Cyberbullying And Social Media Responsibility In Schools

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CYBERBULLYING AND SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

A rapidly growing and destructive phenomenon among today’s adolescent students is cyberbullying, a malicious use of the easy and widespread accessibility of electronic devices and the internet. Whereas traditional bullying typically involves and is known to only a few people, cyberbullying allows perpetrators to spread cruel information to a large audience in a short amount of time, typically via social media. Cyberbullying has negative results for adolescents at school, even if it occurs outside of school hours. With the growing inclusion of technology, specifically social media, in education, educating students on responsible technology usage is more important than ever. This quantitative case study investigated 23 students’ knowledge of social media responsibility and the relationship between social media responsibility and cyberbullying. All participants were high school freshmen in a suburban school district near Charleston, South Carolina. Students completed questionnaires before and after attending a series of presentations, on social media responsibility and cyberbullying, including social media applications, laws on cyberbullying, school policies on social media and cyberbullying, and resources and interventions for those victimized by cyberbullying. The results supported continued research into the importance of integrating presentations into the curriculum for the following purposes: (1) education on social media responsibility encourages appropriate usage in interacting with others, (2) presentations provide
intervention and resources for students who are victims of cyberbullying. This study may inform educators who seek to create a positive atmosphere in their own schools through promoting positive social media interactions and decreasing incidents of cyberbullying.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION OF TOPIC AND BACKGROUND

The increased accessibility to social media sites through the use of cellular data with smartphones has prompted lawmakers and schools to initiate regulations and policies to protect students. The South Carolina Safe Schools Climate Act (2006) requires that schools have policies in place for offenses such as bullying and cyberbullying. Currently, 90% of adolescents report using social media, compared to only 12% less than 10 years earlier in 2005 (Perrin, 2012). In 2013, there were a recorded 1.15 billion Facebook users, over 500 million Twitter users, and over 130 million Instagram users (Bernstein, 2013). In the age of 21st-century technology and the increased usage and access to web and social media sites by adolescents, it is imperative that guidance be provided to students for appropriate usage and the laws regulating communication using cellular and internet usage. Previous studies have shown the need for intervention and education resources for adolescents to prevent and reduce incidents of cyberbullying. This action research study measured whether providing education to adolescents through presentations on social media responsibility would influence ninth-grade students’ reported knowledge and perceptions of cyberbullying, their sense of accountability when using social media, and future propensity to be involved in cyberbullying.

Educational reform has been a constant priority for lawmakers and the public, prompting significant research on educator licensure, curriculum, teaching methodologies, school choice, and discrimination, among other topics. Most traditional
postsecondary research has been conducted by scholars who were not necessarily directly involved with the schools or regions they were researching. Starting in 2000 there has been a shift to action research, in which educators study areas of need they have identified within their own schools and classrooms (Mertler, 2014). Dana and Yendel-Hoppey (2014) stated that when planning appropriate action research, it is important to identify areas of need that can be corrected or improved, and addressing these needs will help students learn more effectively within the school environment, by creating an atmosphere that “focus[es] on equity, race, and closing gaps in opportunity and academic achievement between groups of students” (p. 57).

School bullying takes many forms, but in general, it describes when students face peer judgments and ridicule for their race, socioeconomic status, social conflicts, appearance, sexual identification, religious beliefs, and, more recently, gender identification. As early as 150 years ago, Western literature has documented incidents of bullying within schools. In the latter part of the 20th century, there has been growing concern with the effects of bullying among students, as increased violence associated with bullying has resulted in more death and suicide (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). With the advancement and popularization of internet technology, new forms of communication have emerged that allow users to communicate on a larger scale and change the manner in which people interact with each other. From the earliest forms of chat rooms to social media applications, users can reach a larger audience and interact with users who they may have never met face to face (Donegan, 2012). One of the consequences from this revolution in social communication is the emergence of cyberbullying as a new form of bullying, whereby students are victimized in front of larger audiences, often by
adolescents the victims themselves do not know or have not interacted with. Contributing to the complexity of cyberbullying is the fact that social media is constantly evolving and to create new forums for communication online. The purpose of this dissertation in practice (DiP) is to describe the phenomenon of cyberbullying and the need for education on social media responsibility among high school students in the United States. This DiP is an action research study of approximately 25 high school students in South Carolina, to determine if a social media responsibility presentation affected students in their reported perceptions of cyberbullying, participation in cyberbullying, and accountability as social media users.

