label of predator denotes many connotations and link to a specific set of characteristics, which may be accurate to some degree depending on the cyberbully. Much of the literature makes a distinction between the word “cyberbully” and “online predator”. As Wolak et al. (2008) indicated in their work on online “predators” and the victims they target, the term “predators” generally describes adults who prey on children and youth such as pedophiles, child molesters, and sex offenders. What makes them a predator is that they prey on the information children and youth publicly divulge to then use deception to cover up their ages and intentions (p. 111). Therefore, the word “predator” may be accurate in the case of Amanda Todd; however, it is largely inaccurate as it applies to the other cyberbullies within the rest of the popular films and potentially inaccurate for many of the cyberbullies who exist as members of the youth culture.

⁷⁷ The language begins to dehumanize those within the phenomenon to revert the cyberbully to become an animal, the cyber victim to become mere prey, and the cyber bystanders to be those who want a piece of the carcass. It is a possibility that the presentation of the cyberbully in this way makes it easier to rationalize their actions and to point the blame for a wrongdoing rather than understanding the cyberbully as a youth who is ‘doing what all the other youth are doing’. Primal instincts are evident in the strong preying on the weak; however, since cyberbullying alters this ideal – the weak no longer are the only prey, it brings about questions if language such as this is conveying the most appropriate message. This notion is teasing out a possible critique of the language where the cyberbully is presented as a predator. The action of dehumanizing the cyber victim warrants more attention and further analysis.

⁷⁸ Bullies may no longer be the bigger, tougher kids on the playground. Even though in this film specifically, the narrator is describing the cyberbully as a “capper”, a predator online that captures unknowing young girl’s pictures while they are on webcam, underlying connections can be made to the broader phenomenon. Cyberbullies are a breed on their own where many other breeds, like ‘trolls’ for example, come to exist as various forms of cyberbullies engage in their practices in different ways.

media. As the script indicated, along with the photograph the post read, “This is me and this is Rehtaeh Parsons and I’m having sex with her as she hangs out a window throwing up” (Rau, 2015). Not only was this young person proud of what they had done, but they were actively trying to spread this content across the Internet to show their latest ‘kill’.

Similarly, in *The Duff* and *The Cyberbully*, the cyberbullies were showing a sense of pride for the acts of cyberbullying they had generated. Both Madison and Lindsay ‘lured’ and ‘baited’ the cyber victims where they used information about them to release videos targeting the cyber victims in cruel and untrue ways.⁷⁹ They also baited the cyber bystanders to ensure they would continue to spread the content. In *The Cyberbully*, Casey’s cyberbully encourages her to go online and read the comments on the content that was posted. In these examples, the cyberbullies are actively seeking acknowledgment and affirmation for their actions much like when a hunter achieves some type of reward such as meat from their dead carcass.

Cyberbullies are the Producers of Storms

Any natural disaster has the potential to be disruptive, destructive, and ultimately devastating for those who find themselves in the ‘danger zone’. Cyberbullying, in particular the cyberbully, can be compared to a natural disaster like a hurricane or a tornado. In thinking about the youth culture, youth’s lives revolve largely around the Internet that functions like a community and brings these youths together. In any community there are disruptions to its normal functioning, particularly bad weather. Online a variety of ‘weather’ shifts can be seen. For example, Facebook

⁷⁹ This concept of baiting may not go as intended – the hunter might miss altogether. As was evident in *The Duff*, Bianca failed to let the many ‘traps’ and ‘baits’ left for her online and in school impact her, at least not show any type of reaction in front of the cyberbully. When Madison released the video, she thought she had shot the final shot; however, Bianca embraced it to some extent, which forced her to embrace the labels the other youth were giving her. The ultimate downfall for the cyberbully was near the end of the film when she threatened to release another video. Bianca replied “Good. I’m glad you’re excited about it. Go right ahead” Ultimately, like what happens with hunters, the prey got away. Bianca refused to let the cyberbullying continue and she stood up to Madison.

banters and arguments made reflect a dark cloud that sprinkles some rain and when that conflict is resolved, the showers go away and the sun appears once more. In the online world of youth, I would argue rapid changes in weather are much more common. Similar to when a natural disaster strikes, cyberbullying brings a host of repercussions with it.

The cyberbully themselves are the eye of the storm – the most intense and causes the most damage. The eye of that storm relies on the funnels of clouds that surrounds it, bringing a host of secondary damages with it reflecting the way cyberbullies rely on the cyber bystanders. When the eye touches down, the storm is most powerful. Cyberbullies may bring with them many smaller storms prior to or in addition to the main event. This is very similar to when an earthquake happens, when aftershock occurs, or when a hurricane strikes there are smaller and less intense storms that accompany it. In instances of cyberbullying the cyber victim is often the unprepared and unsuspecting home owner who is not ready for the storm to make landfall.

The path cyberbullies take often reflect patterns or routes that storms take – it can try and be predicted but ultimately the storm is going to do what it wants to do. Cyberbullies will take the path that ensure the most damage or attention as possible to best target the cyber victim. Often there is little to no preparation prior to with little anticipation – the storm can be random.

As made evident within each of the popular films, moments after the initial ‘landfall’ of the storm, a whirlwind of comments, likes, shares, and re-tweets flood the initial content. The cyberbully ignites the flame and has the potential to destruct others that are surrounding the cyber victim. Much like in *The Cyberbully*, the cyberbully targeted Casey; however, Megan and Tamara were in the crosshairs and became associated cyber victims as a result. This was also seen in *Cyberbully* where Samantha was just as much a cyber victim as Taylor was for her involvement online as both Taylor’s friend and under the alias of ‘James’ and *The Duff* where Wes’ association

with Bianca led to trouble with Madison. To some extent the cyberbullies are aware of the damage that can be caused as a result of their actions; however, sometimes even greater damage can occur than anticipated. Their goal is to maximize the harms and leave the cyber victims to suffer the effects of the storm.

2.1a.2 What it Means to be a Cyberbully According to Popular Film

The cyberbully can exude many characteristics. There were five that were quite prominent. These include: persistent and repetitious, ability to play on emotions, instilling fear into the cyber victim, anonymity/deception, and creatively producing harms. However, for the purpose of this analysis, the choice was made to focus on creatively producing harms as the four were already outlined within the literature⁸⁰ (see Appendix A). Cyberbullies in the popular films can be seen to reflect similar characteristics; however, in some cases the same characteristics were shown in a different way.

Creatively Produce Harms

Cyberbullies are gaining many more additional and creative ways to accomplish bullying (Davis, 2011). Popular film revealed an evolvement away from traditional bullying purely through the ways the cyberbully chooses to engage with the cyberbullying and the ways they target cyber victims. This takes the form of social media platforms, creative self-made videos, uploading ‘private’ pictures, and the methods of interaction between the subcultures. Each cyberbully uniquely targets the cyber victim(s); however, a common goal is to inflict and produce harms.⁸¹

In three of the five films, cyberbullies creatively produced harms using photographs whereas the other two films showed the cyberbullies producing videos targeting cyber victims.

⁸⁰ The first four main characteristics fall directly in line with the literature and further development of each characteristic was exemplified within each of the popular films. Therefore, this is why they were mentioned but omitted from a more in depth analysis.

⁸¹ See the section defining harm in relation to cyberbullying.

Secondary instances of cyberbullying included creative methods such as: hacking social media accounts, accessing audio/visual software on the cyber victim's computer, creating fake aliases and accounts to befriend cyber victims, generating memes and photo-shopped pictures or videos, and instating behaviours through comments, likes, and shares online. These creative methods of producing such harm is evolving with the Internet and types of technology youth utilize. This creates various examples of 'new' behaviours including trolling, capping, and flaming.

Within *The Duff* and *Cyberbully*, homemade videos were created by the cyberbully to advance the cyberbullying. Although the medium was the same, the content within each video was different. This indicates that even similar methods of cyberbullying yield creative and unique ways to cyberbully and differ depending on the outcome the cyberbully desires. The motives the cyberbullies have are quite different and that reflects the creativity of the cyberbully. For example, Madison was jealous of the friendship between her on-again-off-again boyfriend Wes and Bianca, which led to Madison targeting Bianca. In comparison, Lindsay did not like Taylor because of an opinion that Taylor voiced in their health class. Lindsay felt she was targeted by this comment and began to cyberbully Taylor as a result. In both films the videos went viral indicating that the ways the cyberbully creatively chose to produce the harms were well received by the cyber bystanders, largely because their unique nature caught their attention.

Other creatively produced harms were generated through the use of explicit photographs in the films of *The Cyberbully*, *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows*, and *No Place to Hide: The Rehtaeh Parsons Story*. These photographs captured similar attention for the same reason within the other two films. As they circulated the Internet, these photos led to speculations about the cyber victims who were in them and caused other comments and implications to emerge; thus, advancing the cyberbullying even further. The photographs

themselves had shock value and captured attention. A point of focus is within *The Cyberbully* where the cyberbully posted the photographs from the cyber victim's social media account. By doing so, it made the audience think that it was Casey who was actually posting these photographs implying she was cyberbullying Megan or seeking attention in the photographs posted of herself. The cyberbully creatively produced this harm implying to the audience that it was Casey who was doing so, possibly shifting the attention away from the cyberbully and onto the cyber victim.

By creatively producing harms, the cyberbullies are capturing the attention of their audience – the cyber bystanders who they rely on to advance, escalate, and further perpetuate the cyberbullying. I argue that these creative methods are used because youth continually need to 'up the ante' of what is being posted because so much content is generated on a daily basis. A mere Facebook status, for example, is no longer enough to capture the same attention as when the Internet and social media platforms were first developing. It is almost as though cyberbullies need to perform and put on a show for their audience, the rest of the youth culture, in order to reel the cyber bystanders in. Youths attention needs to be captured rather quickly so they stop scrolling to engage with the cyberbullying that is happening whether that be reading or viewing the content online.

