University of South Carolina

Scholar Commons

2017

Ninth-Grade Students' Perceptions Of Social Media Responsibility & Cyberbullying

Geoffrey A. Wagner
University of South Carolina

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons

Recommended Citation

NINTH-GRADE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY & CYBERBULLYING

by

Geoffrey A. Wagner

Bachelor of Science
Winthrop University, 2005

Master of Education
Columbia College, 2011

_____

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education in

Curriculum and Instruction

College of Education

University of South Carolina

2017

Accepted by:

Susan Schramm-Pate, Major Professor

Kenneth Vogler, Committee Member

Suha Tamim, Committee Member

Vic Oglan, Committee Member

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

At Upstate High School (pseudonym) in South Carolina, incidences of cyberbullying are on the rise. This explanatory action research study was implemented with the purpose of raising awareness of social media responsibility among ninth-grade high school students along with determining what these students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying. The study was conducted during the Fall semester of 2016 with a single group of 105 9th grade students at a high school in the upstate of South Carolina. Students who participated in the study completed an 85-item questionnaire to provide such quantitative information as their demographics, social media usage, self-esteem, methods of cyber bullying, and attitudes toward cyberbullying. Upon completion of the survey, four student participants were chosen based upon their experiences with cyberbullying to participate in a semi-structured interview to gather qualitative information about their opinions of social media, cyberbullying, and the safe usage of social media. The findings of the study showed that most students struggled to provide examples of responsible social media usage, yet most were aware of the harm that misuse of social media may cause their peers. Upon completion of the study both teachers and school administrators were presented with the findings and in turn an Action Plan was then designed to strengthen the school's policy on cyberbullying, in addition to raising awareness in the school community about the dangers of irresponsible use of social media.

Keywords: Social media, cyberbullying, technology, internet, adolescence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Online or off-line, ninth-grade students at Upstate High School (UHS) constantly interact with their peers. School personnel see and hear them discussing everything from their chemistry exams to plans for after the game on Friday night. These 14-year-olds have a desire to connect with one another. Under Erik Erikson's (1950; 1959) view of psychosocial development this age group is categorized by building peer relations to help develop a sense of identity. To establish identity requires individual effort in evaluating personal assets and liabilities, and in learning how to use these to achieve a clear concept of who one is and what one wants to become (Rice, 1999). Communication is one form of adolescent identity development and in 2016, the students in the present study communicate with each other using the internet connected to 'apps' or programs often referred to at the time of the writing of this dissertation as 'social media'.

Social media is often defined as people connecting with others using electronic communication (*Prevention Researcher*, 2011). By using social media application such as *Twitter* and *Facebook,* students are connected to each other today in a way that is unprecedented. The advent of technology and social media has brought new ways to stay connected around the globe. Going 'online', enables these teenagers to stay connected with their friends and family, build relationships with people of similar interests, and even promote political and cultural change (Allsion, 2015; King 2015).

However, this migration into the digital realm is not without its drawbacks, the most common of which is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is often defined as

bullying through e-mail, instant messaging (IM), in a chat room, on a Web site, on an online gaming site, or through digital messages or images sent to a cellular phone. (Kowalski et al., 2012, p. 1)

To combat this trend many educators are now attempting to educate students in proper social media responsibility, which is also known as digital citizenship. According to Oxley, digital citizenship is defined as the "norms of appropriate, responsible behavior with regard to technology use" (2010, p. 1). These norms can be found in multiple aspects of social media use, from understanding the appropriate use of photographs to knowing how shared content can be stored indefinitely in cyber space. By clearly defining and reinforcing the expected norms, parents/guardians, and teachers at UHS can help students be responsible on social media.

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE STATEMENT

The identified problem of practice for the present action research study involves a high school in the upstate of South Carolina, referred to as "Upstate High School" (pseudonym). Within this school ninth-grade students were found to have reported more instances of being bullied and harassed online than in person, eight reports a year of online bullying compared to only five listed as "traditional" bullying, where "traditional" bullying is often defined as physical aggression, such as hitting/kicking, or verbal aggression, such as teasing/taunting (Smith, 2008). While these reports are small compared to a population of 595 ninth-grade students, they highlight the growing trend of students moving to social media for their communication needs.

RESEARCH QUESTION & OBJECTIVE

Based upon this problem, the primary research question for this study is, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*? By answering this research question, this study provides insight into the usage and awareness that ninth-grade students have about social media. This understanding may influence the ways in which UHS ninth-grade students view social media responsibility. The study may also inform teachers, school administrators, and parents/guardians about the experiences that these students have online and how to best keep them safe.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of the present study is to describe the perceptions of ninth-grade students, at UHS, views of social media responsibility. The secondary purpose is to influence UHS policy to raise awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying and educate students on social media responsibility. The tertiary purpose is to create an Action Plan in conjunction with the ninth-grade students to raise awareness about cyberbullying and to create strategies and tips to help students be responsible online.

SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

Prior to the implementation of this study background research was conducted on related concepts that would also be crucial to the understanding of this study. These themes and concepts assisted in providing context for the present Action Research study, as well as providing scholarly literature in which to ground the theories and findings in. These concepts include Rosenberg's adolescent self-esteem (1965), social media usage (King, 2015), social media responsibility (Ribble, 2010), and cyberbullying (Slonjie &

3

Smith, 2008). These themes are elaborated on in Chapter Two and provide the basis for this study.

As an explanatory mixed-method Action Research study, as defined by Mertler (2014), this study followed the framework and by using quantitative data 'polyangulated' with qualitative data. For example, this study first acquired quantitative data from a set of 105 ninth-grade students, and then elaborated on this data by also collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. Mertler writes,

> In an explanatory mixed-methods design, the educator-researcher first collects
>
> quantitative data and then gathers additional qualitative data in order to help
>
> support, explain, or elaborate on the quantitative results. (p. 104)

By collecting two sets of data, the research answered the question, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*?

KEY WORDS/GLOSSARY

Adolescence - a period of typically between 13- and 19-years of age in which a child transitions into an adult (Rosenberg, 1965).

Cyberbullying – deliberately using digital media to communicate false, embarrassing, or hostile information about another person. It is the most common online risk for all teens and is a peer-to-peer risk (O'Keeffe& Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

Digital Citizenship - a concept, which helps teachers, technology leaders, and parents to understand what students/children/technology users should know to use technology appropriately (Ribble, 2010, p. 1).

Digital Native – people who are "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet (Prensky, 2001).

Digital Footprint – the collective, ongoing record of one's activity as they visit various sites on the Internet (O'Keeffe& Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

Self-concept - one's description of one's self and appraisals of competencies within various domains (Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2010).

Self-esteem – individual's conscience beliefs, opinions, attitudes, values, and feelings about themselves (Rosenberg, 1971).

Social Identity - an individual's self-concept that derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1978).

Social Media - involves people connecting with others using electronic communication (*Prevention Researcher*, 2011).

Social Networking Sites (SNS) - web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211).

POTENTIAL WEAKNESSES

Several potential weaknesses exist within this study, the first being the scope of the study. As this study only examines 105 ninth-grade students at one specific high school, it does not generalize their perceptions of social media responsibility on to a larger population. This limitation on the sample size of the study was necessary based upon time constraints of data collection and access to student participants. Another weakness evident in this study, and addressed in later Chapters, is the assumption that all students have a common understanding of the concept of responsibility. Despite these

weaknesses, the resulting Action Plan created from this study still has potential to positively affect students at UHS and assist them in using social media in a responsible manner.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study's potential impact can reshape the views of UHS personnel including teachers and administrators regarding educating students on the usage and dangers of social media. By bringing to light the perceptions that students have about using social media in a responsible manner, along with identify experiences that students have with cyberbullying, this study will support the need to properly educate students about responsible social media usage and how to stay safe online. This influence can be applied in the creation of school policies, like student handbooks, as well as in the curriculum that is taught in the classrooms.

Along with the potential to directly affect school policy and curriculum, this study's significance can also be felt among students. This study supports the theme of social justice by bringing awareness to the digital environment where students may encounter comments of a sexist, racist, or homophobic nature. Providing awareness of the issues that adolescents face online, and by offering students strategies to deal with offense content, this study can help students at UHS create a more positive online environment for themselves.

CONCLUSION

This explanatory mixed-method Action Research study, as defined by Mertler (2014), examines the perceptions that ninth-grade students have about social media responsibility and cyberbullying. The details of the study can be found in the following

Chapters. Chapter Two contains a review of scholarly literature that provides context for the study as well as the major themes present in the study. Chapter Three includes the methodology for the study and details the sample, setting, and data collection of this Action Research study. Chapter Four is comprised of the findings and implications of the study, including analysis and interpretation of the data collected. Chapter Five contains the summary, conclusion, and Action Plan of the study as well as discussion on the role of an action researcher and suggestions for future research. Together these Chapters detail the Action Research study conducted at Upstate High School and the purpose of this study in understanding what student perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying are.

CHAPTER 2
RELATED RESEARCH & LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two of this Action Research study includes a discussion of the scholarly literature to theoretically ground and historically contextualize the identified problem of practice which involves an investigation into the use of responsible social media usage in Upstate High School (pseudonym). The scholarly literature on social media and its relationship to self-esteem provides a deeper understand of how teenage students today are using social media and how it affects them, both positively and negatively (i.e. self-esteem). Some of the social media studies concentrated on academic grades, gender or race, some on attendance, and even others on the type of programs used. These previous studies have helped in narrowing this research topic to focus solely on ninth-grade student usage of social media and their perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying. Further research has also confirmed that the topic of social media is an area of high interest for teachers and parents/guardians, and will continue to be a relevant topic in the foreseeable future. The major themes found in this Chapter are Adolescence, Self-Esteem, Contemporary Media & Identifies, Social Media, Social Media Responsibility, and Cyberbullying. These themes provide the context and basis for this Action Research study, which examines the perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying among ninth-grade students at Upstate High School.

THEMES & IDEAS

ADOLESCENCE THEORIES. Adolescence, by many people, is often seen as a crucial time for development in children, and one that has many ups and downs. Along with the physical changes that children go through, there are conflicts that happen internally and externally that can shape a child's personality and affect their ideas of self-worth that have been studied for decades. For example, according to Jerslid over 50 years ago,

> One of the tasks of the adolescent is a continuing endeavor to find himself [sic]. This means, among other things, a growing understanding of who and what he [sic] is, of his [sic] resources and limitations, his [sic] prospects and his [sic] hopes. (Jerslid, 1963, p. 17)

Based on this foundational study of adolescents Mitchell (1986) later observed that "the adolescent is growing an identity, but for the most part, he [sic] is not sure what the building blocks of that identity are or what the final product will be" (p. 24). In the 21st century, the literature on adolescents includes the perceptions, conceptions, and attitudes of teenagers regarding the World Wide Web and access to social media 24 hours a day seven days a week. This continual access has changed the way adolescents develop their identity and it has impacted their self-esteem. Issues such as cyberbullying and sexting on websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can be found in prominent scholarly journals, such as *Developmental Psychology, Journal of Social Psychology,* and *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

Jerslid's early literature on identity theory and his view of the ways in which teenagers identify "self" (i.e., perceptions, conceptions, and attitudes) includes everything

9

that a person thinks in the words: I, me, mine, and myself (Jerslid, 1963). As students'

progress through the stage of adolescence they are discovering themselves and who they

are. By not knowing who they are they can often seem confused by those looking from

the outside in on adolescents. For example, when "adults learn that young people do not

always want to be themselves. Even though they say that they want to let their real self

shine forth, many adolescents simply do not know what their real self is" (Mitchell, 1986,

p. 25). It is through their interactions with others that they come to develop more identity

about who they are.

Rosenberg (1965) is another early foundational scholar in the area of identity

development in adolescence. He said that one of the many challenges faced by

adolescents is that it's a "period of unusual status ambiguity. Society does not have a

clear set of expectations for the adolescent" (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 4). This leads the child

to look outwards for support, which is satisfied by friends and family. "There are a few

things an adolescent prizes more than to be accepted by his peers" (Jerslid, 1963, p. 209).

Due to this need for acceptance the "peer group exerts greatest control during the early

adolescent years" (Mitchell, 1986, p. 23). This peer group may provide an advantage to

the adolescent by sharing interests and values, but could also be a disadvantage in that

some adolescents could feel the need to give up rights and their values to feel accepted

(Jerslid, 1963). "In facing the possibility of being accepted or rejected by others the

adolescent . . . usually has a certain amount of freedom in choosing where he [sic] will go

and whom he [sic] will seek out in order to gratify his [sic] need for approval and to

escape the pain of disapproval" (p. 20). This need for acceptance by others will continue

"through the adolescence stage and throughout his [sic] adolescence the young person,

even while retaining a mind of his own, will be sensitive to what others think and feel about him [sic]" (p. 19).

The process of adolescence in which a person "becomes a 'socialized' member of his age group is essential to healthy development, but it may involve disadvantages" (p. 209). Even though the experiences will vary from person to person, "on the whole, we may conclude that youth not only worry about what their peers expect of them, they also worry about themselves because they often do not know what to expect from themselves" (Mitchell, 1986, p. 25). This searching leads them to seek out peers to associate with; sometimes this is through face-to-face extracurricular activities, or in today's age of technology this can also be done through social media. This identification through media was even evident in this early literature on identity. For example, Sommer (1978) observed that "in the search for identity the young person often tries out various roles and engages in over-identification with . . . media idols" (p. 108).

Erik Erikson stated that puberty is like "precipitating a crisis of identity because of the difficulty of maintaining a sense of continuity through change" (as cited in Sommer, 1978, p. 109). This stage of life for students is marked with uncertainty and confusion. One of the reasons for this confusion is that "the question 'Who am I?' takes on an increased salience with the development of more abstract thought, and also because interest in others is increasingly" (p. 109). This search for identity often leads adolescents to look outwards for guidance and answers.

