Narratives of Cyberbullying in New Zealand Secondary Schools:

Reconceptualising Cyberbullying as a Social Practice

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Abstract

Currently, dominant conceptualisations of cyberbullying in academic literature and the New Zealand mass media locate the issue within 'problem' and 'deviant' individuals. This often leads to intervention efforts being directed at the individual level. To date, there is a paucity of research which investigates how cyberbullying occurs in practice and little insight into how numerous individuals engage collectively in such practices. This research explores the structural relations which produce and reproduce cyberbullying behaviours. Sixteen students who had either engaged in cyberbullying and/or experienced cyber-victimisation participated in narrative interviews. Data was analysed through a combination of narrative and discursive methods, examining the dominant constructions of cyberbullying and the various subject positions made available through them, along with the associated material effects. Student stories were integrated to form one overarching narrative consisting of four sub-narratives: 'It's Kill or be Killed', 'Leaders of the Pack', 'Constructing the Other', and 'Hunting the Other'. The overarching narrative was then concluded with an epilogue titled, 'Beyond Brutality'. Overall, these narratives produce and reproduce cyberbullying practices by partitioning social relations into 'us' (the 'cyberbullies') versus 'them' (the 'cybervictims'). By locating the issue of cyberbullying within a wider culture, this research challenges dominant conceptualisations of cyberbullying as an individualistic phenomenon. The implications of these findings for clinicians, teachers, parents and the broader community, are discussed.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Years ago, I witnessed someone close to me become defeated, humiliated and suicidal in the face of prolonged cyberbullying. Sexualised images were disseminated and circulated of this person, who also received widely publicised threats of violence and demands to commit suicide. This abuse was then amplified through the support of many witnesses, who were 'liking' and commenting on these social media 'posts.' Numerous individuals became involved in this bullying, many of whom were unknown to this person. I found this particularly difficult, as I could not see a reason or a motive for the participation in these activities when those participating had not met the person on the receiving end. Even more perplexing, the students who were bullying this person did not look like the 'horrible' and 'sadistic' bullies I wanted them to be. They looked like – for want of a better word – 'normal' kids. This did not match up with the vast amount of news stories and articles coming from the New Zealand mass media at the time, which characterised these persons as 'cyberbullies' and 'deviant criminals.'

The nature of the large-scale and organised cyberbullying experienced by this person urged me to question the social context of this phenomenon. Though I was interested in cyberbullying as a social rather than a deviant individual practice, I found there was limited research which explores cyberbullying in this way. Instead of the notion of the problem as 'deviant' or 'cruel' individuals, could we consider cyberbullying as reflective of broader social issues or concerns? Are there underlying social processes that have enabled engagement in such behaviours? If so, what would be the consequence of disregarding the social and cultural context of cyberbullying in thinking of how we can respond to such activities? Would it be possible to generate responses that transform associated social relationships and understandings, instead of focusing on individuals labelled as 'cyberbullies'?

These initial thoughts and reflections led me to investigate representations of cyberbullying in New Zealand mass media as part of an honours research project. The findings of this research highlighted the responses to cyberbullying which are constrained through dominant understandings of cyberbullying as an individualistic phenomenon. For instance, by placing responsibility for cyberbullying practices on the individual, we enable responses such as the criminalisation of cyberbullying behaviours and overlook the wider social structures in which these practices are located (Papirany, 2015). I was troubled by the idea of criminalising a problem which, to my knowledge, vastly affected children and young people. I wondered how, in the field of psychology, we could engage with understandings and responses to cyberbullying that promote the safety and well-being for all members of society (both 'bully' and 'victim') and reduces or prevents the occurrence of cyberbullying in the contemporary context.

One significant implication of this research was the missing voices of the children and young people who were engaging in this social practice from representations of cyberbullying in the New Zealand mass media. I wondered how they understood the issue of cyberbullying, amid the public outcry against these practices. The research presented here reflects a response to this question, by continuing to raise and explore the issue of wider culture in practices of cyberbullying and by seeking to understand how individuals who become involved in these practices (through engagement, victimisation, or both) make sense of this. It also continues to be an opportunity for me to attempt to make sense of the experiences of a person close to me, along with my thoughts and reflections as a clinical psychology student engaging with a relevant contemporary issue.

Conceptualising Cyberbullying

Given that cyberbullying is a comparatively recent social issue, conceptualisations of cyberbullying in the psychological and academic literature are varied, inconsistent and widely debated. However, there are components of cyberbullying that are generally agreed upon and provide us with an entry point for engaging with ideas and definitions of what constitutes cyberbullying. At the foundational level, cyberbullying denotes a method of bullying which occurs through digital technological devices such as computers or mobile phones, otherwise known as electronic (Kowalski & Limber, 2007) or technological (Conn, 2010) bullying. The initial reaction to the proliferation of cyberbullying reported in the media and academic literature was the idea we were seeing a completely novel and distinct form of bullying (Campbell & Bauman, 2018). Whilst this has been debated by academics over the past decade, the predominant understanding now seems to be that despite some important differences, cyberbullying is an extension of traditional bullying; traditional, in the sense that the bullying occurs in person, without the use of a technological medium. Accordingly, the majority of research on this topic employs modified definitions of traditional bullying (Alipan et al., 2020).

Currently, the most recognised and employed definition of 'traditional bullying' has been provided by Olweus (2010). According to this definition, bullying comprises an aggressive act which is carried out by an individual, or a group, and is accompanied by three key elements: 1) it is deliberate; 2) it involves an unequal relationship of power between an aggressor and their victim, and 3) it is consistent over time. The first element of this definition distinguishes bullying from what is 'typical', 'everyday' conflict or unintentional harm such as 'joking around' (Olweus, 2010). This element of Olweus's definition is significant as it rests on the notion that individuals who engage in bullying behaviours are actively intending to cause harm. An area of contention with this component of Olweus's definition is that it is difficult to determine an individual's intent. Thus, Langos (2012) proposes that intentional harm be considered present if a "reasonable person" believes the behaviour

would be harmful. The second element of Olweus's definition, unequal power relations, refers to any physical, social or other relevant discrepancies between individuals using the bullying behaviours and individuals on the receiving end, making it difficult for those who are victimised to protect themselves. Therefore, the assumption is that bullying takes place when a targeted individual is perceived to be vulnerable or comparatively lacking in something. Finally, the third component, consistency over time, precludes bullying from incorporating standalone or sporadic encounters with peers and therefore proposes a social relationship of some kind between individuals who use bullying behaviours and individuals who are victimised (Olweus, 2010). This component of Olweus's definition incorporates the idea of a 'threshold for harm' which must be met for the abusive behaviour to be considered 'bullying'. Through the requirement of 'repetition', the threshold for harm is determined by the number of abusive behaviours carried out by specific individuals (or groups of individuals), as opposed to a 'threshold for harm' which considers the effects of the abusive practices in their own right. With this in mind how might we conceptualise instances where numerous individuals engage irregularly in abusive practices against a targeted individual, but collectively cause considerable harm?

What is not included within Olweus's definition of traditional bullying is the subjective experience of individuals. This makes it possible for an arbiter to discount the experience of an individual who feels humiliated, shamed, terrified and disempowered due to the actions of another, and to determine that they were not bullied. Consequently, the individual who experiences victimisation has no power in naming what has happened or is happening to them. The discounting of subjective experience in the dominant definition of cyberbullying leads me to question how privileging the perspective and value system of an arbiter might perpetuate the experience of disempowerment by individuals – especially given these individuals already feel disempowered through victimisation.

Recently, challenges have been raised around this issue of repetition in applying Olweus's definition of traditional bullying to cyberbullying. For instance, technology makes it possible for an individual to engage in a single abusive act towards another individual (such as uploading a comment, picture, or videorecording), which can then be commented on, saved, distributed, and continually viewed by individuals who are not involved in the initial abusive act. Therefore, whilst the victim experiences ongoing harm, the individuals engaging with the harmful content may have only committed a one-off abusive action (Alipan et al., 2020; Slonje et al., 2013). In response, Olweus and Limber (2018) propose that the criteria of repetition incorporates the extent of the audience the abusive content reaches, as well as the length of time the abusive content remains in cyberspace. Furthermore, it is proposed that the second component of Olweus's definition, imbalances of power, has to do with the extent of technological knowledge, comparative anonymity, social status, number of friends, and/or relegated group position when bullying occurs through the use of technology (Langos 2012; Olweus

& Limber, 2018; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Smith et al., 2013). Therefore, in the case of cyberbullying, the threshold for harm is then not calculated by the number of times an individual repeats an abusive behaviour, but instead is determined by the extent of the impact of these abusive behaviours (e.g., humiliation is increased as there are many witnesses to the singular abusive act). Yet, the possibility of 'individual-less' (traditional) bullying does not appear to be discussed in the current body of literature. Instead, the need for modifying the definition of cyberbullying is attributed to the platform (of technology) in which cyberbullying behaviours occur, rather than the 'individual-less' bullying practices that may occur with or without the use of technology. The limited consideration for 'individual-less' traditional bullying is indeed interesting, given the predominant understanding that cyberbullying is merely an extension of traditional bullying, yet this need for a modified definition suggests otherwise. With this in mind, confusion among academics around the relationship (or lack thereof) between traditional bullying and cyberbullying may be a consequence of a limited conceptualisation, which overlooks practices of bullying and therefore the issue of the wider culture in the emergence of bullying behaviours.

Not only does the definition of traditional bullying place emphasis on the ill-intentions of individuals who engage in bullying behaviours, but on the vulnerability of 'victims'[1] as well. A focus on victim vulnerability is reflected in an ongoing debate regarding the separation of cyberbullying behaviours from what has been coined 'cyberaggression'. Whilst Bauman et al. (2013) have suggested we abandon the separation between these two constructs and include all forms of abusive online behaviours under the umbrella term 'cyberaggression', Campbell and Bauman (2018) have disagreed with this suggestion, due to the loss of emphasis on power imbalance and concerns over repetition, and therefore the vulnerability of victims as incorporated in the second and third component of Olweus's definition of bullying. They argue that cyberaggression implies both parties are engaging in abusive online behaviours, whereas cyberbullying involves the targeted individual's inability to make the abusive behaviours directed towards them stop (Campbell & Bauman, 2018). Accordingly, this definition suggests that once an individual attempts to defend themselves from abusive behaviours directed towards them, it should not be considered cyberbullying, but instead 'cyberfighting'. However, the idea that someone is 'less than vulnerable' for defending themselves, regardless of the efficacy and consequences of such attempts, is simplistic. Similarly, the separation between conceptualisations of cyberaggression and cyberbullying based on an individual's responses to receiving abusive content, presents a black and white picture of what is likely to be a more complex social practice and leaves little room for nuance. For instance, how can we make sense of cases where individuals fight back in response to victimisation, but continue to be targeted with abusive online

[1] I place inverted commas around terms such as 'victims/cybervictims' and 'bullies/cyberbullies' to draw attention to the individualism inherent in these terms. This, along with the usefulness of these terms, is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

content?

Taken together, the dominant understanding of bullying behaviours (traditional and cyber) is the combination of individuals with ill-intentions, directing abusive behaviours against an individual who is in some way vulnerable and unable to make the bullying behaviours stop. This analysis of Olweus's definition brings into question the reasons why the individual is so central to current understandings of cyberbullying. How does this affect what we can consider to be 'cyberbullying'? Does it lead to the unheeding of certain behaviours that are not able to be ascribed to any particular individual or groups, as for instance, in occasions where an individual has attempted to defend themselves against abusive content and is seen to be engaging in 'cyberfighting' rather than being involved in a wider culture of bullying?

The engagement in bullying behaviours is often not associated with single individuals. Instead, bullying is a complex practice which involves numerous individuals occupying varying roles. Olweus (2001, 2010) highlights this through the development of a model called 'the bullying circle', which incorporates a variety of ways in which individuals can become involved in bullying behaviours. In this model, he distinguishes between the roles of the 'bully/bullies' who 'plan' and start the bullying, the 'henchmen', whose role is to participate actively, without having planned or initiated the bullying; the 'active supporters', whose role is to applaud the 'bully' in pursuit of material or social reward; the 'passive supporters', whose role is to quietly enjoy the bullying; the 'disengaged onlookers' whose role is to witness the bullying, but who do not react or involve themselves in any way; the 'potential witnesses', whose role is to contest the bullying, without acting; and finally the 'resister/defenders', whose role is to actively oppose the bullying and defend what Olweus labels the 'target'. Olweus's Circle of Bullying attempts to classify the multitude of ways in which individuals can become involved in bullying behaviours.

However, making the individuals occupying these roles the point of focus loses sight of the social structures which enable such widespread engagement in bullying behaviours by numerous individuals. Granted, it is easy to be preoccupied with such labels as they are interesting. For instance, it is noteworthy that some people can initiate and start bullying behaviours, whereas others can spontaneously join-in, simply applaud, ignore, or contest the bullying. Furthermore, these labels enable us to differentiate between the 'bullies' and 'others' who are allocated varying degrees of perceived culpability – in other words, some roles are constructed as being less culpable or even 'better' than others. Yet how useful is it to make the individual the point of focus through the application of these labels, when the majority of these roles and therefore numerous individuals contribute (even if, in varying degrees) to the ongoing practice of cyberbullying? Are henchmen not as implicated as 'bullies' in maintaining the issue of cyberbullying? Are passive onlookers somehow

‘better’ than active supporters? Are there not more pertinent questions to be asked, such as how do individuals who are not initially involved in bullying become involved? What material and/or social rewards are there for bullying? And how does wider culture enable involvement in bullying practices from numerous individuals?

To further illustrate the diverse ways bullying can occur through the use of technology, Willard (2007) has divided cyberbullying behaviours into seven distinct categories. Firstly, flaming, the term which applies to fights that occur through the use of technology, involves an escalatory and uncouth exchange of words. Alternatively, harassment refers to the repeated distribution of hurtful messages to another person, which does not originate within the context of a fight. Denigration involves the participation in ‘gossip’ which is to the detriment of another person’s reputation. Similarly, impersonation involves posing as someone else and behaving in ways that cause harm to the reputation of another. In addition, outing denotes consensually sharing someone’s secret or information with the intention of causing them humiliation. Exclusion involves cruelly and deliberately discounting another person from organised online space, such as a page, site, or an online conversation. Finally, cyberstalking means consistent and intensified harassment involving threats and causing fear.

Collectively, the varying range of practices and behaviours that constitute cyberbullying suggests it is not an issue which can be neatly or statistically defined. Indeed, the sets of ‘practices’ and ‘behaviours’ that constitute cyberbullying are not exclusive, since practices, as regularised ways of understanding and being, inevitably incorporate sets of bodily behaviours (Reckwitz, 2002). Therefore, not only is it more appropriate to refer to practices of cyberbullying, but avoiding the term ‘behaviours’ when referring to cyberbullying brings its own advantages. For instance, the term ‘behaviours’ can be considered reductive, insofar as it places the individual at the centre of focus. While the term ‘behaviours’ focuses on individuals performing and carrying out certain actions, the term ‘practices’ is a more abstract notion, incorporating social ideas and structural relations (Reckwitz, 2002). Consequently, the term ‘practices’ has the capacity to account for the complex ways in which cyberbullying takes place and shall be utilised when referring to cyberbullying in the present research.

Whilst debate over terms such as cyberbullying, cyberaggression and traditional bullying may seem like a game of semantics, our understanding of what constitutes bullying is important in terms of how we can respond to the issue in professional and community settings (Hawley & Williford, 2015; Walton, 2011). Recently Temko (2019) conducted a critical content analysis of the most prominent school intervention into traditional bullying, ‘Olweus’s Bullying Programme’. Temko concluded that the programmes’ individualistic conceptualisations of bullying support a ‘compliance’ based

approach which incorporates monitoring of student behaviour in accordance with anti-bullying rules. Compliance-based approaches to school cyberbullying interventions are problematic as the school staff who are to implement the programme cannot ensure they are always there to maintain compliance, as bullying does not merely happen in plain sight, nor does it always occur on school grounds. Furthermore, compliance-based approaches do not address the sociocultural structures that support and maintain bullying practices (Temko, 2019). Consequently, Temko argues that interventions into bullying should incorporate both individualistic and structural elements of bullying. My research takes this further, by emphasising the constraining effects of an individualistic conceptualisation of bullying and a need for a sociocultural understanding and approach to all forms of bullying practices.

Bullying and Technology

Although cyberbullying is widely understood to be an extension of traditional bullying, it is important to recognise and discuss the different space which technology offers and how this may impact on practices of bullying. Firstly, the accessibility of larger audiences via social media platforms means that consequences of bullying, such as shame and humiliation, are increased for victims (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). The significant impact of larger audiences was indeed one of the most observable features in the experiences of cyberbullying by the person I am close with. The internet also enables all participants to revisit and re-evoke abusive content due to the permanency of technology, inflating the trauma and humiliation of the individual who is victimised. Moreover, in practices of traditional bullying, individuals are often physically present, and/or known to the victim. By contrast, technology enables individuals engaging in bullying practices to remain anonymous to their victims. Some researchers have proposed that the lack of a physical presence online may limit feelings of responsibility and accountability for the harm caused by individuals who are engaging in bullying practices, as their ability to observe the effects of bullying on the victim is reduced (Heirman & Walrave, 2008; Smith et al., 2008).

These features of cyberbullying have been the basis of debate over whether cyberbullying and traditional bullying are distinct issues. However, the use of technology as a point of difference between both methods of bullying locates the problem within (and intervention efforts towards) technology, as opposed to the actual practices of bullying. Consequently, attention is directed away from the wider social context and social power relations in which the bullying still arguably occurs, regardless of whether it takes place via technology or in person. Indeed, it is likely these features of technology can increase the impact of bullying practices and there is some evidence to suggest such features of cyberbullying may lead to harsher consequences for victims than traditional bullying (Dooley et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith & Slonje, 2010;

Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008), particularly so with cyberbullying involving pictures and videoclips (Smith et al., 2008). The uniqueness of cyberbullying, therefore, makes it possible for us to see the impact of traditional bullying, with minimised constraints. However, by concentrating on what can increase the impact of bullying, we may end up disregarding how it emerges in the first place. Therefore, despite the distinctive use of technology in practices of bullying, it may be helpful to explore cyberbullying as situated within a wider cultural context of traditional bullying, in order to understand how cyberbullying practices are socially enabled.

Finally, it is important to mention that the distinct features of the online environment and its impact on communication methods have also led researchers to locate the issue of cyberbullying within a 'cyber-culture' (Ferreira & Deslandes, 2018; Guzzetti, 2008; Hollá, 2016). Whilst it is acknowledged that the online environment offers a new space for social identities to be established and idiosyncratic practices to take place, I would argue that such practices remain situated in the same social context in which all social relationships are located, regardless of technology. Accordingly, the online environment merely provides new tools and a new platform for the same social relationships which contribute to bullying practices to take place, even though such relationships may appear to present differently in the absence of physicality. Accordingly, 'cyber-culture' is likely to be incorporated as part of a broader cultural analysis of cyberbullying, providing insight into how traditional social relationships may 'look' in this new space.

A Deficit Model

The limited consideration of social-contextual understandings of cyberbullying in academic literature has resulted in a heavy emphasis on the characteristics of individuals who use and experience cyberbullying behaviours[2]. Consequently, ideas around what causes and maintains engagement in cyberbullying behaviours are constructed through psychological understandings of an individual who is vulnerable to victimisation, or prone to the use of cyberbullying behaviours. Temko (2019) has also raised this issue with regards to the literature on traditional bullying.

To elucidate, correlational studies have associated individuals who engage in cyberbullying behaviours with certain traits, such as low social intelligence (difficulty understanding appropriate behaviour in social situations) (Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016), sadism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism (Buckels et al., 2014), low self-control and generalised aggression (Bayraktar et al., 2014). As a whole, these characteristics produce engagement in cyberbullying behaviours as an effect of personal deficits. The sadistic element can also be viewed as corresponding to Olweus's

[2] Here and throughout the rest of this section, I have used the term 'behaviours' rather than 'practices' to emphasise the individualistic conceptualisation of cyberbullying that the 'deficit model' produces.

definition of bullying, which suggests that bullying behaviours are intentionally harmful. Alternatively, correlational studies have associated cyber-victimisation with difficulty managing emotions (Hemphill et al., 2015) and the use of unhelpful coping strategies (Jacobs et al., 2013; Vollink et al., 2013). Similarly, these characteristics produce cyber-victimisation as a consequence of varying personal deficits. The idea that individuals who experience cyber-victimisation are lacking in something, supports Olweus's definition of cyberbullying, which suggests that cyber-victimisation is related to an imbalance of power between the 'victim' and the 'aggressor', impeding their ability to protect themselves. Overall, such research produces a deficit model of cyberbullying, which links the engagement in these behaviours and the experience of cyber-victimisation to pathological traits. How might locating the 'cause' of the problem within the individual overlook the issue of wider culture in cyberbullying practices? How might a deficit model of cyberbullying affect, and limit, the way in which we can respond to this issue in professional and community settings?

Inherent in the deficit model is the taken-for-granted notion that individuals possess a 'personality structure' which is static and consistent over time (Arrigo, 2013; Kofoed & Ringrose, 2012). The concept of a personality structure is critical to, and substantiated within, the institution of psychology which makes an individual's internal capacities the central focus of intervention (Bansel et al., 2009; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; Valentine, 2014). By placing deficiency within the individual, the deficit model of bullying produces a dichotomous distinction between 'bullies' who are seen to be bad and 'victims' who are seen to be weak (Ringrose, 2008). Chapman and Buchanan (2012) argues that the privileging of dichotomies forces simplistic understandings of bullying that are unable to account for the complexity of wider cultural practices.

The dichotomisation of roles associated with cyberbullying has to do with the way in which power is understood. If power is limited, it is something to be acquired and exerted over others; such an understanding of power is taken for granted and again, privileges the individual (Ringrose, 2008). Indeed, this is a vital component of Olweus's definition of traditional bullying, in which an individual manifests power and targets another individual who does not have access to such power and therefore cannot defend themselves. The understanding of power as finite and yielded by individuals produces a distinction between a superior 'bully' and an inferior 'victim'. Migliaccio and Raskauskas (2015) argue that rather than power being wielded by one individual over another, power is generated from a social context through participation in bullying practices. Accordingly, if we locate power within social relations (Foucault, 1978), we can look beyond dichotomous bully/victim positions and begin to understand the complexity of the social practice of cyberbullying.

The privileging of dichotomies is not an issue unique to the literature on cyberbullying. Dichotomisation can be seen as an effect of social power relations, which produce and reproduce

systems of domination and subordination between constructed categories of people (Clifford, 1988; Loto et al., 2006). Dichotomisation occurs through the identification of an 'other' which is different, producing an automatic distinction between an accepted 'ingroup' and an 'outgroup'. Arrigo (2013) contends that the socially established expectation for 'sameness' originates from a cultural intolerance to 'mystery' and 'difference', resulting in the pathologizing of difference. Accordingly, negative characteristics are assigned to that which is different, simultaneously producing positive ingroup identities (Loto et al., 2006). In his exploration of imperialism, Said (1985) draws attention to systems of domination and subordination between a superior 'us' and an inferior 'them'. Loto et al. (2006) describe this as 'symbolic power', referring to the ability of one group to define another from their position of social and/or economic privilege. In the present research, it will be important to examine the social power relations and the effects of these in practices of cyberbullying.

Interestingly, despite the privileging of dichotomies in the literature on cyberbullying, some empirical research suggests that categories such as 'cybervictims' and 'cyberbullies' are misleading. For instance, individuals both engage in cyberbullying behaviours, and experience cyber-victimisation (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2015; Gibb & Devereux, 2014; Marcum et al., 2013; Roberto et al., 2014). The simultaneous occupation of both roles ('cyberbully' and 'cybervictim') has also been identified as the most common form of involvement cyberbullying practices (Kokkinos et al., 2014). Furthermore, one study identified engagement in cyberbullying behaviours as the largest statistical risk factor for experiencing cyber-victimisation (Livingstone et al., 2011). Similarly, another correlational study found that individuals who experience bullying in person are more likely to engage in cyberbullying behaviours (Smith et al., 2008). Accordingly, it has been speculated as to whether some individuals engaging in cyberbullying behaviours use technology to defend themselves after experiencing traditional bullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). These studies call into question the utility of distinct categories of 'cybervictims' and 'cyberbullies', suggesting that cyberbullying is a more complex social phenomenon. Accordingly, it will be beneficial to investigate how understandings of static and concrete positions may affect practices of cyberbullying.

The literature has provided multiple explanations for the blurring of the boundaries between 'cybervictim' and 'cyberbully' categories. For instance, a recurring theme among the current theoretical models for cyberbullying is the inclusion of the victim-to-perpetrator pathway, where a victim of cyberbullying is proposed to retaliate through the use of cyberbullying behaviours. However, this appears to be an overly simplistic explanation which, again, privileges dichotomy. To elucidate; according to the victim-to-perpetrator pathway, you can only occupy one of the two categories ('cyberbully'/'cybervictim') at any one time. In this sense, a 'cybervictim' can become a 'cyberbully', yet the fluid occupation of and alternation between both forms of involvement (i.e. engagement in and experience of cyberbullying) is not considered. Individuals are rigidly confined

to the specific ‘label’ attached to the set of behaviours they elect, allowing no space for variability and multiplicity in the engagement in, or experience of, these behaviours. Therefore, it is argued here that when we place the focus on the individuals who participate in these behaviours, rather than practices of cyberbullying, we lose the richness and complexity of the issue.

This question becomes more pertinent when we consider the issue of bystanders in the practice of cyberbullying. One of the key features of cyberbullying which makes it distinct from traditional bullying is the fact that there are often larger audiences available to witness a cyberbullying encounter (Dooley et al., 2009; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Sticca & Perren, 2013). Hence, when cyberbullying is being conducted on social media, we can assume there are a considerable number of bystanders who are either intentionally or unintentionally observing at any given time. Yet, research consistently suggests that bystanders are more likely to encourage the aggressor, or ignore the incident altogether, than support the victim (Barlińska et al., 2013). Therefore, how can an individualistic understanding of cyberbullying account for such widespread endorsement of, or ambivalence towards, these behaviours?

With this in mind, how do we conceptualise a bystander who does support the victim? According to the literature, bystanders can be one of three things: if they choose to do nothing they are considered a ‘passive bystander’; if they choose to support or encourage the aggressor they are considered ‘a negative bystander’; and finally, if they choose to support the victim they are considered a ‘positive bystander’(DeSmet et al., 2016). As previously discussed, the literature has proposed certain overlapping traits for both passive/negative bystanders with cyberbullies themselves. For instance, limited empathy was suggested for both passive and negative bystanding responses (Van Cleemput et al., 2014), and ill-intentions (DeSmet et al., 2016), along with aggressive inclinations (Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016) were proposed for negative bystanding responses. Hence, the similarity of negative/passive bystanding profiles with that of ‘cyberbullies’ themselves somewhat positions negative/passive bystanders as additional ‘cyberbullies’. Positioning ‘negative/passive bystanders’ as ‘cyberbullies’ provides the assumption that ‘positive bystanders’ (those who do not possess the traits that relate to the engagement in or endorsement of cyberbullying practices) are ‘the norm’ and is thus the ‘ideal’ response to cyberbullying.

Ultimately, DeSmet et al. (2016) distinguish between two types of bystanding responses – (1) ‘negative’ bystanding responses (which includes ‘passive’ bystanding responses) and (2) ‘positive’ bystanding responses – thereby advocating for the development of interventions which elicit ‘positive’ bystanding responses. Thus, even those who stumble into a cyberbullying encounter by happenstance are apportioned within a dichotomy (‘positive/negative’ bystanders). This dichotomous understanding of cyberbullying responses depicts a somewhat sensationalised process

where individuals are required to 'pick a side'[3] on observing a cyberbullying event. Certainly, it is commendable that anyone witnessing a cyberbullying incident would not encourage the aggressor and, would instead, provide support for the victim. However, when a bystander chooses to publicly advocate for the 'cybervictim' by joining-in against the 'cyberbully', are they not engaging with cyberbullying practices themselves? This delicate issue of 'right' and 'wrong' bystander responses (where there is likely to be no 'right' answer, given its complexity) can be avoided by moving the focus away from the individual and towards the social practice of cyberbullying. In doing so, we can make sense of how it emerges, rather than channelling efforts towards what can and 'should' be done by individuals once it has already occurred.

Beyond Individualism in Bullying

Recently, there has been emerging discussion, particularly in the sociological and social psychological literature, around the effects of power, norms, social identities, as well as social and ecological context on traditional bullying practices. This discussion has made space for an alternative conceptualisation of bullying to be considered, which Temko (2019) has labelled 'the sociostructural model' of bullying. According to Temko, a sociostructural approach is not about a few 'bad' individuals, but how bullying practices are located within social relations. Consequently, the sociostructural approach enables the consideration of variability and multiplicity in roles associated with bullying practices.

Temko (2019) summarises numerous social psychological studies which are interested in the relationship between bullying behaviours and social context, to form an outline of the sociostructural approach. He argues that a key consideration of this approach is how bullying is normalised within social and educational institutions through policy and practice, which reproduce unequal systems of power that bullying practices thrive in. The normalisation of bullying practices may thus result in bullying being tolerated and/or unrecognised in the school environment (Temko, 2019). Temko's outline of a sociostructural approach to bullying also incorporates research which has explored the issue of dichotomisation in relation to bullying practices. For instance, the production and vilification of an 'outgroup' through bullying practices can be seen as a way to achieve positive ingroup identification and self-concept (Brenick & Halgunseth, 2017; Palmer et al., 2015; Rutland & Killen, 2015). Power and social status are achieved through bullying practices, which function to police constructed boundaries between ingroups and outgroups (Brenick & Halgunseth, 2017; Dixon, 2004). Bullying can therefore be seen as a method of social regulation, ensuring that students conform to the prevailing hierarchical social structure (Armstrong et al.,

[3] I use inverted commas throughout this thesis to draw attention to the terms and phrases I do not agree with or wish to use in an ironic manner.

2014; Dixon, 2007; Payne & Smith, 2013). Interestingly, the same process of categorisation, which produces a dichotomous distinction between 'bullies' and 'victims' in the current literature on cyberbullying, has been identified in the material practice of bullying. The presence of dichotomies in both the academic literature and practices of bullying, could point to a wider social process of 'othering', in which bullying behaviours (and our understanding of them) emerges. Therefore, could the apparent 'need' to identify individual 'bullies' and 'victims' responsible for the issue of bullying reflect a wider cultural problem which we are all a part of? In terms of my research, it will be important to question and explore the issue of dichotomisation in cyberbullying practices in the local context of Aotearoa/New Zealand. How do children and young people in our community understand cyberbullying behaviours, given that a dominant approach seems to be the identification of responsible individuals? How might dominant processes of 'othering' shape these understandings?

Though Temko (2019) has labelled this approach to traditional bullying 'the sociostructural model', such an approach still appears to harbour considerable variation in terms of how researchers have examined and conceptualised the relationship between social context and bullying. For instance, some research has identified specific 'factors' that contribute to the tolerance of bullying practices in the school's environment and therefore has raised the idea of a social context of bullying. One such study, Palmer et al. (2015), read stories of bullying to school children and adolescents and found that prosocial bystander behaviour declined with age. However, adolescents were more likely to stand up for a victimised character who was perceived to be a member of the 'ingroup' and when the aggressor was perceived to be a member of the 'outgroup'. Ojala and Nesdale (2004) conducted a similar experimental study and found that perceived threat to group 'distinctiveness' (from an 'outgroup' who shared similar characteristics to the 'ingroup') supported the endorsement of bullying behaviours. Moreover, Rutland and Killen (2015) summarise social psychological literature to conclude that notions of morality and fairness mitigate prejudiced beliefs and acts of social exclusion in school children. Such research adds weight to the conceptualisation of traditional bullying as a social practice rooted in sociocultural biases, prejudices and processes of division, rather than a consequence of individuals who are inherently 'bad' targeting individuals who are inherently 'weak'. However, by exploring specific 'factors', these studies do not provide rich insight into the way in which 'ingroups' and 'outgroups' are formed and maintained through practices of bullying.

Further research on the social context of traditional bullying emphasises the impact of peer groups on how students understand and respond to bullying practices. Hawley and Williford (2015) highlight several social rewards for engagement in bullying practices, such as power, status, and admiration from peers. They draw on the Theory of Planned Behaviour to argue that positive attitudes and beliefs regarding bullying behaviours, as well as reinforcing factors (such as social

reward), create feedback loops that maintain bullying behaviours. However, they also acknowledge that the ideas and beliefs which endorse bullying behaviours are shaped by the surrounding social context and that individuals simultaneously shape social context through action. Brenick and Halgunseth (2017) contribute to this discussion, by arguing that the behaviours, attitudes, values, and beliefs shared by members within a relative group contribute to a group's 'social identity'. It is then, through this identity, that boundaries are established between members of their own groups and members of other groups. Individuals who adhere to group norms (such as participation in bullying practices) are accepted and those who do not, risk being cast out of the group (Veenstra et al., 2013). Bullying behaviours are thus conceptualised as a form of adherence to the norms and social identity of peer groups (Brenick & Halgunseth, 2017). Empirical support for the influence of peer groups on bullying behaviours has been provided by Veenstra et al. (2013), who found that engagement in bullying behaviours and the consequences of such (in the form of positive or negative reception from peers) varied between groups. Moreover, perceiving engagement in bullying behaviours as a form of 'protection' was a significant contributing factor (Veenstra et al., 2013). Overall, these studies conceptualise bullying as a method of establishing social identity and a sense of belonging to one's peer group, which again, points toward a shared practice of bullying, rather than it being a problem of individuals. Such research on the influence of peer groups on bullying behaviours is useful, as it provides insight into the function of these behaviours and the way in which 'ingroups' and 'outgroups' are maintained. In terms of my research, it will be important to explore the social context of one's peer group in practices of cyberbullying. How do students in the local context understand and respond to cyberbullying practices? What understandings endorse engagement in such practices? What social rewards might there be for participating in cyberbullying practices?

There is also a vast amount of research which emphasises the social context of a 'school climate' on the engagement in bullying behaviours (see Acosta et al., 2019; Espelage et al., 2014; Gage et al., 2014; Wang et al, 2013). There appears to be no consistent definition of 'school climate' within the current literature, although school climate can be broadly conceptualised as the nature and quality of the school environment (National School Climate Council, 2007). Acosta et al. (2019) highlight several features of the school environment that may be associated with a positive 'school climate', such as the presence of teacher and peer support, a sense of safety through reliable rules and regulations, and high student engagement. Much of the literature on school climate suggests these (or similar) features of the school environment play mediating roles on the presence of bullying behaviours among students. Interventions into school bullying are therefore often geared towards improving the school environment (Payne & Smith, 2013). However, Payne and Smith (2013) distinguish between 'school climate' and 'school culture', stating that the former emphasises structural features of the school, whilst the latter embodies the wider systems of

knowledge available within the social context of a school, for students to draw from. Accordingly, Payne and Smith (2013) argue for focus to be directed towards the culture of a school, by evaluating the norms, beliefs and values related to bullying behaviours, as these deeper social structures will inevitably impact the environmental characteristics of the school which are associated with 'climate'. The idea that bullying is shaped by the negative features of a school's environment locates the 'problem' within the school itself and overlooks the wider social context in which human behaviour is located. Alternatively, the notion of a school culture which contributes to engagement in bullying behaviours, locates the issue within social relationships in which bullying practices may be normalised and tolerated. Research which locates practices of bullying within an overall 'school culture' is useful, as it does not limit responsibility to a 'person' or a 'thing' (i.e. school) which simply needs to be 'fixed'. Rather, it allows for an investigation into the complexity of bullying as a social practice. In terms of my research, it will be useful to explore the way in which practices of cyberbullying are culturally located. This will involve an exploration of the norms, values and beliefs that enable participation in cyberbullying practices within the school environment, rather than focusing on specific schools, or features of schools.

Other authors have widened the lens even further by focusing on social disparities and how they may affect bullying practices. Much of this research combines understandings of proximal group norms and school cultures, with the inclusion of broader social structures. For instance, Migliaccio and Raskauskas (2015) have acknowledged group and individual factors in their discussion of traditional bullying but emphasise the need for interventions to account for the social inequalities which contribute to power imbalances within the school environment. Ringrose and Renold (2010), and later, Payne and Smith (2013) have located peer aggression in a cultural privileging of heterosexuality. They argue that such systems of power that marginalise gender minority groups are produced and reproduced within the school environment, through bullying practices, which function to police those who are, considered to be, non-conformant. Brinkman (2016) highlights the way in which structural inequalities are reproduced in institutions, such as schools, which instil ideas and practices associated with the conventional social order in children. Indeed, Freire (1993) contends that the fundamental structure of school models oppressive power, in which teachers exercise power over, and impart education into, docile students. Likewise, Harber (2009) discussed the achievement orientation of schools, which ultimately reinforces the idea that resources are limited, and students must compete with one another for such resources. Consequently, students who excel are celebrated and likely to receive more attention than students who struggle (Harber, 2009). Brinkman (2016) adds to this by highlighting the way in which schools often implement gender-segregated practices and reinforce heteronormative ideals. She argues that these structures likely normalise oppressive powers, teaching children and young people that society operates similarly. Bullying can thus be conceptualised as a way for students to gain access to power within a broader system of dominance

and subordination (Brinkman, 2016). She also highlights that such systems of power can be reinforced by school staff in their response (or lack of response) to instances of bullying. By locating bullying practices in social relations and broader systems of power, we can begin to understand how bullying emerges within a social context, rather than focusing on the individual who is only a part of this system. Given that cyberbullying involves the engagement in harmful and abusive practices against individuals, an analysis of social power relations will be a pertinent point of focus for my research. How are individuals who engage in and/or experience cyberbullying practices positioned and what might this tell us about the relations of power that enable these harmful practices to occur?

Currently, the application of a 'social-ecological' framework to the issue of traditional bullying seems to be the most dominant sociostructural approach (Brinkman, 2016). A social-ecological framework locates the individual who experiences and/or engages with bullying practices within a sequence of systems which affect their behaviour, such as the family, school and wider community. Brinkman (2016) highlights the way in which this framework is often used to underscore the impact of systems on the individual to identify areas of change, but she argues that it overlooks the way in which the individual actively contributes to the meaning-making systems in which bullying practices emerge. Within this framework, the individual is positioned as a passive being (and therefore merely a 'victim'), rather than a co-constitutive agent in practices of cyberbullying. According to Brinkman, individuals – through social relationships – produce and reproduce understandings that support bullying practices and navigate their way through a social system as best as they can, whilst circumventing undesirable outcomes, such as experiencing victimisation. Expanding on Brinkman's critique, I would also highlight that social-ecological approaches still privilege the individual who is seen to be 'affected' by surrounding systemic issues. Placing the individual at the centre of the problematic system de-emphasises the social relationships between individuals that contribute to material practices of cyberbullying. However, the social structures highlighted in the social-ecological model are produced in the context of social relations, rather than something which exists outside of the individual. Therefore, in terms of this research, it will be important to explore the ways in which cyberbullying practices are shaped by, and actively contribute to the contemporary context in which they are located.

Interestingly, despite growing discussion regarding the issue of social context for traditional bullying practices, it is concerningly difficult to engage with sociostructural understandings of cyberbullying unless one makes a point to refer to the available social context literature on traditional bullying and extend this to cyberbullying. The absence of discussion regarding the issue of social context for cyberbullying may be due to the fact that sociostructural investigations naturally lend themselves more to the conceptualisation of cyberbullying as an extension of traditional bullying, whereas the conceptualisation of cyberbullying as a separate phenomenon tends to locate responsibility in

‘individuals’ or ‘technology’. Granted, as cyberbullying is now predominantly understood to be an extension of traditional bullying, it could be argued that a separate discussion regarding the social context of cyberbullying is redundant. However, as cyberbullying is still a topical issue and the idea of cyberbullying as a novel ‘individualistic’ phenomenon has been sensationalised in both the media and academic literature, it is important to make sociostructural understandings of cyberbullying more readily available in both of these spaces.

Cyberbullying in the New Zealand Context

As this study locates practices of cyberbullying within a particular social, cultural, and historical context, it is necessary to discuss understandings of cyberbullying in the contemporary context of Aotearoa/New Zealand. At various times within the past decade, cyberbullying has been a popular topic for discussion in the New Zealand mass media. The salience of this topic for New Zealand was triggered by two major cases which were heavily publicised in 2014. The first major case of cyberbullying was known as the “Roast Busters”, concerning a group of teenage boys who distributed their non-consensual sexual exploits with underage and intoxicated girls on social media (Dougan, 2013). The second major case involved the death of Charlotte Dawson, a New Zealand celebrity, who committed suicide after tolerating widespread abuse on social media (Webb, 2014).

The combination of these cases emerging in close succession resulted in intensified public attention on the topic of cyberbullying in New Zealand. This was largely due to media highlighting the limited options available for responding to cyberbullying. For instance, according to media coverage, police were unable to prosecute the main individuals involved in the Roast Busters case because of a lack of prosecutable evidence against them, such as formal statements from the underaged girls (Steward & Dennett, 2014). Similarly, the media reported there were no repercussions for individuals who took part in cyberbullying Charlotte Dawson. The lack of consequences for Charlotte Dawson’s ‘cyberbullies’ was attributed to the virtual anonymity of individuals engaging in cyberbullying practices, prompting extensive calls for a ‘Charlotte Dawson law’ to prevent this from occurring again (Dawson’s Death Prompts Calls, 2014; Mastronardi, 2014). The sense of injustice associated with each of these cases generated public outrage against the individuals who were involved in each of these cases. This was particularly evident in vigilante-style appeals were made by members of the public for the ‘Roast Busters’ to be physically assaulted; money was even offered in exchange for video evidence of an assault (Dougan, 2013). Others formed specific ‘groups’ on social media to call for the imprisonment of the ‘Roast Busters’ (Send the “Roast Busters”, 2014). Amid this public outcry, the government announced a ‘Harmful Digital Communications Bill’ which would criminalise cyberbullying behaviours and offer serious penalties, including imprisonment (Young, 2013). Accordingly, New Zealand gained positive national and worldwide recognition for its ‘no-

nonsense' stance on the issue.