2.1b The Subculture of the Cyber Victim

2.1b.1 The Threshold of "Going Viral"

Within popular film, it became clear that the notion of 'going viral' was vastly important in relation to the cyber victim subculture. Firstly, it is important to define and understand the term 'going viral'. 'Going viral' should be understood in terms of a threshold or benchmark (James, 2016). Viral means that something posted online, such as a video or a picture, has reached a mass number of viewers in a relatively short period of time (Patchin et al., 2014, p. 19). As Rockett

(2013) and James (2016) address, there is a relative complex set of criteria content must be met in order to consider it as ‘viral’. Some of these factors include: the number of views, shares, or likes the content receives, the number of users the content has reached, the rate of consumption of the content, the life span of the content online, and the repetitious exposure of the content (Rockett, 2013; James, 2016). For the purpose of this research, “you know a viral video when you see it” meaning that when it reaches ‘you’ it is already viral (Rockett, 2013).⁸²

Based on popular film, content is considered viral when the cyberbullying is ignited and the scope of the audience goes beyond the cyberbully and the cyber victim. From here, the subcultures begin to emerge and formulate in a cyclical nature. The cyberbullying is then propelled forward. In each film it was made apparent that the threshold of ‘going viral’ was when much of the harms were onset onto the cyber victim because it was at this point that the cyberbullying appeared to reach an uncontrollable scope.⁸³ A much larger audience is able to see, read, and respond to the cyberbullying, making it much harder for the cyber victim to cope (Patchin et al., 2014, p. 19).⁸⁴

Content goes viral because social media platforms “assign a higher premium to the size of one’s network than the strength of the bonds within it” (Aboujaoude et al., 2015, p. 16). For youth there is a larger incentive to grow their social network because it can lead to social status and

⁸² Not all content goes viral; however, there are no real concrete determining factors that make content ‘go viral’. Sometimes it just happens. Largely it is the cyber bystanders who increase viewership of specific content through views, likes, shares, retweets, comments, etc.

⁸³ ‘Going viral’ was seen as a breaking point for the youth within popular film. The cyberbullying the cyber victims experienced began as low level deviancy where somewhat ‘tolerable’ online content was being produced. Minimal harm was experienced as a result. As the cyberbullying progressed, harm increased and so did the level of deviancy. This was as a result of the creative methods of harm chosen by the cyberbully. This content then went viral and created the highest level of deviancy and maximum amount of harm. By going viral, as Rehtaeh Parson expressed, the cyber victim is repeatedly exposed to the harms of cyberbullying and experiences that may have led to the cyberbullying in the first place. Further ‘spin-off’ content is also generated as a response to the viral content, once again causing more harms and furthering the cyberbullying.

⁸⁴ As seen in *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows*, *Cyberbully*, and *The Duff*, sometimes a cyber victim does not even know the content existed, let alone that it was targeting them.

online respectability (2015, p. 16). The status of viral is the ultimate recognition for a cyberbully. However, cyber victims feel easily overwhelmed, as made evident in each of the popular films, because they truly believe their lives and reputations are ruined (Hinduja et al., 2012, p. 2).

An interesting element emerges within the Amanda Todd story where Amanda proves that sometimes ‘going viral’ can be positive to garner awareness on the effects of cyberbullying. As a response to the cyberbullying she was experiencing, Amanda created a video to explain her side of the story. She posted the video to YouTube and “the world started watching”; however, it was after Amanda committed suicide⁸⁵ that the video itself went viral (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014). Viewers expressed words of encouragement, messages of support, and an element of relatability. Not all the feedback was positive as further cyberbullying emerged. Nonetheless, to this day the video is one of the most iconic as it was one of the first of its kind to really draw attention to the phenomenon of cyberbullying; it sparked a public conversation – all because it went viral.

As discussed, it really is the cyber bystanders who hold responsibility for content going viral. *The Duff* warrants specific attention. Within this film, viewers are able to see the choices the cyber bystanders make in advancing the cyberbullying to aide in the cyberbully achieving having the content going viral. After Bianca viewed the video Madison had created and posted, she hid in the bathroom because she did not know how to react. While there, she overheard two students. It started out as one of them saying they felt bad for Bianca but was quickly followed by “I should forward this” where the two students then said “Viral?” where the other replied “Viral” (Bello & Sandel, 2015). In this instance it was made clear that the cyber bystanders are those who explicitly make the choices to have the content ‘go viral’. Cyber bystanders try to stay active online to keep

⁸⁵ Amanda never intended the video as a suicide video but rather a way for the world to hear her and understand the toll cyberbullying takes on a cyber victim.

up with content as it is being uploaded or generated. When content emerges, like the video of Bianca, they decide if it warrants ‘viral status’ based on the entertainment value behind it. Cyber bystanders who propel this content forward often lack an understanding of the implications of their actions on the cyber victim.⁸⁶

2.1b.2 The Five Stages of the Cyber Victim

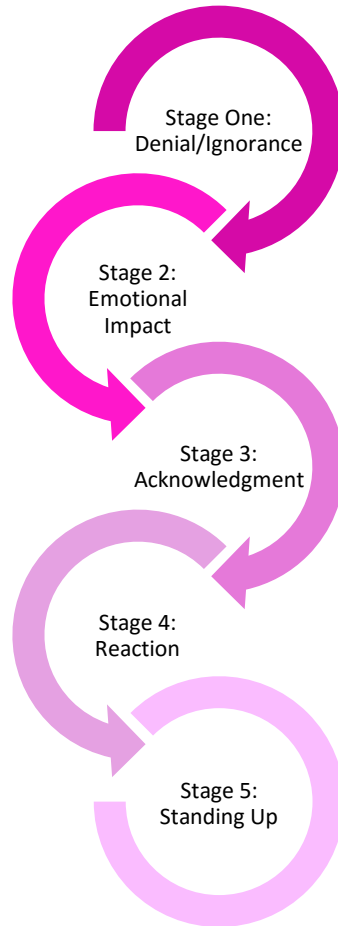


Figure 2 – The Five Stages of the Cyber Victim

⁸⁶ Although ‘going viral’ appeared to have somewhat of an impact on Bianca, it was nowhere near as detrimental when comparing Bianca’s reactions to those of the other cyber victims. What this indicates is that the box office film made a choice to show the cyber victim actively having some reaction to the content going viral; however, it was heavily outweighed by the notion that it should be embraced. Since *The Duff* made it to the box office, this decision could have been made purely for ‘happy ending’ purposes where it may not have done as well at the box office had Bianca been shown to commit suicide as a result of an inability to cope like the within two of the other films after the content went viral. This leads to questions of how accurately the box office film reflected this element of cyberbullying since much of the literature and the other four popular films, which did not receive as much status as *The Duff*, show the cyber victim experiencing various negative emotions as a reaction to being victimized where in very few cases does the cyber victim successfully stand up to the cyberbully without repercussions (see Appendix A).

Amongst popular film, it was discovered that in each instance of cyberbullying, the cyber victim tended to go through stages of their victimization. These were all presented in various different ways; however, the categorical association of what they were going through was vastly similar. The five stages of the cyber victim include: denial/ignorance, emotional impact, acknowledgement, reaction (positive or negative), and standing up. A critical point to be made is that this order can fluctuate; however, this is how each was represented in popular film where not all cyber victims achieved the final stage of standing up. This process was exclusive to the cyber victim indicating that amongst popular film, the five stages were universally portrayed and depicted. Each stage warrants further examination and discussion.

Stage 1: Denial/Ignorance

Many teens struggle to accept that they are not popular amid the youth culture where making friends and interactions are no longer limited to the schoolyard or neighbourhood. As seen within popular film, it was difficult for the cyber victim to accept their victimization. Often these youths denied or ignored that the cyberbullying was affecting them because they were at odds with positioning themselves as victims (Boyd, 2007, p. 140). I argue it is even more so difficult when the cyber victims know the content online has reached a wide audience and they are repeatedly exposed to it.

Throughout the popular films analysed many initial reactions to cyberbullying involved denying what was happening or not believing it to be true. Often cyber victims turned to close friends to laugh it off or pretended it was not a big deal. They laugh off the pain, smile, and try to avoid negative emotional responses (2007, p. 140). As well, certain films portrayed a belief that the content will 'blow over' in a couple days; therefore, the cyber victim should not become too

affected by what was being said about them. This may occur where a one off comment occurred and warranted little to no further attention; however, this was not the case in popular film.

There were different ways the cyber victims attempted to avoid or deny their victimization. In *Cyberbully*, Taylor turned to her close friends and actively mocked the comments the cyberbully was making. For example, Lindsay comments “Lardo and Dog Face” on a photo Taylor uploaded to Cliquesters. Samantha and Taylor laughed it off and jokingly fought to claim which one they were. Casey in *The Cyberbully* was ignorant that she was being cyberbullied. Since the cyberbully was utilizing a hacked account of Casey’s friend Alex, Casey thought it was a joke and that someone was playing a prank on her. Denial is seen throughout the storyline where Casey is continually attempting to piece together the identity of the person on the other end of the computer. In both these films, the cyber victims did not acknowledge the cyberbullying for what it was until much further into their victimization when the cyberbullying had escalated past the point that they could laugh or smile through it let alone deny it was happening.

As seen in *The Duff*, sometimes the cyber victims put up a front in attempts to play off the cyberbullying and the toll it is having on them. Bianca often laughs off the comments Madison makes and is ignorant to admitting the affects the cyberbullying and bullying are having. This is greatly evident after the release of the video where Bianca tries to embrace the outcome of the video being posted.

Similar aspects of denial and ignorance were seen in the documentaries. Amanda was ignorant toward the repercussions exposing herself on webcam could have. Rehtaeh was in denial and struggled to acknowledge what had happened to her the night the photo was taken. Often Rehtaeh indicated that she was too young to be experiencing all of this, which further indicated

aspects of denial. Within both films, the young girls knew the cyberbullying was influencing their day-to-day lives; however, the affects it was having were often not acknowledged.

The denial/ignorance stage moves to the next when the cyber victim realizes the online content is spreading and it begins to have an influence. Often this is when the content has reached the attention of the cyber bystanders. There is no longer an indication that ‘this will be forgotten about tomorrow’ because the cyberbullying is escalating through likes, comments, shares, etc. Once youth acknowledge they are being cyberbullied and that it is influencing them in some way, there is often an emotional response.

*Stage 2: Emotional Impact*⁸⁷

Cyber victims often do not want to appear as weak or show the cyberbully they have power or that they have caused such emotional harm (Boyd, 2007, p. 140). As shown throughout popular film, cyberbullying does cause emotional distress to cyber victims (Cao, 2015, p. 458). The levels of emotional distress vary and often coincide with the levels of deviancy where little emotional distress is displayed when low level deviancy occurs and escalates to high levels of emotional distress if the cyberbullying is a higher level of deviancy.

