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EXAMINING CYBERBULLYING BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR USING A A MULTIPLE GOALS PERSPECTIVE

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Communication and Information
at the University of Kentucky

By

Sarah E. Jones

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Matthew W. Savage, Assistant Professor of Communication

Lexington, Kentucky

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

EXAMINING CYBERBULLYING BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR USING A MULTIPLE GOALS PERSPECTIVE

Cyberbullying, defined as any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others, is a widespread problem. Bystanders play an integral role in the initiation, maintenance, and prolonged presence of such aggressive behaviors, but have thus far been overlooked in cyberbullying literature. Cyberbullying bystanders are defined in this study as those who witness cyberbullying, either within or outside their personal social network(s) and whose available responses range from inaction to intervention. Operating from a social-ecological perspective and guided by multiple goals theories, this study used focus group methodology and found that cyberbullying bystanders have an impact on perpetration and victimization by way of multiple, distinct goals, which impact their choice of behavioral response. Bystanders' goals and behaviors served to inform the creation of a cyberbullying bystander typology inclusive of five types: *the oblivious/distant bystander, the entertained bystander, the conspiring bystander, the unintentional instigating bystander, and the active/empowered bystander*. By allowing a thorough, nuanced understanding of bystanders' role in cyberbullying, the study has significant implications for communication theory and practical application in the development of prevention and intervention efforts.

KEYWORDS: Cyberbullying, Traditional Bullying, Bystanders, Multiple Goals, Social-Ecological Model

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May 6, 2014

EXAMINING CYBERBULLYING BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR USING A MULTIPLE GOALS PERSPECTIVE

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In the dedication page of her book, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*, Dr. Sarah Tracy of Arizona State University writes, "…anything worth doing is worth doing badly in the beginning." The quote has stayed with me because it is a testament to the gradual learning process and evolution of the thesis, and serves as a reminder of the emergent process of qualitative research. I am forever indebted to those that made that process possible.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Cyberbullying, defined as "the deliberate and repeated misuse of communication technology by an individual or group to threaten or harm others" (Roberto & Eden, 2010, p. 2), has recently become an overwhelming problem. The Pew Research Center's most recent report on cyberbullying revealed that one in three teens online (32 percent) experienced a form of cybervictimization (Lenhart, 2010). This statistic is accelerating due to the large proportion of individuals using social networking sites (SNS). As of December 2012, 67 percent of adults online use social networking sites; 83 percent of those adults are young adults, ages 18 to 29 (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Overall, 39 percent of SNS users have experienced cyberbullying (Lenhart, 2010). With increased use of digital communication technologies comes increased exposure to potential negative consequences. Prolonged cyberbullying is associated with psychosomatic and psychiatric issues, and may result in a traumatizing experience for victims (Sourander et al., 2010).

Cyberbullying occurs in a triadic, interactive social context between bully, victim, and bystander (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999; Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004). Bystanders in traditional bullying are peers who are aware of bullying (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010) and can have pronounced harmful or helpful impact on all elements of the bullying process, including the episode's longevity and its participants' well being (Salmivalli, 2010; Swearer et al., 2010; Twemlow et al., 2004). Conceptually, bystanders in cyberbullying are those who witness cyberbullying, either within or outside their personal social network(s), whose available responses range from

inaction to intervention. It is important to note that the idea of peers, however, is exempt from the definition. In contrast to traditional bullying which most often occurs in primary and secondary school settings, the context of cyberspace houses any individual with Internet and/or personal cell phone access, meaning bystanders may be of varying ages outside the cyberbully's or cybervictim's peer group.

Compared to traditional bullying, cyberbullying reaches a notably larger peer group of bystanders due to the nature of its online environment (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Initially, a larger group of bystanders might appear to translate to greater potential for victims to receive help. However, larger groups of bystanders are known to decrease probability of helpful and altruistic bystander behaviors (Burton, Florell, Wygant, 2013; Twemlow et al., 2004). Thus, the larger amount of cyberbullying bystanders may actually increase the probability of additional cyberbullying behaviors or nonintervention.

Traditional bullying scholars have also suggested that peers' nonintervention in response to continued exposure to bullying may further desensitize young adults to the suffering of victimization (Cowie, 2000; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999; Safran & Safran, 1985). Though the bystanding audience in cyberbullying may include more than peers, this desensitization effect is likely to occur in cyberbullying contexts too. Further, the reinforcement supplied through bystanders' indirect attention and engagement maintains the bully's superiority over the victim and within the social environment (Craig & Pepler, 1997). In contrast, bystanders' awareness of their role and the enhancement of their empathetic attitude may effectively ameliorate the cyberbullying process and reduce some consequences of victimization (Salmivalli, 2010). Yet, despite the obvious and increased presence of bystanders in cyberbullying as opposed to traditional bullying,

exclusive investigation of cyberbullying bystanders has yet to occur. Thus, cyberbullying bystanders and their behavioral responses warrant further research.

Better understanding of cyberbullying bystanders may contribute to communication theory, as well as developments of cyberbullying prevention efforts. A large part of a better understanding involves identifying the multiple types of potential cyberbullying bystander behaviors. Literature on bystanders in traditional bullying clearly notes varying responses that each has definitive, unique effects on the peer audience, the social environment, and the advancement of aggression (e.g., Craig & Pepler, 2007; Olweus, 2001; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996; Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004). Yet, cyberbullying research as a whole is still rather new and most studies are not guided by theory. Further, bystander behavior has essentially been disregarded until recent years (Twemlow et al., 2004). Consequently, the empirical associations between cyberbullying bystander behaviors, perpetration, and cybervictimization outcomes are currently unclear and warrant investigation. Indeed, a theoretical framework of cyberbullying cannot be fully and accurately outlined without an appropriate, nuanced understanding of its bystanders. Put differently, the whole is the sum of each of its parts and so cyberbullying too must be placed within its "ecological framework of interactional influence" (Craig & Pepler, 1997, p. 54) for scholarship to yield rich, inclusive results.

A better understanding of cyberbullying bystanders' place within the social system has potential practical contributions too. Cyberbullying interventions can be enhanced by systematic focus on how bystanders might stop or thwart cyberbullying interactions through specific behavioral responses. Because traditional bullying

bystanders' inner attitudes have been shown to be generally pro-social and disapproving of bullying (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999; Salmivalli, Lappalainen, Lagerspetz, 1998), the key to effective cyberbullying interventions may lie in manipulating those analogous attitudes among cyberbullying bystanders, thus reducing "pluralistic ignorance" and lessening victimization consequences for all involved (Burton et al., 2013; Salmivalli, 2010, p. 117). Only then might cyberbullying interventions effectively challenge the status quo of the online culture that all too often fosters victimization within peers' social context (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999).

Given the need to address these practical concerns and the strong potential to make theoretical contributions, the purpose of the present study is four-fold: (1) to present a conceptual definition of cyberbullying bystanders; (2) determine the goals of cyberbullying bystanders; (3) explore the impact of those goals on cyberbullying bystanders' behaviors; and (4) develop a typology of cyberbullying bystanders as a means to explore the varying effects of their behaviors on the foundations of the coercive normative environment of cyberbullying. In order to best accomplish these goals, a comprehensive literature review of traditional bullying, cyberbullying, and bystanders from the perspective of a social-ecological model (SEM) within the bullying process will be presented. Next, a multiple goals theoretical framework will be used to guide a focused investigation of how goals shape cyberbullying bystander messages and how those goals shape interpretations of those messages. Then, bystander typologies of traditional bullying literature will be reviewed in order to prepare investigation and development of the cyberbullying bystander typology based on cyberbullying bystander goals. Finally, the methods utilized in the study, which include qualitative data analysis

and focus group methodology, are discussed in detail with special attention to the focus group guide and coding schemes.

Chapter Two

A SURVEY OF BULLYING LITERATURE

Traditional Bullying

Seminal works and definition. An understanding of cyberbullying necessitates a thorough review of its predecessor, traditional bullying. Most traditional bullying studies examine children or young adolescents in their primary or secondary school settings. Olweus (1996), one of the foremost scholars in traditional bullying research defined bullying three-fold: (1) intention of harm; (2) repetitive in nature; and (3) power imbalance between the bully (i.e., perpetrator) and the victim. Aricak et al.'s (2008) interpretation of Olweus' definition is a bit more succinct: "the victimization of a student by being repeatedly exposed to physical or verbal behaviors of other students" (p. 253). Thus, in a general sense, traditional bullying centers on face-to-face "negative action" by a young individual or group who holds more power and has harmful intentions of discomfort or physical injury (Olweus, 2003, p. 12). The foundational elements of cyberbullying, however, differ in unique ways, which will be attended to later in this chapter.

Bullies. According to Olweus (1977), such negative behaviors originate in aggression, which is manipulated in order to achieve a desired degree of distress in the victim (Stephenson & Smith, 1989). The victim's degree of distress or psychological agitation is represented as the bully's intention or goal, which fuels the bully's behavior (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Aricak et al. (2008) confirmed that the goal of bullies is to "harm victims through repeated disturbance to gain control" (p. 254), even within a cyberbullying context. Aggression thus serves as the

foundation of communication in bullying and thereby greatly affects the specific, repetitive bullying behaviors that occur (Olweus, 1977).

Victims. Traditional bullying literature has also noted victims' complex roles, which has informed research on cybervictims. Victims are typically characterized as physically weak, low in self-esteem, generally submissive and passive to perpetrators, and are therefore wholly unable to defend against aggression (von Marées & Petermann, 2012). Bully-victims combine the aforementioned bully role and victim role by engaging in "negative actions" themselves or provoking their own perpetrator by responding aggressively and impulsively to the initial attacks. Bully-victims likely have difficulties interpreting social cues due to deficits in social information processing (Camodeca, Goossens, Schuengel, & Terwogt, 2003; Olweus, 2003, p. 12). In both offline and online contexts, the aggression results in deleterious consequences for either type of victim from initial, overall stress to extreme distress to thoughts or actions of self-harm (Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Wolak, 2000; Olweus, 1993; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004).

Bystanders. Bystanders are an equally and arguably more important part of the bullying picture. Rather than a dyadic interaction between bully and victim, bullying must be understood as triadic, an interaction occurring between bully, victim, and the surrounding audience (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004). However, bullying scholarship takes a unique and novel stance on that audience. The area of scholarship arguably most recognized for its attention to bystanders is that of power-based personal violence, which allocates the term "bystander" only to those who passively witness and do not intervene in aggressive, violent incidents (Banyard, Moyniham, & Plante, 2007; Banyard, Plante, & Moyniham, 2004; Chekroun & Brauer, 2002; Fischer, 2011). These

individuals are bystanders because they are crippled by "indecision and conflict" about whether or not they should respond to the emergency and their apathy is a direct result of their responses to other bystanders' inaction, rather than "presumed personality deficiencies" at the individual level (Darley & Latanè, 1968, p. 382-383).

Contrastingly, bullying literature regards any individual in the surrounding audience as a bystander, though exact terminology is often inconsistent (e.g., peer(s), peer group, audience, classmates, witnesses, bystanders, social systems, social context). Conceptualizations regarding bystander involvement and impact in bullying can also vary widely. Some scholars claim that bystanders are those "who are aware of bullying" (Swearer, Espelege, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010, p. 39), others simply characterize them as "noncommittal" (Cowie, 2000, p. 86), and still others posit that they are "active and involved participants in the social architecture" of bullying violence rather than passive observers (Twemlow et al., 2004, p. 215). Within traditional bullying, specifically, bystanders are simply analogous with the peer audience. Craig and Pepler (1997, 2005, & 2007) noted in multiple traditional bullying studies that the majority of peers who witness bullying episodes are involved in the interactions whether as a witness or a "co-conspirator" (Craig & Pepler, 1997, p. 55) and can therefore be defined as bystanders.

A social-ecological perspective. A social-ecological model as applied to bullying serves as an effective rationale for the importance of bystanders and the triadic perspective, as its conceptual framework provides a functional, holistic assessment of the phenomenon (Doll & Swearer, 2006; Espelege & Swearer, 2004, 2010; Swearer et al., 2010). At its core, the model conceptualizes that human behavior has multiple levels of

influence and those levels interact with each other over the course of a given phenomenon (Sallis, Owen & Fisher, 2008). Consequently, the model considers behavior's causes to be ubiquitous. Influences can stem from intrapersonal, interpersonal, group or organizational, community, immediate environment, and policy-related "ecological conditions," the model thereby providing a unique and comprehensive framework for synthesizing individuals' interactions, or "transactions," with their physical and abstract environments (Espelage & Swearer, 2004, p. 248; Sallis, Owen, & Fisher, 2008, p. 466).

In terms of bullying behaviors, Doll and Swearer (2006) affirm that the application of such a framework makes "intuitive sense" (p. 191). As a phenomenon rooted in cognitions and displayed through performed behavior, bullying is pervasive in its effects. The individual bully and victim are not only impacted, but also the peer group, which acts as a bystanding audience throughout the episode. At an even larger level, bullying affects the immediate, physical environment of the school, as well as the outlying environments of family, community, and society as a whole. Realizing the expansive impact of bullying allows the phenomenon to be conceptualized as one of social-ecological nature where bullying behavior may have many causes and is influenced by multiple environments, including the bystanding peer group. Therefore, an effective assessment of bullying in any form is most compatible with an assessment model that is multimodal and multi-informant.

Bystander characteristics. Bystanders' crucial importance in the social-ecological environment of bullying is further reinforced by research on peers' behavioral responses to witnessing the aggression. Peers can respond with either positive feedback (e.g., verbal

or nonverbal cues that either blatantly or subtly reward the bully) or negative feedback (e.g., challenging the bully's power by siding with the victim) (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; Salmivalli, 2010). In terms of inner attitudes, peers' are generally altruistic and acting on such attitudes would allow defenders to achieve a positive peer status (Caravita, DiBlasio, & Salmivalli, 2009; Pöyhönen, Juvoven, & Salmivalli, 2010; Salmivalli et al., 1996). However, of the two types of feedback, peers most often respond with positive feedback by reinforcing the bully's aggressive behavior through passive attention and engagement (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999; Twemlow et al., 2004). In other words, observable pro-social behavior to ameliorate bullies' aggression is overestimated and rare (O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Lagerspetz, 1998; Twemlow et al., 2004). Though indirect, positive feedback is understood by bullies as condoning the aggressive behavior (Craig & Pepler, 1997).

Peers' reluctance to engage in negative feedback or act supportively can be attributed to numerous factors including individual differences, classroom climate, ignorance of effective intervention techniques, fear of victimization and fear of exacerbating aggression, or the social standing of bullies and victims (Kärnä et al., 2010; Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, & Zeira, 2004; Hazler, 1996; Salmivalli, 2010). Yet, no matter the ultimate rationale, peers' reluctance to help through intervention or report (Cunningham et al., 1998; Olweus, 1993; Whitney & Smith, 1993) is a withdrawal action positively associated with empathy, but negatively associated with the self-efficacy needed to defend (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2008; Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008). Peers' reluctance also reveals a negative bias toward victims, wherein peers judge victims as personally accountable for failure, as opposed to nonvictimized

peers (Schuster, 2001; Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003). Consequently, bullies garner a great deal more respect (Craig & Pepler, 1997) and victims become increasingly rejected over time (Hodges & Perry, 1999; Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003; Olweus, 1978). Nonetheless, little is known about cyberbullying bystanders with respect to the aforementioned bystander characteristics, presenting a major shortcoming for future directions in cyberbullying research. In order to overcome the limitation, further assessment of bystanders will be attended to throughout this review.

Cyberbullying

Similarities, differences, and definitions. In many respects, traditional bullying literature has served as a guide for the course of research on cyberbullying. Similarities like repetition and intention of harm are notable (Aricak et al., 2008; Stephenson & Smith, 1989; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007) while differences like asymmetry, resources of power, and the setting in which the bullying takes place are often discussed (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Ramirez, Palazzolo, Savage, & Deiss, 2010; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Reviews of cyberbullying include reviews of multiple constructs such as cybervictimization or stalking and Internet harassment (e.g., Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols, & Storch, 2009; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002; Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2006).

Consequently, conceptualizing the phenomenon has led to varying, inconsistent definitions such as, “using the Internet to harass and bully others,” “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text,” and “a form of harassment that occurs through the use of electronic communications such as e-mail and cell phones” (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007, p. S59; Beran & Li, 2005, p. 265; Patchin &

Hinduja, 2006, p. 152). Tokunaga's (2010) recent review of cyberbullying argued that conceptual clarity was needed due to the volume of overlapping definitions presented by cyberbullying scholars. For the purpose of the present study, Tokunaga's (2010) integrative definition of cyberbullying, will be used: "Cyberbullying is any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (p. 278).

Perpetration characteristics. Characteristics of perpetration within the social structure of cyberbullying differ greatly from those of traditional bullying. Cyberbullying attempts can be all the more severe and threatening due to the cyberbully's anonymity and the ubiquitous nature of the Internet (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Pratarelli, 1999). These unique factors translate to a myriad of aggressive behaviors that may constitute cyberbullying, though the threshold for what ultimately qualifies as cyberbullying differs between individuals (Savage & Jones, 2014). Perpetration can be characterized by impersonation, rumors, cyberstalking, embarrassment or humiliation, teasing, insults, infected e-mails or software, and forms of "denigration" (Willard, 2007) through hacking and exhibition of unapproved photos, videos, or other multimedia forms (von Marées & Petermann, 2012; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Cyberbullies' intention to psychologically agitate victims is similar to that of traditional bullies and is accomplished by combining traditional bullying ideas with electronic harassment techniques (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993).