Dana and Yendel-Hoppey (2014, p. 32) identified several different “passions” that can help educators identify an area of research worth investigating. I chose to focus on cyberbullying and social media responsibility among adolescents in high school because this is an increasing concern at the high school where I work, Springfield High School (pseudonym). In the last decade of the 20th century, classroom computers were limited to word processing programs and other basic programs that did not use the internet. In a few short years, however, internet technology has introduced several powerful tools for the 21st-century classroom, although many users have not been adequately trained on how to handle them properly. Specifically, with the introduction of internet technology, society has seen communication expand exponentially through mobile phones and social media apps. Communication is now instant and can reach vast numbers of recipients within seconds.

Before mobile technology became a major mode of communication, school administrators handled incidents of traditional bullying through face-to-face, direct
interaction between the perpetrator and victim. According to a traditional definition of bullying, “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students and the student who is exposed to negative actions has difficulty defending him- or herself” (Olweus, 1993, p. 4). While traditional bullying may involve groups of participants, its scope is limited to those participants within a particular location, such as a school or local community.

However, cyberbullying involves indirect interaction and more people than the victim and the perpetrator (Stoel, 2011). The National Crime Prevention Council (2016) defined cyberbullying as “the process of using the internet, cell phones or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person” (p. 2). Cyberbullying does not always involve a repetitive act of harassment, but its actions reach a larger number of people in a short amount of time, and its effects are just as significant, if not more (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatson, 2012). Technology applications focused on reaching multiple recipients such as social media increase the scope of the impact when a perpetrator harasses a victim, as these applications enable perpetrators to create and act behind false personas. This anonymity contributes to barriers for local authorities and school administrators in their investigations of incidents of inappropriate communication and harassment on social media platforms. Given these unique features of social media, school administrators cannot handle incidents of cyberbullying with the same approaches as they do with traditional bullying (Smit, 2015).

To further elaborate on this, in cyberbullying, the harassment can be accomplished behind a veil of secrecy by the perpetrator and spread to large groups of recipients instantaneously, making it difficult for school officials to combat the issue and
hold offenders accountable. Additionally, since cyberbullying often occurs outside the confines of the school building or hours, administrators also must weigh the complex question of jurisdiction and whether it is appropriate to exercise school authority and respond to incidents according to school policy. These questions aside, studies have shown the importance for schools to work with the local community to create a climate where bullying, in all forms, is socially unacceptable (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011). To do so, school and district policies should incorporate provisions allowing for intervention and action by school administrators if incidents that occur outside of school are shown to adversely affect the school environment or the health and safety of the student at school (Beale & Hall, 2007).

Notar, Padgett, and Roden (2013a) reported that in the early 2000s, the term “cyberbullying” did not exist, but now that almost all students use the internet and social media, the need to use technology responsibly has become a growing issue. Lawmakers in almost every state have now passed laws to combat cyberbullying, but not necessarily in an effective manner. Between 1990 and 2010, more than 120 bills were introduced to address cyberbullying (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Under the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, the federal government requires local and state entities to provide safe school environments for students. However, while all 50 states have enacted legislation on bullying and cyberbullying, there is a lack of congruity on what constitutes bullying and cyberbullying and what the scopes and limits of school district authority may be. For instance, some states limit school jurisdiction to acts of bullying and cyberbullying that are committed during school hours and on school grounds, while other states extend school jurisdiction to include incidents outside of
school if they are proven to affect the victim’s school environment (National Academies of Sciences, 2016). With this lack of consistency, school administrators do not always have authority to address cyberbullying, and it is therefore imperative that schools implement preventative measures to educate students on how to use social media responsibly when interacting with others, and on the negative impact of using social media to harass, intimidate, or make fun of others.