Sometimes the cyber victim is even unsure how to respond. There is a vast array of emotions a cyber victim may show such as frustration, depression, and fear (2015, p. 459; Gualdo et al., 2015). The emotional impact the cyber victims displayed throughout popular films often overlapped, showing that cyberbullying can have similar affects even when the instance of

⁸⁷ Being a cyber victim, I argue based on the emotional responses in the popular films, is rather an eye opening experience. Being that cyberbullying is a popular youth phenomenon, likely majority of youth have been a cyber bystander at some point; however, not every cyber victim makes it past stage one or two. These emotional responses are an indication that the cyberbully has successfully inflicted the harm they intended to produce. As seen in the TV and box office films, the cyber victim was reluctant to let these emotions show as that indicates the cyberbully was successful.

cyberbullying itself is different. For example, all of the films showed the cyber victim in a state of fear and concern as to what would happen after the content went viral.⁸⁸

The emotional impact a cyber victim has reaches peak levels when they begin to acknowledge the cyberbullying and begin to feel the effects. Amanda Todd's story greatly depicted strong emotion where feelings of isolation and hopelessness were evident. Amanda often blamed herself and led to feelings of regret. Both Amanda and Rehtaeh experienced changes in their personalities as an inability to cope, leading to questions of why this was happening to them. Rehtaeh exhibited strong and intense emotions in regards to the sexual assault. This further intensified the emotional response to the cyberbullying as it was a reminder of what she had been through.

In *Cyberbully*, Taylor's role as a cyber victim reflected similar emotions as seen within the documentary films. Taylor was definitely struggling with how the cyberbullying was tarnishing her reputation and showed extensive concern with how others would view her as a result of the cyberbullying. Taylor tried to remain isolated throughout the cyberbullying; however, it became too much for her to handle and she reached out to her mother for support in dealing with complex emotions. Unlike in the documentaries, which described the emotions of the cyber victims, in *Cyberbully* Taylor was shown in very raw states – crying, throwing objects out of anger, and clearly displaying a sense of an emotional struggle.

The Cyberbully and *The Duff* depicted very covert emotion where, without description, it was difficult to know what the cyber victims were experiencing. Bianca played off the cyberbullying by putting on a tough front. Eventually she broke off friendships with her two best

⁸⁸ Although each cyber victim was cyberbullied in a unique way, the emotional responses they have often showed similarities. To depict the vast array of emotions possible, each popular film will be discussed in regards to the major, overarching emotion that took precedence in each popular film.

friends and focused on herself. This was a response to avoid showing what she was feeling and having to relive being ‘the duff’ of the group.⁸⁹ Casey was rather emotionless throughout the film and was depicted as being very tough and argumentative with the cyberbully; however, near the end, when she accepts the cyberbullying for what it is, the emotions hit her. Casey displayed a variety of emotions in a relatively short time. It appeared that everything hit her at once. As well, throughout the film, the emotions Casey has fluctuated between being a cyber victim and a cyberbully, which may have impacted the persona she had during different elements of the story.

All in all, the emotional response a cyber victim comes as a way to prepare to acknowledge that the cyberbullying has occurred or is occurring. It does not mean the cyber victim has come to full terms with their victimization; however, it indicates a step towards acknowledgment if they have not already fully done so. This stage is important because it allows cyber victims to express how they feel.

Stage 3: Acknowledgement

Progressing from the emotional stage means that the cyber victim acknowledges harm caused by the cyberbullying. This acknowledgment comes as a way to come to terms with the cyberbullying, attempt to stop it, or show that they were impacted in some way. Both active and passive methods were shown throughout popular film ranging from creating videos sharing the cyber victim’s story to a single post. Sometimes acknowledgement only recognizes that the cyberbullying was harmful; however, a cyber victim may still not acknowledge the cyberbullying as cyberbullying.

⁸⁹ The lack of emotion displayed by Bianca in *The Duff* speaks to the understanding that media may distort the reality of the phenomenon in order to better target the audience leading a false portrayal of the given phenomenon (Haney, 2009). This indicated a large disconnect between the box office film and the documentary films and the scholarly literature around cyberbullying where emotional responses are widely evident in terms of the cyber victim and how they understand their positions as cyber victims.

Within the documentary films, acknowledgment was rather subtle and made evident through the narrator who was telling accounts of the stories of the cyber victims. This was done through the description of the young girl's reactions to the cyberbullying. Amanda and Rehtaeh really acknowledged that the cyberbullying was harmful when they internalized the notion that they were known as 'the girl(s) in the picture'. They knew the photos circulated the Internet and this was causing the cyber victims immense amount of emotion, which lead to acknowledgement that there was an impact of the content the cyberbullies generated.

Amongst the other films, the acknowledgment stage came in a variety of forms. Taylor acknowledged the cyberbullying quite early in the film. Largely the point of acknowledgment came when Taylor realized she could no longer handle the cyberbullying she was experiencing online and she turned to her mother for support. *The Cyberbully* was a bit more complex because of the fluidity in Casey's role within multiple subcultures. The moment of acknowledgment really came when Casey was being coerced into taking additional dosages of her medication in exchange for the cyberbully to not post the photos of Casey and Megan topless. Bianca in *The Duff* was unique because the acknowledgment came when Bianca realized she was vulnerable to the cyberbullying and that she could no longer ignore the emotions she was experiencing when the video was posted. Further into the film, there was a second instance of acknowledgement when Bianca self-acknowledged her position as 'a duff' and that it did not necessarily have to be a bad thing. She took initiative to address the effects of the cyberbullying and attempted to use it positively.

The acknowledgment stage directly feeds into the reaction stage. After a cyber victim has acknowledged the cyberbullying, they act on their emotions to react to it in some way. The

reactions expressed are a way to escape the cyberbullying or an additional attempt, like a ‘last call’, to try and make it stop.

Stage 4: Reaction

Reactions are a release of the emotion attributed to an inability to cope. Within popular film, generally reactions occurred after the content went viral. This was the breaking point that led to a various set of reactions. During the process of the content going viral and the cyber victim acknowledging that it has achieved this status, the emotions exhibited in stage two multiply and intensify. Intensified emotions led to depression, suicidal thoughts and attempts, and self-harming behaviours.

The Cyberbully and *The Duff* are exceptions where the reactions of the cyber victims did not portray as intensified reactions. Casey did take additional dosages of her medication that could have led to death; however, she was being coerced to do so and stopped the behaviours herself before it became detrimental. Casey’s reactions to the cyberbullying was to put an end to it. Casey’s father announced that Megan had called and left a message saying, “Whatever is going on, she knows this isn’t you”. Casey realized she would not lose Megan’s friendship and realized that entertaining the cyberbully was not worth risking her life. The reaction led to Casey breaking down and working through the emotional rollercoaster she had been through. Unlike reactions in the other films, Bianca had a moment of acknowledgment that led to a small scale emotional reaction; however, largely Bianca’s reaction was to embrace the ‘duff’ label and choose to confront Toby about the crush she had on him. Neither Bianca nor Casey resorted to suicide.

Amanda and Rehtaeh both reacted in similar ways where it was indicated that they were struggling to cope with the victimization. Ultimately this led each of these young girls to self-harming behaviours and later suicide. Rehtaeh Parsons continually felt she was too young to deal

with the emotions she was experiencing. Additionally, backlash of the photograph spreading and the police's ill attempt to achieving justice were major contributors to the reactions Rehtaeh had. She was made to feel like the problem since the boys who assaulted her walked the halls of the school and one was even enrolled in the same support group as Rehtaeh.⁹⁰ Rehtaeh felt punished even though it was her who was victimized.

The reaction Amanda had was similar; however, throughout the course of her victimization, Amanda reacted by speaking out to try to portray the truth and apologizing for the photos that were spreading on social media. Regardless, Amanda "didn't know what to do anymore" and started to self-harm. Amanda had also been hospitalized for serious episodes of depression. The cyberbullying was quite detrimental. Soon after Amanda posted her viral video explaining her side of the story and how cyberbullying affected her, she committed suicide. In both documentaries, the suicides were a result of repeated exposure to the photographs where both young girls were not able to live their lives without some aspect of cyberbullying occurring. Suicide was a last resort to 'escape'.

Cyberbully really bridged the reactions between the two sets of reactions within the other films. At first, Taylor did not take the cyberbullying seriously and laughed it off. As it escalated, Taylor attempted to handle it alone and this led to a downward spiral. Initially Taylor reacted by retaliating when she commented "Bitch" on a post Lindsay had made but things only got worse. As the cyberbullying escalated, Taylor's reactions included a variety of complex emotions that she struggled to cope with. After Lindsay released the video and it went viral, Taylor posted a video

⁹⁰ This support group was targeting drug use. Rehtaeh was sent to attend even though she had never used or experimented with drugs before. Rehtaeh expressed going made her feel even worse where she was treated as a delinquent even though she was really the victim. These negative resources and lack of support were also major motives for her to self-harm. As well, the photograph spread throughout the town she lived in and made headlines, which caused even more exposure.

similar to the one in the story of Amanda Todd. Based on the storyline, underlying notions can predict that this was a suicide ‘note’. Soon after it was uploaded Taylor attempted suicide; however, this attempt was intervened by Samantha and Taylor’s mother. Post-suicide attempt led to a more positive way to cope and react to the cyberbullying – a support group for cyber victims.

Dependent upon the reactions of the cyber victim, the reaction stage may be the last and final stage in their story or it can directly lead to the next stage, which is contingent on the outcome of the instance of cyberbullying. Within popular film, those who do not commit suicide were shown standing up to the cyberbully. If the cyber victim committed suicide, the cyberbullying was displaced onto another cyber victim or was directed toward friends and family of the cyber victim.