Even in 1978 this outward search for identify often led to media usage. Sommer (1978) observed, "young people spend a great deal of time attending to the media" (p. 113). However, the media of today consists of the Internet and smart phones, not the

11

radio and movies of the 1970s. Not only have the ways in which teenagers accessed

media changed, but the values that they learn have as well, this is because "the values of

pubescents reflect in large part those of surrounding society" (Sommer, 1978, p. 112).

These values, regardless of what they are, help to shape their identity and their feelings of

self-worth.

SELF-ESTEEM THEORIES. The historical scholarly literature on teenagers'

search for identity, and their desire to be accepted by their peers has been studied since

the mid-20th century and can be connected to teenage life after World War II and the

Civil Rights Movement, both of which factor into how post- Cold War and post 9/11

adolescents view themselves today. For many adolescents, their self-esteem becomes

very dependent on the approval of their peers. Mitchell illustrated 30 years ago the fact

that "self-definition and self-esteem are unalterably linked with peer acceptance"

(Mitchell, 1986, p. 24). Rosenberg (1965) and Jerslid (1963) illustrated 50 years ago that

that "during adolescence, a person's dealing with his peers becomes even more

significant" (Jerslid, 1963, p. 207) and that because of this desire to fit in, "the

individual's self-opinion is largely determined by what others think of him [sic]"

(Rosenberg, 1965, p. 25). "Between about 15 and 18 years of age the individual tends to

be keenly concerned with his self-image" (p. 3). It is this idea of self-image that is linked

to self-esteem has been historically documented in the scholarly literature on adolescents

post-World War II.

For example, one of the most cited research reports on self-esteem measurement

is Rosenberg (1965) and the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. Rosenberg (1965) defined

self-esteem as the feeling of self-worth that a person had. In another study, Rosenberg

(1971) states that measures of high self-esteem expresses feelings of self-satisfaction and feelings of worth. In contrast, measures of low self-esteem convey the feelings of inadequacy and being unworthy.   This idea of "self" deals with the unconscious attitude towards self, not any one individual aspect.

It is important to keep in mind that the views on identity from these researchers came during a time of the civil rights movement in the mid 20th century. Julian Bond (2014) writes that during that time "common identity comes from individual interaction in formal and informal social and political networks" (p. 12). The civil rights movements and the interactions that adolescents had with them would certainly have had an impact on the researchers studying them and their findings.

More current theories on self-esteem in high school students indicate that students with high levels of self-esteem also have higher levels of respect for others. Yelsma & Yelsma (1998) using both the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Coopsmith Self-Esteem Inventory found "evidence that people with high self-esteem are more predisposed than those with low self-esteem to have positive affective orientations and positive relationships" (p. 431). Another report from Wigfield, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman, & Midgley (1991) points to changes in self-esteem of young adolescents due to the changes in classroom environments of high school courses. Both older and current research done on self-esteem in high school lead to the same conclusions, that it is a challenging time for many students as they learn who they are and the levels of self-esteem can vary greatly based upon experiences.

However, this search for self is not done in a vacuum. "Changes in self-esteem during adolescence are responsive to life events, perceived support from family and

friends, and school climate" (Kort-Butler, 2012, p. 13). These can all factor into development of self-esteem during the high school years. The average high school student "also desires one or more companions who will accept him [sic] as a person and share his [sic] concerns" (Jerslid, 1963, p. 21). This desire to join others will often lead to seeking out like-minded peers, in 2016, this can be done through social media.

CONTEMPORARY MEDIA AND IDENTITIES THEORIES. The engagement in media today is much different than in 1978. Prior decades would have used radios and movies, whereas today's students use smart phones and the Internet. Also in today's world "teachers, parents, health providers, and child development experts all agree that the media children use can have a profound impact – both positive and negative – on learning, social development, and behavior" (Common Sense Media, 2013, p. 7). It is because of changes in media formats and the fact that the users of social networking websites continue to grow rapidly (Miah, Omar, & Allison-Golding, 2012), that it becomes essential to understand the affects that social media can have on adolescents.

Today's adolescents are sometimes referred to as "digital natives", meaning, "students today are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). They are contrasted by "those of us who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology are . . . digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001). The 'digital natives' in today's high schools have different experiences because of the technology around them. "A large part of this generation's social and emotional development is occurring while on the Internet and on cell phones" (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011, p. 800).

Experiences that students have can change their thinking pattern (Prensky, 2001), and this in turn changes how they interact with others and the world around them. "We now know that brains that undergo different developmental experiences develop differently, and that people who undergo different inputs from the culture that surrounds them think differently. And while we haven't yet directly observed 'digital natives' brains to see whether they are physically different (such as musicians' appear to be) the indirect evidence for this is extremely strong" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). This would suggest that students who have higher experiences on social media are going to think differently about themselves and others.

The dependence on social media has potential to lead to negative effects for adolescents. "Because of their limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure, children and adolescents are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media" (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011, p. 800). Coupling this desire with an unsupervised or unregulated social media account can be harmful. "Recent research indicates that there are frequent online expressions of offline behaviors, such as bullying, clique-forming, and sexual experimentation, that have introduced problems such as cyberbullying, privacy issues, and 'sexting.' Other problems that merit awareness include Internet addiction and concurrent sleep deprivation" (p. 800). Adolescence can be a difficult time for many students, and with the rise of social media it can be made even more difficult.

However, there are some positives that can arise from social media usage. Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) found that high usage of social media also related to more interpersonal connections with peers. Jacobsen and Forste (2011) reported that

social media has aided in creating higher feelings of closeness and connectedness in relationships of people who use them. Lastly, Reich (2010) wrote that people who use social media sites more frequently felt a stronger sense of community with the groups they connected with. The ability to connect with others during adolescence is an important step in helping high school students learn about who they are.

SOCIAL MEDIA. King (2015) defines social media's brief history by stating that "social media is somewhere between eleven and nineteen years old" (p. 6). Which makes it much younger than the older topics of adolescence and self-esteem that are also present in this Action Research project. King (2015) continues to show the sudden growth and rise of Internet usage by stating that, "in about twenty-three years (1991 being the beginning of the publicly available web), web usage has morphed from a handful of academics and researchers to most of the United States" (p. 6). King's statement and use to the word 'most' can be supported by the reports from Common Sense Media's 2012 report, *Social Media, Social Life* which confirms 90% of 13- to 17-year olds use social media.

Other sources, like the Pew Research Center with their 2011 report on teenage usage of social media report the same. Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell, Zickuhr, & Rainie (2011) summarize their findings when they write that because of social networking, "much of the social activity of teen life is echoed and amplified—in both good and bad ways" (p. 2). Regardless of the positives or negatives, adolescent usage of social media is on the rise and shows no sign of slowing down. With the topic of social media being in its infancy, many researchers are trying to find the answers to how the extended usage of this new form of communication will affect adolescents.

SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY. As this shift to social media occurs it becomes important for teenagers to learn what is considered acceptable behavior in an online space. Ribble (2014) writes that "All users of technology need to come to grips with how to use the tools of today and how to become digital citizens" (p. 88). This idea of digital citizenship is "a concept, which helps teachers, technology leaders, and parents to understand what students/children/technology users should know to use technology appropriately" (Ribble, 2010, p. 1). These guidelines can help ensure that student behavior and actions in an online environment are appropriate for their development and follow proper social norms. By exemplifying what it means to be a good digital citizen, adolescents can use "technology in an appropriate way while enjoying its vast capabilities and becoming more productive" (Ribble, 2014, p. 88).

The educational piece of digital citizenship is crucial since "all users of technology need to come to grips with how to use the tools of today and how to become digital citizens" (p. 88). If applied in a classroom, the concepts of digital citizenship are typically broken into nine elements or themes. These elements are Digital Access, Digital Commerce, Digital Communication, Digital Literacy, Digital Etiquette, Digital Law, Digital Rights and Responsibilities, Digital Health and Wellness, and Digital Security (Ribble, 2010). For this study the focus will be on the Digital Communication and Digital Etiquette themes.

Ribble (2010) writes that Digital Communication is the electronic exchange of information. To exemplify the values of a good digital citizenship adolescents should understand the different avenues available to them in communicating with others, such as email, cellular phone, text messages. In addition, good digital citizens should know

17

which form of communication to use based upon the situations they are in. The other element, Digital Etiquette is the standards and procedures of proper use of technology in communication. Ribble (2010) states that this is often the most complicated because it is easy to identify misuse and a challenge to educate about the proper use before it begins. In many cases schools turn to banning the technology without teaching appropriate use of it.

These themes then need to be taught in schools to ensure that the students are learning about what it means to interact online appropriately in the 21st century. Hollandsworth, Dowdy, and Donovan (2011) believe that the "K-12 professional community must develop common ground that advocates the use of technology in the classroom while preparing the student to make sound choices both for themselves and for others in the digital world" (p. 39). Ribble (2014) warns educators against inaction when stating that, "it is clear that technology use will increase within our schools. If you do not have a plan for how to teach digital citizenship, it will become a larger issue within your schools and district. It is important for our students, and for all of us, to understand this world full of technology and how to work, play and interact within it" (p. 88).

For this to occur policies and standards must be implemented in school curriculum. It is the "sudden emergence of cyber issues that . . . has created a dire need for ethical clarity and behavioral policy" (Ohler, 2012, p. 16). Ribble, Bailey, and Ross (2004) believe that "we must begin somewhere, and because the schools encompass our future, this is where the discussion begins" (p. 11). These policies and guidelines, "if aligned with character education, it would lend itself to becoming a good citizen in the digital community" (Hollandsworth, Dowdy, & Donovan, 2011, p. 38).

CYBERBULLYING. When the themes of good digital citizenship are not taught, the possibility of negative consequences can occur. The most common one is cyberbullying. "Research on this topic is still at an early stage of investigation; the phenomenon only appeared a few years ago, as the use of electronic devices such as computers and mobile phones by young people has increased" (Slonje & Smith, 2008, p. 147). Hinuja and Patchin (2008) define cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (p. 5).

Early reports of cyberbullying cited the use of online chat rooms, however "in recent years, most youth have been drawn to social networking websites (such as Facebook) and video-sharing websites (such as YouTube). This trend has led to increased reports of cyberbullying occurring in those environments" (p. 21). Slonjie and Smith (2008) provide evidence of the four primary methods that are currently used in cyberbullying. These are: text messaging, email, phone call and picture/video clip. Despite these multiple avenues, reports of cyberbullying are relatively low, most research indicates that 10% − 20% of adolescents report being the victim of cyberbullying (Slonjie & Smith, 2008; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004).

Along with research on the methods and frequency of cyberbullying, studies have also been conducted on the impact of cyberbullying on self-esteem. Patchin & Hinduja, (2010) and Ybarra, et al. (2007) both found that cyberbullying had a significant negative impact on student self-esteem. In addition, "while the majority of youth targets of aggression report being relatively unaffected, a notable one-third of youth harassed online indicate feeling very or extremely upset, and one-third feel at least one symptom of stress

19

following the incident" (Ybarra & Mitchell, p. 1308). These studies show that while not every teenager who uses social media will be a victim of cyberbullying, those who are will likely feel its effects.

PROBLEM OF PRATICE

The identified problem of practice for the present Action Research study focuses on the high level of cyberbullying, meaning students who have reported being harassed online, compared to "traditional" bullying at Upstate High School. Specifically, administration at UHS reported cyberbullying outnumbered "traditional" bullying eight to five. While these reports are minor compared to the overall population of the school, 595 students, they highlight the increased trend of student use of social media as a form of communication.

POINTS OF VIEW

While no previous studies disputed the importance of raising awareness to social media issues like cyberbullying, some research has touted the positives of social media usage, while others have warned of the negative side effects. This Action Research study relates to these previous studies by providing insight into student social media usage, perceptions of responsible usage, and views of cyberbullying.

Positive views of social media come from studies such as Utz, Tanis, and Vermeulen (2012) who examined the relationship between social media usage and self-esteem. Within their study, they found that students who connected with their peers via social media showed an increase needing of belonging. This "need to belong was found to positively affect attitudes toward [Social Networking Sites] SNSs" (p. 37). While the ability for adolescents to connect with one another through social media is a positive for

20

building relationships, there can also be negative that arise through this use of communication.

To contrast this Valkenburg and Peters (2009) highlight the negative aspects of social media usage. Within their study Valkenburg and Peters revealed that the difference in online communication as compared with face-to-face communication can have consequences. "For example, flaming (hostile and insulting interactions between Internet users), online harassment, and cyberbullying may all be associated with the disinhibition that results from the reduced auditory and visual cues in [Computer Mitigated Communication] CMC" (p. 4). Regardless of the differing points of view, both studies included disclaimers that more research should be conducted and that the use of social media should not be categorized as an absolute.

SUMMARIES OF LITERATURE

The major themes found consistent throughout this Action Research study are Adolescence, Contemporary Media & Identifies, Social Media, Social Media Responsibility, and Cyberbullying. The data collected both in the quantitative online questionnaire and the qualitative semi-structured interview, align with the framework provided by the scholarly literature reviewed in this Chapter. The theories on adolescence showed that ninth-grade students depended heavily on their peers for identity formation. The research on contemporary media provided evidence that students use social media to communicate and connect with their peers, and the social media theories provided examples of how social media is used and its impact on adolescents who use it. Reviewing literature about social media responsibility outlined the importance of using social media in a responsible manner. Finally, the theories on cyberbullying provide

consequences for what occurs when social media responsibility is not followed. This reviewed literature coupled with this study supports the need for an Action Plan that address social media awareness at UHS.

VARIABLES

While this Action Research study seeks to describe ninth-grade student perceptions of social media responsibility, it also examines how these online interactions may be affected by the race or gender of the student-participants. Previous studies "have shown significant differences in media use patterns by adolescents' basic social identities such as age, gender, and race/ethnicity" (Brown & Bobkowski, 2011, p. 96). In some situations, adolescents have a choice, and they may choose how they engage in social media based upon how they view themselves or how their peers participate in social media. "Indeed, there is fairly modest demographic variation in terms of where teen social media users maintain their accounts" (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell, Zickuhr, & Rainie, 2011, p. 20)

One difference in social media engagement comes in the form of gender. "Girls prefer to use technology to communicate with each other, text, call, where boys preferred to use their time to play video games" (Brown & Bobkowski, 2011, p. 96). Within this aspect of social media, researchers have found that there are differences between male and female engagements online. "Girls ages 12-13 have the most negative assessment of social network spaces" (Lenhart et al., 2011, p. 27). This means they report more of the cruelty they see and are more affected by the experiences they have online. Boys on the other hand "are more likely to ignore online cruelty" (p. 44). These gender differences

add a new layer in student perceptions of responsible social media usage and suggest that adolescents experience social media differently based upon their demographics.