Prevalence and connectivity. Consequently, advancements in digital communication technologies have elevated cyberbullying to a global concern. Because

the processes of cyberbullying include use of technological tools, the prevalence of the phenomenon has expanded with technological improvements (Belsey, 2005). Cyberbullying not only affords novel tools to bullies, but also creates increased potential for victimization. With 39 percent of the world's population (2.7 billion) now online (International Telecommunication Union, 2013), cyberbullying has the potential to impact all individuals regardless of demographic.

However, in addition to the frequency of use, the nature of the connectivity also continues to change. Ownership of smartphones and tablets, in particular, has resulted in increased mobile access of social networking sites. The Pew Research Center indicates that adults' and teens' use of smartphones and tablets (56 and 34 percent, respectively; 37and 23 percent, respectively) (Zickuhr, 2013; Smith, 2013) is reflected in the high percentages of online adults and young adults, ages 18 to 29, who use cyberbullying-prone social networking sites daily (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Thus, individuals' methods of connecting differently and more often have allowed them to take advantage of the capabilities of modern technology in such a way as to immediately position themselves as dangerously vulnerable to online cyberbullying attempts (Srivastava, 2012). Indeed, greater exposure to disturbing online behaviors results from increased frequencies of Internet usage (Aricak et al., 2008).

Yet, although cyberbullying may appear pervasive in any online demographic, adolescents in primary and secondary school remain the most frequently studied population in cyberbullying and traditional bullying research. Among that demographic, the majority of cyberbullying still occurs outside school via "intense daily use" of digital communication technologies (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004, p. 313). Perhaps such an

investigative focus is an extension of research traditions in in-school harassment or is in response to adolescents' frequent use of technological tools: For adolescents ages 12 to 17, access to and usage of Internet service rose dramatically from 45% (Rainie et al., 2001) to 95% (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013) in just over a decade. Yet, 67 percent of online adults regularly use social networking sites and 83 percent of those online adults are 18 to 29 year old young adults; in other words, the young adult demographic is the most likely of any demographic to frequently access the public domain of online spaces like social networking sites (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Still, few articles have examined this demographic to explore their conceptualizations of and exposure to any facet of cyberbullying (Savage & Jones, 2014; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011), including the bystander experience.

Cyberbullying bystanders.

A conceptual definition. Bystanders of any age are often not considered within cyberbullying studies. Nevertheless, a conceptual definition of cyberbullying bystanders can be reached from reflections on traditional bullying bystander research and the digital, electronic environment of cyberspace. Therefore, the following definition of cyberbullying bystanders is forwarded to guide the present study: Cyberbullying bystanders are those who witness cyberbullying, either within or outside their personal social network(s), whose available responses range from inaction to intervention. These definitional components are discussed next.

One is made a cyberbullying bystander first by their presence in or awareness of the cyberbullying situation. As many constructs of cyberbullying are similar to those of traditional bullying, cyberbullying bystanders can also be characterized as those "who are

aware of" (Swearer, Espelege, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010, p. 39) or witness cyberbullying incidents (Craig & Pepler, 1997, p. 55). However, due to the public nature of cyberspace, witnessing cyberbullying may not necessarily mean the bystander observes the aggression within a social network to which they personally belong. In the online environment where much cyberbullying occurs, aggression is not only more powerful and permanent, but most importantly, public (Ramirez et al., 2010; Savage & Jones, 2014). Thus, the experience of being a cyberbullying bystander is probably most salient in an online environment. So, though the aforementioned conceptual definition is relevant to both public and private message dissemination in online, e-mail, and cell phone channels (Savage, 2012), the present study is taking an initial step by investigating the public domain of online spaces.

Cyberbullying bystanders have a range of responses available to them as a consequence of the social structure of cyberbullying. From inaction to intervention, clusters of bystanders exhibiting similar behaviors create a social structure based on pro-bullying, pro-social and non-involved roles (Salmivalli, Huttenen, & Lagerspetz, 1997). Responses of inactive reinforcement (e.g., passive attention and engagement) of the majority of traditional bullying bystanders (Craig & Pepler, 1997; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999; Twemlow et al., 2004) are intensified in cyberbullying. In other words, bystanders' exploitation of anonymity may make it easier for them to avoid the episode or more reluctant to intervene. Yet, in contrast to traditional bullying, inactive reinforcement online may not be immediately observable because despite the fact that the bystanders would have seen the 'interaction scripts' online themselves, public, verbal reactions may not occur. In two studies, Li (2006, 2007) affirmed that most cyberbullying

bystanders appear to respond silently; further, he discovered that this type of response is motivated by fear or feelings of powerlessness. However, cyberbullying bystanders could also publicly intervene or report the incident. In other words, it is possible that anonymity could have the opposite effect by encouraging those witnessing cyberbullying to be active bystanders, free from fear of retaliation or victimization. In this case, cyberbullying bystanders who acted as supportive may, in fact, create a peaceful, safe electronic environment to ameliorate cyberbullying, much like supportive traditional bullying bystanders create a similar school environment (Cowie, 2000).

A social-ecological perspective. A social-ecological model as applied to cyberbullying is equally as functional as in traditional bullying contexts by reason of one assumption—that, in response to bullying, "nested contextual systems" (Swearer et al., 2010, p. 42) combined with individuals' characteristics shape adolescent behavior (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005). Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, & Zeira's (2004) study using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory built on this assumption and discovered that school climate characteristics were negatively related to the victimization level of the school. In other words, the school's environment contributed greatly to the explanation for its corresponding victimization levels. Thus, if the environment in which bullying behaviors take place influences the level or frequency of victimization, it stands to reason that an ecological perspective of cyberbullying would help to explain how an online environment full of bystanders influences perpetration and victimization online.

Because bystanders have already been acknowledged by social-ecological research as "key participants" in bullying episodes (Doll & Swearer, 2006, p. 186), investigations to expand cyberbullying theory also warrant a similar lens. As members of

the peer group ecology, traditional bullying bystanders sustain the overall social-ecological framework. That is, the silent permission and respect most often given to bullies by peers' indirect engagement, attention, and lack of interference allows the bully a sense of power and victory, thus maintaining and exacerbating violent behaviors (Beran & Li, 2007; Doll & Swearer, 2006; Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999). Therefore, it is essential to also explore the social-ecological framework of online spaces by expanding the focus of cyberbullying research beyond the cyberbully-cybervictim dyad to bystanders. Ultimately, Espelage and Swearer (2004) note that these kind of novel directions "go to the heart" (p. 90) of social-ecological theory by acknowledging that interactive, social contexts like cyberbullying are typified by multiple levels of influence, and microsocial and macrosocial hierarchical structures (O'Connell et al., 1999; Twemlow et al., 2004).

The perspective afforded by a social-ecological model also has advantages for applied research in cyberbullying. In their review of health-related ecological models, Sallis et al. (2008) emphasized the importance of comprehensive approaches to intervention, as wide-reaching systematic approaches are more likely to have positive and long-lasting effects as compared to interventions that target only one level of influence. Interventions that target only the cyberbully or only the cybervictim would fall under the latter category. Additional literature concurs, promoting an ecological approach so that contextual issues and interventions can be conceptualized at multiple levels (Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Swearer et al., 2010), including those social contexts like cyberbullying that impact adolescents' behavioral development.

Bystander frequencies. Though scholars have not yet capitalized on the social-ecological nature of cyberbullying to complete a focal investigation of cyberbullying bystanders, some general cyberbullying research includes preliminary estimates of bystander frequencies in investigations of cyberbullying participants and processes. These estimates offer insight into bystanders' integral presence as environmental factors in cyberbullying episodes, as well as their motivations toward inaction or intervention, which further reinforce the conceptual definition presented.

In a pair of studies, Li (2006, 2007) determined that the occurrence of cyberbullying corresponds to adolescents' individual perceptions of what is acceptable within the online environment; this relationship is similar to that found in traditional bullying (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). Utilizing an anonymous survey among Canadian middle school students, Li (2006) found that bystanders—those students who were aware of cyberbullying—did not vary greatly by gender; 55.6 percent of bystanders were male, while 54.5 percent were female. In terms of those bystanders' actions, only 30.1 percent of students who knew a cybervictim reported the incident to adults, though there was no significant gender difference. In a follow-up study with the same population, Li (2007) found that 34.5 percent of students who knew a cybervictim told adults about the incident; in this case, the students were active, helpful bystanders. Yet, student perceptions of the school's climate revealed that only 67.1 percent of students ultimately believed that adult authorities in school actively attempted to stop cyberbullying when told of the incident(s). In both studies, most students chose to be inactive, silent bystanders due to feelings of powerlessness or fear, similar to traditional bullying bystanders. Li's findings reiterate bystanders' presence and importance in the

cyberbullying system, which affirms that cyberbullying bystanders deserve explicit inquiry.

Agatston, Kowalski, and Limber (2007) studied American middle and high school students through focus groups. Overall, they discovered that students were reluctant to report cyberbullying to either adults in the school or parents due to electronic privilege revocations. Yet, even though students appeared to be more content as passive bystanders, their role may have been due to a lack of knowledge regarding helpful bystander responses. Thus, Agatston et al. recommended that future research should seek to better understand effective prevention interventions as they relate to bystander responses.

Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk, and Solomon (2012) recently concurred when they measured bystander frequency and motivations using an exploratory, cross-sectional survey amongst Canadian middle and high school students. Twenty-five percent of the study's participants reported previously witnessing a cyberbullying incident, which the researchers argued challenged the "assumption of anonymity" (p. 371). Consequently, they further noted that the inclusion of these bystanders in intervention efforts was crucial, as their attitudes and responses to cyberbullying incidents are key to effective prevention. Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, and Coulter (2011) recently argued that though cyberbullying bystanders play important and "complex roles" (p. e5) in the creation, maintenance, and end result of cyberbullying, bystanders' influence on behaviors as a matter of context has not been sufficiently explored.

Power. If cyberbullying is an extension of traditional bullying, then cyberbullies' power must be considered. That is, does cyberbullying involve a power difference

between perpetrator and victim? A traditional bully's resources of power are due to physical strength, popularity, and intelligence (Limber, 2002; Olweus, 1993; Kaukiainen et al., 1999). Although cyberbullies do not have a physical component of power, their power is cultivated from technological skills and exploitation of anonymity afforded by the asymmetrical nature of digital communication technologies (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Thus, a power imbalance between cyberbully and cybervictim, whether perceived or real, is established simply through the occurrence of cyberbullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Therefore, reinforcing power differentials between cyberbully and cybervictim can not only be understood as a byproduct of cyberbullying, but more importantly as its most foundational intention.

Bystanders also play an integral role in the establishment of power, having pervasive influence as a result of group norms. Though cyberbullying bystanders' proximity to or perception of power has yet to be empirically investigated, traditional bullying literature may again serve to inform future studies in a cyberbullying context. Within the traditional peer audience, a particular environment emerges when bystanders observe others continuing to reinforce the bully (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Throughout traditional bullying literature, the environment that emerges in this interaction is referred to as *normative* or one that fosters particular group *norms* (e.g., Dijkstra, Lindenberg, & Veenstra, 2008; Henry et al., 2000; Juvoven & Cadigan, 2003; Juvoven & Galvan, 2008; Juvoven & Ho, 2008; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Distancing from low-status victims and mimicking aggressive behavior is often a normative behavior or trend in bystanding peer groups, one that saves bystanders from attempting to "thwart" bullies' power (Salmivalli, 2010, p. 115). Behaving in a manner

prescribed by the norm (i.e., assimilating) is therefore considered an adaptive behavior (Garandeau & Cillessen, 2006; Juvoven & Galvan, 2008). Thus, to act within the socially accepted standards and avoid victimization, those who are not targeted by the bully's aggression will act within these norms (Salmivalli, 2010), which most often entails refusal to be transparent about their inner attitudes or publicly confront the bully (Juvoven & Galvan, 2008). Cowie (2000) referred to this inaction as part of a "dissociating process": in such a "dysfunctional, coercive, and disconnected social system" as bullying, being an inactive bystander is essentially an unconscious reaction to the anxiety (p. 217). Nonetheless, though it may be a safe and reflexive response for bystanding peers themselves, nonintervention to repeated exposure has distinct results: Private and public behaviors and attitudes about bullying are impacted (Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, & Franzoni, 2008; Swearer et al., 2010), attempts at pro-social interventions are made obsolete (Salmivalli, 2010), and bystanding peers become desensitized to victims' plights (Cowie, 2000; O'Connell et al., 1999; Safran & Safran, 1985).

This socialization of normative bystander behavior has two major implications, which are likely also applicable to online contexts of cyberbullying. First, bystanders' proximity to the bully is largely irrelevant (Juvoven & Ho, 2008). Bystanders instead have greater influence on each other, having a direct role in the creation of bullying's social atmosphere; the bully simply assumes the role of the bystanding audience agent (Twemlow et al., 2004), rather than the sole focus and responsible party. Second, and most importantly, bystanders' adaption to the status quo fosters a power imbalance that benefits bullies and restricts pro-social interventions (O'Connell et al., 1999). In other words, their incessant reinforcement of bullies widens the power differential between

bully and victim. As Craig and Pepler (1997) commented, the influence of peers' group context on their subsequent passive, yet supportive responses allows a reinforcement of aggression that not only affirms the bully's dominance within the group context, but the bully's absolute superiority over the victim. Further misbalancing the power thereby implies that the bully attacked deservedly within their power (Craig & Pepler, 1997; O'Connell et al., 1999). Because power is a highly salient construct of cyberbullying, it follows that cyberbullying bystanders' place in the establishment, maintenance, and advancement of power deserve inquiry.

Consequences and effects. Consequences of cyberbullying are severe and affect all parties involved. Similar, but perhaps more austere to the deleterious consequences that occur for victims and bully-victims of traditional bullying, cybervictims experience clinical symptomology and mental health issues including psychological and psychosocial problems like depression and anxiety, problematic behaviors including suicide and symptoms of depression, or additional traditional bullying victimization (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Fauman, 2008; Thomas, 2006). Bully-victims in cyberbullying may experience the greatest psychosocial challenges, perhaps due to the fact that they are nearly six times as likely as standard cybervictims to experience emotional distress due to harassment online and also have poor relations with their caregiver(s) (Barnow, Lucht, & Freyberger, 2001; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). However, consequences exist for cyberbullies too. Cyberbullies experience increased levels of aggression and social anxiety, a lack of sophisticated social skills, and low self-esteem as a result of their negative actions (Harman, Hansen, Cochran, & Lindsey, 2005). Given the adverse effects of cyberbullying episodes on both

cyberbullies and cybervictims, it follows that a consequence of some form may belong to the final party: bystanders. Yet, such an application has been wholly overlooked in cyberbullying literature to date.

Traditional bullying literature regarding bystanders again provides a starting point for realizing such consequences in cyberbullying. Scholars have found that, in traditional contexts, peers' normative environment fosters increased likelihood and greater frequency of victimization, in addition to directly affecting victims' well being. The likelihood of victimization is dependent on group norms or social context. When the social context is one in which bystanders refuse to challenge the bully and instead support the behavior, the likelihood of victimization is greater (Kärnä, Voeten, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2010). When bystanding peers act within the confines of that social context, likelihood gives way to increased frequency of bullying incidents and greater levels of post-aggression conflict (DeRosier, Cillessen, Coie, & Dodge, 1994); even the mere presence of peers is positively associated with greater persistence of bullying (O'Connell et al., 1999). Over time, such successful group bullying (e.g., bullying that is largely reinforced by bystanding peers) leads to more individual bullying (e.g., one-on-one encounters between bully and victim) (Espelege, Holt, & Henkel, 2003) and a sense of group cohesion (Garandeau & Cillessen, 2006). Thus, victims' well being is highly threatened by what Twemlow et al. (2004) termed, "pathological bystanding roles" (i.e., bystanders following group norms spreads like a disease because of the social and emotional environment and sticks) (p. 229).

Bystanders' defending actions, however, make an immediate, positive difference in victims' situations (Salmivalli, 2010). In a social context of support where bystanders

characteristically come to victims' defense, the frequency of bullying decreases (Kärnä, Salmivalli, Poskiparta, & Voeten, 2008). Even one bystander who chooses to defend the victim rather than inactively observe along with other peers has the ability to lessen victimization's deleterious effects and close the power differential between cyberbully and cybervictim (Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing, & Salmivalli, 2011).

Chapter Three

MULTIPLE GOALS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Overview and Contribution

The present study will utilize a multiple goals theoretical framework as articulated by Caughlin (2010). In his review of multiple goals theories, Caughlin argued that this group of interpersonal communication theories offers a nuanced understanding that is crucial to studies of relational communication (i.e., wherein interpersonal messages have a calculated effect on individuals' level of satisfaction with the specific interaction and overall relationship as well as relational well-being and subsequent message production). However, multiple goals theories have primarily been applied to individual encounters isolated in time. By acknowledging this limitation and drawing connections amongst the diverse field of multiple goals literature, Caughlin revealed that multiple goals' advantage as a theoretical framework lies in its potential as a macroscopic approach to describing associations between communicative behaviors and broad conversational and relational outcomes. In other words, goals do not simply shape messages; rather, goals shape interpretation of messages, which is the hallmark of multiple goals theories.