Stage 5: Standing Up

Standing up to the cyberbully takes courage, determination, and strength from the cyber victim as doing so could only result in more intense or harmful cyberbullying. Standing up occurs in many forms such as: attempting to confront the cyberbully to request that they stop or remove the content, indicate how the cyberbullying is impacting them, etc. As made evident within the literature, there is no ideal concrete way to combat cyberbullying but it may be achievable.⁹¹ This stage was heavily portrayed in the three television/box office films; however, it was relatively sensationalized as it was not portrayed in the documentary films prior to the cyber victim committing suicide.⁹²

⁹¹ More research on this particular topic is warranted; however, for the purpose of this research, it is important to acknowledge ‘standing up’ as a legitimate stage in the process of the cyber victim as it was consistent throughout the three television and box office films used for analysis. Questions are raised as to how often this happens in ‘reality’, in what form it takes (online or in-person) and to what extent ‘standing up’ proved to be effective. A comparative analysis would be useful.

⁹² Within the scholarly literature, there is a notion that youth should attempt to achieve this stage but it may not always be reality as many youths cease their experience with cyberbullying at stage four. It is important to note that if a cyber victim commits cyberbullicide, the cyberbullying does not stop; rather it is displaced somewhere else or onto someone else. This could be the family members or friends of the cyber victim or it could be directed to an entirely new cyber victim. The focus of this stage is the cyber victim actively standing up to the cyberbully and/or the cyber bystanders; therefore, the documentary films were omitted from this portion of the analysis. In the story of both the young girls,

In *The Duff*, after Bianca realized there was more to high school than being popular, she reacted by accepting her label as the ‘duff’. As one of her teachers, Mr. Arthur, indicated, ‘duffing’ had been around for ages but “there was no cool name for it like ‘the duff’”. This is what really led to Bianca confronting the cyberbully. As the school’s homecoming/prom, Bianca confronted Madison face-to-face stating that she used to get upset by what her and her friends were saying and doing but now she felt bad for them because they were also someone’s ‘duff’.⁹³ Bianca was no longer going to let the cyberbullying negatively affect her even though some people may choose to target her and the quirks she has.

By Bianca standing up, the cyberbullying stopped. She won over the school’s football star and wrote an inspirational article following the homecoming. Bianca wrote about what it means to be ‘a duff’. This article is a form of reaction and standing up through the expressions and voice of the cyber victim. Bianca attempted to connect others within the youth culture to cyberbullying and this notion that everyone can be affected by it because everyone was someone else’s ‘duff’. As Bianca stated, “It’s about understanding that no matter what label is thrown your way, only you can define yourself”. Although these methods may have worked for Bianca, not all cyber victims have the same experience or the means to stand up in the ways Bianca did.

In *Cyberbully*, one method Taylor used in attempts to gain attention to how problematic cyberbullying can be, was through a local news agency. A story ran about how Taylor was being cyberbullied by one of her best friends through the use of an alias. It had potential to make

their parents often carried on the legacy in attempts to achieve justice for their daughters who lost their lives to cyberbullying. This warrants further analysis as it is outside the context of the stage of standing up for the purpose of this research project.

⁹³ Bianca is showing how the ‘duff’ is a normalized part of the youth culture and that everyone is a part of it even if they do not realize it. No one was excluded as a target to cyberbullying. Therefore, by confronting the cyberbully, the cyber victim attempts to regain some power that the cyberbully had over them.

headlines.⁹⁴ Like Bianca, Taylor tried to use a media outlet as a tool to speak out about her story so others could realize they were not alone. Reaching out to the news agency was an outcome of Taylor realizing, through her support group, that there were many other youths who had been victimized at the hands of cyberbullying.

After Taylor's suicide attempt, she was enrolled in a support group for other cyber victims where she received immense support. Upon returning to school after some time off, on a lunch break, Lindsay tried to poke fun at Taylor for returning to school. Taylor, along with several other active bystanders, confronted Lindsay and the mean things she was posting on Cliquesters. Taylor initiated by stating, "...I know you think you're probably being funny but you should know your words actually hurt. And I think you should stop attacking people online" (Prupas, Rice & Biname, 2011). Friends of Taylor made comments about the harms the cyberbullying was having. Others within the cafeteria cheered and clapped. Lindsay left the cafeteria and the scene changed to show the students of the school happily engaging online by smiling and laughing while on their devices.

In *The Cyberbully*, near the end of the film, Casey began to realize that the cyberbully had been following her on social media for some time. After Casey's father relayed the message to her from Megan, Casey realized what was being said online about her no longer mattered. Despite pleas from the cyberbully, Casey made a choice to shut the laptop and no longer let the cyberbully have control. Once she shut the laptop screen, Casey broke down and called for her father for support. Even though Casey became quite emotional, she stood up to the cyberbully by disengaging with the demands put forward because her life was not worth risking.

⁹⁴ Due to the year of release, I would argue that stories of cyberbullying making headlines is not like it used to be. This argument can be confirmed by *The Cyberbully* where it is stated that "cyberbullicides are not like they used to be" (Bond & Chanan, 2015). Further research into this would be beneficial to see and understand how headlines treat or recognize the phenomenon of cyberbullying in order to garner a conclusive argument if headlines are impactful in any way to attempt to stop or combat cyberbullying. What would be of particular interest is to compare the stories of cyberbullying when the phenomenon first developed to the present as more instances of cyberbullying are occurring.

Each film ended with the cyber victim standing up to the cyberbully; however, very little, if anything, was shown as a result of the cyber victim and/or cyber bystanders standing up. It was implied in each film that the cyber victim overcame their experiences; however, this is an inconclusive conclusion as there was no depictions of life after the cyberbullying. It cannot be confirmed that the cyberbullying ended, if it was displaced, or if other instances of cyberbullying emerged or were made apparent. All in all, popular film indirectly developed these stages of the cyber victim that proved to be vastly important in the construction of the cyber victim subculture. As a product of the stages, various extensions and continuations of the subcultures were generated; this is especially true when the cyber victim's battle with cyberbullying came to an end when they committed suicide.

2.1b.3 Extensions/Continuation of the Subculture

The subculture of the cyber victim really is carried forward through the extensions of the subculture. Cyber victims can do so themselves through various types of actions to formulate a collective or to establish connections with others who share similar experiences. In the case of a cyberbullicide, this is often done through friends and family by erecting some type of memorial. These extensions and continuations of the subculture are limitless and monumental in garnering connections among cyber victims themselves or others known to a cyber victim because they propel the subculture forward. The subculture of the cyber victim is much more than being victimized as proven through the examples within popular film.⁹⁵ Without such extensions or continuations, the story of the cyber victims would cease to exist after the cyberbullying ended or when the youth committed suicide.

⁹⁵ *The Cyberbully* was omitted from analysis as there was little portrayals of the extension of the cyber victim subculture after Casey shut down the laptop.

As Arnold (1970) indicates, subcultures are ever changing and evolving based on the phenomenon that they exist within and the specific subculture grows and changes (p. 111). When a specific subculture is formulated, there are conditions that need to be met. These conditions apply to the cyber victim subculture based on its nature where there is a strong reliance on the extensions of the subculture to maintain its existence. These conditions include (1970, p. 110):

- *Time* – a group must be able to interact over a period of time even if the cyber victim ends their life
- *Commitment* – those involved (friends, family, other cyber victims, etc.) show a strong commitment to the subculture and show a continuation of the elements of the subculture to move forward
- *Congruence* – little to no conflict exists within the group as it is mutually founded and maintained on shared experiences with an interest to preserve the memory of the cyber victim, educate on cyberbullying, or other types of progressive activities such as erecting memorials, sharing stories, and aiding others who have been victimized
- *Distinct Qualities* – these are shared amongst the group and go far beyond a shared experience

Based on these criteria, the documentary films exhibited the strongest elements of the extensions of the cyber victim subculture after both young girls committed suicide. Both of these films were based on true stories that still resonate and ‘ring a bell’ when discussions of cyberbullying erupt or make headlines. Due to their influence at the time and still today, the subculture of the cyber victim is continuing far beyond the years the cyberbullying took place for each of the cyber victims. The stories themselves extend the subculture well beyond a shared experience.

In *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows*, Amanda's YouTube video nearly instantaneously attracted strong attention and connection amongst other cyber victims. "The video attracted more and more attention. Other kids could relate to her struggle and sent her messages of support" (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014). Additionally, this sparked other cyber victims to make their own videos. Even one of the investigators on her case indicated that, "Amanda Todd is always in the back of your mind when you deal with these cases and the harassment type cases online" (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014). It resonated with many people because it was one of the first cases of cyberbullying to make headlines across Canada. Amanda Todd's name is "synonymous with cyberbullying..." (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014), arguably for the mere impact the cyberbullying had on her, the community, and how it still resonates with society today – the cyber victim subculture still surrounds her story.

As well, within the film Amanda's parents extend the subculture through their creation of memorial pages where others from around the globe can hear Amanda's story, show support, and connect with others within the subculture. Carol, Amanda's mother, extended a search for justice by involving the police in an official investigation in hopes that this could be presented from happening to another young person. After her suicide, Amanda's death really sparked the online communities who followed her story and this helped to "push the investigation into over drive" (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014). The entire subculture was working together to achieve justice and ensure prevention of future incidents. Amanda's father erected a memorial of his own by getting Amanda's dream tattoo of the words 'Stay Strong' across his arm. Examples such as these ensure a long-lasting and meaningful propelling of the subculture forward – to never forget but also to advance in hopes that cyberbullying eventually comes to an end.

Similarly, Glen and Leah Parsons used social media as a way to create an everlasting memorial for their daughter. Leah, specifically, took to Facebook in attempts to connect with other parents who experienced such loss. For Rehtaeh's parents, it was about connections. The story had spread across the globe where Glen was receiving messages of support from places such as Saudi Arabia, Japan, and Russia (Rau, 2015). The momentum in Rehtaeh's story grew and grew to the point it gained the attention of the online vigilante group Anonymous. This resulted in Rehtaeh's case being re-opened with local authorities. It is unlikely that this would have happened without attempts at extending the subculture to the online world where others were able to engage and actively get involved to extended the subculture far beyond the scope of family and friends. The outlet of social media turned out to be an instrument for the Parsons that allowed the subculture Rehtaeh was a part of to grow, change, and expand into something much larger.

Further, Rehtaeh's mother had an outlet of her own by painting stones as 'memory stones' for Rehtaeh that she would leave in places around the community, mainly on the beach (Rau, 2015). Everyone who wanders by them would be able to see them and acknowledge it in some way, perhaps to remember Rehtaeh or to look into the story. Regardless, this type of memorial that is erected had the aim to not only allow a parent to cope with her daughter's suicide, but to spread the story.