Another difference in social media usage is based on race. Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) found in their research that among adolescents who stated they use the Internet several times a day: 39% were White, 33% Black, and 26% Hispanic or Latino. This engagement on social media was also different based upon race. "White teens are more likely than black teens to post comments on their friends' posts (90% vs. 80%) and both white and black teens are more likely than Latino teens to post status updates (among social media using teens 90% of whites, 84% of blacks, and 70% of Latinos do this)" (Lenhart et al., 2011, p. 23).

Even when adolescents used the same social media platform, there was a difference in their experience. "Black teens who use social media are more likely than Latino teens (though not white teens) to say they witness mean behavior on social network sites "frequently," with 17% of black teens reporting seeing such behavior, along with 4% of Latino youth and 11% of white teens" (Lenhart et al., 2011, p. 34). For example, "black teens are less likely to say their experience is that people their age are kind to one another on social network sites" (Lenhart et al., 2011, p. 27) and "black teens are more likely to see others joining in harassment" (p. 42). This difference in race, like the difference in gender contributes to the way students engage in social media and the experiences they have with it.

Historically the characteristics of gender and race have been a dividing point both in society and in the educational setting. The inclusion of these factors in this Action Research study will assist in providing a clearer picture about differences that may occur

23

on social media based upon the gender or race of students at UHS. Throughout this country's history "conscious and deliberate actions have institutionalized group identity in the United States" (Lipsitz, 2013, p. 78) and created dominant and oppressed groups. "These systems structure both our individual lives and our society" (Weber, 2010, p. 4) and they also create the inequalities that we see in our world. One example of this is the educational setting where in "high school, ability group tracking is pervasive and is highly correlated with race and class" (p. 201). Not only in student academics, but also "students' interactions with one another create and reinforce race, class, gender" (p. 202).

Gender inequality has existed and continues to exist is many forms today. Even after the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which gave women the right to vote, and the 1972 title IX amendment, which opened "the way for increased participation of women and girls in athletic programs" (p. 51); there are still defining roles that limit female empowerment. "These roles form the basis for the structure of oppression of women and girls, or sexism, in our society" (Hackman, 2013, p. 320). Within the societal created gender roles, it is the male role that is characterized by strong dominant traits. When coupled with the idea that men and women are opposite, a "system of gender inequality that benefits men" (p. 318) is created as men being strong and women being weak. However, even though "women have steadily gained myriad rights regarding the control of their lives and bodies" (p. 318) the separation still exists.

Racial inequality, like gender inequality, is also still prevalent in our society and in our educational system. Even after the 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* decision, which "strikes down separate but equal doctrine . . . and orders all schools desegregated" (Weber, p. 50) discrimination persists. Throughout this country's history "conscious and

deliberate actions have institutionalized group identity in the United States" (Lipsitz, 2013, p. 78) and created dominant and oppressed groups. This system of oppression provides advantages to those who have power, and "race, regardless of how it came to be, is a burden of our society" (Arminio, 2013, p. 126).

While this study has the purpose of describing ninth-grade student perceptions of social media responsibility, it is imperative that the race and gender of the student-participants are also considered. By examining the race and gender of student-participants and how race and gender may affect social media experiences, this project provides more insight into inequalities that persist today.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SOURCES

While the study of social media and its effect on adolescents is still new in the world of academia there has been a growth of literature written about it. The sources listed in this Action Research study are based upon experts in the field who have conducted research directly related to the impact of social media and who have had their works published in peer reviewed journals such as, *Journal of Social Psychology*, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, and *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. By using academic journals in the review of the related literature, this Action Research study is better able to focus its own purpose and design a study aligned with already identified themes and concepts. In addition, this previously published literature can provide context for this Action Research study and frame its findings with the current body of knowledge regarding responsible social media usage and cyberbullying.

METHODOLOGIES

In the creation of this Action Research study the primary reference for study's design came from Mertler (2014). Based upon Mertler's term of 'polyangulation' which means to gather data from multiple sources, Mertler's definition of an explanatory mixed-method design was determined to be most suitable for answering the research question, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*? This design focuses on "the collection of two types of data" (p. 104), quantitative and qualitative. "The quantitative data and analysis provide the main focus for the overall study results; the qualitative data are used to elaborate on, refine, and further explain the quantitative findings" (p. 104). For this study, the quantitative data was collected by administering an online questionnaire, and from the results of the questionnaire a semi-structured interview was designed to collect the qualitative data. While this Action Research study is based upon previously published scholarly literature, it is important to note that this study only "captures opinions and such, during a fleeting moment in times" (p. 97) at UHS.

CONCLUSION

The quality and breadth of research already conducted about the topics of adolescent development, social media, cyberbullying, and self-esteem show that this is an area of high interest and concern for those in the field of education. This prior research has also shown the validity of these concerns and that they are a factor in the development of teenage identity. Therefore, this Action Research study fits into these themes by combining student social media usage with perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying to provide both parents/guardians, and those in the field

of education, with a more comprehensive look at ninth-grade student online communication. The results of this study, though focused specifically on UHS, can be added to these fields of literature to further support the understanding of adolescent usage of social media and perceptions of social media responsibility in contemporary classrooms across the United States.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY FOR QUANTITATIVE STUDIES

In Chapter Three of this Action Research study an explanation of the methodology, sample, setting, and data collection will be presented. In order to answer the question, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*? an online questionnaire and a semi-structured interview was, was designed and administered to collect data. The questionnaire, or survey, was used to collect quantitative data and acquire information about ninth-grade student views on social media usage and cyberbullying. Following the quantitative survey a qualitative semi-structured interview was conducted among four of the student-participants for clarification. These two sets of data were joined by artifacts collected from school administrators to successfully "polyangulate" (Mertler, 2014) the findings. These findings were then used to create an Action Plan that served to increase social media awareness to students and educators at Upstate High School (UHS).

ACTION RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of this project is an explanatory mixed-method design based upon Mertler's (2014) definition, which focuses on gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. This design was chosen due to knowledge that "both types of data may provide a better understanding of the research problem than either type of data alone." (p. 96). The aim of the project is to provide a description of how students view the concept of social media responsibility, and by posing questions and having students respond to them, this

28

Action Research study can accomplish that goal. Since this study is not attempting to

prove any correlation or make comparisons no other designs would suit this need.

RESEARCHER

As an Action Researcher, and leader of this project, my role was to develop

appropriate measures based upon previous studies, administer the questionnaire to collect

the data, reflect on the findings, and follow-up with specific student-participants for

clarification. By basing the measures of this study after examples that had already been

tested and proven reliable, this study can assume that the data collected will be reliable

and relevant to the study. In addition, my role as the leader in the Action Research study

requires reflection with the participants. In the case of this study four student-participants

were interviewed for clarification on answers from the questionnaire as well as the school

administration to review the findings and discuss a suitable Action Plan to address the

needs. As an Action Researcher for an explanatory mixed-method study it is also

important for me to remember that these opinions are a sampling of opinions from a

single moment in time, and as such could be subject to change if the study was replicated.

However, by using an explanatory mixed-method design, as defined by Mertler (2014),

this Action Research study serves its purpose in identify ninth-grade student perceptions

of social media responsibility at UHS.

SAMPLE

To gather data for this Action Research study a convenience sample of 105 ninth-

grade students was taken from four High School 101 Course at UHS. Each student in

these four classes was given a parent permission slip which outlined the study as well as

provided a sample of some of the questions that students would be asked. Ninth-grade

students who wished to participate were required to have the permission slip signed and returned within a two-week window. Only the students with signed and returned permission slips could participate in the study. This convenience sampling was used since involvement in the study was voluntary and had no bearing on student academics. The only criteria involvement within the study was that students had to be enrolled in the ninth-grade.

The sample of the study provided a mix of male and female participants and races. While the gender makeup of the group was very similar between male and female there was a considerable difference in race. As seen in Table 3.1, the primary ethnicity of the group was White, however this is a fair representation of the entire school as Upstate High School, which is made up of 81.4% White students, 11.2% African American students, and 3.5% Hispanic or Latino students.

Table 3.1 Ethnicity and gender of participants

	White	African American	Hispanic or Latino	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Two or more race	Not indicated
Males	33	2	3	1	1	7	3
Females	38	3	1	1	1	7	2
Total	71	5	4	2	2	14	5

To ensure confidentiality and uphold the ethics of educational research, students who participated in this study were required to have both a parent permission form and an assent form completed. By making sure to "obtain permission from both the parents and the students themselves" (Mertler, p. 151) this study ensured that both parents/guardians and students were aware of their participation and the information they provided. Student-participants were then provided with a survey ID with which to enter when

taking this questionnaire. This use of a number coding system to designate responses provided anonymity to the student-participants. Mertler (2014) uses this strategy in which participants are given a number as an identifier rather than a name to provide confidentiality, because "an action researcher's ability to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants and their data is a vitally important component of the action research process" (Mertler, p. 151). None of the information gathered was shared with parents/guardians or teachers, so that student-participants could feel safe with expressing their opinions and experiences.

SETTING

Upstate High School is a public high school that resides in suburban South Carolina. The school is made up of approximately 1,860 students, with approximately 595 of those students being enrolled in the ninth-grade. The overall racial makeup of the school is 81.4% White students, 11.2% African American students, and 3.5% Hispanic or Latino students. More specifically, this Action Research study takes place across four High School 101 classroom at UHS which were chosen primarily due to most students enrolled in High School 101 Courses in the Fall of 2016 being ninth-graders.

Student-participants completed the online questionnaire in a single sitting during class time. Mobile school devices were brought into the classroom so that students could access the questionnaire, and no time limit was set for its completion. Four of these student-participants, two males and two females, were selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted in the media center in a one-on-one setting to encourage students to freely provide their opinion and to elaborate on their answers provided in the questionnaire. This interview helped to further answer the

research question, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*?

INSTRUMENTATION & MATERIALS

The instruments and materials used in collecting data for this Action Research study took the form of an online questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Both tools were used to collect data from students to determine what their perspectives of social media responsibly and cyberbullying were. The online questionnaire, or survey, provided "students a space to share their thoughts and opinions" (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 114). Mertler (2014) touts the advantages of using surveys by stating that they are "very effective at gathering data concerning students' attitudes, perceptions, or opinions" (p. 144). The second tool, a semi-structured interview was used to collect qualitative data from four student-participants. Mertler again confirms this choice by writing, "when gathering truly qualitative data, interviews are probably best conducted following semi-structured or open-ended formats" (p. 130). Both the quantitative online questionnaire and the qualitative semi-structured interview worked in tandem to answer the research question and provide insight into ninth-grade students' perception of social media responsibility and cyberbullying. The sections below detail these tools and how they were applied in this study.

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE. As an explanatory mixed-method study, this Action Research study based many of its findings on the online questionnaire that was administered to 105 ninth-grade students. The questionnaire was administered online using the software program Google Forms, and student-participants were provided school issued mobile devices to complete the questionnaire. This software allowed for a variety

of questions to be asked of student-participants to gain a descriptive understanding of student perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying. These questions contained scales, checklists, and multiple choice formats.

Items in this online questionnaire were based upon previous research studies of the same topics. This ensured the validity of the tool to produce findings that accurately depicted the desired outcomes. The online questionnaire consisted of 85 total questions spanning four distinct categories, Demographics, Self-esteem, Social Media Usage, and Cyberbullying. (See Appendix A) The first segment of the questionnaire provides demographic information about the student-participants. Student-participants were asked their age, gender, race, grade level, school, estimated academic performance, number of siblings, number of /guardians they live with, marital status of parents/guardians, and how they access the Internet. This data assisted in providing variables in the data analysis as well as ensuring that a fair representation of UHS students existed in the sample.

The self-esteem segment of the questionnaire was based upon Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale in which students answer ten Likert-scale questions about how they felt at the time of taking the questionnaire (Rosenberg, 1965). Student-participants indicated their level of agreement (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) on each of the ten measures. Responses were coded 1, 2, 3, or 4 based upon the question. (See Appendix A for full questionnaire) The questions were then tallied and a score of 10 – 40 was given with 40 indicating the highest level of self-esteem. The test has a "satisfactory reproducibility (of 92 percent) and scalability (of 72 percent)" (p. 16). The ten questions

from the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale were used to calculate a self-esteem variable of the study.

The social media usage segment of the questionnaire was based on a national survey conducted for the *Social Media Social Life* report (Common Sense Media, 2012). This survey had a high internal constancy with a Cronbach's alpha of .80, and questions from it were used in this study's questionnaire. A total of 37 questions were used and provided such information as social media usage, number of accounts, frequency of posts, and feelings toward social media. (See Appendix A) This segment of the questionnaire provided insight into how and why ninth-grade student-participants use social media. Responses from this section were also used in determining which student-participants would be selected for semi-structured interviews.

The cyberbullying segment of the questionnaire was based upon a cyberbullying study conducted by Slonje and Smith (2008). Questions from this segment reported on five different categories of cyberbullying; email, phone call, text message, and picture/video clip. Student-participants were asked to indicate the frequency in which they have been the victim of cyberbullying using a five-point scale, 1 – I have not been bullied/bullied others, 2 – only once or twice, 3 – two or three times a month, 4 – once a week, and 5 – several times a week. Along with these frequency questions, student-participants were also asked their views on these forms of cyberbullying and if they consider this form of bullying more/same/less harmful than traditional bullying. In addition, student-participants were asked if they feel that they are more/same/less likely to be noticed by an adult. (See Appendix A) The questions regarding the frequency of being the bully or being bullied were used as a cyberbullying variable in this study and

were used in the data analysis to compare different backgrounds of students to the frequency or type of cyberbullying that they encountered.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS. The semi-structured interviews provided qualitative data for this explanatory mixed-method study and supported the quantitative data collected in the online questionnaire. The interview was comprised of eight core questions with each core question having one or two follow-up questions based upon the answers. (See Appendix B) Questions were written by the Action Researcher and in a language and tone that would be comprehend by ninth-grade students at UHS. In addition, these questions were open-ended in nature to encourage student-participants to provide more detail or even recall their own personal experiences related to social media usage. Answers to these questions were recorded and compiled together. With a limited number of questions and only four interviewees, the assembling of the responses was simplified.