In the context of this public outrage against cyberbullying practices, I conducted my previous research into the representations of cyberbullying in New Zealand mass media. A key finding from my research highlighted a dominant individualistic conceptualisation of cyberbullying which portrayed 'cyberbullies' as inherently 'bad' and 'deviant' individuals, thereby enabling the social response of criminalisation. However, missing from these constructions of cyberbullying were the voices of the children and young people who were engaging in these practices. I wondered how, amid public outrage against cyberbullying, did they make sense of these practices. The completion of my research project inspired me to continue to evaluate cyberbullying practices in the local context by attempting to provide insight into how cyberbullying practices are understood by individuals who are involved and how these understandings might contribute to such practices.

Going Forward

An exploration of the current body of literature on cyberbullying demonstrates a dominant individualistic conceptualisation of cyberbullying behaviours. Reductive approaches that condense cyberbullying into a set of 'features' that can be specifically defined are also popular within the current literature. This reductive focus has the effect of diverting attention away from the wider social and cultural practices in which cyberbullying behaviours are located. The bulk of the current literature producing these conceptualisations is situated within empirical quantitative approaches to knowledge, predominantly in psychology. Therefore, the dominance of individualistic approaches may be an effect of the methodological foundations which function to classify and measure human behaviour. Because it is possible to observe and to measure the individuals who engage in and experience cyberbullying behaviours, and significantly more difficult to capture the social structures in which individual behaviours are located, people serve as yardsticks for observation rather than having the focus on the relevant practices. In light of this, Smith and Brain (2000) and, more recently, Smith (2019) have identified a need for qualitative research methods that can capture the richness of practices associated with traditional bullying and cyberbullying.

In 2010, Tokunaga highlighted the tendency of quantitative research to rely on "intuition" and "biases" to formulate "reasonable" sounding definitions of cyberbullying (pp. 283). Furthermore, by limiting definitions and using leading questions that are naturally inherent in quantitative questionnaires (Tafreshi et al., 2016), the voice of the 'absent expert' is privileged over the individuals who engage in and/or experience cyberbullying practices. This is problematic as it has led to studies operationalising and measuring cyberbullying in different ways (Patchin, & Hinduja, 2015; Smith, 2019; Thomas et al., 2014; Tokunaga, 2010). It has also resulted in researchers and

participants holding different ideas about what cyberbullying is (Heirman & Walrave 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). The privileging of researcher voices in definitions of cyberbullying perpetuates the neglect of understanding what cyberbullying practices involve and how they occur, by further consolidating individualistic explanations for cyberbullying. In terms of my initial thoughts and questions at the outset of this research, these assumptions and orientation to the research may explain why the academic literature did not resemble what I personally witnessed happening to the person I am close with; representations of 'sadistic bullies' in the literature did not explain how cyberbullying resulted in such widespread participation.

There is a need for research that enables explorations of the wider culture associated with cyberbullying practices; research that investigates the variable and dynamic ways in which cyberbullying practices manifest. An open-ended or unstructured study, which makes the practices associated with cyberbullying the point of focus, will be highly beneficial in ensuring that understandings of cyberbullying are not limited by precise definitions that may overlook potentially significant elements of this social practice. An investigation of cyberbullying practices requires a turn to how cyberbullying emerges in the context of social relationships, rather than a quest for 'truth' about what cyberbullying is. This kind of inquiry will enable an exploration of the wider culture and social power relationships that contribute to the engagement in cyberbullying practices and experiences of cyber-victimisation. In light of the identified gaps in the current body of literature on cyberbullying, the following chapter discusses the focus for the present study, as well as the methodology and method employed in pursuit of this focus.

Chapter Two: Methodology and Method

In the previous chapter, my exploration of the current body of literature on cyberbullying indicates that the dominant conceptualisation of cyberbullying is largely rooted in traditional empirical approaches. These traditional approaches produce overly simplistic understandings of what I have argued to be a more complex social phenomenon. Rather than attempting to reduce cyberbullying to a set of isolated features or individualistic traits, my research seeks to preserve this complexity and provide richer insight into this phenomenon by exploring an alternative conceptualisation of cyberbullying as a social practice.

The investigation of cyberbullying as a social practice involves exploring how cyberbullying is understood in a particular social, cultural and historical context, rather than the pursuit of a universal 'truth' regarding the nature of cyberbullying (Willig, 2013). Accordingly, the present research questions how cyberbullying is understood by those who engage in and experience cyberbullying in the local context of Aotearoa/New Zealand and how these understandings shape practices of cyberbullying. Due to its concern with personal experience and meaning-making processes, narrative inquiry was selected to address the questions and aims of my research (Emerson & Frosh, 2004). This chapter discusses the way in which narrative theory is conceptualised in my research, as well as outlining the guiding philosophical assumptions of social constructionism, in which this study is located. It also discusses the specific methods utilised in this study in applying narrative methodology within a social constructionist framework.

Narrative Inquiry

An attempt to neatly review narrative research would be a futile task, as it incorporates a broad range of interrelated approaches that fall under the same title (Andrews et al., 2013; Smith & Sparkes, 2006). The various approaches to narrative differ in essential ways, affecting what kinds of questions are asked and how the 'object' of study is viewed (Gergen & Gergen, 2010; Mishler, 1986). Accordingly, this chapter will discuss a particular approach to narrative research which is guided by the philosophy of social constructionism. A social constructionist approach to narrative has been elected to facilitate a rich analysis which surpasses the thematic approach of looking for themes across data and considers the location of cyberbullying within a particular social, cultural, and historical context. This would best suit the aims of my research, which intends to make the social relationships and practices that produce cyberbullying behaviours the point of focus, rather than the individual using and experiencing these behaviours. For this reason, the theoretical framework of social constructionism is discussed next.

Social Constructionism

The social constructionist movement in psychology emerged in the wake of growing criticisms towards the traditional post-positivist pursuit of knowledge (Gergen, 1985). Whilst traditional psychology is centred on uncovering the 'truth' about reality through measurement and observation, social constructionism places our understanding of the world within the constraints of the social milieu (Gergen, 2011). This has certain implications for how researchers approach and generate 'knowledge' within a social constructionist framework, requiring alternate methods and procedures to those employed within traditional psychological research.

At the core of the social constructionist position is the view that language and discourse form our understanding of the world, ourselves and others. Reality – as we know it – is understood to be socially constructed. Language and discourse are considered to be active and productive constructs, rather than docile entities that passively mirror reality (Gergen, 1994a; Misra, 1993). In light of this view, the object of study in social constructionist research differs to that of traditional research; rather than an independent entity awaiting discovery, social constructionism informs us that our knowledge of the object is constructed through language in the context of social relationships (Gergen, 1985) and therefore, it is the 'knowledge' of an object we can pursue through research. Within this epistemological framework, we are interested in how reality is constructed and understood instead of what reality is. As the present study aims to explore how experiences of cyberbullying are made sense of, the social constructionist approach facilitates this nature of inquiry. Within this epistemological framework, it is possible to investigate our current 'knowledge' of cyberbullying and how these understandings may contribute to cyberbullying practices.

A second assumption which is integral to social constructionism is the idea that 'reality' and 'truth' are contextually dependant, rather than universally fixed. If our understanding of the world is constructed through language, then it follows that knowledge is relative to a particular social, cultural and historical context in which certain language is meaningful. By recognising that knowledge is contextually located, we are able to then consider the presence of multiple truths varying across contexts (Burman, & Parker, 1993; Willig, 2013) and the way meaning changes over time (Gergen, 1985). This is useful to my research, which aims to explore the way in which cyberbullying is produced through narrative in the local context of New Zealand, and the way that historical, social and cultural understandings are reproduced to shape how cyberbullying is understood by those who engage with cyberbullying practices. Furthermore, as there is currently limited research which explores the issue of cyberbullying in Aotearoa/New Zealand, a social constructionist approach may provide insight into cyberbullying which is appropriately meaningful and applicable within the local context.

Furthermore, through the recognition of multiple truths, social constructionism enables an examination of power in the production of 'knowledge'. As social understandings can either be privileged or marginalised, relationships of power influence what is deemed to be 'true' within a particular social, cultural and historical setting (Hall, 1992). Importantly, these systems of domination and subordination affect how individuals can relate to one another within a given social context (Parker, 2002) and therefore, social constructionism allows for an examination of the social positions, actions and responses that are enabled and constrained – in other words, the material effects of the dominant ways we understand our social world (Gergen, 2011). Social power relationships are particularly salient for my research, given that cyberbullying involves abusive practices in which power is understood to be exerted over others in harmful ways. A focus on social power relations will, therefore be useful in understanding how the material practice of cyberbullying is socially enabled.

What are Narratives?

It is necessary to elucidate what is meant by 'narrative', as the common understanding of this term does not capture the way it is understood in the realm of narrative inquiry and therefore in this research. The term narrative denotes a coherent and structured account of events with causal connotations (Franzosi, 1998; Murray, 2003). Rather than simply listing events that have happened to them, people systematically link and make sense of events through time, explaining how and why such events have occurred. Gergen and Gergen (2014) argue that without narrative, life would appear meaningless and chaotic, in the sense that we cannot comprehend that in life, we merely experience "one damned thing after another" (p. 174). A defining feature of narrative is thus the establishment of a 'goal state', which provides life events with a sense of coherence (Gergen & Gergen, 2014). Often, narratives will possess dramatic features, such as a plot, setting, characters, conflict and a resolution which assist in coherently organising events to achieve this goal state (Gergen & Gergen, 2014; Mishler 1986; Riessman, 2001). Yet, narrative theory recognises the taken-for-granted nature of narratives; when we talk about ourselves and our experiences, our accounts are implicitly organised in the form of a narrative, facilitating a sense of order and coherence in our complex lives (Crossley, 2002; De Fina, & Georgakopoulou, 2011; Murray & Sargeant, 2011; Smith & Sparkes, 2006). Gergen (1994b) and Linde (1993) point to a cultural privileging of narratives, which makes being able to form a coherent account of events an 'achievement' – a sign of a rational account which 'makes sense'. Hence, although narratives tend to possess these dramatic features, they saturate our everyday lives to a degree in which their presence is concealed. Therefore, as my research seeks to explore how cyberbullying is understood by individuals engaging in cyberbullying practices and/or experiencing cyber-victimisation, narratives will be a good point of focus since individual experiences are organised, understood and shared in the form of narrative.

However, as we are confined to the linguistic resources that make sense and hold value within our social, cultural and historical context, narratives are not merely personal reflections of events that have occurred, but culturally located ways in which events are made coherent in order to be understood (Gergen, 1994b; 2001a; 2001b; Riessman, 2001; Stephens & Breheny, 2013). For instance, we cannot produce an account of cultural 'drivel' and expect this to be understood by others (Gergen & Gergen, 2010, 2014). Narratives are made up of language and discourses that are readily available within a particular social context (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Riessman, 2001; Souto-Manning, 2014). We draw on shared narratives to form our own personal narratives, as well as to understand the world around us – narratives can thus be thought of as the framework within which we understand ourselves and navigate our social world (Somers, 1994). By acknowledging that narratives are shaped and constrained by context, narrative psychology recognises there is no 'accurate' narrative or representation of an event, and that multiple interpretations are possible (Riessman, 2001). Accordingly, narrative inquiry provides a scope for meaningful interpretations to be made from the personal experiences collected in this research. Rather than simply gathering individual accounts of cyberbullying, a narrative focus enables the investigation of the social world, within which these narratives are constructed. This is important for this research, which aims to make social relationships the point of focus, rather than the individual storyteller.

Not only is narrative central to our understanding of the world, but also to how we understand ourselves (Crossley, 2000; Smith and Sparkes, 2006; Stephens & Breheny, 2013). Narrative psychology moves away from the traditional notion of the self as a 'thing' which can be 'discovered', to an understanding of the self and identity as established through the meanings we attach to our life experiences (Smith & Sparkes, 2006). It is through narrative that we achieve a coherent and unified awareness of self. Considering this, it can be said that narrative is fundamental to identity, and identity can otherwise be known as a self-narrative (Murray & Sargeant, 2011). As there is an implicit inclination for people to position themselves favourably in relation to the ideals of the social world, narrative psychology is useful in the exploration of identities and subject positioning (Stephens & Breheny, 2013). This is especially relevant to the issue of cyberbullying, as narratives of 'cyberbullies' and 'cybervictims' can shed light on how individuals come to take up these subject positions, and therefore the wider social structures surrounding the practice of cyberbullying more generally.

Finally, narratives often serve to make meaningful links between the 'remarkable' and the 'ordinary' (McCance et al., 2001), to make sense of discrepancies between one's life and ideals, or between the self and others (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Riessman, 1993). Narratives are especially pertinent for an individual attempting to understand salient life-experiences and manage ongoing adversity (Bruner,

1990; Riessman, 1990). Such events are a good point of focus for narrative inquiry since they demonstrate the need for coherence to be re-established after experiencing a disruption (Crossley, 2000; Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Murray, 2000). As the experience of cyberbullying is often traumatic for victims, narratives can be understood as providing a means of processing this experience, by organising their experiences in a way which helps them to make sense of it. Moreover, involvement in cyberbullying likely requires an individual to explain or even justify their engagement in these practices, which may not be in accordance with their own professed values. Narratives may therefore be useful in making sense of this discrepancy.

Narrative as Social Practice

Since my research seeks to investigate how individuals, through narrative, construct cyberbullying experiences and how these understandings might contribute to social practices of cyberbullying, it is necessary to explore how 'social practices' are conceptualised in this research and how narrative inquiry might elicit such insight. Forming narratives, are sets of discourses which contribute to produce a coherent story of an individual's life' or an event (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Riessman, 2001; Souto-Manning, 2014). Foucault's theorising of discourse and its relationship to social practice is useful for my research to draw from, as issues of power, materiality and political action are his chief focus – more than what discourse says, Foucault was particularly concerned with the material implications of what is said (Hook, 2001). Thus, from a Foucauldian perspective, we can explore the discursive practice of storytelling and how narrative inquiry might be useful in understanding the social practice of cyberbullying.

For Foucault, discourses are not simply sets of interrelated statements, but practices that construct an object (Hook, 2001; Parker, 2002; Willig, 2013) or ways in which language produces knowledge (Hall, 1992). When knowledge about an object is produced, certain understandings are privileged, whilst alternative understandings are simultaneously constrained (Willig, 2013). From a Foucauldian perspective, these processes of production and marginalisation are seen to be inextricably reliant on one another (Foucault, 1981), in the sense that one cannot say anything which does not automatically constrain alternative understandings (Said, 1984). This reflects the active function of discourse (Gavey, 1989); when one draws on discourse, one is essentially engaging in 'discursive practices' of production and marginalisation (Foucault, 2002; Hook, 2001). As all social practices involve meaning, discourse is at the core of all practices (Hall, 1992). This research utilises the term 'social practice' to emphasise the de-individualisation of cyberbullying behaviours. However, given that practices are located in discursive relations, it is noted that the 'social' in 'social practice' is tautological (Reckwitz, 2002),

From a Foucauldian perspective, an individual can only draw from 'knowledge' which is readily available to construct an 'object' (Foucault, 1981). As Bakhtin (1981) argues, there is no neutral language to draw from, and individuals cannot lay claim to words and formations derived from a 'heteroglot' of meaning. Since language use does not appear in a vacuum, all meaning emerges from historical layers of knowledge that serve as 'prerequisites' for modern-day thought, speech and action (Parker, 2005). In this sense, discourses (and therefore narratives) are continuous reproductions of 'knowledge', as we utilise what we already 'know' to explain something new (Foucault, 1981; Hall, 1992; Hook, 2001; Said, 1984; Souto-Manning, 2014). Accordingly, some narratives are more readily accessible than others to the narrator, who is drawing on culturally sanctioned ideas to make sense of their experiences. Although narratives gain their sense of coherence through the attribution of a 'goal state' to otherwise random life events, these systematic links are treated as objective and are thus subject to scrutiny. Gergen and Gergen (2010) highlights the way in which institutions of science, mass media, and the justice system tell us which narratives are true or false. Likewise, in everyday life, narratives are considered a lens for the truth – an accurate reflection of events that have occurred (Gergen & Gergen, 2014). Integrity is expected when one provides an account of events, and people are vulnerable to objection by others who may have a more 'trustworthy' or 'accurate' knowledge of an event (Gergen & Gergen, 2014). Therefore, narratives, like discourses, are embedded in wider social power relations that privilege some narratives and marginalise others.

Hook (2001) notes that Foucault's way of conceptualising discourse makes it hard to abstract the 'material' from the 'discursive'. Indeed, Willig (2013) describes the Foucauldian approach as more 'ambitious' than other forms of discursive research, since it explores the relationship between text, human subjectivity, and cultural life, rather than remaining at the linguistic, interpersonal level. From this perspective, the enabling and constraining effects of discourse are not limited to text but they affect ways of 'being' by producing what Foucault calls, 'the material conditions of possibility' for thought, speech and action (Foucault, 1981). Not only are there consequences for those who engage with a discourse, as well as those who are 'inflicted' by it (Hall, 1992), but as Gergen (2011) notes, there are broader political ramifications in terms of how discursive practices affect cultural life (Gergen, 2011). Discourse brings to bear a variety of 'subject positions' which grant and deny rights to speak, stipulates what can be said (Parker, 2005) and how people can interrelate (Willig, 2013). Accordingly, discourse is embodied through social practices (Parker, 2002), and it is through material relations that discourse is able to sustain itself (Said, 1984). For this reason, Parker (2005) argues that all meaning is located in systems of physical violence or welfare, of material injustices and the struggle to overcome them. Power, in this view, is situated in the material effects of discursive practice and discourse itself is seen to be the act of violence (Hook, 2001). Political action, then, is merely locating knowledge about an 'object' within these social power relations, illuminating the particular conditions of possibility (Hook, 2001) and thus making space for alternative

understandings to be considered (Hollway, 2001). Because individual lives are located in these 'material conditions of possibility', narratives too, are embodied practices with material effects (Nightingale, 1999; Parker, 2005).

Narrative Interviews

As narrative interviews are centred on storytelling, researchers typically adopt a relaxed, conversational approach to interviewing (Fraser, 2004). Seemingly 'disorganised' interviews are not problematised, as connectedness is valued, and it is recognised that dialogue is 'messy' (Fraser, 2004). This differs from conventional approaches to interviewing, that usually involve the meticulous planning of questions and the establishment of a predetermined structure which purposely shapes the data to be collected. By contrast, a large part of a narrative-style interview cannot be predetermined, as narratives are understood to be collaboratively constructed by a researcher and participant, in the context of the interview itself (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Fraser, 2004; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2001; Stephens & Breheny, 2013). Accordingly, researchers can be guided by a topic-based interview but are not bound to this structure. The relaxed and somewhat informal nature of the interview provides participants with time and space to process stories, with little constraints placed on what is considered 'relevant' or what 'makes sense' (Fraser, 2004). Narrative interviews are thus less directive and standardised than conventional interviews, with questions depending on what is raised by participants, resulting in differences from one interview to another (Fraser, 2004).

This purposefully unstructured nature of interviewing is considered the best way to allow a narrative to develop, as the participant draws on unprompted language when there are limited constraints surrounding their responses. Unprompted language is seen to be reflective of the meaning-making processes people draw on, to make sense of their experiences (See Riessman, 1990 and 2001 for detailed examples of this). By minimising any preconceptions about what this study may find and simply letting the data emerge, it may be possible to identify alternative understandings of, and insights into, cyberbullying practices that have not yet been considered within the literature. This is particularly relevant considering the present literature – as I have argued in the previous chapter – has yielded somewhat homogenous conceptualisations of cyberbullying, through a heavy concentration of quantitative research methods.

To foster a narrative-style interview, researchers typically begin with a general opening question designed to elicit a detailed response from participants which is conducive for initiating the storytelling process (Fraser, 2004). In terms of my research, an example of this may be, "Can you tell me about your experience of cyberbullying…". Following on from this, further questioning may involve non-directive elaborations, clarifications and questions that arise in response to the stories

participants tell. However, as Fraser (2004) points out, it is more useful to focus on the meanings shared by narrators, rather than trying to ask the 'right' questions. This style of interviewing is vital to my research, which is concerned less with what has occurred than how participants make sense of their experiences. Placing focus on these meaning-making systems will enable an exploration of the surrounding sociocultural context of cyberbullying. An approach which allows participants the freedom and space to make sense of the experiences is therefore necessary for meeting the aims of this study.

Narrative Analysis

Though narrative analysis encompasses a diverse cluster of approaches, there are a few underlying assumptions these various approaches share, which at the very least, converge on their focus on narrative text (Riessman, 2004; Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Unlike more conventional forms of research that offer structured and prescribed methods, narrative analysis represents a broad theoretical framework which focuses on meaning-making processes in the construction of narratives (Fraser, 2004; Mishler, 1986; Stephens & Breheny, 2013).

The object of study within narrative analysis is the story itself. This kind of research asks: what story was constructed, and why was the story constructed this way (Riessman, 1993, 2001)? Despite it being commonly understood that each person has 'a story' to share, narrative inquiry considers that there is no single story to be told. Instead, people tend to select events, along with numerous viewpoints, to support an elected narrative (Gergen & Gergen, 2014). The assumption is that the individual has strategically utilised various linguistic resources to form a coherent and meaningful link between events in their life – a strategy in which Polkinghorne (1988) originally described as 'emplotment'. The coherent link which forms the narrative is understood to be culturally located, and so, it is the task of the researcher to examine the various emplotment strategies utilised in the construction of the narrative and consider what these strategies can tell us about the surrounding social, cultural, and historical context (Riessman, 2001). Although narrative analyses are similar to other critical qualitative approaches, lengthier sections of storied dialogue are taken into consideration and importance is placed on the broad structural features of the story, which are considered to be important aspects of the meaning-making process (Riessman, 1990).

The investigation of meaning-making processes in the construction of narrative is subjective and positional, contrasting to the traditional pursuit of 'objectivity'. Instead of reflecting reality, narratives are interpretations of events that are continually open to change (Riessman, 2001). The interview process itself contributes to this through the interactions between the narrator and listener, as well as the analysis, in which the researcher imparts further interpretation onto the narrative

(Riessman, 2001). Also positioned within a particular social, cultural, and historical context, the researcher too, becomes a part of the research, and the research itself becomes an additional narrative (Fraser, 2004; Parker, 2005). Such an approach may be a useful way to bridge the gap identified in the current literature between society and the issue of cyberbullying. Reductive quantitative methods have had the effect of decontextualizing the issue of cyberbullying, attributing it to problem individuals and absolving the rest of society from responsibility. A narrative approach which locates the issue of cyberbullying in wider social relations may thus lead to more comprehensive understandings and responses to the issue of cyberbullying.

Furthermore, the examination of narrative in its 'own right' relocates emphasis from the traditional concern with the individual at the centre of an issue, to how an issue emerges within social relationships. This type of inquiry differs from more conventional psychological methods, which treat dialogue as an indirect measure for gathering unobservable data about the person behind the narrative (Gergen, 1994b). In doing so, narrative can preserve the complexities of lived experience, rather than reducing it to universally applied facts. This shift away from the individual to the examination of narrative is imperative for my research, which strives to disrupt the power relations that produce reductive and pathological understandings of cyberbullying practices.

Depending on the aims and objectives of the research, decisions can be made throughout the research and analytic process, as to the most useful way of illuminating the meanings participants share. For instance, researchers can choose to focus on smaller individual stories and/or weave together fragments of individual stories, to form a larger integrated story (Fraser, 2004). Furthermore, narrative analyses can work across varying levels, such as the personal (where subjective experience is privileged), to the interpersonal (where the joint construction of narratives between researcher and participant is considered), to the positional and/or ideological (where the location of narratives within a wider sociocultural context is explored), along with an integrated approach which combines all four levels of analysis (Stephens and Breheny, 2013). Narrative analyses can also adopt a thematic approach by focusing on reoccurring themes across stories (Riessman, 2004). Finally, in addition to the content of narratives, researchers can examine the structure of narratives and how this contributes to meaning-making. Following the work of Labov (1982), Riessman (2004) has identified five structural features of a complete narrative: an abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, and coda. These structural features are seen as having a function and can be useful in exploring the ways in which narrators form meaningful and coherent stories.

A Discursive Approach to Narrative Analysis

Narrative research which works from a positional level takes a discursive approach to analysing narratives (Stephens and Breheny, 2013). Emerson and Frosh (2004) point out that whilst such a focus is usually attributed to research which employs discourse analysis, it is useful to apply the critical facets of discursive theory within an overarching narrative framework. The combination of critical discursive and reflexive narrative methodology interlaces the 'personal' with the 'social' and enables both layers of meaning of to be explored (Emerson and Frosh, 2004; Riessman, 1993). Indeed, Stephens and Breheny (2013) demonstrate the way in which an integrated approach to narrative analysis can explore the complex interplay between varying levels of meaning-making, including the personal, interpersonal, positional, and ideological.

A critical discursive approach to narrative analysis can be a useful tool for producing action research which goes beyond merely collecting personal stories (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Fraser, 2004; Parker, 2005). An issue with narrative research is how to articulate 'bodily movements' without allowing them to become a mere 'story' which denies the material relations of injustice and resistance in which narratives are located (Parker, 2005). Fraser (2004) echoes these concerns, stating that narrative research can become 'escapist' if it overlooks the sociopolitical structures in which narratives are located and the degree to which they reinforce or oppose dominant ideas and practices. Though Fraser cautions against focusing solely on social context which ultimately revokes individual agency, she also warns against treating narratives as fictional ideas that can simply be 'reframed', or extreme relativism which discounts the 'real' impact of social power relations producing systems of domination and subordination. Likewise, according to Hook (2001), Foucault was particularly concerned with what he believed to be an overemphasis on text in discursive research, without enough attention given to political action and the outcomes of discursive practices. Hook adds that without considering the 'material effects' of discursive practices, analysis risks producing a reductive and decontextualised game of 'semantics', which can easily be discounted. Willig (2013) highlights that in Foucauldian approaches, an exploration of subjectivity is the most speculative level of analysis since it attempts to understand how discursive practices might affect the subjective experiences of individuals. Consequently, there are controversial views around the extent to which we can theorise the subjective experiences of individuals – in terms of how subjects actually think, feel and experience – whilst occupying certain positions (Willig, 2013). However, as Parker (2005) notes, narrative research provides a more straightforward link between language and experience than discourse analysis can do on its own, by incorporating the 'personal' with the 'social'. By attending to the complex interplay between personal/experiential, textual and the 'material', narrative inquiry can attempt to disrupt social power relations, by locating dominant narratives and social practices in a social, cultural, and historical context, thereby making space for alternative understandings to be

considered (Emerson & Frosh, 2004).

A discursive approach to narrative analysis can be thought of as an investigation of the way in which culture expresses itself through a person's story (Fraser, 2004). A discursive approach makes the subject positions, social power relations and wider social structures that produce the narratives, the point of focus (Stephens and Breheny, 2013). Riessman (2001) argues that social positioning in narratives is a fruitful point of focus, as positions are necessarily fluid and dynamic, rather than static and fixed. For instance, narrators can position themselves as responsible agents in some instances, yet passive victims in others. This variability in positioning can alert us to the particular functions that social positions serve and how people rely on numerous discourses to form logical and coherent narratives (Wetherell, & Potter, 1988). These positions can then be studied for the material effects they have, in terms of enabling and constraining particular actions and responses when occupying certain positions (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Harper, 2006; Parker, 2002; Willig, 2013). In this way, narrative research can be used to understand what practices mean to people who adhere to them, as well as a means by which dominant social practices can be challenged or supported (Fraser, 2004). An exploration of the subject positions made available in narratives of cyberbullying – along with careful consideration of their material effects – can therefore provide insight into cyberbullying as a social practice. Furthermore, looking for areas of resistance to dominant narratives of cyberbullying may assist in disrupting the social power relations that enable cyberbullying practices to take place.

Issues of Reliability and Validity

Though it is not practical to conduct narrative interviews with a large number of participants, the benefit of this style of interviewing is the rich and detailed information which can be gathered (Fossey et al., 2002; Riessman, 2001). As it is more difficult to achieve a deeper and more refined analysis with larger groups of participants, it could be argued that narrative research prioritises depth of insight over generalisability. Whilst traditional positivist research intends to make generalising claims beyond that of the research sample, this is not the case for research which is guided by the philosophy of social constructionism. Utilising narrative inquiry, my research is concerned with how stories contribute to meaning-making processes. Therefore, rather than focusing on what individuals personally think or intend to say, the use of language in the construction of narratives is the object of interest. This focus on the use of language means that rather than striving for stability and consistency with findings, variability and change are key points of interest. Thus, it is neither appropriate nor relevant to apply traditional measures of reliability to this research, that privilege 'a lack of variation' within the sample (Parker, 2004, 2005).

Alternatively, in qualitative research, samples are often guided by data saturation (Fossey et al.,

2002), which involves the continued collection of data until it is clear no new insights are being gathered (Fossey et al., 2002). A researcher is required to implement judgement as to whether data saturation has been achieved within a sample. In instances where initial sample sizes do not appear to have reached data saturation, the researcher can collect more data until they are confident that no new insights are being generated (Fossey et al., 2002). In my research, no new themes and meaning-making systems emerged after interviewing 16 students, and it was clear that data saturation had been reached.

Furthermore, Fossey et al. (2002) argue that as qualitative research is concerned with understanding how humans make sense of and navigate the social world, a central feature of good qualitative research is the extent to which the subjective meanings of research participants are captured. Therefore, to achieve a trustworthy analysis in my research, I considered the multiple and dynamic possibilities in which the data could be interpreted (Fossey et al., 2002; Parker, 2004). I also formed interpretations which were grounded in the data, to develop an overall argument that was convincing, fluid, meaningful and somewhat 'obvious' from the data (Fossey et al., 2002). Through supervision, my interpretations of the data were able to be discussed and critically examined to assess whether these markers were being met within my analysis. Finally, a number of critical qualitative researchers have advocated for reflexive processes as an indicator for sound qualitative research (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Fossey et al., 2002; Parker, 2002, 2004, 2005; Russell & Kelly, 2002). Reflexivity involves the acknowledgement and integration of the researcher's own contributions to the research. This requires researchers to explore their own background and life experiences as an element of the research, as well as the decisions made throughout the research and analytic process; just as the data is subjected to examination, so too is the researcher's own contributions to the outcomes of the study. In light of this, the following section engages with this reflexive process.

Reflexivity

Guided by the epistemological assumptions of social constructionism, my research views the relationship between the researcher and the 'object' of study differently to positivist research. Traditionally, the researcher and object of interest are viewed as independent entities, and therefore, the 'object' is seen to exist regardless of our awareness of it. Social constructionism, however, holds that 'knowledge' is socially constructed and therefore, the influence of the researcher cannot be separated from the object of interest (Parker, 2002). As social beings, the interpretations we make as researchers are located within a wider social, cultural, and historical context. Rather than 'discovering' knowledge about the 'object', the socially situated researcher co-constructs the 'knowledge' is generated through research (Gergen, 2015). For narrative research, this is particularly important, as the assumptions and expectations of the researcher can shape what narratives are

shared, what narratives are constrained, as well as affecting the way in which the narratives are later analysed and made sense of (Emerson & Frosh, 2004).

Research which is guided by social constructionism assumes that impartiality is an unattainable goal for social beings. Yet, the idea of impartiality is not simply acknowledged and endured, but welcomed, as it is through this impartiality that we can learn about the social context which produces the 'object' of study. With this in mind, Parker (1990) asserts that reflexivity itself is a sign that a researcher has recognised and connected with a discourse, as the socially situated researcher is required to utilise their own discursive knowledge to do so. As human beings, we do not have access to 'discourses' per se, because 'discourses' are not tangible entities to be identified and discovered. Rather, we can identify 'pieces' of discourse and draw on our own implicit knowledge to somewhat 'fill in the gaps' regarding the broader system of meaning informing the text we are analysing (Parker, 1990, 2002). Reflexivity is thus integral to the analytic process, and a critical qualitative researcher is encouraged to consciously engage with this useful tool. To do this, a researcher should recognise their equal contribution to the research process and the object in which they are studying (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Fossey et al., 2002). Supervision can be a useful space for supporting the reflexive process, as interpretations made throughout the research process can be discussed and critiqued.

Accordingly, it is important to consider my personal influence on the process and outcomes of this research. In addition to choosing the research question, I decided to explore cyberbullying as a social problem and selected epistemological and methodological approaches that would enable me to do this. Furthermore, as a student of clinical psychology, I was interested in generating practical insights from this study and this, in turn, guided my focus on the material effects of narrative constructions. My interest in developing practical insights also led me to implement discursive research methods within an overall narrative framework. In addition, the personal stake I have in this research through the cyberbullying endured by the person I am close to, has shaped my approach to conceptualising and studying the issue of cyberbullying, as well as how I have examined the data. For instance, the initial thoughts and tensions I experienced when trying to make sense of what I observed happening to the person I am close to sparked my particular interest in cyberbullying which involves numerous 'cyberbullies'. Keeping this in mind throughout the research process, I have been careful to ground my interpretations in the data and have located the constructed narratives in wider systems of meaning, rather than attributing them to individuals. Importantly, this has enabled me to circumvent the production of 'labels' in my own research and avoid perpetuating the dominant conceptualisation of cyberbullying as an individualistic problem.

In light of this, it is also necessary to appreciate my privileged position as the 'researcher' (Fossey

et al., 2002), as it is my own voice and interpretation which is heeded in the final research product. Similar to the experiences of other qualitative researchers (Hoskins & Stolz, 2005), I found this to be a constant tension throughout the analytic process – respecting the subjective experience of participants, whilst exploring the wider systems of meaning in which their experiences are located. To resolve this, I tried to honour the subjective experiences of those who participated in this research, by checking that my interpretations were grounded in the data and meaningfully resonated with the experiences that were shared. Furthermore, by locating the issue of cyberbullying in a wider social context and relations of power, I attempt to disrupt the imbalance of power between the 'researcher' and 'researched' by drawing attention to the ways in which we are all implicated in the issue of cyberbullying.

Finally, as a young female researcher, my age and gender may have affected what questions I asked during interviews and how I responded to the experiences that were shared. Equally, this may have affected how participants shared their experiences with me. I noticed during interviews that my language tended to mirror that of the participants, as I tried to relate to them in a conversational manner. Yet in some instances, I did not understand certain catchphrases and colloquialisms popular and familiar amongst the secondary school students and tried my best to clarify these with participants to get a sense for the meanings behind them. The following section discusses the methods incorporated to conduct this research.

Method

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are particularly significant when the topic of study is of a sensitive nature and especially when the research is being conducted with children and young people. An additional ethical issue was the recent criminalisation of cyberbullying (which had not been finalised at the time of data collection). The present study received approval from Massey University Ethics Committee: Northern (Application 15/045) and required careful consideration as to how best to manage these ethical issues to uphold the safety and wellbeing of participants, along with the wider community, in this study.

Firstly, I was aware that talking about experiences of cyberbullying with students could elicit different responses and students may experience difficult emotions as a result of the interview. I was also appreciative of the possibility that discussing students' own engagement in these practices may cause them to feel judged, guilty, and uncomfortable. Throughout the interview, I tried to show empathy and ensure that I phrased my questions sensitively and non-judgementally. I reminded

participants that if they began to feel upset during the interview, they could take a break, withdraw from, or postpone the interview. They were also assured that interviews were confidential and that narratives included within the analysis will be anonymised so that participant involvement in the study would not be identifiable to anyone who reads the research. A list of support services and school counselling services were made available to participants, and I made sure to discuss these support services with them at the end of each interview. Though I was mindful I was not in the role of a clinician, working under the '2002 NZ Psychologists Code of Ethics', I utilised clinical skills to assess risk if concern for safety arose during the interview process. In addition, my main supervisor, a clinical psychologist, was placed on standby to discuss any issues of risk during the interview process and to establish a safety plan (if required).

Time was allocated after each interview for a thorough debrief, in which I checked in with participants to see how they were feeling, having discussed some difficult experiences. Although many students expressed that they felt the experience had been therapeutic for them, for some students, the topics raised in the interviews brought up some difficult feelings related to their cyberbullying experiences. Participants who appeared upset during, or after the interview were encouraged to seek parental support and/or a school counsellor or an alternative support service which they felt comfortable with. I also contacted participants one week after each interview to check how they were feeling, answer any questions they may have, and remind them of the available support services if they were experiencing distress as a result of the interview.

Furthermore, I kept in mind the personal relevance of the topic of cyberbullying and the possibility that discussing participant experiences/involvement in cyberbullying may cause some discomfort for me – though this was not anticipated or experienced throughout the research process. Post-interview debriefings with my main supervisor were put in place for the purpose of discussing whether appropriate measures were taken in relation to any matters of concern, as well as to discuss personal responses as they occurred. I also took notes following any interviews that elicited concern and required additional consultation.

Finally, consultation was sought with the Massey University Director of Ethics and the Legal Expert Chair to discuss the legal implications of talking to students about their engagement in cyberbullying practices. It was determined that I was not required to breach confidentiality when a participant simply discussed engagement in cyberbullying practices. However, I would advise participants to seek support from parents/caregivers, counsellors, or Netsafe[4]. An exception to this rule would occur

[4] Netsafe is a New Zealand organisation dedicated to online safety, providing support, advice, and educational services (https://www.netsafe.org.nz/aboutnetsafe/).

in instances where participants revealed they had participated in, or experienced cyberbullying of a serious nature. In such instances, safety was considered the primary concern, and I was required to conduct a risk assessment and consult with my supervisors to consider whether parental, police, and/or school involvement was an appropriate course of action. Accordingly, participants/parents were informed of this exception to confidentiality within the information sheet, as well as at the beginning of each interview. Thankfully, these precautionary measures were not required to be taken during the data collection process.

Participants

A total of 16 students volunteered to participate in this study, with eight identifying as male and eight identifying as female. Each student had either self-disclosed to participating in cyberbullying practices, and/or experiencing them through cyber-victimisation. Participants were secondary school students between the ages of 13 and 18 years of age, with one exception. One participant was 19 years of age and had completed secondary school; however, he was able to reflect on his experiences of cyberbullying from the previous few years, which he described as vivid memories for him. Participants were from two different cities in New Zealand, and all spoke proficient English.

Given that cyberbullying had recently been criminalised in New Zealand and participation is generally considered to be socially unacceptable, it was expected that more self-disclosing 'cybervictims' would come forward than self-disclosing 'cyberbullies'. This was indeed the case. However, as the literature indicates that children and adolescents often occupy both 'categories' (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2015; Gibb & Devereux, 2014; Kokkinos et al., 2014; Marcum et al., 2013; Roberto et al., 2014) the possibility of both forms of involvement was explored in interviews with all participants. This was done in a sensitive and neutral manner, for participants to feel comfortable disclosing any possible engagement in these practices. What was found during the interviews was the majority of participants had engaged in cyberbullying practices, as well as experiencing cyber-victimisation. By not confining participants to either 'category' of involvement, the focus of my research was on practices of cyberbullying, as opposed to the individuals participating in, or experiencing cyberbullying. This is important to my study, which intends to avoid contributing to the perpetual dichotomisation of cyberbullying experiences, whilst allowing for the possibility of complex and fluid involvement in cyberbullying to be explored.

Procedure

The majority of participants were recruited through secondary schools. However, the study was also

advertised through social media and by word of mouth. Permission was granted from various schools in two New Zealand cities to advertise the study. Some schools opted for addressing students collectively and handing out the research advertisement, whereas other schools chose to recruit students via the school counsellor, who privately gave the research advertisement to potentially eligible students (See Appendix A for the advertisement).

Students who were interested in participating in the study could then contact me via phone or email, using the contact details provided in the advertisement. During the initial phone call, I asked a number of eligibility questions[5], answered any of the questions they had, and notified students that they would need parental consent if they were below the age of 16. Students below the age of 16 who were interested in participating and expressed no concern with telling their parents, were then asked to provide a mobile/phone contact number for at least one of their parents. It was then explained to the student that one of their parents would be contacted for permission to partake in the study. Students who were 16 years and older were informed they would need to bring proof of their age (such as a student ID, driver licence, passport, or birth certificate) to the interview. Information sheets and consent forms (see Appendix D) were then sent by email to students who were interested in participating in the study. The participant information sheet contained information about the nature of the research, eligibility criteria, research procedure and how the information from the study will be used. Students who were below the age of 16 also received a second information sheet (see Appendix E) and consent form (see Appendix F), which was addressed to parents/caregivers. After participants had time to read the information sheets, contact was made to answer any further questions and check if they were happy to schedule a time for an interview.

Participants were asked to bring their signed consent forms with them to the interview, as well as their proof of age (if required). After the official interview ended, students were reminded they would be provided with a summary of findings after the study was completed and were thanked for their participation. Participants received either a $20 Westfield Voucher or a Prezzie Card of the same value in acknowledgement of their time and efforts.

Interviews

I was interested in how students who had either participated in and/or experienced cyberbullying made sense of their cyberbullying experiences. Therefore, narrative interviews were selected for this study, as they would enable participants to share and make sense of their experiences in an unconstrained way (Fraser, 2004). With the consent of participants, all interviews were voice

[5] See Appendix B for the information sheet containing eligibility questions for participants aged 13-15 and Appendix C for a separate information sheet for participants aged 16 and over.

recorded so they could later be transcribed and analysed.