Within the film *The Duff* (Bello & Sandel, 2015), Bianca was the one who initiated an extension of the subculture through her reaching out to attempt to normalize the 'duff' label by articling her experience in the school newspaper. This article made the front page. It was shown at the end of the film with students reading aloud parts of the article where students were self-identifying with the subculture Bianca belonged to. It was more than just shared experience

bonding them together – it was the notion that this practice was so common, it was escalating rapidly amongst readers that the it was becoming normalized to be the ‘duff’.⁹⁶

Cyberbully depicts the cyber victim using a news media outlet to actively reach out to extend the subculture she belongs to. Taylor, with the assistance of her mother and Samantha, initiated a news article around the cyberbullying. Although an outcome was not depicted within the film, the mere reaching out to write the article would be considered a continuation of the subculture because the action initiated an attempt to get the story out to the public to garner awareness and/or support to make connections with and among other cyber victims. As well, it resulted in changes in the law after several failed attempts by Taylor’s mother. This extension of the subculture is directly impacting the future of cyberbullying by being one of the main driving factors to attempt to get lawmakers within the film to start the process of passing the law to help protect cyber victims and maybe even stop cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying was quite traumatic for Taylor; however, the most meaningful method of coping was the support group she took part in. A support group is the epitome of an extension of the subculture because it allows those with shared experiences to come together as a collective. Cyber victims realized there were others who were going through similar experiences and emotions – they were not as alone as they may have thought. A support group allowed Taylor to spark a movement at her school to try and make online a safer place for others. Taylor ignited a chain reaction among her peers where cyber bystanders became active, proving that these

⁹⁶ As *The Duff* proves, these extensions of the subculture are not exclusive to youth. Mr. Arthur, one of the teacher’s at Bianca’s school, was even relating to what Bianca experienced stating that there was no fancy name for it back in his day, but he was a ‘duff’ (Bello & Sandel, 2015). The film depicts these connections among cyber victims after the cyber victim reached the point of standing up to the cyberbully, which was successful in this particular film. It was relatively unclear how long after the newspaper was written that these connections or if any other extensions of the subculture emerged; however, the mere unification among the cyber victims is enough to illustrate the argument presented.

continuations of the subculture are not entirely contingent upon others to carry forward the legacy of the cyber victim after a suicide or attempted suicide.

Lastly, I argue each of these films are examples of extensions of all the subcultures, in particular the cyber victim for their mere purpose beyond entertainment. These films speak to the phenomenon of cyberbullying and continue to be viewed by mass audiences rather frequently, some more so than others. Their availability to the public ensures that the stories of these cyber victims, fictional or not, are coming to life each time they are played where their stories are shared and heard; thus indicating that the cyberbullying they experienced was meaningful in some way. The overarching stories and messages carry with them the continuation of the subcultures as viewers have the ability to identify with one or more subculture and put themselves within the cycle.

2.1c The Subculture of the Cyber Bystander

2.1c.1 The Bystander Effect⁹⁷

The Bystander Effect is defined as the decrease in the number of individuals willing to intervene in a situation or emergency as the number of bystanders increase (Obermaier et al., 2015, p. 1492; Machackova et al., 2015). These bystanders are witnesses to the incident of cyberbullying. Generally, the Bystander Effect is discussed in face-to-face or open public settings; although less popular, it can be applied to online communications as well. The role of technology, specifically smart phones, computers, and social media have changed and altered the way bystanders intervene, react, and involve themselves in situations such as cyberbullying. The way bystanders behave

⁹⁷ Although a vast body of literature exists relating to the bystander effect and how that could potentially relate or alter with cyberbullying, specific elements will be focused on for the purpose of this thesis project. This is based on what was portrayed in popular film. A more comprehensive analysis or study ought to be conducted specifically on the bystander effect and cyberbullying to garner comparative results to those present within the literature. In this section the literature is used as a subsidy to the theme of the bystander effect as it was presented in the five popular films analyzed. Also, further elements of the cyber bystander subculture can be seen in Appendix A.

affect the perception and the process cyberbullying takes (Obermaier et al., 2015, p. 1492) due to the way the cyber bystanders choose to intervene.

A key feature of being a cyber bystander is the notion of choice. The choice that is made is threefold: ignore what is happening and not intervene, intervene actively or passively, or to engage in the incident as a participant such as an additional cyberbully. The choices the cyber bystanders make have the ability to reinforce the cyberbullying, impede the cyberbullying, or to either increase or limit the harms the cyber victim experiences (Obermaier et al., 2015, p. 1942-1943). There are a variety of reasons why a cyber bystander may choose to not intervene at all or other possible mitigating factors that are considered prior to making such a choice.⁹⁸

A key characteristic of the Bystander Effect is the diffusion of responsibility.⁹⁹ Due to the inability to physically see the incident or who else has viewed the cyberbullying, the diffusion of responsibility becomes more complex. Cyber bystanders may assume that others have seen it and reacted because the online domain has “an almost infinite reach”; therefore, they are not required to intervene (Obermaier et al., 2015, p. 1494). Cyber bystanders may hide behind a screen and not intervene or get involved because it is unlikely they can be traced back to the situation where they did not intervene (2015, p. 1494). As made evident throughout each of the popular films, entire school populations and even the entire communities, in the case of the two documentaries, were witnesses to the cyberbullying or heard about it in some way. Several of those who did not

⁹⁸ In no way is this list exhaustive of factors that could come into play when cyber bystanders do not intervene; however, these were the most prominent throughout the literature where connections could be made with the popular films. Further research ought to be conducted into the cyber bystander subculture.

⁹⁹ Largely the literature indicates that closeness to the cyber victim, empathy, and the number of instances previously witnessed influence the reaction of the cyber bystanders (Pabian et al., 2016, p. 480; Machackova et al., 2015; Brody et al., 2016). Some cyber bystanders may down right ignore the responsibility they have to intervene because of how common it is to witness instances of cyberbullying. Perhaps when cyberbullying first appeared within society, youth were a bit more meticulous about the decisions they were making about how and in what ways to get involved; however, escalation of the instances of cyberbullying, where content has pushed a threshold and obtained viral status, complicate this entire notion of getting involved. This can lead to such ignorance of youth’s responsibility to intervene.

intervene fall guilty to the Bystander Effect largely, I argue, because of the diffusion of responsibility or the fact that they may have not even known how or what to do.¹⁰⁰

The anonymity of the online domain has the ability to protect cyber bystanders from feelings of obligation because they may have a perception that they are not visible and their presence is not made apparent to others online, especially the cyber victim (Brody et al., 2016, p. 97). In each film anonymity of the cyber bystanders was largely unable to be seen throughout the main cohort of cyber bystanders; however, it would be untrue to say that others within the school populations, for example, did not take advantage of the anonymity online provides.

In *Cyberbully*, Samantha hid behind the alias of ‘James’ to partake in the cyberbullying; however, ‘James’ real identity was anonymous to Taylor. ‘James’ fluctuated between being both a passive and active cyber bystander when the time seemed appropriate. In instances where Samantha and Taylor were not getting along, ‘James’ was active and moved closer to the side of the cyberbully; however, when Lindsay escalated the cyberbullying to directly attack Taylor, like when she posted the video, ‘James’ remained silent. Samantha was doing this to strategically avoided being victimized herself under her own Cliquesters account for association with Taylor. As Brody et al. (2016) indicates, the cyber bystander was more aware to intervene when the cyber victim knew they were aware of the incident (p. 98); however, in this instance, the anonymity of the alias allowed for Samantha to be strategic in the way she chose to intervene and may not have done so in a similar manner had she used her Cliquesters account in the same way she did with ‘James’.

¹⁰⁰ The notion of not knowing what to do or how to properly intervene is not the purpose or intent of this paper; therefore, further research is warranted. It was made mention of because it is a genuine reason as to why cyber bystanders may not intervene in situations. With the complexity of the online world, it cannot be ruled out and needed to be made mention of. Obermaier et al. (2015) raises questions that youth may have such as not knowing how many seen the post before they did and if they genuine do have a responsibility to intervene.

Anonymity can be used as a tool when the cyber bystander(s) successfully intervene in an instance of cyberbullying. They may choose to remain anonymous to avoid repercussions from the cyberbully but genuinely show a connection or some type of sense of responsibility to the cyber victim. For example, in *The Duff* Jess and Casey, Bianca's best friends, wanted to do something about the video Madison posted. Even though Bianca and her two best friends had recently had a falling out, Jess and Casey ensured they intervened by removing the video from YouTube. No one within the school knew it was them – not even Bianca. They did this to avoid publicly positioning themselves closer to the cyber victim.

Youth are bombarded with various events, content, and interactions online – nearly new content is posted every few minutes, possibly even seconds that captures their attention. As a result, it is a struggle for youth to determine what warrants their attention or not online. With cyberbullying happening rather frequently, youth must decide which instances are 'worthy' to intervene in or not. Their decision to act is limited by their ability to consider all the demands for their attention (Brody et al., 2016, p. 96). Regardless of intervention or not, due to the scope of the phenomenon, the individual will remain a cyber bystander because choosing to ignore the cyberbullying is considered an active choice.