DATA COLLECTION

To provide a descriptive answer to the research question, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*? multiple sources of data were collected. Mertler (2014) refers to this as 'polyangulation. This Action Research study utilizes quantitative data collected from an online questionnaire, along with qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews, and artifacts from the school administration to clearly understand student perceptions of social media responsibility at UHS. The quantitative data provides the framework for student-participants' opinions and views, while the qualitative data and artifacts supporting the findings give a more complete view of student social media usage.

The data was collected within two separate windows of time. The first data collection was the online questionnaire. Students who returned the parent permission slip were provided with a survey ID number and a URL in which to access the questionnaire. School issued mobile devices were available for students in the classroom to access and respond to the questionnaire. Responses were collected and stored in a digital file housed in a password protected online account accessible only by the Action Researcher. Student-participants completed the questionnaire in a single class period, approximately 60 minutes.

The second data collection window was the semi-structured interview. Four student-participants were selected from the original sample to participate in the interview, and they were chosen based upon their gender and their responses to the questionnaire about usage of social media and exposure to cyberbullying. The background of each participant is detailed in Chapter Four. Student-participants were interviewed in a face-to-face, one-on-one format with the Action Researcher which was held in the school's media center. Prior to being asked the questions the student-participants were provided with a list of the core questions and asked if any of the items were unclear or ambiguous. Any questions that arose about wording were clarified before proceeding. Throughout the duration of the interview an audio recording device recorded the interview so that answers could be used for reference later. The audio file of each response was stored in the same password protected online account as the responses to the online questionnaire. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes and all four interviews were conducted during the same day.

DATA ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

After the online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were completed the data was analyzed to reveal common themes among the student-participant responses. For the online questionnaire, the responses which were already collected in a digital format were imported into R, a statistical computing software. Using R software allowed the responses to become unique variables that could be categorized based upon different parameters. For example, comparing perceived impact of cyberbullying among students of different races and genders. Using this process, the data collected from the quantitative online questionnaire could reveal trends that were then followed up with in the semi-structured interview.

Data from the interview was qualitative in nature and as such was not analyzed using statistical software. Rather, the students' responses to the questions were coded and tabulated. Since only four student-participants comprised the interview sample, with a total of eight possible questions, analysis was simplified. The common themes pulled from this qualitative data set were used to support the views that student-participants indicated from the quantitative data set.

After the analysis of this data was complete, a summary of the findings was shared with the school administration to reflect on the results. This discussion lead to open dialogue about how gaps in understanding of responsible social media usage had arisen at UHS and what procedures could be put in place to remedy the issue. From this conversation, an Action Plan was created which focused on social media awareness and reducing the frequency of cyberbullying incidents at UHS.

CONCLUSION

By choosing Mertler's (2014) explanatory mixed-method design, this Action Research study accurately portrays student perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying. The study relies primarily on a quantitative online questionnaire to obtain student opinions and perceptions, and then elaborates on the data with the qualitative semi-structured interviews. To polyangulate these findings artifacts from school administrators are also used to provide a complete pictures of social media perceptions at UHS. These findings are then used in the creation of an Action Plan to address the problem of high rates of cyberbullying among ninth-graders at UHS. By raising awareness of this issue and putting a plan in place to address it, this Action Research study serves it purpose of helping students at UHS be safer online.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

This Chapter includes the findings and implications of data collected from the study, which contains the quantitative data collected from the online questionnaire, as well as qualitative data collected during the semi-structured interviews. The implications of the quantitative data are represented in two themes, Views on Cyberbullying and Experience on Social Media. The quantitative data was 'polyangulated' (Mertler, 2014) with the qualitative data and supports these two themes related to ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility. Other data collection included, artifacts from the school administration regarding the number of discipline issues related to cyberbullying and the school's policy on social media usage. These artifacts helped to shape the Action Plan and are addressed in Chapter Five. The analysis of this data serves to address the problem of cyberbullying at Upstate High School and helps to support the creation of an Action Plan to address this issue.

DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY

Data collected for this Action Research study followed Mertler's 'polyangulation' format in that it collected data from a variety of sources to address the research question. The first source of data collected was quantitative data from an online questionnaire. This 85-question questionnaire was administered to 105 ninth-grade students over the course of a single sitting. This questionnaire was created by referencing surveys conducted by other researchers on the same topic. From these responses four student-

participants were selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews. These selections were made based upon gender, usage of social media, and exposure to incidents of cyberbullying. Though this study does not attempt to draw comparisons, by using student-participants of different backgrounds this ensured that the data more accurately reflected the general population. The final data set that was collected for this survey was artifacts from the school administration. This included the number of cyberbullying and "traditional" bullying incidents, as well as the student handbook.

ONGOING ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

Early analysis of the data aligned with preconceived notions that student-participants would indicate exposure to cyberbullying, however the determination that student-participants viewed some types of cyberbullying as more harmful than others was unexpected. This ability to distinguish between different uses of technology for cyberbullying, and which ones are more likely to be caught, showed that student-participants know how to best use social media in an irresponsible manner if they choose.

With this information, another challenge in this Action Research study proved to be conducting the semi-structured interviews without judgement or a desire to correct the student-participant's behavior. Being aware of the irresponsible use of social media and faced with student-participants who indicated that they did not know what it means to use social media in a responsible way was challenging not to immediately address.

REFLECTIVE STANCE

Following the collection of the quantitative data from the online questionnaire, the qualitative data collection tool, the semi-structured interview, was altered to address key questions that arose. The question, *Do you think students are more likely to bullying in*

person or online? was added after student-participants indicated that cyberbullying via videos/pictures was perceived to be more harmful than traditional bullying. By altering the data collection throughout the process a more focused understanding of ninth-grade student perceptions of cyberbullying was created.

Upon reflection after the data was collected it became clear that questions regarding the meaning of responsibility should have been included. In addition, questions pertaining to student-participants who reported being exposed to cyberbullying should have been added to clarify if these student-participants were bystanders, victims, or perpetrators to the cyberbullying. This reflection on the gaps in the data will be used to refine future Action Research studies conducted on similar topics.

DATA ANALYSIS

The themes that emerged from this data collection were Perceptions of Social Media Responsibility, Views of Cyberbullying, and Experiences of Social Media, and School Administrator Artifacts. While the first theme, Perceptions of Social Media Responsibility directly answers the research question, the supporting themes provide a more detailed examination of why students may have the perception they do and how this perception influences their experiences on social media.

PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY. To gather data about student perceptions of social media responsibility a semi-structured interview was conducted among four students, two males and two females. Participants were chosen for the interview based up upon their responses in the questionnaire, administered earlier. These included examples of participants who cited being the victim and/or perpetrator of cyberbullying as well as those who were heavy and light users of social media. These

surveys were conducted in a one-on-one format with the student participant and researcher in the school's media center. At the start of the interview each student-participant was given a list of the seven questions:

1. What does social media responsibility mean to you?;

2. Have you ever posted something then gone back and deleted it?;

3. Do you think things you post could affect you later on?;

4. Have you had consequences for something you've posted online?;

5. Do you share social media with family members?;

6. What advice would you give your peers about social media?;

7. Do you think people are more likely to post negative things online as opposed to face-to-face?

By asking student-participants *What does social media responsibility mean to you*?, students are directly answer the question based upon their understanding of the word 'responsibility'. When asked the questions, *Do you think items you post could affect you later*?, participants are asked to think of consequences that can relate to the items they post, both positive or negative. And lastly, by asking participants the question of *What advice would you give your peers about social media*?, participants are required to formulate their own opinions about usage of social media.

Before providing the answers to these questions, it is worth noting that this study does not address the concept of what responsibility means, and this abstract concept was neither clarified with participants, nor questioned. In this regard, the answers that participants gave about responsibility could have different meaning based upon that participant's individual understanding of what responsibility means to them.

For this study, pseudonyms were provided for the student names to support anonymity, however their responses to questions regarding their social media experience is provided. The reason for addressing the student's social media experience along with their responses in the interview is that their experiences on social media may have shaped their concept of responsibility, however this study is not intended to draw any correlations between the two.

Joanna. The first interviewee was Joanna, a White female, who on the questionnaire reported having experience as both a victim and a perpetrator of cyberbullying. Joanna's background is that she is a mostly B student who lives with both her parents and has one sibling. From the questionnaire, she stated that she has 6 or more best friends and checks her social media 15-20 time a day. She believes that using social media makes her feel more popular, more confident, and more connected with her friends. She indicated that on social media she often sees sexist, racist, and homophobic comments online. In addition, when reporting on instances of being bullied she indicated that she was bullied more by other girls than by boys.

During the semi-structured interview, Joanna was asked several questions about her social media usage. When asked: *What social media responsibility means to you*?, she responded, "don't post drugs and alcohol, and don't post illegal stuff". Joanna went on to elaborate further by saying that if negative items are posted people could capture the images and use them later against the you. When asked about how items on social media could affect a student later in life Joanna agreed that they could, however she was not sure how. In addition, she stated that for the most part she does not post things when she is upset, but she may occasionally. Her advice about using social media for her

friends would be to not post illegal pictures or text, and to read over posts before sharing. Joanna's responses showed that she has experience with using social media irresponsibly as a creator of the content as well as a witness to it.

Marcus. The second interviewee, a White male named Marcus, reported minimal experience on social media and none as a victim or instigator of cyberbullying. In addition, Marcus indicated on the questionnaire that he was a mostly A & B student who lived with both of his parents and a sibling. He indicated that he only has one best friend and participated in social media by only posting 1-5 times a week, (lowest possible score). Even though Marcus indicated that using social media made him feel more connected, it also made him feel more depressed. Additionally, Marcus reported hardly ever witnessing comments that were racist/sexist/homophobic in nature, but also reported that he had been the victim of cyberbullying via pictures/videos two to three times a month over the past three months.

In the semi-structured interview when Marcus was asked, *What does social media responsibility mean to you*?, he responded that he did not feel there was a responsible way to use social media, and that he could only think of irresponsible ways. The second question about how social media could affect your life later produced an example from Marcus in which an acquaintance of his posted pictures of underage drinking, and while he does not know the consequences he does know that this person was caught by an adult or parent. To summarize Marcus's thoughts on social media he was asked what advice would you give to peers, and his response was "don't do anything stupid". Marcus's responses show that his concept of social media responsibility was limited to simply what not to do, and he could not produce examples of how to use it correctly.

Steven. The third interview was conducted with another White male named Steven, Steven reported being the victim of cyberbullying on social media from the questionnaire. Additionally, Steven reported in the online questionnaire, that he was a most A & B student who lived with one parent and three siblings. He reported that he checked his social media site 1-5 times a day, but rarely posted. Steven indicated that his use of social media did not make much difference in his views of confidence or staying connected with friends. In addition to reporting experiencing irresponsible usage of social media online in the form of racist or sexist comments, Steven also indicated that he had been bullied several times a week and saw cyberbullying has being more harmful than traditional bullying.

During the semi-structured interview, when asked *What does social media responsibility means to you*?, Steven responded that it means, "not posting things that would get you in trouble". Like Marcus, Steven focused on what not to do on social media. When asked about how posts could affect you later in life he referenced job interviews and how irresponsible posts could reflect negatively a person in their career. His response to the question on providing advice to peers about social media elicited a response of "don't post anything that would get you in trouble". This trend shows that ninth-grade students have the perception that responsible social media usage simply means not getting into trouble.

Brittany. The fourth and final interview was conducted with a White female named Brittany who reported high use of social media as well as being a victim of cyberbullying. Additional background on Brittany included that she is a mostly A student who lives with both parents and has two siblings. She indicated that she checked

her social media account 15-20 times a day and that while it made her feel more connected to her friends, the use of social media did not have much of an effect on her any other way. Brittany also responded that she witnessed irresponsible use of social media often in the form of racist or sexist comments, and that she had been bullied with video/pictures several times a week, and viewed cyberbullying as being more harmful than traditional bullying.

When asked *What does social media responsibility mean to you*?, Brittany stated that it means posting things you are not ashamed of and posting things that will not harm others. In addition, Brittany elaborated that you may never know who will see your social media accounts and that it could affect job interviews later in life. When asked about how items that are posted to social media could affect you later in life, she again mentioned job interviews as well as sharing content that may conflict with beliefs of friends, and this could have consequences on a friendship. The question about providing advice to others about social media generated another insightful comment from Brittany which was, "if you are worried and have to think twice, don't post it". Brittany's responses indicated an awareness of social media and its potentially harmful effects, and while she did indicate in the survey that she had been the victim of cyberbullying, this study does not intend to create a connection between her views and her experiences.

SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEW DATA. In summary, while Joanna, Marcus, Steven, and Brittany all had different experiences with social media, they shared some consistency with their views on what it means to use social media responsibly. Half of the respondents acknowledged the importance of not posting inappropriate items out of fear of affecting future job interviews and half of the respondents mentioned the

importance of not posting illegal content on social media. Also, two respondents acknowledge that social media does not disappear and those items can be found or used later. Of all the participants, only one, Brittany, acknowledge that social media responsibility included posting items you wouldn't be a shame of and items that are not harmful to others. All other respondents gave answers that included what not to post, but she was the only one to share what to post. Adding this to Marcus's statement that he could not think of how to use social media responsibly highlights the knowledge base of student understanding of social media reasonability.