This advantage can easily be reframed in terms of cyberbullying literature. Research on communication in relationships can inform cyberbullying bystanders' relationships, to the surrounding bullies and victims (albeit unconscious, unintentional, and likely characterized by a power differential). That is, a multiple goals approach would allow cyberbullying scholars to connect cyberbullying bystander behaviors with social norms of the electronic environment and victimization outcomes. Moreover, a multiple goals approach would allow focused investigation of cyberbullying bystanders'

goals in shaping both their messages (i.e., behaviors) and, more importantly, interpretations of their messages (i.e., the resulting impact of their behaviors). Therefore, a multiple goals theoretical framework can contribute to knowledge on cyberbullying bystanders' goals in connection to their varying potential behaviors, which could have further implications for prevention and interventions.

Assumptions

Multiple goals theories have three primary assumptions, each of which contributes in unique ways to the phenomenon of cyberbullying: (1) communication is purposeful; (2) individuals commonly pursue multiple goals simultaneously; and (3) various communication goals frequently conflict (Caughlin, 2010, p. 828; Wilson & Feng, 2007). First, communication is a strategic, purposeful performance (Jacobs, 2002), making an individual a sort of social actor (Goffman, 1959). Even within bullying interactions, the aggressive communication is frequently noted as intentional and often pre-meditated in both traditional and cyberbullying contexts. This assumption further implies that communication is goal-oriented though not always consciously (Caughlin, 2010), goals being "cognitive representations of desired end states for which people strive" (Berger & Palomares, 2011, p. 170; Dijksterhaus, Chartrand, & Aarts, 2007; Dillard, 1997). According to Clark and Delia (1979), use of these communication goals allows management and manipulation of identities and relationships. Additional literature on knowledge structures reveals that individuals manage and accomplish their communication goals with scripts of tangible actions guided by behavioral influences, which involve the social actors' ability to act in a dominant or assertive manner (Kellermann, 2004). So, an understanding of goal-oriented communication has strong

implications for cyberbullying: Cyberbullying bystanders can be strategic in managing their own identity and that of other parties, and can also initiate and maintain a specific relationship, likely one characterized by a power imbalance, with the cybervictim.

Second, the assumption that goals are not pursued in isolation serves as a testament to the social-ecological model of multiple behavioral influences. Communicators may organize these influential goals in several ways, the most basic of which is distinguishing between primary and secondary goals (Caughlin, 2010; Dillard, Segrin, & Harden, 1989; Wilson, 2002). Clark and Delia's (1979) scheme, however, is perhaps more notable and nuanced, distinguishing between instrumental/task (e.g., main task or goal), relational (e.g., type of existing or desired relationship), and identity goals (e.g., the identity one presents and the identity deduced from others' impressions) (Goffman, 1959). A multiple goals theoretical perspective further posits that the more difficult the communication context, the harder it is to achieve all three types of goals. The assumption and its accompanying organizational schemes informs an important construct of cyberbullying: Cyberbullying bystanders have the capability to exhibit various and differing behaviors not only as a consequence of the social structure of cyberbullying, but also because they likely have multiple, prioritized goals.

Finally, because multiple goals are pursued purposefully and simultaneously, one individual's various goals may conflict with each other whether primary or secondary goals (Caughlin, 2010). Cyberbullying bystanders would likely deal with internal goal conflicts (e.g., maintaining friendship with the cybervictim versus protecting their personal identity as an inactive bystander to avoid risk of victimization) by behaving in a way that adheres to the group norm(s) of their immediate environment, which can be

identified from social practices (Goldsmith, 2004; O'Keefe, 1988). Yet, one individual's set of goals may also conflict with another individual's set of goals (Caughlin, 2010). Such goal conflict between two separate individuals may be evident in the presence of differing bystander responses.

Research Traditions

Research traditions within multiple goals literature offer additional insights, which affirm aforementioned bystander processes and provide precise theoretical explanations for bystander behavior, while also suggesting critical new directions related to the present study. As articulated by Caughlin (2010), multiple goals theories have three distinct research traditions: (1) goals shape message production; (2) message sophistication can be evaluated with goals; and (3) beliefs about goals can shape the meaning of communication (p. 828-832). First, messages features are influenced by goals. In the case of cyberbullies, messages of request or seeking compliance would be impacted. More importantly, however, in the case of cyberbullying bystanders, electronic message production may be influenced by bystanders' own goals even if that ultimate message is one of passivity and inaction. Regardless, the variety of multiple goals translates to a variety of multiple potential messages or a variety of observable behaviors that could be exhibited by the bystander; in other words, bystanders' goals may determine the bystanders' behavior. The fact that within a sole conversation, communicators' goals can evolve (Keck & Samp, 2007; Waldron, 1997) is a testament to the achievability of making bystanders' inner, altruistic attitudes salient so that their goals may shift their bystander role to one of cybervictim support.

Second, goals can be used to evaluate message sophistication or quality, which implies explanations for bystanders' scripts or "logics" (O'Keefe, 1988). Because communication goals cannot be reduced to "idiosyncratic cognitions," but rather the degree of goals' appropriateness is relative to the specific situation (Caughlin, 2010, p. 830), bystanders who do not use goals to craft their messages within the confines of the normative environment may be considered incompetent. In other words, in a normative environment of cyberbullying, bystanders who do not reinforce the cyberbully, whether through passive attention or engagement in aggression, would allow their identity as a competent communicator to be threatened and create further grounds for their victimization. Consequently, many bystanders fear intervention and report in such a normative environment.

Finally, goals are powerful tools in shaping the meaning of communication. This is the hallmark of multiple goals theories—goals do not simply shape messages, but goals also shape interpretation of messages. Moreover, goal inferences that shape meaning of communication behavior can also shape their impact (Caughlin, 2010). In the case of cyberbullying, this means that bystander goals have a direct effect on the overall impact of aggressive cyberbullying behaviors. More specifically, this explains how cyberbullying bystanders' goals might shape their messages (i.e., behaviors) and the resulting interpretations of those messages (i.e., the resulting impact their behaviors have on fellow bystanders, the cybervictim and/or cyberbully, and the outcomes of cyberbullying as a whole).

Application to Cyberbullying

Caughlin (2010) took multiple goals theories a step further by building conceptual models of "broad and nuanced associations" between communication goals and behaviors, and evaluations of both specific encounters as well as global, relational level constructs (p. 832-839), though the adapted perspective will not be of particular focus here. Nonetheless, Caughlin's analysis aligns with an important feature of the present study: Confronting the limitation of previous research which solely focused on specific, isolated encounters—the dyadic interaction between cyberbully and cybervictim—but rarely attended to the "big picture"—the surrounding peer audience in cyberspace. Framing with a multiple goals theoretical perspective allows close analysis of messages and interpretations of messages to deduce goals, recognizing communicators' purpose in interactions, and does not oversimplify the phenomena like many dominant behavior models. Its advantage as a "big picture" perspective does not reduce communication to single behavior or to a particular variable, but encourages communication scholars to foster an inherent interest in meaning.

To that end, a multiple goals theoretical perspective is appropriate to the present study because it implies that identifying cyberbullying bystander goals can reveal the various types of cyberbullying bystander behaviors and what, if any, differences or similarities exist as compared to typologies of traditional bullying bystanders. Therefore, it is expected that this multiple goals study will help researchers understand the reasons for cyberbullying bystander behavior through bystander goals, and learn how victims' relational well being, in addition to the encouragement or restraint of cyberbullying aggression, is rooted in bystanders' behavior. Moreover, it is expected that these

understandings can be applied to effective cyberbullying prevention and intervention measures.

Chapter Four

BYSTANDER TYPLOGIES

As noted throughout traditional bullying literature, certain factors may dispose some bystanders to behave differently than other bystanding peers. The same is likely true of cyberbullying bystanders. Many individuals who are victimized in traditional contexts may also be cybervictims and many individuals who act as bullies in traditional contexts may also be cyberbullies (Burton, et al., 2013; Sourander et al., 2010; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). By extension, cyberbullying bystanders may behave in ways analogous to bystanders in traditional bullying (Beran & Li, 2007). In order to explore such cyberbullying bystander behaviors more fully, a discussion of traditional bullying bystander typologies and how they may apply to cyberbullying bystanders' function in an online environment are reviewed next.

Bystander typologies help clarify the nuances of bystanders' responses, a small number of which have been advanced within the traditional bullying literature. No such typologies unique to cyberbullying have yet been advanced. Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, and Kaukiainen (1996) acknowledged that roles of "the other" represent a prominent piece of the bullying process, just as the bully and the victim are considered essential elements. They derived specific bystander types from 50 behavioral descriptions through peer nomination via questionnaire. Within the bullying process, they found that peers fulfill four basic bystander roles: *Reinforcer of the bully*, *assistant of the bully*, *defender of the victim,* or *outsider*. Each bystander type is characterized by a representative set of behaviors, outlined based on individual scales: *Reinforcers* encourage the bully through their presence and often verbal acknowledgment, *assistants*

actively follow or emulate the bullying behavior, *defenders* actively intervene in an attempt to end the violence and support and console the victim, while *outsiders'* response in any form is lacking.

Craig and Pepler (1997) coded bystanders' involvement levels in traditional bullying episodes using videotaped observations of playground bullying, ultimately establishing four levels: *active participation* as an aggressor, *observing* the episode (e.g., inactive participation), *involvement* with either the bully's or the victim's activities, or *intervening* in the episode (p. 51). When peers were present during a bullying episode (85 percent), they varied in their level of involvement as a bystander: Active participation (30 percent), inactive observation (23 percent), joint involvement with the bully and victim (61 percent), and intervention (13 percent). Cowie (2000) reconceptualized these levels, with additional influence from O'Connell, Pepler, and Craig (1999), as "co-bullies, supporters, audience, and 'seldom intervenors" (p. 86).

Olweus (2001), one of the foremost scholars in traditional bullying research, documented seven particular "modes of reaction" (Salmivalli, 2010, p. 114) beyond initiating the bullying, which typify a composite of peer's attitudes and behaviors in response to witnessing bullying. Conceptually, "The Bullying Circle" (Olweus, 2001, p. 14-15) rotates from left to right based on bystanders' degree of positive–neutral and indifferent–negative inner attitudes and ultimate action or inaction: *followers-henchmen* (e.g., do not initiate bullying, but actively participate), *supporters-passive bully/bullies* (e.g., do not actively participate, but support bullying), *passive supporters-possible bully/bullies* (e.g., do not publicly support bullying, but enjoy its occurrence), *disengaged onlookers* (e.g., watch with indifference by projecting responsibility), *possible defenders*

(e.g., disapprove of bullying and feel an urge to assist the victim, but do not ultimately act) or *defenders of the victim* (e.g., disapprove of bullying and actively attempt to assist the victim). From Olweus' scheme, agents of change will emerge as bystanders cycle to the right of "The Bullying Circle."

Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sacco (2004) presented a traditional bullying bystander typology that assumes the bystander is an active and indirectly involved participant in the social architecture of the bullying context. They proposed seven separate roles based on case studies, delineating each type according to the bystander's mentalization, subjective state, and role in the [social] system (p. 218). Allen, Fonagy, & Bateman (2008) define mentalization as "attending to mental states in oneself and others" (p. 1). Moving along a continuum from bystanders excited by community victimization to bystanders genuinely compassionate in their interventions, the seven roles are outlined as: *Bully (aggressive) bystander* (e.g., establishes system of victimization in sadomasochism), *puppet-master variant of bully bystander* (e.g., committed to manipulating power for violent results), *victim (passive) bystander* (e.g., victimized as a result of apathy, fear, and helplessness), *avoidant bystander* (e.g., acts in "defensive euphoria" or denies personal responsibility to facilitate victimization), *abdicating bystander* (e.g., appalled by other bystanders' inaction, but diffuses personal responsibility), *sham bystander* (e.g., adopts a bully or victim role with political motivations) and *helpful (altruistic) bystander* (e.g., confronts frustration at victim's hurt through promotion of supportive, active intervention).

Perhaps the most typical role outlined is that of the *abdicating bystander*, also referred to as the *community bystander* (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004). Bystanders in the abdicating role avoid acknowledging their place in the process of bullying (i.e.,

scapegoating) and instead, cast all blame on other bystanders, the bully, or the victim, believing such individuals constitute "sufficient cause" for the issue of violence (p. 217-218). Ideally, Twemlow et al. (2004) sought to empower the "community bystander" to become a "helpful (altruistic) bystander," proposed as the critical part of the solution to bullying violence. Bystanders in the helpful and altruistic role may be "natural leaders" who offer idealistic, compassionate help without selfishness, avoid victimization, are "mature and effective" in their influence to advance self-awareness, and whose strengths lie in mentalizing and listening; however, helpful bystanders may be doubtful of their impact and must receive encouragement to act. If bystanders refuse to respond altruistically to bullying, the bystanders, in effect, support the bully as the victimizer through their observance, engagement, and often, silence.

Despite the potential application that such traditional bullying bystander typologies offer within the context of cyberbullying, difficulties exist for constructing survey or other quantitative instruments at this point given the novelty of the overall research topic. Rather, pursuit of a qualitative technique may be a more natural approach to obtain exploratory preliminary data (cf. Lederman, 2004) about the cyberbullying bystander experience. Forms of self-report found in qualitative approaches have been utilized greatly through questionnaires, role-play, and conversation analysis in multiple goals research in particular (e.g., Caughlin & Scott, 2010; Donovan-Kicken & Caughlin, 2010; O'Keefe, 1988; Samp & Solomon, 1999; Wilson, Kunkel, Robson, Olufowote, & Soliz, 2009). Therefore, a qualitative methodology such as focus group interviews (FGIs) would allow researchers the in-depth, focused discussion necessary to construct a

typology of cyberbullying bystanders by discovering the 'why' (i.e., goals) behind cyberbullying bystanders' behavior.

Research Questions

Ultimately, cyberbullying bystanders are an integral piece of the cyberbullying problem. They are crucial to the initiation, maintenance, and prolonged presence of cyberbullying behaviors. Cyberbullying bystanders' may also have the power to ameliorate or exacerbate the foundations of coercive normative environments that emerge in instances of cyberbullying. To that end, exploratory, thematic research is warranted to better understand the goals and behaviors of cyberbullying bystanders. Thus, the present study aims to meet this objective by operating as a thematic study from a social-ecological perspective and employing a multiple goals theoretical framework to empirically examine cyberbullying bystanders' goals as determinant of their behavior. To best explore the aforementioned constructs, the present study will utilize focus group interviews (hereinafter referred to as FGIs) to examine the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the goal(s) of cyberbullying bystanders?

RQ2: How do cyberbullying bystanders' goals impact their behavior, such that perpetration and victimization are encouraged or restrained?

RQ3: In what ways do goals and behaviors combine to elicit a typology of cyberbullying bystanders?

Chapter Five

METHODOLOGY

Bystanders in traditional bullying or cyberbullying operate in a group context or environment. Their actions are largely dependent on or are reflective of the surrounding peers in the bystanding audience due to phenomenon like social contagion (Olweus, 1991) and the diffusion of responsibility (O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli, 2010). FGIs, in this sense, conceptually mimic the processes of a bystanding audience because they aim to "probe" members' "deep, psychological reactions" (p. 11) and internal attitudes using social strength and support from group members to create openness and candor (Lederman, 2004). In other words, the "synergy" foundational to group norms is also present as an advantage of FGIs (Lederman, 2004, p. 11). Below is an explanation of the participants, procedures, focus group guide, and data analysis to be used in the present study involving the employment of FGIs.

Participants

Participants were selected from a population of undergraduate students enrolled in intro-level communication courses at the University of Kentucky. They had to be 18 years of age, a student at the university, and have had access to a personal cell phone, personal computer with an Internet connection. In addition, participants must have witnessed cyberbullying online at least once. Examples of online cyberbullying behaviors were provided to potential participants, so they could accurately determine their experience as a cyberbullying bystander. Although the conceptual definition of cyberbullying bystanders herein is applicable to all electronic forms of communication

(i.e., online, e-mail, and cell phone channels), the present study investigated the domain most salient to cyberbullying bystander experiences (i.e., online message dissemination).

Five FGIs were conducted with five to ten participants each. Because the FGIs were constructed demographically based on gender, the study began with two female sessions and two male sessions. However, data saturation was not reached after the fourth FGI (the second male session), so a fifth FGI (a third male session) was added in order to gather sufficient information to fully develop the theoretical model (Creswell, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, 40 students in total—13 females (two female sessions) and 27 males (three male sessions)—participated, ranging in age from 18 to 26, with an average age of 18.8 years old.

Participants reported being White/Caucasian (77.5%, *n* = 31), Black/African American (7.5%, *n* = 3), Hispanic/Latino (5%, *n* = 2), Asian (2.5%, *n* = 1), American Indian/Native American (2.5%, *n* = 1), or another ethnicity (i.e., biracial or multiracial; 5%, *n* = 2). Participants' relationship to technology was also assessed: The vast majority felt "very comfortable" using a computer (97.5%, *n* = 39), used the Internet more than nine times per day (75%, *n* = 30), and spent 10-20 hours per week online (40%, *n* = 16). Participants also reported their primary purposes for using technology: entertainment (87.5%, *n* = 35), education (85%, *n* = 34), communication with others (not including e-mail; 72.5%, *n* = 29), wasting time (60%, *n* = 24), shopping/gathering product information (45%, *n* = 18), gathering information for personal needs (42.5%, *n* = 17) and work/business (25%, *n* = 10). Finally, participants' regular usage of social networking sites (SNSs) was assessed: Facebook and Twitter were the most used SNSs at 90% (*n* = 36) and 80% (*n* = 32), respectively. Instagram was the third most used at 37.5% (*n* = 15),

with 10% of participants (n = 4) also reporting regular use of other SNSs (e.g., YouTube). No participants reported regularly using MySpace.