Interviews were conversational in nature, enabling participants and researcher to collaboratively construct meaning from the stories shared. Interviews were intentionally open, flexible, and non-directive, making it more likely that their experiences of cyberbullying will be formed through stories. This was important, as it is through the process of storytelling that meaning is generated, and therefore, space was required for participants to be able to do this. Furthermore, as my research attempts to avoid dichotomising or confining understandings of cyberbullying to pre-established and dominant notions already offered in the literature, an open, participant-led interview was vital.

At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself to the participant, reminded them about the nature and purpose of the study and answered any questions they had. To open the conversation, I told participants I was interested in hearing about their experiences of cyberbullying. Some participants sought clarification with a more specific opening question, to which I generally replied with a question about their experience of either participating in cyberbullying or experiencing cyber-victimisation, followed by more specific examples of where they may wish to start. Participant responses to the opening questions tended to begin with a story of their first, most recent or most salient cyberbullying experiences. However, two participants began with a broader 'life story', in which their experiences of cyberbullying were introduced as smaller sub-stories. I gave participants the space to share their cyberbullying experiences in the way that they felt was most meaningful and this in turn, directed the course of the interview, including my subsequent questions/responses. Throughout the interview, I kept a few broad topics (see Appendix E) – rather than specific questions – in mind and raised these as natural parts of the conversation where possible. At the beginning of the interview, I informed participants of this, to ensure that space would be made within the conversation for these at some point. Interviews were generally one and a half hours in length.

Data Analysis

The aim of my analysis was to explore student experiences of cyberbullying through a critical narrative framework. I wanted to know how students made sense of their engagement in and/or experiences of cyberbullying and how these understandings might contribute to the material practice of cyberbullying. Therefore, rather than looking solely for themes across participant stories, or focusing on personal experience, I wanted to construct a shared narrative which provided insight into the contemporary context of cyberbullying. To achieve this, I used a combination of narrative and discursive approaches. Whilst narrative approaches enabled me to collect personal stories from participants and use these stories to construct one integrated narrative of how cyberbullying practices occur, discursive approaches enabled me to conduct a closer examination of language and to consider

how constructed narratives might contribute to material practices of cyberbullying. Accordingly, when analysing the data, the overarching questions I had were:

- How do students construct narratives of cyberbullying?
- What appears to be the dominant narratives of cyberbullying?
- How might these shared narratives contribute to material practices of cyberbullying?

I began data analysis during the interviews with participants. Reflecting on the process and content of each interview, I made notes in a research journal on participant narratives, my contributions to these narratives and any noteworthy observations. As suggested by Russell and Kelly (2002), it was important for me to be aware of my responses during the interviews and critically reflect on why I might have such responses, as this alerted me to my own understandings and interpretations which contributed to the construction of narratives.

During the transcription phase, I continued making notes on any thoughts or musings related to the construction of cyberbullying as I listened and transcribed each interview. Later, I found this process valuable, as these initial thoughts and reflections provided the basis for further analysis. Upon transcribing the interviews, I noticed that the way the participant and I spoke was often disjointed, laden with grammatical and linguistic inaccuracies, and how my use of minimal encouragers tended to disrupt the flow of participants' dialogue. I found the messiness of this data confronting, and I had to forgo the desire to polish the transcript in sections where valuable information for analysis may be lost. Hoskin and Stolz (2005) recommend deeper engagement with the data through multiple readings of transcripts to develop what they describe as an "embodied knowing". Therefore, after I had finished transcribing the interviews, I found it helpful to listen to the interviews and read the transcripts without the disrupting task of transcribing. This not only gave me more of a 'feel' for what participants were communicating, but also deepened my understanding of my own responses throughout the interviews and how these helped shape the narrative.

The next phase of my analysis focused on identifying the story within the transcripts. It was quickly apparent that this was not going to be a straightforward task, as it was difficult to ascertain where participant narratives began and particularly, where exactly they ended. Participants often spoke in fragments, changed direction during the stories, and began new 'substories' within a larger story. Sometimes aspects of the story, or 'substory' seemed unrelated to the topic of cyberbullying. For instance, one participant started to talk about cyberbullying, which lead to sharing their broader life story. Another participant changed tack in the middle of a story about cyberbullying, to tell another story about gang violence. Trying to make sense of these 'tangents' in the context of the broader narrative was a difficult task, and I came to realise that like our lives, dialogue is messy and complex. With a relatively large number of participants for an interpretive study, I decided I would need to

prioritise the level of analysis I felt would be most beneficial for making sense of the data I had. Therefore, whilst I could analyse the data structurally by identifying the outline of the narratives and their features (such as the plot, setting and characters), I felt the most important task in meeting the aims of this research was to locate the narratives in a contemporary context and explore their material effects.

Accordingly, I turned to an approach offered by Pellico and Chin (2007) in which critical or defining moments for participants were highlighted from the transcripts, which gave insight into participants meaning-making processes. As narratives can be thought of as culturally located 'links' between events that have occurred through time, a good place to start in identifying narratives is the meaning participants draw from in order to link events and to tell a coherent story. To identify these critical moments, I systematically read through each transcript, looking for quotes and excerpts which were central to the way in which participants made sense of their cyberbullying experiences and which constructed cyberbullying in a particular way. I recorded these passages on a separate document for each transcript and engaged with them through a series of questions that helped me explore the way participants made sense of their cyberbullying experiences:

- What makes this a critical or defining moment in the participant's story?
- How do these critical or defining moments in the participant's story construct cyberbullying?
- What social positionings are being produced, and for what purpose?

After analysing the personal stories and how participants made sense of their cyberbullying experiences, the next step was to construct an integrated narrative, which located cyberbullying in a contemporary context. Looking at the data I extracted from the original transcripts, I carefully examined the language used to construct participants stories, to identify shared systems of meaning. This was the easiest and most engaging phase of the analysis, as the most pivotal idea – a central feature of almost all of the participants' stories – seemed to 'leap out' of the data; specifically, the notion that students needed to participate in cyberbullying to protect themselves from experiencing cyber-victimisation. Forming what I conceptualised as the 'bones' of the shared narrative, I began to flesh the remaining narrative out by continuing to look for dominant and reoccurring constructions. After doing so, I was able to group these ideas into four dominant narratives and one smaller, distinct narrative which I decided to call an epilogue. Each of these narratives (and the epilogue) appeared to coincide with and build upon one another, to tell one larger story of how cyberbullying occurs:

- It's 'Kill' or be 'Killed': this narrative refers to the idea that secondary school is a harsh environment, and one must engage in cyberbullying practices to protect oneself from cyber-victimisation.
- Leaders of the 'Pack': this narrative refers to the idea that social relations are hierarchically

organised and successful cyberbullies, who have proven their strength to their fellow students, are looked up to and considered to be 'leaders' amongst their peers.

- Constructing the 'Other': this narrative refers to the idea that 'cybervictims' are deserving of cyber-victimisation and therefore, they are vilified and ostracised by fellow students through cyberbullying practices.
- Hunting the 'Other': this narrative refers to the idea that cyberbullying can be a contagious, collective process, where increasingly more students become involved in cyberbullying against one particular victim, who becomes a well-known target amongst their peers.
- Beyond Brutality: this brief narrative functions as an epilogue, which transports the story to a future time period and 'reveals' the 'outcome' of the overarching story. It refers to the idea that cyberbullying is a childish practice students simply 'grow-out' of as they mature.

I found the use of metaphor helpful in constructing an integrated narrative of cyberbullying. As metaphor can be viewed as a product of language and ideas which are salient and familiar within a particular social, cultural and historical context, the use of metaphor allowed me to connect the dominant narratives (and the epilogue) in this research to broader social ideas in a way which is simple and perhaps more immediately recognisable to the reader. Furthermore, I found that using familiar 'sayings' provides a heuristic tool in organising and communicating the often, convoluted, elements of shared narratives. They can also alert us to the taken-for-granted assumptions present in society, as common 'sayings' are often produced from historical ideas that have been passed down for generations. For instance, the metaphor 'It's Kill or be Killed' was utilised to convey the idea that students needed to participate in cyberbullying practices to protect themselves from cyber-victimisation. Whilst the 'catchiness' of this metaphor simplifies the elements of this idea, the familiarity of this saying links the idea to a broader web of 'knowledge' connections – specifically, a widely held belief that life is naturally cruel and one must fight for survival at the expense of others. Drawing attention to this wider discourse through the use of metaphor opens up space for this taken-for-granted idea to be critically examined within the analysis.

For me, the most important aspect of my analysis was the exploration of how these constructions of cyberbullying contribute to practices of cyberbullying. Therefore, after identifying the four overarching narratives and the epilogue, I turned to the data for a more in-depth examination. Looking closely at the quotes and passages I had grouped within each overarching metaphor, I was particularly interested in exploring the positioning of subjects within the narratives (e.g. 'cybervictims' and 'cyberbullies'), as well as the systems of relations between subjects. For instance, both positions of 'cybervictim' and 'cyberbully' were located in broader issues of power that produced an 'inferior/superior' binary between the strong, virtuous 'cyberbully' and the weak, immoral 'cybervictim'.

As I identified the constructions of cyberbullying and the subject positions made available through them, I also paid close attention to their material effects. This involved an examination of the social power relations that enabled certain actions, responses, and positions to be taken up within narratives of cyberbullying, whilst constraining others. I was interested in both practical and subjective material effects (Willig, 2013). For instance, the narrative of 'It's Kill or be Killed' enabled students to engage in practices of cyberbullying, by justifying their engagement as a form of self-defence. Likewise, the narrative 'Constructing the Other' justified cyberbullying practices by positioning subjects as 'immoral' and therefore deserving of cyber-victimisation. These constructions and positions, in turn, shaped the 'subjective experience' of individuals, by affecting how one can think, feel, behave and interact with others when occupying certain positions made available within the narratives. To illustrate, participants who had experienced cyber-victimisation discussed questioning their worth and even their identities, as a result of relentless cyberbullying which positioned them as deserving of vilification.

After exploring the constructions, subject positions, and material effects, it was important for me to identify avenues of resistance. While I was looking for shared systems of meaning within participant stories, I also made a note of any non-dominant, contradictory and/or contrasting constructions and later explored these as potential avenues for resistance. For instance, in the stories participants told, I noticed that 'cybervictims' were constantly positioned as weak, in comparison to the 'cyberbully' who was understood to have proven their strength. However, there were a few excerpts from the stories which constructed the experience of enduring cyber-victimisation as proof of their strength and resilience. The distinctiveness of this construction alerted me to a potential for resistance to the dominant 'cyberbully/cybervictim' binary produced in narratives of cyberbullying. I found this alternative position of a strong 'cybervictim' significant, as it disrupted the systems of domination and subordination that enabled 'cybervictims' to be targeted through cyberbullying practices.

In presenting the analysis, I made some minor alterations to the quotes and excerpts taken from the transcripts to improve the flow of reading. In doing so, I was careful to avoid changes that would alter the content and meaning of the dialogue. Alterations included finishing incomplete words or omitting repeated words that were not essential to the construction of meaning. At times it was necessary to add extra words to the quotes and excerpts so they could be understood out of context. Additional words were indicated to readers by placing them in square brackets: []. I also found it helpful to emphasise words or sections of the statements which were particularly pertinent to the interpretations I made, by underlining them. This alerts the reader to aspects of the quotes that have sparked my recognition of shared systems of meaning. The following quote provides examples of adding extra words to an excerpt to facilitate understanding, as well as my use of underlining text to emphasise the pertinent aspects of the dialogue.

Frances. If you do it, you're seen as like – it's stupid – but like, an Alpha; the person whose [cyberbullying]. Like, the boss who's in control because you can do that. You've made a stand. I don't know. And then it's just like little followers who think they can be. You know?

Interviewer. Yup. So everyone's trying to get that place – that status.

Frances. Yeah.

Overall, narrative and discursive approaches were used to collect personal stories of cyberbullying, construct an integrated narrative from these personal stories, and examine the ways in which shared narratives shape practices of cyberbullying. From this analysis, I was able to construct four overarching narratives and an epilogue, which coincided and built upon one another to tell a larger story of how cyberbullying occurs. Namely, 'It's Killed or be Killed', 'Leaders of the Pack', 'Constructing the Other', 'Hunting the Other' and finally, an epilogue titled, 'Beyond Brutality'. These narratives are further developed and closely examined in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Findings

It's Kill or be Killed

'It's Kill or be Killed' refers to the dominant and overarching narrative identified in my research, featuring a moral dilemma, in which subjects are forced to choose between cyberbullying others, or being cyberbullied themselves. The saying 'its kill or be killed' commonly refers to the justification of committing harmful actions to another being, by insinuating that the absence of such actions would result in harm being caused to oneself. It is based on the idea that harmful actions are acceptable when considered to be self-defence or in the interest of self-preservation (Renzo, 2017). The title, 'It's Kill or be Killed' was chosen for this narrative as it reflects the dichotomisation of involvement in cyberbullying practices (into 'cyberbullies' and 'cybervictims') which emerged in student narratives. The dichotomisation of cyberbullying practices in student narratives resulted in the production of a reductive understanding of cyberbullying.

In this study, this idea is used by participants to justify their engagement in cyberbullying practices, by depicting it as a necessary form of protection. This is an interesting narrative to emerge from the data, given the dominant understandings of cyberbullying produced within New Zealand mass media, as well as the current body of literature on cyberbullying; such understandings have located the cause of cyberbullying within the individual, producing it as a deviant individual practice (Flegel, & Parkes, 2018; Papirany, 2015). By contrast, the narrative of 'its kill or be killed' does not position individuals who engage in cyberbullying practices as inherently 'bad', 'sadistic' or 'deviant' individuals. Rather, they are regular students who are engaged in a struggle for survival within a hostile social climate – that being secondary school. This narrative locates the 'cause' of cyberbullying within the 'system' dynamics rather than the self, which enables students to deny agency and avoid blame and responsibility for engaging in these practices. In the statements below, several students support this idea by constructing the engagement in cyberbullying practices as a means of protection from cyber-victimisation:

> **Jordan.** I see it like, people just want to fit in, or they just feel like, "if I [cyber]bully, no one is going to [cyber]bully me".
> **Interviewer.** Can you explain that further?
> **Jordan.** Sort of like – a girl, you know, she's [cyber]bullying another girl, just so she don't got a target on her back to be [cyber]bullied.

> **Tia.** [Be]cause it's like if you don't do it then you get [cyber]bullied for not doing it.

Whilst Jordan hypothesises that students engage in cyberbullying practices as a means of protecting

themselves from cyber-victimisation, Tia tells us more definitively that not engaging in cyberbullying practices directly results in the experience of cyber-victimisation. Inherent in the notion that engaging in cyberbullying protects one from experiencing cyber-victimisation, is the production and reproduction of the 'bully/victim' binary (discussed in chapter one), which produces a dichotomous understanding of cyberbullying. Within this narrative, an individual can only occupy one of two available positions; specifically, that of the 'cyberbully' or 'cybervictim' and not more than one of these positions at one time. Individuals are therefore assigned to fixed roles, detracting attention away from the complexities and nuances of social practice. For instance, the 'bully/victim' binary neglects the possibility that students can participate in cyberbullying practices and experience cyber-victimisation simultaneously. It also does not allow for the consideration of alternative subject positions, other than that of the 'cyberbully' or 'cybervictim', such as an uninvolved bystander:

> **Interviewer.** How does it protect you? [Be]cause technically you can still be [cyber]bullied, right?
> **Jordan.** Yeah. [Be]cause I've never seen someone that's [cyber]bullying someone get [cyber]bullied. Sort of, until they stop [cyber]bullying someone.

In the above statement, the interviewer attempts to challenge the 'bully/victim' binary and was curious about how engagement in cyberbullying protects students from cyber-victimisation in practice. Although Jordan appears to acknowledge it is possible to be both 'cyberbully' and 'cybervictim', he refers to his own observation of cyberbullying and cyber-victimisation occurring separately, to determine the rules of and best practices within the 'system'. The observations he draws on appear to produce the taken-for-granted notion that this is the way things are and, therefore, always have and always will be. We can see this in the following statement, in which Jordan draws on language which has the effect of naturalising the 'bully/victim' binary:

> **Jordan.** To me it's just a cycle. It's a cycle of bullying. Sort of can't stop it. Just that's high school life you know: bully or be bullied.

In the above statement, the choice between these two positions ('cyberbully'/'cybervictim') is constructed as a somewhat unavoidable process, which students must face. At its core, the 'bully/victim' binary rests on the assumption that power is hegemonic and adheres to a binary understanding. Accordingly, the unequal distribution of power is inherent. 'The system' (i.e., secondary school) thus represents a struggle for power, in which some students will naturally thrive, at the inescapable expense of others. By constructing the 'bully/victim' binary as a natural and inevitable process, responsibility for cyberbullying practices is taken away from students, as they have no agency over their involvement in it. The only choice they do have within this narrative, is

whether they choose to occupy the position of a ‘cyberbully’, or whether they become a ‘cybervictim’.

The dichotomisation of cyberbullying divides individuals across two opposing sides and pits them against one another. The matter of cyberbullying is therefore a matter of survival; if students wish to ‘survive’, they are required to do so at the expense of others. The narrative, ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’ is therefore a lose-lose situation for students who do not wish to engage in cyberbullying practices, but feel it is somewhat unavoidable in the interest of self-preservation. Below, Beth emphasises this catch-22 situation:

> **Beth.** So, I've experienced with drinking like, I wouldn't drink, but then I'd only do it because I would feel cool in front of my friends and I wouldn't be left out and stuff. And then when you're left out you're likely to get bullied next. So, with [cyber]bullying and stuff, like people wouldn't think it’s right or anything, they literally don't like what they're doing but they would just go along with it. And [they] won't necessarily have any comments towards it, or they'd just laugh, or their presence would be there. And they know if they weren't there, then they'd be the next target. I guess it is kind of like a culture, if you're not doing it then, yeah.

In the above statement, Beth describes a process whereby social exclusion precedes cyber-victimisation. She then tells us this is avoided by being at least physically present during group engagement in cyberbullying practices – although it is best when actively involved. Consequently, without the protection of belonging to a group, one becomes a target of cyberbullying. The process Beth describes produces a relationship between survival and belonging; if you belong to a group, you get to survive. This relationship is further emphasised in Jordan’s statement below, in which he describes a need to be in a group to be considered “cool”, thereby producing a binary between the “cool” and everyone else:

> **Jordon.** If you ain’t in the clique, you ain’t cool. So you want to get in the clique – you want to have your own little clique… That’s how I see it anyway.

In this way, groups define themselves through active exclusion; the ‘inside’ is defined by creating an ‘outside’, which is vilified and attacked. These structural relations are not entirely novel, bearing resemblance to Reicher, Haslam and Rath’s (2008) study of the cultivation of hate, with particular focus on the genocidal practices that took place during the Holocaust. As Reicher et al. theorised, group identification was achieved in Nazi Germany by excluding an ‘outgroup’ (the Jews) from a constructed ‘ingroup’ (the Germans) through processes of vilification. Hence, it was pure, noble, and morally superior German’s, versus devious, immoral Jews. Similarly, the narrative of ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’ places the only two available subject positions of ‘cyberbully’ and ‘cybervictim’ on opposing

sides; it is ‘us’ (the ‘cyberbullies’) versus ‘them’ (the ‘cybervictims’). Indeed, in the statement below, George directly refers to the “audience” and the “cyberbullies” as “the us”, depicting this as the privileged inside position. Hence, if one is not within the privileged ‘us’ position, one is automatically excluded through cyber-victimisation, whether or not they wish to be involved in practices of cyberbullying at all:

> **George.** Once he found the file and he put it on the internet, I kind of felt like I was dragged into the game, because I'm the victim. Like the [way] I see [it] is, you don't have to be the ‘us’, you know, the audience – you don't have to be the cyberbully. You just have to be a part of it, even if your face is in the image. You just get dragged into it.

Here, George’s use of the word “dragged” reinforces the idea that there is a lack of agency over student involvement in cyberbullying practices. In addition to this, he tells us his presence online was initiated by his ‘cyberbully’, who deceitfully uploaded his picture onto the internet as a means of cyber-victimising him. The lack of agency adheres to the ‘cyberbully/cybervictim’ binary, which produces only one of these two subject positions as available to be occupied. In other words, if you do not choose to be a ‘cyberbully’, you will be dragged into the social practice of cyberbullying as a ‘cybervictim’. Here again, there is no space made available for the subject position of a ‘bystander’, or simply being offline and uninvolved.

Accordingly, choosing not to be a part of the “us” is understood to be a deliberate decision to expose oneself to cyber-victimisation. This can be seen in the following statement, in which Beth – upon questioning whether she has taken part in cyberbullying practices herself – produces her decision not to take part in cyberbullying practices as a form of self-sacrifice. In this excerpt, we can see that the concept of self-sacrifice was a general theme in Beth’s personal narrative of cyberbullying, as she draws parallels between self-sacrificial actions she has taken within the school environment as well as at home. By drawing on the concept of self-sacrifice, Beth supports the legitimacy of her response, in which she tells us that she has not participated in cyberbullying practices:

> **Interviewer.** So have you ever felt like you've had to do the same so that you're not the target? Like is anyone an exemption?
> **Beth.** Me? No I wouldn’t. Nah. I guess I could kind of relate that [to my situation] at home. Like, I would be the one that mum would beat up, so that [it] wouldn't go back on my sisters. But I wouldn't – I’ve never retaliated or do[ne] anything [be]cause I don't have that in me.

Although the narrative of ‘self-sacrifice’ reproduces the idea that there are only two positions available (‘cyberbully’ or ‘cybervictim’), it is also important to acknowledge the way in which the narrative of ‘self-sacrifice’ simultaneously resists the dominant narrative of ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’.

Whilst ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’ produces cyberbullying as a ‘necessary’ action, thereby taking responsibility away from the individual for their engagement in cyberbullying practices, the narrative of ‘self-sacrifice’ involves refusing to engage in cyberbullying practices, despite the constructed threat to self. Therefore, because the dominant narrative produces the idea that students have no agency, the narrative of self-sacrifice resists this, by making non-engagement a calculated choice. It also provides the subject with a somewhat more dignified position within the ‘bully’/‘victim’ binary, as the subject position of ‘cybervictim’ becomes an agentic alternative to the ‘helpless cybervictim’ who was unexpectedly ‘dragged’ into cyberbullying practices, as well as a morally superior alternative to the ‘cyberbully’.

Since survival is dependent on a sense of belonging in the narrative ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’, students form ‘packs’ as a means of ensuring their own safety. The function of the ‘pack’ is constructed similarly to that of a ‘pack of wolves’, providing safety to members of the ‘pack’, as well as strength in numbers. In the narrative ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’ which dichotomises the social environment, pack members occupy the privileged inside position (the ‘us’), whilst vulnerable individuals occupy the outside position (the ‘other’). Without the protection of a pack, a student thus becomes vulnerable to cyber-victimisation. Identifying an ‘other’ through cyberbullying practices strengthens students’ own sense of belonging to the ‘pack’. Hence, by engaging in cyber-attacks against an ‘other’, students can draw attention away from themselves, providing safety from their own potential experience of cyber-victimisation. The process of ‘othering’ works by producing a point of difference between an ‘other’ and the rest of the ‘pack’, which justifies targeting them through cyberbullying practices. This is supported in the statements below, in which students illustrate numerous reasons as to why someone may experience cyber-victimisation. In doing so, a variety of features (e.g. size, skin colour etc.) are listed, that can be used as a focal point in differentiating the ‘cybervictim’ from the rest of the ‘pack’:

> **Beth.** I was [cyber]bullied because I was seen as the 'little white girl' that wouldn't do anything. So, you'll get used for [anything]; your skin colour, everything. And like, they'll [cyber]bully girls if they're bisexual, lesbians, or anything.
>
> **Tessa.** There [could] be 5000 things that they are judging you on. It might be just the fact that you [are] big, or fat, or anything like that.
>
> **Esther.** There would be kids who get made fun of just because of their size, or because of their colour, or something like that.

In the above statements, the use of the word “anything”, the term “just because”, as well as the emphasis on numerous reasons for cyberbullying, give the sense that there is little significance

behind the selection of a ‘cybervictim’. These statements depict petty and trivial explanations for students’ engagement in cyberbullying practices. This is further demonstrated in the following statement, in which one student emphasises an imbalance between the reason he was targeted via cyberbullying practices and the severity of cyberbullying he experienced. The perceived imbalance between his own actions and the way other students responded left him feeling astonished and perplexed as to why he was treated so badly for what he believed to be a minor reason:

> **George.** Yeah. [He said he cyberbullied me because] he never liked my voice… [I thought to myself] that's it? Really? You would dare post something about that? Honestly!… It’s amazing how far people would go [because of] one little thing. One little tiny detail.

Collectively, these statements produce cyberbullying practices as an arbitrary and indiscriminate process, rather than a personalised attack. In the narrative ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’, cyberbullying is constructed as a by-product of the need for an ‘other’ to exist (i.e. to establish one’s own sense of belonging), rather than a meaningful dislike of a ‘cybervictim’. This is further illustrated in the following statement, which describes individuals haphazardly selecting a ‘cybervictim’ for the purpose of engaging in cyberbullying practices. Though the engagement in cyberbullying practices is portrayed as premeditated and carefully executed, the selection of the ‘cybervictim’ is not depicted as particularly meaningful or personal:

> **Herman.** They went through his friends [list on Facebook] and chose the ugliest looking one and just started picking on him.

Because the predominant motivation to engage in cyberbullying practices is constructed as impersonal, the experience of cyberbullying can often seem unexpected for the ‘cybervictim’. The ‘cybervictim’ may feel confused as to why they have been targeted and often, this is because the ‘cyberbully’ is not someone they know personally. Consequently, student experiences of cyberbullying are constructed as unwarranted, random and unprovoked:

> **Frances.** I’ve heard other girls say, for no reason – like, calling someone ugly or saying something [like that].
> **Interviewer.** Online?
> **Frances.** Just like posting, "Oh, random name, she's so ugly" or something [like that].
> **Interviewer.** It seems so like, un-provoked.
> **Frances.** Yeah. It’s just for no reason.

> **Tia.** She used to tag me and her other friends in photos and when I used to comment on it, [the cyberbullies] used to reply back and be like, "Ew can you get away" and all that stuff.

And I'm like, “Who the hell are you? I've never talked to you in my whole entire life”.

Interviewer. So how did you make sense of that?
Tia. I didn't. I didn't make sense of it. I was just like, “Who even are you?” And then I just blocked them.
Interviewer. Why do you think they were doing it though? Because that is so odd.
Tia. [It’s] Out of the blue aye… I still have no idea why they were doing that.

Herman. I was just talking to him and then he's like, "Oh you fat cunt" and stuff like that. I was just like, "Ok whatever".
Interviewer. So what were you talking about before he said that?
Herman. He told me what he was doing. Like, he was playing this game and I'm like, "Oh yeah. What game are you playing?". And then he said he was doing something else and then straight after that he just said, "You're a fat cunt". And I was like, “Aye? What the hell. Why would just say that? We were just talking”. And [then] he [said], "Yeah".
Interviewer. That's so confusing that you were talking normally –
Herman. Half of these were just surprising.

Students who are part of a ‘cyberbullying group’ are understood to be safe, provided their allegiance to the ‘pack’ is demonstrated to group members. Acceptance within and allegiance to the ‘pack’ requires participation in cyberbullying practices. In the narrative ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’, it is every group member’s duty to contribute to the cause and maintain the integrity of the ‘pack’ through engagement in cyberbullying practices:

Frances. A while ago I remember everyone was being nasty about this girl and I’d agree for the same reason as I said before.
Interviewer. Yeah. For the fitting in thing?
Frances. Anyone who joined in [on the cyberbullying] was like "Oh yeah. You're a good cunt". "You're all good in our group”.

Jesse. Most of [cyberbullying] is probably just about fitting in with their friends and saying, “Oh look I picked on somebody”.

Herman. It’s kind of like they look up to them and only be their friend so that they won't get bullied and so that they can use the cyberbullies to their advantage.
Interviewer. So, is that like a thing? That you kind of have to –
Herman. Fit in with them basically, to be their friend. To not be bullied by them.

Interviewer. Oh. So does that mean that you have to [cyber]bully other people too, if you are friends with them?
Herman. If they tell you to, yes.

Reicher et al. (2008) have linked the cultivation of hate and the engagement in genocidal practices to ingroup solidarity, which requires the collective effort of ingroup members to maintain social bonds at the expense of individuality. For instance, "love Germany above all else" was the first Commandment of every National Socialist (Koonz, 2003, p. 7). Within the narrative of 'It's Kill or be Killed', one constantly has to demonstrate their loyalty to the group in order to belong to the 'inside' and therefore, differences in beliefs, values and opinions to that which the 'pack' endorses, cannot be expressed. Below, Frances and Raymond share their experiences of what happened when they resisted participating in cyberbullying practices, along with their friendship groups:

Frances. If someone doesn't agree – like if everyone's ripping into someone and roasting [them] or whatever, and someone else doesn't agree, they are seen as, you know, weird. Like, "Why are you doing that?" "Why are you sticking up for them?" Like, "Are you like that?" They don't want to be seen as the weird person.
Interviewer. Yeah. What happens to them when they are the weird person that sticks up for someone?
Frances. Everyone just ignores them and is like, "What are you doing?" "You're being a bit weird".

Raymond. They tried peer pressuring me into [cyberbullying] and I kind of put my foot down and said, "I'm not doing that kind of stuff; I've been [cyber]bullied enough in my life." So, I stuck up for myself and pretty much stayed by myself, like didn't really talk to [many] people. I'd kind of just be always by myself.

In Frances' statement, she discusses a hypothetical scenario of what happens when someone crosses the boundary line between 'us' and 'them', by advocating for a 'cybervictim' and demonstrating support for the other side of the binary. The response from other members of a friendship group appears to question the 'boundary crosser's' likeness to the 'cybervictim', thereby positioning them as a potential outsider (i.e., "the weird person"). The statement portrays the group as coming to an immediate defence against a suspected intruder who may be wrongfully included within the inner circle. It rests on the idea that any association one has with the other side of the binary distances them from the 'inside' and risks social exclusion. One's position within the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed' is therefore, never entirely safe. Likewise, in Raymond's statement, his resistance came at a personal cost, resulting in his isolation from others. Thus, whilst resistance to cyberbullying practices is made possible within the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed', it is only made possible through the idea of 'self-

sacrifice'.

Accordingly, allegiance to one's 'pack' is established and maintained through the impending threat of cyber-victimisation which follows the loss of belonging to the 'pack'. Allegiance to one's 'pack' requires silence and conformity from students, no matter what their personal feelings are, regarding cyberbullying practices. Though students often express that they do not feel good about the group's engagement in cyberbullying practices, fear of losing their sense of belonging to the 'pack' (and threat of subsequent cyber-victimisation) appears to prevent them from outwardly expressing what is constructed as their 'true' feelings. This is emphasised by Beth:

> **Beth.** They'd be like hating themselves for [cyberbullying]. But they can't show that when they're around their friends. You literally can't show that because then you'll be next.

Silence and conformity to 'packs' produces a partitioned environment, where students are unable to support one another out of fear of becoming the 'cybervictim'. Below, Tessa and Beth discuss how hard it is to stand up for someone (even a friend) when they are being cyberbullied, due to fear over the consequences for doing so. Furthermore, Raymond tells us about an occasion where he did stand up for someone who was being cyberbullied, which then resulted in him being targeted himself:

> **Tessa.** I have to be very careful because it is their own situation and they can deal with it. I feel like I should have input in trying to stop it. But I don't know how that reaction [will] come out cause it might make the situation 10 times worse. I look at it and I feel guilty. So, if I were to comment back and say, "Hey, can you please stop this. I don't appreciate the words." They might come back and say, "Oh well I don't need your input on this. Who cares about your input. You should just go away. Piss off. You're ugly yourself," and they might continue on further.
>
> **Beth.** Like even if my friends were to get [cyber]bullied and stuff, it's really hard for someone to stick up for their friends [be]cause they would then get [cyber]bullied as well. So, even though you don't want to be dragged down into it, you will if you stick up for them.
>
> **Raymond.** It's kind of actually hard to talk about, but after sort of sticking up for her, that's when they were like, "I'll get my brother" blah blah blah and I was like, "Oh yeah whatever." Then that's when the messages would start, and that's how [the cyberbullying] all started really.

The above excerpts tell us that by advocating for the 'cybervictim', an individual is subjected to their own cyber-victimisation and thereby, forced to take up the position of the 'cybervictim' themselves.

Again, Beth's use of the word "dragged" reinforces the lack of agency over involvement in cyberbullying practices, within the constraints of the 'bully/victim' binary. Furthermore, a missing subject position of an 'advocate' was emphasised in Raymond's story of an occasion in which he attempted to take up the position of the 'advocate' and instead, was forced into the position of the 'cybervictim'. The dichotomisation of subject positions within the narrative, 'It's Kill or be Killed' does not make space available for alternative subject positions, such as an advocate for a 'cybervictim', or an uninvolved 'bystander'. Individuals must choose one of two available positions; 'cybervictim' or 'cyberbully'.

The simplicity of dichotomy produces clear and absolute boundaries in the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed'. Not only do students refrain from advocating for one another, even simply associating with one another reflects a crossing of such boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. This concept, which can be referred to as 'death by association' in the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed', is supported in the statements below, where students describe friends of 'cybervictims' being targeted for cyberbullying:

> **Beth.** And then like if you're seen hanging out with the person that [they're] like bullying or anything then you'll – they'll forget about bullying them and you'll be the next one.
>
> **Tessa.** And then they just target or pinpoint all of your friends.
>
> **George.** Well I was making videos at the time. Like, I actually had someone who really enjoyed my videos and liked who I was. It was a girl and she became my girlfriend. After two months, she started to get hate from others because I was dating her. So, I did the right thing and I had to stop the relationship. She left my college and she moved on.

As it can be seen in the above statement, the ingroup/outgroup distinction was so dominant that George told a story in which he terminated a relationship to protect someone from cyber-victimisation. George, a 'cybervictim' and therefore an 'other', placed the safety of his girlfriend in jeopardy, simply because she was associated with him. George's narrative of self-sacrifice reinforces the binary between 'us' and 'them', depicting the "right" action as protecting someone he cared for, from his underprivileged side of the binary – by ending his relationship with her, she would be safer.

Interestingly, although 'us' and 'them' boundaries limited students' friendship prospects in the narrative of 'It's Kill or be Killed', the application of these boundaries appears to be context-specific. For instance, strict boundaries are only necessary when in the presence of others, who are also on the privileged side of the binary. Below, Rachel and Beth discuss situations in which their 'cyberbullies' behave normally (or even friendly) towards them when they are alone, yet return to cyberbullying practices in the presence of their friends:

Beth. Like someone could cyberbully you and they could be doing it, but they could act real normal towards you if you have like one class with them and no one else is with them. But as soon as they're like around their friends they become more – they just become more poisonous. Like they are so horrible.

Rachel. It felt like when she was alone, if she was not with her friends, she would be friendly to me. Like if her friends went off by themselves, then she would sort of come sit next to me, or we would just like snapchat each other and it felt like we were friends. Then her other friends would come back and she kind of would just back away from me and start saying names again and she messaged me horrible things.
Interviewer. So you never really knew where you stood with her?
Rachel. No. I didn't know if I wanted to like, cut that off. I knew I should of, but then I think if I did it would have just got worse.

Though confusing for 'cybervictims' who are unsure of what to make of the conflicting actions of their 'cyberbullies', such a contradiction may signal that students are attempting to covertly resist the 'us' and 'them' boundaries produced in the narrative of 'It's Kill or be Killed', when the threat to self is lessened. The statements above suggest that when free from constraints (such as witnesses to their crossing of boundaries), 'cyberbullies' do not necessarily personally dislike 'cybervictims'. Though students often expressed that they do not feel good about their engagement in cyberbullying practices, they feel they have to participate in them to belong to the 'inside' and prevent their own cyber-victimisation. In this way, the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed' maintains itself by dividing students up and pitting them against one another; students are prevented from discussing their fears and learning they are not alone in their dislike of cyberbullying practices. Therefore, they resign themselves to acting upon what is constructed as their 'true' feelings in secrecy. With restrictions around sharing their 'true' feelings, this problematic social practice continues. In their study of racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Barnes et al. (2013) describe a similar phenomenon referred to as the "divide and rule tactic" (p. 68); Barnes et al. argue that pitting people against one another simultaneously diverts attention away from resisting the systems of domination and subordination that oppress them. Although Barnes et al. explore the function of the 'divide and rule' tactic in maintaining racism in the local context, the resonating emphasis on competition in practices of cyberbullying suggests this is a powerful method for maintaining structural inequalities in the local context.

Leaders of the Pack

The narrative 'Leaders of the Pack' features the emergence of 'cyberbully leaders' within their

relative friendship groups. In the previous narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed', students plead their allegiance to their relative groups through their engagement in cyberbullying practices. In doing so, students established a sense of belonging to the 'pack' and simultaneously received protection from cyber-victimisation. Though a key feature of the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed' places emphasis on 'pack' (rather than individualistic) ideals, the current narrative 'Leaders of the Pack' organises students within the 'pack' hierarchically, across varying levels of power and status. This hierarchical structure can be seen in the following statements, in which students describe docile friendship groups, who are led by one dominant member through their engagement in cyberbullying practices:

> **Herman.** There's like the ringleader of it all.
>
> **Jordan.** Yeah they were sort of the passengers and he was sort of the driver, the main one.
>
> **Beth.** Well, there will be like someone whose is like the biggest – so she'll be like the main source and then people just like comment and reply on her thing.
>
> **Raymond.** There were four of them all together, but one of them was the ringleader for it.

Out of all of the group members, the 'leader' has the most power and authority – they are located at the very top of the hierarchy. Therefore, the leaders of the 'pack' make decisions on behalf of the group. Group members in turn are expected to follow the orders prescribed by the 'leader', including orders involving cyber-attacks towards other students:

> **Herman.** [The ringleader] says to his friend – like to his group of cyberbullies – or if there's just one, they will decide what they are doing and pick their target.
>
> **Raymond.** He was like, egging the younger one to [cyberbully others], because the main person was year 13 and he would just tell the younger people to do it.
> **Interviewer.** Okay. Would he ever do it himself?
> **Raymond.** No. He was pretty much saying, "You do this or else" kind of thing. So he was bullying them into doing it.
>
> **Rachel.** They were friends that would come to my house and we would all sleepover and then they just one day turned their backs [on me] and I knew it was just the one that was leading it… You could tell that there was the two girls that didn't really want to be saying this stuff, but it almost seemed like they wanted to still be friends with her just because she's like popular or whatever.

The narrative 'Leaders of the Pack' appears to be structured according to patriarchal ideals, with a

strong authoritarian leader, who has power and influence over other pack members. Patriarchal ideals are further emphasised in the following statements, in which students explain that individuals within the pack engage in cyberbullying as a means to assert their dominance within the group. However, it also implies that only some students are able to successfully do so:

> **Herman.** So [they] try and be like someone to look up to, for other people who are trying to do [cyberbullying]. You know, like someone to look up to for other people to do it.
>
> **Frances.** If you do it, you're seen as like – it's stupid – but like, an Alpha; the person whose [cyberbullying]. Like, the boss who's in control because you can do that. You've made a stand. I don't know. And then it's just like little followers who think they can be. You know?
> **Interviewer.** Yup. So everyone's trying to get that place, that status.
> **Frances.** Yeah.
>
> **Jordan.** Sort of just like thinking he's the boss; thinking he's the man. You know sort of, he's [not] the man, but he's just thinking he's the king of the castle, he's on top, you know.
> **Interviewer.** So what do you think he was doing back then? Like now that you're –
> **Jordan.** Now that I think about it I think he was just trying to look cool in front of the clique… Cause there was the boys, like they were just the boys, the cool boys sort of, you know. But yeah he used to think he was cool for bullying me.

In the above statements, qualities such as strength and superiority in cyberbullying abilities are privileged and attributed specifically to 'pack leaders'. Imbedded in these statements is the idea that such qualities need to be proven to the 'pack' and that power, authority, and status are to be earned through engagement in cyberbullying practices. Supporting the idea that successfully participating in cyberbullying is 'proof of strength', one student tells us that eliciting a negative response from a 'cybervictim' through cyberbullying practices is perceived as an achievement:

> **Herman.** It's just that people think it's cool. They do it for a reaction.
> **Interviewer.** Mm. So I'm wondering if you know anything about why it's cool. Like what do you get if you cyberbully?
> **Herman.** I don't know like just the feeling that you've achieved something I think. Achieved bullying someone. You know, making them feel like the lowest of the low.

This statement illustrates the way that cyberbullying is produced in the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', as a fashionable, desirable behaviour. In particular, the statement places emphasis on the reaction of the 'cybervictim' as a measure of achievement; if one elicits a negative response from

the ‘cybervictim’, then one has sufficiently proven their strength and superiority by causing harm to their opponent. Successful cyberbullying is therefore a measure of harm which you are able to inflict on the ‘cybervictim’ – and specifically, evidence of this harm in the way the victim reacts. A successful cyber-attack positions the ‘cybervictim’ at the very bottom of the social hierarchy (“made to feel like the lowest of the low”) and simultaneously, one’s own favourable position is established (the “cool” cyberbully). In the following statement, Jesse more explicitly alludes to the idea that hurting others is seen as ‘cool’, further supporting the construction of cyberbullying as a trendy, desirable behaviour:

> **Jesse.** These other people who seem to think it’s cool to hurt; to make somebody else feel low, so they feel high and strong.