VIEW OF CYBERBULLYING. A secondary component of this study was how students viewed the act of cyberbullying versus traditional bullying. Within this section, participants were asked to respond to questions which compared the different forms of cyberbullying; email, text message, phone call, and videos and pictures, to traditional bullying. These results provided insight into how students view cyberbullying and its impact.

One question about views of cyberbullying asked participants to indicate how they viewed different methods of cyberbullying compared to traditional bullying. Each question was asked independently, and students rated their responses by indicating if they viewed the form of cyberbullying as being more harmful, the same, or less harmful than traditional bullying. For the question on views of bullying by email, out of 105 participants 31 indicated email bullying was more harmful, 51 responded that it was about the same, and 23 responded that it was less harmful. When comparing bullying through text messages, 30 indicated this was more harmful, 55 indicated it was the same, and 16 responded that it was less harmful than traditional bullying. When comparing

phone call bullying to traditional bullying, 20 indicated that it was more harmful, 62

stated it was about the same, and 22 responded less harmful. For bullying using video or

pictures, 42 indicated that it was more harmful, 50 responded that it was the same, and 11

stated that it was less harmful. As indicated in Table 4.1, participants viewed distinctive

methods of cyberbullying as having different impacts on victims.

Table 4.1 Do you think cyberbullying compared to traditional bullying
has a more, same, or less harmful impact on victims?

	More harmful	About the same	Less harmful
Email	29.5%	48.6%	21.9%
Text message	29.7%	54.5%	15.8%
Phone call	19.2%	59.6%	21.2%
Video or picture	40.8%	48.5%	10.7%

The other question which pertained to how students view cyberbullying compared

to traditional bullying came in the form of a question about the likelihood of adults to

notice this form of bullying compared to traditional bullying. Just as in the previous

question, each form of bullying was asked separately in the questionnaire and students

responded by indicating whether they believed that the form of cyberbullying was more

likely, the same, or less likely to be noticed by an adult. Of the 105 participants that

responded 17 responded that bullying over email would be more likely to be noticed,

while 27 reported the same, and 61 indicated less likely. For bullying over text message,

21 indicated they thought it would be more likely, 28 responded the same, and 55

indicated they would be less likely to be noticed by an adult. With regards to bullying

over phone calls, 11 indicated more likely, 43 reported the same, and 50 stated they

thought that phone calls would be less likely noticed by an adult. Regarding bullying by

video or pictures, 26 indicated that the likelihood to get caught would be more compared

to traditional bullying, 46 reported the same, and 32 reported feeling less likely. As

shown in Table 4.2, different methods of cyberbullying are perceived to have different

chances of being noticed by an adult.

Table 4.2 Do you think cyberbullying compared to traditional
bullying is more, same, or less likely to be noticed by an adult?

	More Likely	About the same	Less Likely
Email	16.2%	25.7%	58.1%
Text message	20.2%	26.9%	52.9%
Phone call	10.6%	41.3%	48.1%
Video or picture	25%	44.2%	30.8%

EXPERIENCES ON SOCIAL MEDIA. Since this study has a focus of what

social media responsibility means to ninth-grade students, participants were also asked to

respond to how frequently they were witness to harmful comments online. These

comments were broken into four categories, sexist, racist, homophobic, and anti-religious

comments. The purpose of these questions was to determine how often students saw

comments, or posts, that were examples of irresponsible social media usage. These

questions did not indicate if these posts were directed at participants or created by

participants, just if they were witnessed by them. In addition, results from two of the

areas that were questioned, homophobic and anti-religious are not presented due to

having no background on students' religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

The first experience that participants responded to was about sexist comments.

Participants were asked if they encountered sexist comments, that is, someone putting

girls or guys down in a way that call attention to their gender or using insulting words

about women or men. Out of 50 male participants 17 responded never, 13 stated hardly

ever, 10 indicted sometimes, and 10 stated often. Out of 53 female participants 22

responded that they never encountered sexist comments, 11 stated hardly ever, 8

indicated sometimes, and 12 responded often. Table 4.3 provides these numbers as a

percentage.

Table 4.3 Percentage of participants encountering sexist comments

	Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
Males	34%	26%	20%	20%
Females	41.6%	20.7%	15%	22.7%

The next social media experience that participants were asked about related to

race and ethnicity. Participants were asked about the frequency of their exposure to racist

comments, that is someone putting people down based upon their race or ethnicity. Even

though the demographic of this survey are predominantly White participants, the results

still provide much needed insight into the type of experiences students have online. Out

of 71 White students, 22 indicated that they never encounter racist comments, 18 stated

hardly ever, 13 responded sometimes, and 18 stated often. Based upon five students who

identified as African America, two indicated that they never encountered racism, two

responded hardly ever, and one indicated that they encountered racist comments

sometimes. From a total of four students who identified as Hispanic or Latino, two

responded that they encountered racist comments sometimes, and two indicated that they

encountered it often. One student who identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native

responded that they hardly ever encountered racism. Of the three students who identified

as Asian or Pacific Islander, one indicated that they never encountered racist comments,

one indicated that they hardly ever, and one indicated that they encountered racist

comments online often. The final group of participants comprised of students who

identified with two or more races in their ethnicity. Of these 14 students, five responded

that they never encountered racist comments, one responded hardly ever, three stated

sometimes, and five responded that they often encounter racist comments online. Table 4.4 shows the frequency of these encounters by identified ethnicity.

Table 4.4 Percentage of participants encountering racist comments

	Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often
White	30.9%	25.4%	18.3%	25.4%
African American	40%	40%	20%	
Hispanic or Latino			50%	50%
American Indian or Alaskan Native		100%		
Asian or Pacific Islander	33.3%	33.3%		33.3%
Two or more races	35.7%	7.2%	21.4%	35.7%

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR ARTIFACTS. Informal interviews were also conducted with several school level administrators to collect data about disciplinary problems they have encountered stemming from student misuse of social media. Based upon their records of ninth-grade discipline from the previous year, there were more cases of bullying conducted online than in person. There were eight reports of cyberbullying compared to only five happening in person. In addition to these reports of bullying, there was an additional incident in which a student had been transferred from a school due to bullying, however there was no clarification on if this was related to traditional bullying or cyberbullying. Additionally, information was collected from the student handbook and analyzed for references to cyberbullying. These observations are outlined in Chapter Five and provide a basis for the Action Plan.

Through 'polyaungulation' (Mertler, 2014), these data provide a glimpse into the social media environment that students are exposed to and their view of how it should be used. The themes that emerged from this analysis answered the research question, *What*

are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying?
and helped to shape that Action Plan to address known issues.

CODING

The two broad themes from this analysis, Views on Cyberbullying and Experience on Social Media provide a clear picture of student perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying. The data collected fits these themes in the following ways. The views of different methods and effects of cyberbullying (email, text message, phone call, pictures/videos) along with each method's perceived likelihood to be noticed by an adult illustrates the knowledge that students have about cyberbullying and its effects. The responses about the frequency of encountering racist or sexist comments online provide context to the experiences that student-participants have on social media. Using these two themes, the view of students' perception of social media responsibly takes shape, along with the lack of understanding the concept of social media responsibility, and the effects that it has, becomes clearer. This lack of knowledge about the abstract concept of social media responsibility only adds to the frequency of irresponsible social media interactions like cyberbullying.

DATA INTERPRETATION

The results of this study are applicable to the teachers, school administrators, and students of UHS and the Action Plan in outlines in Chapter Five delineates the ways in which teachers and administrators can enable students to be responsible with social media and become safer online. These results are interpreted to not only answer the question of *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and*

cyberbullying?, but to also give a clearer picture of why these student-participants may, or may not, use social media in a responsible manner.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews revealed how student-participants at UHS view the concepts of social media responsibility. Of the four participants, only Brittany acknowledged the "correct" or "proper" use of social media by stating that one should post items that they are not ashamed of and that will not cause harm to others. The other three participants all gave examples of what students should not post. While half of the participants acknowledged the importance of being mindful to post items due to potential future effect on job interviews, the concept of what responsibility means was vague. In fact, even one participant, Marcus, admitted to not knowing what it meant to be responsible with social media, and just like the previous participants, could only provide examples of what not to do. Students need to understand how to engage in social media in a responsible manner. Oxley (2010) writes that students "need to understand the reasons for the rules and be able to make thoughtful and critical decisions when confronted by opportunities to engage in inappropriate and irresponsible online behavior" (p. 1).

VIEWS OF CYBERBULLYING. The way participants viewed cyberbullying compared to traditional bullying provided insight into students' understanding of the impact that cyberbullying can have on others, as well as why they may choose to use cyberbullying versus other forms of harassment. This view of cyberbullying was conducted in two parts, the first comparing the perceived harmful effects of

cyberbullying versus traditional bullying and the second, the perception of adults to notice acts of cyberbullying versus traditional.

While this study did not examine the impact of cyberbullying compared to traditional bullying it did gauge students understanding of which form they thought to be more harmful. The most notable of this was that 89% of students indicated that they saw cyberbullying with videos and pictures to be just as harmful as or more harmful than traditional bullying with 41% indicating that bullying using videos and pictures was more harmful. The increase availability of smartphones to students, 84% of participants indicated that they have access to a personal device at any time, can certainly be a factor when it comes to capturing and sharing videos and photos for harassment on social media.

The other form of cyberbullying that was seen in a similar light with regards to harmfulness was that of text messages, with 84% of students indicating that text messages were as harmful as or more harmful than traditional bullying, with 30% indicating that text messages were more harmful. This can be attributed to the wide spread use of text messages as a form of communication, this study found 85% of participants indicated that they sent or receive text messages on a cell phone several times a day. With such a high frequency of messages sent via text, harassing message have the potential to be exposed to a broader audience and therefore have the chance to be more harmful than traditional bullying.

When comparing cyberbullying to traditional bullying regarding concerns of drawing the attention of parents or adults, participants appeared to show differences in what they perceived to be private conversations as compared to public posts. When using

online communication, there are many different methods to choose from, some more private, or personal, than others. Depending on the content and purpose of the message, users of social media may choose one method over another.

The form of cyberbullying that was perceived to most likely not be caught was email. In total, 84% of participants indicated that email was as likely or less likely to be noticed by adults with 58% indicating less likely to be noticed. This can be attributed to the idea of email as being a private form of communication. Due to a requirement of having an email address when enrolling in most social media programs, most students have at least one email account which makes its more accessible to students. However, since email correspondence are not posted on social media sites for public view, it is not as likely to be noticed.

The form of cyberbullying that was perceived to be noticed more by adults was the use of photos and videos. In all, 70% of participants indicated that bullying by videos or pictures were as likely or more likely to be noticed, with 25% indicating that they were more likely to be noticed. This can be linked to the popularity of video and photo sharing apps that are used in social media. These apps work by having users post photos to a public site with the intention of making them visible to others. This in turn makes posting photos or videos more likely to be seen by adults. This form of cyberbullying is also evident in a Slonje and Smith (2008) study which reiterated that cyberbullying via video and pictures can be more harmful since it has the potential to "reach particularly large audiences in a peer group compared with the small groups that are the usual audience in traditional bullying" (p. 148).

EXPERIENCES ON SOCIAL MEDIA. Though these results provided some insight into the type of experiences that students have online, the limited diversity of the sample make the findings limited in their scope. In addition, the lack of information that may provide clues as to why a participant may experience harmful posts on social media was also lacking. For example, one question asked participants if they have encountered any anti-religious comments online. A factor that may heavily influence these questions would then be to indicate what religion that participant associates with. Another example where the lack of context hinders discovery is the question which asks participants if they have encountered homophobic comments on social media. To more accurately understand these results a question about the sexual orientation of the participant would need to be known to provide context to their experience. Since participants were not questioned on their religious views or sexual orientation, these questions about anti-religious comments or homophobic comments have less meaning than they would if that information was known.

Two areas where more information was collected was regarding the participants' race and gender. Both race and gender can provide more insight and context to questions asking about experiences with racism and sexism on social media. With regards to race and ethnicity 69% of participants in this study identified as White leaving 31% to identify as other races or more than two races. From the group of non-White students who identified as Hispanic or Latino, they reported witnessing racism more than any others non-White group, with both participants indicating that they experience racism sometimes or often. In addition, White students also indicated a high level of racism, but it would be worth exploring if this experience was discrimination they felt was directed at

them, or if it was directed at minority groups. Overall the lack of racial diversity from this population made gathering data on racism inconclusive.

The separation of genders in this study was more equal than that of race, with 50 male participants compared to 53 female participants. However, no significant difference was found between reports of males versus females in encounters of sexism online. This is consistent with the findings of studies such as Smith et al. (2008) which have determined no statistical difference in frequency of cyberbullying between males and females. Again, another determining factor that could further influence the understanding of these results would be the knowledge regarding participants experiencing these comments passively or if they were actively aimed at them.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Based upon this data a more complete picture of student perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying emerged. The answer to the research question, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*? can best be summarized with the conclusion that ninth-grade student don't know what social media responsibility is. While student-participants could identify cyberbullying events and they acknowledged what irresponsible social media usage looks like, their lack of understanding responsible social media usage means that action needs to take place to address this deficiency.

The results of this Action Research study have led to the creation of an Action Plan to address the need at UHS to support student understanding of what social media responsibility is. This Action Plan has the potential to not only affect the ninth-grade

students involved in the study, but it can also help other students at UHS in being safer and more responsible online.

CONCLUSION

The findings and implications of the data collected indicate a lack of understanding regarding the use social media in a responsible manner. Student-participants have shown that there is ambiguity in their understanding of social media responsibility and that while they know how not to use social media, they lack the knowledge of how to use it correctly. Adding to this is the data which shows student-participants are exposed to irresponsible social media behaviors, like sexist and racist comments, further helps to portray a complete picture of student perceptions of responsible social media usage.