Procedure

The present study utilized FGIs to answer the aforementioned research questions. Procedures were developed from Lederman's (2004) manual on focus group methodology and were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants were recruited through the University of Kentucky Department of Communication's online SONA system. Participants provided informed consent prior to participation (Appendix A) and completed the online demographic survey, which lasted a maximum of five minutes.

A comprehensive focus group guide was developed with attention to appropriate questions and overall language for the undergraduate student participants in order to moderate the FGIs (Appendix B). Participants were assured that their participation was fully voluntary and no penalty would be received for non-participation or withdrawal. Confidentiality could not be afforded due to the group discussion format of FGIs. However, participants were allowed the opportunity to choose a pseudonym to identify their responses during the discussion. Following consent procedures and introductions, FGIs consisted of a broad discussion of cyberbullying and the bystanding audience, followed by an exploration of cyberbullying bystanders' goals and the varying roles that cyberbullying bystanders fulfill.

FGIs were audio recorded and the audio files transcribed by the moderator. During transcription, pseudonyms were used to identify each response, so that no

information was kept with participants' real names. Focus groups lasted 45-55 minutes and were facilitated in a research conference room on campus.

Focus Group Guide

Throughout the FGIs, standard probing questions were avoided to allow ample time for pre-planned probing questions within each section. These are noted within each section of the focus group guide (see Appendix B). The moderator summarized participants' responses after each section to effectively transition to the next section.

Section one of the focus group guide, "Exploring the Bystanding Experience," generally explored the bystanding audience. Time was given to exploring cyberbullying with intentional acknowledgment that people have difference thresholds for what perpetration characteristics count as cyberbullying. The moderator began by introducing 'people-watching' online harassment and asked following question: Have you ever seen or noticed this online? If cyberbullying was not mentioned, the moderator will use follow-up questions to guide the discussion toward cyberbullying and its audience: (1) When you talk about experiences like that, are there specific terms or words that you use to describe it?, (2) Is it something you see/have seen often?, (3) At what point do you feel that this behavior crosses the line?, and (4) How did you react? What was the experience like? The goal of the first section was to understand participants' conceptualizations of cyberbullying, as well as to ensure that all participants were equally familiar with bystander characteristics and able to draw upon any bystanding experiences.

Section two of the focus group guide, "Bystander Goals," explored the goals of cyberbullying bystanders. The moderator asked the following questions: (1) What motivated you to react that way? (or if they haven't been a bystander: What do you think

motivates bystanders?), (2) Were you ever 'torn' about how to react? How did that affect what you ended up doing?, (3) When you see cyberbullying going on, does it make a difference that other people are watching?, (4) What are some ways bystanders react to cyberbullying?, (5) Do you feel like bystanders respond the same way every time?, and (6) Do you the way other people react change anything about the way you react? The goal of the first research question was to encourage participants to consider the underlying intentions of cyberbullying bystanders or, in other words, ask how the participants themselves would conceptualize the goals of cyberbullying bystanders.

The third section of the focus group guide, "Impact of Cyberbullying Roles on Perpetration and Victimization," explored how cyberbullying bystanders' roles impact their behavior relative to perpetration and victimization. The moderator asked the following questions: (1) Do you feel pressure to respond in a certain way?, (2) Do you think that what you say or don't say makes a difference to the person being aggressive? What about to the person it's directed at?, and (3) In your experience, what have you found is the best way for a person to respond when they see someone being aggressive towards someone else online? The goal of the second research question was to determine how cyberbullying bystanders' goals influence their behaviors and the promotion or inhibition of cyberbullying.

The fourth section of the focus group guide, "Closing," concluded the FGIs. The moderator summarized participants' responses, wrapped up the discussion, and thanked the participants. Finally, the moderator reminded participants of the incentive in the form of one SONA research credit per participant.

Data Analysis

The present study was approached as a thematic study; this had implications for the specific course of analysis, which was developed from Creswell (2013) and Tracy's (2013) suggestions for qualitative data analysis. Such thematic approaches embody what Tracy (2013) terms *iterative analysis*, which integrates the "etic" use of theoretical models with an "emic" (i.e., emergent) relationship to the data. In other words, the analysis is a reflexive process whereby meaning is grounded in current scholarship, theories, and interests and priorities of the researcher, in addition to the "emergent data." Thus, while each transcript was thoroughly reviewed through the process of data immersion, each transcript was also coded for specific theoretical constructs—goals, behavioral responses and the consequent impacts (i.e., encouragement or restraint of perpetration or victimization)—as the constructs related to cyberbullying bystanders.

The nature of the project being a supervised thesis mimicked the notion of having a second coder. Together, we constantly visited the data, evaluated its conceptual clarity, and noted the meaning of and connections among codes (Tracy, 2013) and ideas of the emerging themes through the process of *memoing* (Creswell, 2013). Finally, we compared the emerging themes against the data to make sure the data were applicable to each code and to the emerging themes or categories (i.e., the *constant comparative method*; Creswell, 2013; Tracy, 2013). This process provided an external assessment of the themes' validity and was used to elicit a typology of cyberbullying bystanders.

Coding was electronically completed in a two-step process: open coding (i.e., *primary-cycle coding*) and axial coding (i.e., *secondary-cycle coding*) (Creswell, 2013; cf. Tracy, 2013 for synonymous terms noted in italics). In the first stage of analysis, *first-*

level codes, or descriptive short words and phrases that answered "what" was happening in the data (Tracy, 2013), were written for approximately 80% of the lines in each transcript to describe emerging patterns. Researchers often recommend using gerunds as *first-level codes* (i.e., words that end in –ing) as much as possible to best capture the essence of the actions in the data (Charmaz, 2011; Tracy, 2013). For example, when coding for bystander goals, *first-level codes* included words and phrases such as "loyalty/responsibility," "full understanding," "progressing/getting worse," "knowing story," "gauging," "avoiding victimization," "protecting," "age/maturity," and "misconstruing (as CB)." When coding for bystander behavior, *first-level codes* included descriptive words and phrases such as "watching entertainment," "laughing/joking," "talking," "reporting (authorities)," "ignoring," "retaliating," "checking/supporting (victim)" "distancing/stay neutral," and *in-vivo* codes (i.e., codes that use participants' own language or terms) like "eating popcorn."

Identical and similar codes from each transcript were then grouped by question into one collective document for that section of the focus group guide. In other words, there was a single document for "Exploring the Bystanding Experience," for "Bystander Goals," and for "Impact of Cyberbullying Roles on Perpetration and Victimization," each containing all *first-level codes* from each separate transcript, separated by question. This method of organization arranged data for each research question into constructs (e.g., each time a participant identified a bystander goal) within distinct documents to allow for more streamlined analysis.

In the second stage of analysis, lean coding (Creswell, 2013) was completed by writing *second-level codes*, analytic and interpretive revisions of the descriptive *first-*

level codes that answered "why" the data were significant (Tracy, 2013). This process involved *hierarchical codes* or organization (Tracy, 2013), beginning with a review of each separate document containing the *first-level codes*. The *first-level codes* were re-organized according to their identicalness or similarity within each question. The "Bystander Goals" document, for example, included six questions as outlined in the focus group guide (Appendix B). Under the first question, "What motivated you to react that way?" codes like "loyalty/responsibility" and "protecting," were grouped together; "avoiding victimization" and "misconstruing (as CB)" together; and "full understanding" and "knowing story" together. The "Exploring the Bystanding Experience" document included four questions; under the fourth, "How did you react? What was the experience like?" codes like "laughing/joking," "talking," "watching entertainment," and "eating popcorn" were grouped together; "ignoring" and "distancing/stay neutral" together; and "reporting (authorities)" and "checking/supporting (victim)" together.

Next, after further analytic and interpretive revisions, each similar set of codes was assigned a categorical name. According to Tracy (2013) these *hierarchical codes* "serve as conceptual bins for emergent claims" (p. 200). In other words, re-organizing the data under categorical 'umbrellas' allowed the emergent themes to be discovered. For example, with bystander goals, "Proximity" was used to categorize the *first-level codes* "loyalty/responsibility" and "protecting;" "Avoidance/Fear" to categorize "avoiding victimization" and "misconstruing (as CB);" and "Ignorance" to categorize "full understanding" and "knowing story." With bystander behavior, "Watching/Talking" was used to categorize the *first-level codes* "watching entertainment," "laughing/joking," "talking," and "eating popcorn;" "Ignore/Neutrality" to categorize "ignoring" and

“distancing/stay neutral;” and “Attempt to Help” to categorize “reporting (authorities)” and “checking/supporting (victim).”

After more *secondary-cycle coding*, *hierarchical codes* for bystander goals like “Ignorance” (i.e., goals about bystanders’ relationship to information about “both sides”) folded into “Proximity” (i.e., goals about the bystander’s relationship to the cybervictim/bully) and was re-coded as “Closeness to cybervictim/information (knowledge of both sides)” and the *hierarchical code* “Avoidance/Fear” was re-coded as “Fear of bystander harm” (i.e., goals about bystanders’ avoidance for fear of personal harm). *Hierarchical codes* for bystander behavior like “Watching/Talking” were re-coded as “observe;” “Ignore/Neutrality” as “ignore;” and “Attempt to Help” as “intervene.” Repeating this cycle of coding multiple times in order to further refine codes allowed us to determine the final themes for bystander goals and behaviors; these are revealed in Tables 1 and 2 of the following chapter.

After both stages of analysis were complete, the data were organized in a *loose analysis outline* within yet another separate document in order to evaluate the completeness of the data analysis (Tracy, 2013). This process involved closely comparing the data to the original research questions to determine how the emergent themes potentially addressed them. Creating such an outline ensured that the emergent themes were both salient in the actual data and connected well to the specific interests of the research questions. Finally, the outline was used to guide the actual writing process.

Chapter Six

RESULTS

Before delving into discussion that addressed the research questions, participants spent time exploring the general cyberbullying bystanding experience, which revealed that they were aware of cyberbullying, familiar with bystander characteristics, and able to easily draw upon personal bystanding experiences. RQ1 results showed that participants identified five goals as central to their bystanding experiences: *honor proximity, respond according to severity, embrace the cultural environment, gauge from others' responses*, and *avoid personal consequences*. RQ2 results showed that these goals impacted bystander behavior in five ways: *ignoring, observing, intentional instigating, unintentional instigating,* and *intervening*. Using the goals and behaviors to construct a typology collectively revealed five types of cyberbullying bystanders, providing an answer to RQ3: *the oblivious/distant bystander, the entertained bystander, the conspiring bystander, the unintentional instigating bystander,* and *the active/empowered bystander*.

The chapter is organized in order of the research questions and their respective results. Participants' conceptualizations of and attitudes about cyberbullying are presented first to build a foundation from which their goals and resulting behaviors can be sufficiently explored. Following this introduction, the goals of cyberbullying bystanders are reviewed. Next, the impact of these goals is discussed in relation to bystanding behaviors; contributing goals for each behavior are also presented in order of how much participants felt each goal impacted the behavior. Finally, the integrative typology of cyberbullying bystanders is presented.

Introduction to the Bystanding Experience

"I mean, you can't not go on YouTube and see some pretty bad stuff," one participant confidently declared to open the inaugural focus group. On a host of various websites, the most commonly referenced being Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, anonymous sites like Spring.me, Ask.fm, or Topix, and even MySpace "a long time ago," respectively, participants described that they inevitably encounter aggressive behavior online. For example, "subtweets," statements posted on Twitter that call out, complain about, or even harass another user without explicitly mentioning their name, are "definitely daily." Collectively, they described such aggressive behavior as existing on a continuum, ranging from teasing among friends to the creation of fake profiles used to harass others through stolen and often graphic images.

The most frequently cited conditions for the point on the continuum at which such behavior 'crossed the line' into cyberbullying included intentional, repetitive threats of harm targeting a specific individual, their relationships, or uncontrollable circumstances (e.g., a mental illness or physical features) by means of public exposure, sometimes involving 'bandwagon' aggressors, necessitating intervention of authority figures, and adversely affecting the victim's well being. When the aggressive behavior met these terms, so to speak, participants agreed that it qualified as 'cyberbullying.' Indeed, participants' criteria for cyberbullying are similar, if not identical, to Tokunaga's (2010) integrative definition presented in Chapter Two: "Cyberbullying is any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (p. 278). Thus, as bystanders, they grasped the phenomenon.

Many used the term 'cyberbullying' in normal, everyday conversation; those that did not were at least familiar with its meaning. Interestingly, they were also quick to note the common, but sometimes-subtle nature of cyberbullying. In other words, participants stated that many bystanders are dismissive and think that such aggressive behavior online is harmless. However, in reality it is far from harmless; in taking the cybervictim's point of view, they described the effect of cyberbullying as "demoralizing," "embarrassing," and as an act that can "hurt someone's feelings." As one participant described: "I think like a lot of bullying actually happens, but people call it—I mean, people don't consider it that major… But I think like sometimes like subtle things that are said people don't consider cyberbullying but it is."

Participants' overall attitudes about cyberbullying were highly critical. They referred to the act of cyberbullying as "immature," "rude," "annoying," and even "pointless" as in, "There's just really no point to what [the cyberbully is] saying half the time." They also used film as a metaphor to describe the "drama" inherent in cyberbullying incidents: "[It's] like a movie. Like eating popcorn." Given these characterizations, it is not surprising that participants also revealed a negative attitude about cyberbullies themselves. They noted cyberbullies' actions as "for the sole purpose of getting attention" or creating "entertainment," motivations which baffled and frustrated participants, rousing emotions of exasperation: "Who has the time to do that to like every freakin' person? ... Like, are you really that bored with your own life that you have to like, you just make fun of other people? Or…accuse people of things?" Consequently, the existence of cyberbullying, combined with its public, permanent nature, left participants feeling "sad," no doubt contributing to their professed "short

tolerance" for such behavior: "I have no toleration for bullying at all. But like, I would even say the cyberbullying is worse than actual bullying sometimes just because...it's there forever." Yet, most felt the behavior was unfixable—in their words, it is "hard to curtail [cyberbullying] effectively."

In regard to the bystanding experience, all participants had witnessed cyberbullying at one point or another. While some brought up the term 'bystander' on their own and others claimed "there's not a lingo" for their role—"I don't think it's really a term; it's just, everybody on the Internet,"—participants' discussion revealed that they understood that as a witness to cyberbullying, they were part of a triadic interaction, though they may or may not know the cybervictims and/or cyberbullies directly. Their discussion highlighted the "different meanings" of a bystander within cyberbullying versus traditional bullying, mostly because of the sheer size of cyberspace and its user base: "It's just understood that a lot of people have seen it." Consequently, participants recognized that cyberbullying bystanders have the convenient option to be "more passive" because one user may not have any way of knowing what another user may have seen. Overall, participants' conceptualization of their bystanding role support the conceptual definition proposed in Chapter Two: cyberbullying bystanders are those who witness cyberbullying, either within or outside their personal social network(s), whose available responses range from inaction to intervention. From this introductory exploration of participants' understanding of cyberbullying and the bystanding experience, a basic schema of bystanders' integral role in the cyberbullying process can be constructed.

Goals of Cyberbullying Bystanders

Exploring bystanders' determinant motivations, as well as the internal experience of conflicting motivational factors, was the most spirited area of discussion within all focus groups. In the end, bystander goals encompassed five themes: honor proximity, respond according to severity, embrace the cultural environment, gauge from others' responses, and avoid personal consequences (Table 1). Each of these themes can be reframed as a goal, culminating in multiple goals for any and every bystander. Indeed, all participants utilized more than one of these goals in any given bystanding experience.

Honor proximity. With proximity—or, the degrees of separation between two parties of the cyberbullying interaction—everything seemed to hang in the balance. In other words, more than any other goal, the existence and content of bystanders' responses depended on their proximity to the interaction, whether to the cybervictim, the cyberbully (i.e. relational proximity), or full knowledge of both "sides" of the story rather than the "one" typically presented publicly on social media (i.e., informational proximity). If those elements are not in place, the bystanders feel it is not their place to engage in any form. Behavioral responses hinged on the idea of how "connected" they were to the cybervictim. The closer the bystander was to the cybervictim, the more obligation they felt to intervene or help in some way but, the more relational distance between the bystander and cybervictim, the less comfortable they were responding:

> If it was my best friends, I would obviously say something. But if it's someone that just goes to my school and I walk by them every couple of days and I don't really talk to them, then I don't know if I'd say anything.