To narrow the focus of the research on cyberbullying among adolescents at Springfield High School, I reviewed recent studies and articles to identify most salient issues. Literature review is an essential component to developing effective action research, because it identifies experts in the field of my inquiry and provides a background of the problem and the studies that have been conducted. Further, by identifying a gap in the research, my review of the literature review can substantiate the need of the present study (Craig, 2009). The relevant literature I reviewed and the insight I gained therefrom are summarized in the following section and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 to support the methodology and purpose of this action research.

**Overview of Relevant Literature**

The studies reviewed in this dissertation in practice (DiP) focus on the existing philosophies in understanding social media responsibility and its possible connections to cyberbullying. The review includes research methodologies and conclusions to help me draw connections between previous similar studies and the current DiP. As Stringer (2014) stated, “Communication is the key to the effective operation of any process of inquiry, providing the means to ensure that people are fully informed of events and activities and have all the information they need to accomplish their work together” (p.
Through the literature review, I showed how the current DiP is related to previously conducted studies. This served to determine and justify the methodology used in this study, as well as to demonstrate the value of the current project in understanding the impact of social media responsibility and curtailing its negative effects.

Agatston, Kowalski, and Limber (2007) investigated student perceptions of cyberbullying through a qualitative study using personal interviews facilitated by a counselor. These researchers gained insight into students’ personal views of cyberbullying, of the helpfulness of school personnel in dealing with cyberbullying, when cyberbullying tended to occur, and its perceived impact on the school. The study determined that the majority of students had access to the internet and reported cyberbullying to be a problem at school. The report also concluded that online filters to prevent access to school-restricted sites were not effective, as students were knowledgeable on ways to bypass the restrictions to gain access to their desired sites. The participants also provided suggestions on how to address and prevent cyberbullying at school through intervention measures the school could facilitate.

Wang, Iannotti, Luk, and Nansel’s (2010) national study designated five different types of bullying—physical bullying, verbal bullying, social exclusion, spreading rumors, and cyberbullying—and identified correlations between each type and specific effects on students. They found that most reported incidents of bullying used at least two methods and that cyberbullying is linked to at least one other form of bullying by the same aggressor. Wang et al. (2010) also researched different types of students and identified those who were most likely to be victims of some form of bullying, concluding that cyberbullying occurred almost equally between male and female adolescents, but females
were more likely than males to report cyberbullying. Their study helps provide a
historical background and evolution in understanding bullying and supports the position
that intervention and education efforts should be developed for prevention. For example,
it can be helpful to conduct a social media responsibility presentation that addresses how
additional forms of bullying are connected to cyberbullying, as adolescents are often
unaware of the reach of their actions and the ramifications that public posts and
comments have on their peers.

Dredge, Gleeson, and de la Piedad Garcia (2014) focused on the sociological
impact of cyberbullying through exploring different factors in how it is perpetrated.
Through interviewing high school students in Melbourne, Australia, the researchers
gathered data to determine the depth of the effects of cyberbullying according to
variables such as public venues, the bully’s anonymity, and the role of bystanders
(witnesses to the cyberbullying). Although few studies of cyberbullying focus on the role
of bystanders, social media responsibility extends to them, requiring that they intervene
when others are harassed. Accordingly, Dredge and colleagues’ (2014) study informed
the presentation development at Springfield High School, specifically regarding
responsible behavior on social media when witnessing negative events.