In addition to examining the concept of social media responsibility, this study also looked at views of cyberbullying. While student-participants are aware of cyberbullying and its impact, they are also aware of which forms of harassment are more likely to get them caught and which are most harmful. This study does not seek to answer if this knowledge makes students more, or less, likely to become perpetrators of cyberbullying, but it does show its potential existence in students' everyday life. By combining the students' knowledge of cyberbullying with the observations on the school discipline policies which targets this form of harassment, the need for an Action Plan including Social Media Awareness, and a revision of the student handbook at UHS becomes even more pronounced. The interpretation of this data helps to provide a descriptive answer to the research question, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*?

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, & ACTION PLAN

Chapter Five provides a summary of the present Action Research study as well as an Action Plan that details an ongoing study of students' perceptions of social media responsibility. This Chapter begins by providing an overview of the Action Research study and an emphasis on why this study was important to the students and faculty at Upstate High School (UHS) (pseudonym).

Within UHS, school administrators reported more instances of cyberbullying than "traditional" bullying, eight incidences compared to five. These reports confirm the literature that shows more adolescents are turning to social media to communicate with their peers (Common Sense Media, 2012). As this trend increases it becomes important to know how adolescents are engaging with each other online. To support this understanding the present Action Research study asked the question, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*? To answer the question 105 ninth-grade students were provided with an online questionnaire, and four were involved in a semi-structured interview. The findings showed that 75% of the students could not provide positive examples of responsible social media usage, however they could identify examples of cyberbullying and its impact. Coupling these findings with the lack of school policy outlining cyberbullying led to the creation of an Action Plan to support students at UHS as they increasingly turn to digital means of communication.

KEY QUESTIONS

The key question that emerged from the findings and implications was, *What does it means to be responsible on social media*? For the student-participants at UHS this question was difficult to answer. Though taken at face value, this question may appear simple, upon closer inspection it has several layers, additionally it brings up other questions that need to be answered for clarification. For example, *What does the word responsible mean,? Should interactions on social media be dependent on the group or audience being addressed?,* and *How can social media be used in a responsible manner?* When clarified, these complex questions can support student understanding of responsible social media usage among ninth-grade students. The Action Plan put forth in this study seeks to dispel some of this ambiguity brought on by the question *What does it means to be responsible on social media*? and assist students in better understanding how to use social media in a responsible manner.

ACTION RESEARCHER

I played an "insider/outsider" role in the process of my Action Research study since I needed to "become [an] active participants in [my]classrooms as well as active [observer] of the learning process" (Mertler, 2014, p. 13). This active reflection is at the heart of my Action Research study and because of it I was "encouraged to become [a] lifelong learners in [my] classrooms" (p. 13). In this role, I could turn a critical eye onto my own practice even if that practice was tied to my long-held beliefs and my peer enforced norms.

My role in the district is as a Technology Integration Specialist. Within this position, I support teachers and school administrators in developing curriculum that

models the best use of technology practices, as well as developing and implementing professional development for faculty and staff. Though I don't have one specific classroom of students I work with, my positon allows me to have influence in the lives of many students and educators. Though the absence of a personal classroom was a challenge, it was overcome by the relationships that were previously established with other teachers. By allowing me into their classrooms, these teachers shared their students, and time, with me to assist in the completion of this Action Research study.

The creation of an Action Plan in this study fits within my role as Technology Integration Specialist for the district since it pertains to educating students on the proper usage of technology as well as supporting educators at UHS. Though the school administrators at UHS will have the final say in how the Action Plan is implemented, my role in the district, as well as my role as an Action Researcher, make the application of this Action Plan a possibility.

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

The data indicated that students-participants at UHS were exposed to examples of irresponsible social media usage, and while the students could identify ways in which social media is used irresponsibly, most could not identify ways in which social media could be used in a responsible manner. Pairing this with a lack of understanding about what social media responsibility means, and an absence of cyberbullying in the student handbook, an Action Plan was developed to address these issues.

As a Technology Integration Specialist for the district my relationship with the school administration at UHS was already established prior to the study. This afforded me a level of trust with them in presenting my findings and as well as their willingness to

assist in drafting an Action Plan. To begin the process of developing an Action Plan the school administrators and myself reviewed a summary of the data collected from the online questionnaire, the semi-structured interviews, and the student handbook. Two key themes that arose from the discussion, the need to provide students with a framework for using social media in a responsible manner and the need to include a reference to cyberbullying in the student handbook. By working with the school administration at UHS, this Action Plan aligns with their goals as a school, as well as the aim of this study, which is to promote responsible use of social media as a form of communication and consequently reduce the frequency of incidents of cyberbullying reported at UHS. The following section details this Action Plan.

ACTION PLAN

The results of this study provide evidence that student-participants were unable to identify ways in which they should use social media in a responsible manner. This Action Plan provides a course of action for tackling this issue at UHS and gives the educators and students a framework with which to build upon for the future. The Action Plan is broken into two parts,

1. Social Media Awareness

2. Revision of the Student Handbook

SOCIAL MEDIA AWARENESS. The Social Media Awareness component of the Action Plan has two parts, a Social Media Awareness Unit, which is to be taught by educators, and a Social Media Awareness Program, which is to be hosted by students. The Social Media Awareness Unit will be incorporated into the High School 101 Course due to the Course being a prerequisite for graduation at UHS, and being a course that is

largely enrolled with ninth-grade students. This ensures that all students, at some point in their enrollment at UHS will be exposed to the content of the Social Media Awareness Unit. The topics and lessons covered within this Unit are based upon the Common Sense Media Digital Citizenship Curriculum (www.commonsensemedia.org/educators/scope-and-sequence) and address issues such as Relationships & Communication, Cyberbullying & Digital Drama, and Self-image & Identity. The purpose for using curriculum created by Common Sense Media is that they are a non-profit organization aimed at providing educators with the resources they need to empower their students to interact safely in an increasingly digital world. As experts in the field of social media responsibility, Common Sense Media provides all the resources educators will need to teach the unit. The Social Media Awareness Unit is comprised of four units, with five lessons in each unit. (See Appendix C) The lessons can be taught using the resources provided by Common Sense Media and can be completed alongside the curriculum that is already provided for High School 101 Courses. Upon completion of the Social Media Awareness Unit students will be expected to host an annual Social Media Awareness Program for parents and the community.

This Social Media Awareness Program will be a 30-minute Program hosted by students at UHS and will allow students to act as "experts" in the field of social media. Students will customize the Program to fit their needs, but must include topics such as, protecting your privacy online, cyberbullying, and communicating online. The overall goal of the Program is to support parents/guardians in identify the dangers that their child may face online with cyberbullying and what resources are available for them. To help

entice parents/guardians to attend the Program it may be hosted in conjunction with other school related events.

By addressing a Social Media Awareness Program directly to parents/guardians and community members, educators and students at UHS will support parents/guardians in the understanding of the dangers that students may face online, particularly cyberbullying, which is defined as deliberately using digital media to communicate false, embarrassing, or hostile information about another person. (O'Keeffe& Clarke-Pearson, 2011). This student created program is just one example of how students will be empowered to advocate for themselves at UHS.

REVISION OF THE STUDENT HANDBOOK. The second part of this Action Plan, and another example of student empowerment, is the revision of the student handbook. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the student handbook was examined for references to cyberbullying. While no poll or survey was conducted among the faculty and staff, the following anecdotal evidence provide yet another angle of how cyberbullying is viewed at Upstate High School. Being a public school in the state of South Carolina the school is governed by both district school board policies as well as individual school policies. As a district, the policy against bullying is found in School Board Policy JICFFA (2013) which states, "The board prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying of a student by students, staff and third parties that interfere with or disrupt a student's ability to learn and the school's responsibility to educate its students in a safe and orderly environment whether in a classroom, on school premises, on a school bus or other school related vehicle, at an official bust stop, at a school-sponsored activity or event whether or not it is help on school premises, or at another program or

function where the school is responsibility for the student". This statement provides a broad definition of bullying and does not define the method of bullying as being verbal, physical, or electronic.

In addition, UHS also has a policy that vaguely addresses irresponsible social media use in their student handbook. The offense is listed as a level II offense, meaning that the first offense results in two days of in-school suspension, the second offense results in three days of out-of-school suspension, and with the third offense the student is recommended to the alternative program and taken out of the general population of students at Upstate High School. The term used in the student handbook for this offense is labeled as a "Precarious Situation" and the wording is as follows from the student handbook (2016), "no student shall take any action or make any comments or written messages (including messages send via text, Facebook, MySpace, etc.) intended to cause others to fight or which might reasonably be expected to result in a fight. Police will be called by the principal whenever appropriate" (p. 18). This is the only policy that the school has which addresses misuse of electronic communication by students.

Another policy that UHS which addresses general bullying and threats is also a level II offense with the same consequences. This policy focuses on blackmail, threats and intimidations and reads, "a student who attempts to blackmail, intimidate, or bully another student or a staff member or who makes bodily or intimidating threats will be subject to suspension or expulsion" (p. 18). Like the school board policy, this provides a sweeping generalization and does not signify if the bullying is verbal, physical, or done through electronic means. This lack of addressing cyberbullying outright in both the district policy and the school handbook indicate that educators and school leaders are

65

either unaware of the issues or are unsure of how to address it properly. This study does not seek to confirm school administrator awareness of the issue of cyberbullying, but only includes the results of the handbook to contrast the student awareness that cyberbullying exists at UHS, as well as to support the necessary revision of the student handbook outline in this Action Plan.

To address the omission of expectations of responsible social media usage in the student handbook, students will lead a revision of the handbook with a focus on the areas of:

1. Responsibility

2. Cyberbullying

3. Homophobia

4. Sexism

5. Racism

This revision of this handbook will be conducted in a cyclical process between the students and school administration. The first stage will entail collecting thoughts and ideas regarding revisions from the student body. This will be done by providing an open forum event for students to either attend in person or to submit their topics and thoughts for a revision in writing. By holding an open forum, all students, particularly those from marginalized groups, or groups that may be subject to bullying, will have an opportunity to have their voices heard. As the Action Researcher, I will organize and facilitate this event and collect student opinions regarding the student handbook.

The second stage will consist of compiling these requests and recommendations and presenting them to the school administration along with the student body

government. Again, as the Action Researcher I will help to facilitate this meeting and present the student requests. After this meeting a new draft of the student handbook will be shared with students to preview, and a second open forum will also be held to gather further input from all students. If needed this cycle has the potential to continue indefinitely, however as the Action Researcher in charge of the revision, I would place a limit of two open forums and two meetings with the school administration per year.   The estimated time frame for the revision of the student handbook would be three months.

By providing all students with the opportunity to give input on the revision of the student handbook, students from all backgrounds will be able to include issues that directly impact them and use word choices that reflect their language. This will eliminate vagueness that exists and will change phrases like "precarious situation" to a more concrete term relative to the student's actions and desired social norms. As the digital landscape of social media changes, school leaders need to rely on their student body to update their handbook to reflect the expectations of students regarding use social media in a responsible way, and there is no better resource to rely on the individuals who are in the space daily, the students.

By placing students at the forefront of both the Social Media Awareness Program and the revision of the student handbook, this Action Plan enables all students at UHS to have their voices heard and to advocate for themselves by creating changes they wish to see in their school. The Social Media Awareness Program allows students to be the "experts" in the field of social media, and share the experiences and obstacles they routinely face. The revision of the student handbook, a collaboration between students

and school administration, will help them protect them and enforce the behavior they expect from their peers.

FACILITATING EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

To implement this Action Plan at UHS students must first be empowered to make the changes. The first step of this is to recognize students as digital natives, meaning that they are "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet (Prensky, 2001). As such, students may have ideas about what it means to learn about social media that differ from their classroom teacher. In this regard, the educators of UHS should rely on the students to know what topics to teach and what changes to make in the student handbook. By providing student ownership in the learning process students can make the changes that will be more effective and applicable to their own lives rather than the lives of the faculty and administration.

The previous iterations of the student handbook were created without student input, and the result of which was the absence of a key issue that students face, cyberbullying. By allowing students to take the lead on modifying and editing the student handbook, school administrators and teachers at UHS can help ensure that the material is relevant and applicable to the current class of students. To assist in this change, I will facilitate an open forum meeting with the students to gather their input and thoughts on revisions to the handbook. I will also lead meetings with the school administration's leadership team and the student government to discuss the recommended items submitted by the students and determine the best course of action for making the appropriate modifications. By highlighting the voices and desires of all students at UHS,

students from all backgrounds will feel they are represented in the handbook and thus respected in the school culture.

Challenges to this change may arise from educators from within the school. These confrontations may surface from teachers and administrators who are unwilling to relinquish control or fear not having all the answers to questions about responsible social media usage. To address these challenges, it will become imperative to meet with these teachers and emphasis the student experience on social media is unique to their generation and that these experiences should be used as examples and applied into a social media awareness program along with updates to the student handbook that make it more relevant to the students.

By establishing a culture of student empowerment regarding the student handbook and the creation of a social media awareness program, both students and educators at UHS will reap the rewards of a collaborative learning environment. A place where educators can help guide students in the use of responsible social media usage by listening to student needs about the obstacles that they face and providing direction when needed. A joint effort between students and faculty in the Action Plan is one that has the potential to be a continuous force of change at UHS and one in which future classes will reap the rewards.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

As an Action Research study this project has an overall goal of directly impacting students by answering the question, *What are ninth-grade students' perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying*? The answer to this question is that many of the ninth-grade student-participants at UHS don't know what it means to use social media in

a responsible way. To aid the students at UHS in using social media in a responsible manner an Action Plan was created to address their needs. This Action Plan not only provided support for teachers through a High School 101 Course, but it also gives ownership to the students in the creation of a student handbook which addresses the type of environment that students immerse themselves in daily.

As evident in the data collected, many student-participants were unaware of what it means to use social media responsibly. To support students in learning how to use social media in a responsible manner a Social Media Awareness curriculum can be added to the High School 101 Course. This curriculum would follow a similar outline created by experts in the filed such as Ribble (2010) and Common Sense Media (2012). Both have curriculum guides that address the following areas to help students in using online tools safely and responsible. These areas include: Digital Communication, Digital Literacy, Digital Etiquette, Digital Law, Digital Rights & Responsibilities, Digital Health & Wellness, and Digital Security. By sharing lessons with students based upon these areas, the additional curriculum taught in High School 101 Courses can assist students in learning how to use social media in a responsible fashion.