Table 1

What Are the Goals of Cyberbullying Bystanders? Central Themes

Hierarchical Codes	Bystander Goals (Themes) and Examples
Closeness to cybervictim/ information (knowledge of sides)	*Honor proximity:* "It depends on who you know and how you know them." Close: "If somebody's coming at your friend… you want to react." Far: "If I don't really know them, it's kind of like, 'Okay, like I'm not gonna get into that;'" "I don't really comment or something unless I kind of fully understand" both sides.
Severity of cyberbullying	*Respond according to severity*: "I feel like depending on the degree of severity of it." Not severe: "Sometimes it's amusing." Severe: "Once it gets to that point" of "*really* serious" then "somebody should step in."
College surroundings/age	*Embrace the cultural environment*: "I feel like your demographic says a lot about how you're gonna react." Physical environment: "…if you get mad at one of your friends, there's, you know, 20 other thousand people on campus that you can talk to." Age/Apathy: "People in our [college] demographic, you know, we see it more often. We're just gonna kinda bypass it;" "You have to be at least a little apathetic. I mean, you're in college. You can't worry about everything."
Awareness of other bystanders	*Gauge from others' responses*: "I always wanna see if the person I'm telling like reacts the same way I did and like if we have similar opinions." Diffusion of Responsibility: "Everyone else sees it so maybe they'll say something, so I really shouldn't." Reinforce Support: "Other people like her closer friends group posted on her wall…so, it made me want to like post something."
Fear of bystander harm	*Avoid personal consequences*: Victimization: "[If] I say something, they could gang up on me and I don't want them to do that." Misperception: "Do I want to say that to them?…that may be construed as bullying maybe."

Participants spoke in terms of loyalty, responsibility, and an obligation to protect when witnessing a close friend or someone they knew "really well" being victimized. The experience of seeing a friend endure harm seemed to awaken an instinct that drove the bystanders' responses: "You want to protect your friends… I go into damage control, like, 'I can't believe that happened. What can I do?' Like, 'We gotta fix this.'" The desire, then, to react was fueled and sustained by the closeness and strength of their friendship, "different," one participant discussed, "than a casual observer." Those that were bystanders to their friend's victimization thought, "Like don't—don't talk about my friend like that."

Even in terms of reporting the cyberbullying to an authority figure, several participants felt that success depended on that proximity; if the instance is reported to someone that knows the cybervictim, they are more like to "go that extra step to make sure it stops." Yet, participants vividly described how knowing both the cyberbully and the cybervictim left them agonizingly 'torn' about how to move forward. One participant in particular shared an account about a friend and an acquaintance who were involved in a cyberbullying incident with each other:

> I was really good friends um with this guy since like ever. He like stole some other girl's—this other guy's girlfriend and what not. And after awhile, and they'd been dating for a while and the other guy had like a cleft lip when he was little and got it fixed. And he is so nice and smart and my friend um he like made a tweet about the other guy um mentioning his cleft lip, like called him a bad name and like everyone knew. And so, it put me in an awkward position because like right—so then I was torn as to what to say. Like do I like turn on my best friend or do I support this? Or do I like look bad because I'm not like doing either?

In contrast, a lack of proximity induced an uncertainty in participants' minds. Participants spoke of not wanting to "get involved" when the cybervictim was a stranger

or otherwise had no discernable connection to them. Thus, unless the bystander knows the person being harassed or the information being debated pertains to them, no one will "stand up" for the cybervictim. Moreover, depending on who the cybervictim was, participants stated that it is "not [their] position" to say anything at all. In this way, bystanders not only distance themselves, but also feel it is 'out of line' to engage when the cybervictim has no connection to them: "Like, I knew of them, but like I didn't feel comfortable being like, 'Oh, this person's my hero,' or whatever."

Finally, proximity also seemed to apply to the information being appropriated on both sides of the attack. Put differently, if a bystander is not familiar with "the whole situation" or has "no knowledge of both sides," they are much less likely to comment or take a stance in defense of someone. Participants preferred to be informed bystanders, only becoming involved or "putt[ing] [themself] in that position" if they had a foundation of in-depth knowledge of the argument on both sides of the stock cyberbullying dyad. In many ways, this aspect of honoring proximity contains an underlying defense mechanism. If bystanders were to get involved, tell friends, or report to an authority without knowing "all the details and stuff," the end result could be catastrophic. In the mind of the bystander, it is better to stay still than to "tell them the wrong story" and most likely "make it worse." As one participant shared: "One of them in my opinion is right, but I can't really say anything 'cause I don't know the exact other side of the story." In this way, bystanders are restrained by the lack of proximity to the whole story due to relational closeness or lack thereof.

Respond according to severity. Since participants consider cyberbullying behaviors on a continuum, the degree of severity of the cyberbullying incident also

played a prominent role in bystanders' conceptualization of goals. For some, the degree of severity referred to the specific site used. Cyberbullying on YouTube, for example, is perceived as less personal because of the vast size of its user base and the fact that a main purpose of the site is to broadcast content rather than establish social connections and community with others. Participants illustrated this aspect of the bystander goal by 'putting themselves in the victim's shoes.'

> If you're on YouTube… Okay, well I have no connection to you. You have no connection to me on YouTube. There's no way you can find anything about me on YouTube. You have no idea who my friends are on YouTube. But if you're coming at me on Facebook…that just become more personal because now you're on a platform where I'm in a community of people who can see what you're saying.

Transferring this understanding to the bystanding experience, participants felt that less personal mediums equaled less severe cyberbullying and therefore they "don't take it as seriously."

For most, severity referred to the harshness of the aggression itself. On one hand, cyberbullying can be "amusing" when one makes fun another (though participants did not explicitly define the parameters of "making fun"); this type of behavior was considered not severe. A number of participants described that this non-severe behavior often generates amongst-bystander gossip such as, "Come here! Come here! Look what they said." Thus, an attitude of indifference seemed to plague this sort of initial stage. "Toward the beginning," one participant clarified, "I guess nobody really cares at that point." On the other hand, when the situation progressed to "*really* serious" or "unusual" in some way—making incessant fun of someone's friends, talking about their family, threatening them, or leaking real, controversial or graphic images of the cybervictim—participants considered the behavior severe. Gauging the cybervictim's well being by

noticing “the little things” like an uncharacteristically quiet and isolated demeanor in face-to-face interactions was also a way that participants reported determining the degree of severity. At this point, bystanders felt that because the aggression qualified as severe, some sort of action needed to be taken, whether telling an authority figure or stepping in themselves. To that end, bystanders’ feel they must model their judgment, and response if necessary, in proportion to the degree of severity of the cyberbullying incident so as to act most appropriately or at least to never appear as overreacting or ‘out of line.’

Embrace the cultural environment. The often unconscious need to blend with one’s cultural environment, or adhere to group norms, emerged as a prominent determinant of bystanders’ behavior. Participants discussed their cultural environment in terms of their age and immediate physical surroundings (i.e., school). In regard to school, many pitted high school against college to illustrate the dialectics between their former and present environments. Whereas high school students are “a little more interconnected” due to daily sightings and interactions with the same core of individuals in a “closer, smaller space,” college students may be exposed to thousands upon thousands of others, leaving one with an abundance of alternative options if a friendship falls apart—“I mean, if you get mad at one of your friends, there’s, you know, 20 other thousand people on campus that you can talk to.” In terms of the bystanding experience, this discussion revealed that the essence of a college environment offers a sort of camouflage with which bystanders can more easily blend in, a sort of escape chute that absolves them of responsibility.

Within this cultural environment, participants were aware of how their age as a college student might impact their bystanding experience. They saw bystander responses

as largely dependent on demographic, which they discussed in terms of maturity and moral development. Participants felt that with age, bystanders developed a stronger "moral code": "…you start to get into your mid to late twenties and you have a more set-in-stone moral code that you more or less live your life by… who's watching isn't really gonna change that." As a result, they perceived older bystanders as having "more incentive" to immediately intervene to stop the cyberbullying. Contrastingly, participants felt that though they had matured enough since high school to realize cyberbullying was "childish," their "moral code" was still in flux: "...when you're still at our age or younger, um then you're still kind of discovering what's right and what's wrong from your point of view. So, you're more…careful."

Despite the assertion that their age group "see[s] it more often," this carefulness seems to imply the uncertainty bystanders experience when witnessing cyberbullying, often compounded by an apathetic mindset. In fact, the idea of apathy as playing a role in the bystanding experience within college students' environment became a popular talking point. Participants described how they are socialized as they grow up to hold an attitude of indifference toward things; in this way, being apathetic is "inherent." Apathy may also be necessary for day-to-day functioning in their cultural environment:

> …but I mean, you have to be at least a little apathetic. I mean, you're in college. You can't worry about everything. You're too busy. You get—there's too much… if you were, you know, worried about everything, you wouldn't get anything done.

Reframed in terms of the bystander role, bystanders may feel that since they tend to have "thicker skin" as a by-product of wielding an apathetic attitude, the cybervictim should too and so, the cyberbully's comments should "just bounce off." After all, the cybervictim may never see or socialize with the cyberbully behind those comments,

coming full circle to the disconnectedness of students on a college campus discussed earlier. Taken further, the bystander may never encounter the cybervictim, giving them more of an allowance to ignore the cyberbullying altogether and blend into the silent crowd or in other words, embrace their cultural environment.

Gauge from others' responses. Within their bystanding experiences, participants used others' responses as a way to gauge the appropriateness and content of their own. These evaluations took on two forms. For most, others' responses justified their own inaction. The more that other bystanders engaged and wrote in support of the cybervictim, the less they felt the responsibility or obligation to act. That is to say, others' responses validated that it was "okay to keep scrolling." Others' responses also affected bystanders emotionally by lifting the harsh weight of guilt off of their shoulders:

> I think it makes you feel like a little better about like not like partake—just like witnessing it. Because I feel like if I were the only one to see it, I would be like kind of like, I guess trapped in my own opinion.

The participants also clarified that as bystanders, they are aware of the implications of the publicity of cyberbullying; meaning, they know that others can always see and so it "never happens" that they are the only bystander. Yet, this realization reinforced an accepted lack of accountability and a priority to maintain their image: "I'm not the only one held accountable. I'm not the only one that sees this. So it's not all my responsibility to like step up and defend the person… I would get judged for it."

For some, others' responses propelled them to join in and become part of the solution. A desire for inclusion in a community and an interest the cybervictim's well being appeared to drive this aspect. Though not as frequent of an occurrence as the first

form, participants' discussions of becoming involved due to others' responses were similar to this participant's story:

> But other people, like her closer friends group, posted on her wall and saying, 'Don't listen to them. They don't know what a relationship is like,' and stuff like that. So, it kind of made me want to like post something, like if more people were posting it, I felt like the more she got and the better she would feel.

As may have occurred in the experience quoted above, a concern for personal safety contributed to bystanders' overall evaluation of others' responses:

> I mean if someone's really mean and like more people agree that it's mean than agree that it's funny, then like you're gonna be more—like it's, it's less like dangerous for you to like defend someone or come to someone's defense instead of like thinking it's funny.

Understandably, bystanders prefer to err on the side of caution and respond in a way that best keeps them out of harm. Participants discussed that most often, that way is to "just let it go," an avoidance strategy further discussed as part of the next goal.

Yet, while these responses reveal that others' presence made a difference in their bystanding experiences, participants were silent when directly asked whether others' reactions to cyberbullying fundamentally changed anything about the way they reacted. They were often wrought with internal conflict at the outset, but invariably implied a sense of control over their own final responses; in a phrase, denial of deindividuation. Thus, regardless of *how* bystanders respond to the cyberbullying incident, it is clear that bystanders do actively and sometimes consciously gauge their own responses based on the prevailing opinion or group norm. It is important to them that other bystanders justify their reaction, albeit indirectly.

Avoid personal consequences. Finally, a salient theme throughout the participants' discussions was the importance of avoiding certain consequences:

victimization and misperception. Participants discussed the former in terms of "putting [themselves] out there" and "getting wrapped into it." Within the bystanding experience, they understand that there is a real possibility that their attempts at intervention or consolation, should they make them, may be met with additional aggression—this time, aimed at them. If a bystander tries to "say something" or "defend someone," they are exposing themselves to victimization:

> I think when you like put yourself out there and like try to defend someone, like you're putting yourself in like the situation to get bullied too. So, I think by saying something and like coming to someone's defense, you're putting yourself at risk of like being bullied too.

Despite the internal conflict bystanders may experience—they "don't want it to happen" but attempts at stopping it get them too "wrapped into it"—the possibility that the cyberbully(ies) may "come toward" them and "start attacking" or "gang up" on them must be avoided at all costs. Especially in the event that those involved "get in trouble," bystanders "don't want to be a part of that at all." Interestingly, this aspect of this goal is also not uncommon in the bystanding experience within traditional bullying.

Participants discussed the latter in terms of fear that their attempts at intervention as a bystander may be misconstrued, which brings about a paralyzing uncertainty. In other words, bystanders want to not only avoid victimization, but also avoid being perceived as "defiant," as one who spoke out of line, or as an instigator due to their engagement. So, despite their best intentions, they may be caught in a "compromising position." This fear partially explains why bystanders are often 'torn' between multiple goals:

> I think that's why subconsciously we're like, 'Should we say something? Or should we not say something?' …I just think that's why a lot of people don't

> know because you can instigate something, you know, and instead of helping like you intended to do.

Some sought social support in trying to remedy this issue by speaking to someone "with more wisdom" like a parent or someone who once shared a similar experience in hopes that they can receive more knowledge about the situation, learn if a direct response is appropriate, and if so, the best way to phrase it so as to not be "construed as bullying." Nonetheless, regardless of the eventual behavior, the importance of avoiding personal consequences and "saving face" (Goffman, 1959; Ting-Toomey, 2005) is a goal that plays a major role in the experiences of cyberbullying bystanders.

Impact of Goals on Bystander Behavior

By exploring these five primary goals and the ways in which they affect bystanders' consequent reactions, we can begin to understand how bystanders 'work' within the larger cyberbullying process. Similar to the first thematic analysis, the ways in which bystanders' goals impacted their behavior encompassed five themes: ignoring, observing, intentional instigating, unintentional instigating, and intervening. Each category of behavioral responses is a composite of how participants themselves responded in their bystanding experiences and how they observed other bystanders responding. Based on those experiences, the themes have been organized in order from least to most engaged with the cyberbullying process, and include participants' descriptions of and general attitudes about the respective behavior, what goal(s) may be most at play, and how it might impact the involved parties by either encouraging or restraining perpetration and victimization.

Ignoring. Bystanders most often responded in a way that disengages from the cyberbullying. Whether participants opted to "just stay neutral" or distance themselves from the incident by "move[ing] on if it does happen," these bystanders intentionally "separate[d]" themselves from the incident. More specifically, these are bystanders who, beyond the initial exposure, choose to not observe the continued aggression. Participants described this behavior with an action: "You just…keep scrolling."

Many felt that this behavior was attributed to the first goal, *honor proximity*, especially when the incident did not involve a close friend: "I mean, it doesn't pertain to you. It's not your business what's going on between them." But, this goal may also manifest itself in terms of the bystanders' relationship to information: "Well, like in most cases I generally like to stay neutral if I have no knowledge of both sides." *Avoid personal consequences* was also a popular explanation; participants were adamant that the most effective way to avoid such harm is simple—"don't get involved in it." However, it is possible that other goals may also lead to this behavior. For example, the act of ignoring a phenomenon as acute as cyberbullying is made easier by the nature of their surroundings in college and the age group's penchant for apathy (*embrace the cultural environment*). One participant summed up the strategy by explaining, "So you just kind of like move on and if it does happen, like you said, you kind of just like separates himself [sic] from it." Another nodded and quickly added, "…there's, you know, 20 other thousand people on campus that you can talk to."

Interestingly, though, sometimes a bystander's behavior contradicted an otherwise obvious goal: "…sometimes it'll be like really bad and you know that just sitting back and doing nothing is probably the best thing to do." In this participant's case, goals other

than *respond according to severity* were more salient. This behavior often prevailed despite bystanders' recognition of the often vicious attacks cybervictims endured, affirming the power of bystanders' goals: "Sometimes I feel a little bit of pity for the person who's being attacked regardless of their, I guess, position, but I still don't get involved."

Overall, participants felt that *ignoring* was an effective response due to the fact that it denied the cyberbully a main catalyst of their behavior: attention. By responding in some way or even observing the behavior from a distance, bystanders were pacifying the cyberbully, allowing them to "win." Thus, by ignoring the incident, bystanders defeat the cyberbully's purpose: "I mean, if they don't have a reason, if they don't have people reading what they're saying, and they don't have people reacting, what's the point?" In other words, if the cyberbullying is ignored, it will disappear. However, participants felt that this behavior had a negative effect on the cybervictim. When the incident is ignored, cybervictims may get "borderline upset" or "think everyone agrees." Consequently, participants realized that cyberbullying could have extreme effects, such as suicide: "Like if they have nobody standing up for them and this person just keeps going and going and going and nobody's saying anything, they're like, 'Oh, well nobody has my back so why should I be here?'"

Finally, when asked what they would recommend as a course of action for other bystanders, not a single participant across all focus groups suggested *ignoring* or any variation thereof. This chasm between bystanders' actual behaviors and their 'model' behaviors brings the results to an interesting crossroads; it seems to suggest a sinister side of bystanding goals, whereby bystanders' inner, altruistic attitudes are overtaken by their

goals in a way that adheres to the group norm. Thus, in looking toward the creation of a typology, a bystander who exhibits this category of behavior could be called the *oblivious/distant bystander.*

Observing. In contrast to those who ignored the incident altogether, some participants stood back and watched the cyberbullying interaction taking place. Watching, however, was rarely done in isolation. Bystanders not only mentioned it to friends—"Oh, did you see this?"—but also invited others to watch the cyberbullying, saying things like, "Aw, go look at this page. Look what they did to this girl. That's messed up." When others accepted the invitation to observe, participants depended on the metaphor of a boxing ring: "[It's] almost like watching a fight." In a way, these bystanders either forgot or were not concerned with playing into their earlier assessment of cyberbullies' actions as being solely for the purposes of attention and entertainment. Gossiping, laughing, and joking about the aggression was a naturally apathetic way to respond to the "amusing" incident.