Again, it is worth noting the parallels to Reicher et al.’s (2013) analysis of the cultivation of hate and engagement in genocidal practices. Reicher et al. draws attention to the way in which ‘othered’ groups are not only vilified and attacked, but how attacks are often *celebrated* and understood to be an achievement. For instance, during the Holocaust, it was perceived that only the ‘strong’ and the ‘noble’ were able to celebrate their engagement in genocidal practices (Reicher et al., 2013). The privileging of ‘achievement’ in the narrative of ‘Leaders of the Pack’ makes space for certain individuals to rise to the top of the hierarchy and be set apart from others. Achievement is something to be ‘earned’ and thus, it inherently differentiates individuals from one another, based on their level of perceived success. The social reward for participating in cyberbullying can be seen in the following statements, which depict particular individuals (and groups of individuals) as gaining (or attempting to gain) notoriety and status for their engagement in cyberbullying practices:

> **Tessa.** Because, you know, they think, “Oh I might be popular, because I gang up with this gang and I’ll get more hits and stuff like that”... It’s a funny thing, you need to do something to get more friends and I think when they pinpoint and [cyber]bully people they think, "Oh I’m going to get more friends because I do that”.

> **Frances.** There was this one guy and he's known for like roasting people and just being mean to people. But it’s seen as cool.

The construction of cyberbullying as trendy and ‘cool’ was perhaps one of the most dominant ways in which cyberbullying was produced within student narratives. In the statements below, this can be seen in the way that students talk about cyberbullying practices being promoted to other students, as a means for achieving social prominence, recognition and ultimately, securing a higher position on the social hierarchy. In this way, bragging about engagement in cyberbullying practices appears to serve as a form of ‘social capital’:

Herman. People used to talk about, you know, just in general at lunch times and stuff, they would talk about bullying other people online.

Interviewer. Yeah. So what would you hear them talking about?

Herman. Just saying that they gave this one kid crap for what he looked like and calling him "ugly" and telling him to like, "hang himself" and stuff.

Interviewer. Oh okay and how does the friend respond to that?

Herman. He just [says,] "Oh, yeah I did the same thing a couple of months ago with a different kid" and then they were just going on and on [about cyberbullying in front of] other people in the playground.

Jordan. Like you know, "Look at me I'm [cyber]bullying this person. I'm cool"… I don't know that's the thing nowadays. Hate on someone and you're cool.

Tia. Well um.. It was like, it just felt like a trend, like one person would be like, "Oh I just sent this person hate on this social media", and then their friends will be like, "Oh I'll do it too then". It's like as soon as one person does it, everyone else is doing it as well. So It's like real cool to be like, "Oh yeah I did it as well".

Interviewer. So do you think someone sees them doing it and wants to do it, or the other person asks them to?

Tia. I feel like it's all of them. So like the person who does it first would later go back to school and be like, "Oh guess what I did" and they will brag about it. Which would cause everyone else to do it. And then someone else would do it at school and then someone would be like, "What are you doing?", and they'd be like, "Oh I'm sending hate to this person, you do it too". And they would do it. So then all their friends would do it. It's a big trend.

One particularly pertinent example of how ingrained the ideals of 'strength' are in student narratives of cyberbullying occurred when one student, Frances, was discussing an instance in which she told the 'leader' of her friendship group about her participation in the present study. Even when confronted with knowledge of this study (which might problematise cyberbullying practices), this person was still proud to acknowledge her extensive engagement in cyberbullying practices:

Frances. She can be nasty. I was talking and I told her that I was doing an interview for this and she was like, "Oh how have you been cyberbullied?". I just told her it was "when I was younger" or something, because I didn't want to explain to her. And she's like, "Oh fuck that. I'm the one who would cyberbully all these bitches". And I was like (laughs), "Okay".

In Frances's statement, we can see her reluctance to admit to the 'leader' that she had recent

experiences of cyber-victimisation; the 'leader' appears to be undermining Frances for her participation in the research and therefore, doing so would place her in an unfavourable 'cybervictim' position. The 'leader' then proceeds to assert her superiority, by reminding Frances of her position at the top of the hierarchy, through her extensive engagement in cyberbullying practices. Hence, the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack' also adheres to a binary understanding of cyberbullying, contrasting strong, superior 'cyberbullies' against weak, inferior 'cybervictims':

> **Tessa.** Most of the [cyber]bullies were actually boys. None of them were girls. So that was surprising as well. I don't know if it was kind of like a sexist thing, or something like that.
> **Interviewer.** That's a really interesting comment about sexism. Can you explain that further?
> **Tessa.** I think because it's the whole female/male dominance thing. They feel that a lot of the girls can be weak at most times. They can cry and they're not – I don't want to say it – not strong enough, as the boys. Because you know [the boys] can just laugh about it… They think that the girls are a lot more emotional and they are at that time of age. But it's happened in most cases, like you might get a few that might be the same sex, but it's a lot of female/male dominance.

Although Tessa discusses the issue of sexism in the above excerpt, we can see that a binary has been established between the 'strong male cyberbully' and the 'weak female cybervictim'. Through naturalising inequality between males and females, this excerpt produces and reproduces the idea that females are weak and therefore inherently positioned for domination by 'naturally' stronger and superior males. In doing so, it reinforces the idea that intrinsic differences exist between different groups of people and therefore, systems of domination and subordination are unavoidable. The reproduction of the 'bully/victim' binary is further demonstrated in the following statements, which link qualities that are understood to be a sign of 'weakness' to the experience of cyber-victimisation:

> **Jordan.** I just think it was because I didn't stick up for myself back then. It sort of made me an easy target.

> **Tia.** I still think of myself as a target as well – just not [with] cyberbullying anymore. More of an easy target.
> **Interviewer.** What do you mean by an easy target?
> **Tia.** Like a pushover. I used to be – well I kind of still am – a pushover. People will say things to me that hurt. Inside of me it's hurting, but then on the outside I act like it's funny.

> **Frances.** There's this girl at our school and you could see in her appearance, she really self-harmed – like really bad scars and she's lesbian as well. I don't know if [the rumour about her being a lesbian is] a lie or real. But then everyone was being real nasty to her in our

> group, saying how disgusting [she was] and just like, "I hate anyone who [self-harms]" and all this. And I was like, "Well it's not really like – we don't know why [she self-harmed]". So I just told them to stop it and then [my friend] was like, "Oh you fuck up you're just being stupid anyways". "Do you [self-harm as well]?" And I'm like, (sighs).

In adherence with the 'bully/victim' binary which naturalises systems of domination and subordination between different groups of people, vulnerable individuals are positioned as 'fair game' with regards to cyberbullying practices. The concept of 'fair-game' is apparent in the above statement, in which Frances discusses her friendship groups response to a fellow student who was perceived to engage in self-harming behaviours. The act of self-harm appears to be read as a sign of weakness by members of Frances's friendship group and, consequently, the vilification of this student is enabled. When Frances advocates for the student, she risks her own position as an 'insider', as her group begins to question her own engagement in self-harming behaviours.

The privileging of strength in favour of weakness provides 'cybervictims' with little opportunity for response to cyberbullying attacks and prevents them from acknowledging the negative impact cyber-victimisation has on them. In the statements below, several students construct the need to appear unscathed by their experiences of cyber-victimisation:

> **Jane.** Yeah it did [bother me]. But I didn't react, because she likes it when I do that, you know?
>
> **Jesse.** It does hurt but I don't let it show because then they think that [they are] winning, sort of thing.
>
> **Beth.** So, kind of like with bullying – when I was getting [cyber]bullied and stuff – I just couldn't tell a teacher [be]cause I just, yeah – I just couldn't.
>
> **Frances.** Nah. Because then it would just look like they have that… Like I couldn't do it myself you know, I couldn't confront the thing myself. I had to get [help]. That's what it would look like, someone else fighting my own battles, if you know what I mean?
>
> **Frances.** And if you block people, it would be seen as like… You can't handle it.

Above, Frances explains that she refrained from blocking her cyberbully and seeking help from others about the cyberbullying she was experiencing, as she needed to show she was strong enough to deal with the cyberbullying on her own. In the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', the weaker a student appears to others, the more vulnerable they are to further cyber-victimisation. Therefore, cyberbullies look for a sign that their 'cybervictim' is 'weak' by way of a negative reaction to their attack – this

in turn tells them they can continue to attack this individual, as they have 'proven' their strength. Accordingly, 'cybervictims' could demonstrate strength by resisting the attack and preventing further cyber-victimisation. The conflation of 'reacting' and 'vulnerability' in student narratives is supported in the following statements, in which participants discuss the tendency of 'cyberbullies' to continue cyberbullying when a negative response is elicited from the 'cybervictim':

> **Jesse.** Because I've [shown] it once and just because they think that they won, they don't stop. They continue, because they know that they are beating you. And like hurting you... So then you're just [going to] be hiding away from life and social [activities]. And that's what they want.

> **George.** At the end of the day, you make your comment and then the person you victimised either [does] something in retaliation and you know, that's the [idea].

> **Herman.** They try to look for a reaction and they hope that they get it. But when they don't, sometimes they keep going [and] sometimes they stop if you don't give them a reaction. But if you do [give them a reaction], they will keep going even longer; if you don't [give them a reaction], they will keep going for a bit and then they'll stop eventually.
> **Interviewer.** Okay. So you're saying that the reason people carry on is if you react to it?
> **Herman.** Yeah. So if you just ignore it, it will stop – if you don't give them the reaction they are looking for. So [if] someone said to hang yourself to a random person and they did it, they got the reaction [and] they will do it to another person. But if they don't get the reaction they might keep sending the person the same message over and over to see if they will do it and if they keep not doing it then they will stop and go to another person.
> **Interviewer.** So the bullies who say to someone to hang themselves, they are waiting –
> **Herman.** For that person to do it, yeah.
> **Interviewer.** What has given you that impression?
> **Herman.** It's just that they keep going. I've noticed that with other people, they do it. Like they keep going and stuff.

Remarkably, the privileging of strength in favour of weakness appeared to be a protective factor for some students, who chose not to commit suicide upon receiving messages that were inciting them to do so. Although they had struggled with suicidal ideation upon receiving such messages, these students explain that they chose not to commit suicide, to prevent their cyberbullies from 'succeeding'. Therefore, there appears to be an opportunity for 'cybervictims' to resist subjugation, by portraying a strong defence against cyber-victimisation:

> **Esther.** I see it like, if I don't [kill myself] then I'm being the bigger person.

Interviewer. What's changed?

Dave. Not really much. [It's] just, I know if I die it might make them happy. And I wouldn't want them to be that happy if they are just going to be bullying other people after me.

Jesse. If you [kill yourself] they think that they're on top. But if you don't [kill yourself] then you show [them] that you're not backing out that what they're doing [doesn't hurt]. It's not giving their satisfaction that they have been wanting.

Interviewer. So is that a third reason – is that killing yourself would let them win?

Jesse. Pretty much what most bullies want.

Interviewer. They want that?

Jesse. People tell me to kill myself, but I don't even listen to that really.

The opportunity for 'cybervictims' to demonstrate strength in response to cyber-victimisation gave way to an alternative narrative of 'resilience' which emerged in participant narratives. The alternative narrative of 'resilience' resists the dominant narrative 'Leaders of the Pack' by making space for an alternative subject position which was not previously available; rather than 'weak cybervictims', the narrative of 'resilience' positions 'cybervictims' as having proven their strength to the 'pack' by enduring and surviving cyber-victimisation – an arduous test of an individual's strength:

George. Deep down inside of me, where I have a lot of thoughts and a lot of heart, I just – something inside of me told me [that] if you make it through this…If you can get through all this shit, through 1200 people or more [cyberbullying you], you can do nearly anything.

Jane. It's definitely built my character up a lot. I just feel stronger and like if it happened to me now, I'd just be like, "What are you doing? Just leave me alone".

Beth. I guess, once you've been through cyberbullying and stuff, like you definitely think that your life is over and like nothing is worse [than] coming to school. And you definitely do go through that down phase of like, wanting to kill yourself, or self-harm... But then when you kind of like overcome [it] and you're still there at the end of the day, it's kind of like a huge feeling. Like you definitely feel like you've overcome something and then you kind of just use that and look back. So if I was like ever to get bullied again, then I would – honestly I would probably get down and stuff and I would think like that – but then I would kind of just look back at when I was younger and stuff. So you do become more resilient.

In the previous narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed', we learned that cyberbullying practices are maintained through partitioning material relations. Likewise, the 'Leaders of the Pack' narrative

reinforces this partitioned environment by preventing students from seeking help from others for their experiences of cyber-victimisation. However, in the narrative of 'resilience', students have already proven their strength by enduring cyber-victimisation and no longer need to appear unaffected by it. Accordingly, seeking help from others becomes an available response. The idea that seeking help makes one stronger draws on the alternative narrative of 'resilience', which constructs the experience of cyber-victimisation as a measure of strength. In the statement below, Tessa demonstrates the way in which an alternative response to cyberbullying is enabled by the narrative of 'resilience'. Here, she portrays seeking help from others as a means of becoming stronger, rather than a sign of weakness.

> **Tessa.** I just [sought] help because there's kind of like no point in not telling anyone [be]cause you're not going to be okay, so you need to talk to someone about it. So yeah, I just went back and did the whole process and I think from that point on I got a lot stronger and I was more open with people. Because [initially] I just kept it to myself and I didn't tell people what was going on and I think that you should tell people.

Finally, in the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', social media accounts appear to be integral to the process of establishing a favourable position within the hierarchy. A social media profile is a visual construction of one's identity; social media content is carefully selected to produce an understanding of oneself which is shared with others. Hence, social media profiles are extremely important to the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', as they provide students with an opportunity to outwardly display ideals of strength to their peers. Many students describe the emergence of a phenomenon called 'PP-grams' – an acronym which stands for "Private, Private Instagram's". It appears that many students possess multiple Instagram accounts, with at least one additional account which is separate to their general Instagram account. 'PP-grams' are therefore personal Instagram accounts with, typically, a small number of 'followers', enabling students to share content they do not wish to share with the larger audiences of their general Instagram account. The benefit for students, in having an additional private Instagram account, is that they are able to include content in their profiles which they are unable to share with certain individuals – including parents and other family members. Below, Frances, Beth and Jane describe the way in which these accounts work:

> **Frances.** Everyone calls them 'PPgrams' - 'private, private Instagram's'.
> Interviewer. 'PP-grams.' Okay.
> Frances. And so it's just your closest friends following you and you just post how you feel and stuff.

> **Beth.** On Instagram you can either have [your profile] private, or non-private. Many of the

girls here will have like, ‘private-privates’, where they'll let like three [of their closest friends] follow [them] and then they won't accept anyone [else].

Jane. Because there's private Instagram’s… So only like a handful of people follow them. Like only your close friends or whatever – people you trust.
Interviewer. So does everyone have their own account, is that normal?
Jane. It’s normal for people to have about three Instagram’s.
Interviewer. Really?
Jane. Yeah. Like a main one and then like a spam one where you know, it's – I don't even, I only have like two – a spam one where I put like funny posts like that wouldn't look good on my main Instagram.

The statements above tell us that different Instagram accounts serve different functions. Whilst the general Instagram account constructs an identity shared with a larger target audience – such as friends, family and likely, strangers – the function of a ‘PPgram’ constructs an identity which is shared exclusively with close friends. The predominant nature of content included within a ‘PPgram’ is the engagement in cyberbullying practices. It is the students personal display of ‘strength’ within their relative friendship groups. In the statements below, this is supported in the way students discuss a common practice involving privately slandering a ‘cybervictim’ within one’s own ‘PPgram’. However, the target audience of this particular practice of cyberbullying are close friends only, indicating that the actual ‘cybervictim’ is often not present to experience the cyber-victimisation:

Interviewer. Okay, so that's the purpose of it? Is it like a place where you can really just say anything [that] you want?
Frances. Yeah and a lot of those [PP] Instagram’s are like slandering people and stuff; [it is] just for your friends to see though.

Rachel. So they'll have like one account that's open to the public where they post like, really nice photos of themselves and then they'll have like another account that's just completely private and they'll only have about like, 30-something ‘followers’, where they just completely talk shit about other people. And it’s a common thing – it happens in my friend[ship] group a lot.

Beth. They'd have so many posts on [their PPgram] where they just absolutely shit talk someone and put someone down, or they'll just make fun of them. And then all their friends will comment on it and they'll be laughing together and they'll just think they're so cool.

In Frances’s statement above, she tells us that the cyberbullying is somewhat indirect, as it is only

intended to be shared with one's friends. The notion that having a direct 'cybervictim' is inconsequential to engagement in such practices, supports the idea that 'PP-grams' function more as a visual demonstration to one's relative friendship group regarding ideals of 'strength', rather than any meaningful attack on the 'cybervictim'. Though, often the cyberbullying included within a 'PP-gram' will either intentionally or unintentionally become known to the 'cybervictim':

> **Rachel.** You've got people following that ['PPgram'] account that will see [the cyberbullying] and then they'll know it's about this person.
>
> **Beth.** They do it without the person seeing it and then they come back to school and they'll make sneaky comments. But normally they let one of the ['cybervictims' friends see it]. For me, they let my best friend follow the account so [that] she could see everything that they were doing to me and [my best friend] would then show me. So they knew that I would find out.
>
> **Frances.** But most of the girls that follow that ['PPgram'] account are friends with us. That's how we knew [about the cyberbullying].
> **Interviewer.** So they saw it happening –
> **Frances.** And they told us.

In the statements above, we can see that although the primary function of the 'PPgram' appears to be the visual demonstration of strength to peers through the engagement in cyberbullying practices, often a secondary function is a more indirect method of attack against a 'cybervictim'. This subsidiary function of the 'PPgram' may reflect students' dislike of using harsh cyberbullying practices and thus, a less direct method may feel more palatable for them. It is not the 'cybervictim' themselves who is viewing the content, but a friend of the 'cybervictim' who will pass on the 'attack themselves; hence it may enable students to distance themselves from their engagement in cyberbullying practices, whilst still benefiting through the visual display of strength to their peers.

Overall, the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack' produces a somewhat contradictory understanding of cyberbullying to that of the previous narrative, 'It's Kill or be Killed'. In 'It's Kill or be Killed' cyberbullying practices are constructed as undesirable, but necessary for survival. Alternatively, 'Leaders of the Pack' produces cyberbullying as a desirable, trendy behaviour – inflicting pain on a 'cybervictim' is proof of one's 'strength' and a form of achievement. Consequently, the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack' maintains itself by fostering students' personal investment in cyberbullying practices. While silence and a segregated social environment maintains cyberbullying in 'It's Kill or be Killed', competition, hierarchy and personal reward now further entrenches students in these problematic practices. As a consequence of privileging competition and individual achievement, not

everyone can be a ‘leader’ of the ‘pack’ and members of the group are subjugated by the ‘leader’. However, subjugated members of the ‘pack’ still occupy more socially favourable positions than subjugated individuals who do not belong to any ‘pack’. Not only are members of the ‘pack’ safer from experiencing cyber-victimisation, but members of the ingroup who are ‘successful’ with cyberbullying gain in popularity and social status.

The production of two contradictory narratives appears to function to keep social power relations consistent and coherent between those who engage in cyberbullying practices and those who experience them. Because discourse enables certain understandings whilst constraining others, people often need to draw on various and sometimes conflicting discourses to produce certain understandings and achieve particular actions in the social world (Wetherell, & Potter, 1988). Through the construction of the narrative ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’, individuals engaging in cyberbullying practices are positioned as fearful of cyber-victimisation and reluctantly engaging in cyberbullying practices as a means of survival. Within this narrative, individuals can engage in cyberbullying practices without occupying the ‘evil cyberbully’ position. However, such a construction also implies that cyberbullies are fearful and therefore ‘weak’. In adherence with the binary, ‘cyberbullies’ are understood to be strong and dominant whereas ‘cybervictims’ are constructed as weak and vulnerable. Thus, the addition and co-articulation of the narrative ‘Leaders of the Pack’, counters the threat to existing social power relations that the narrative ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’ enabled.

Constructing the Other

The narrative ‘Constructing the Other’ follows the practices of cyberbullying by which the ‘cybervictim’ or ‘other’ is produced and reproduced in student narratives. In the previous narratives ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’ and ‘Leaders of the Pack’, the social structures producing cyberbullying practices were explored. Alternatively, ‘Constructing the Other’ investigates the actual practices of cyberbullying, examining the different ways in which these practices take place, as well as their material effects. In this narrative, dominant methods to engage in cyberbullying practices are identified, with each method ultimately serving to establish a ‘cybervictim’ as the ‘other’.

Despite the dominant understanding of ‘cyberbullies’ as ‘bad’, ‘sadistic’ individuals, we have seen that students who engage in cyberbullying practices often do not feel good about their engagement. Since cyberbullying practices consist of actions that have harmful effects for individuals who are targeted, engagement may be seen as contradicting an understanding of oneself as a ‘good’ person who does not hurt others. However, engagement in cyberbullying is simultaneously constructed as necessary to establish a sense of belonging, as well as protecting oneself from cyber-victimisation. In the narrative, ‘Constructing the Other’, the process of ‘othering’ somewhat alleviates the moral

dilemma which is produced in the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed'; it enables students to behave in ways that conflict with their self-concept or values. When a 'cybervictim' is constructed as 'the other', they are not seen as part of the 'pack'. Consequently, tolerance and empathy towards the 'cybervictim' diminishes, enabling the inhumane treatment of them. Ultimately, the narrative 'Constructing the Other' enables students to consolidate their belonging to the 'pack', protect themselves from their own potential cyber-victimisation, whilst feeling justified in their engagement with cyberbullying practices. As Reicher et al. (2013) argue, hate is not an objective reaction, nor is it necessarily perceived; rather, hate is actively *constructed*. In the narrative, 'Its Kill or Be Killed' students portrayed the 'reasons' for engaging in cyberbullying as trivial, supporting the idea that the vilification of the 'cybervictim' was not an impartial reaction and nor was it meaningfully perceived. Yet, as the students in this study who have experienced cyber-victimisation have articulated, the extreme and abusive actions of the 'cyberbullies' would suggest otherwise. The narrative 'Constructing the Other' addresses this identified 'gap' between the inconsequential targeting of a 'cybervictim' and the extent to which they are harmed. Although there are a multitude of methods by which an 'other' can be constructed, four dominant methods of 'othering' emerge in my research: (1) the production of propaganda regarding the 'other'; (2) imparting moral judgement about the 'other'; (3) retaliation against the 'other'; and (4) separating the 'cool' from the 'uncool'.

The Production of Propaganda

The production of propaganda regarding an 'other' is one dominant way in which an 'other' is produced in this research. Through the generation of rumours that place an individual in a socially unfavourable light, 'cyberbullies' can denigrate the character of the 'cybervictim' and generate animosity towards them from other individuals. In the statements below, two students describe incidents where exceptionally negative rumours were started about them on social media:

> **George.** One day I was in class working on a film and a friend of mine was on his phone on [a social platform called] 'Yik Yak'. He was scrolling down [the social platform] and I noticed one [comment] that scarred me. It said, "George will shoot up the school. He will kill everyone".
>
> **Interviewer.** What did they say? What got shared [on Facebook]?
> **Esther.** Just what happened with my dad.
> **Interviewer.** So they found out about that?
> **Esther.** Yeah. But the comment was that apparently, he just slapped me and I made him out to be this person that he's not. That's what got around.
> **Interviewer.** That would have been so traumatic to read after knowing what really happened to you.

> **Esther.** Yeah. And it sucks when you know what happened, [but] other people say that it didn't [happen]. It's like, "How can you know? You weren't there." That's how I see things. But because it was just continuously going through the school and I didn't really have anyone to back me up, I just let them say it.

In the statements above, George describes a rumour which painted him as a potential murderer, whilst Esther refers to a rumour in which her father was unjustly sent to prison, due to false allegations she made about him. Accordingly, George was produced as the unstable, dangerous 'other', whilst Esther was produced as the lying, callous 'other'. Both of these subject positions are so severely negative that they not only devalue the portrayal of these students' characters, but they essentially dehumanise them. A person who can kill, along with someone who can lie and have their own father sent to prison, does not deserve dignity and respect; they are less than human and therefore, not one of 'us'. By dehumanising 'cybervictims', 'cyberbullies' strengthen the position of the 'other', subsequently justifying and encouraging the inhumane treatment of them through cyberbullying practices. Likewise, Reicher et al. (2013) discusses the central role of propaganda in dehumanising the 'other', a process which has laid the groundwork for genocidal actions to take-place throughout history. For instance, the representation of Jews as sewer rats – not simply animals, but rodents that jeopardise our survival – enables the exclusion (or annihilation) of the Jews to be considered an act of self-preservation rather than aggression or malice.

Stanley (2018) argues that propaganda, no matter how far from the truth it is, simply needs to capture an audience and generate enough suspicion regarding an identified 'other' to achieve its purpose. Successful propaganda need only to elicit an emotional response from an audience, rather than convince an audience of the information being presented (Stanley, 2015). The effect of successfully constructed propaganda is illustrated in the following statement, in which George describes the response from other students, parents and teachers to the social media comment stating he will "shoot up the school". Although the comment was dubiously left on a social media platform by a young secondary school student, we can see that it successfully elicited enough fear in its audience to generate suspicion regarding George as a potential murderer:

> **Interviewer.** So people took that seriously?
> **George.** Teachers took it seriously. Students took it seriously. Parents took it seriously. It broke my heart to realise [that] teachers were <u>scared of me</u>. I had a day where a bunch of teachers wanted to speak with me [one on one]. A lot of the teachers were just <u>worried</u> for me; <u>they thought that I would actually do something like that.</u>

In the narrative 'Constructing the Other', participating in the production and reproduction of propaganda serves a functional purpose. Propaganda works by packaging information in a novel,

sensational way to capture an audience and stir arousal; the sensationalism of information in the production of propaganda subsequently aids the differentiation process between the "us" and "them". The more sensational the information being told, the more implausible it becomes for anyone to relate to such extreme 'otherness'. Hence, when one is participating in the production and reproduction of propaganda, they are solidifying their own position as part of the 'pack'. By discussing someone else's 'otherness', one is ultimately saying, "They are not one of us, I am not like them – I am therefore, one of us". By bringing this information to the 'pack', the 'pack' becomes closer as they define themselves through active exclusion against the 'other'. The withholder of the information also possesses a form of 'social capital', since they are the one who gets to impart this information with others. Having information thus solidifies one's loyalty to and usefulness within the 'pack', since their peers are reliant on them for obtaining this information. The functional purpose of spreading propaganda is supported in the following statements, which produce propaganda as an attractive form of social capital to be used and distributed:

> **George.** I think college is all about interesting situations and stories; people trying to start a story and try go from there…Once you get a juicy story, what do you do? You spread it around on your Facebook.
>
> **George.** They just took what they saw and they just used it, you know.
>
> **Interviewer.** So do you know how that rumour started and what happened?
> **Esther.** [My friend] told this group of girls [about what happened with my dad], not knowing that they were, you know, a bad group of girls. He told them the whole story. [They weren't interested] in trying to make me their friend and trying to make me fit in and everything – you know, make me feel comfortable. They were just thinking, "Oh there's new news".

In Esther's statement above, she refers to a friend who shared some private information with a group of girls at her new school, in the hope they would look out for her. However, this novel information about Esther was viewed as a form of social capital, which superseded the request to make Esther feel welcome at her new school. Accordingly, the girls used the information they received about Esther's father being in prison, to form and distribute propaganda about her:

> **Esther.** One of the girls posted a status and was like, "When the new girl comes to school and tries to say that her dad beat her up" and all that stuff when it wasn't even like that.

Despite the positive intentions of Esther's friend, she was not accepted by the group of girls. Esther was 'the new girl' and therefore, already an 'other'. Reicher et al. (2013) notes the tendency for foreigners to be discriminated against and excluded from dominant political and civil bodies, often

not being granted the right to vote and generally being understood as less able to epitomise the identity and the values of the dominant community. Because a new student automatically begins from the 'other' position, they require acceptance to be considered part of the 'pack'. Hence, it is easier to produce an 'other' from an 'outsider', as less work is required to distance a new student from the rest of the 'pack':

> **Esther.** Starting [school] at year 12 is hard, because everyone's already got their cliques and groups and you know, people that they hang out with. And me trying to fit in was just not my thing, you know. I sort of just go there and just do me. But I was going to school for a couple of months in the beginning of the year and I just wanted to go and work, but it was just sort of hard being surrounded by people that are talking about you.
>
> **Interviewer.** Why do you think they initially targeted that guy?
> **Raymond.** [He was] just a newbie to the school.

Through the production of propaganda, the position of the 'cybervictim other' is strengthened, as the audience increases. The more people consuming and reproducing the propaganda, the more legitimate the propaganda appears to the 'pack'. This effect is so strong, that it overpowers the 'cybervictim's' ability to counter the rumours and gossip produced about them:

> **George.** Someone anonymously wrote that I would [shoot up the school] back in May. Then it grew because people knew about me…They didn't realise someone could have just posted it as a joke. It just grew.
> **Interviewer.** Were you able to kind of explain that it wasn't true?
> **George.** One person's voice is… I don't think it's enough. After one person posting something [and] a lot of people saying, "He's going to do it", it just comes to the point where my voice doesn't even matter. Even if I say, "I'm not going to do this", they won't believe me.
> **Interviewer.** It could ruin your whole reputation.
> **George.** It did.
>
> **Esther.** Someone would just [make assumptions about] me and then they go and write a comment about it. [In a] big school like that it just gets shared and shared and shared, to point where you can't sort of deny it, because it's gotten around that much.

What is interesting about George and Esther's narratives, is the way in which the process of 'othering' is initiated by a single voice, yet cannot be challenged by a single voice ("one person's voice is… I don't think it's enough" and "my voice doesn't even matter"). The practice of producing

propaganda is a powerful and effective strategy, since it is rapidly picked-up and supported by many other voices through the incentive of social capital – each individual who partakes in reproducing the propaganda actively secures their position within the 'pack'. In these narratives, the 'pack' is positioned as uniting against a common enemy, subjugating Esther and George by forcing them into the position of the 'cybervictim other'.

The Imparting of Moral Judgement

Whilst the production of propaganda involved the use of deceptive information to instil fear and suspicion regarding an 'other' in an audience, an additional practice of cyberbullying identified in student narratives is the moral judgement of an 'other'. In this practice of cyberbullying, 'us' and 'them' boundaries are established through the production of the 'immoral other', who is differentiated from the 'morally superior pack'. Similar to the production of propaganda, cyberbullying which utilises moral judgement also justifies and encourages inhumane treatment towards a 'cybervictim' from their peers. This is because the 'immoral other' is seen to be corrupt, sinful and therefore not worthy of the dignity or respect which is afforded to the rest of the 'pack'. In the statements below, students describe cyberbullying practices that involve the use of derogatory language to portray female 'cybervictims' as sexually promiscuous. In doing so, the female 'cybervictim' is positioned as the 'sexually immoral other' and therefore, deserving of cybervictimisation:

> **Frances.** I think [she gets bullied] because... I don't know, she like gets with heaps of boys all the time and they're just being nasty to her, saying she's a slut and all that stuff.
>
> **Jordan.** Yeah you sort of see it online heaps nowadays. Scrolling down the newsfeed, you see one girl getting 'ripped on'. People just 'ripping' on her, saying that she's a [slut] and all that.

By removing the right to be treated with dignity and respect, the subject position of the 'immoral other' dehumanises 'cybervictims'. In the absence of human qualities, the 'immoral other' is constructed as a mere object, devoid of feelings and therefore, an available commodity. In the following excerpts, students describe cyberbullying practices involving the circulation of other students' sexually explicit photographs. It appears that whilst these pictures are typically intended to be shared with one other person, in many cases, the recipient subsequently sends the private content on to other students, who then share this content with others. Dehumanising and objectifying the 'immoral other' makes the photographs available for public consumption:

> **Frances.** This wasn't me, but everyone else they would always post – if they got a hold of

someone else's nudes – they would post them on AskFM.

Interviewer. So is that common? The sending nudes thing?

Frances. Yeah. Everyone in group chats always sends someone else's nude in. [They will say,] "Hahaha look at this", or something [else].

Interviewer. How do they get them?

Frances. I don't know. I'm guessing, because I've never got one. I've never known where to get them from. But I'm guessing it just gets sent around so many times. Like, it gets sent to someone and [then] they'll send it [to someone else] and it just eventually ends up in our group chats.

Jordan. It's happened countless times at [school]. A girl has a nude and then all these little thirsty boys want to look at it. It sort of goes around the whole school. [Then] that girl finds out [and] feels abused, and then doesn't come to school. We had a couple of people [who] had to leave school and go to another school [because of this].

Interviewer. So how [do the nudes] get passed around? Is it like, on Facebook, or Snapchat?

Raymond. It could start off on Snapchat and then the most common excuse I've seen is, "Oh my friend had my phone and they stole [the nude]". So that's apparently how they start [getting circulated around]. But [they actually] just send it to their friends. [Then their friends] pass it around…[The victim] would think that it's just between the two people and then one of them will go, "Oh I'll send this to my friends", thinking that it will stay in that group. Then it will just open up and a friend will let [another] friend in [and so on so forth].

Positioning 'cybervictims' as the 'immoral other' thereby justifies inhumane treatment of them; because the 'cybervictims' are portrayed as undignified subjects, they do not need or deserve to be treated with dignity by their peers. In the following statements, this can be seen in the way that the females appearing in the explicit photographs are depicted as sexually promiscuous or inappropriate. These statements focus on the act of taking the photographs, rather than the act of distributing the photographs without permission. In doing so, blame is inadvertently attributed to the 'cybervictim':

Frances. [One of my friends] sent [a nude] into the group chat not long ago and it's this girl who [is] seen as a slut. And [she] just doesn't care about herself at all and gets drunk every weekend and all that.

Jordan. I'm not female. I don't really have that aspect of a female's point of view. But to me, that's ugly, you know, sending someone a picture of your body.

In the narrative' Constructing the Other', this form of cyberbullying, which involves circulating

another student's private photographs, serves to further dehumanise 'cybervictims'. In doing so, 'cyberbullies' consolidate their belonging to the 'pack' by strengthening the position of the 'other'. This can be seen in the following statements, which describe the responses of students who receive the explicit photographs. Both these statements depict the purpose of distributing private photographs as a means of shaming the 'cybervictim' for taking them. We can also see that the recipients of the photographs subsequently respond in ways that contribute to the process of 'othering'. For instance, by laughing, name-calling, and demonstrating shock or indifference to the photographs, students distance themselves from the 'cybervictim':

> **Interviewer.** How do you react to those nudes in the group chat? And how do other people react?
> **Frances.** Most people don't reply. Or, someone will just say like, "Hahaha" or, "Who is that? How did you get that?".
> **Interviewer.** Okay.
> **Frances.** Yeah. Sometimes I'm like, "Well what do I do about this?" (Laughs).
> **Interviewer.** (Laughs) Yes. Well, what I'm interested in, is what they are being used for.
> **Frances.** I don't know. It's just [to] like – to embarrass them. I don't really know, because I usually don't reply. I just think it's kind of weird. Like, "Oh my gosh there's a naked person on my screen". And then everyone else will just be like, "Ew. Who is that? That's so gross".

> **Raymond.** People have sent me [nude] screenshots and [written next to it,] "Put a name on it". I was like, "What the hell do I want this for?" and then they were like, "[Send] it around and put another word on it". [Then the 'cybervictim'] gets messages daily, getting called a 'slut', 'whore', 'ho' and stuff like that.

Sexuality is an additional means by which the subject position of 'the immoral other' is able to be produced. 'Us' and 'them' boundaries are established through the privileging of heterosexuality and the subsequent construction of homosexuality as a 'deviation' from the norm. This binary produces the subject position of the 'sexually deviant other', by which inhumane treatment towards individuals who occupy this position is justified. In the following statements, students describe first and second-hand experiences of cyberbullying which is related to the sexual orientation of the 'cybervictim':

> **Tia.** I reckon it's because of the sexuality thing. That's what ticked [the cyberbullying] off. And then after that I don't know. People just started hating me for everything.

> **Beth.** When my sister first came out as being bisexual, she put it on social media and she got absolutely bullied for it.

Beth. Then that gets out on social media and if you put up a post to your friend and you're like, "Happy birthday" with like a 'love heart' or something, then people would be like, "Oh God she's lesbian".

Sarah. I came out as bi[sexual] in year eight. I put it over Facebook because it's kind of just how it was [back] then and everyone started making fun of me. Like people I didn't even know.

Jesse. Every day I woke up [and] there [were] hate messages sent to me overnight. There were heaps.
Interviewer. So can you tell me about that? How did that unfold?
Jesse. People just making up that I'm a homo[sexual] and all this other stuff.

Similar to the 'sexually promiscuous other', the position of the 'sexually deviant other' is constructed as devoid of human qualities. Reicher et al. (2013) notes that minority 'outgroups' such as Jews, Indians, or black people, have long been positioned as sexually corrupt beings and reflects one of the most dominant forms of 'hate discourse'. Individuals occupying the position of the 'immoral other' are perceived as less than human and therefore, objects that are available for public consumption. The objectification of the 'sexually deviant other' fosters a sense of entitlement towards what would normally be considered 'private' information. In the following statement, a female student describes receiving requests for sexually revealing information and photographs from a fellow male student; she attributes his expectation that he is entitled to such information, to his knowledge of her bisexual orientation:

Sarah. One of the boys on my bus would always message me asking me inappropriate things and asking for nudes and stuff. When [I would] turn him down, he would start to bully me on Facebook and Snapchat, saying that I smell.
Interviewer. So he messaged you asking you for nudes?
Sarah. [We would be] having a normal conversation and then, because he knows that I'm bi[sexual], he would ask me, "Have you ever kissed a girl" – like all [that] kind of stuff. And he would ask me for [photos] of my body so that he can rate them. And I would say, "No I don't do that kind of stuff".

In the above statement, Sarah tells us that upon rejecting the request from the male student, he began to retaliate against her through cyberbullying practices. She also describes the male student's intentions to evaluate her body upon receiving photographs from her, a request that was portrayed to be somewhat nonchalant. Collectively, these aspects of Sarah's experience reflect blurred boundaries between the personal and the private. The negative response of the male student to Sarah's exercising

of boundaries suggests that he possessed a sense of entitlement to intimate details about her. Within the subject position of 'the sexually deviant other', individuals are seen as objects that can be acquired, used and distributed freely by others. While this section of the analysis lends itself to a larger discussion around heteronormative sexism, normalised misogyny and the objectification of women, I have decided to focus this narrative on the process of 'othering' which justifies engagement in cyberbullying practices. Although this limits the depth of this analysis, focusing on processes of 'othering' ensures that the *practices* of cyberbullying remain the central focus of this research. Therefore, what I have described produces an outline of cyberbullying practices which utilise 'moral judgement', without delving deeper into the social context and gendered power relations in which practices of moral judgement are enabled.

The Practice of Retaliation

An additional practice by which 'us' and 'them' boundaries are produced and reproduced in the narrative 'Constructing the Other', is through the practice of retaliation. However, within this practice 'the other' is established through a claim to victimhood, which serves to justify engagement in cyberbullying practices:

> **George.** There were some moments at college, [where] I kind of felt like they were huge assholes to me. So I would post on Facebook, "Blah blah blah 'this person' is ruining my life".
>
> **Rachel.** I don't know if I did it directly back to them. I knew that I would have posted something with a long message. No names [were] mentioned or anything, but I had put a lot of offensive things [in the post]. I felt that because they've done it [to me] that I could do it back.

Through a claim to victimhood, retaliation is constructed as beyond the individual's control and blame is subsequently placed on the other person. This can be seen in the following statements, in which students externalise responsibility for their engagement in cyberbullying practices, through their own experiences of cyber-victimisation:

> **George.** Being the victim and [then] becoming a cyberbully yourself – it's easy because [of] the amount of pain you build up inside of you. It just gets to you. The hate [is] just building up in the bottle and sometime soon you just open up the bottle and out comes all the hate. So one little thing, like someone says, "Oh your videos suck" and that bottle breaks. I would go AWOL on them.

Beth. I guess sometimes I'd give it back, because sometimes it would get too much for me.

Esther. I would get to a point where it's just hurt me so bad, I just go out of control.

In the above statements, we can see that a claim to 'victimhood' is made in order to justify engagement in cyberbullying practices. In each of these statements, students refer to a lack of emotional control which is triggered by experiences of cyber-victimisation, causing them to retaliate through cyberbullying practices. Whereas the binary only makes it possible for students to occupy one of two subject positions ('cyberbully' and 'cybervictim'), the practice of retaliation troubles the binary by crossing the boundary line between engagement in cyberbullying practices and experiences of cyber-victimisation. Accordingly, the practice of retaliation begs the question: Who is the 'cybervictim' when both parties are experiencing 'cyber-victimisation?'

Sarah. We've had a lot of like fights on Facebook Messenger and basically just being real rude to each other and yeah, saying things that we shouldn't really say to each other.

Above, Sarah's statement demonstrates the complexity of cyberbullying practices when the practice of retaliation is used. In her statement, the boundaries between 'cybervictim' and 'cyberbully' are blurred as both parties are constructed as simultaneously engaging in cyberbullying practices, whilst also experiencing cyber-victimisation. Below, Esther attempts to simplify this complexity by reintroducing clear distinctions between both parties – although both parties are engaging in cyberbullying practices, Esther differentiates the individual who initiates engagement in cyberbullying practices, from the individual who responds and continues engagement in such practices:

Esther. She sort of started it off. [It's] like a fire I guess. She's the fire starter and I'm the fire.

In the above statement, Esther uses the metaphor of fire to explain retaliatory cyberbullying practices. In doing so, she is able to reduce the complexity of dual engagement in cyberbullying practices to clear absolutes – since fire cannot be blamed for the harm it causes, the individual who starts the fire is held responsible. Similarly, the practice of retaliation holds the initial aggressor responsible for cyberbullying practices. However, the aggressor does not necessarily need to have engaged in cyberbullying practices to be considered the responsible party, only to have committed a harmful action against another individual. Accordingly, cyberbullying practices can be justified for a multitude of reasons:

Sarah. Yeah I said that online, but in class and Instagram they post indirect stuff about her.