In her article “Review of the Status of Cyberbullying and Cyberbullying
Prevention,” Chisholm (2014) summarized several research studies and perspectives on
cyberbullying. She described different methods for cyberbullying, as well as specific
social media forums whose structure tends to support an atmosphere that promotes
bullying. Snapchat and Instagram are social media forums for sharing of photos and
videos. Snapchat deletes photos seconds after they are viewed by the recipient, giving the
sender a false sense of security against the unwanted sharing of privately sent images. Chisolm further explained appropriate usage for social media, along with prevention and intervention strategies against cyberbullying in schools. Similarly, Nixon (2014) reviewed previous literature on the possible health effects of cyberbullying on adolescents, specifically its mental health ramifications. Nixon (2014) identified the social impact on cyberbullying victims and higher risks of depression and suicidal tendencies as effects of cyberbullying. In Nixon’s (2014) study, there is also an overview of the current perspectives of cyberbullying’s impact on adolescents and school-level prevention and intervention strategies to assist those who are cyberbullied, and to help engage students in discussing, learning, and implementing preventative measures and responsible social media usage. Preventative measures included interventions that center on developing student empathy and self-esteem. Nixon (2014) stressed that while correlational studies are important, more longitudinal studies are needed to determine the long-term effects of those victimized by cyberbullying.

Notar, Padgett, and Roden’s (2013b) review of studies published over the span of eight years discussed different aspects of cyberbullying. They provided information on how cyberbullying occurs, how it affects school climates, prevention and intervention programs, and legal aspects of cyberbullying. They also pointed out the different roles in which someone can commit cyberbullying and the avenues they use to do so. With school accountability on providing a safe environment for student learning, the authors stress the importance of schools addressing acts of bullying. Finally, Notar et al. (2013) offered resources on how schools can monitor electronic usage and prevent acts by developing a definitive guideline of what constitutes as cyberbullying, a strong district policy to
address acts of cyberbullying, providing education on how to identify cyberbullying for educators, students and parents and incorporating technology filters to identify and enforce cyberbullying policies.

**Problem of Practice**

The problem of practice (PoP) for the present action research study involves cyberbullying and social media responsibility at Springfield High School (SHS), a suburban high school located near Charleston, South Carolina. Data from SHS’s PowerSchool student log entries and Educator’s Handbook disciplinary statistics show that during the 2015–2016 academic year, ninth-grade students reported the most incidents of cyberbullying through mediums such as text messages, mostly through social media (EducatorsHandbook, 2016; Pearson, 2009). The focus group for this study incorporated ninth-grade students, since this is the first year of secondary education at Springfield High School and can be significant in establishing guidelines and boundaries for what is acceptable for student behavior. By providing a social media responsibility presentation to first-year students, educators can communicate lasting lessons on how to use social media responsibly and possibly reduce future incidents of cyberbullying.

In a recent study of school bullying that panned a two-month period, middle and high school students reported being either the perpetrator or recipient of several types of bullying: physical (20.8%), verbal (53.6%), social (51.4%), and electronic (13.6%) (Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009). Consistent with these results, guidance counselors at Springfield High School reported that several ninth-grade students there were victims of cyberbullying conflicts. Counselors reported that the students expressed feelings of emotional distress and an inability to do their schoolwork due to the effects of
cyberbullying. The present study used student questionnaires to collect data on participants’ knowledge and opinions of cyberbullying, both before and after exposure to a presentation on social media responsibility. Based on this data, I will work with stakeholders – school educators, administrators and district leadership - to design large-scale instruction on social media responsibility for all ninth-grade students, with the goal of encouraging more appropriate use of social media venues by adolescents.

**Research Question**

The following research question was developed to investigate the problem of cyberbullying at Springfield High School, and it was formulated to directly address the inappropriate use of social media that negatively affects one’s peers. This research question ascertained the influence of social media responsibility education on freshman high school students’ perceptions of cyberbullying.

**RQ:** What are the differences in attitudes toward cyberbullying for ninth-grade students after participating in a social media responsibility presentation?

**Purpose Statement**

The main purpose of the present action research study is to understand high school students’ knowledge of social media and perceptions of cyberbullying and to determine the differences in their personal opinion and knowledge after participating in an informative presentation on social media responsibility. Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon that has increased exponentially following the availability of smartphones to the average adolescent. Dr. Jay Giedd (2012) noted that in 2010, adolescents spent approximately 8.5 hours a day using some form of an electronic device,
an increase of two hours per day from 2006, just four years earlier. While the expanding access to the internet and new forms of educational technology continue to encourage teachers to use and incorporate technology appropriately in the classroom, similar instruction for their own students lags woefully behind. The underlying motivation for research in this area is the fact that the increase in social media usage in schools has created a serious problem with cyberbullying that interferes with academic success through the emotional ramifications to the victim. Schools can no longer ignore the large-scale, daily usage of social media among adolescents as their main form of communication. Because social media can reach thousands of recipients within seconds, the impact is enormous and can be detrimental to the well-being of students.