However, understanding these bystanders' broadcasting as solely for the purpose of sharing the entertainment would be unwarranted. Even though some did observe with others because they wanted entertainment, some felt a true *need* to tell others. If the cyberbullying was particularly horrible, participants described that it neither felt appropriate nor comfortable to hide their newfound knowledge: "I feel like I need to talk about it with someone because…if it's a big deal then like you don't just wanna like keep it to yourself."

Within this particular theme, a few goals appear to impact bystanders' decision to stay an observer rather than engage in the incident. An especially prominent goal is

gauge from others' responses: A bystander who witnesses the incident often invites others to join "so they can watch it too." Participants explained that "people gather 'round" because it is "like a form of entertainment. People like think the fight is like entertaining, so they like keep track of it." But they also accepted the invitation to observe because the fact that others were "watching the fight go on" made them "feel a little better about like not like partake[ing]" and "just like witnessing it." In this way, observing quickly becomes the group norm; so, a bystander evaluating their own reaction based on a group of bystanders such as this may find no reason to deviate—a consequence of the social structure of cyberbullying. Still, other goals may also impact the behavior. For example, Bystanders may feel that the cyberbullying is not severe enough to warrant engagement (*respond according to severity*): "Like nobody cared. Everyone thought it was…amusing." They may also not know the cybervictim well enough to feel comfortable intervening (*honor proximity*): "Well, for me, I didn't really know any of the people getting attacked… I was kinda just like an onlooker. I didn't, I guess I didn't really get involved, not really." Also, college-age bystanders' characterization of cyberbullying as "childish" seemed to contribute to their 'downplaying' the incident (*embrace the cultural environment*): By joking, "they were trying to make the people that are in it feel like it doesn't really matter," noted one participant, to which another quickly added, "because once you get to college you realize like all that is kind of childish."

Participants did not comment widely on whether this behavioral response was effective or ineffective. Like *ignoring*, some participants felt it still denied cyberbullies their desire to the "center of attention," suggesting that even though they watched and

commentated within a potentially large bystanding audience, as long as they did not publicly respond then they were not letting them to "win." Still, some participants recognized that this could backfire: cyberbullies may be "totally fine with going on" due to the presence of a large bystanding audience looking on. But in general, the notion of publicly responding was deemed highly inappropriate—it only "add[s] fuel to the fire," making the cyberbully more "defensive." Participants rationalized their talking about the incident with others as a way to 'vent' while guarding against rash, public responses, thus contributing to bystanders' silence amidst online commentary. Yet as with *ignoring*, no participants recommended observing exclusively. This suggests that it may be more of a coping mechanism than a solution. Thus, a bystander who exhibits this category of behavior could be called the *observant bystander.*

Instigating. Some bystanders went beyond mere observation and instead instigated the aggression. However, participants described that instigating can be done intentionally and unintentionally, resulting in two distinct types of bystanders.

Intentionally instigating. Participants felt that bystanders who intentionally instigated the cyberbullying did so by condoning the cyberbullying: "[They] just encourage it to go on pretty much." Often this is done by voicing support for the cyberbully: "…she was getting a lot of support too! You know, there are a lot of opposition [sic] to her but she's getting a lot of support for what she's saying too." However, instigating could also be done by provoking the cybervictim for the purpose of "add[ing] to the entertainment" by saying something like, "Aw, so you gonna let 'em talk to you like that?!" In these ways, the bystander ends up acting as a "co-conspirator" (Craig & Pepler, 1997).

The fifth goal, *avoid personal consequences*, was most at play for these bystanders in terms of avoiding victimization. Because they want to avoid cyberbully(ies) "come[ing] toward" them and "attacking" at all costs, it is "less dangerous" to back up the cyberbully. *Honor proximity* also influenced this behavior when the bystander was a friend of the cyberbully. As one participant noted, "…a lot of people that will comment on that are the friends of the people who have actually made the status [cyberbully] rather than the friends of the people who were tagged [cybervictim] to like stand up for 'em." In this case, the bystander feels allegiance to their friend and so supporting the aggression, thereby instigating the incident, becomes a priority. Indeed, when the second participant quoted in the profile of this goal was "torn as to what to say," their internal conflict was due to their relationship with the cyberbully—"Like do I like turn on my best friend [the cyberbully]," thereby condemning the aggression, "or do I support this [the best friend and their aggression]?" thereby instigating it.

Participants decided that intentionally instigating the cyberbullying was wholly ineffective and worsened the experience for all involved. Unsurprisingly, they urged against it. They felt that bystanders who "side" with the cyberbully just cause the cybervictim to "feel bad about themselves even more." A bystander who exhibits this category of behavior could thus be called *the conspiring bystander*.

Unintentionally instigating. Participants felt that it was also possible for bystanders to instigate the aggression unintentionally. They shared numerous examples of bystanders who intended to help, but in the end "created more drama." One participant who shared a personal cybervictimization experience felt that when her friends "jumped in" and began "going back and forth" with the cyberbully's friends who had also "jumped

in," they were not allowing her to "fight [her] battle." In other words, she felt that these bystanders were exacerbating the aggression by striking back at the cyberbully, ignoring the fact that "it wasn't, you know, between me and all my friends and her." Similarly, bystanders who "side" with the cybervictim but use the bystanding platform to respond with, "What the hell, like stop. You're pathetic," only make the cyberbully defensive, provoking them to "bully you more." So, while bystanders may have good intentions, cybervictims' supporters "gang[ing] up on" the cyberbully and their supporters agitates everyone involved. Unfortunately, participants revealed that it is "more common to fire back" than to use logic: "I mean…we've all done that one."

The first goal, *honor proximity*, greatly impacted bystanders' unintentional instigation when they were friends of the cybervictim. As noted above, the occurrence of friends supporting victimized friends was central to participants' discussion. However, participants recognized that honoring proximity to the cybervictim may not always entail the most sensible remarks or ameliorate the situation: "I've seen that a lot… they'll have 400 comments saying well, just attacking the [cyberbully] instead of trying to help." Perhaps equally as impactful, was the fourth goal, *gauge from others' responses*, though in a different way than *observing* bystanders. Participants' discussion of cybervictims' supporters "gang[ing] up on" the cyberbully and their supporters illustrates how bystanders' responses can propel others to join in retaliation against the cyberbully rather than diffuse responsibility.

Though these bystanders may indeed be trying to stop the cyberbullying, they are not necessarily part of a solution: "It doesn't fix anything to just turn around and strike back at the person…'cause they'll probably come back with something else."

Consequently, participants also cautioned against unintentional instigation: "One way is to fight fire with fire, but that's a dangerous path to tread." They believed the "path" was dangerous for two reasons: First, when striking back at the cyberbully, the bystander who may have been the cybervictim's only hope ends up intensifying the controversial argument and "adding to the drama." Second, attacking the attacker is hypocritical, which participants implored their fellow bystanders to avoid: "Don't make yourself a bully in the process." Participants' final, guarding advice: "Pick your battles and think before you act. I know that sounds really cliché, but the reaction is gonna be *snap* 'Screw you. I'm gonna fire back.'" In this case, participants felt it was imperative that bystanders know when their intended response may "cause more harm than good." Thus, a bystander who exhibits this category of behavior could be called *the unintentional instigating bystander*.

Intervening. With few exceptions, including comments like "You just compound the problem," and "…the commenting on there, it could turn around on you," participants agreed that bystanders must help "crack down" on cyberbullying by "step[ping] up" every time. Indeed, this behavior was commensurate with many of their own bystanding experiences. Whether it was an individual bystander who tried to stop it "as much as possible" or a community of bystanders coming together, many participants shared stories of how they would "try [their] damndest" to stop it and "get to the bottom of what the issue was." The actions of this bystander ranged from reporting the cyberbullying to authorities, responding directly to the cyberbully, and reaching out to the cybervictim. In each of these methods of intervention, two goals most impacted bystanders' behavior: *respond according to severity* and *honor proximity*. As detailed in the beginning of the chapter, participants said they were more likely to intervene as bystanders if the

aggression had ‘crossed the line’ into severity or if they were close to the cybervictim. A bystander intervening in any of these ways could be called *the active/empowered bystander*.

Reporting to authorities. Some described telling familiar authorities like teachers, parents, or coaches about the cyberbullying in an effort to put a final stop to the cyberbully’s attacks, especially when the incident was severe or prolonged. In these instances, participants felt that, as bystanders, “it need[ed] to be told” to some type of authority figure. Their reporting attempts proved successful—the cyberbullies were eventually reprimanded and “got in a lot of trouble”—but with one caveat: timing. As one participant shared: “It took awhile… It took several, you know, comments and posts from her to have, you know, someone of authority step in and say something about it.” In addition to reporting incidents to familiar authorities, participants also recommended that bystanders “flag” or “‘x’ out” the cyberbully’s post to alert the site’s own governing body. Though, contrary to the delayed but successful help of familiar authorities, some participants were skeptical that it would even be “possible to govern or watch” all of the aggression taking place.

Responding directly to the cyberbully. Responding directly to the cyberbully was informed more by participants’ observations of other bystanders’ behavior than their own, but they nonetheless asserted its grave importance. They felt that directly responding to the cyberbully would be the most sure way to make the cyberbully “feel bad” and “realize the error of their own ways.” However, it is worth noting that this behavior is considered separate from *unintentional instigating* because of the nature of the bystanders’ responses: bystanders who instigate cyberbullying unintentionally

hypocritically retaliate against the cyberbully, thereby "create[ing] more drama," whereas *intervening* bystanders also confront the cyberbully, but in "a more respectful way" to protect against escalation (i.e., "You know, maybe you shouldn't be subtweeting these things"). After witnessing a community of bystanders come together in this way, one participant shared that the cyberbully finally apologized due also in part to the large number of bystanders that responded, making them feel isolated in their position: "He really saw then like, 'Wow, I shouldn't have said that.'" Overall, participants felt optimistic that the cyberbully could "change for the better" and realize "the falls in their ways" once bystanders responded and they were able to understand the effects their actions had on the cybervictim.

Yet, the cyberbully's receptiveness to this type of bystander behavior may ultimately trace back to "how connected you are to the situation." In other words, participants explained that a "common, unaffiliated" bystander asking the cyberbully to stop will likely result in "a little backlash." But, proximity to the cyberbully not only affords more "weight" and "credibility," but also implies more of a "right" to respond. As one participant stated: "You have to have an impact in their life to like make an impact in like what they did." In the end, this suggests that the core of the first goal, *honor proximity*, is not only a main determinant of bystanders' decision to engage, but also a determinant of cyberbullies' receptiveness to bystanders' responses.

Nonetheless, participants highly recommended this behavior with two stipulations: "come with a more respectful approach" and "talk to [them] privately." Participants explained that by responding with kindness, the cyberbully will not feel

attacked, thus making them more open to bystanders "explaining why they should stop" and realizing the hurt caused:

> What's the Abraham Lincoln quote? I—"By making my enemy my friend, I got rid of my enemy," or something like that. So, if you can do that, I think that's probably the best way to get rid of the bully all around.

Also, because public responses too often result in too much "back and forth," bystanders that send a direct, private message (e.g., a "DM" on Twitter) guard against their responses turning into added entertainment. "The easy way out is just to post something," one participant shared, "versus actually confronting the bully." To that end, the easy response may not be the best, most impactful response. In doing these things, bystanders "keep the high road" and avoid "adding to the drama."

Reaching out to the cybervictim. Of all interventions, participants felt that reaching out to the cybervictim, letting them know that "*somebody* [is] there for you," was the most crucial. They often noticed cybervictims posting a 'screenshot' of the attack as a call for support: "Obviously she was like asking for attention, but she needed it. So, I think like her posting that was like her way of coping with it, instead of just letting it like sit there." They explained that because the emotional suffering of cybervictimization is damaging to the their self-esteem and increases insecurity, extending a helping hand to the cybervictim makes them "feel better about themselves" and more importantly, "less alone," thereby increasing their self-confidence and security. Participants did not shy away from considering the consequences of the alternative, especially from the cybervictim's point of view: "…suppose that no one comes to their defense. Then how do

they feel?" Thus, when participants told the cybervictim, "Don't listen to them" or "You're beautiful. You have it all," they found that it provided "a little support group."

In this case, the goal *gauge from others' responses* also influenced their behavior as several participants recounted incidents when they wanted to join the community of supportive bystanders: "There was like over 100 comments on…I even inputted [and] you could tell that like made a difference." Interestingly, participants felt that their proximity to the cybervictim did not impact their receptiveness to bystanders' outreach. Though bystanders who are friends with the cybervictim may create "a more dynamic change," participants were adamant that "from the victim's point of view," even one or two "random bystander[s]" can make a difference, affirming Sainio et al.'s (2011) assertion at the end of Chapter Two. They elaborated that in their bystanding experiences, while two bystanders did not necessarily stop the cyberbullying, it made the cybervictim "feel better about themself" and "shrug it off;" in other words, it alleviated victimization's deleterious effects and closed the power differential. Hence, with cybervictims' well being as the primary concern, participants advocated most for responding by reaching out to them: "Nobody deserves to be pelted out with bullets…if you're having trouble dodging them you need somebody there to help you dodge them."

Typology of Cyberbullying Bystanders

From these exploratory results, a framework of the bystanding experience begins to materialize. The integration of bystanders' determinant goals and behaviors reveals five types of cyberbullying bystanders and therefore, makes possible the construction of a typology. So, in line with RQ3, Table 2 is offered as a typology of cyberbullying

bystanders with the contributing goals for each behavior again presented in order of how much participants felt each goal impacted the behavior.

Table 2

Typology of Cyberbullying Bystanders

Bystander Types	**Contributing Goals**	**Resulting Behavior**
the oblivious/ distant bystander	*Honor Proximity* (1): If it doesn't involve a friend or they don't know "both sides'" stories, it doesn't pertain to them and is therefore, "not [their] business." *Avoid Personal Consequences* (5): The most effective way to avoid victimization or misconstrued attempts at intervention is "don't get involved." *Embrace the Cultural Environment* (3): The college environment, with near infinite alternative interactions and the age group's penchant for apathy, allows them to easily "move on," blend into a silent crowd, and "keep scrolling."	ignoring
the entertained bystander	*Gauge from Others' Responses* (4): A group norm is constructed when they accept the invitation to watch and gossip. Thus, a bystander evaluating his or her own reaction based in this context may find no reason to deviate. *Respond According to Severity* (2): The cyberbullying is more amusing than severe enough to warrant engagement. *Honor Proximity* (1): While interested in the interaction, they don't know the cybervictim well enough to feel comfortable intervening. *Embrace the Cultural Environment* (3): Because their age group typically thinks of cyberbullying as "childish," they often joke about and 'downplay' the incident.	observing
the conspiring bystander ---------- the unintentional instigating bystander	*Avoid Personal Consequences* (5): If they want to avoid victimization, it is "less dangerous" to back up the cyberbully or provoke the cybervictim. *Honor Proximity* (1): If close to the cyberbully, they feel an allegiance to the cyberbully and therefore support the aggression. ---------- *Honor Proximity* (1): If friends of the cybervictim, they feel obligated to support but, while well meaning, often do so by attacking the cyberbully. *Gauge from Others' Responses* (4): Supporters "gang[ing] up on" the cyberbully and their supporters propels more bystanders to join in retaliation.	intentional instigating ---------- unintentional instigating

Table 2 cont.

Typology of Cyberbullying Bystanders

Bystander Types	**Contributing Goals**	**Resulting Behavior**
the active/ empowered bystander	*Respond According to Severity* (2): When severe or prolonged, they feel that it "need[s] to be told" to an authority, or approached with the cyberbully. *Honor Proximity* (1): They are more likely to intervene if close to the cybervictim. *Gauge from Others' Responses* (4): A community of supportive bystanders incites others—even random bystanders—to join in by reaching out to the cybervictim.	intervening (report to authorities; respond directly to cyberbully; reach out to cybervictim)

Chapter Seven

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was four-fold: (1) to present a conceptual definition of cyberbullying bystanders; (2) determine the goals of cyberbullying bystanders; (3) explore the impact of those goals on cyberbullying bystanders' behaviors; and (4) develop a typology of cyberbullying bystanders as a means to explore the varying effects of their behaviors on the foundations of the coercive normative environment of cyberbullying. A social-ecological perspective reinforced the necessity to assess cyberbullying with a multimodal, multi-informant model in order to capture its expansive impact and levels of influence. The objectives were framed within tenets of Caughlin's (2010) work on multiple goals theories, allowing a focal exploration of how cyberbullying bystanders' goals might shape their messages (i.e., behaviors) and resulting interpretations (i.e., the resulting impact their behaviors have on fellow bystanders, the cybervictim and/or cyberbully, and the outcomes of cyberbullying as a whole).