In addition to the social media responsibility content taught within the classroom, another key aspect of this study is the change of ownership in the student handbook. This inclusion in the Action Plan is based upon the absence of cyberbullying in the current student handbook, and its ambiguity as related to what students encounter in their daily lives. Prior to this Action Research study the handbook was designed and written solely by school administrators. However, the Action Plan set forth in this Chapter intends to change ownership from the administration, to those who are directly affected by it, the

students. By shifting the authorship of the student handbook to students, this study empowers them to take ownership of their educational experience and compose a set of norms and guidelines that is applicable to the situations they face.

Action Research studies such as this one are important to educational settings for their unique ability to take an interest, collect data on the topic, and directly affect change. Mertler (2014) touts the benefits of action research as a process that "brings about results that are more informative and have immediate and direct applications" (p. 4). This Action Research study exemplifies this concept by taking the topic of student use of social media, administering an online questionnaire and semi-structured interview to collect data on the views of social media responsibility, and thus advancing social media awareness and providing student ownership in the educational process at UHS through a designed Action Plan.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provided a view of ninth-grade student perceptions of social media responsibility and cyberbullying, there are still many related areas of social media usage that were not within the scope of this project. For example, this study interviewed students with differing experiences on social media. Further studies could be conducted to examine if students' experiences altered their views of what it means to use social media responsibly. Such as if students become exposed to the role of victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying would their view of what it means to be responsible on social media change?

In addition, future research can build upon this study by examining the ambiguity of what bullying is, both in the traditional sense, and with cyberbullying. Though this

study didn't address the issue, students may have different views on what it means to be bullied or to be a bully. What one student may view as friendly banter may appear as bullying to another student. In addition, these views of what is, or is not, bullying may vary by parent or educators whom are outsiders observing this digital world. Likewise, further research could explore how the medium of electronic communication could change the perception of what constitutes bullying.

These topics can be further researched within the classrooms of UHS, or they can be conducted at most any public high school in the United States. The usage of social media is not shrinking and the dangers of cyberbullying and the issues that students face on social media will not disappear either. It is for this purpose that educational researchers must continue to examine social media's impact on high school students and use their findings to better support students and educators both inside and outside of school.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has laid a foundation for understanding how students perceive the concept of responsible social media usage and cyberbullying at UHS. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, students reported not only their beliefs of what is responsible social media usage, but also their views of cyberbullying and experiences on social media as well. These findings showed that while most students know what irresponsible usage of social media is, most could not identify correct usage. In addition, many students are exposed to incidents of cyberbullying in different forms and they know the harm that cyberbullying can cause. Due to these findings, an Action Plan was put in place at UHS with the goal of reducing the frequency of cyberbullying incidents and

bringing more awareness to the issue of social media responsibility. This Action Plan

assisted teachers with educating students about the proper use of social media by

involving students and allowing them to take an active role in the educational process by

reviewing and editing the current school policies regarding cyberbullying. These steps

all focus on the goal of helping students to learn what it means to be a responsible

participant in today's digital world.

REFERENCES

Ahn, J. (2011). The effects of social network sites on adolescents' social and academic development: Current theories and controversies. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *62*(8), 1435-1445.

American Psychological Association. (2011, August 7). Social networking's good and bad impacts on kids. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/08/110806203538.htm.

Allison, S. (2013). Youth and the (potential) power of social media. *Youth Studies Australia*, *32*(3), 69-75.

Arminio, J. (2013) Waking up white. M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, C. Castaneda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zuniga. (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (3rd ed., pp. 125-126). New York, NY: Routledge.

Ayas, T., & Horzum, M. B. (2013). Relation between depression, loneliness, self-esteem and internet addiction. *Education*, *133*(3), 283-290.

Baruth, K. K., (2014). Psychological aspects of social media and mental well-being. *Journal of Human Services*, *34*(1), 84-87.

Bond, J. (2014). From civil rights to human rights. *Sign Language Studies*, *15*(1), 10-20.

Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*(1), 210-230.

Brown, J. D., & Bobkowski, P. S. (2011). Older and Newer Media: Patterns of Use and

Effects on Adolescents' Health and Well-Being. *Journal of Research On*

Adolescence, *21*(1), 95-113.

Common Sense Media. (2012). Social media social life. Retrieved from Common Sense

Media website: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/social-media-

social-life-how-teens-view-their-digital-lives.

Common Sense Media. (2013). Zero to Eight. Retrieved from:

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/zero-to-eight-childrens-media-use-

in-america-2013.

Dana, N. & Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2014). *The reflective educator's guide to classroom*

research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Eccles, J. S., Barber, B. L., Jozefowicz, D., Malenchuk, O., & Vida, M. (1999). Self

evaluations of competence, task values, and self- esteem. In N. G. Johnson, M. C.

Roberts, & J. Worell (Eds.), *Beyond appearance: A new look at adolescent girls*

(pp. 55–83). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends:"

Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of*

Computer- Mediated Communication, *12*(4), 1143-1168.

Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1959). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: Norton.

Gadbois, S., & Bowker, A. (2007). Gender differences in the relationships between extracurricular activities participation, self-description, and domain-specific and general self-esteem. *Sex Roles*, *56*(9/10), 675-689. doi:10.1007/s11199-007-9211-7.

Hackman, H. W. (2013) Sexism. M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, C. Castaneda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zuniga. (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (3rd ed., pp. 317-322). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hagler, B. E. (2013). Value of social media in today's classroom. *Journal For Research In Business Education*, *55*(1), 14-23.

Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2008). Cyberbullying: An exploratory analysis of factors related to offending and victimization. *Deviant Behavior*, *29*(2), 1–29.

Hollandsworth, R., Dowdy, L., & Donovan, J. (2011). Digital Citizenship in k-12: It takes a village. *Techtrends: Linking Research & Practice to Improve Learning*, *55*(4), 37-47.

Jacobsen, W. C., & Forste, R. (2011). The wired generation: Academic and social outcomes of electronic media use among university students. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 14*, 275-280.

Jerslid, T. A. (1963). *The psychology of adolescence*. New York: MacMillian Company.

King, D. L. (2015). Why Use Social Media?. *Library Technology Reports*, *51*(1), 6-9.

Kort-Butler, L. A. (2012). Extracurricular activity involvement and adolescent self-esteem. *Prevention Researcher*, *19*(2), 13-16.

Kort-Butler, L. A., & Hagewen, K. J. (2011). School-based extracurricular activity involvement and adolescent self-esteem: A growth-curve analysis. *Journal Of Youth And Adolescence*, *40*(5), 568-581.

Kowalski, R. M., Limber, S. P., Limber, S., & Agatston, P. W. (2012). *Cyberbullying: Bullying in the digital age*. John Wiley & Sons.

Lenhart, A., Madden, M., Smith, A., Purcell, K., Zickuhr, K., & Rainie, L. (2011). Teens, kindness and cruelty on social network sites. Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved from: http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Teens-and-social-media.aspx.

Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A., & Zickuhr, K. (2010). Social media and mobile internet use among teens and young adults. Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved from: http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Socia-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx.

Lipsitz, G. (2013) The possessive investment in whiteness. M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, C. Castaneda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zuniga. (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (3rd ed., pp. 77-86). New York, NY: Routledge.

McQuade, S. C. (2009). *Encyclopedia of cybercrime*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Mehdizadeh, S. (2010). Self-presentation 2.0: Narcissism and self-esteem on facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 13*, 357-364.

Mertler, C. A. (2014). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Miah, M., Omar, A., & Allison-Golding, M. (2012). Effects of social networking on adolescent education. *Proceedings of the Information Systems Educators Conference*, New Orleans, Louisiana, *29*(1927), 1-11.

Mitchell, J. J. (1986). *The nature of adolescence*. Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises.

Moore, K. A., Hatcher, J. L., Vandivere, S., & Brown, B. V. (2000). *Children's behavior and well-being: Findings from the national survey of America' s families.* Washington DC: Child Trends.

O'Keeffe, G. S., & Clarke-Pearson, K. (2011). The impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families. *Pediatrics, 127*(4), 800-804.

Ohler, J. (2012). Digital citizenship means character education for the digital age. *Education Digest*, *77(*8), 14-17.

O'Moore, M., & Kirkham, C. (2001). Self-esteem and its relationship to bullying behavior. *Aggressive Behavior*, 27, 269-283.

Oxley, C. (2010, October). Digital citizenship: Developing an ethical and responsible online culture. Paper presented at International Association of School Librarianship in Brisbane Australia.

Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2006). Bullies move beyond the schoolyard: A preliminary look at cyberbullying. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, *4*(2), 148-169.

Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2009). Bullying beyond the schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2010). Cyberbullying and self-Esteem. *Journal of School Health, 80*(12), 616-623.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon, 9*(5).

Reich, S. M. (2010). Adolescents' sense of community on Myspace and Facebook: A mixed-methods approach. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *38*(6), 688-705.

Ribble, M. (2010) Welcome to the digital citizenship website. Retrieved from: http://www.digitalcitizenship.net.

Ribble, M. (2014). The importance of digital citizenship. *District Administration*, *50*(11), 88.

Ribble, M. S., Bailey, G. D., & Ross, T. W. (2004). Digital citizenship: Addressing appropriate technology behavior. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, *32*(1), 6-9.

Rice, F. P. (1999). The adolescent: Development, relationships, and culture. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). Society and the adolescent self-image. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rosenberg, M. & Simmons, R. G. (1971). *Black and white self-esteem: The urban school child*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.

Slonje, R., & Smith, P. K. (2008). Cyberbullying: Another main type of bullying?. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *49*(2), 147-154.

Sommer, B. B. (1978). *Puberty and adolescence*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Smith, P. K., Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M., Fisher, S., Russell, S., & Tippett, N. (2008). Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in secondary school pupils. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *49*(4), 376-385.

Suldo, S. M., & Shaunessy-Dedrick, E. (2013). Changes in stress and psychological adjustment during the transition to high school among freshmen in an accelerated curriculum. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *24*(3), 195-218.

Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups*. London: Academic Press.

Tatum, B. D. (2013) Defining racism. M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, C. Castaneda, H. W.

    Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zuniga. (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social*

    justice (3rd ed., pp. 65-68). New York, NY: Routledge.

Teens, social media, and relationships: An interview with Kaveri Subrahmanyam. (2010).

    Prevention Researcher, *17*, 11-12.

Utz, S., Tanis, M., & Vermeulen, I. (2012). It is all about being popular: The effects of

    need for popularity on social network site use. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and*

    Social Networking, *15*(1), 37-42.

Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2009). Social consequences of the Internet for

    adolescents: A decade of research. *Current Directions in Psychological Science,*

    18, 1-5.

Weber, L. (2010). Understanding race, class, gender, and sexuality: A conceptual

    framework (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., Mac Iver, D., Reuman, D.A., & Midgley, C. (1991).

    Transitions during early adolescence: Changes in children's domain-specific self-

    perceptions and general self-esteem across the transition to junior high school.

    Developmental Psychology, 27(4), 552-565.

Ybarra, M. L., Diener-West, M., & Leaf, P. J. (2007). Examining the overlap in internet

    harassment and school bullying: Implications for school intervention. *Journal of*

    Adolescent Health, *41*, 42-50.

Ybarra, M. L., & Mitchell, K. J. (2004). Online aggressor/targets, aggressors, and targets:

    A comparison of associated youth characteristics. *Journal of Child Psychology*

    and Psychiatry, *45*(7), 1308-1316.

Ybarra, M.L., Mitchell, K.J., Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2006). Examining
characteristics and associated distress related to internet harassment: Findings
from the second youth internet safety survey. *Pediatrics*, *118*, 1169–1177.

Yelsma, P., & Yelsma, J. (1998). Self-esteem and social respect within the high school.
Journal of Social Psychology, *138*(4), 431-441.

Yousef, W. S. M., & Bellamy, A. A. (2015). The impact of cyberbullying on the self-
esteem and academic functioning of arab american middle and high school
students. *Electronic Journal of Research In Educational Psychology*, *13*(3), 463-
482.

APPENDIX A – ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Answer the following questions to the best of your ability.
Please enter your survey ID number found on the slip of paper provided by your teacher
Survey ID:

Demographics
1.) What is your gender?
a. Male
b. Female

2.) What is your age?
a. under 13
b. 13
c. 14
d. 15
e. 16
f. 17
g. 18
h. 19

5.) What ethnicity do you most closely identify with?
a. Hispanic or Latino
b. American Indian or Alaskan Native
c. Asian or Pacific Islander
d. Black or African American
e. White
f. Two or more races

6.) How many parents do you live with?
a. I do not live with my parents
b. I live with one parent
c. I live with both parents

7.) What is the martial status of your parents?
a. My parents are divorced
b. My parents are separated but still married
c. My parents are married
d. My parents never married

8.) How many siblings do you have?
a. 0, I'm an only child
b. 1 sibling
c. 2 siblings
d. 3 siblings
e. 4 or more siblings

9.) What would you say your current academic performance levels are?
a. Mostly A
b. Mostly A & B
c. Mostly B
d. Mostly B & C
e. Mostly C
f. Mostly C & D
g. Mostly D and below

10.) Identify all the following ways you have access to the internet:
a. I do not have access
b. a school issued device during school hours
c. a school issued device after school hours
d. a personal device like a smartphone or laptop that can be accessed during specific times
e. a personal device like a smartphone, laptop, or desktop that can be accessed at any time.