Students can unintentionally participate in cyberbullying due to a lack of understanding of the ramifications to the victim. Cyberbullying can affect students’ emotional, academic, and social well-being (Nixon, 2014). It occurs in different formats and during different times, including after school hours. If students feel that the cyberbullying that occurs outside of school hours affects them academically, socially, and emotionally while at school—as the present study demonstrated—it is important for schools to develop responsive measures to prevent, discipline, and stop these actions when reported. Similarly, it is important to teach students about using social media responsibly, provide educational opportunities that help mold them to be more understanding and accepting of their peers, and encourage them not to use avenues such as texts and social media to resolve conflicts or to make judgment of others.

This study’s proposal of implementing education on social media responsibility as a means of curtailing cyberbullying reflects a pressing problem in 21st century education.
The effects of cyberbullying on its victims are a growing concern, especially given its links to depression and suicidal tendencies (Nixon, 2014). In embracing the internet and social media in the school environment, schools must accept the responsibility that comes with its incorporation and the larger impact it has outside of traditional education purposes. Developing education on how to use social media properly and how to be a responsible digital citizen can provide lasting effects for adolescents’ entire high school careers, preparing them to be responsible citizens as adults. More broadly, it is also important for educators to continue to evaluate their schools for areas of academic and social improvement. The findings of this research will serve to inform the design and implementation of training and staff development resources for educators, helping to make schools a safer and more inclusive place for adolescents, which is crucial to student success (Hong & Lawrence, 2011).

**Action Research Design**

**Research Site**

The site of this action research was Springfield High School (SHS), a suburban high school located in Springfield, South Carolina, with approximately 2,900 students. Springfield is known as a commuter town for those working in nearby Charleston, and SHS is the largest of the three high schools in Springfield School District (pseudonym). The district contains six middle schools, four of which feed into SHS. Using information provided by the South Carolina State Report Card for the 2014–2015 school year, SHS identified 57.1% of its students as being in poverty. The school has an overall graduation rate of 83.3%, and 72.5% of their graduates go on to postsecondary education (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). Among the student population of Springfield
High School, 64% are White, 29% are Black, 4% are Hispanic, 1% are Asian, 1% are Pacific Islander or Native American, and 1% are students who identify as two or more unidentified races (PowerSchool, 2015).

**Research Participants**

An action research study allows the researcher to investigate specific areas of need within his or her own school in an attempt to create a solution. Mertler (2014) stated that “action research is a process that improves education by incorporating change” (p. 19). In order to make the most lasting change in a school to stem the incidents of cyberbullying, it is important for the participants in the social media responsibility presentation to be early in their high school career for the changes brought about by the action research to have an opportunity to take effect. Therefore, I conducted the study with a randomly selected single class as participants for the study.

**Methodology**

From a group of 23 students from a single freshman seminar course, I collected quantitative data through a pre- and post-presentation student questionnaire. The initial questionnaire, administered prior to my presentation of a presentation on social media responsibility, ascertained students’ reported baseline knowledge and experience using the internet and social media appropriately and the dangers and effects of inappropriate use of the same, and collected their personal views and opinions about how this responsibility correlates with cyberbullying. The information from the pre-questionnaire was used to aid in the creation of the weekly presentations. The presentations were given over several weeks on social media responsibility and its connection to cyberbullying, using information from previously conducted studies and current literature. After the
presentation, I issued a second questionnaire to determine the influence of the presentation on the participants, and this questionnaire explored any differences in students’ opinions about cyberbullying and inclinations toward preventing and reporting cyberbullying in the future. This research was conducted over a period of four weeks during the spring months of 2018. The results of this action research will also assist me in my continuing efforts to determine the benefit of developing a monthly presentation on social media responsibility to address prevalent concerns with technology usage, including cyberbullying. My plan is to deliver the presentation to all ninth-grade students at SHS as part of the freshman presentation curriculum.