Thematic analysis of participants' attitudes about cyberbullying, their bystanding experiences, and recommendations for effective bystander behavior provide qualitative evidence that helps clarify bystanders' role within the triadic, interactive social context of cyberbullying by answering the research questions, "What are the goal(s) of cyberbullying bystanders?" and "How do cyberbullying bystanders' goals impact their behavior, such that perpetration and victimization are encouraged or restrained?" This chapter explores theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

Contribution of a Cyberbullying Bystander Typology

The analysis revealed distinct themes regarding bystanders' goals and related

behavioral responses. Throughout the focus groups, participants drew both explicit and implicit connections between each, noting which goals most often influence certain behaviors; from this, names were assigned to each category, informed by prominent characteristics of the relationship between each behavior and its contributing goals and of the bystander typologies detailed in Chapter Four, and a typology of cyberbullying bystanders was created. In a sense, the concluding typology frames the entirety of the present study by providing a framework for understanding bystanders' role within the social context of cyberbullying. This typology offers several contributions to cyberbullying scholarship.

First, by constructing the typology, the study withstands a familiar verdict from the body of bullying literature—the power dynamic of stakeholders that sustain the coercive normative environment has been largely overlooked (Hazler, 1996; Salmivalli, 2010; Twemlow et al., 2004). Occasional attention has been devoted to bystanders in traditional bullying studies as described in Chapter Four (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Olweus, 2001; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Twemlow et al., 2004), but the focus is not consistent and has not extended to studies in cyberbullying literature at all. In this way, the typology presented in this study furthers cyberbullying scholarship by extending the focus of cyberbullying research to include bystanders, going beyond the typical cyberbully-cybervictim dyad. More specifically, the typology furthers scholarship by exposing bystanders as connected members of the online community; as such members, they are not only aware of the existence of such aggression, but also of the triadic, interactive social context between cyberbully, cybervictim, and bystander, whereby their reaction

has a decided and direct impact on the longevity of the incident and the severity of harm the cybervictim must endure.

Second, the profile of cyberbullying bystanders captured in the typology is similar to characterizations of bystanders in traditional bullying. Traditional bullying literature has defined bystanders to be those who are "aware of bullying," whose responses may range from "noncommittal," to that of a "co-conspirator," or that of "active and involved participants," and whose interactions may be "activated in a helpful or harmful direction" (Swearer et al., 2010, p. 39; Cowie, 2000, p. 86; Craig & Pepler, 1997, p. 55; Twemlow et al., 2004, p. 215-217). The typology itself can also be compared to traditional bullying bystander typologies. Of those reviewed in Chapter Four, all include variations of each type denoted in the present study, the most similar being *the oblivious/distant bystander, the conspiring bystander, the active/empowered bystander* and *the entertained bystander*, respectively. The similarities between bystanders in both settings suggest that this initial exploration of cyberbullying bystanders is 'on the right track' and perhaps findings of traditional bullying bystanders can inform certain aspects of the construction cyberbullying resolutions.

Third*, the unintentional instigating bystander* presents a unique aspect of the typology; while all four within traditional bullying include some category for those bystanders who participate in the aggression by encouraging the bully and/or emulating the behavior, thereby tipping the power dynamic in favor of the aggressor (i.e., Salmivalli et al.'s *assistants* and *reinforcers of bullies*, 1996; Craig and Pepler's *active participation* and *involvement*, 1997; Olweus' *followers-henchmen* and *supporters-passive bully/bullies*, 2001; Twemlow et al.'s *bully (aggressive) bystander* and *puppet-master*

variant of bully bystander, 2004), none take into account that such support can be provided unintentionally by those bystanders who genuinely mean to help the victim. As delineated by the participants in the present study, bystanders do often reinforce the cyberbully by accident when supporters from both sides "gang up on each other," thereby provoking the cyberbully and their supporters, and agitating everyone involved. Thus, the nuances of the bystander types are of notable contribution.

Fourth, the typology can be utilized by practioners for next steps in the management of cyberbullying threats. The typology illustrates cyberbullying bystanders' multiple reasons (and their related internal conflicts) for their behavior, making it possible to use goals to predict potential bystanders. The nuances of the typology also illustrate the power bystanders can yield through each behavior to affirm or condemn the coercive environment, which highlights numerous opportunities to involve bystanders in interventions. This practical implication is elaborated upon in greater detail below. If, as Twemlow et al. (2004) articulated, "the goal of any intervention is the transformation of brute power into passionate statement and respectful communication," then by matching bystanders' goals to their behaviors, their private attitudes and motivational struggles are made salient, revealing opportunities to redirect their inherent power toward "minimizing the adverse effects" for cybervictims (Salmivalli, 2010, p. 117). Indeed, the majority of participants recognized the benefit of such a transformation when they advocated taking "the high road" and using "a more respectful approach" when confronting the cyberbully, or in other words, being an *active/empowered bystander*.

Ultimately, the typology advances cyberbullying literature by illustrating similarities and distinctions between bystanding populations and by offering a foundation

to develop interventions that involve bystanders. Scholarship has already noted that traditional bullying cannot be considered complete by only attending to the interactions of the bully-victim dyad; instead, it must be framed within the peer group ecology (e.g., Craig & Pepler, 1997). The present study by way of the concluding typology affirms that cyberbullying is much the same—the phenomenon is only fully and accurately outlined when it includes a thorough analysis and nuanced understanding of its bystanders.

Practical Implications

A significant practical implication of the results is that cyberbullying does indeed exist within the college population. Participants' accounts were not only insightful, but also poignant. They were intimately familiar with the phenomenon from multiple perspectives; their emotional attitudes about cyberbullying as well as their adherence to certain goals was not only informed by their fulfillment of the bystanding role, but often by their own cybervictimization or the results (in two instances, fatal results) of a friend's cybervictimization. As evidenced by the third goal in particular (i.e., *embrace the cultural environment*), participants were aware of how their environment—one dependent on their age—impacts their effectiveness as *active/empowered bystanders*. Throughout the entirety of every focus group, and as shown throughout the excerpts featured in the results, participants were aware of the properties and roles played in cyberbullying.

As noted throughout Chapter Two, however, the vast majority of general bullying research has devoted all attention to adolescents within primary and secondary school populations; in regard to cyberbullying specifically, only three articles have approached the college population (Savage & Jones, 2014; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011) and none have focused on their place as bystanders. Given that college

students are the most likely demographic to frequently and consistently access online spaces, and even more specifically, social networking sites (SNSs) (Duggan & Brenner, 2013), it is a wonder that a stronger connection has not been made between this population and the pervasive, public aggression at the core of cyberbullying. As evidenced by these results, college students' immediacy to cyberbullying can no longer be denied and represents an essential direction for the field to pursue.

The results also highlight just how integral bystanders are to the longevity of cyberbullying incidents and the degree of their effect on the cybervictim, suggesting that intervention and prevention efforts would be more effective if aimed at the outlying audience. Traditional bullying studies that can serve to inform construction of cyberbullying interventions (Pearce, Cross, Monks, Waters, & Falconer, 2011) have recently made such a point. Researchers have stated that it is essential that interventions avoid "overemphasize[ing] therapeutic efforts with the victim or victimizer," (Twemlow et al., 2004, p. 218). Instead, interventions should target bystanding peers' behavior by teaching them that it is 'okay' to "attend to their discomfort" resulting from pro-social, disapproving attitudes of bullying with strategies to be assertive, supportive, and constructively resolve conflict (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Swearer et al., 2010; O'Connell et al., 1999, p. 448; Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2004).

Participants in the present study did exhibit prosocial, altruistic attitudes toward cybervictims within their bystanding experiences. As detailed in Chapter Six, the existence of cyberbullying made them "sad" and they were critical of cyberbullies' motives and aggressive behavior. They were aware of the harmful outcomes and overwhelmingly advocated for *active/empowered bystanders*. Yet, in many of their

personal experiences, certain multiplicities of goals outweighed others to overtake intervention behavior and instead awarded "positive feedback" to the cyberbully (Hawkins et al., 2001; Salmivalli, 2010).

Hence, a chasm seems to exist between bystanders' inner attitudes and their final responses that typically ignore, scoff, or encourage the cyberbullying. The chasm indicates that cyberbullying bystanders' goals evolve over the course of a single cyberbullying incident, an occurrence accounted for in multiple goals literature (Keck & Samp, 2007; Waldron, 1997). This occurrence, then, indicates the possibility of shifting behavioral responses to ones of empowered support by making salient goals that align with bystanders' inner, altruistic attitudes. Indeed, that possibility, nested in the implication that including bystanders is essential to interventions, confirms a recent assertion in cyberbullying literature: bystander intervention is key to terminating incidents of cyberbullying and supporting cybervictims (Pearce et al., 2011). Comprehensive approaches that embrace a social-ecological approach are more likely to have positive, long-lasting effects (Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Sallis et al., 2008; Swearer et al., 2010) and repudiate the status quo of an online culture that fosters victimization (O'Connell et al., 1999).

In this way, this study furthers applied cyberbullying research. In Snakenborg, van Acker, and Gable's (2011) analysis of prevention and intervention programs for cyberbullying, only one is noted as attending to bystander interventions (i.e., The Cyber Bullying: A Prevention Curriculum; Kowalski & Agatston, 2008). However, the oldest age group any of the programs cater to is 18 years of age, or students in 12th grade. Additional strategies from organizations such as the National Association of School

Psychologists, the American Humane Association, Medscape, and stopbullying.gov, exist (Feinberg & Robey, 2010; AHA, 2013; Muscari, 2010; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2014). Yet, even those tips are targeted specifically to parents, educators, and only occasionally cybervictims; the one hint at bystanders—"Encourage your kids to tell you immediately if they, or someone they know, is being cyberbullied" (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2014)—is offered to parents as a way to be transparent about cyberbullying with their child and aware of their online activities. Even cyberbullying interventions in prominent scholarly work appear geared toward an authoritative audience (e.g., school psychologists; Diamanduros, Downs, & Jenkins, 2008) or uphold parents' education as the "key to preventing cyber bullying" (i.e., Aftab, 2010; Kraft & Wang, 2009; Tully, 2007; Willard, 2007).

It is safe to say that these strategies would likely be rendered useless past secondary school, especially in college student populations, due to the target ages and strong reliance on parents and educators as hopeful agents of the *active/empowered bystander* in what participants termed a "more interconnected" environment. Thus, cyberbullying interventions must be enhanced by systematic focus on the bystanding audience. Specifically, interventions must focus on how bystanders of any age might thwart cyberbullies' attempts or ensure the cybervictim's well being through particular behavioral responses.

The need for such systematic focus was never more evident than in participants' own accounts of their bystanding experiences. Their awareness of the dangers of normative bystander behavior affirms the effect that the status quo may have on power within cyberbullying interactions. When bystanders incessantly reinforce cyberbullies by

ignoring, observing, or encouraging the aggression, they are widening the power differential between cyberbully and cybervictim, giving cybervictims the impression that "everyone agrees." Moreover, participants' note that this differential has extreme effects—"…if they have nobody standing up for them…they're like, 'Oh, well nobody has my back so why should I be here?"—affirm that the normative coercive environment constructed by cyberbullying bystanders benefits the aggressor and restricts pro-social interventions (O'Connell et al., 1999). Hence, the need for prevention and intervention efforts that target cyberbullying bystanders can no longer afford to be overlooked.

To that end, the present study signifies an achievement: construction of a nuanced profile of cyberbullying bystanders, made accessible for development of wide-reaching, systematic interventions, the details of which were informed by the participants themselves. As shown in participants' accounts, bystanders are familiar with their role in the overall process of cyberbullying, as well as their internal motivations and conflicts, and impact of their ultimate behavior. So, attempts to mobilize bystanders toward *active/empowered* states should not shame them—bystanders' feelings attached to their goals are valid because the essence of each goal makes intuitive sense. Nonetheless, as noted by participants, some goals may not 'be the best' to channel into behavior. Cyberbullying interventions that involve bystanders should help them find ways to recognize and acknowledge their goals, evaluate those goals relative to the cybervictim's psychological well being and physical safety, and perhaps offer examples of ways to confront the aggressor and/or support the cybervictim in a respectful and selfless manner, thereby empowering bystanders to abandon harmful *oblivious/distant*, *entertained*, *conspiring,* and *unintentional instigating* bystander roles.

Theoretical Implications

The present study also has significant theoretical implications. As an investigation grounded in Caughlin's (2010) analysis of multiple goals theories, the study advances scholars' understanding of cyberbullying by providing a systematic illustration of bystanders' holistic role in the phenomenon through identification of bystander goals. By deducing that cyberbullying bystanders do indeed have distinct, determinant goals, bystanders' various responses are revealed as integral to the facilitation or amelioration of cyberbullying. In the end, the results both affirm and further multiple goals theories.

Affirmation of Multiple Goals Theories. The first primary theoretical implication, affirming multiple goals theories, is that cyberbullying bystanders do operate with multiple goals in mind. These goals are distinct, each encompassing a different facet of the bystanding experience, and represent clear motivations driving cyberbullying bystanders' behavior. Moreover, these goals do not operate in isolation, which further substantiates the existence of multiple behavioral influences as noted in the social-ecological model. In this way, the results affirm the three primary assumptions of multiple goals theories: (1) communication is purposeful (i.e., participants intentionally used goals as an evaluative schema); (2) individuals commonly pursue multiple goals simultaneously (i.e., participants often responded in a particular way due to a persuasive culmination of analogous goal); and (3) various communication goals frequently conflict (i.e., participants also felt 'torn' between different responses because of incompatible goals) (Caughlin, 2010, p. 828; Wilson & Feng, 2007). In affirming these assumptions, the study highlights bystanders' purpose as high profile, goal-oriented communicators in cyberbullying interactions, without oversimplifying the phenomenon.

Moreover, the nuances of each assumption as they potentially related to cyberbullying are affirmed by the results. First, as goal-oriented communication allows for the management and manipulation of identities and relationships (Clark & Delia, 1979), so bystanders' goals revealed an ability to strategically manage their identity and initiate a specific relationship with the cybervictim. For example, in the case of *avoid personal consequences*, participants were preoccupied with avoiding victimization and misperception because internally, they feared the possibility of their comfortable and familiar bystander identity morphing into that of a cybervictim or even a cyberbully. Also, participants' characterizations of the aftermath align with particular relationships to the cybervictim initiated at the onset of their response: one characterized by a power imbalance if ignored, observed, or instigated, or one characterized by power equalization if support is provided through intervention even if from one or two bystanders.

Second, as the possibility of achieving different types of goals, which are not pursued in isolation, decreases with the difficulty of communication contexts (Caughlin, 2010), so bystanders have the ability to respond in various, differing ways. In other words, for every bystander that ignores the cyberbullying, there are still others enacting the other three behavioral responses; additionally, individual bystanders may alter their responses from incident to incident. As informed by this assumption, the multiplicity of individual bystanders' responses is due both to the social structure of cyberbullying and to the presence of multiple, prioritized goals. Essentially, because the social structure of cyberbullying is one framed within the immense context of cyberspace and so is sustained by a vast bystanding audience, participants recounted being afforded opportunities for both passivity and activeness. Consequently, from one participant to the

next, responses varied based on each person's set of prioritized goals, as detailed in Chapter Six. Further, while an individual participant may have ignored the cyberbullying in one instance in an attempt to *embrace the cultural environment*, they may intervene in the next if they hold *honor proximity* in higher regard and the cybervictim is someone they know relatively well or are they are privy to all information from both "sides."

Third, as one's goals may not only conflict with each other, but also conflict with another individual's goals (Caughlin, 2010), so bystanders are often 'torn' between different behavioral responses. In this way, they are essentially dealing with goal conflicts and often remedy the conflict by assimilating to the normative environment. For example, participants' feeling there is a clear need to step when the cyberbullying is severe (i.e., *respond according to severity*), combined with their feeling that it is not their place to step in if they do not know the cybervictim well (i.e., *honor proximity*), indicated conflict between goals. As recounted by participants, bystanders usually reconciled the conflict by choosing not to step in because the behavior prescribed by normal social practices was one of silence or because they felt a lack of responsibility and feared impending judgment, constructs indicative of the bystander effect and the inherent diffusion of responsibility. Ultimately, the direct impact of bystanders' goals have on the establishment, maintenance, and advancement of power in cyberbullying incidents, as well as victimization outcomes, affirms Caughlin's (2010) assertion that goal inferences that shape meaning of communication behavior can also shape their impact.

Extension of Multiple Goals Theories. In addition to affirming multiple goals theories, the study also furthers multiple goals theories in two specific ways. First, by looking beyond the dyadic interaction between cyberbully and cybervictim to the

surrounding audience in cyberspace, the study remedies a limitation of previous multiple goals research as noted by Caughlin (2010): a focus on specific, isolated encounters, rather than attention to the "big picture." Moreover, the study has 'taken on' the "most obvious challenge" of using multiple goals theories to decode relationships holistically and link goals to "broad relational outcomes" (p. 835) by first identifying bystanders' goals and then more importantly, by linking those goals to outcomes of perpetration and victimization. In this way, the potential of multiple goals theories as a macroscopic approach in establishing that goals do not simply shape messages, but also interpretation of messages, is made real.