> **Frances.** There was this girl and she took a picture in front of a clothing bin which has clothes everywhere, like coming out of the clothing bin – but she wasn't meaning anything bad by it. [Someone] posted [on social media] saying, "Oh my God you're disrespecting all these people. They live off these clothes and need them to survive and you're just being horrible about it". But she wasn't really. People [were] just twisting the story really weirdly… She was actually a victim of cyberbullying, because people just picked on her.

Though different reasons are given for the use of retaliatory cyberbullying practices, a second-hand claim to victimhood is made in both of those statements. In the first statement, Sarah discusses retaliating on behalf of a friend who experienced victimisation through cyber as well as traditional methods. Alternatively, Frances discusses a situation in which an individual was cyberbullied for an action which was perceived to be disrespectful to the recipients of donated clothing. Hence, the claim to victimhood is the way in which the narrative 'Constructing the Other' is able to preserve the simplicity of the binary amid the complexity of retaliatory cyberbullying practices. Through retaliation, the individual who engages in cyberbullying practices sidesteps the position of the 'cyberbully' and occupies the position of the 'victim' or an 'agent' who acts on behalf of the victim instead. Interestingly, here, the position of the 'victim' becomes the favourable side of the binary, contradicting the dominant production of the 'weak cybervictim' in earlier narratives. Since the binary only makes it possible for one individual to occupy the favourable position, both parties compete to occupy the position of the 'victim'. This can be seen in the excerpt below, where Esther describes a situation in which she engaged in back-and-forth arguments with another person online. She describes the other person as intentionally manipulating the dialogue to position herself as the 'innocent' party and therefore, placing herself in a more favourable position than Esther:

> **Esther.** So I'd have a go at her and explain to her how I feel and everything like that and then she would sort of spin it and she'd try make herself look innocent and then there's me throwing all the comments back. Not to hurt [her] or anything, but just to like defend [myself]… And then she would sort of calm down and then say, "Oh you don't need to say all this stuff". That just annoys me [be]cause she just started it off and now she is trying to calm down, which makes me even more angry. So I'd throw more comments and say, "Well why did you?" [etc.] and start swearing. At the end of the day, it makes me look bad because I'm throwing all the comments.

Because one cannot simultaneously occupy the position of the 'cybervictim' and 'cyberbully', claims to victimhood force the other individual into the position of the 'cyberbully'. Esther alludes to this above, as she describes being made to "look bad" as a result of the other person occupying the position of the 'innocent victim'. This is further supported in the statements below, in which students

indicate that they did not perceive themselves to be the ‘cyberbully’ during their engagement in retaliatory cyberbullying practices:

> **Interviewer.** When you were doing this, did it feel like you were participating in [cyberbullying]?
> **Sarah.** No.

> **Interviewer.** With this online stuff, have you ever felt like you've somehow become ‘the bully’?
> **Jesse.** No. Everyone seems to think that just because I’m replying back and turning everything that they say to me [around on them], is bullying. I don't think [that] it’s true, because I’m just [seeing] how they like it. Because they just think that they are getting away with it, but how would they feel if they were me? That's pretty much all it is – just turning it around and saying, "How do you like it if I [were] you and you were me". That's all I really do.

Accordingly, retaliation is an interesting cyberbullying practice, as it can be both personally and non-personally motivated. In both instances (personal and non-personal), the claim to victimhood functions to justify engagement in cyberbullying practices. It is an additional (albeit messy) form of producing an ‘other’. The statement below provides a particularly pertinent illustration of this; in this statement, Jane describes verbatim, an instance in which she experienced cyber-victimisation through a social media post which was directed towards her. However, in this instance, she was produced as the ‘antagonist other’, who is deserving of retribution and inhumane treatment, as opposed to the ‘weak’ and ‘vulnerable’ ‘cybervictim’:

> **Jane.** And then she [wrote], "You need to grow the fuck up, you're so childish, it’s yuck. Stay the fuck out of other people’s relationships, you obsessive bitch. You ruined so much for me. So don't you even dare try to ruin shit. Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you. Oh my God you deserve the worst and that's what you’re getting". [Then she wrote] “#her boyfriend’s name. Rotten ho. You selfish, pathetic, piece of arsehole, shit cunt".

In the statement above, the claim to victimhood made by the author of the social media post does not position her as the ‘weak victim’ constructed in previous narratives, ‘It’s Kill or be Killed’ and ‘Leaders of the Pack ’. In this instance, the claim to victimhood is made through engaging in cyberbullying practices and thus, the ‘weakness’ associated with being the ‘victim’ is concealed within a ‘strong’ cyber-attack made against Jane. The display of strength made by the author of the post forces Jane into the ‘weak’ side of the binary, despite her position as the ‘antagonist other’. Accordingly, in order to claim victimhood without jeopardising one’s position on the ‘inside’, one

has to do so in a way which exhibits strength. However, only individuals who are considered to be a part of the 'inside' can make a claim to victimhood which is accepted by the 'pack'. Consequently, an 'other's' engagement in cyberbullying practices is understood to be a crossing of boundaries which are met with subsequent retaliation from the 'pack'. This can be seen in the following statements, in which Dave and George describe what happens when they try to stand up to their 'cyberbullies' and are met with resistance from other students:

> **Dave.** I told him to 'F- off' and I said, "Please stop" and all those things.
> **Interviewer.** And what happens when you do that, when you challenge the cyberbully?
> **Dave.** Well, they react. And it's like a negative reaction.
> **Interviewer.** What was the reaction?
> **Dave.** The reaction was him trying to fight me; his friends trying to fight me.
>
> **Interviewer.** What was the response to that?
> **George.** A lot of people didn't like it at all. People would just see me at school and be like, "Why are you doing this?". Comments on my posts would be, "Fucking leave him alone. He didn't deserve this". And [I'm] like, "Hello. I'm going through something as well and maybe like 1200 people are lying about it".

In the statements above, we can see that Dave and George have both tried to achieve the same goal of overpowering their 'cyberbullies' and were met with different responses from the 'pack'. In Dave's case, the 'pack' proceeds to outmatch his display of strength (i.e. telling his cyberbully to "F-off") through threat of physical violence and gathering reinforcements from other members of the 'pack'. Accordingly, Dave is outnumbered, and this forces him back into the 'weak' side of the binary. On the other hand, George's attempt to use cyberbullying tactics appears to backfire on him, as the 'pack' appears to force him into the position of the 'antagonist other'. The hypocrisy of the 'packs' negative response to George's engagement in cyberbullying practices appears to leave him feeling confused – he describes feeling as if other students are deliberately concealing their inhumane treatment of him. The dichotomisation of cyberbullying produces a double standard, where only the 'pack's' engagement in cyberbullying practices is understood to be trendy and acceptable, whereas it is perceived negatively when used by an 'other'. This double standard functions as a safeguard for the 'pack's boundaries, which remain intact in instances where attempts are made by an 'other' to cross the boundary line.

Separating the 'Cool' from the 'Uncool'

A fourth practice of cyberbullying which emerged in student narratives was constructed as a method of separating the 'cool' ingroup members from the 'uncool' outgroup members. Below, students

discuss receiving negative comments from their peers in response to uploading video footage of themselves showcasing specific skills. While these students wanted to celebrate their achievements with their peers, they were instead met with an overwhelmingly negative response:

> **Interviewer.** So you posted a video of you doing a backflip –
> **Jesse.** Yeah. On the trampoline for the first time. I can't even put an achievement up without getting hate.
> **Interviewer.** So what were the things [that] they were saying to you online?
> **Jesse.** Just like, "Oh you're such a try hard. You should honestly stop, because nobody really gives a crap about you"… There was this post on Facebook of me doing a backflip and I got so much hate for it. I normally never get this much comments on things; I always get like one or two comments, but this whole post had like 600 [comments] – people just hating on it.

> **Dave.** The first experience of cyberbullying was last year. I uploaded my first YouTube video and I got so many hate comments on it like, "You're terrible give up now". "Why do you even try?" and all these different ones.
> **Interviewer.** What was the video?
> **Dave.** It was just me doing parkour – like tricks and stuff.

In the excerpts above, we can see that the 'pack' immediately responds to Jesse and Dave who have posted a video of themselves showcasing a specific skill, and attempts are made to put them down ("You're terrible. Give up now"). Jesse and Dave are perceived by others as attempting to be noticed and admired ("you're such a try hard"). As a consequence, they are immediately rejected through a series of abusive messages that position them as irrelevant and not worthy to be seen ("nobody really gives a crap about you"). According to Reicher et al. (2008), outgroup members are vilified when it is perceived that they threaten the constructed identity of the ingroup. In the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', friendship groups were constructed as striving for popularity through their engagement in cyberbullying practices, which were seen to be 'cool'. In adherence with the 'victim/bully' binary, privileged positions of 'cool,' 'admirable,' and 'relevant,' are reserved for ingroup members. Outgroup members, by comparison, are marginalised and excluded. If an outgroup member is seen as attempting to challenge these social power relations by trying to be 'seen', this automatically threatens the ingroups' own identification with being 'cool' and they are immediately chastised and subordinated through cyberbullying practices. Below, George reflects on why his videos were met with resistance from his peers, attributing this to the way in which he was perceived by others as "quiet" and therefore insignificant:

> **George.** It's not even just my videos. It's how I acted at school, as well. I mean, I was quiet. I never did much; sometimes I'd break a little bit in front of some people and that's how they saw me… Before this all happened, I was quiet. I was probably the most quietest guy you'll ever meet and I only would talk unless it was a teacher, or it was my friend and after making that video, people would kind of notice me and they were like, "Whose this guy, I never realised him before" and so that's I guess that kind of how I built myself up at college.

As we can see in the excerpt above, George tells us he was perceived by others to be quiet and unobtrusive in the school environment. As he is not accepted as a 'cool' ingroup member, he tells us he was largely unnoticed. He also describes 'breaking' in front of others, which was likely interpreted by his peers as 'weak' behaviour. George's efforts to 'build himself up' challenges the hierarchal social order outlined in 'Leaders of the Pack' and as a consequence, he finds himself in an even worse position than when he started (the 'cybervictim'). This is further supported in the statement below, which indicates that attempts were made by individuals to guide George back to his unobtrusive self – by asking him to stop producing videos, he would go back to not being noticed and, therefore, he would no longer be a target:

> **George.** There were a couple of comments [saying], "[Message] me privately". So I'm like, "Okay". And these people would have deep conversations with me, telling me to stop. They told me – not from [their] perspective, because [they] thought my videos were fine – but they just saw me, you know, as a target. They told me if I were to stop making videos, I would be able get some respect back.
>
> **Interviewer.** How does that make you feel – because this is something that you obviously enjoyed doing?
> **George.** Honestly, it's just unfair. You want to do something in life and well – I wanted to make videos – and you're just getting hate.

George tells us that because he was perceived as trying to be 'seen', he was subsequently punished and put back in his place. He then expresses a sense of injustice around not being able to resist his subordination, because any attempts he makes to 'build himself up' would be met with cyber-victimisation. Georges narrative produces a relationship between visibility and cyber-victimisation; when one makes themselves visible, they are understood to be vulnerable. In the statements below, the risk of cyber-victimisation is attributed to the use of social media, which makes oneself visible to others:

> **George.** It doesn't matter what kind of application you use, doesn't matter if it's a tablet, or PC, or whatever it is. If you post something, you're putting yourself out there. You're putting

yourself at risk.

> **Beth.** But you'd get bullied more when you put it on social media. When my sister first came out as being bisexual, she put it on social media and she got absolutely bullied for it…I had to go and find her. She had overdosed and she ran away – she was in a gutter. It was horrible. But like, it would have been a different story if she hadn't put it on social media… We then had to explain to [her] that you can't be putting things on social media.

Overall, whilst there are a multitude of ways by which the position of an 'other' can be produced, four dominant practices emerge in the present data: (1) the production of propaganda, (2) moral judgement, (3) retaliation and (4) separating the 'cool' from the 'uncool'. Each of these practices of 'othering' ultimately function to justify the inhumane treatment of a 'cybervictim' and enable students to engage with cyberbullying practices. Whereas clear boundaries between the 'pack' and the 'cybervictim' are produced through the production of propaganda and the use of moral judgement, retaliation challenges these boundaries through a claim to victimhood, which demonstrates the complexity of engagement in cyberbullying practices. Such complexity is resolved through an adaption of the original 'victim/bully' binary, producing the 'victim' position as the favourable side of the binary when engaging in retaliatory cyberbullying practices. The adaption of the binary enables students to make claims to victimhood without jeopardising their position as part of the 'pack'. However, claims to victimhood need to be delivered within a powerful attack, as weakness is still associated with the underprivileged side of the binary. Furthermore, claims to victimhood cannot be made through retaliatory cyberbullying practices when a student has already occupied the position of 'the other' – accordingly, when a 'cybervictim' attempts to defend themselves through engaging in cyberbullying practices against a 'cyberbully', they are subsequently met with more resistance by the 'pack'. One final practice of 'othering' was constructed as a method of excluding 'uncool' students from the 'pack'. Since visibility and admiration are social currencies that are reserved for ingroup members, attempts by outgroup members to be *seen* are considered a violation of the 'pack's' hierarchy and therefore, such attempts pose a threat to the privileged position of the ingroup. In such instances, inhumane treatment through cyberbullying practices is seen to be justified since the 'cybervictim' is understood to have brought it upon themselves.

Hunting the Other

The narrative 'Hunting the Other' follows the progression of cyberbullying practices after the production of an 'other' has occurred. The escalation of engagement in cyberbullying practices consolidates the 'cybervictim's position as the 'other' – the more students target a single individual through cyberbullying practices, the more entrenched this subject position becomes. Whilst the previous narrative 'Constructing the Other' explores the ways in which cyberbullying is justified

through various practices of ‘othering’, the narrative ‘Hunting the Other’ is the collective effort of targeting the ‘cybervictim’ through continued engagement in cyberbullying practices.

The metaphoric title ‘Hunting the Other’ refers to the ways in which this narrative constructs cyberbullying as a collective practice which is carried out in ‘pack-like’ fashion. Once a ‘cybervictim other’ has been identified, students work together to ‘hunt’ the ‘other’ down. Accordingly, in ‘Hunting the Other’, the binary between the ‘cyberbully us’ and the ‘cybervictim other’ can be seen via two opposing subject positions: the ‘cyberbully predators’ and the ‘cybervictim prey’. The production of this binary is supported in the statements below, in which students describe cyberbullying practices being carried out in groups and use language which positions these groups of individuals as ‘predators’:

> **Beth.** They'll find something about you and they'll just absolutely rip into you. But they'll only do it when they're together.

> **Lucien.** I just know that people like really gang up on other people – people that they think are vulnerable.

In the first statement above, Beth describes a process in which ‘othering’ (“finding something about you”) precedes collective cyberbullying practices – she draws on graphic language to describe cyberbullying (“rip into you”) which produces cyberbullying as a vicious practice. Similarly, Lucien discusses the tendency of individuals to “gang-up” on people who are perceived to be “vulnerable”, reinforcing the idea that cyberbully groups hunt for vulnerable ‘others’ (i.e. those who are not protected by a group). Together, these statements construct cyberbullying as a collective, predatory practice in which the vulnerable ‘cybervictim prey’ is cornered and outnumbered in pack-like fashion. A particular practice of cyberbullying, which involves creating large ‘group-chats’ on social media (such as Facebook Messenger) for the purpose of targeting a specific ‘cybervictim’, provides a particularly pertinent illustration of this. In describing this social practice, students portray numerous ‘cyberbullies’ surrounding an unsuspecting (and therefore vulnerable) ‘cybervictim’ who is consequently outnumbered and does not stand a chance against the ‘pack’:

> **Beth.** On Facebook or Messenger, you can have a group chat. So, I have like group chats with my netball team and like a few of my friends. But girls can like – there's one group chat called, “shit talkers” and they're just a bunch of girls and they just rip into everyone. So they can put you in it, shit talk you so you can see everything and [then] they'll take you out. And then they'll put someone else in and they'll take them out…So like girls would message me and make group chats and like absolutely destroy me, like put me down and stuff, but then put me in a group chat so I could see everything that was happening.

Dave. I got put in a group chat with all these different people and I tried to leave and they were just like giving me hate. And every time I tried to leave another person would put me back in the group.

Interviewer. What does that mean – so how did you get put in a group chat?

Dave. So, you can get put in. If I have a mutual friend on Facebook, they can go on my Facebook and add me to a group chat without me knowing. I'm in the group chat and then when I go in to see what's in the group chat, I just have a look and read. Then I leave and they re-add me to the group chat. It's a different person who adds me [each time I leave].

Interviewer. So is that a common thing that happens?

Dave. Yeah it's been common for like, the last couple of weeks.

Interviewer. Okay, so someone who you don't know, or someone you do know, adds you to a group chat with people in it that you don't know?

Dave. No with people that I kind of know, but don't know at the same time.

Interviewer. Oh. So what's the purpose of that?

Dave. It's a way to bully people. And in my [case] it's just people bullying me.

Interviewer. So someone's adding you to this group for the purpose of bullying you?

Dave. Yeah.

In the above statements, we can see that 'cybervictims' are placed in the group chat against their will, subjected to attacks from numerous 'cyberbullies' and subsequently expelled from the group-chat. When efforts are made by the 'cybervictim' to escape the attacks (by removing themselves from the group chat) they are simply placed back in and subjected to further cyber-victimisation. Therefore, by supporting the production of cyberbullying as a predatory practice, such as hunting, these statements describe a cruel and sadistic practice, which functions to humiliate and belittle a powerless 'cybervictim'.

Because it is a collective effort to 'hunt' the 'cybervictim' in the narrative 'Hunting the Other', engagement in cyberbullying practices can snowball, as increasingly more members of the 'pack' begin to join in. In the following statements, members of the 'pack' are constructed as mindlessly following the behaviours of everyone else, depicting a rapid process, whereby participation in cyberbullying increases due to peer influence:

Tessa. When one person starts, the rest of them do it as well.

Frances. I think when people see someone getting picked on, they swarm to pick on them.

Beth. It's like they breed off each other. Literally.

In the statements above, the use of the verbs “breed” and “swarm” describe student behaviour in somewhat animalistic terms. This language supports the positioning of ‘cyberbullies’ as predators, who like animals act upon instinct, rather than behaving with individual intent. Accordingly, the ‘cybervictim’ is automatically positioned as ‘vulnerable prey’, surrounded by ‘cyberbully predators’. In the following statements, this can be seen in the way Frances and George describe being targeted and outnumbered by the ‘pack’ – not only does Frances describe feeling ostracised by her peers through cyberbullying practices, but defenceless and helpless in protecting herself from cyber-victimisation:

> **Frances.** It just feels like, lonely and like everyone’s just against you. And you're backed into a corner like, "What am I supposed to do?".
>
> **George.** I'm like a dart board basically and people were just throwing their little darts at me and seeing how much they can hurt me. That's how I saw it back then.

In the third narrative ‘Constructing the Other’, various practices of objectification/ dehumanisation justified the use of cyberbullying practices against the ‘cybervictim’. Accordingly, occupying the role of the ‘other’ positions the ‘cybervictim’ as subhuman and therefore unworthy of dignity and respect. In the above statements the dehumanisation of the ‘cybervictim’ is reinforced, by the way in which the ‘cybervictim prey’ is understood to be fair game to the ‘cyberbully predators’. To be seen as ‘prey’ is to be seen as something less than human and therefore an appropriate target for attack. In the following statements, the use of harsh and extreme forms of speech (such as encouraging suicide) demonstrates the cruel and inhumane treatment of the ‘cybervictim’ which is enabled through the position of ‘vulnerable prey’:

> **Dave.** "Next time I hope you die". Sometimes it’s just that.
>
> **Herman.** [They were] spamming their messages on Facebook [and saying], "Just kill yourself". Stuff like that.
>
> **Lucien.** They'd just call me a fat piece of shit. They also said that I didn't deserve to be alive, or be walking around on this planet, so I should just go and kill myself. Random messages kept popping up on [my school email account] saying, "You shouldn't be at this school. You are just a worthless piece of shit. I’m going to kill you" and stuff like that. I would actually get threats [from] people saying, "I’m going to kill your family. I know where you live"… They kept saying, "When you're not looking we are going to slit your throat. We are going to cut your head off". And then someone else said, "I’m going to cut you into little pieces and send you in pages to your family".

As increasingly more individuals begin to target a single 'cybervictim', the 'cybervictim' becomes well-known amongst fellow students as the 'target' and thus prone to further cyber-victimisation. The notoriety of the 'cybervictim' is particularly evident in cases of cyberbullying which have progressed beyond the school that the 'cybervictim' attends. In some situations, a 'cybervictim' can be recognised (and even cyberbullied) by individuals in the wider community. The potential for victim notoriety can be seen in the statements below, in which students describe being somewhat 'infamous' for their 'other' status:

> **George.** It's not really helpful when you're trying study at college and you got people every day, you know, looking at you.
>
> **George.** I knew a lot of people didn't like me. If one thing goes up – like a video [that] I did – it would get spread around to everyone in college – about 1200 people. And so every year level between Year 9 and Year 13 all knew about it… People from different colleges even knew about it and that did not help. But you know, it's just weird having a lot of people, not even from my college and even more, just sending me messages.
>
> **Jesse.** It was like most of the year 10s that I know. And their friends as well – like outside [of school]. So there'd be people from school and then they would tag other people – like, their friends. Then their friends will keep going and it just went to everyone's friends. Everyone [was] hating on it.
>
> **Esther.** My whole family started seeing [the cyberbullying] and that's when they started messaging me like, "Why are you sharing our personal stuff?".
> **Interviewer.** So it got that far that even [people outside of] school could see it?
> **Esther.** Yeah. I guess it's like that down here. Even though it's a huge place, it's very small – like a small world I guess and things get around.

As we can see from the above statements, the narrative 'Hunting the Other' produces more severe practices of cyberbullying, involving the engagement of numerous individuals against a single 'cybervictim'. Indeed, though not all 'cybervictims' experience such severe cyber-victimisation, the consequences of cyberbullying practices can be tenfold, as the internet makes it possible for cyberbullying to reach considerably larger audiences than traditional methods of bullying. The possibility for larger audiences produces a vicious cycle, in which the more well-known the 'cybervictim' becomes, the more entrenched their position as the 'other' becomes and the more they are targeted through cyberbullying practices. The engagement of numerous individuals likely supports the notion that the 'cybervictim' is a reasonable/deserving target for attack and therefore, as the number of students engaging in cyberbullying practices increases, so too does the severity of

cyberbullying inflicted upon the 'cybervictim'. Like a celebrity, the 'cybervictim' receives somewhat of an 'object' status and are seen as 'belonging' to the public; to be famous is to no longer be seen or treated as 'human'. Every aspect of a famous person's life is a public affair and therefore, open to scrutiny:

> **George.** So that happened all year. It's just always there, no matter what you post. I just felt like anything I posted would just get hate for it. If it was something happy, sad, angry – or whatever – I 'd always get hate for it.

Furthermore, the more well-known the 'cybervictim' becomes, the less input they have into their identity – who they are (or wish to be) matters increasingly less, as people 'know' them as who they are constructed to be. Positioned as an 'object', the identity of the 'cybervictim' is free to be manipulated. The 'cybervictim's' lack of agency over their perceived identity is further illustrated in the following statement, in which George constructs a losing battle between who he is versus how he is seen by others:

> **George.** That's how they [perceived] me. I just kind of lost my voice. Like, they never knew me. They never got to know the real me. They never sat down with me, never had a coffee with me, or whatever.

The way George describes "losing his voice" in the above statement produces a sense of defeat, powerlessness, and marginalisation in the face of relentless attacks on his identity. George has lost control over his reputation – his public image superseding his own understanding of who he is. In George's story, he faces a loss of identity, as well as an imposition of a new identity. The loss of identity George describes is reminiscent of Barnes et al.'s (2013) study of racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In this study, Maori participants explored the role of the New Zealand mass media in representing Maori as socially 'deviant'. Participants in this study expressed a lack of agency over their constructed identities as a consequence of the constant privileging of Pakeha voices and the perpetual disregarding of Maori voices within media representations. Social media is another powerful institution through which many voices can accumulate to outweigh and marginalise one voice. Cyberbullying practices can therefore be thought of as a collective attack on a 'cybervictim's' sense of self in the narrative 'Hunting the Other'. Hunting in 'packs', the 'cyberbullies' work to entrench the 'cybervictims' position as an 'other' in order to reconstruct their identity:

> **Jesse.** [The cyberbullies] are destroying who you are as a person.

Like a celebrity, the 'cybervictim' receives somewhat of an 'immortal' status. Once positioned as 'prey', the entrenchment of this position through increasingly more individuals targeting the

‘cybervictim’ can make it difficult for the ‘cybervictim’ to escape this position, as they are too well-known. Consequently, well-known ‘cybervictims’ are susceptible to prolonged cyber-victimisation:

> **George.** I did the right thing and I stopped [making videos].
> **Interviewer.** Did that stop the bullying?
> **George.** No. It just went throughout the rest of 2014 and 2015. A lot more happened in 2015, because a lot of people knew me still.

> **Jesse.** No matter what I did it [the cyberbullying] kept going.

The entrenchment of the ‘cybervictims’ position in the narrative ‘Hunting the Other’ is further reflected in the statements below, where – like celebrities evading the paparazzi – students discuss feeling as if they required the use of extreme measures, such as concealing, disguising or altering aspects of themselves, in an attempt to escape cyber-victimisation:

> **Anaru.** Everyone was just ganging up on me… It felt like I had to change my number. I had to change my address. I just had to change everything. I did change my name. I had to change my profile pictures. I had to change my contacts.

> **George.** I wouldn't have minded just leaving the college. I wouldn't have minded just getting away from everything… I just got rid of everything. I just had to hide my profile on Facebook. I deactivated it and just left it for many, many months.

Collective engagement in cyberbullying practices exposes students regularly to harsh and extreme forms of speech. An effect of such frequent exposure to callous and harmful language, such as telling someone to “kill themselves”, dulls the perceived severity of such phrases and desensitises students to the point where this manner of speaking is collectively tolerated. The shifting boundaries for what are considered to be acceptable forms of violence is supported in the following statement, where Tia tells us that the most common cyber-victimisation she experienced was encouraged suicidality, producing it as a common practice:

> **Tia.** On the internet I’ve been told to “kill myself” and “cut myself” too many times to count… The “cut yourself” [messages] were probably the most common ones I ever got, [as well as] small [messages] like, "Die" or "I hope you die".

Frequent exposure to harsh and extreme forms of speech produces the idea that this way of relating to one another is acceptable and perhaps even, the way things have always been. This has the effect of normalising cyberbullying practices, allowing them to be trivialised and/or taken-for-granted,

rather than seen as something which is harmful. Gerbner (1972) describes this process as "symbolic annihilation", alluding to the covert and illusive way in which media representations marginalise groups of people, by making the harmful impact difficult to recognise and therefore difficult to contest. Barnes et al. explored the 'symbolic annihilation' of Maori within New Zealand mass media, through their continuous representation as socially 'deviant'. Barnes et al. argues that when such depictions of Maori are perpetually reproduced, the harm is concealed since they are familiar and therefore automatically accepted as 'truth'. Similarly, in the following statements, students tell us that cyberbullying practices have become somewhat commonplace, providing further support for the changing realm of what is considered to be 'acceptable violence':

> **Raymond.** When I thought it was normal, I kind of admit that I did [cyberbully others]. Because after I was always cyberbullied, I kind of started to do it [too].

> **Frances.** I think it's just kind of like a cultural thing. You know, it happens in a community and [then] everyone just starts doing it.

The normalisation of cyberbullying practices can also further limit empathy among students, as they are less likely to consider the harmful consequences of their actions for the 'cybervictim', if the cyberbullying practices they are engaging in seem 'normal'. Yet, whilst demonstrating the harmful consequences of increasing engagement in cyberbullying practices, the above statements also provide an opportunity for resistance to such practices. Whilst the narrative 'Hunting the Other' positions 'cyberbullies' as vicious predators who hunt vulnerable 'cybervictims', these statements produce cyberbullying as a normalised cultural practice. This conceptualisation of cyberbullying makes space for an alternative subject position – the 'regular' student, who is unaware of the significant consequences of their actions. In the following statements, George and Tessa allude to this, by hypothesising that those who are engaging in cyberbullying practices do not understand the significant negative impact of such practices for the 'cybervictim':

> **George.** I think some people just find it normal. I guess when they post something they're just like, "Not a big deal they'll get over it". Some people don't though. That's the thing.

> **Tessa.** I took it personally and it did hit me hard and I didn't appreciate it, because I was dealing with a whole depression and anxiety type of issue and body-dysphoria, so it did hit me hard. But I think [that] they don't understand that the statements [such as], "You are ugly" might carry on for the rest of [your] life. That statement of, "killing yourself " might actually [cause you to do it] because it's a sensitive topic and them saying that [to] you [might actually cause you to] take your own life.
>
> **Interviewer.** Mm. It's just such a – I mean it bewilders me, because I just – I don't understand

if they actually intend for that person to do it or not. What was your feeling of it?

Tessa. I think [that] they might have thought it was a joke and I wouldn't take it personally.

Importantly, in the above statements, George and Tessa tell us that whilst individuals engaging in cyberbullying practices may not necessarily intend (or be aware of) any significant negative impact their actions have for the 'cybervictim', the 'cybervictim' is still negatively affected by these actions. Furthermore, Tessa hypothesises that her 'cyberbullies' were joking and therefore did not intend for her to take their encouragements for committing suicide seriously. Thus, the normalisation of cyberbullying practices enables students to distance themselves from the harmful effects of such practices. Yet it does not mitigate the harm which is caused to the 'cybervictim'. George and Tessa's statements highlight contradictory ideas about cyberbullying, where it is seen as normal/harmless to engage in, yet harmful to experience. This contradiction is also evident in the following statements, where participants reflect on whether their 'cyberbullies' really intended to encourage them to commit suicide. Both Tia and Beth can be seen to grapple with this question, suggesting a tension between their understandings of cyberbullying as normal, and therefore 'non-malicious', and the real impact that they feel when experiencing cyber-victimisation:

Tia. They probably did [mean it] back then. But I felt like if I did [kill myself] they'd be like, "Oh my God. I didn't think she'd actually do it." So I think there's a part of me that says, "They don't mean it". But then there's another part of me that says, "If they keep doing it, then they obviously do mean it".

Beth. Sometimes people, I don't know... I think the girls knew that when they were bullying me, I wouldn't kill myself – even though I wanted to. But I just wouldn't in the end. Even though I tried a few times – but they never knew about that.

Interviewer. Do you think if they [knew], they would feel differently about what they said?

Beth. Not really (laughs).

In the above statements, Beth and Tia struggle to rectify tensions between understandings of cyberbullying as a malicious versus non-malicious practice. Beth reflects on the possibility that her 'cyberbullies' may not have intended for her to kill herself – or at least, they did not expect that she would actually follow through with their encouragements. However, she subsequently undermines this, by hypothesising that her 'cyberbullies' would not have experienced empathy had they known she had actually attempted suicide during the time they were encouraging her to do so. Accordingly, the 'other' is not simply a character constructed in narratives of cyberbullying, but a subject position which is assumed – a social practice with material effects. Despite the intentions and levels of awareness of those who engage in harmful practices (such as encouraging suicide), the encouragements feel 'real' to those who receive them. Positioned as 'prey' and subject to vilification,

'cybervictims' experience repeated attacks to their sense of self and their worth through cyberbullying practices. In the following statements, we can see that the 'othering' process is then reflected inwards, where 'cybervictims' begin to question and doubt their own sense of self and value in response to the cyber-victimisation they have experienced:

> **Frances.** I was like, "Oh shit. Is something wrong with me?"
>
> **Lucien.** It just made me feel horrible. [It] made me feel like they were right.
>
> **Tessa.** I started to develop personal issues, feeling like I wasn't worth it and maybe I am [what they say I am]…They were telling me to kill myself and stuff like that; being [at] a vulnerable age, you really take that on board. You get really sensitive about it. I think a lot of teenagers get put into the fact that they're really not good enough for society. If the cyberbullies say that you're not 'this' or 'that', then they're going to obviously take it to heart.

The above statements reflect a process of 'internalised othering', in which attacks by 'the pack' cause the 'cybervictim' to think and feel as if something is 'wrong' with them and therefore, they do not belong. From within this position, the 'cybervictim' begins to perceive themselves as the 'other'. This may be particularly so in instances where cyberbullying practices are severe, involving prolonged cyber-victimisation and/or numerous 'cyberbullies'. For Anaru and Jesse, internalising the position of the 'other' resulted in them questioning their right to exist:

> **Anaru.** It makes me feel like, 'should I be in this world [or] should I not be in this world' kind of thing.
>
> **Jesse.** I don't know. I asked Mum if living was the right [thing for me to do]… I took it and took it, but then I broke and just asked Mum, "Why?". I didn't cry or anything. I just asked her, "Is living the right place for me?

The process of 'internalised othering' reflected in the above statements can be likened to the process of internalising structural racism. Participants in Barnes et al.'s study recounted similar experiences of feeling shame for being Maori and an overall devaluing of Maori culture as the material manifestations of racist ideology reproduced in New Zealand mass media. Barnes et al. (2013) demonstrates how racist ideology is taken-up by individuals, shaping their personal belief systems and affecting the way in which they begin to perceive themselves. Perhaps the strongest example of the materiality of cyberbullying practices is the way in which the 'cybervictim' responds from within this position – the possibilities for action may seem extremely limited for the 'cybervictim', who feels hopeless, worthless and ostracised. In earlier statements, we learned that Beth and Tessa had

both attempted suicide in in the wake of receiving suicidal encouragements. Likewise, in the following two excerpts, Jesse and Anaru provide particularly salient examples of how dire the consequences of cyberbullying can be, in terms of how an individual can think and feel, along with the possibilities for action when occupying the position of the 'other'.

> **Interviewer.** What would say is your worst experience that you've had – one that was more difficult than the others?
> **Jesse.** Even though it might not seem bad, but [it was] probably getting called "fat". [Be]cause I just changed completely after I got called "fat" and I still can't get my eating on track. I just can't.
> **Interviewer.** These words are more than just words, they have real –
> **Jesse.** – big actions.
> **Interviewer.** Yeah [it] impacts on your life.
> **Jesse.** Everyone seems to think a word can't hurt, but it can.

> **Interviewer.** So what did it feel like, experiencing that cyberbullying?
> **Anaru.** After she said that [online] I went to my room [and] I [got] all of my gear [out].
> **Interviewer.** Was that because you felt like doing what she said?
> **Anaru.** Yeah I was.
> **Interviewer.** What was the reason for getting the gear out?
> **Anaru.** Well I was just going to kill myself on the spot.

Furthermore, in the statement below, George refers to the rumour which portrayed him as a potential school shooter (discussed in the narrative 'Constructing the Other') and reflects on the possibility that one might actually become a school shooter in response to such rumours. George's statement provides a powerful illustration of the materiality of cyberbullying practices and the way in which the 'cybervictim' internalises the position of the 'other':

> **George.** I didn't do anything stupid. I never gave in and, you know, did what the rumour [about me shooting up the school] said. I knew I would never do such a thing. At first, [with] a rumour, you think to yourself, "I'm never going to do this". Some people actually [give in to the rumour]. But I never did it because I would go to jail. If I were to [give in to the rumour], I'd be in jail thinking for the rest of my life, "Why [did I do it?]".

George's account above, of not "giving in to the rumour", portrays his experience as a struggle to resist the urge to 'become' a school shooter in the wake of relentless cyberbullying by a multitude of individuals who portray him as one. George's narrative is about the struggle to maintain his sense of identity and values when facing an overpowering external threat to who he is as a person. This

narrative demonstrates the way in which the position of the 'other' is internalised, affecting the way in which a 'cybervictim' thinks, feels, acts, and the impact this can have for how the 'cybervictim' perceives themselves. Again, student descriptions of internalised othering are similar in sentiment to Barnes et al.'s study of racism, in which participants also spoke of internalising stereotypical depictions of Maori and behaving accordingly. One participant in Barnes et al.'s study echoes George's point above, stating, "Oh well must be true then, I must be a ratchet fulla then… next time they are in a moment of rage they are just gonna do whatever they do… because that is what we are, must be what we are… if they are going to keep writing bad things about us then we are gonna be bad because we feel like we are" [pg. 67]. Barnes et al. describes this process as a 'negative role fulfilment', where public constructions are internalised privately, shaping the beliefs and attitudes of individuals who occupy these subordinate positions. In this way, structural inequalities are enacted and then reinforced by individuals, since the perpetration of negative roles confirms their position as the 'other'.

However, despite the 'real' harmful effects experienced by the 'cybervictim', individuals engaging in cyberbullying practices may not personally observe the significantly harmful impact of their actions. For instance, in an earlier statement, Beth tells us she does not believe her 'cyberbullies' would have cared if they knew she was struggling with suicidality – therefore, it makes sense that Beth would refrain from disclosing her 'real' struggle with suicidality. Furthermore, in the following statements, Tessa tells us she did not want her 'cyberbullies' to know she had actually attempted suicide in response to their encouragements, whilst Frances tells us she feels disclosing the negative impact of cyberbullying practices to her 'cyberbullies' would not generate any empathy from them:

> **Tessa.** I didn't tell them [I was actually suicidal] because you know I don't want them to know. But I did [do] that – take that further. Like they don't understand who you are as a person and what you are going through, so for them to say [to you to "kill yourself"], they might not mean it personally, but you might take it personally.
>
> **Frances.** Bringing up [how the cyberbullying was making me feel] wouldn't fix it. She wouldn't care.

Cyberbullying practices can therefore sustain themselves through these contradicting ideas which produce cyberbullying as 'normal/harmless to participate in' and yet 'harmful to experience'. Without having to confront the 'real' negative impact of cyberbullying practices on the 'cybervictim', empathy and compassion for the 'cybervictim' is less likely to be fostered and cyberbullying practices are more likely to continue. However, in the following statement, Tessa tells a story of a remorseful 'cyberbully' who was confronted with the significant negative impact his

actions had for her, during a school-arranged counselling session:

> **Interviewer.** So what was said about that from the bullies perspective to you?
> **Tessa.** When we had the conversation, I had a mental breakdown and I was crying about it and the cyberbully was looking at me and he felt – I think he felt, you know, really guilty and he felt that he didn't understand what that statement meant. He didn't know [about my] personality and what [I was] going through and I felt that he was really sorry.

Tessa's statement suggests that individuals who engage in cyberbullying practices may benefit from exposure to the 'real' effects of cyberbullying practices. For the position of the 'other' to be made available in the narrative 'Hunting the Other', the 'cybervictim' needs to be seen as fair game, limiting tolerance and empathy towards them from the 'pack'. However, exposure to the significant negative effects of cyberbullying practices, troubles the binary between 'us' and the 'other' (or 'predator' and 'prey'), by humanising the 'cybervictim' and making it considerably more difficult to perceive and treat them as an 'other'. It is through empathy that one can place oneself in the position of the 'cybervictim'. Therefore, whilst the normalisation of cyberbullying practices enables individuals to distance themselves from the harmful consequences of such practices, exposure to the harmful effects of cyberbullying removes this distance and challenges the idea that such practices are normal and harmless. This is further illustrated in the following quote, where Jane reflects on how she had not considered the impact of cyberbullying practices until she experienced cyber-victimisation herself:

> **Interviewer.** And so even just back then – because it was so common and it seemed to be happening everywhere – was it easy to get caught up in it yourself, do you think?
> **Jane.** Yeah. Kind of.
> **Interviewer.** What would that have looked like?
> **Jane.** What do you mean?
> **Interviewer.** Like, getting caught up in it yourself.
> **Jane.** Like me bullying people?
> **Interviewer.** Yeah – or even if you didn't [think] it was bullying at the time, [but it was] just so common that it was easy to do it yourself.
> **Jane.** I don't really know. My like AskFm was all –
> **Interviewer.** – You've probably never thought about it
> **Jane.** Yeah I never thought of it – like, on AskFm, I didn't really follow that many people, so I didn't see much. But I know I used to get shown it from my friends like – what things would say and stuff. But I never really cared until it was me (laughs).
> **Interviewer.** Yeah (laughs).

In the above statement, Jane states that although she was shown examples of cyberbullying by her friends, it was not until her own experience of cyberbullying that she developed a vested interest in such practices. Prior to her own experience, we can see it was easy for Jane to distance herself from the 'real' adverse effects of cyberbullying practices. When on the 'inside' one is distanced from the 'other', not only through the objectification of the 'other', which justifies inhumane treatment, but through the normalisation of cyberbullying practices and also the lack of exposure to the 'real' adverse effects. Indeed, the primary function of the process of 'othering' is to distance the 'cybervictim' from the rest of the 'pack'. It could therefore be argued that distance itself sustains cyberbullying practices – the further the 'cyberbully' is from the 'cybervictim', the easier it is to engage in such practices. Technology, providing a physical distance between individuals engaging in cyberbullying practices and the individuals who are targeted, likely supports engagement in bullying practices more generally. On the other hand, when distance is reduced, such as through exposure to the harmful effects of cyberbullying, it likely becomes more difficult to engage in such practices. In support of this, the following statements produce experiences of cyber-victimisation as a deterrent for engaging in cyberbullying practices:

> **Interviewer.** So that comment you mentioned, "If I was to bully someone – but I don't" – why do you think that is? Because it sounds like it is – or it was quite easy to get caught up in it. Why do you think you personally – you didn't?
> **Tia.** Because I just know what it feels like. I know [be]cause, I had it quite bad for a good three years. And I don't really want anyone else going through it as well. So I just chose not to get caught up in it.
>
> **Interviewer.** Why does it seem like the cool thing now?
> **Jordon.** I don't know, cause I don't bully. I don't like bullying people cause of how bad I got bullied. So I don't you know…But, nowadays that's sort of what you see on Facebook.
>
> **Beth.** [After experiencing cyberbullying] you also become more like, against it I guess.