**Ethical Considerations**

Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) stated that “engagement in teacher inquiry is an opportunity for teachers to improve learning conditions in their classrooms on a regular basis” (p. 149). Learning conditions not only include how instruction is delivered for improved academic growth, but also outside factors that can affect a student’s ability to be a productive learner while in school. In conducting this action research, it was crucial that I protect the identities of the participants and ensure that the inquiry did not have a negative impact on them (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014).

The class selected for the social media responsibility presentation is a freshman presentation class, which is an elective course attached to an English 1 College Preparatory (CP) course in a block period. The freshman presentation covers a variety of topics, such as study skills and organization, and includes an overview of school rules and guidelines. This class seemed the most appropriate for implementing the presentation as it would not interfere with core curriculum studies. Since the purpose of the action
research did not require identifying individual student demographic data, a parental permission form to participate was not required. However, an informational letter was sent home outlining the purpose of the research, students’ involvement in the social media responsibility presentation, and students’ participation in the pre- and post-presentation questionnaires. An opt-out form was also included in the informational letter for any parents who preferred that their children not participate. In addition, no student was required to participate if he or she chose not to at any time before or during the action research. Participants who completed the questionnaires were assigned a randomly assigned number to use throughout the study to ensure anonymity (Mertler, 2014). After the data was assessed, the participants were provided with the summative results of the research in which they were active participants.

**Dissertation in Practice Overview**

This dissertation in practice (DiP) presents information on the emergence of cyberbullying and its relation to social media responsibility within high schools. Chapter 1 establishes the problem of practice (PoP) on cyberbullying, the purpose statement for the action research, and the primary research question. The chapter includes a literature summary of action research that has been conducted on the topic, as well as relevant sources on cyberbullying and its negative effects. I also outlined the study’s design framework, including the testing site, research participants, and methodologies. Finally, concerns on limitations of the study were reviewed and correlated to my purpose for conducting this action research on cyberbullying and social media responsibility.

In Chapter 2, I discuss in greater detail the literature on cyberbullying and its connection to social media responsibility. I will explore the connections among the
social, emotional, and physical effects on adolescent students when social media is misused inside and outside of school. Chapter 3 details the study’s methodology: a quantitative research design intended to gather inferential statistical data from pre- and post-presentation questionnaires. Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and the findings in relation to the identified problem of practice. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes my conclusions on the need to integrate social media responsibility presentations within the ninth-grade curriculum at Springfield High School, to help teach students to use cyber technology appropriately and be responsible digital citizens. Ideally, these practices will prevent cyberbullying and provide a safer, more inclusive learning environment for SHS students in the emerging digital age.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative action research study was to investigate the possible influence of social media responsibility education on ninth-grade students’ knowledge and perception of social media and cyberbullying. The problem of practice for this action research study is the use of social media by high school students and the possibility of increasing cyberbullying incidents, since there are many problems with underclassmen’s inappropriate use of electronic devices at Springfield High School. Specifically, incidents reported to school counselors, school resource officers, and school administrators often involve freshman students participating in cyberbullying (Educators’ Handbook, 2016; PowerSchool, 2009). To address this problem, I designed this study to determine whether educating students on appropriate social media usage from the
beginning of their high school career would positively affect their social media usage behavior. For the participants in this study I selected students from the freshmen class, an age group that has also shown a strong propensity to use social media to spread rumors, share inappropriate or sensitive materials, and taunt or ridicule other students.