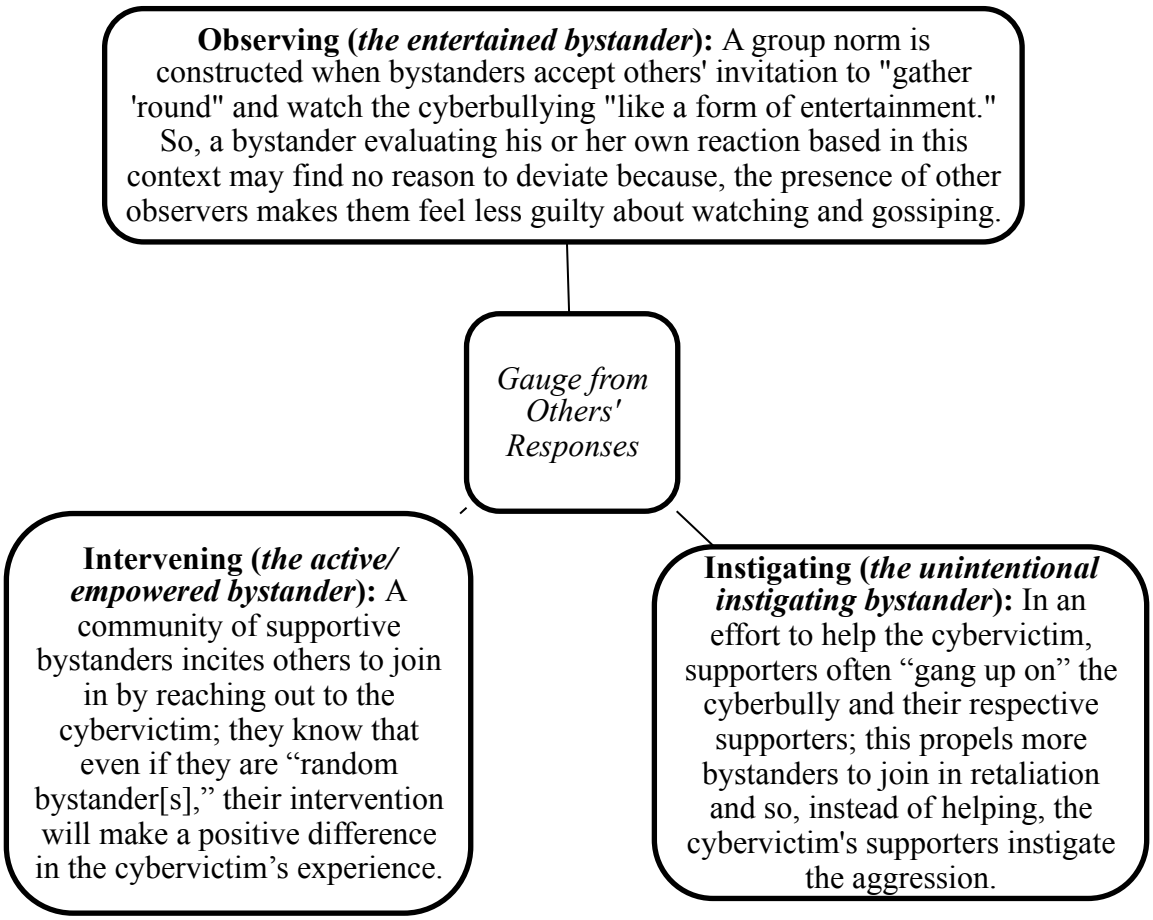
Second, as best seen in Table 1, each goal is multifaceted. Therefore, one goal does not equal one behavior, but rather, one goal may contribute to multiple behaviors, each in different ways. For example, consider Figure 1 (an adaption of Table 2) which illustrates the nuanced ways in which the goal, *gauge from others' responses*, impacts bystander behavior. This visualization succinctly packages the multiple ways in which this particular goal contributes to bystanders' behavior, as articulated by participants' bystanding experiences. If bystanders' actions are likewise understood as functions of proximity, severity, environment, other bystanders, and potential consequences, thereby framing the study using multiple goals theories, communication theory has been both reinforced and extended in significant ways.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

As a first study of cyberbullying bystanders grounded in communication theory, the study comprises notable strengths. Most importantly, by setting 'having witnessed bullying online at least once' as an inclusion criterion for the study, all who participated

Figure 1

Bystander Behavior as Impacted by Goal #4 (Gauge from Others' Responses)



qualified as cyberbullying bystanders; this ensured that bystanding experiences were captured as accurately as possible. To that end, the study was able to provide a thorough, nuanced understanding of the triadic element too often left out of studies on the social context of cyberbullying. The details used to describe participants' bystanding experiences and outline the resulting themes (i.e., metaphors, action verbs, interrelated details) culminated in *rich, thick description*, which emerged as a strength in contextualizing the study and will allow readers the opportunity to evaluate the results' "transferability," or the degree to which "shared characteristics" can be identified in other settings or populations (Creswell, 2013, p. 252; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 32).

As a result, the study contributes to communication theory and to developments of cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs. It exemplifies efforts in the field to move toward translational work, a rising focus of qualitative journals. Its contributions to such practical applications are sustained by the typology of cyberbullying bystanders, a "classificatory system" (Tracy, 2013, p. 210) fully and solely informed by participants' experiences and perspectives. As such, it encourages scholars to continue to explore facets of the bystanding experience and also offers a 'springboard' to develop quantitative investigations of cyberbullying bystander experiences.

Yet, the study is not without its limitations. Using the same moderator for all focus groups may have been problematic. Ideally, a male moderator should facilitate the male sessions and a female moderator the female sessions. Same-sex moderators may have negated the need to complete one more FGI than initially planned due to a higher degree of comfort when articulating responses (though this may have also been indicative

of goal conflict) and therefore, earlier data saturation. Nonetheless, splitting at least the participants in each focus group session by gender did result in a camaraderie that ultimately yielded *rich, thick description*. Still, future studies exploring the bystanding experience through FGIs or open-ended interviews should ensure similarity between moderator and participants in terms of gender.

Furthermore, though the nature of the project being a supervised thesis mimicked the notion of a second coder, the study would have benefitted from additional coders to further validate the results. Future studies should seek to involve a team of coders in order to ensure rigorous methods and reinforce interpretations and if possible, also engage in *member checking* to ensure further trustworthiness of the data (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Finally, class ranks were overlooked in the demographic survey. While a seemingly minor component, Chapter Five was written with intention of its inclusion to provide another means than age by which participants' position within the college population could be described. Crossing bystanders' class rank and age with their goals in future studies may be an important step in articulating the metamorphosis of bystanders' "moral code" and if any related differences exist in their responses to online aggression.

Additional future directions became evident in codes not substantial enough to be themes, but codes that nonetheless raise interesting questions about the bystander experience. For example, does the size of the physical community in which the cyberbullying takes place (i.e., small, rural towns) affect the likelihood of intervention? Does unfamiliarity with consequences of victimization breed silence? More simply, how do bystanders construct the placement of primary and secondary goals?, or how well do these goals translate to other populations? Most importantly, however, future studies

should aim to integrate these findings into development of prevention and intervention programs. Ultimately, as the first of its kind, it is imperative that scholars continue to investigate the constructs of this study and in doing so, combine multiple sources of data (e.g., real-time capture of cyberbullying interactions and any visible bystander responses, plus bystanders' first-hand accounts) to provide further validity to the results (i.e., *triangulation*; Creswell, 2013).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study is an important step toward managing and eradicating the pervasive phenomenon of cyberbullying. Given that the cognitive effects and even physical consequences of cyberbullying are just as complex as they are crippling, the entirety of the interactive, social context deserves attention and its multiple levels of influence understood. By operating from a social-ecological perspective and grounding the investigation in a multiple goals theoretical framework, the participants' experiences seem to establish that cyberbullying bystanders are, in fact, crucial to the initiation, maintenance, and prolonged presence of cyberbullying behaviors. Attending to bystanders' multiple, distinct goals and the impact they exert on their behavioral responses serves to not only bring understanding to their role by exposing their emotions and cognitions, but also to challenge the status quo of online victimization.

Appendix A
Informed Consent

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Examining Cyberbullying Roles Using a Multiple Goals Perspective

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a focus group about the various motivations of cyberbullying bystanders and how those motivations relate to their behaviors. More specifically, you are being invited to take part in this focus group because of your experience as a student at UK. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 40 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

Sarah Jones, a master's student under the direction of Dr. Matthew Savage, is coordinating this study in the University of Kentucky Department of Communication.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

Cyberbullying is the use of technology (i.e., the Internet and cellphones) to harm or harass another individual or group. Recently, cyberbullying has become a problem due to the large number of individuals using social networking sites and mobile devices.

The purpose of this study is to determine cyberbullying bystanders' goals and roles and to understand how such roles impact bystander behavior to encourage or discourage cyberbullying. By doing this study, we hope to learn more about cyberbullying bystanders' role in the overall process of cyberbullying and how they can contribute to the development of cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts.

ARE THERE REASONS YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You should not take part in this study if you are under 18 years of age. You should not participate if you are not student at the University of Kentucky. Finally, you should not participate in this study if you do not have access to a personal cell phone, personal computer, and easy access to an Internet connection.

WHERE IS THE STUDY TAKING PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The research will be conducted at an agreed upon campus location. You will attend one focus group discussion during the study. That visit will take one hour.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

During this focus group you will be asked to do two things. First, you will be asked to complete this informed consent form and a brief demographic questionnaire. This should take approximately 10 minutes. Your name will not be required, and the demographic information will only be reported in cumulative form for descriptive purposes. This information will not be associated with specific feedback that you provide during the focus group, and it will not be used to identify you in research reports. Second, you will be asked questions about your attitudes and experiences watching people harm or harass others using technology. This discussion will take the bulk of the time, lasting

approximately 50 minutes. After the focus group is concluded, you will automatically receive 1 SONA research credit for participation.

As part of this study, the focus group discussions will be recorded to assist the researchers in thoroughly and accurately capturing the information that will benefit the identification of cyberbullying bystander goals and roles. Your name will not be associated with the focus group information or the demographics that are collected, so your opinions will remain confidential when we share or publish research results.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than would accompany naturally occurring thoughts about cyberbullying. However, it is possible that you may experience discomfort when answering some of the survey and focus group questions if you have previously cyberbullied or have been a victim of cyberbullying. If you do experience any distress, we can direct you to someone who may be able to help you at the University of Kentucky Counseling Center (UKCC). To schedule an appointment, call (859) 257-8701 or visit the office in 201 Frazee Hall and speak with the receptionist, Monday-Friday from 8:00am-4:30pm. Emergency counseling is also available at UKCC.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Beyond the incentives for taking part in this study (see below), there is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, your willingness to take part may help society as a whole better understand this research topic, which might eventually lead to safer online environments.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except to sign up for another study through SONA or complete the alternate SONA assignment.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study, save for the time you spend to participate.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Each student participants will receive 1 SONA research credit for taking part in the study, even if you withdraw from the study early.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because of the

nature of focus groups. That is, other participants who are present will know what was said and by whom.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. The recordings of focus group discussions will be transcribed using pseudonyms (e.g., Participant A) and will be stored electronically by the primary researcher in password protected computer files.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. There will be no consequences for withdrawing from the study. If you wish to withdraw, please inform the focus group facilitator at any time during the focus group discussion. You will still receive 1 SONA research credit for taking part in the study.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Sarah Jones, at 859-257-1365, or her advisor, Dr. Savage, at 859-257-7801. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

_____ _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____ _____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____ _____

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent Date

Appendix B

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

(1) Informed consent: Read informed consent form to students. Ask if there are any questions. Invite students who would not like to participate to leave. Those who will participate must sign the informed consent letter.

(2) Survey: Have students complete demographic survey before the interviews begin.

(3) Introduction: "Today we are here to talk about your thoughts and experiences related to witnessing people using technology to harm others. I ask that you speak one at a time. The one rule to keep in mind is there is no right or wrong answer. Your honest opinions are important."

(4) Pseudonyms: Invite students to use a pseudonym if they wish.

I. Exploring the Bystanding Experience

"So, let's start by going around the room. Will you tell me your name or a pseudonym you'd like to use?

It's really great to meet all of you. So, today we're going to talk about a special kind of 'people-watching,' something we do a lot in 'real life,' maybe at the mall or the airport. But, I want to explore a special kind of 'people-watching' with technology where people talk back and forth like on social networking sites and a lot of times we can see it happening. But, those people aren't always nice; they can actually be pretty mean and might even harass one another. So, I am curious… **Have you ever seen or noticed this online?"**

(IF CYBERBULLYING IS NOT MENTIONED TO DESCRIBE THESE BEHAVIORS, PROBE FOR IT. IF CYBERBULLYING IS MENTIONED, USE THE TERM TO GUIDE THE DISCUSSION AND ESTABLISH CYBERBULLYING AND ITS AUDIENCE AS A RELEVANT CONCERN – USE FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS)

Follow-up questions:

1. "When you talk about experiences like that, are there specific terms or words that you use to describe it?"

2. "Is it something you see/have seen often?"

3. “At what point do you feel that this behavior crosses the line?”

4. “How did you react? What was the experience like?”

(SUMMARIZE AND TRANSITION)

II. Bystander goals

1. “What motivated you to react that way?”

2. “Were you ever ‘torn’ about how to react? How did that affect what you ended up doing?”

3. “When you see cyberbullying going on, does it make a difference that other people are watching?”

4. “What are some other ways you’ve noticed bystanders reacting to cyberbullying?”

5. “Do you feel like bystanders respond the same way every time?”

6. “Does the way other people react change anything about the way you react?”

(SUMMARIZE AND TRANSITION)

III. Impact of Cyberbullying Roles on Perpetration and Victimization

1. "What sort of pressure did you feel [to respond in a certain way]?"

2. "How did the way you react influence the person being aggressive? What about to the person it's directed at?"

3. "What are your recommendations about how to respond when seeing someone being aggressive towards someone else online?"

(SUMMARIZE AND TRANSITION)

V. Closing

"Thank you to each of you for everything you shared today and for your time. Remember, you will all receive 1 SONA research credit each for participating. It was great to meet all of you. Have a good day."

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Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Minor: Psychology)
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Professional Positions
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY
08/13 – present
Graduate Research Assistant (Department of Communication, Dr. Matthew Savage)

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Graduate Teaching Assistant (Department of Communication, Dr. Alan DeSantis)

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Graduate Teaching Assistant (School of Journalism and Telecommunications, Dr. John Clark)

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UK101 Peer Instructor (Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs)

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President, Student Activities Board (Office of Student Involvement)

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Director of Engaging Issues Committee, Student Activities Board (Office of Student Involvement)

KRA Corporation
Somerset, KY
05/10 – 09/10
Career Counselor

Publications (Published, Under Review & In Progress)

Jones, S. (2012, November/December). Core values: Essential to your programming board's success. *Campus Activities Programming, 25*(5), 34-36. Available at: http://issuu.com/naca/docs/nov_dec_2012

Savage, M., **Jones, S.**, & Tokunaga, B. (Under Review). An overview of cyberbullying. In *Mental Health in the Digital Age: Grave Dangers, Great Promise*. Oxford University Press.

Savage, M., Reno, J., **Jones, S.**, & Veil, S. (Under Review). Targeting the Stop.Think.Connect. cybersecurity campaign to university campuses. Manuscript currently under revision for publication in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*.

Savage, M., & **Jones, S.** (In Progress – Discussion). Cyberbullying: The phenomenon from young adults' perspective. Manuscript to be submitted to *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication* by January 31, 2014.

Frisby, B. N., Denev, I., Haarstad, N., Huebner, A., **Jones, S.**, Tompoulidis, T., …Vaughn, R. C. (In Progress – Discussion). Extending the understanding of student participation: Quantity, quality, and a student participation typology.

Quinlan, S., & **Jones, S.** (In Progress – Literature Review). Power in the classroom: A critical perspective of student-instructor 'friending' behavior on Facebook.

Honors, Awards, & Activities

Graduate Education

- Volunteer Focus Group Facilitator, Workplace Climate Committee, Lexington-Fayette County Health Department (LFCHD), 2013-2014.
- Moderator, Oral Presentations, National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), 2014, University of Kentucky.

- Graduate Teaching Associate offer for 2014-2015 academic year, 2014, Arizona State University.
- Judge, First Annual Bluegrass Invitational Forensics Tournament, 2013, University of Kentucky.
- International Scholarship Recipient (Alternative Service Breaks, Center for Community Outreach), 2013, University of Kentucky.

Undergraduate Education

- Dean's List, 2009-2013, University of Kentucky.
- Presidential Scholarship, 2009-2013, University of Kentucky.
- Robert G. Zumwinkle Student Rights Award, 2012, University of Kentucky.
- Chair, Student Fee Committee via Student Government Association and Board of Trustees, 2012, University of Kentucky.
- Top Rated Essay on Gender, Popular Culture, and Careers, 2012, Theodore H. Clevenger Jr. Undergraduate Honors Conference (Southern States Communication Association).
- Outstanding Senior Award (College of Communication & Information), 2012, University of Kentucky.
- Member, Interview & Selections Committee for Director of New Student & Parent Programs/Program Director for Student Engagement/Program Director for Leadership Education, 2012, University of Kentucky.
- Emcee, University Honors & Awards Banquet, 2012, University of Kentucky.
- Chair, Office of Student Involvement's External Review Team, 2012, University of Kentucky.
- Accepted to University Scholars Program, 2012, University of Kentucky.
- UK FUSION Philanthropy Event Team Leader, 2010-2011, University of Kentucky.
- Nominated, Leadership Summit Program (Department of Leadership Education, Office of Student Involvement), 2011, University of Kentucky.
- Accepted, Emerging Leadership Institute (Department of Leadership Education, Office of Student Involvement), 2010, University of Kentucky.

Society Memberships:

Graduate Education
National Communication Association: 2013 – present
Communication Graduate Student Association, University of Kentucky: 2012 – 2014

Undergraduate Education
COMMunity, University of Kentucky: 2010
Communication Student Association (CSA), University of Kentucky: 2010 – 2011