The above statements suggest that exposure to cyber-victimisation may deter engagement in cyberbullying practices. When positioned within the underprivileged side of the binary, the distance which supports engagement is not readily available. Furthermore, 'cybervictims' essentially have nothing left 'to lose', making it possible for 'cybervictims' to unite and support one another. The opportunity for students to resist the silent and partitioned environment which maintains cyberbullying practices is only available from within this subjugated position. When discussing how her experience of cyber-victimisation affected her, Esther describes feeling motivated to assist others

who are also experiencing cyber-victimisation:

> **Esther.** I like to help people out as well – like people who have been in bad situations. I sort of just like sit down and talk with them. That's what I was doing at my old school – [I] was helping people who got bullied. There would be kids who get made fun of just [be]cause of their size, or because of their colour or something like that. I would be that person who would just sit there and say like, "Mate I don't really know you or anything like that, but I know you are going through a rough time and I've heard a few comments about you and I know it's not true". And I just tell them, "You're really someone special, even if you don't think so".

Overall, the narrative 'Hunting the Other' explores the process and consequences of collective engagement in cyberbullying practices. In this narrative, students are constructed as working in groups to target a single 'cybervictim', producing dichotomous positions of the 'cyberbully predators' who hunt the 'cybervictim prey'. Collective engagement in cyberbullying practices solidifies the 'cybervictim's position as the 'other', making them vulnerable to further cyber-victimisation. As the 'cybervictim' becomes increasingly well-known, they receive object status, in which their identity becomes their reputation – static and concrete. All sense of individualism is lost, as the 'other' is not seen to possess a dynamic human identity. Furthermore, having object status positions an individual as the property of the collective – it is understood that the 'cybervictim' is fair game, which is likely supported by the presence of numerous individuals targeting them through cyberbullying practices. Finally, as a consequence of collective engagement, cyberbullying practices are normalised as students become desensitised to harsh and extreme forms of speech. With external attacks to the 'cybervictim's' sense of self, the process of 'othering' is subsequently internalised, where the 'cybervictim' begins to lose their sense of self whilst occupying the position of the 'other'. Such an environment produces a vicious cycle, where cyberbullying practices continue to be tolerated and taken-for-granted as the silent and partitioned environment provides students with little exposure to the 'real' adverse effects of cyberbullying practices. However, removing boundaries between "us" and "them" may break this cycle by exposing students to the adverse effects of cyberbullying practices and re-humanising the dehumanised 'cybervictim other'.

Epilogue: Beyond Brutality

'Beyond Brutality' is a brief, yet pivotal narrative which transports the story to a different time period, featuring students who are older, more mature, and able to reflect on cyberbullying practices in hindsight. 'Beyond Brutality' is told in 'present time', which subsequently locates the previous four narratives in the past. Therefore, I decided to call this smaller narrative an 'epilogue', to

differentiate it from the dominant overarching narrative which begins with 'It's Kill or be Killed' and ends with 'Hunting the Other'. Traditionally, an epilogue deals with the fate and outcomes of characters within a story, occurring after the main plot has finished. In a similar way, 'Beyond Brutality' 'reveals' the 'aftermath' of the harsh environment depicted in the overarching narrative through the production of the idea that students eventually grow up and 'grow-out' of cyberbullying practices. 'Beyond Brutality' incorporates the concept of progress beyond brutal animalistic ways of thinking – a dominant construction of the human sciences that naturalises human's progression from primitivity to civilisation. This title was chosen as it captures how immaturity and progress are naturalised in student narratives and the way in which this enables cyberbullying practices amongst young people to be taken-for-granted, thereby diverting attention away from sociocultural intervention. While cyberbullying is constructed as a necessary means of survival in a harsh secondary school environment in the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed', the narrative 'Beyond Brutality' portrays this environment as eventually evolving and transforming to a 'system' which is more harmonious:

> **Tia.** I think it was just [that] we all grew up and we grew out of it. Like we thought [that] there is not much point.

> **Jordon.** When we got older we sort of grew up and [we] realised, nah – why do we want to fight when we can just be boys?
> **Interviewer.** Was he bullying you online?
> **Jordon.** Yeah.
> **Interviewer.** So what's it like relating with him now? Is it easy or is it quite hard?
> **Jordon.** Sort of – it never comes up. You know he's not like, "Oh remember when I was bullying [and] cyberbullying [you]"… I don't know, we sort of just matured out of that kind of thing.
> **Interviewer.** Yeah. So how do you see his behaviour now – reflecting back on it? [Be]cause you must see it in a certain way now that allows you to forgive him and be friends with him?
> **Jordon.** Yeah. Well, we sort of just grew up, you know?

In the second excerpt above, the interviewer attempts to understand how Jordan feels being friends with his previous 'cyberbully' and how he conceptualises this bullying in hindsight. Jordan implies that there are no longer any 'hard' feelings, as both he and his previous 'cyberbully' have simply matured. Each time the interviewer requests an elaboration on this, Jordan relies on the concept of maturity in somewhat of a taken-for-granted manner; for instance, his response implies that the concept of maturity should be understood by the interviewer with no further explanation necessary. By conceptualising his 'cyberbullies' behaviour as immaturity, Jordan's statement naturalises

cyberbullying practices, constructing it as a childish, ignorant practice which is performed by those who do not yet know any 'better'. Interestingly, Jordan's statement also implicates his own level of maturity (yet he does not disclose engaging in cyberbullying practices himself), suggesting that maturity on a collective level was responsible for ending cyberbullying practices ("we all just grew up"). What is significant about Jordan's statement is that he inadvertently points to a sociocultural understanding of cyberbullying practices, in that collective intervention is necessary before engagement can be resisted; however, the naturalisation of immaturity simultaneously draws attention away from this. In the statement below, Tessa utilises the medical discourse to assist with the naturalisation of cyberbullying practices, attributing such practices to the hormonal changes adolescents experience during puberty:

> **Tessa.** I think because like it's the whole hormonal changing, going through puberty and that stuff. And it's all up here and everyone's experiencing changes, they're looking at themselves like, "Am I perfect? Am I good enough? Am I going to fit into society?"… Once they grow up they don't tend to.

Tessa's statement above is interesting, since parts of what she says seem to be at odds with one another. On one hand, she refers to a well-known medical understanding: that adolescents experience hormonal changes during puberty, that have the effect of naturalising cyberbullying practices. The dominant medical discourses, which are readily available for conceptualising adolescent behaviour, are indeed convincing and difficult to challenge. However, like Jordan, she subsequently (and perhaps inadvertently) conceptualises cyberbullying as a sociocultural problem by attributing cyberbullying to social norms ("am I going to fit into society"). Accordingly, though she is essentially referring to a sociocultural practice, the utilisation of the medical discourse enables a sociocultural understanding to be overlooked and constrains the challenging of such practices during childhood and adolescence.

Despite the naturalisation of cyberbullying practices, the idea that young people 'grow out' of cyberbullying simultaneously suggests that intervention into the social environment which produces such practices is possible. Indeed, in the above statements, Tia and Jordan both describe students coming to the realisation that one does not have to engage in cyberbullying practices. The notion that one can stop places agency with students to collectively disengage from such practices, whereas the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed' removes agency by constructing cyberbullying as a necessary means of survival. The allocation of agency to students can be seen in the statements below, in which students reflect on their engagement in, and experiences of, cyberbullying – in both statements, students describe reconceptualising cyberbullying practices and subsequently responding differently:

Tessa. Because they are vulnerable at that age in intermediate and I think it does get better, [be]cause you mature a lot and you think about what you've done in the past… It may not be good, but you've learnt from your mistakes and finally just get it through your head that this wasn't a good thing to do, but I'm going to move on with my life and I hope the person is not dwelling on the thoughts and is doing better.

Beth. But I understand like why she's doing [cyberbullying] and stuff. So I just – I don't play into it. I just, back off a bit. But for other people that don't know, that's like so messed up really.

Interviewer. Yeah and so when you say you understand, it goes back to what you were saying before – when you know she's doing it because she doesn't want to be a target herself. She wants to fit in and be cool – [be] part of the cool crowd.

Beth. Yeah, but I didn't think any of this when I was in year nine or ten [be]cause I just thought [that] they did it [be]cause they hated me… I kind of grew up. I was thinking I had to be a certain person, so then I wouldn't get bullied. But, growing up and then having a lot more experiences with like, [mental health services] and stuff, I then stepped back a bit and looked at things in different ways. So I do understand things a bit more. But I am still very sensitive to cyberbullying and stuff.

The statements above reflect changing narratives of cyberbullying through the benefit of hindsight. In both statements, different responses to cyberbullying practices were enabled through different understandings of cyberbullying. For Tessa, reflecting on her previous engagement in cyberbullying enabled her to reconceptualise cyberbullying as a negative practice ("this wasn't a good thing to do"), recognise the impact such practices may have had for the 'cybervictim' ("I hope the person isn't dwelling on the thoughts and is doing better") and resist further engagement ("move on with my life"). For Beth, reconceptualising cyberbullying through a broader lens which locates the issue outside of herself enabled her to challenge the idea that cyber-victimisation indicated that something was personally wrong with her. Here, Beth is essentially telling us that through an alternative understanding, she was able to resist the position of the 'other' that she had previously internalised through experiences of cyber-victimisation ("I was thinking I had to be a certain person, so then I wouldn't get bullied"). Reconceptualising cyberbullying enabled Beth to respond differently to experiences of cyber-victimisation ("I don't play into it"). The way she emphasises her own responses to cyber-victimisation points to a sociocultural explanation for cyberbullying and therefore the need for intervention to occur at this level. Conceptualising cyberbullying as a social practice points to the need for interventions to work towards deconstructing dominant ideas that enable such practices to take place and providing further opportunities for students to resist engagement.

Overall, the collective intervention into practices of cyberbullying has been a consistent theme throughout the narrative 'Beyond Brutality'. In this narrative, students are no longer immersed in the harsh secondary school environment which requires them to choose between fighting for their survival or martyring themselves. Rather, the harsh, disparate 'system' is constructed as evolving, through collective effort, to form a more harmonious environment. Accordingly, this narrative provides an opportunity for students to resist engaging in cyberbullying practices without the requirement of self-sacrifice through cyber-victimisation (a dominant construction in the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed'). Although a consequence of this narrative is the naturalisation of cyberbullying practices amongst young people, it also highlights the possibility of intervening at the sociocultural level, through deconstructing dominant narratives of cyberbullying that enable such practices to continue.

Chapter Four: Discussion

With increased media coverage of cyberbullying and from witnessing the effects of cyberbullying on a person I am close to, I became personally and academically motivated to undertake research on this topic. Upon reviewing the understandings of cyberbullying produced in the current body of literature, I could not reconcile my observations of large-scale cyberbullying practices with the constructions of 'cyberbullies' as the manifestation of deviant individuals. This initial sense of unease I felt with the dominant individualistic conceptualisation of cyberbullying inspired my investigation into cyberbullying as a social practice. I wanted to know how practices of large-scale cyberbullying emerged and the way in which the individuals engaging in these practices make sense of them. How do such individuals construct their experiences of cyberbullying, when the information available to the public suggests it is deviant behaviour? Accordingly, the present study sought to identify the constructions of cyberbullying produced by students who had either experienced and/or engaged in cyberbullying practices and the various subject positions that were made available to them, along with the material effects of these practices. A narrative analysis was employed as narratives are central to our understanding of the world and shape our experiences; this enabled me to identify dominant constructions of cyberbullying and the sets of material practices that emerge from these constructions.

Student understandings of cyberbullying produced four dominant narratives, with each narrative building on one another to form one overarching narrative of cyberbullying. The overarching narrative was accompanied by a brief auxiliary narrative, which I have termed an 'epilogue', since it transports the story to a different time period and reveals the outcome of the overarching narrative. The first narrative, 'It's Kill or be Killed', produces a moral dilemma, in which students must decide whether to participate in cyberbullying practices and remain safe, or to sacrifice themselves by refusing to take part. 'It's Kill or be Killed' served as a foundation for the three additional narratives through its construction of secondary school as a hostile social environment, in which students form 'packs' to survive. According to this narrative, students must demonstrate absolute loyalty to the 'pack', including participation in cyberbullying practices, to receive its protection. Cyberbullying is therefore constructed as a necessary action, in order to remain inside the 'pack' and to prevent one's experience of cyber-victimisation. In the second narrative, 'Leaders of the Pack', students compete with one another for power and social status, by demonstrating their strength to their peers through cyberbullying successes. The 'pack' hierarchy system is achievement-orientated and functions via social capital; within this narrative, students are required to 'prove' their strength to the 'pack' by eliciting negative reactions from 'cybervictims', in order to work their way up the constructed hierarchy.

The third narrative, 'Constructing the Other', delineated four dominant processes by which cyberbullying practices produce a 'cybervictim other'. Ultimately, each of these methods serve to objectify and dehumanise 'cybervictims' and to justify the 'pack's' engagement in cyberbullying practices. The fourth narrative 'Hunting the Other' produced cyberbullying as a collective process, in which increasingly more students target a single 'cybervictim' other in 'pack-like' fashion. Within this narrative, increasing engagement in cyberbullying consolidates the 'cybervictim's' position as an 'other' and produces a vicious cycle, in which the more well known the 'cybervictim' becomes, the more vulnerable they are to further cyber-victimisation. Finally, in the epilogue 'Beyond Brutality', the secondary school environment is depicted as evolving toward a more harmonious state, and cyberbullying is constructed as 'childish' behaviour, which naturally runs its course as students mature. In this epilogue, students reflect on cyberbullying practices and attempt to make sense of them in hindsight.

Taken together, these narratives (and epilogue) co-articulated in complex ways to form an overall understanding of cyberbullying which limits student responsibility for involvement in this practice. The practice of limiting responsibility was primarily found through the establishment of binary distinctions between 'cyberbullies' and 'cybervictims' in the text. This was most explicit in the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed', where participating in cyberbullying was constructed as a matter of survival; the decision to participate was taken out of the students' hands, placing responsibility for cyberbullying in nature itself. In the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', responsibility for cyberbullying was taken away from students through the construction of 'competition' and the idea of 'achievement'; students who made it to the top of the social hierarchy were understood to have worked hard and thus 'earned' their privilege. By privileging achievement, responsibility for cyber-victimisation was placed with the 'cybervictim', as it is their duty (like everyone else's) to avoid this position.

Furthermore, in 'Constructing the Other', responsibility for cyberbullying is again placed with the 'cybervictim' through the process of 'othering', which objectifies/dehumanises the 'cybervictim' and therefore justifies their occupation of this position. 'Cybervictims' are therefore understood to have brought the cyberbullying upon themselves, through their own unacceptable actions. Although I use the term 'cybervictim' to point to the actual victim (or the recipient) in practices of 'Constructing the Other', it is important to note that in retaliatory cyberbullying practices, the 'cybervictim' becomes the privileged position/side of the binary. However, in such practices, the person who claims the term 'cybervictim' is still justifying their use of cyberbullying practices by holding the recipient responsible (even if they understand themselves to be the 'cybervictim'). Therefore, they claim this position rhetorically, despite being the ones inflicting harm. By holding the recipient accountable for the cyber-victimisation they receive, the recipient is placed in the role of the deserving 'other'. This

enables the abuse cycle to continue with no sense of remorse for the constructed 'other'. Likewise, in the narrative 'Hunting the Other', the 'cybervictim other' is understood to be an appropriate target for attack, justifying the use of cyberbullying practices against them. The normalisation of cyberbullying practices then further limits responsibility by diverting attention away from the harm inflicted on the 'cybervictim' and trivialising the matter altogether. Finally, in the epilogue, 'Beyond Brutality', the construction of cyberbullying practices as a product of immaturity limits responsibility by producing cyberbullying as a natural, unavoidable aspect of 'growing-up'. Overall, the various ways by which the overarching narrative limits responsibility for cyberbullying practices draws attention away from any collective responsibility.

Though each of the narratives seem to build upon one another to tell one larger story, there are some obvious inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in the overarching narrative which was produced. For instance, 'It's Kill or be Killed' produced cyberbullying as an undesirable practice, in which students have no choice but to participate. Alternatively, 'Leaders of the Pack' constructs cyberbullying as a trendy, desirable practice and participation is constructed as an achievement. Such a contradiction enables individuals engaging in cyberbullying practices to dislike the systems of domination and subordination they are 'forced' to grapple with, whilst still benefitting from them (i.e. by working their way up the social hierarchy). Furthermore, the solid 'cyberbully/cybervictim' binary established in the narratives 'It's Kill or be Killed' and 'Leaders of the Pack' was somewhat more malleable in the narrative 'Constructing the Other', where privileged students were able to occupy the position of the 'cybervictim' without jeopardising their position within the 'Pack'. This contradictory flexibility of the 'cybervictim' position enables individuals to re-dichotomise cyberbullying practices (and uphold the binary) in situations where the roles of 'cyberbully' and 'cybervictim' are messy and unclear. These contradictions reflect the power imbalances inherent in cyberbullying practices, insofar as the narratives are constructed and then reconstructed, in order to uphold 'us' and 'them' boundaries, and continuously favour the privileged side of the binary. Finally, the epilogue 'Beyond Brutality' contradicts the naturalisation of unequal systems of power produced in the narrative "It's Kill or be Killed', by constructing this system as progressing to a more harmonious state as the students mature. 'Beyond Brutality' therefore produces systems of domination and subordination as an erroneous 'primitive' system, rather than an inherent aspect of human nature. This contradiction enables students to naturalise cyberbullying practices ("it's just something that children/young people do"), without implicating themselves in present time ("but we have since matured"). However, it also demonstrates the way in which such practices evolve, as understandings of cyberbullying change. Significantly, this contradictory shift in how cyberbullying is conceptualised, suggests that intervention into the social environment which produces cyberbullying practices can be addressed through reflecting upon and deconstructing dominant narratives. Overall, these contradictions point to an understanding of cyberbullying as a dynamic,

messy practice which is located in power relations, rather than a set of behaviours which can be neatly defined and categorised.

Finally, fragments of resistance to these dominant narratives were also carefully searched for, considering the space which they open for alternative understandings of cyberbullying, and therefore, alternate ways for students to engage with this social practice. Narratives that did not adhere to binary understandings were of particular interest and, although produced infrequently within this research sample, little openings for resistance to the dominant 'cyberbully/cybervictim' binary reflected some possibilities for the negotiation of these dominant constructions of cyberbullying. For instance, in the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed', a sub-narrative of 'self-sacrifice' resisted the dominant construction of the helpless 'cybervictim' who is dragged into cyberbullying practices, against their will. Within this narrative, the student produces a strong character who makes a deliberate decision not to engage in cyberbullying practices for a 'greater good', despite the personal cost to themselves. The narrative of self-sacrifice, therefore, resists the systems of domination and subordination that position 'cybervictims' as naturally inferior individuals. Furthermore, when not in the presence of fellow 'pack' members, some students covertly resist the partitioned environment produced in the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed', by being friendly towards 'cybervictims' and acting as if there is no animosity between them in face-to-face encounters (despite simultaneously targeting them through cyberbullying practices in on-line contexts). The occasional friendliness of 'cyberbullies' to 'cybervictims' suggests that 'us' and 'them' boundaries are not adhered to in the absence of perceived threat and thus, open a potential avenue for interventions that could work towards reducing the threat to students in challenging such boundaries.

In the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', an alternative narrative of 'resilience' enabled students to resist the 'weak cybervictim' position by producing the experience of cyber-victimisation as a measure of strength. Thus, rather than a helpless and vulnerable 'cybervictim', students who experienced cyber-victimisation had not only proven, but gained in strength, by surviving cyberbullying. Importantly, this also functions as a protective factor for suicidality, as students construct surviving cyber-victimisation (and choosing to live) as a sign that they have 'won' against their opponent(s). In the narrative 'Hunting the Other', opportunities for resisting the binary are made possible through in-person exposure to the 'real' harm of cyberbullying practices and the effects this has for the 'cybervictim'. Understanding the 'real' harm of cyberbullying not only disrupts the normalisation/trivialisation of cyberbullying practices but confronts 'cyberbullies' with the humanness of the 'cybervictim'. Since cyberbullying practices are enabled through 'us' and 'them' boundaries that dehumanise 'cybervictims' and distance them from the 'pack', exposure to individuals on the 'other' side of the binary reduces this distance and makes it difficult to perceive and treat them as the 'other'. Finally, in the epilogue 'Beyond Brutality', reconceptualising

cyberbullying provided an opportunity for resistance to cyberbullying practices. Through deconstructing dominant narratives of cyberbullying (such as the idea that it is necessary for protection, or that cyber-victimisation indicates something is wrong with you), different responses to cyberbullying practices (other than engagement or cyber-victimisation) were enabled. Though students did not overtly reconceptualise cyberbullying as a sociocultural practice, the ways in which they reflected on cyberbullying practices in hindsight pointed towards a sociocultural explanation. For instance, a consistent theme in this narrative was the collective effort required to achieve a more harmonious 'system'.

In my research, student narratives produced a vastly different picture of cyberbullying in contrast to the dominant ways conceptualised within the current body of literature. Olweus's (2010) definition of traditional bullying, which is frequently applied to the issue of cyberbullying, defines cyberbullying as a product of individuals with ill-intentions, directing abusive behaviours against an individual who is in some way vulnerable and unable to make the bullying behaviours stop. This definition produces a binary understanding of cyberbullying as a problem between ill-intended 'bullies' and vulnerable 'victims'. However, this definition does not account for the complex ways that cyberbullying practices emerged in my research. For instance, my findings demonstrate how practices of 'othering' are often achieved collectively and therefore, how 'groups' engage in cyberbullying practices together. My research also demonstrates the way in which engagement in cyberbullying practices can 'snowball', making a particular individual vulnerable to experiencing prolonged cyberbullying by many different individuals. These findings make it difficult to perceive that all such individuals possess ill-intentions, and it is more reasonable to theorise that group participation points to a wider culture in which such practices are normalised and tolerated. In fact, individuals in my research were often constructed as experiencing an internal conflict regarding participation in such practices, but felt it was necessary for survival. 'Cyberbullies' were also constructed as unaware of the negative impact that cyber-victimisation has for the 'cybervictim', and cyberbullying practices (along with extreme and harsh forms of speech) were constructed as normal. The engagement of numerous individuals taking part in such practices reduces individual responsibility, yet simultaneously increases the impact of cyber-victimisation. My findings therefore challenge the utility of Olweus's definition of traditional bullying, which makes the individual the point of focus.

The findings of my research also challenge the bulk of literature which attributes the issue of cyberbullying to individual traits and thereby produces a 'deficit model' of cyberbullying. In Chapter One of my research, I explored correlational studies that linked individual traits and personal deficits to engagement in cyberbullying 'behaviours' (Bayraktar et al., 2014; Buckels et al., 2014; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016) and experiences of cyber-victimisation (Hemphill et al., 2014; Jacobs et al.,

2013; Vollink et al., 2013). However, my findings point to some important and different aspects/features of cyberbullying – a wider culture which enables (and maintains) engagement in cyberbullying practices. It also locates the experience of cyber-victimisation within complex social power relations that position individuals as 'cybervictims' and constrains them from occupying alternative positions. Therefore, if we continue to subscribe to 'the deficit model' of cyberbullying, we not only overlook the issue of wider culture in which this phenomenon is located, but we see a completely different phenomenon altogether. An issue of a few 'problem' individuals is quite different from a 'trend' that many individuals, in various ways, are engaged in.

My findings locate the issue of cyberbullying within sets of practices which produce an 'other'. Technology is therefore not a key component of cyberbullying practices, but merely a tool which is utilised in order to perform particular acts that are associated with such practices. Accordingly, my research does support the understanding that cyberbullying is an extension of traditional bullying (Alipan et al., 2020; Olweus, 2012). The exploration of large-scale cyberbullying in my research demonstrates the way in which technology can assist the 'othering' process, since many more individuals can participate in targeting a 'cybervictim' through cyberbullying practices. However, the issue of technology is secondary to the function that producing an 'other' through cyberbullying practices serves; ultimately, such practices work to achieve positive ingroup identification and sustain systems of domination and subordination, by policing the constructed boundaries between the dominant 'cyberbully ingroup' and the subordinate 'cybervictim outgroup'.

My findings also demonstrate the rhetorical uses of the terms 'bully' and 'victim' and how these are: 1) understood differently by students from how they are conceptualised within the literature, and 2) not as fixed as much of the literature suggests. For instance, according to 'the deficit model' of cyberbullying, the term 'cyberbully' is associated with personal deficits and 'negative' traits, such as sadism or psychopathy. However, in student narratives, the role of the 'cyberbully' was often associated with 'positive' traits, such as strength, popularity, being 'cool', 'trendy' and accepted by others. Furthermore, the terms 'bully' and 'victim' are utilised strategically, meaning that someone could perform actions associated with the position of the 'cyberbully' and yet claim the position of the 'cybervictim'. In Chapter One, I discussed a suggestion made by Campbell and Bauman (2018) for differentiating between 'cyberfighting' and 'cyberbullying'. Campbell and Bauman's argument is based on their conceptualisation of a 'victim' as someone who is unable to defend themselves. Therefore, if a recipient of abusive practices engages in such practices themselves, the phenomenon should then be considered 'cyberfighting'. However, my findings around the rhetorical uses of the terms 'victim' and 'bully' challenges the utility of excluding dual-engagement from cyberbullying practices, since it overlooks an important issue: that students do not necessarily differentiate between these experiences themselves. In student narratives, social power relations positioned one individual

as the ‘bully’ and the other as the ‘victim’, regardless of whether both parties participated in cyberbullying practices. Even if we, as ‘absent experts’, decide to exclude dual engagement from cyberbullying practices and impose the label of ‘cyberfighting’, we disregard the variable and dynamic functions of ‘victim/bully’ roles and the ways in which they are used strategically, producing a variety of complex abusive practices. We also miss the bigger picture, in that whether practices resemble ‘cyberfighting’ or ‘cyberbullying’, students are simply trying to navigate their way through a complex web of social power relations, whilst trying to avoid their own subjugation. Such nuances are important for understanding the wider culture in which cyberbullying practices emerge (and therefore how to respond effectively to this issue), yet are not captured by reductive, binary understandings of cyberbullying. The differences between the rhetorical uses of the terms, ‘victim’ and ‘bully’, in the academic literature and in student narratives, suggest the literature is limited by conceptual issues regarding the phenomenon of cyberbullying it attempts to investigate and what this phenomenon actually entails in practice.

My findings also support research which suggests bystanders are more likely to encourage a ‘bully’ or overlook an incidence of bullying, than they are to assist a ‘victim’ (Barlińska et al., 2013). In the student narratives, constructions of cyberbullying as necessary for survival, and of students as fearful of the consequences of not participating, provide insight into the social context which enables cyberbullying practices and simultaneously constrains students from supporting a ‘cybervictim’. Furthermore, constructions of cyberbullying as trendy and participation as an indication of success/achievement, along with depictions of ‘cyberbullies’ as ‘proud’ for participating, means that students are rewarded for engaging in cyberbullying practices and choosing not to support the ‘victim’. Overall, these narratives produced a partitioned environment, which was able to sustain itself through material relations by inciting fear in students over being ‘othered’ and producing social rewards for students who participate in practices of ‘othering’. These findings provide insight into the social context which enables cyberbullying practices and simultaneously constrains bystander support for ‘victims’.

The findings of my research support what Temko (2019) has labelled, ‘the sociostructural model of bullying’ (discussed in Chapter One) which, instead of identifying problematic individuals, locates cyberbullying in wider social relations. My findings echo Temko’s concerns around the normalisation of bullying within social and educational institutions, by suggesting that students are becoming desensitised to harsh and extreme forms of speech, resulting in the trivialisation (and therefore toleration) of cyberbullying practices. Furthermore, my findings support research which suggests that bullying functions as a way to achieve positive ingroup identification and occurs through the production and vilification of an ‘outgroup’ (Brenick & Halgunseth, 2017; Palmer et al., 2015; Rutland & Killen, 2015). My findings also expand on this by providing insight into the various

practices through which ‘othering’ is achieved (i.e. the production of propaganda, moral judgement, retaliatory cyberbullying practices, and ‘self-othering’). Overall, not only does my research contribute to the literature which conceptualises bullying as a sociocultural issue, but it provides a more nuanced insight into the various practices of cyberbullying and how they take place. Furthermore, although sociocultural understandings of traditional bullying are being discussed, there is a paucity of literature which discusses and explores large-scale bullying practices. My research contributes to this gap by exploring how cyberbullying practices encourage and maintain group engagement and how this can often lead to the participation of many individuals (even individuals who do not seem to have a relationship with the ‘cybervictim’).

My findings also resonate with the work of Reicher et al. (2008), who took special interest in exploring the way in which groups produce hate through social relationships. Reicher et al formulated a five-step ‘Social Identity Model’ to explain how people collectively engage in (and celebrate) harmful actions towards certain groups of people. In Reicher et al.’s model, similar processes are identified, such as the construction of an ‘other’, who is vilified and attacked. Despite these similarities, one key difference between the practices outlined in this research, and Reicher et al.’s model, is that Reicher et al. considers a perceived *threat to identity* as the core to engaging in (and celebrating) genocidal actions. Reicher et al. argues that simply producing an ‘other’ is not justification enough for genocidal practices to be enacted and positively regarded. However, my findings suggest that the celebration of cyberbullying practices can be understood as a function of group formation (as opposed to preservation), since acceptance and belonging to the ingroup is established by differentiating oneself from the ‘cybervictim other’. Furthermore, my research emphasises the dehumanisation of the ‘cybervictim other’ as the means by which cyberbullying practices are able to be carried out. These differences do not necessarily contradict one another, however, they do reflect differing focal points for understanding the production of hate and the enactment of abuse towards certain groups of people. One explanation for the emphasis on group acceptance in this research could be the social context of secondary school, in which this research is located. During secondary school, the issue of group acceptance may be more salient, as students do their best to position themselves favourably within hierarchically organised social relationships.

My findings also contribute to conversations about structural inequalities in the local context of Aotearoa/New Zealand (Barnes et al., 2013; Pack, Tuffin & Lyons, 2016; Phelan & Shearer, 2009; Rankine & McCreanor, 2004). Though issues of racism and colonisation did not emerge as fundamental issues in the data gathered in this research, my findings locate practices of cyberbullying within wider systems of domination and subordination that enable such abuses to occur. As Barnes et al. elucidates, an “ideology of inferiority” is core to racism, which echoes the subordination of the ‘cybervictim other’ in this research. These similarities point to a wider issue of structural violence

which allows certain groups of people to be marginalised and treated badly within our communities, in a variety of ways. Perhaps most significantly, my research further stresses the way in which structural violence permeates lived experiences, causing *actual* harm to the individuals embedded within these hegemonic social power relations (Barnes et al., 2013).

It is also worth noting that we are seeing cyberbullying practices that can be aligned with some broader societal ideas. In particular, there appear to be some unsettling resonances with neoliberal and fascist ideologies in the cyberbullying practices produced in this research. For instance, Stanley (2018) argues that fascist practices normalise cruelty by limiting tolerance and empathy for certain groups of people. Historically, fascist nationalism is reinforced through a sense of solidarity against a common enemy which is constructed as 'dangerous' and therefore 'must' be conquered. Consequently, the nation understands itself through the identification of the dangerous 'other' and cruelty towards the 'enemy' is subsequently justified (Stanley, 2018). In my research, establishing a common enemy (i.e. the 'cybervictim'), through various processes of 'othering', was essential to the production and reproduction of cyberbullying practices. These served to dehumanise the 'cybervictim other' and justify the inhumane treatment of them. Significantly, Stanley (2018) argues that fascism is difficult to challenge since fear of the 'other' supersedes understanding between groups. Just as Stanley contends with fascism, dominant narratives of cyberbullying are able to sustain themselves through the constant threat of cyber-victimisation, which limits relations between 'cyberbullies' and 'cybervictims'. Moreover, in the narrative 'It's Kill or be Killed', uniformity within social groups is promoted, and students are required to conform to the interests of the 'pack' to be granted acceptance. These practices bear resemblance to fascist nationalism (a form of ultra-nationalism) which functions to remove people of their individuality, to fashion one coherent unit (Stanley, 2018). The formation of 'packs' within students' narratives of cyberbullying could thus be likened to fascist practices that place less emphasis on individual intentions and motives, accentuating instead the wellbeing of the nation as a whole.

On the other hand, neoliberalism privileges individuality, 'achievement' and competition, determining human worth by measure of individual output (Bourdieu, 1998; Friedrich, 1955; Olssen, 2003). Though a key feature of a fascist society is the emphasis on collective ideals, Stanley (2018) argues that neoliberalism and ultra-nationalism actually work in tandem with one another in the context of fascist practices. For instance, fascist nations are still ordered hierarchically, positioning citizens across varying levels of power and status. Similar to the 'leaders' in the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', the fascist hierarchy is typically headed by a dictatorial leader who rests in sole charge of the state (Stanley, 2018). Emphasis is then given to ideals of industry and autonomy in fascist ideology; it is understood that through hard work and merit, individuals can 'work' their way up the hierarchy. By contrast, individuals who do not 'achieve' are considered lazy and therefore,

undeserving of privilege (Stanley, 2018). Likewise, the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack' contradicts the collective ideals of 'It's Kill or be Killed', placing a high value on individual achievement and success. Students are organised hierarchically, with the most notorious and 'successful' 'cyberbullies' positioned at the top of the hierarchy. Hence in the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', the subordination of 'cybervictims' through cyberbullying practices can be attributed to their own shortcomings, for which they are seen to be responsible. In the present research, the emergence of contradictory ultranationalist and neoliberal ideas could thus be located in fascist practices that privilege both of these ideals. Alternatively, Atzmuller and Decieux (2019) have argued that there appears to be a more general shift from the dominant neoliberal regime to fascism in the western world. Therefore, contradictory ideas in the present research may reflect wider tensions between dominant neoliberal and emerging fascist ideologies in the western world.

Finally, fascist notions of achievement are also heavily interlinked with heteronormative ideals of masculinity (Passmore, 2014; Stanley, 2018), which position men as strong, dominant beings, in comparison to passive, nurturing women (Gavey, 1992). Hence, in fascist ideology, the 'strong man' is considered to be better positioned for power and success and consequently, a strong authoritarian 'father' is placed at the head of the nation. The 'father' then speaks for, and has the power to make decisions as to what is best for, the nation (Stanley, 2018). Similarly, in the narrative 'Leaders of the Pack', students who were able to demonstrate/prove their strength over others were positioned as 'leaders' within their relative friendship groups. 'Leaders' then had the power to make decisions on behalf of the docile 'pack' regarding engagement in cyberbullying practices. By contrast, students who were considered to have 'weak' qualities were positioned as vulnerable to cyber-victimisation. Though a thorough exploration of fascism in cyberbullying practices is beyond the scope of this thesis, this may be a fruitful area for future research to undertake, given the identified similarities between fascist practices and practices of cyberbullying.

Clinical Implications of this Research

In terms of the clinical implications of this research, the understanding of cyberbullying as a social practice, rather than a deviant behaviour, may be beneficial in informing how clinicians, parents, teachers (and the wider community) can more effectively respond to the issue of cyberbullying. For instance, it may not be helpful to focus so strongly on individualistic factors and interventions, when students appear to be positioned within a wider web of social relations that contribute to (and reinforce) engagement in cyberbullying practices.

Further, the narratives generated from the analysis in this research can be used to delineate a certain

process by which cyberbullying practices take place (see Figure 1). This process can be used to guide professionals and the wider community in understanding how cyberbullying practices occur and what ideas may be reinforcing such practices. Given the complexity of the constructed narratives, a visual representation of this process can be a useful tool for educational purposes, as well as for generating solutions towards cyberbullying practices. The diagram below highlights the key components of cyberbullying practices identified in my research and the way that each of these components can affect one another, forming two separate feedback loops that sustain engagement in cyberbullying practices:

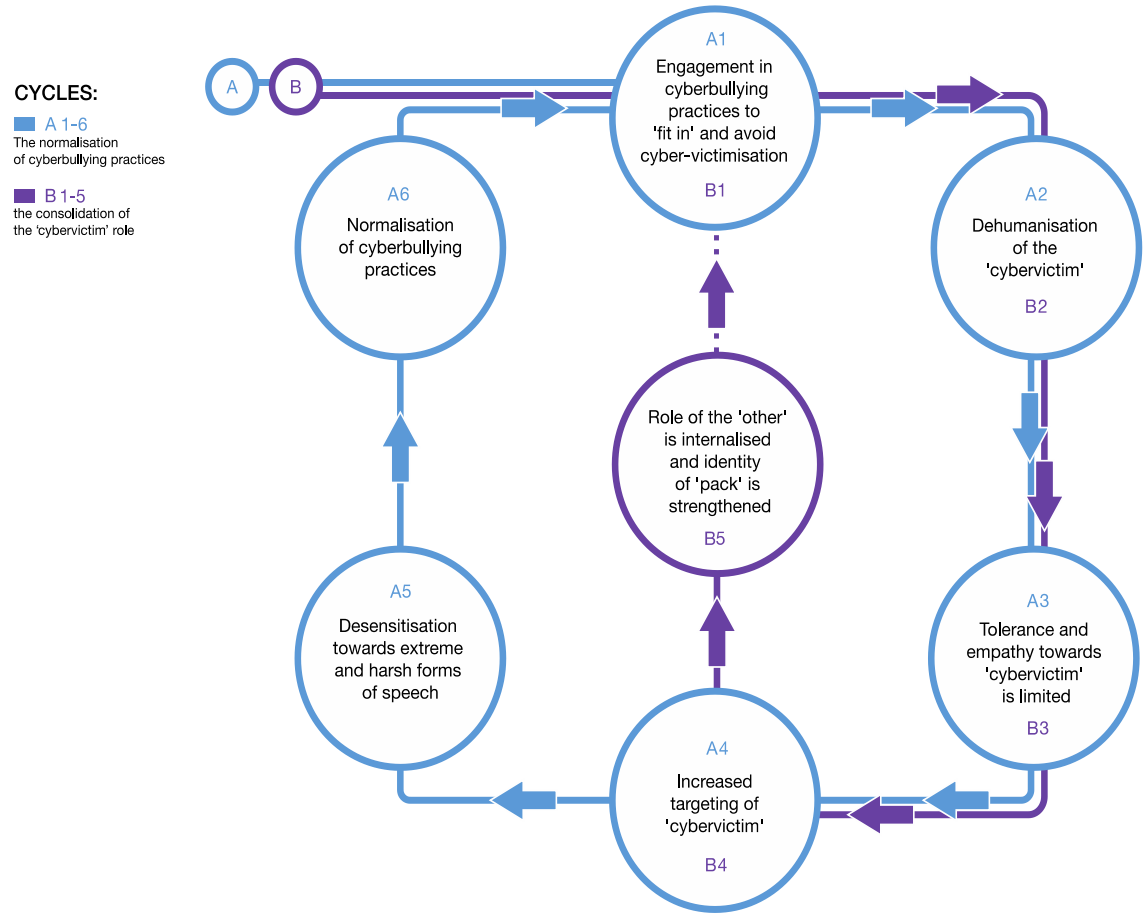

Figure 1. 'The Cycles of Cyberbullying' depict the key aspects of the process by which cyberbullying practices occur, as constructed in the overarching narrative.

As reflected in Figure 1, the Cycles of Cyberbullying maintain cyberbullying practices through two separate feedback loops; one larger loop (Cycle A) which normalises and maintains cyberbullying practices and a second smaller loop (Cycle B) which 'traps' an individual in perpetual cyber-victimisation, through practices that consolidate the role of the 'cybervictim'. In Cycle A, the process

begins with students engaging in cyberbullying practices to fit in with peers and protect themselves from cyber-victimisation (reflected as A1 in the diagram). However, subsequent engagement in cyberbullying then functions to justify the inhumane treatment of the 'cybervictim' by dehumanising them – taking engagement in cyberbullying from a trivial matter to one which meaningfully targets a constructed 'other' (A2). Consequently, tolerance and empathy towards the targeted student are reduced (A3), leading to the increased targeting of the 'cybervictim' by additional students who were not involved in the original instance of cyberbullying (A4). Engagement in cyberbullying from increasingly more students then desensitises students to extreme and harsh forms of speech (A5). Increasing students' tolerance of abusive actions shapes notions of what is considered to be acceptable forms of violence, resulting in the normalisation of cyberbullying practices; here, cyberbullying begins to take on a cultural aspect (A6). This final stage of the process forms the larger feedback loop of Cycle A since the normalisation of cyberbullying practices promotes further engagement.

Cycle B begins the same as Cycle A; however, a departure is made at A4 (also reflected as B4 in the diagram), in which the escalation of engagement into large-scale cyberbullying practices enables the 'cybervictim' to internalise the role of the 'other', and simultaneously, the production of a common enemy solidifies the identity of the 'pack' (B5). Internalising the role of the 'other' produces a second feedback loop, since available responses from within this position reinforce the position of the 'other' (e.g. by withdrawing, self-harming, fighting to defend themselves). Such responses serve as confirmation that the 'cybervictim' deserves inhumane treatment, further justifying the use of cyberbullying practices against them. Furthermore, the increased solidarity of the 'pack' against the common enemy solidifies the position of the 'cybervictim other', leaving the 'cybervictim' vulnerable to continued cyber-victimisation. The tentative connection of the final arrow in Cycle B indicates that the cycle does not return to the absolute beginning. This is because further participation in cyberbullying practices continues to meaningfully target the constructed 'other' (who is positioned as an 'enemy' who deserves inhumane treatment), rather than engaging to 'fit-in' and avoid cyber-victimisation.