11.) How many close, or best, friends would you say you have?
a. I do not have any I consider close
b. I have 1 – 2 best friends
c. I have 2 – 3 best friends
d. I have 4 – 5 best friends
e. I have 6 or more best friends

Self-Esteem
Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

12. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

13. At times I think I am no good at all.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

14. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

15. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

16. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

17. I certainly feel useless at times.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

18. I feel that I'm a person of worth.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

19. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

20. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

21. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

Social Media Usage
The following questions relate to your usage of social media, for this survey social media refers to websites or apps on a smartphone or tablet that allow users to share and create content or take part in a social networking. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

How often do you do each of the following activities
22. Send or receive email
a = Several times a day
b = Once a day
c = Several times a week
d = Once a week
e = Less than once a week
f = None at all

23. Send or receive text messages on a cell phone
a = Several times a day
b = Once a day
c = Several times a week
d = Once a week
e = Less than once a week
f = None at all

24. Use video chat such as Skype, Facetime, Google Chat, or iChat
a = Several times a day
b = Once a day
c = Several times a week
d = Once a week
e = Less than once a week
f = None at all

25. Send or receive messages or image through social media account(s) like: Twitter, Snapchat, Tumblr, or Instagram
a = Several times a day
b = Once a day
c = Several times a week
d = Once a week
e = Less than once a week
f = None at all

26. Write a blog or comment on someone else's blog
a = Several times a day
b = Once a day
c = Several times a week
d = Once a week
e = Less than once a week
f = None at all

27. Chat through text online with other players in a video or computer game
a = Several times a day
b = Once a day
c = Several times a week
d = Once a week
e = Less than once a week
f = None at all

28. Talk through headsets to other players online in a video or computer game
a = Several times a day
b = Once a day
c = Several times a week
d = Once a week
e = Less than once a week
f = None at all

29. Visit virtual worlds such as Second Life, World of Warcraft, or the Sims
a = Several times a day
b = Once a day
c = Several times a week
d = Once a week
e = Less than once a week
f = None at all

30. Stream or watch live video streams like YouNow, Periscope, or Meerkat
a = Several times a day
b = Once a day
c = Several times a week
d = Once a week
e = Less than once a week
f = None at all

31.) Which of the following is your favorite way to communicate with your friends?
a. In person
b. Talking on the phone
c. Texting
d. Through a social networking site
e. Using IM or some other online chat program
f. Using a video program like Skype, iChat, or Facetime
g. Through email
h. By chatting or talking online in a video or computer game

32.) Do you have an account with at least one social media account?
a. Yes
b. No
If No, skip Questions 4 - 12

33.) How many social media accounts do you have?
a. 0
b. 1-2
c. 3-5
d. 6-9
e. 10-15
f. more than 15

34.) Among all your social media accounts, about how many times a day do you post things to your own or someone else's social media account(s)?
a. 0
b. 1-5
c. 6–10
d. 11–15
e. 16–20
f. 21–25
g. 26–30
h. More than 30 times a day

35.) About how many times a day do you check your social media account(s)?
a. 0
b. 1-5
c. 6–10
d. 11–15
e. 16–20
f. 21–25
g. 26–30
h. More than 30 times a day

36.) How often do you post things to your own or someone else's social media account(s)?
a. Several times a day
b. Once a day
c. Several times a week
d. Once a week
e. Less than once a week

37.) What is the main way you check your social media account(s)?
a. From my cell phone or another mobile device
b. From a laptop or desktop computer
c. Both equally

Please choose the answer that best applies to your experience.

38.) Using my social media account(s) makes me feel:
a. More confident
b. Less confident
c. Doesn't make much difference one way or the other

39.) Using my social media account(s) makes me feel:
a. Better about myself
b. Worse about myself
c. Doesn't make much difference one way or the other

40.) Using my social media account(s) makes me feel:
a. More connected with my family and friends
b. Less connected with my family and friends
c. Doesn't make much difference one way or the other

41.) Using my social media account(s) makes me feel:
a. More sympathetic to what other people are going through
b. Less sympathetic to what other people are going through
c. Doesn't make much difference one way or the other

42.) Using my social media account(s) makes me feel.
a. More outgoing
b. Less outgoing
c. Doesn't make much difference one way or the other

43.) Using my social media account(s) makes me feel:
a. More depressed
b. Less depressed
c. Doesn't make much difference one way or the other

44.) Using my social media account(s) makes me feel:
a. More popular
b. Less popular
c. Doesn't make much difference one way or the other

45.) Using my social media account(s) makes me feel:
a. More shy
b. Less shy
c. Doesn't make much difference one way or the other

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

46.) Using my social media account(s) has helped me get to know other students at my
school better
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

47.) Using my social media account(s) has helped me stay in touch with friends I can't
see on a regular basis
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

48.) Using my social media account(s) has helped connect me with new people who share
a common interest, hobby, or activity of mine
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

49.) Using my social media account(s) often distracts me when I should be paying attention to the people I'm with
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

50.) Using my social media account(s) has taken away from time I could be spending with friends in person
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

51.) Using my social media account(s) has helped me be more aware of current event
a = Strongly agree
b = Agree
c = Disagree
d = Strongly disagree

For the following questions, please choose the answer that best applies to your experience

52.) Have you ever flirted with someone online or through texting who you wouldn't have flirted with in person?
a = No
b = Yes

53.) Said something bad about someone online or through texting that you wouldn't have said in person?
a = No
b = Yes

54.) Become friends with someone you met through a social media account(s)?
a = No
b = Yes

55.) Edited pictures to make yourself look better before you posted them online?
a = No
b = Yes

For the following questions, please indicate how often, if ever, have you encountered the following types of comments in social media:
a – Often
b – Sometimes
c – Hardly Ever
d – Never

56.) Racist comments, that is, someone putting people down based on their race or ethnicity — such as for being Black, Hispanic, Asian, or White, or using insulting words that refer to race
a – Often
b – Sometimes
c – Hardly Ever
d – Never

57.) Homophobic comments, that is, someone putting people down for being gay or using insulting words about being gay
a – Often
b – Sometimes
c – Hardly Ever
d – Never

58.) Sexist comments, that is, someone putting girls or guys down in a way that calls attention to their gender or using insulting words about women or men
a – Often
b – Sometimes
c – Hardly Ever
d – Never

59.) Anti-religious comments, that is, someone putting people down for their religious beliefs — such as for being Muslim, Jewish, Mormon, Christian, or for not being religious enough
a – Often
b – Sometimes
c – Hardly Ever
d – Never

Cyberbullying

This next set of questions all pertain to cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is most often defined as when someone "repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through email or text message or when someone posts something online about another person that they don't like."
These next set of questions will ask you about your experience with cyberbullying, I would like for you to think about the last 2 – 3 months when you answering.

60.) First, have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months (any kind of bullying, including cyberbullying)?
a = No
b = Yes

61.) Now, just thinking about cyberbullying, how often have you been cyberbullied at school in the past couple of months?
a – I have not been bullied/bullied others
b – Only once or twice
c – Two or three times a month
d – Once a week
e – Several times a week

62.) How often have you been bullied through email in the past couple of months?
a – I have not been bullied/bullied others
b – Only once or twice
c – Two or three times a month
d – Once a week
e – Several times a week

63.) Have you bullied others through email in the past couple of months?
a – I have not been bullied/bullied others
b – Only once or twice
c – Two or three times a month
d – Once a week
e – Several times a week

64.) Do you think email bullying compared to 'ordinary, traditional' bullying has less/same/more of an effect on the victim?
a - Less
b – Same
c – More

65.) Do you think email bullying compared to 'ordinary, traditional' bullying has less/same/more of a chance to be noticed by an adult?
a - Less
b – Same
c – More

66.) Have you been bullied through email by boys or girls?
a – Boys
b – Girls
67.) Have you told anyone that you have been bullied through email?
a - No
b - Yes

68.) How often have you been bullied through text message in the past couple of months?
a – I have not been bullied/bullied others
b – Only once or twice
c – Two or three times a month
d – Once a week
e – Several times a week

69.) Have you bullied others through text message in the past couple of months?
a – I have not been bullied/bullied others
b – Only once or twice
c – Two or three times a month
d – Once a week
e – Several times a week

70.) Do you think text message bullying compared to 'ordinary, traditional' bullying has less/same/more of an effect on the victim?
a - Less
b – Same
c – More

71.) Do you think text message bullying compared to 'ordinary, traditional' bullying has less/same/more of a chance to be noticed by an adult?
a – Less
b – Same
c – More

72.) Have you been bullied through text message by boys or girls?
a – Boys
b – Girls

73.) Have you told anyone that you have been bullied through text message?
a – No
b - Yes

74.) How often have you been bullied through phone call in the past couple of months?
a – I have not been bullied/bullied others
b – Only once or twice
c – Two or three times a month
d – Once a week
e – Several times a week

75.) Have you bullied others through phone call in the past couple of months?
a – I have not been bullied/bullied others
b – Only once or twice
c – Two or three times a month
d – Once a week
e – Several times a week

76.) Do you think phone call bullying compared to 'ordinary, traditional' bullying has less/same/more of an effect on the victim?
a - Less
b – Same
c – More

77.) Do you think phone call bullying compared to 'ordinary, traditional' bullying has less/same/more of a chance to be noticed by an adult?
a – Less
b – Same
c – More

78.) Have you been bullied through phone call by boys or girls?
a – Boys
b – Girls

79.) Have you told anyone that you have been bullied through phone call?
a – No
b - Yes

80.) How often have you been bullied through picture/video clip in the past couple of months?
a – I have not been bullied/bullied others
b – Only once or twice
c – Two or three times a month
d – Once a week
e – Several times a week

81.) Have you bullied others through picture/video clip in the past couple of months?
a – I have not been bullied/bullied others
b – Only once or twice
c – Two or three times a month
d – Once a week
e – Several times a week

82.) Do you think picture/video clip bullying compared to 'ordinary, traditional' bullying has less/same/more of an effect on the victim?
a - Less
b – Same
c – More

83.) Do you think picture/video clip bullying compared to 'ordinary, traditional' bullying has less/same/more of a chance to be noticed by an adult?
a – Less
b – Same
c – More

84.) Have you been bullied through picture/video clip by boys or girls?
a – Boys
b – Girls

85.) Have you told anyone that you have been bullied through picture/video clip?
a – No
b - Yes

Survey questions are based upon:

Common Sense Media. (2012). Social media social life. Retrieved from Common Sense

Media website: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/social-media-

social-life-how-teens-view-their-digital-lives.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). Society and the adolescent self-image. Princeton, NJ: Princeton

University Press.

Slonje, R., & Smith, P. K. (2008). Cyberbullying: Another main type of

bullying?. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *49*(2), 147-154.

APPENDIX B – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Question: What do you think of when you hear the term "Social Media Responsibility"?

Follow-Up: Why do you think this is important to follow?

Question: Have you ever edited/deleted something you posted online?

Follow-Up: What was your reason for doing so?

Question: Do you think that items you post on Social Media can affect you later on?

Follow-Up: How so?

Follow-Up: What steps do you think you can take to minimize these negative affects?

Question: Have you ever faced consequences for something you've posted online?

Follow-Up: What was it?

Question: Do you share social media posts with your parents or other adults?

Follow-Up: How much/what do you share?

Question: How do you think your actions on Social Media affect others?

Follow-Up: Could this be negative?

Follow-Up: Could this be positive?

Question: What advice would you give other students your age about being responsible with social media?

Follow-Up: How would this help them?

Follow-Up: Do you think this would help prevent cyberbullying?

Question: Do you think students are more likely to bullying in person or online? Why?

Follow-Up: Do you think it is easier/safer to bullying someone you know or a stranger?

Follow-Up: Do you think it is easier/safer to bully someone while being anonymous online?

APPENDIX C – OUTLINE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA AWARNESS COURSE

OVERVIEW: The following course outline is taken from Common Sense Media Digital Citizenship Curriculum (www.commonsensemedia.org/educators/scope-and-sequence) and focuses on the themes of Internet Safety, Digital Footprint & Reputation, Privacy & Security, Relationships & Communication, Cyberbullying & Digital Drama, Creative Credit & Copyright, Self-image & Identity, and Information Literacy. These lessons support the goal of helping students become more responsible social media users.

Unit 1:
Lesson 1-Digital Life102: What is the place of digital media in our lives?
Lesson 2 - Oops! I Broadcast It on The Internet: What Are the Consequences of Oversharing Online?
Lesson 3-Copyrights and Wrongs: How Can I Make Responsible Choices When I Use Other People's Creative Work?
Lesson 4-Feeling on Display: Are Girls and Guys Judged Differently When They Post Photos Online?
Lesson 5 - Turn Down the Dial on Cyberbullying and Online Cruelty: Which Factors Intensify Cyberbullying and Online Cruelty, And What Can You Do To Lessen Them?

Unit 2:
Lesson 1 - My Online Code: What Does It Mean to Do the Right Thing Online?
Lesson 2 - Who Are You Online?: How Do You Present Yourself To The World Online And Offline?
Lesson 3 - Building Community Online: How Can Websites Foster Community Online?
Lesson 4 - Overexposed: Sexting and Relationships: What Are the Risks and Responsibilities When You Share Online in A Relationship?
Lesson 5 - Risky Online Relationships: How Can You Tell When an Online Relationship Is Risk?

Unit 3:
Lesson 1 - Rights, Remixes, And Respect: What Should You Consider When You Use Other People's Creative Work?
Lesson 2 - Taking Perspectives on Cyberbullying: How Does Online Cruelty Affect the People Involved?
Lesson 3 - What's The Big Deal About Internet Privacy?: How Do Websites Collect Your Personal Information, And What Can You Do About It?
Lesson 4 - Becoming A Web Celeb: What Does It Mean to Become an Internet Celebrity?
Lesson 5 - College Bound: How Can Information You Post on The Internet Affect Your Future Opportunities?

Unit 4
Lesson 1 - Private Today, Public Tomorrow: How Can You Respect the Privacy of Others Online?
Lesson 2-Does It Matter Who Has Your Data?: What Are The Upsides And Downsides Of Companies Collecting Your Data Online?
Lesson 3 - Breaking Down Hate Speech: How Can You Create a Community Culture in Which Hate Speech Is Unacceptable, Both Online and Offline?
Lesson 4 - Retouching Reality: What Are the Creative and Ethical Aspects of Digital-Photo Manipulation?
Lesson 5 - Collective Intelligence: What Are the Benefits and Drawbacks of People Working Together to Create Information Online?

Culminating Activity – Social Media Awareness Program

www.commonsensemedia.org/educators/scope-and-sequence