However, the main focus within the films was the notion of some type of intervention of the cyber bystander(s). Multiple instances were depicted when they intervened. Underlying themes, in addition to the literature, allowed for a particular process that any cyber bystander ought to go through when making the choice to intervene. There are five steps that a cyber bystander must make and if any of these steps are not completed, then the cyber bystander is less likely to get involved (Obermaier et al., 2015, p. 1943; Machackova et al., 2015).¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ For the purpose of this analysis, I have altered the steps to apply to both interventions favouring either the cyberbully or the cyber victim whereas Obermaier et al. (2015) generally tends to indicate that these steps apply only

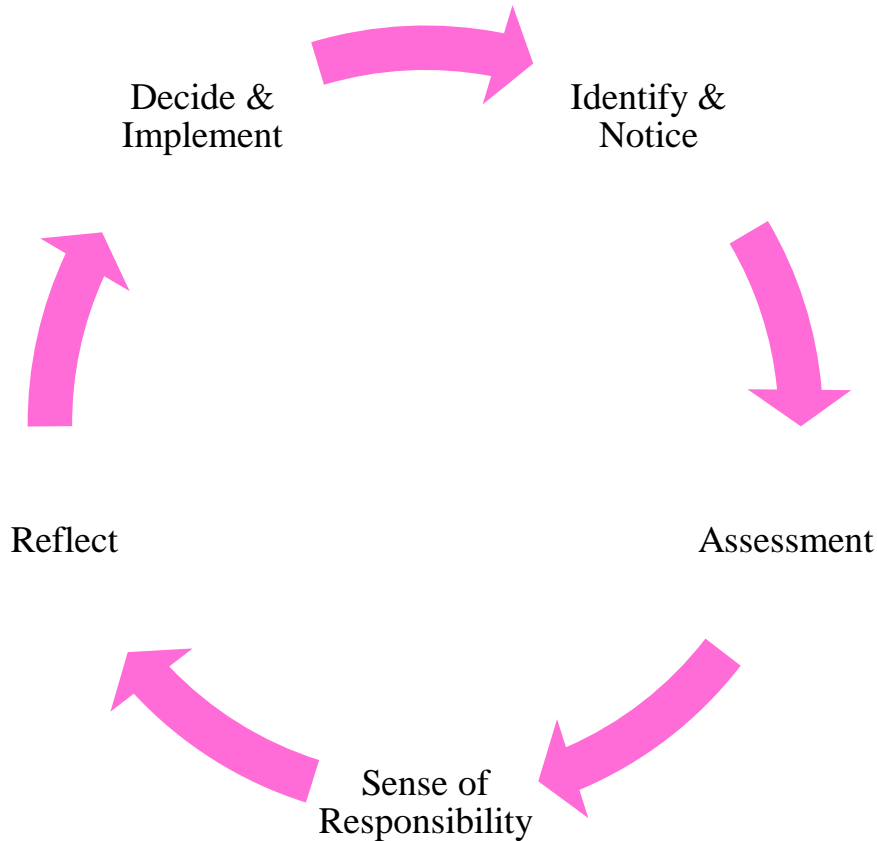


Figure 3 – The Five Stages of Intervention among Cyber Bystanders (Obermaier et al., 2015, p. 1943)¹⁰²

The five steps are as follows (Obermaier et al., 2015, p. 1943):

- **Identify and notice** an instance of cyberbullying – The cyber bystander must identify that cyberbullying is occurring. By doing so, they are taking notice to the negative harms and deviant practices that are present within the online domain. Cyber bystanders closer to the cyber victim would recognize the harms being directed toward the cyber victim whereas the cyber bystanders closer to the cyberbullies would be more inclined to be in agreement

when a bystander will successfully intervene to attempt to stop the cyberbullying or to prevent harms to the cyber victim.

¹⁰² The examples illustrated are merely the most prominent throughout that particular film; however, other examples are existent where parallels can be made between each example highlighted and one or more of the other films used for analysis. These examples were chosen because of such consistency amongst the sample.

or find humour, for example, in what was being posted online to show support toward the cyberbully.¹⁰³

- **Assess** to see if intervention is warranted – Cyber bystanders must assess the content they are seeing to determine if they should intervene at all. Those closer to the cyber victim would assess the level of harm and degree of risk that the cyberbullying presents to the victim. The higher the level of deviancy, the higher the need for intervention. Those closer to the cyberbully ought to determine their relationship and emotional or personal involvement either with the cyberbully or against the cyber victim to determine if they should engage in the cyberbullying.
- Feelings of **responsibility** – Cyber bystanders emotional and personal involvement within the cyberbullying is ultimately going to determine if they feel some sort of responsibility to intervene. Those nearest the cyber victim may feel responsible to intervene because they too have been victimized or because they are close friends with the cyber victim. It may be that they do not like what is being posted on social media or how it is reflecting them as associates. Cyber bystanders closest to the cyberbully may feel a similar sense of responsibility to intervene because of their closeness to the cyberbully. Intervention may be due to being friends with the cyberbully, not liking the cyber victim, a sense of humour in joining in, etc.

¹⁰³ It is more important that the cyber bystander notice the types of comments, posts, videos, etc. as targeting one or more cyber victims than necessarily classifying it as cyberbullying. This is because some youth may not recognize cyberbullying for what it is or as deviant or negative. In instances where the cyber bystander is closer to the cyberbully, this idea of identification and notice of the cyberbullying would come as acknowledging the behaviour in some way by perpetuating the content further through comments, likes, shares, etc. or aiding the cyberbully by actively helping the cyberbully to target the cyber victim without being a cyberbully themselves. Largely these cyber bystanders notice the cyberbullying but do nothing to stop it or to direct their concern to the cyber victim rather they support the cyberbully throughout some point or the duration of the cyberbullying.

- **Reflect** on how to intervene – There are many options for both set of cyber bystanders in how they choose to intervene as depicted within popular film.¹⁰⁴ This ultimately comes down to the cyber bystanders weighing the costs and benefits of their options to make the ‘right’ decision for them and their role in the instance of cyberbullying. Many factors can come into play such as concerns over social hierarchy and social currency, the outcomes of their decision, if they will be cyber victimized as a result, etc.
- Make a **decision and implement** the choice to intervene – Cyber bystanders make a choice on the method(s) of intervention and go on to implement one or more of those methods. This choice may change at any time.

This cycle was seen through the role of Kaitlyn, Madison’s best friend in *The Duff*. Kaitlyn was always directly involved in some way with Madison targeting Bianca where Kaitlyn recognized Madison’s actions as harmful to Bianca but had no real concern for her. Kaitlyn would exhibit more concern to pleasing Madison, positioning herself closer to the cyberbully. No real assessment was seen within this specific example as Kaitlyn was automatically positioned closer to the cyberbully than the cyber victim. If Kaitlyn were to change or alter that role in any way, she would open herself up to victimization by Madison; therefore, Kaitlyn would do little to no assessment about intervening to help Bianca. This was similar to others within the school who would often follow the lead of Madison, the ‘Queen Bee’, without question.

Kaitlyn was loyal to Madison and her actions sought reaffirmation for Madison’s friendship. It was very clear Kaitlyn held a sense of responsibility for helping Madison and protecting her when Bianca and Wes were becoming close since Madison and Wes had romantic history. For example, Kaitlyn spied on Bianca and Wes when they were at a department store

¹⁰⁴ Examples will follow proceeding the outlining of each of the steps.

where she passed this footage off to Madison who used it to target Bianca. It is unlikely Kaitlyn reflected on her actions because of the role she held. Like Kaitlyn, majority of the cyber bystanders within *The Duff* implemented the decision to follow Madison's lead in cyberbullying Bianca through circulating the video. The decision to stand by Madison was greatly reflected throughout the entire film, including in the end when Bianca stood up to Madison and Kaitlyn stayed by her side.

Within *Cyberbully*, the cycle was seen throughout the intervention of Samantha. Samantha was well aware of the cyberbullying that Taylor was experiencing where she would often notify Taylor of new content Lindsay would post. Samantha's role was complex since she was part of every subculture; however, when the video Lindsay posted surfaced, Samantha was a monumental active cyber bystander who positioned herself closer to the cyber victim. When Samantha had seen the video Taylor posted in response to Lindsay's cyberbullying video, Samantha assessed the situation and realized Taylor was in trouble. Samantha took initiative by calling Taylor's mother and rushing over to stop Taylor from committing suicide. Largely due to the close bond Samantha and Taylor had prior to all the cyberbullying, Samantha felt a responsibility to do something. This may have also been out of guilt for the use of the 'James' alias. The moment of reflection was relatively subtle, if portrayed at all. Samantha reacted very quickly after viewing the video and rushed over to Taylor's house. The decision to get intervene was done face-to-face when Taylor actively stopped Taylor from taking pills by grabbing them out of her hand despite resistance from Taylor. Based on this film, a combination of online and offline intervention can be used by cyber bystanders.

Overall, in relation to these films, it was generally always a close friend of the cyber victim who made the choice to intervene or show their support. This may indicate that popular film¹⁰⁵ depicts cyberbullying in such a way that the cyber victim can and should rely on their close friends to be active cyber bystanders who intervene in severe or serious instances of cyberbullying. The cyber bystanders play a crucial role in cyberbullying with a very complex subculture and therefore ought to be better represented and depicted within popular film to garner understandings from viewers as to the role they take in the phenomenon.

2.1c.2 The Creation of Sub-Cyberbullies

The way some cyber bystanders engage with instances of cyberbullying make it appear as an online game of ‘follow the leader’ where some cyber bystanders become just as involved, if not more so, than the initial cyberbully. This is creating sub-cyberbullies who take the cyberbullying to new levels and escalate the original content posted. Sub-cyberbullies function in a greater capacity than ‘regular’ cyber bystanders and may not have become a cyberbully had the initial instance of cyberbully not occurred.¹⁰⁶

Each film uniquely allowed sub-cyberbullies to emerge for the ways they were heavily involved online by perpetuating further cyberbullying. Amanda Todd’s cyberbully was the one

¹⁰⁵ To relate to the documentaries, examples could be seen where cyber bystanders intervened and positioned themselves closer to the cyberbully; however, neither cyber victim had close friends who intervened or even stood up for them. Both Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd lost their friends after the cyberbullying escalated because it was implied that these ‘friends’ did not want to be associated with them as a fear of what that could mean for them or that they simply did not know how to go about intervening. For example, Rehtaeh’s mother indicated that Rehtaeh felt alone and would often ask the question “where are my friends? I know I have family that loves me but where are my friends?” (Rau, 2015). A friend of Rehtaeh who was interviewed, named Bryony stated, “...I’ve watched her get bullied...there’s nothing I could do about it...” (Rau, 2015). Based on this example, a more research ought to be conducted in order to adequately address the rate of intervention among close friends as cyber bystanders. This study focused on what was depicted in the films when a cyber bystander intervened – either closer to the cyberbully or the cyber victim.