The Cycles of Cyberbullying demonstrates that there are multiple points for intervention, at various stages of the cycle. Ideally, intervention would be proactive rather than reactive, directing intervention efforts at the beginning of the cycle, where students engage to fit-in and avoid cyber-victimisation' (A1). Proactive interventions would work toward deconstructing dominant narratives of cyberbullying, which naturalise cyberbullying practices and produce engagement as a necessary means of survival. Furthermore, for addressing ongoing cyberbullying practices, the process of dehumanisation, producing the deserving other, is core to intervention. Students may not connect with a generalised intervention delivered to large student bodies, since the environment may not

enable a connection with the 'other' side of the binary. This may be why students in this research describe collective bullying interventions falling flat or being laughed at. Collective interventions are likely to be more salient when conducted in an intimate setting to facilitate exposure to the experience of the 'cybervictim', thereby reducing 'us' and 'them' boundaries. Furthermore, rather than resorting to some implicit humanism in such interventions, small group work which invites students to reflect on the ideologies underlying cyberbullying practices (and the personal contradictions these produce in relation to their values) may be more effective.

At the individual level, this research poses two further implications for clinical practice. Firstly, this research highlights the profound effects of cyberbullying practices, and the need for therapeutic interventions, as well as interventions aimed at the collective level. Secondly, this research provides nuanced and unique insight into the ways in which cyberbullying practices affect the subjective experiences of individuals who are involved. This is valuable for guiding clinical practice, in terms of how we can formulate presenting difficulties and tailor therapeutic interventions with clients who experience and or engage in cyberbullying practices. For instance, the theoretical framework of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) holds that individuals develop 'core-beliefs' that shape the way an individual perceives themselves, the world and others. Such beliefs are then understood to affect the way an individual thinks, feels and behaves (Dozois et al., 2019; Leahy et al., 2011). From a CBT standpoint, the process of 'internalised othering' could be conceptualised as the formation of unhelpful 'core-beliefs' about the self, the world and others. Some examples of unhelpful core-beliefs that could be particularly impactful and pertinent to the experience of cyber-victimisation are: "I am unworthy", "I am different", "something is wrong with me", "others do not value me", "the world is a dangerous place", "I cannot defend myself" and "I am unsafe". Accordingly, from a CBT perspective, the material consequences of cyberbullying practices are likely to have a lasting impact, particularly for individuals who experience prolonged cyber-victimisation and have therefore developed more ingrained unhelpful beliefs.

There are also likely to be profound effects for students who engage in cyberbullying practices, particularly since students were constructed as negatively reflecting upon themselves and their actions as a result of participation. Students may develop unhelpful core beliefs about themselves, for example, "I am a bad person" and "I am unworthy/undeserving", as well as unhelpful beliefs about the world and others, such as, "I am vulnerable/unsafe", "others are cruel/out to get me", "the world is harsh, dangerous and/or unfair", and "I need to fight for survival". For both engagement in cyberbullying practices, and experiences of cyber-victimisation, these harmful consequences are compounded by the way in which students are taught to compartmentalise their negative experiences and deny vulnerability, as a means of coping with the social environment in which cyberbullying practices emerge. Without acknowledging or addressing the impact of cyberbullying practices, these

negative beliefs cannot be challenged. For parents, teachers and mental health workers in particular, it will be important to recognise the way this sociocultural context shapes the individual responses of children and young people. It will also be important to not only have an awareness but compassion for this, considering the way in which particular responses enable children and young people to function within this social environment (including engagement in cyberbullying practices itself).

In light of this, it will be important to challenge the notion that one is a 'good person' and therefore incapable of inflicting serious harm. The findings of my research suggest that located within wider social relations, people collectively contribute to both systems of domination and subordination that produce cyberbullying practices. We do not need to be a 'bad' person to do 'bad' things, nor do we need to be a 'deviant' individual to engage in harmful cyberbullying practices. Although clinicians, parents and teachers can help students to navigate their way through this wider web of social relations, it is clear that broader social interventions which address the sets of beliefs and practices associated with cyberbullying are needed. Accordingly, when considering solutions for this complex social practice, we also need to challenge the binary and acknowledge that we are part of the problem, as we are part of the solution.

Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Through my analysis of student narratives of cyberbullying, I demonstrate and critically evaluate the way that students conceptualise cyberbullying and how these understandings produce sets of practices with material consequences. I also draw attention to these dominant constructions of cyberbullying with the intention of making space for the consideration of multiple/new/alternative understandings. Notwithstanding, it should be recognised that this research produced constructions of cyberbullying in collaboration with 16 students who have engaged in cyberbullying practices and/or experienced cyber-victimisation, within a particular period of time, location and cultural context. Furthermore, the majority of these participants resided in one particular area of New Zealand. Whilst there are some benefits of studying the effects of cyberbullying in one location, such as the breadth of local data needed for a sociocultural analysis, the particular location may have also uniquely contributed to shaping the narratives that were produced. Further research could thus explore how practices of cyberbullying take place similarly and differently in other locations within New Zealand, as well as internationally.

Furthermore, since the particular analytic process chosen for this research has contributed to the shape of the research findings, further research could explore practices of cyberbullying from alternative analytical lenses. In terms of my research data, a particularly significant issue for future research to explore would be the issue of sexism and the location of cyberbullying practices within

gendered power relations. Throughout my analytical process, there were numerous moments where issues of gender, sexism and heteronormativity were raised in the data and resounded some important discussions regarding gendered power relations in the local context of New Zealand (Adams, Towns, & Gavey, 1995; Towns & Adams, 2000). However, I wanted to focus the constructed narratives on processes of 'othering' which produce and reproduce cyberbullying practices, since this was at the core of all of the practices. A deeper exploration of gendered power relations may have drawn attention away from this. Therefore, I decided that addressing these issues is beyond the scope of my research and that they deserve further thought in their own right. This would be a particularly pertinent area for future research to examine and may even be conducted using this research data.

Concluding Comment

In returning to my original thoughts and questions which instigated this research, I reflect on how convenient it is to dichotomise our social world and how comforting (and easy) it is to limit and focus responsibility, rather than to acknowledge that issues are messy, complex, and socially located. Even while writing this research, it was a tedious process to avoid active use of the labels 'cyberbully' and 'cybervictim' and I found that "individuals who engage in cyberbullying practices or experience cyber-victimisation" didn't quite roll off the tongue. However, reducing cyberbullying to 'cyberbullies' and 'cybervictims' merely perpetuates the social power relations producing cyberbullying practices in the first place. My study draws attention to the systems of domination and subordination which emerge from binary distinctions and which ultimately produce an "us" versus a vilifiable "them". I think about my initial shock and revulsion in response to the severity of the cyberbullying which the person I am close to endured from young individuals, who outwardly appeared 'nice' and 'normal'. I also think about infamous events throughout history, in which 'everyday people' have engaged in large-scale harmful practices. In doing so, it strikes me that whether or not we are personally involved or affected by cyberbullying, it is an issue in which we are all embedded through the wider social contexts that cyberbullying practices have emerged from. My hope is that by raising the issue of wider culture in relation to cyberbullying practices, this conceptualisation of cyberbullying can be recognised and considered when it comes to generating solutions for this problematic issue, in professional, as well as community settings.

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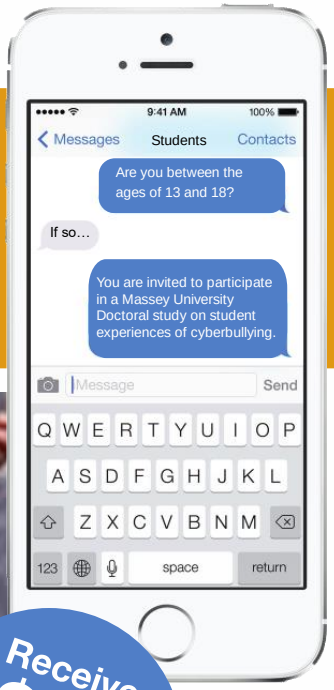
Appendix A: Research Advertisement

Have you ever experienced, or have been involved in 'cyberbullying?'

Want to tell your story in a safe & confidential environment that is free from judgement?



Receive $20 Westfield Voucher

For further information:
Contact Adi Papirany
Email: adi.papirany.1@uni.massey.ac
Text or Phone: [redacted]

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Appendix B: Information Sheet for Participants Aged 16–18

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

Student Experiences of Cyberbullying

Information for Students about the study

You are invited to be part of a Massey University research project on experiences of cyberbullying. My name is Adi Papirany and I am doing this study as part of my university degree. Helping me with this project are my supervisors, Clifford van Ommen and Kerry Chamberlain. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about this study, our contact details are below:

Researcher:	Research supervisor 1:	Research supervisor 2:
Adi Papirany	Clifford van Ommen	Kerry Chamberlain
Phone: [redacted]	Phone: 09 2136095	Phone: 09 4140800 ext 43197
Email:	Email:	Email:
adi.papirany.1@uni.massey.ac	c.vanommen@massey.ac.nz	K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz

What is this research about?

This research is about experiences of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that happens when using things like computers and cell-phones. I am interested in finding out how cyberbullying works, so I am doing this study to understand it better.

Why is this research important?

It is important to understand cyberbullying as there is a lot of it happening at the moment and it is still quite a new type of bullying, so there is very little research that can help us to better understand it.

Who are we looking for?

We are looking both for students that have been cyberbullied and/or students who may have cyberbullied others. To participate in this study, you should be between 13 and 18 years old, speak good English, and want to talk about your experience of cyberbullying. To get a good understanding of cyberbullying, I am going to talk to around 15 students' altogether.

What will happen?

If you are interested in taking part in this study, it may be helpful for you to talk about this with your parents first. Taking part in this study means that you will have an interview, where you can tell me about your experience of cyberbullying. The interview will take about 60 minutes and will be sound-recorded. This interview will be private and no one will be able to tell that you participated in this research. When I make a written copy of your interview, and when I write about what we talk about, I will leave out any personal information so that no one can tell it is you. I will also store the written copy of your interview safely, where no one, other than my supervisors and myself, will have access to it. However, if you tell me about something serious (like causing harm to yourself, someone else, or that you are being harmed by someone else), then I will need to get some outside support for this, to make sure that you are safe.

It is also important for you to know that serious forms of cyberbullying are going to be illegal soon. This means that if you talk about using cyberbullying behaviours in a way that causes serious harm to another person in this interview, I will have to tell someone about this, to make sure that everyone is safe. However, the purpose of this study is to find out about your experience of cyberbullying – not about illegal activities. For this reason, I will not be asking you about specific details of cyberbullying events and you can choose not to tell me things that you do not want to.

If you decide to participate in this study, it is important to bring proof of your age to the interview (student ID, driver license, passport or birth certificate). Because of Massey University regulations, if you do not have this with you at the time of the interview, we cannot carry on with the interview.

You can decide where you would like to have the interview; it could either be held at the University (I will send you directions), or a different quiet/private place, such as a room at a public library in your area. After the interview, you will get a $20 Westfield Voucher to thank you for your time. I will also call you around a week after the interview to see how you are doing.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part in this research?

A benefit of participating in this study is that you will be helping us to understand cyberbullying better. However, cyberbullying can be a difficult thing to talk about, so it is possible that talking about your experience of cyberbullying during the interview could make you feel uncomfortable, or upset. If this happens, we will stop the interview and decide whether we should cancel it, or carry on with it at a different time. If you feel upset after the

interview, there is support available for you- I have placed a list of support services at the end of this information sheet, and I will give you another list of support services during the interview.

Your Rights:

You do not have to accept this invitation to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Not talk about anything you do not want to in the interview;
- Be assured that your name will not be used in any reports from the study;
- Ask for the sound recorder to be turned off at any time;
- Withdraw from the study at any time, until one week after the interview;
- Ask me or my supervisors any questions about the study, at any time;
- Be given a summary of the research findings when it is finished;

Summary of Findings:

Once I have finished this study in 2017, you are more than welcome to read a summary of what I find from doing this research. This will be available online, once the research is finished – I will send you the website details in 2017.

Committee Approval Statement:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 15/045. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 43317, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Thank you for your interest in this study!

If you (or someone you know) are having difficult thoughts or feelings about cyberbullying, there is some support available for you:

Youthline
Free Phone (anytime): 0800 376 633
Free Txt (anytime): 234
Email: talk@youthline.co.nz
Online Chat (anytime): http://www.youthline.co.nz/services/goforward/go-chat/
This helpline is for youth of all ages.

What's Up
Free Phone (daily from 1- 11pm): 0800 942 8787
Online Chat (daily from 7- 11pm): https://public.mc.hostedcc.com/whatsupnz/forms/Chat/Chat
This helpline is for young people aged 18 and under.

Kidsline
Free Phone (anytime): 0800 543 754
This helpline is for young people aged 18 and under.

Lifeline
Free Phone (anytime): 0800 543 35
This helpline is for people of all ages.

Suicide Crisis Helpline
Free Phone (anytime): 0508 828 865
This helpline is for those who may be thinking about suicide, or are concerned about their friends and family.

OUTLine
Free Phone: 0800 688 5463
Hours: Mon-Fri 9am- 9pm/ Sat-Sun & holidays 6pm- 9pm
OUTLine is a confidential phone support service for LGBTIQ people, or people experiencing gender identity issues.

RainbowYOUTH
Phone (Mon- Fri 11am till 5pm): (09)376 4155
Email: info@ry.org.nz
Drop-in centre (Mon-Fri 11am- 5pm): 281 Karangahape Road, Newton, Central Auckland
RainbowYOUTH provides support for young queer and trans* people, friends and families.

NetSafe
Phone (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm): (09) 362 0971
Email: queries@netsafe.org.nz
NetSafe is an organisation that promotes online safety and can provide information and help to those experiencing cyberbullying issues.

Appendix C: Information Sheet for Participants Aged 13–15

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

Student Experiences of Cyberbullying

Information for Students about the study

You are invited to be part of a Massey University research project on experiences of cyberbullying. My name is Adi Papirany and I am doing this study as part of my university degree. Helping me with this project are my supervisors, Clifford van Ommen and Kerry Chamberlain. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about this study, our contact details are below:

Researcher:	Research supervisor 1:	Research supervisor 2:
Adi Papirany	Clifford van Ommen	Kerry Chamberlain
Phone: [redacted]	Phone: 09 2136095	Phone: 09 4140800 ext 43197
Email:	Email:	Email:
adipapirany@massey.ac.nz	c.vanommen@massey.ac.nz	K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz

What is this research about?

This research is about experiences of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that happens when using things like computers and cell-phones. I am interested in finding out how cyberbullying works, so I am doing this study to understand it better.

Why is this research important?

It is important to understand cyberbullying as there is a lot of it happening at the moment and it is still quite a new type of bullying, so there is very little research that can help us to better understand it.

Who are we looking for?

We are looking both for students that have been cyberbullied and/or students who may have cyberbullied others. To participate in this study, you should be between 13 and 18 years old,

speak good English, and want to talk about your experience of cyberbullying. To get a good understanding of cyberbullying, I am going to talk to around 15 students' altogether.

What will happen?

If you are interested in participating in this study, your parents need to know about this. Please discuss this with them before making a decision. I will also need to phone your parents to talk about this with them.

Participating in this study means that you will have an interview, where you can tell me about your experience of cyberbullying. The interview will take about 60 minutes and will be sound-recorded. This interview will be private and no one will be able to tell that you participated in this research. When I make a written copy of your interview, and when I write about what we talk about, I will leave out any personal information so that no one can tell it is you. I will also store the written copy of your interview safely, where no one, other than my supervisors and myself, will have access to it. However, if you tell me about something serious (like causing harm to yourself, someone else, or that you are being harmed by someone else), then I will need to get some outside support for this, to make sure that you are safe.

It is also important for you to know that serious forms of cyberbullying are going to be illegal soon. This means that if you talk about using cyberbullying behaviours in a way that causes serious harm to another person in this interview, I will have to tell someone about this, to make sure that everyone is safe. However, the purpose of this study is to find out about your experience of cyberbullying – not about illegal activities. For this reason, I will not be asking you about specific details of cyberbullying events and you can choose not to tell me things that you do not want to.

You can decide where you would like to have the interview; it could be held at the University (I will give you directions), or a different quiet/private place, such as a room at a public library in your area. After the interview, you will get a $20 Westfield Voucher to thank you for your time. I will also call you around a week after the interview to see how you are doing.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part in this research?

A benefit of participating in this study is that you will be helping us to understand cyberbullying better. However, cyberbullying can be a difficult thing to talk about, so it is possible that talking about your experience of cyberbullying during the interview could make you feel uncomfortable, or upset. If this happens, we will stop the interview and decide whether we should cancel it, or carry on with it at a different time. If you feel upset after the interview, there is support available for you- I have placed a list of support services at the

end of this information sheet, and I will give you another list of support services during the interview.

Your Rights:

You do not have to accept this invitation to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Not talk about anything you do not want to in the interview;
- Be assured that your name will not be used in ay reports from the study;
- Ask for the sound recorder to be turned off at any time;
- Withdraw from the study at any time, until one week after the interview;
- Ask me or my supervisors any questions about the study, at any time;
- Be given a summary of the research findings when it is finished;

Summary of Findings:

Once I have finished this study in 2017, you are more than welcome to read a summary of what I find from doing this research. This will be available online, once the research is finished – I will send you the website details in 2017.

Committee Approval Statement:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application __/__ (insert application number). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 43317, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Thank you for your interest in this study!

If you (or someone you know) are having difficult thoughts or feelings about cyberbullying, there is some support available for you:

Youthline
Free Phone (anytime): 0800 376 633
Free Txt (anytime): 234
Email: talk@youthline.co.nz
Online Chat (anytime): http://www.youthline.co.nz/services/goforward/go-chat/
This helpline is for youth of all ages.

What's Up
Free Phone (daily from 1- 11pm): 0800 942 8787
Online Chat (daily from 7- 11pm): https://public.mc.hostedcc.com/whatsupnz/forms/Chat/Chat
This helpline is for young people aged 18 and under.

Kidsline
Free Phone (anytime): 0800 543 754
This helpline is for young people aged 18 and under.

Lifeline
Free Phone (anytime): 0800 543 35
This helpline is for people of all ages.

Suicide Crisis Helpline
Free Phone (anytime): 0508 828 865
This helpline is for those who may be thinking about suicide, or are concerned about their friends and family.

OUTLine
Free Phone: 0800 688 5463
Hours: Mon-Fri 9am- 9pm/ Sat-Sun & holidays 6pm- 9pm
OUTLine is a confidential phone support service for LGBTIQ people, or people experiencing gender identity issues.

RainbowYOUTH
Phone (Mon- Fri 11am till 5pm): (09)376 4155
Email: info@ry.org.nz
Drop-in centre (Mon-Fri 11am- 5pm): 281 Karangahape Road, Newton, Central Auckland
RainbowYOUTH provides support for young queer and trans* people, friends and families.

NetSafe
Phone (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm): (09) 362 0971
Email: queries@netsafe.org.nz
NetSafe is an organisation that promotes online safety and can provide information and help to those experiencing cyberbullying issues.

Appendix D: Participant Consent Forms

School of Psychology
Massey University
Level 3, North Shore Library
Building
229 Dairy Flat Highway
Albany
Auckland 0632

Student Experiences of Cyberbullying

Participant Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet and the study has been explained to me. I am happy with the answers to my questions, and I understand that I can ask more questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this study, as described in the Information Sheet.

Participant signature: ..... Date: .....

Full Name - printed .....

Appendix E: Information Sheets for Parents/Caregivers of Participants

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

Student Experiences of Cyberbullying

Information for Parents/ Guardians/ Caregivers about the Study

Your child has been invited to be part of a Massey University research project on experiences of cyberbullying. The research is being conducted by Adi Papirany, who is studying for a doctoral research degree at Massey University, and is supervised by Dr Clifford van Ommen and Professor Kerry Chamberlain. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about this study; our contact details are below:

Researcher:	Research supervisor 1:	Research supervisor 2:
Adi Papirany	Dr Clifford van Ommen	Prof Kerry Chamberlain
Phone: [redacted]	Phone: 09 4418175	Phone: 09 4140800 ext 43197
Email:	Email:	Email:
adipapirany@massey.ac.nz	c.vanommen@massey.ac.nz	K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz

What is this research about?

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that happens when communication technology (such as computers and mobile phones) is used to cause harm to another person. This research is about your child's experience of cyberbullying.

Why is this research important?

Children's use of technology is on the rise and so is the practice of cyberbullying. Yet, as it is still quite a new form of bullying, there is very little research that can help us to better understand it.

Who are we looking for?

We are looking both for students that have been cyberbullied and/or may have cyberbullied others. To participate in this study, your child should be between 13 and 18 years old, speak good English, and want to talk about their experience of cyberbullying. To get a good understanding of cyberbullying, I am going to talk to around 15 students' altogether.

What will happen?

Participating in this research will involve your child taking part in a confidential interview about their personal experience of cyberbullying. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded. If your child has your permission, and decides that he or she would like to participate in this study, you need to sign the parental consent form and bring it to the interview with your child, before the interview can begin. Your permission will first be discussed and given to me over the phone, before we arrange any interview with your child.

Your child will have a choice about the location of the interview: it can either be held at the University (I will send directions), or another quiet/private location, such as a room at a local public library.

After the interview, your child will be given a $20 Westfield voucher in return for giving their time. I will also call them around a week later, to see how they are doing.

Your child's interview will be confidential and no one will be able to tell if they have participated in this research. When I make a written copy of their interview, I will leave out any personal information so that no one can tell it is them. I will also store the written copy of their interview safely, where no one else, other than my supervisors and myself, will have access to it. However, if your child tells me about something serious (like causing harm to themselves, someone else, or that they are being harmed by someone else), then I will need to get some outside support for this, to make sure that they are safe. I would also involve you in this process.

It is also important for you to be aware that serious forms of cyberbullying are soon to be illegal. This means that if your son/daughter talks about using cyberbullying behaviours in a way that causes serious harm to another person in this interview, I will have to tell someone about this, to make sure that everyone is safe. However, the purpose of this study is to find out about your child's experience of cyberbullying – not about illegal activities. For this reason, I will not be asking your child about specific details of cyberbullying events and they can choose not to tell me things that they do not want to.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part in this research?

A benefit of participating in this study is that your child will be helping us to understand cyberbullying better. However, cyberbullying can be a difficult thing to talk about, so it is possible that talking about their experience of cyberbullying during the interview could make

them feel uncomfortable, or upset. If this happens, we will stop the interview and decide whether we should cancel it, or carry on with it at a different time. If they feel upset after the interview, there is support available for them – I have placed a list of support services at the end of this information sheet, and I will give them more information about available support services during the interview.

Summary of Findings:

Both you and your son/daughter are more than welcome to read a summary of what I find from doing this research. This will be available online, once the research is finished – I will send you the website details when the summary is available in 2017.

Your Child's Rights:

Your child does not have to accept this invitation and you are under no obligation to give permission for them to participate. If your child has your permission and decides to participate, he or she has the right to:

- Not talk about anything they do not want to in the interview;
- Be assured that his or her name will not be used in any reports form the study;
- Ask for the sound recorder to be turned off at any time;
- Withdraw from the study at any time, until one week after the interview;
- Ask me or my supervisors any questions about the study, at any time;
- Be given a summary of the research findings when it is finished;

Committee Approval Statement:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application __/__ (insert application number). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 43317, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Thank you for considering your child's participation in this study!

If your child is experiencing any difficult thoughts or feelings about cyberbullying, there is some support available for them:

Youthline
Free Phone (anytime): 0800 376 633
Free Txt (anytime): 234
Email: talk@youthline.co.nz
Online Chat (anytime): http://www.youthline.co.nz/services/goforward/go-chat/
This helpline is for youth of all ages.

What's Up
Free Phone (daily from 1- 11pm): 0800 942 8787
Online Chat (daily from 7- 11pm): https://public.mc.hostedcc.com/whatsupnz/forms/Chat/Chat
This helpline is for young people aged 18 and under.

Kidsline
Free Phone (anytime): 0800 543 754
This helpline is for young people aged 18 and under.

Lifeline
Free Phone (anytime): 0800 543 35
This helpline is for people of all ages.

Suicide Crisis Helpline
Free Phone (anytime): 0508 828 865
This helpline is for those who may be thinking about suicide, or are concerned about their friends and family.

OUTLine
Free Phone: 0800 688 5463
Hours: Mon-Fri 9am- 9pm/ Sat-Sun & holidays 6pm- 9pm
OUTLine is a confidential phone support service for LGBTIQ people, or people experiencing gender identity issues.

RainbowYOUTH
Phone (Mon- Fri 11am till 5pm): (09)376 4155
Email: info@ry.org.nz
Drop-in centre (Mon-Fri 11am- 5pm): 281 Karangahape Road, Newton, Central Auckland
RainbowYOUTH provides support for young queer and trans* people, friends and families.

NetSafe
Phone (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm): (09) 362 0971
Email: queries@netsafe.org.nz
NetSafe is an organisation that promotes online safety and can provide information and help to those experiencing cyberbullying issues.

Appendix F: Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Consent Forms

School of Psychology
Massey University
Level 3, North Shore Library Building
229 Dairy Flat Highway
Albany
Auckland 0632

Student Experiences of Cyberbullying

Parent/ Guardian/ Caregiver Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet and I agree to allow my son/daughter to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Parent/guardian/ caregiver signature: ..... Date: .....

Full Name - printed .....

Full Name of participant - printed .....

Relationship to participant: .....

Appendix G: Research Case Study

CASE STUDY 6

The Catch-22

Student Narratives of Cyberbullying in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Candidate : Adi Papirany
Clinical Psychology Programme Massey University
Student ID : 10051347
Setting : Massey Centre for Psychology
Supervisor : Clifford van Ommen

This case was completed during the internship year in 2018 and represents the work of the candidate at this point in time.

Supervisor	**Student**
Clifford Van Ommen	**Adi Papirany**
Registered Clinical Psychologist	**10051347**
_____	_____

Abstract

This case study explores student experiences of cyberbullying in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Narrative interviews were carried out with 15 secondary school students, between the ages of 13 and 18 years, across various New Zealand schools. This case study presents one of the dominant narratives that were identified in student experiences of cyberbullying, the wider implications that this narrative of cyberbullying may have for students and clinicians in the local context, as well as the self-reflections of the writer, with a particular focus on how this research may contribute to clinical practice.

Introduction

As the prominence of technology within our lives increases, so does the need to undertake research on the new societal platform that technology provides us with – the emergence of cyberbullying as a social practice being one important example of why this is important. With what little we currently know about cyberbullying, research so far has linked both experiences of, and participation in cyberbullying to a variety of psychological, educational and interpersonal issues that affect children and youth. Perhaps of most concern is that victimisation has been linked to experiences of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidality (Hay & Meldrum, 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Perren, Dooley, Shaw, & Cross, 2010; Tynes & Giang, 2009). A decrease in school performance, along with the use and abuse of substances has also correlated to victimisation (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007; Mitchell, Ybarra, & Finkelhor, 2007; P. K. Smith et al., 2008; Williams & Guerra, 2007). Similarly, educational and substance problems have been linked to the *use* of cyberbullying behaviours (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008), in addition to an increased risk of severe injuries, along with the participation in illegal and antisocial activities (Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004; Perren & Hornung, 2005; Pickett et al., 2002). As a discipline that is committed to contributing to the wellbeing of our community, cyberbullying is thus a pressing issue for clinical psychology.

Recently, the vast issue of cyberbullying has become more apparent, with new research demonstrating frequent incidences of cyberbullying globally; it has been declared an issue within the US (Selkie, Fales, & Moreno, 2016), Canada (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, & Daciuk, 2012), England (Tarapdar, Kellett, & People, 2013), Ireland (Callaghan, Kelly, & Molcho, 2015), Australia (Brack & Caltabiano, 2014), Spain, (Garaigordobil, 2015), China (Zhou et al., 2013), Indonesia (Safaria, 2016), Nigeria (Pham & Adesman, 2015) and Israel (Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman, & Eden, 2012). Moreover, a recent systematic review on the prevalence of cyberbullying found that one in every five children are involved in this practice (Zych, Ortega-Ruiz, & Del Rey, 2015). However, the issue of cyberbullying is one that concerns Aotearoa/New Zealand particularly, as some evidence suggests that we have higher rates of bullying in general (Raskauskas & Prochnow, 2007). Therefore, as a new form of 'bullying', it is possible that the prevalence of cyberbullying in the local context is similar. Accordingly, cyberbullying has been an important topic for New Zealand that has received widespread public and political attention. With new legislation to criminalise

cyberbullying behaviours, New Zealand has gained positive national and worldwide recognition for its 'no-nonsense' stance on the issue.

Defining Cyberbullying

Given that cyberbullying is such a recent phenomenon, definitions of cyberbullying in the psychological and academic literature are diverse and varied. However, there are elements of cyberbullying that can be widely agreed upon and give us a starting place for engaging with understandings and definitions of what cyberbullying can refer to. At the most basic level, cyberbullying refers to a form of bullying that occurs through digital technological devices such as computers or mobile phones, otherwise known as *electronic* (Kowalski & limber, 2007) or *technological* (Conn, 2010) bullying.

Menesini and Spiel (2012) provide us with a more specific definition, describing it as the use of electronic devices to intentionally and continually "assault" another person (p. 163). Moreover, Willard (2007) highlights the complex and varied nature of cyberbullying, pointing to the many ways in which it can occur, through the identification of seven distinct forms of cyberbullying: firstly, escalatory online fights involving a back-and-fourth exchange of hurtful messages is known as *flaming*. However, when not occurring with the context of a fight, the recurrent dissemination of hurtful messages is referred to as *harassment.* In addition, cyberbullying can occur through deterring an individual's reputation – either through the participation in 'gossip' (otherwise known as *denigration*), or through the direct *impersonation* of another individual. *Outing* is a form of humiliation which involves sharing information about another individual without consent. Alternatively, the cruel and deliberate *exclusion* of an individual from a structured technological space (often an online site, or conversation) is another form of cyberbullying. Finally, constant and intensified harassment (such as threats and/or other incitements of fear) have been labelled as *cyberstalking* (Willard, 2007).

Whilst it is recognised that cyberbullying can occur across various demographics and contexts, research has often concentrated on the prevalence and presentation of cyberbullying amid younger demographics. Perhaps this is because it is reasonable to

conclude that cyberbullying predominantly affects children and youth – particularly school-aged children. Though less is known about the occurrence of cyberbullying among the adult population, evidence seems to suggest that cyberbullying peaks between the ages of 15-18 years old (Price & Dalgleish, 2010). This peak-age could be due to the frequent co-occurrence between cyberbullying and traditional-school bullying (Olweus, 2012; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012) – traditional, as in bullying that occurs in person, without the use of a technological median. For instance, if cyberbullying often coincides with traditional school bullying, than it is likely that the prevalence of cyberbullying is higher amongst school-aged children. For this reason, the current research focuses on the issue of cyberbullying among school aged children and adolescents.

A Deficit Model

A primary focus of the current literature has been on the characteristics of those who use and experience cyberbullying behaviours. Accordingly, an understanding of the causes and maintaining features of cyberbullying have been produced through psychological understandings of an *individual* that is vulnerable to victimization, or susceptible to the use of cyberbullying behaviours.

To illustrate, correlational studies have linked those who use cyberbullying behaviours to specific characteristics such as low social intelligence (the inability to navigate oneself appropriately in social situations) (Pabian & Vandebosch, 2014), sadism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (Buckels, Trapnell, Paulhus, 2014). Furthermore, low self-control and generalised aggression have been associated with bullying behaviours (Bayraktar, Machackova, Dedkova, & Cerna, 2014). Taken together, these individual characteristics produce cyberbullying behaviours as a result of personal deficits. Interestingly, the 'sadistic' component of the deficit model for those who use cyberbullying behaviours can be seen as supporting the earlier definition/requirements of bullying, in that the harm caused was necessarily *intended* by the aggressor. Characteristics pertaining to those who are victimised demonstrate correlational links between lack of successful coping strategies (Jacobs, Dehue, Vollink, & Lechner, 2013; Vollink, Bolman, Dehue, & Jacobs, 2013) and emotional regulation (Hemphill, Tollit, Kotevski, Heerde, 2014) to cyber victimisatison. This produces

cyberbullying as a result of an individual that cannot 'manage' effectively, nor control their emotions and similarly supports a deficit model to cyberbullying. Collectively, these studies suggest that cyberbullying is caused by various pathological characteristics that are specific to those who use and experience cyberbullying behaviours. This begs the question; how do deficit models of cyberbullying affect the way in which clinicians can conceptualise and respond to the issue when it presents to us in practice? How does this affect the way in which we can view of clients? How does locating the 'cause' of the problem within the individual ignore the wider social contexts of cyberbullying behaviours?

The 'Bully/Victim' Complex

The deficit model relies on the taken-for-granted assumption that individuals have a particular 'personality' that is static and concrete over time (Arrigo, 2013; Kofoed & Ringrose, 2012). Such understandings are important to and grounded within the institution of psychology that locates deficiency within the individual, by making their internal capacities the focus of intervention and thereby distracting from the social external factors impinging on behaviours (Bansel, Davies, Laws & Linnell, 2009; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; Valentine, 2014). This has the effect of producing a 'bully/victim' complex in which the 'bullies' are *just* bad and the 'victims' are *just* weak (Ringrose, 2008). Through these static and concrete understandings of those who use and experience cyberbullying behaviours, the tendency of the current literature on cyberbullying to privilege dichotomies can be seen. The 'pathologizing' of cyberbullying inherently separates individuals into dichotomous distinctions such as 'victims/bullies', bad/weak and innocent/guilty. Different subjects are grouped into distinct categories of at-risk for being victimised, or at-risk of becoming a 'bully'. Yet is anything really this simple? Chapman and Buchanan (2012) state that our tendency to dichotomise bullying prevents us from an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural structures underlying bullying, by forcing simplistic understandings that do not have the capacity to account for social complexity.

The effects of western privileging of dichotomies have been a topic of interest to many authors (Clifford, 1988; Loto et al., 2006; Said, 1985). It has been argued that dichotomisation is located in social power relations that produce and reproduce systems of domination and subordination between constructed categories of people (Clifford, 1988; Loto et al., 2006). Through the identification of that which is *different*, dichotomisation

makes available the subject position of the 'other', inherently constructing an automatic distinction between an accepted 'in-group' and a mysterious, unknown 'outgroup'. Arrigo (2013) argues that the production of the 'other' comes from a cultural intolerance to 'difference' and the socially established expectation for 'sameness'. This in turn, leads to the pathologizing of difference and the attaching of negative identities to the position of the 'other'. Self-identification of the 'us' position is simultaneously achieved, producing positive in-group identities in comparison to the adverse 'other' (Loto et al., 2006).

Therefore, as the identity of the 'other' becomes uncontested 'truth' and the identity of the in-group is instantaneously strengthened, systems of domination and subordination form an 'imperial' relationship between the superior "us" and the inferior "them" (Said, 1985). In this way, dichotomisation does not occur in a vacuum; the production of 'knowledge' about the 'other' mediates lived experiences, through impacting on how constructed groups can view themselves and relate to others whilst located within these understandings (Loto et al., 2006). In terms of the current research, the construction of the 'other' will be important to explore in narratives of those who use and experience cyberbullying behaviours. What social power relations of 'us' and 'them' are produced in constructions of cyberbullying, and what are the consequences of this?

With this in mind, some research suggests that the 'victim/bully' complex is not as clear cut as being 'either/or'. For instance, being a 'cyberbully' has been found to be the largest statistical risk factor for being cyberbullied (livingstone, Haddon, Gorzig, & Olafsson, 2011). One correlational study has also reported that those victimised in the material social setting have later used cyberbullying behaviours themselves (Smith et al., 2008). This suggests that some individuals using cyberbullying behaviours have originally experienced traditional forms of bullying and use technology to substitute fighting back in person (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Such evidence also troubles the separation between the two forms of bullying, suggesting a wider context of cyberbullying that is related to traditional bullying. In light of this evidence, it will be important to examine the way in which the roles/positions of those who use and experience cyberbullying behaviours intersect within student narratives. How do understandings of concrete and fixed positions impact on those who use and experience cyberbullying behaviours? Are our current responses to cyberbullying incorporating the possibility that those who experience cyberbullying have also used these

behaviours themselves? How does this affect our practice in clinical psychology; particularly, the way in which we view clients who may present to us with this issue.

Not surprisingly then, there is empirical evidence to suggest that those who use bullying behaviours (traditional and cyberbullying) experience many of the same adverse consequences to those who are victimised. For instance, those who use cyberbullying behaviours were found to experience trouble in school, along with the use of violence and illegal substances (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). The use of cyberbullying behaviours was also found to place individuals at higher risk for severe injuries, alcohol related disorders, in addition to the use of illegal and antisocial behaviours (Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004; Perren & Hornung, 2005; Picket et al., 2002). Furthermore, evidence suggests that general bullying behaviours are also associated with an increased risk for depression and suicidality (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999). Ultimately, both victimization and bullying behaviours are associated with a higher risk of experiencing physical and psychological health problems (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Menesini, Modena, & Tani, 2009). Although the literature is currently uncertain as to whether these factors are present before the use of bullying behaviours, or whether they are consequences of using them, there is still a pressing need for interventions into cyberbullying that respond to those who are considered the 'bullies', in addition to those who are victimised. As this further troubles the stagnant and individualistic labels of 'victims' and 'bullies', it may be useful within the current research to question how these labels affect individuals who use these behaviours – how do they construct their narratives? How is a concern for the well-being of those who use cyberbullying behaviours (in addition to those who are victimised) enabled through the 'cyberbully' identity?

As the literature has demonstrated a tendency to privilege individual explanations of cyberbullying, it is important to question why we are removing context, in order to prevent taking these individualistic understandings for granted. This is especially important, as a consideration for the wider social context surrounding cyberbullying may lead us to more useful responses (such as those that target the social determinants of cyberbullying). This requires an exploration of the broader understandings that produce a focus on individualism.

Tracing Individualism Back to Neoliberalism

At the cessation of world war two, a widespread movement towards neoliberalism originated in the United States and was strongly backed by Britain (Ferguson, 2009; Peters, 2001). The movement enveloped the western world and by 1980 it was so deeply ingrained that it has been referred to as the most prevailing doctrine today (George, 1999; Peters, 2001; Peck, 2008). As the hegemonic force of neoliberalism penetrates the western world, dictating all social structural operations, it is necessary to question the potential impact that neoliberal discourses have on our understanding of social problems such as cyberbullying, and therefore our responses to them.

Although in essence, neoliberalism relates to the domain of the economic market (Wacquant, 2010), the function and influence of neoliberalism extends far beyond the political economic sphere (Lemke, 2001; Read, 2009; Rose, 1996; Walkerdine, Lucey, Melody, 2001). In terms of its economic origins, neoliberalism incorporates a series of political and economic structural changes such as deregulation, tax alterations, free trade and privatization (George, 1999; Jessop, 2002; McCarthy, 2007; Peters, 2001). However, it is argued that neoliberalism forms not only the state and economy, but society more generally (Harrison, 2005). In this way, neoliberal focus on a market-driven state inherently forms a market driven society, pointing towards broader assumptions about the nature of society and people (Giroux, 2005). Taken together, this economic orientation has the effect of running the state "like a business" (Ferguson, 2009, p. 170), through promoting the economic division of the world's limited resources (George, 1999; Peters, 2001) and therefore, the philosophy of competition. These economic transformations have given rise to a 'Social Darwinistic' perspective of the world, in which the 'survival of the fittest' has been naturalised (George, 1999). Indeed, Margaret Thatcher reiterated in many speeches that, "there is no alternative" to neoliberalism; as if to say that this is simply the inherent nature of the world (Giroux, 2005; Peters, 2001). This has the effect of pitting individuals against one another and distracting attention away from the way that society functions as a whole, through social structural relations. For this reason, it could be argued that 'us and them' binaries are supported through neoliberal discourses and the promoting of competition, as society is less likely to seek coherence and unity when it is 'survival of the fittest'.

Therefore, the importance of understanding neoliberal influence on any social problem has to do with the way neoliberalism has been naturalized (Jessop, 2002; Read, 2009) and constructed as the only conceivable way to organize society (George, 1999). As such,

neoliberalism has become a new system of truth regarding the world around us, or a new world religion that cannot be contested (George, 1999; Peters, 2001; Read, 2009). Consequently, we are often unable to locate neoliberal understandings within its social origin as a political scheme, with an economic agenda (Jessop, 2002; McCarthy, 2007; Read, 2009). This in turn, may cause us to neglect alternative discourses that produce more useful understandings of cyberbullying and therefore, it is important to identify and analyse neoliberal understandings and their particular material effects. How does neoliberalism produce narratives of cyberbullying and what are the material effects?

The social organization of neoliberalism can be understood through Foucault's concept of governmentality, pertaining to a form of state governing that no longer relies on direct external force (Peters, 2001; Rose, 1996; Walkerdine et al., 2001). This means that individuals are understood to be in control of their own lives, whilst circumventing direct dependence on upon the state (Herbert & brown, 2006). Consequently, the neoliberal subject is positioned as a rational individual who secures their own destiny through economic calculations of risk (Ferguson, 2009; Gill, 2008; Herbert & Brown, 2006; Larner & Walters, 2004). This has the effect of 'responsibilising' citizens into free, autonomous and active agents in all areas of their lives (Ferguson, 2009; Herbert & Brown, 2006). Through such a relationship between a government and citizens, relational power is transformed from traditional 'top-to-bottom' governmental rule, into a widely dispersed form of power. Therefore, when applying the function of governmentality to the current literature on cyberbullying, the intensified emphasis on the internal deficit of an individual as the 'cause' of cyberbullying makes sense. How may the positioning of the responsible citizen produce narratives of cyberbullying? How does the move towards the 'rational individual', based on the assumption that individuals are responsible for their own outcomes, impact on those who use and experience these behaviours?