¹⁰⁶ The creation of sub-cyberbullies leads to questions surrounding their accountability similar to that of the initial cyberbully. These individuals can parallel associates to the cyberbully or even resemble copiers of the cyberbully much like copy-cat killers. Not all cyber bystanders go on to become sub-cyberbullies; however, there were many instances within popular film where examples can be applied to justify the arguments and analysis being presented here.

who took photos and posted them online; however, it was sub-cyberbullies who circulated the photos further within their own social networks. These sub-cyberbullies did more than witness the photo. Similarly, it was sub-cyberbullies who circulated the photo of Rehtaeh Parsons by doing the ‘dirty work’ for the initial cyberbully. Rehtaeh’s photo went viral and appeared to the eyes of viewers worldwide indicating that it was more than the initial cyberbully who could accomplish such a task.

Casey was a sub-cyberbully in *The Cyberbully* because she fell for a trap laid by the initial cyberbully by following link that allowed her to post content onto her ex-boyfriend’s Twitter page. Without the cyberbully providing this resource, Casey may not have done such a thing. Casey’s friend Megan also played a sub-cyberbully role through encouraging Casey to get revenge.

Similarities can be seen between *Cyberbully* and *The Duff* where members of the school community were sub-cyberbullies for their responsibility in aiding the cyberbully to make the videos and sharing them to achieve viral status. Both main cyberbullies have direct accomplices who gained information for the cyberbully. Within *Cyberbully*, this was Lindsay’s posse who helped spread the content and establish superiority of Lindsay within the school community. Kaitlyn played this role in *The Duff* for her role in actively recording footage that was used by Madison to target Bianca. As this indicates and further proves, cyberbullies cannot work alone. They rely on supporters and sub-cyberbullies to be directly involved in the cyberbullying in some way.

3. Other Emergent Themes¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ The other emergent themes chosen for brief discussion were included because they warranted recognition for their strong underlying presence within the popular films analyzed. By no means is this section of this research project exhaustive; rather, each presents an implication for future research in the related sub-fields of this study. The decision was made to include them in the analysis due to the strong thematic presence each held in popular film as well as the strong relationship each had among the literature at the core of this thesis.

3.1 Links to Traditional Bullying

Embedded within popular film was the notion that traditional bullying and cyberbullying are somewhat linked. These links came in a variety of forms as it was slightly more complex in some instances than one resulting after the other. In some cases, the cyberbullying and the traditional bullying a youth faced were distinctive from one another. For example, in *The Cyberbully* it is implied that Casey faced some elements of traditional bullying within her school; however, it was never made out right. As a result, this film specifically made a distinction between the two where the focus was solely on cyberbullying without any concrete links to traditional bullying.

The other films, such as the documentaries of *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows* and *No Place to Hide* made clear indications that the two young girls were bullied prior to the cyberbullying. The bullying they faced was not linked to the cyberbullying that arose; however, throughout the duration of the cyberbullying, the traditional bullying the two young girls experienced worsened as a result. Messages were uniform throughout the two other films of *Cyberbully* and *The Duff* where both cyber victims were bullied prior to any experience of cyberbullying; however, the bullying they experienced shifted as a result of the cyberbullying. Overall, these films indicate that cyberbullying may not necessarily be a product of traditional bullying; however, outcomes of cyberbullying can have impacts on the bullying youth experience both during and after instances of cyberbullying occur.

3.2 The Role of Outsiders (Society, Schools, Parents, & Justice Personnel)

Cyberbullying as a youth phenomenon does not mean that others outside the youth culture do not make attempts to understand, intervene, or aide in instances of cyberbullying. As made apparent within each film used for analysis, there was some type of ‘outsider’ involvement.

Largely this was done through parents¹⁰⁸, specifically of the cyber victim, in attempts to assist them in coping, achieving some type of help, and seeking out justice when and if possible.

In both *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows* and *No Place to Hide* the two main types of outsider involvement was the parents of the young girls as well as justice personnel; however, the involvement of police was attributed to the parents wanting justice for their daughters. In regards to Rehtaeh Parsons, police were largely involved because of the incident prior to the cyberbullying where Rehtaeh was raped. In the case of Amanda Todd, with her being a minor and appearing on porn websites, it was grounds for Amanda's parents to get the police involved. Within the other films, a police or justice personnel presence was non-existent.

The role of outsiders within *Cyberbully* occurred in a sequence of events. Taylor's mother was rather overprotective of her and often tried her best to stay in tune with what Taylor was doing online. It is through this and the monitoring of Taylor's Cliquesters account that Taylor's mother become involved. On several occasions, Taylor was instructed by her mother to shut her account down; however, her mother's efforts were of no avail as Taylor kept it active. After Taylor attempted suicide, her mother became greatly involved as well as doctors from the hospital who insisted Taylor attend the support group he ran for others involved in cyberbullying. Taylor's mother made a huge push to have the city/state counsels to reconsider the implementation of laws against cyberbullying. They reconsidered doing so once Taylor and her mother reached out to a news reporter about Taylor's story. Through this film there were many who were involved during the aftermath of Taylor's suicide working to achieve justice.

¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, an underlying question that emerged was that would cyberbullying be able to continue if it was strictly left to youth to control it? In all of the films it was outsiders to the youth culture who stepped in and attempted to control the phenomenon because they realized, through seeing a change in the youth involved – mainly the cyber victims – that it had gone too far. This point warrants further analysis as it could aide in speaking to the way in which policies are developed and implemented in relation to cyberbullying.

Unlike Taylor's story, Bianca in the film *The Duff* had little to no support from her mother, largely because her mother was unaware of the torment and cyberbullying Bianca was facing. The only real, concrete example of any outsider involvement was attempts from the school principal to initiate and implement a policy called "Internet Marshall Law" (Bello & Sandel, 2015) where the teachers confiscated the cellphone and devices from the students for what appeared in the film to be one school day. Bianca relied on herself throughout most of the film and loosely on her core group of friends for support in the aftermath of the cyberbullying.

Lastly, similarly to Bianca, Casey in *The Cyberbully* largely remained isolated from her parents throughout the cyberbullying. It was not until the end that viewers seen a glimpse into any outsider involvement; however, even then it was only shown that Casey called out for her father after she shut off the laptop. Within this film there was no other presence of outsider involvement such as the school or any justice personnel.

Through each of these films, this preliminary analysis indicates that the most prominent form of involvement from others who exist outside the youth culture are the parents of the youth. Their role may not begin until 'it is too late' or until after the cyberbullying; however, they are still a main component to understanding cyberbullying. Evidently more research is warranted as the role the parents take on is relatively complex as well.

3.3 Law & Policies Present in Popular Film

Within popular film, specifically the five films analyzed, a large gap exists as to how the law is presented and understood within the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Questions can be raised as to how cyberbullying fits within the law and specific policies that understand the notion of harm and where accountability lies since cyberbullying exists online, largely through social media platforms. The Fighting Words Doctrine and Freedom of Speech, among others, are two specific

policies that can be regarded when discussing cyberbullying and if any laws are adequately addressing such a phenomenon. Although this is the aim for future research, a preliminary analysis showed that only two films specifically discussed the law including: *Cyberbully* that had a United States focus and *No Place to Hide: The Rehtaeh Parsons Story*. Mentions of any sort of policy were seen within *Stalking Amanda Todd: The Man Behind the Shadows* whereas *The Duff* only showed a brief, insufficient one day, 'spur of the moment' school policy. *The Cyberbully* made no mention to any laws or policies.

As a result of Amanda Todd's images appearing on pornography websites, in addition to the discovery of the multiplicity of aliases the cyberbully had, police were greatly involved in the Amanda Todd case; however, no real mention was made to the policies or types of legal accountabilities for the cyberbully. The film did mention an investigation that led to the arrest of a man named Aden Coban where nine charges were laid relating to child pornography, assault, and fraud; however, nothing directly relating to the cyberbullying he initiated against any of the cyber victims, specifically Amanda Todd (Ayotte-Thompson & Weinstein, 2014).

A similar story is seen in the case of Rehtaeh Parsons where no laws were applied that specifically related or garnered accountability for the cyberbullying. Majority of the law that was applied in Rehtaeh's case was related to the rape as within the case, relating to the viral photo of Rehtaeh being raped, a police officer stated, "Well that's not against the law" (Rau, 2015). However, laws were implemented in relation to the rape, where Rehtaeh's father worked alongside police and policy makers in attempts to achieve some sort of legal justice for Rehtaeh (Rau, 2015). As Glen, Rehtaeh's father, stated, "Bullying today is far worse and so much more devastating to people... Nowadays the way kids communicate, there is no getting away from it. It's everywhere" (Rau, 2015). As a result, Glen is a strong supporter of Bill C-13 because he feels youth need

accountability because what they are doing is not free speech, “it’s hate speech” (Rau, 2015). The arguments made by Glen channel the future research that needs to be done where accountability sits at the forefront of understanding if the laws in place are adequate to deal with cyberbullying.

While Rehtaeh Parsons’s story utilized Bill C-13, which Minister of Justice Peter McKay referred to as ‘Rehtaeh’s Law’ (Rau, 2015), the film *Cyberbully* relied on news media exposure to sway law-makers to implement policies relating to cyberbullying.¹⁰⁹ In the film, Taylor’s mother’s initial visit to a court official yielded no results after insisting that it should be considered to pass some type of law relating to cyberbullying as done in other states (Prupas, Rice & Biname, 2011). This particular official replied that he did not want to legislate the internet (Prupas, Rice & Biname, 2011). This may be an inherent problem – law-makers may not know how or where to begin with the online domain. A similar message was conveyed when Taylor’s mother confronted the principal of the school where the principal told her that he “cannot control the Internet” even though he knows “bullying over the Internet is a problem” (Prupas, Rice & Biname, 2011). He further indicated that the school board only provided a “vague” policy that protected the school from any sort of liability (Prupas, Rice & Biname, 2011). The frustration of Taylor’s mother was evidently seen as she felt that a youth needed to die from suicide before anyone would take her seriously and recognize the need for laws and policies. There was a strong underlying message that no one wanted to take on the phenomenon of cyberbullying and/or that they simply did not know what to do about it.

It is in *The Duff* that a vague, one-day policy was created spontaneously without careful thought or consideration by the principal of the school. In fact, this ‘make-shift’ policy only made the cyberbullying worse for Bianca as students targeted her in the aftermath of the implementation.

¹⁰⁹ It is important to recognize that within this film, the laws discussed are within the United States where the film indicates that several states had already passed such laws; however, not in the state which Taylor is in.

In all of the films, this was the only policy that utilized the word ‘cyberbullying’ explicitly. Nonetheless, credit is due for the film attempting to portray a need for policies within school relating to cyberbullying. After the video of Bianca that Madison posted online went viral, seen throughout the school community including the teachers and principal, the principal acted somewhat quickly. Moments after the video was removed, an announcement was made to the students indicating that their halls were ‘compromised’ by cyberbullying where “YOLO terrorists” will not be tolerated¹¹⁰ (Bello & Sandel, 2015). Afterwards, teachers could be seen taking the phones away from the students to be collected at the end of the day.

Unfortunately, this policy was not as successful as intended. The only flaw within such a policy was that not only did it target Bianca even more, but it only lasted one day. This is insufficient as cyberbullying is not over in mere hours, rather it can be perpetuated repeatedly for a prolonged period of time. Although *The Duff* begins to initiate conversations over policies, it was done rather inadequately. Accountability is the underlying and prominent issue to addressing cyberbullying where concrete and well established policies ought to be implemented. The question then becomes “how and to what extent should the online domain be policed and through what policies?”

¹¹⁰ The language utilized to address and understand cyberbullying within the policy ought to be analyzed in itself as it could generate meaningful content that would help to understand, possibly, how outsiders of the youth culture view those within and the phenomenon of cyberbullying. For example, the word “YOLO”, meaning You Only Live Once, in addition to ‘terrorists’ is very powerful language.

7. FUTURE DIRECTIONS & CONCLUSIONS

Cyberbullying has become more common place in society due to the shift in present day youth culture, as compared to previous generations, as indicated throughout the literature review of this thesis project. The aim of this thesis was to answer four main questions in attempts to advance cyberbullying as a youth phenomenon, understand it from a criminological viewpoint by utilizing Ferrell's (2015) theory of cultural criminology, and to examine the portrayal of the phenomenon within popular media. As this thesis proves, I was successful in answering what was sought out at the initial stages of the research.

Through the theory of cultural criminology, cyberbullying was newly understood in a way no study previously has examined. It is through the use of this theoretical standpoint that I was able to develop one of the most prominent elements within this thesis – the subcultures of cyberbullying. The design and implementation of the subcultures greatly changes the way in which the phenomenon is constructed. Utilizing this cyclical model, it provides the groundwork for future scholars to take the research even further. Employing this model within the analysis led to the discovery of several prominent themes and features of each subculture. The subcultures were evident within popular film, which effectively illustrated the way the three subcultures work distinctly together to perpetuate, advance, and model cyberbullying.¹¹¹

One major finding within the analysis came when analyzing the themes present within the cyber victim subculture. The notion that the threshold of going viral was the breaking point for the cyber victims was a monumental milestone as no previous literature addressed the impact 'going

¹¹¹ Overall, the ideas that were presented throughout this thesis were newly developed ideas that relied on pre-existing literature of the phenomenon alongside theoretical understandings of elements within the field of criminology. Largely these new ideas are framed in the ways popular film is depicting cyberbullying in relation to the emergent themes found within the methodology of this research.

viral' had and to what extent. From this concept, the stages of the cyber victim were formed to further understand the process that the cyber victim goes through in any instance of cyberbullying.

Additionally, a similar model was constructed amongst the cyber bystanders in relation to when and how they intervene in instances of cyberbullying. The cyber bystanders, from beginning to end, were the most complex of the subcultures. Future research would be warranted to examining such a subculture even further, especially since the online domain complicates the Bystander Effect. The cyber bystanders are largely responsible for the carrying out of the cyberbullying through the ways they engage with the content such as sharing it, commenting on it, and through liking it. Their role is monumental and the movement they exude within the cyclical model is quite complex. This study only began to scratch the surface.

Unfortunately, one major short coming within this research was a lack of popular films to utilize for analysis, resulting in the sample including five prominent films that directly discuss cyberbullying. As cyberbullying garners more popularity, there would be a potential to make use of new films as they emerge. Further, due to time constraints, it was not feasible to make use of any other type of media such as news media, which could have yielded meaningful results as well. Although the sample was sparse, meaningful results were uncovered that cannot go unnoticed.

Overall, cyberbullying remains a relatively understudied phenomenon; however, this research aimed to open the conversation of why and how cyberbullying's representations in popular film are important and/or critical to the way society constructs cyberbullying. This research not only advanced the scholarly literature relating to cyberbullying but it found a niche within it and took advantage of the missing elements to produce this thesis that aims for changes in the way society, scholars, and youth understand cyberbullying. Cyberbullying was proven to be largely a youth

phenomenon that greatly results in youth becoming more involved with online social media platforms.

As popular media indicates, these notions of connectivity and a 'need' to be online drive youth to subject themselves to such behaviours online. Future studies ought to begin to analyze and examine the ways in which the laws and policies that exist fit within the phenomenon and if they are adequate before more youth become subjected to cyberbullying and find themselves in the subculture of the cyber victim. Without proper laws or policies in place, cyberbullying will continue to exist because at the end of the day, cyberbullying is a result of the 'likes', 'shares', 'views', 'comments', and 're-tweets', where content that goes viral captures the attention of youth across the globe.

APPENDIX A

Cyberbully Subculture

<i>Characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed an act of cyberbullying (channels the term offender)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviours deemed deviant by others either within the youth culture or from an outsider of the youth culture
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages in “cyberdeviance” (Arntfield, 2015, p. 377)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infliction of harm on a chosen victim – repetitious nature (Hinduja et al., 2009, p. 18)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background/Personal history as a motivator to commit the cyberbullying such as negotiating identity or mental health issues (Smith et al., 2012, p. 118; Boyd, 2014, p. 135)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use gossip as social currency (Boyd, 2014, p. 142)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take advantage of their position of power over a chosen victim
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assert status, get attention, relieve boredom (Boyd, 2014, p. 144)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want others to fear or be intimidated by them
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shames the victim in some way through their actions/engagement of cyberbullying
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates attention to their harmful post
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former friend or “frenemy” (Boyd, 2014, p. 130) or fabricated friendship using deceitful tactics to gain information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to use information they have as a weapon
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to achieve celebrity culture status within social media
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blur lines of acceptable behaviour in online domain (Boyd, 2014, p. 148)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw attention away from themselves and put it onto their victim
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exaggerates truth or even makes up false realities • Rely on intended impact of their actions as they are usually unable to see the immediate reaction of the victim (Shetgiri, 2013, p. 37; Wingate et al., 2013, p. 93)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take advantage of cyberspace having no concept of time or space (Wingate et al., 2013, p. 93-94) to broaden scope of harm and pain caused to the victims
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often rely on anonymity (Hinduja et al., 2010, p. 20; Davis et al., 2015, p. 359) but not always the case as some want their identity known
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence exuded behind the screen that might not be held in real life (Wingate et al., 2013, p. 92)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance of getting caught – use fake online aliases, avoid public posts of harm toward the victim, etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creatively produce harms – evolution from traditional bullies 	

Cyber Victim Subculture

<i>Characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving end of an online harm (channels the term victim)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience emotional, psychological, physical, mental, and virtual harm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm infiltrates their entire lives including private spaces (Hinduja et al., 2010, p. 24)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time spent in online environment can increase risk (Arntfield, 2015, p. 374); however, not socially acceptable to not have an online presence – catch for those who are victimized
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience a removal of barriers between themselves and the cyberbully (Arntfield, 2015, p. 374)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcasts are targeted to a higher degree; however, everyone has a higher chance of being a victim due to the online nature of cyberbullying – hidden behind computers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices or posts against social norm increased target status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel like they are being under an online microscope
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in the “always-on-nature” of the culture where it is difficult to escape the tormentor (Davis et al., 2015, p. 359)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No escaping harm even if devices are off
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement in “information promiscuity” (Arntfield, 2015, p. 377)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information they post or chose to follow/tweet, etc. might be considered attention seeking or alternative to their real lives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can fuel their victimization through their social interactions online (example of befriending an unknown account on Facebook)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficultly positioning themselves as a victim – try to laugh it off
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not want to appear weak (Boyd, 2014, p. 140)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear the scope of their victimization to reach an uncontrollable audience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victimization transfers into everyday life creating more harm or struggle
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of confronting/standing up to the cyberbully or cyberbullying
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of escalation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern of knowing what is going on in the online world and show trouble disconnecting even when the technology was the means of the violence or harm (Henriksen et al., 2012, p. 444)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject themselves to repeated harm by viewing the initial or subsequent posts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hooked on social media and show an inability to control their life (Boyd, 2014, p. 78)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixation on the harm being posted about them/repeated exposure from themselves after the incident
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surrender and let the cyberbully maintain control (Wingate et al., 2013, p. 94)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High rates of suicide and self-harming behaviours (Shetgiri, 2013, p. 42; Holfeld et al., 2015, p. 117)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cyberbullicide” due to negative emotions, thoughts and feelings (Hinduja et al., 2010, p. 63, 66, 70) 	

Cyber Bystander Subculture

<i>Characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirectly involved in the cyberbullying (channels the term witness) • Participation can be as minimal as witnessing an act of cyberbullying to choosing to engage with the cyberbullying positively (standing up for the victim or removing/reporting the harm) or negatively (advancing or sharing the cyberbullying)
<i>Dependent on</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “By doing nothing, bystanders are doing something” (Holfeld, 2014, p. 2) by choosing to ignore the post when scrolling past it meaning they are not doing anything to perpetuate the harm or stop it
<i>the type of</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to perpetuate the cyberbullying phenomenon to exist through their involvement of viewing
<i>engagement by</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold the power to advance cyberbullying and the scope of harm
<i>the cyber</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to advocate for the victim or the cyberbully
<i>bystander</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest subculture because everyone in the youth culture (possibly more) has seen an act of cyberbullying carried out
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to intervene when the scope is so large – those worldwide probably do not know the victim to intervene
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to intervene when they know the victim or can relate to their experiences (Shultz et al., 2014)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to see visual clues if they should help the victim or not (Holfeld, 2014, p. 6)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear they too will become victimized
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterized by their choices and how they chose to position themselves in relation to the cyberbullying taking place

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VITA AUCTORIS

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