Summary

An exploration of the current body of literature on cyberbullying demonstrates a reliance on individualistic understandings of the associated behaviours. It has been noted that the majority of current literature has the effect of reducing and simplifying cyberbullying to a set of 'features' that can be precisely defined. This in turn, distracts from the wider social context that enables these behaviours to occur. As the majority of current literature producing these understandings is located within empirical quantitative approaches to knowledge, this may be an effect of the methodological underpinnings that serve to quantify and categorise human behaviour. When one is observing and measuring behaviours, individualistic approaches are more conducive of this, as it is often possible to observe/measure individuals using behaviours, yet more difficult to capture the external circumstances or social structures surrounding the use of behaviours. Indeed, Smith and Brain (2000) have already problematized the heavy reliance on quantitative measures in the context of traditional bullying, stating that the richness of more qualitative methods are required.

What appears to be needed is a study that enables a richer understanding of the social practice of cyberbullying, incorporating the diverse and dynamic ways in which it emerges. This involves a turn to *how* we understand cyberbullying, as opposed to the pursuit of 'truth'. Such insight will enable an examination of the wider social context and power relations contributing to cyberbullying and therefore the space to explore alternatives. A narrative analysis will enable an exploration of the way in which those who use and experience cyberbullying behaviours construct the issue, what might be the material effects of this, and to my knowledge, has not yet been examined in the current body of literature on cyberbullying.

Taken together, the question of how cyberbullying is produced through student narratives and the positions that are discursively enabled and constrained through these narratives emerges from the current body of literature. The current research will explore how cyberbullying is located within a social context and the social power relations that are produced and reproduced through the narratives. It will also explore how current psychological representations of cyberbullying are made available to students in the construction of their narratives, along with the effects this might have for the issue itself. Accordingly, the methodology employed to pursue this, is discussed next.

Methodology

The present study employs a critical narrative methodology to enable a rich exploration of narratives of cyberbullying at both the personal and sociocultural level. The examination of these narratives will be guided by the epistemological assumptions of social constructionism, which locates our knowledge of the world within the context of social relationships (Gergen, 2011). This contrasts to the traditional pursuit of knowledge, which seeks to discover the inherent 'truth' about reality that exists independently of social relationships (Gergen, 1985, 2011). Hence, a social constructionist approach is best suited for the aims and objectives of this research, as it will enable the examination of narratives to surpass the realm of mere 'story-telling', into a meaningful analysis of the sociocultural context within which these stories are produced.

Social Constructionism

The social constructionist movement in psychology emerged in the wake of growing criticisms towards the traditional post-positivist pursuit of knowledge (Gergen, 1985). Centered on uncovering the 'truth' about reality, measurement and observation are the cornerstones of traditional psychology. Conversely, social constructionism contests this inquiry into an objective reality, by placing our understanding of the world within the constraints of the social milieu (Gergen, 2011). This has certain implications for how researchers approach and generate 'knowledge' within a social constructionist framework, requiring alternate methods and procedures to those employed within traditional psychological research.

Perhaps at the core of the social constructionist position is the view that language and discourse form our understanding of the world, ourselves and others. Reality, or as we know it, is thus understood to be socially constructed. Accordingly, language and discourse are considered to be active and productive constructs, not docile entities that passively mirror reality (Gergen, 1994; Misra, 1993). In light of this view, the object of study in social constructionist research differs to that of traditional research; rather than an independent entity awaiting discovery, social constructionism informs us that our knowledge of the object is constructed through language in the context of social relationships (Gergen, 1985), and

therefore, it is the 'knowledge' of an object that we can pursue through research. Within this epistemological framework we are interested in *how* reality is understood instead of *what* reality is. As the present study aims to explore how experiences of cyberbullying are made sense of, the social constructionist approach facilitates this nature of inquiry. Within this epistemological framework, it will be possible to investigate our current 'knowledge' of the object of cyberbullying and how these understandings may contribute to the issue altogether.

Subsequently, social constructionism recognises that if we construct our knowledge of the world through language, then knowledge must be relative, as language is located within a particular social, cultural and historical context. By acknowledging that knowledge is contextually located, we are able to consider the presence of multiple truths varying across contexts, in favour of searching for one universal truth (Harper, 2006; Parker & Burman, 1993; Willig, 1999). Therefore, it is within this position that we can explore local knowledge and the way that meaning changes over time (Gergen, 1985). As highlighted in the exploration of the current body of literature, there is limited research available on the topic of cyberbullying which is relevant to New Zealand. A social constructionist approach may therefore provide insight into cyberbullying that is pertinent and meaningful to children, parents and schools in the local context, and can be directly applied.

Furthermore, the recognition of multiple truths enables an examination of power in the production of 'knowledge'. With the privileging of particular social understandings and the marginalisation of others, relationships of power influence what is deemed 'true' within a particular social/cultural setting, or at a particular point in time (Hall, 2006). This is significant as it allows us to consider how the dominant individualistic conceptualisation of cyberbullying came to be privileged and supports a more critical review of this, rather than simply accepting this as 'truth'. An exploration of cyberbullying within a social constructionist framework may thus open up space for alternative ways of understanding cyberbullying to be considered, as well as a discussion into new ways that we could respond. Moreover, through the recognition of multiple 'truths', this research can extend upon the existing body of knowledge and contribute to a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of cyberbullying.

Finally, this concern with language and meaning-making processes offers a valuable epistemological framework for the exploration of narrative. Narratives are comprised of language and discourses which we combine to make sense of ourselves, our experiences,

and our surroundings. Social constructionism thus provides a useful lens for exploring narrative and enables the level of analysis to extend beyond *what* is said, into *why*, *how* and the *effects* of what is said. Thematic and phenomenological approaches to narrative would constrain the present research from locating experiences of cyberbullying within a social, cultural and historical framework. Social constructionism thus enables a richer analysis to be conducted on narratives of cyberbullying in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

What Are Narratives?

It is necessary to elucidate what is meant by 'narrative', as the common understanding of this term does not capture the way that it is understood within the realm of narrative inquiry and therefore this research. A dictionary defines narrative as a 'story' and these terms are often used interchangeably in everyday language. Yet this definition does not speak to the pervasive presence and vast implications that narrative has within our social world. According to some social scientists, they can be identified as coherent and structured accounts of events with causal connotations (Denzin, 1989; Murray, 2003). Beyond this however narratives are a ubiquitous structure through which we come to understand and express the meanings of events, ourselves and others (Stephens & Breheny, 2013).

Indeed, at its most basic level, narrative is a form of language (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013). Since language, under the social constructionist view, originates within social relationships, narratives are not fundamentally personal or private (Smith & Sparkes, 2006; Squire, 2002). They are made up of readily available discourses that circulate throughout our social environment. We draw on shared narratives to form our own, or to understand the world around us. Therefore, it can be said that our experiences and knowledge of the world is located within narrative; it is the framework within which we navigate our social world (Somers, 1994). In terms of the current research, this may enable meaningful interpretations to be made from the personal experiences that are collected in this research. Rather than simply gathering a number of individual stories about cyberbullying, a narrative focus enables the investigation of the social world within which these narratives were told. This is important considering this research seeks an understanding of cyberbullying that extends beyond the 'individual', as is the current focus within the current literature on cyberbullying. This adds an 'applied' element to the experiences that are collected, as an

understanding of the social structures which inform narratives of cyberbullying may also be contributing to and maintaining the issue itself.

Narrative psychology somewhat 'naturalises' story telling (Smith & Sparkes, 2006); it is recognised that when we talk about ourselves and our experiences, our accounts are implicitly organised in the form of a narrative (Denzin, 1989). Thus, although narratives may possess the above distinguishing features of coherence, structure and causality, they saturate our everyday lives to the extent that they may easily go unnoticed. If experiences are organised, understood and told in the form of narrative, then there is something to be gained from analysing the experiences of cyberbullying in this form.

Since narratives are shared, they cannot be removed from the surrounding social, cultural, historical context within which they are told (Squire, 2002). A narrative therefore not only provides a narrator's recollection of an event, but insight into the social, cultural lens within which the narrator has made sense of the experience (Stephens & Breheny, 2013), at a certain position in time. Narratives are produced and reproduced as new understandings of the world emerge (Andrews, 2008). Hence, narratives are not static entities, they are subject to variability across contexts and change over time, reflecting the dynamic structure of our social world. A contextual approach to cyberbullying is thus vital for the current research, which aims to explore the issue of cyberbullying for Aotearoa/New Zealand specifically.

By acknowledging that narratives are shaped and constrained by context, narrative psychology recognizes that there is no 'accurate' narrative or representation of an event, and multiple interpretations are possible (Dean, 1998). However, certain understandings of the world are privileged over others and become more dominant and readily accessible to the narrator who is making sense of their experience. Accordingly, dominant narratives form within a particular social context, which are continually reproduced. A narrative inquiry into cyberbullying will therefore be useful considering the current literature appears to privilege individualistic conceptualizations of this phenomenon. By employing a narrative approach that does not pursue one 'true' understanding of cyberbullying, we may make alternative understandings and responses to cyberbullying in New Zealand more accessible.

Not only is narrative central to our understanding of the world, but how we come to know ourselves (Stephens & Breheny, 2013). Narrative psychology moves away from the

traditional notion of the self as a 'thing' that can be 'discovered', to an understanding of the self and identity as established through the meanings we attach to our life experiences (Smith & Sparkes, 2006). We define ourselves through the stories we tell ourselves and others; it is through narrative that we achieve a coherent and unified awareness of self (Murray & Sargeant, 2011). Considering this it can be said that narrative is fundamental to identity and identity can otherwise be known as a self-narrative (Murray & Sargeant, 2011). As there is a natural inclination for people to position themselves favourably in relation to the ideals of the social world, narrative psychology is useful in the exploration of identities and subject positioning (Stephens & Breheny, 2013). This is especially relevant to the issue of cyberbullying, as narratives of 'cyberbullies' and 'cybervictims' can shed light on how individuals come to take up these subject positions, and therefore the wider social structures surrounding the practice of cyberbullying more generally.

Not only do narratives provide us with meaning, but they facilitate a sense of order and coherence in our complex lives (Crossley, 2000). They can be considered to possess dramatic features, such as a storyline, setting, actors, conflict and a resolution (Gergen & Gergen, 1984; Mishler, 1986). We draw on these features as a way of configuring our understanding of an event and communicating this to others. The structure of narratives can therefore be seen as a method for applying a structure of sorts to our own lives. It may therefore be useful to identity these features in narratives of cyberbullying as a means for highlighting what social structures are drawn on to make stories of cyberbullying coherent. This may provide insight into what dominant social structures may be surrounding and therefore contributing to the issue of cyberbullying in the local context.

Finally, narratives often serve to make meaningful links between the ordinary and extraordinary (McCance, McKenna, & Boore, 2001), to make sense of discrepancies between one's life and ideals, or between the self and others (Riessman, 1993). Narratives are especially pertinent for an individual attempting to understand salient life-experiences and manage ongoing adversity (Riessman, 2003). As the experience of cyberbullying is often traumatic for victims, narratives may provide a means of cognitively processing this experience. Moreover, the involvement in cyberbullying likely requires an individual to explain or even justify their use of these behaviours, which may not be in accordance with their own values. Narratives may therefore be useful in making sense of this discrepancy.

Narrative inquiry will thus be useful in the exploration of cyberbullying as a social practice, as it can capture the rich and multi-faceted nature of individual experience, whilst still accounting for the surrounding context within which these experiences are situated. Particularly, it can explore the meanings individuals draw from to produce a narrative surrounding their experiences of cyberbullying. This may provide a greater understanding of the social world within which the practice of cyberbullying has emerged from.

Narrative Interviews

In research, personal narratives are typically gathered in one-on-one interviews. Conventionally, interviewing usually involves the meticulous planning of questions, topics, and a predetermined structure that purposely shapes the data that is collected from participants. In narrative interviews however, a narrative is co-constructed between a researcher and participant in the context of the interview itself and therefore, there is a large part of the interview that cannot be predetermined. Thus, narrative interviewing differs to more conventional forms of interviewing in that it has a more open structure; it is a form of participant-led research where questions and topics of conversation depend on what is raised by participants themselves. As a result, narrative interviews are non-directive, and differ from one interview to another. By minimising any preconceptions about what the current study may find and simply letting the data emerge, it may be possible to identify alternative understandings and therefore responses to cyberbullying that have not yet been considered within the literature. This is particularly relevant considering the present literature is heavily concentrated on quantitative methods for research which have yielded a somewhat homogenous group of conceptualisations of cyberbullying.

To foster an open interview, narrative interviewing often begins with a general opening question designed to elicit an open and detailed response from participants that can set the scene for the rest of the interview: "Can you tell me about your experience of cyberbullying…" Following on from this, further questioning typically involves non-directive elaborations, clarifications and questions that arise in response to the stories that participants tell, such as: "Can you tell me more about that?"; "What happened then?"; "And what did you do?". This purposefully unstructured nature of interviewing is considered the best way to allow a narrative to develop, as the participant draws on unprompted language when there are limited constraints surrounding their responses. This unprompted language is considered to be reflective of the meaning-making processes they draw on to make sense

of their experiences (Riessman, 2001). This style of interviewing is vital to the current research, as this research is concerned less with *what* has occurred and more with *how* participants make sense of their experiences. Placing focus on these meaning-making systems will enable an exploration of the surrounding socio-cultural context of cyberbullying. Therefore, an approach which allows participants the freedom and space to make sense of the experiences is necessary for meeting the aims of the current study.

Though it is not practical to conduct narrative interviews with a large number of participants, the benefit of this style of interviewing is the rich and detailed information that is able to be gathered, especially when in comparison to conventional interview methods (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). As it is more difficult to achieve a deeper and more refined analysis with larger groups of participants (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007), it could be argued that narrative research prioritises depth of insight over generalisability. Indeed, sample sizes are traditionally guided by the overarching objective of generalising research findings beyond that of the research sample itself. However, this is not often the intention for narrative research, which is concerned with how stories contribute to meaning making-processes. Instead, data saturation is often fundamental in guiding narrative samples, which involves ceasing data collection upon the repetition of stories and themes, and when it is evident that no new insight is being gathered (Fossey et al., 2002). A researcher is thus required to implement judgement as to whether they have achieved data saturation within a sample, or whether they need to continue collecting data until they are confident that the sample can be considered sufficient (Fossey et al., 2002). This approach is well suited to the current study which aims to explore how experiences of cyberbullying are constructed through narrative in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As the current research actively avoids linking individual traits to the use and experience of cyberbullying behaviours, the ability to generalise the results of this research beyond the research sample is of little relevance. Of more importance is the depth of insight that is gathered within interviews, rather than across interviews.

Narrative Analysis

Though narrative analysis denotes a diverse cluster of approaches, there are a few underlying

assumptions that these various approaches share, which at the very least, converge on their focus on narrative text (Riessman, 2003). Unlike more conventional forms of research which offer structured and prescribed methods, narrative analysis represents a broad theoretical framework that centres on meaning making processes in the construction of narratives (Fraser, 2004; Stephens & Breheny, 2013). For this reason, it is useful to review the fundamental principles of narrative analysis before outlining the specific approach that the current study employs. However, as narrative inquiry is a multi-layered interdisciplinary field, this is not a straightforward task due to the lack of consensus that exists within the current literature on narrative methodology (Andrews et al., 2013; Riessman, 1993).

The object of study within narrative analysis is the story itself (Riessman, 1993). This kind of research asks, what story was told and why was the story told this way? Such a focus embodies a fundamental shift in the investigation of 'hidden' psychological phenomena, to the study of language and how it contributes to the construction of meaning. Accordingly, narrative analysis leads researchers to ask distinctive questions to that of traditional psychological research. Standard questions for cyberbullying such as, "what individual traits and factors are linked to the use and experience of cyberbullying behaviours?" may therefore be exchanged with "how do those who participate in, and experience cyberbullying, understand and communicate their experiences". The ability to ask these different kinds of questions that do not appear to have been considered in the current literature is an important component of the present study, which intends to address this gap. By exploring the way that individuals make sense of their cyberbullying experiences, we can investigate the wider social structures that surround and likely contribute to the issue of cyberbullying in the local context.

The investigation of meaning making processes in the construction of narrative is subjective and positional, contrasting to the traditional pursuit of 'objectivity'. Instead of reflecting reality, narratives are interpretations of events that are continually open to change (Crossley, 2000; Riessman, 2003). The interview process itself contributes to this through the interactions between the narrator and listener, as well as the analysis, in which the researcher imparts further interpretation onto the narrative (Riessman, 2003). Also positioned within a particular social, cultural, historical context, the researcher too, becomes a part of the research and the research itself, becomes an additional narrative. Such an approach may be a useful way to bridge the gap identified in the current literature between research, society

and the issue of cyberbullying. Reductive quantitative methods have had the effect of detaching the issue of cyberbullying from its social structures and therefore, the rest of society; attributing it instead to a few individuals who are assumed to be 'the problem'. A narrative approach which draws attention to the way in which we are all embedded within the social structures which harbour the issue of cyberbullying may be a way to make space for more inclusive responses to cyberbullying that attend to the issue more broadly.

Furthermore, the examination of narrative in its 'own right' relocates emphasis from the traditional concern with the individual at the centre of an issue, to how an issue emerges within social relationships. This type of inquiry differs to more conventional psychological methods, which treat dialogue as an indirect measure for gathering unobservable data about the person behind the narrative (Gergen, 2009). In doing so narrative is able to preserve the complexities of lived experience, rather than reducing it to universally applied facts. As it is evident from the exploration of the current literature on cyberbullying that an investigation of the social structures surrounding this phenomenon is missing, an approach that enables focus to be placed on social relationships is pivotal in addressing this gap. A focus on social relations will also provide a valuable shift away from reductive and pathological understandings of cyberbullying behaviours that have were identified in Chapter One as unhelpful and potentially harmful conceptualisations.

Yet narrative methodology diverges from other qualitative (even other social constructionist) methods in its privileging of the story itself. Many qualitative approaches, particularly discursive approaches, break lived experiences down to its most intricate components, namely, discourses and discursive ideas. Whilst this is an extremely useful method for examining meaning, some insight is lost when fragments of dialogue are considered out of context. Rather than rupturing the text, narrative analysis takes into consideration lengthier sections of dialogue, and places importance on contextual features of text, such as the structure and sequence of events (Riessman, 2003). Analysing text in larger, un-fragmented sections captures both personal and social elements of dialogue. For instance, what social, ideological ideas is the narrator drawing on to make sense of their experiences, and why have they chosen to communicate their experiences *this* way. Essentially, in the analysis of discourses and discursive ideas, the person behind the text becomes irrelevant; the focus is solely on the dominant understandings that are available within their social, cultural, historical context. In light of the limitations outlined in the current literature on

cyberbullying, the privileging of both personal and collective meaning may be a way to make space for individual voices to be heard, who have typically been silenced within the literature to date, through an emphasis on reductive methods which have often reduced their experiences to a set of pathological factors.

The Current Study

Using narrative interviewing techniques, 15 interviews were carried out with secondary school students who were between the ages of 13 and 18 years of age. Interviews were approximately one and a half hours in length. Interviews were then transcribed and a narrative analysis was conducted, using the transcribed interviews.

Analysis

Its Kill or Be Killed

'It's kill or be killed' refers to the dominant narrative identified in the current research, featuring a moral dilemma, in which subjects are forced to choose between cyberbullying others, or being cyberbullied themselves. The current metaphor of 'its kill or be killed' draws on the dominant neoliberal discourse to construct cyberbullying as a *necessary* act of self-defence, as well as a 'natural' and therefore unavoidable social process. Echoes of Darwin's *survival of the fittest* and Margaret Thatcher's *there is no alternative* saturated the narratives, as students expressed no desire to engage in cyberbullying behaviours or cause harm to others, yet justified their actions through individualistic ideas which privilege self-preservation. This has the effect of drawing our attention away from, or even denying the role of, personal agency in the engagement of cyberbullying, as well as the social, cultural and historical context in which the bullying occurs.

Underlying 'its kill or be killed' was the dichotomisation of positions available within the discourse, such that an individual could only occupy *one* of two available positions; specifically, that of the 'cyberbully' or 'cybervictim' and not more than one of these positions at one time. This led to the production and reproduction of the 'victim/bully' binary, in which individuals are assigned to fixed roles, detracting attention away from the

complexities and nuances of social practice. Below, this can be seen in the way that Tia and Jordan describe the use of cyberbullying behaviours as preventing one from victimisation, as if to say that the occupation of one role automatically excludes one from another:

> **Tia**. Cause it's like if you don't do it then you get [cyber]bullied for not doing it.
>
> **Jordan**. I see it like, people just want to fit in, or they just feel like, "if I [cyber]bully, no one is going to [cyber]bully me".
>
> **Interviewer**. Can you explain that further?
>
> **Jordan**. Sort of like – a girl, you know, she's [cyber]bullying another girl, just so she don't got a target on her back to be [cyber]bullied.
>
> **Interviewer**. How does it protect you? Cause *technically* you can still be [cyber]bullied, right?
>
> **Jordan**. Yeah. Cause I've never seen someone that's [cyber]bullying someone get [cyber]bullied. Sort of, until they stop [cyber]bullying someone.

The idea that the engagement in cyberbullying behaviours protects one from cybervictimisation does not acknowledge the possibility that one could both use and experience cyberbullying behaviours together. In the above statement, the interviewer attempts to challenge the taken for granted assumption that an individual can only assume one role at a time through the use of the word '*technically'*, which encourages Jordan to reflect on his statement further. However, it was evident that the dominant notion that subject positions are fixed was not able to be shifted; this was reflected in the way that Jordan did not acknowledge the possibility that one could still be victimised whilst using cyberbullying behaviours (and therefore the potential for multiple, fluid subject positions to be taken up). Instead he supported the dominant notion further by stating that he had *personally* never seen an individual that was victimised whilst also using the behaviours.

The dichotomisation of subject positions is enabled through the privileging of individual traits, which is supported through neoliberal ideas of competition and scientific discourses, supporting evolutionary concepts such as natural selection. In the following excerpt, this can be seen in the way that Jordan draws on the scientific discourse to construct cyberbullying as a "cycle". His use of the word "cycle" can be traced back to the age-old concept of the 'circle of life', which implies that there is a 'natural order' of the world. One well-known example of the 'circle of life' is the idea of the 'food chain', where predators higher on the food chain, instinctually prey on animals who are beneath them. The food chain is thus, natural, undisputable, and unavoidable. Jordan constructs cyberbullying in this same way as natural and unavoidable, much like the 'food chain' itself:

> **Jordan.** To me it's just a cycle. It's a cycle of [cyber]bullying. Sort of can't stop it. Just that's high school life you know: [cyber]bully or be [cyber]bullied.

As a consequence of the dichotomisation of subject positions, the idea that it is *either* 'me' or 'them' emerged within student narratives. This somewhat implied that an individual has little choice but to engage in the behaviours themselves, which had the effect of justifying cyberbullying, by drawing attention away from personal agency in the use of cyberbullying behaviours. The central theme of 'its kill or be killed' was thus, a narrative of *survival*. In 'its kill or be killed', individuals do not engage in cyberbullying behaviours because they are simply 'bad'; instead, individuals engage in cyberbullying behaviours because they have no *choice* if they wish to survive. This can be seen below, as Francis, Beth and Herman emphasise the pressure that is felt within a group of friends to engage in cyberbullying behaviours, to ensure that they are protected from being ostracised and/or, victimised. In doing so, cyberbullying is constructed as necessary for survival:

> **Beth**. So, I've experienced with drinking like, I wouldn't drink, but then I'd only do it because I would feel cool in front of my friends and I wouldn't be left out and stuff. And then when you're left out you're likely to get bullied next. So, with [cyber]bullying and stuff, like people wouldn't think it's right or anything, they literally don't like what they're doing but they would just go along with it. And [they] won't necessarily have any comments towards it, or they'd just laugh, or, they'd just be there and they know if they weren't there then they'd be next. They'd be like hating themselves for [cyberbullying]. But they can't show that when they're around their friends. You literally can't show that because then you'll be next.

Francis. A while ago I remember everyone was being nasty about this girl and I'd agree for the same reason as I said before.

Interviewer. Yeah for the fitting in thing?

Francis. Anyone who joined in [on the cyberbullying] was like "oh yeah you're a good cunt". "You're all good in our group".

Herman. It's kind of like they look up to them and like only be their friend so that they won't get bullied and so that they can use the cyberbullies to their advantage.

Interviewer. So, is that like a thing? That you kind of have to –

Herman. Fit in with them basically, to be their friend. To not be bullied by them.

As it can be seen in the above statements, social groups were pivotal to the narrative of 'kill or be killed' as they were constructed as somewhat of an 'alliance' which served strategic purposes, such as protection for students from cybervictimisation. Students who are part of an alliance are understood to be 'safe', provided their allegiance and conformity to the alliance in which they belong to. Acceptance *within* and allegiance *to* an alliance requires participation in cyberbullying behaviours and students described a threat of losing the protection of an alliance if they reject participation. This produced a culture of silence, where students are unable to acknowledge their dislike for cyberbullying behaviours out of fear of losing their alliance. Below, Raymond tells a story that outlines the consequences of choosing not to conform to an alliance. In his story, he describes experiencing social pressure to participate in cyberbullying and appears to accept that rejecting this practice equates to losing friendship; it was not possible for him to opt out of participating in cyberbullying whilst keeping his friends:

Raymond. They tried peer pressuring me into doing it [cyberbullying] and I kind of put my foot down and said, "I'm not doing that kind of stuff; I've been [cyber]bullied enough in my life." So, I stuck up for myself and pretty much stayed by myself, like didn't really talk to [many] people. I'd kind of just be always by myself.

Demonstrating the importance of a functional, strategic alliance; below, Beth, Tessa and George tell us that simply being friends with an individual who is being 'victimised' leaves

one vulnerable to victimisation. Consequently, alliances are constructed as either serving to protect oneself from cyberbullying, or expose oneself to cyberbullying:

> **Beth.** And then like if you're seen hanging out with the person that you're like bullying or anything then you'll – they'll forget about bullying them and you'll be the next one.
>
> **Tessa.** And then they just target or pinpoint all of your friends.
>
> **George.** Well I was making videos at the time. Like, I actually had someone who really enjoyed my videos and liked who I was. It was a girl and she became my girlfriend. After two months, she started to get hate from others because I was dating her. So, I did the right thing and I had to stop the relationship. She left my college and she moved on.

As it can be seen, the construct of an 'alliance' was so dominant that George told a story in which he was forced to terminate a relationship to protect someone from cybervictimisation. Hence, by naturalising competition, neoliberal discourse pits individuals against one another, creating a partitioned environment where students are unable to support one another out of fear of becoming the victim:

> **Tessa**. I have to be very careful because it is it is their own situation and they can deal with it. I feel like I should have input in trying to stop it. But I don't know how that reaction [will] come out cause it might make the situation 10 times worse. I look at it and I feel guilty. So, if like I were to comment back and say, "hey, can you please stop this. I don't appreciate the words" they might come back and actually say "oh well I don't need your input on this, who cares about your input, you should just go away, piss off". "You're ugly yourself" and they might continue on further.
>
> **Beth.** Like even like if my friends were to get bullied and stuff, like it's really hard for someone to stick up for their friends cause they would then get bullied as well. So, like even though you don't want to be dragged down into it, you will if you stick up for them.
>
> **Raymond.** It's kind of actually hard to talk about, but after like sort of sticking up for her that's when they were like oh "I'll get my brother" blah blah blah and I was

like, “oh yeah whatever” and then that's when the messages would start. And that's how [the cyberbullying] all started really.

The above excerpts tell us that by advocating for the ‘cybervictim’, an individual is subjected to their own victimisation and thereby, forced to take up the position of the ‘cybervictim’ themselves. In Tessa’s statement, we can see her drawing on the neoliberal discourse to justify not being able to advocate for cybervictims, in the way that she tells us, “it’s their own situation and they can deal with it”. Furthermore, the missing subject position of an ‘advocate’ was emphasised in Raymond’s story of an occasion in which he attempted to take up the position of the ‘advocate’ and instead, was forced into the positon of the ‘cybervictim’. Hence, the dichotomisation of subject positions within the narrative of ‘its kill or be killed’ does not make space available for alternative subject positions, such as an advocate for a victim, or an uninvolved bystander. Individuals must choose one of two available positons; cybervictim or cyberbully. By dividing students up and pitting them against one another, the neoliberal discourse appears to conquer by drawing attention away from seeking coherence and unity in social relations.

However, the construction of cyberbullying as an unavoidable, natural process was often contradicted within student narratives – particularly when students were speaking from the position of the ‘cybervictim’. This can be seen in the following excerpts, where individual traits and/or personal gain is attributed to the use of cyberbullying behaviours, producing ‘cyberbullies’ as inherently bad individuals:

Beth. It could be one person and they could kill like three people. So it’s kind of scary how someone can just think like that – that what they're doing and telling someone to kill themselves is okay. That's what I don't understand.

Interviewer: Neither do I. What do you think is going on there? Have you thought about it at all?

Beth. I guess in some girl’s cases, they have problems at home. So, their parents or whoever is doing it, could be putting them down and stuff so they do it fully for the power and to feel, bigger than who they are.

Lucien. They think it’s fun.

Interviewer: Its fun?

Lucien: Yeah just to torment and torture someone

Interviewer: So, they do it for the enjoyment?

Lucien: Yeah, I'd say.

Raymond: I mean it could have been the way he was brought up to like, bully.

Interviewer: Could have been.

Raymond: Because I know a few people that were kind of brought up like that - that bully to kind of get what they want. So, I think it may be something like that. Like how they were brought up.

Interviewer. Okay.

Raymond: And their friends that they hang out with – kind of all the same, so they all do it.

Interviewer: Okay. How do you think it ends up being normal? Cause you said it felt like it was really normal?

Raymond: I think it's a personal thing.

Jesse. These other people who seem to think it's cool to hurt, to make somebody else feel low, so they feel high and strong. To me it's just being stupid really.

In the above statements, we can see personal responsibility is attributed to individuals who use cyberbullying behaviours. In Raymond's statement, he had previously discussed the use of cyberbullying behaviours as having been 'normalised' in the way that it seemed 'everyone' was engaging in it. However, when the interviewer attempted to draw on this alternative discourse by raising this with Raymond, he stated that cyberbullying was a "personal thing", demonstrating the unavailability of social, contextual factors to be considered under the neoliberal discourse.

Discussion

Narratives of cyberbullying were illustrated in the current research, through the use of the metaphor, 'it's kill or be killed'. 'It's kill or be killed' produced a catch-22 situation for students, who must choose between cyberbullying others, or being victimised themselves. Within this narrative, students who chose to become the 'cyberbully' were still positioned as the 'victim', as their engagement in cyberbullying behaviours was not by choice, but instead, necessary for their survival. Thus, it was lose/lose situation for students, who expressed that they did not wish to engage in cyberbullying behaviours, but felt that it was somewhat unavoidable in the interest of self-preservation.

Narratives of cyberbullying coincided with and yet also contradicted dominant discourses that were also produced in the current body of literature on cyberbullying (as discussed in the introduction). In particular, neoliberalism was the predominant discourse relied on in the narratives, which was not surprising, considering the current literature on the topic of cyberbullying is heavily influenced by dominant neoliberal assumptions. Under the neoliberal regime, individuals are held personally responsible for their own outcomes in life, prompting competition between individuals and the assumption that only the 'fittest' succeed, or what's more, *survive*. It is the inherent nature of the individual that is subject to inspection. The underlying influence of neoliberalism was demonstrated in the introductory chapter by exploring the predominance of the 'deficit model' in shaping how we can understand cyberbullying, where all forms of involvement is causally attributed to something that is 'lacking' within an individual. Consequently, cyberbullying is 'pathologised' and individuals are placed into distinct (and dichotomous) categories, such as 'victims/bullies', bad/weak and innocent/guilty. In the student narratives, this could be seen through the production and reproduction of 'bully/victim' binaries, which reduced individuals to fixed subject positions of either 'cybervictim' or 'cyberbully' and did not permit the possibility of fluid, alternative roles.

Furthermore, as discussed in the introduction, the subject position of the 'other' is made available through processes of dichotomisation, which produces automatic distinctions between an accepted 'in-group' and a mysterious, unknown 'outgroup'. Systems of domination and subordination form an 'imperial' relationship between the superior "us" and the inferior "them" when the identity of the in-group is established through the definition of

the ‘other’ as an uncontested ‘truth’. The forming of imperial relationships between “us and them” enables the “us” to justify and enforce power over the “other”. In the student narratives, imperialism could be seen in the way that powerful scientific discourses (from which evolutionary principles of natural selection and ‘the circle of life’ are located) emphasises the legitimacy of the constructed ‘other’ – the ‘other’ being, every other student. In this way, ‘it’s kill or be killed’ produced a partitioned environment, in which every student must fend for themselves and enforce power over ‘the other’ before power is enforced on them, by ‘the other’.

However, unlike the dominant conceptualisation of cyberbullying that is offered within the current body of literature, individual traits were not pivotal to student narratives; students did not appear to draw heavily on psychological discourses and the predominant ‘deficit model’ of cyberbullying in their construction of narratives. Student narratives contradicted dominant individualistic notions of bullies as ‘bad’ and victims as ‘weak’ as the narrative of ‘is kill or be killed’ positioned individuals who use cyberbullying behaviours as ‘good’ at heart, yet forced to commit bad actions. Simultaneously, those who choose not to engage in cyberbullying behaviours are automatically positioned as victims. As it is their choice to occupy this role within the narrative of ‘its kill or be killed’, ‘cybervictims’ may be seen as strong individuals who place the needs of others before their own – much like a martyr.

Yet, at times student narratives contradicted this, particularly, when occupying the position of ‘cybervictim’. From within the position of ‘cybervicitm’ students tended to draw on dominant deficit models of cyberbullying to attribute personal agency to individuals who use cyberbullying. Within this discursive construction, ‘the cyberbully’ was constructed to be inherently ‘bad’ and sadistic individuals who should thus be held personally accountable to for their actions.

Interestingly, this highlights the multiple effects of the bully/victim binary, in that it both draws attention to personal agency by attributing the use of cyberbullying behaviours to static and enduring traits of an individual which imply guilt (e.g. sadism, aggression, intelligence, self-control), as well as drawing attention away from personal agency by stating that only one *of* two positions are available (i.e. bully or victim) and therefore it cannot be held against someone for choosing the position of ‘cyberbully’. As discussed in the introduction, the dominant deficit model of cyberbullying distracts us from seeing other social forces that impact on individual use of cyberbullying behaviours, by producing a

taken-for-granted sense of freedom and agency that focuses our attention on the internal aspects of individuals. Hence, social contextual factors were constrained within both discursive construction of cyberbullying (the deficit model and 'its kill or be killed').

Accordingly, this research demonstrates that the individualistic conceptualisation of cyberbullying produced and reproduced within student narratives, as well as the current body of literature on cyberbullying, is problematic. Within the narrative of 'its kill or be killed', students were able to justify their use of cyberbullying behaviours, when in the position of 'cyberbully'. This likely serves to maintain the issue of cyberbullying over time; when attention is drawn away from the possibility of students taking up alternative positions other than that of the 'cyberbully' or 'cybervictim', students may feel that they have little choice other than to engage in the behaviours, along with everyone else. Working in tandem with dominant neoliberal ideas, the psychological literature perpetuates this by reinforcing taken-for-granted neoliberal assumptions which pathologise cyberbullying and provide us with a simplistic, reductionist, dichotomous framework for conceptualising what is likely a much more complex issue – one that is socially, culturally and historically located. Thus, it could be said that the catch-22 exists not only for students, but for clinicians too, as we draw on the psychological literature to inform how we can understand and therefore best respond to the issue of cyberbullying.

Taken together, 'It's kill or be killed' works by creating a partitioned environment where students feel that in school, it is 'every man for himself'. Essentially, then, the main method underlying 'it's kill or be killed' is to divide and conquer. If students cannot speak about the harmful effects of cyberbullying, their dislike for the use of these behaviours, and their support or advocacy for those who are victimised, the issue is likely to continue. However, by the same token, this presents clear avenues for possible resistance, in the form of students taking a stand against the current narrative which enforces silence, segregation, and obedience as a *collective*. As clinicians, it also demonstrates the importance of acknowledging the complexity in the use of cyberbullying behaviours, to prevent limiting how we are able to effectively respond to individuals who engage in cyberbullying.

Self-Reflection

Conducting this research has provided me with useful skills which have served me will in my practice throughout my internship year, working for the Department of Corrections. In my current role for corrections, I am required to interview clients for the purpose of assessing and formulating their offending, as well as their suitability for the Te Piriti Special Treatment Unit Programme for Child Sexual Offending. In my research, I was required to interview students regarding their experiences of cyberbullying. Hence, I have been able to transfer some of the interview skills that I have developed through the process of interviewing students to my new setting, whilst other skills that are not relevant in this new setting have simply given me an appreciation for the different styles that I draw on, when interviewing different populations, in different settings.

Firstly, using a narrative approach in this research has enabled me to develop my ability to ask open-ended questions, to be the naïve inquirer, and to allow the content of the interview to flow naturally and conversationally. This has been very useful in developing rapport with clients and strengthening the therapeutic relationship. In the prison setting especially (though this is true for any clinical setting) I have been aware of the major power imbalance that exists between myself in the role of the clinician, and the client sitting before me. Thus, I feel that coming from a narrative background has enabled me to balance this out somewhat, to place the client as the 'expert' on their own life and background history, and to listen to the narrative that they construct about who they are, and how they came to offend. By asking open-ended questions, and communicating interest in the client's narrative, I have noticed that clients feel heard, as I am communicating to them that I am interested in more than simply what they did; I am interested in *their* narrative.

A client's narrative is extremely useful information to gather. This provides insight into how the client believes they came to offend. It is somewhat, the client's own formulation of themselves. Sometimes the client's narrative is extremely insightful; by the time the client arrives at Te Piriti STU, they are towards the end of their sentencing and have often had many years to reflect on how they came to offend. However, many times the narrative reflects a lack of insight, and the use of cognitive distortions to justify and explain their offending. Again, this is all extremely useful information that may not have been gathered, had the narrative not been elicited from the client.

Furthermore, the prevalence of dichotomisation and categorisation in my research analysis has made me more aware of how these same neoliberal processes have dominated the discourses which are available within the prison setting. Similarly to the 'bully/victim' binary in my research, the prison setting too, pathologises individuals and places them in categories according to their calculated 'risk' of reoffending. Whilst this has its use and without denying the importance of this for working towards safer communities, it has given me an appreciation for the taken-for-granted nature of such discourses, and the possibility of drawing on alternative discourses when reflecting on my clients. The effect this has on my practice, is that it gives me diversity in my approach to offender rehabilitation to draw on alternative models, other than the dominant RnR model), and an appreciation for alternative models, such as 'The Good Lives Model'. Accordingly, I am currently using both approaches within my practice, to ensure that I am addressing risk, whilst also guiding clients to meet their needs in new ways, other than offending. Hence, through one approach the objective is work together to *reduce* risk factors to reoffending (RnR model), and through another the objective is to *increase* the protective factors of the client so that offending is less likely (Good Lives Model).

Furthermore, conducting the narrative interviews was good exposure to clients presenting with high-risk difficulties, which required me to think on my feet in the managing of risk (of harm to self) and developing safety plans. This has served me well through my internship, in the prison setting where I have been working with complex presentations, high-levels of risk (to myself, to clients, to other inmates and to the community). It has helped me to keep calm and think clearly in pressured situations. It has also given me an increased appreciation for the value of supervision and clinical meetings, where complex issues can be discussed in detail.

As discussed in the methodology/methods section, the narrative interviewing style is non-directive and client-led. Such an appraoch has helped me to be attuned to patterns in discourse, and consider the broader social, cultural, historical contexts within which the interviewee is placed in. I have found that noticing patters in discourse has helped me significantly with formulating my clients within the corrections setting. Through feedback by my supervisors and colleagues, I have learned this year that formulating clients is a strength of mine, and I believe that this skill was strengthened through my analysis of cyberbullying data, which has helped me to be aware of broad patterns that occur in people's

dialogue, tying them together to form a narrative. Indeed, formulating is a form of a narrative itself – it is a story that draws together all of the assessment information gathered about a client, which can explain how that individual came to present in this particular way, at this particular time.

However, whilst narrative interviewing has helped me to notice patterns and conceptually formulate my clients within the prison setting, I experienced difficulty initially with being clear, concise and directive within my interviews, formulations and report writing towards the beginning of my internship. In my first mock exam, I spent 20 minutes gathering the clients background history, before getting to offending. This resulted in me lacking detail about the offending when it came to writing the exam report. Hence, my learning edge towards the beginning of the year was to be more structured within my interviews (without being too directive) than I had previously done within the narrative interviewing approach. It is not possible to be entirely client-led within the prison setting, as it consists of multiple-client (such as the offender, the prison, and the community), each with competing demands. Furthermore, the style of corrections reports is very succinct and there is no space for detail other than that which is related to how the client came to offend.

Overall, with some initial difficulty settling into the new style of interviewing and report writing that is required of me within the corrections setting, I have been able to adapt my original approach slightly from that of the narrative approach, whilst still keeping the aspects of this approach which have enhanced my work within the corrections setting. Ultimately, I feel that these two contrasting experiences have helped to shape me into a more creative, flexible clinician.

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