This action research study posed the following research question: “What are the differences in attitudes toward cyberbullying for ninth-grade students after participating in a social media responsibility presentation?” with the intent of improving the school environment by creating a safe learning environment for all students.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid advancement of computer technology in the 21st-century has drastically changed the world for young people, especially in their communications with one another and the classroom instructional strategies used by their teachers. The detrimental aspects of advanced technology for adolescents appear most prominently in the social context. With social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, one can reach others instantly and relatively easily, and one message can be sent to countless others at the push of a button. These conveniences have resulted in both positive and negative engagements between students, situations that often challenge school administrators. Administrators must therefore maintain an impressive knowledge of devices and sites used by young people. Johnson (2011) suggested that “to keep up with the needs of student learning and issues in a school building, school administrators must be the models for change” (p. 78). However, many administrators still do not fully understand the ramifications of public communication and the potential physiological effects of negative interactions with social media (Wiseman, 2011). School administrators across the nation find it difficult to report conclusively on the impact of negative social media communication on school-age children. They also struggle to find strategies that will prevent adolescents from using social media irresponsibly. However, the prevalence of social media problems in schools makes it clear that this is an important educational issue that must be studied and addressed.
In the United States, studies by the federal government have focused on the impact of social media on politics and information dissemination. A Congressional research report released in 2016 evaluated study on the methods of communication to reach member constituents from 1995–2015 (Straus & Glassman, 2016). The report concluded that the main method of communication in society has shifted from traditional modes to electronic forms, which can facilitate more effective and farther-reaching communication to member constituents. By 2013 all member of Congress had created their official Twitter accounts for the purpose of constituent communication and platform support (Straus & Glassman, 2016). However, with the instantaneous ability to reach hundreds of thousands of people comes responsibility for appropriate usage, especially given the serious consequences of one important feature of online communication: the inability to take back what has been released. In 2011, Congressman Anthony Weiner accidentally sent an inappropriate photo of himself through his official Twitter account (Krieg, 2016). In 2014, Delaware Governor Jack Markell accidentally attached a photo of a woman in a bondage photo to an official tweet sent to his constituents (Krieg, 2016). In both incidents the tweets were removed, but not in time to prevent the continued distribution of the photos through social media by those who had already viewed and saved the released tweets.

Social media is perhaps the most powerful, influential phenomenon of the early 21st-century. The first social network site to appear was SixDegrees.com in 1997, but by 2012 Facebook was the largest social networking site in the world, with more than one billion members (Zhang & Tu, 2009). The increased use of the internet and social media can be attributed to increased broadband availability, adolescents’ embrace of new
technology, and affordability of technological devices such as computers, laptops and mobile smartphones. In a brief on social media released by the Canadian Parliament, which defines social media, its evolution, attributes, and its impact, social media is defined as “the wide range of internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities” (Dewing, 2010, p. 1). The brief also identifies different aspects of social media and its usage that are causes for concern. First, what is posted on the internet becomes permanent—even if it is deleted or removed, it can still be discovered. Another concern is that posts on the internet can be anonymous. The brief also points out that the internet and social media are changing how people interact with one another as well as the ways they are involved in consumerism. Businesses are using social media to promote products, and individual professional bloggers and social media influencers are paid or reimbursed for promoting products and businesses. While the overall impact of the internet and social media is not yet clear, previous studies on the influence of media on children have shown that children exposed to physical or social aggression through television were more likely to emulate those behaviors (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski & Eron, 2003). The fact that their usage continues to grow exponentially and has fundamentally changed how people interact and communicate with one another makes it an important topic for study.

In this study, I conducted a four-week presentation with a select group of freshman presentation students at Springfield High School. Through pre- and post-presentation questionnaires, I ascertained any differences students’ existing and post-presentation knowledge of social media and their feelings about using social media
technology responsibly. According to the Pew Research Center, 92% of adolescents access the internet daily (Lenhart, 2015). Of those students, more than three-quarters report owning a mobile phone, and 71% report using more than one social media website (Lenhart, 2015). With such widespread availability of technology comes a significant need to monitor and regulate usage, as well as to educate adolescents about its responsible use. It is imperative that schools help young people understand the dangers of irresponsible social media usage.

**Theoretical Base**

As identified in the problem of practice (PoP), the usage of social media technology, its negative effect on high school adolescents and the learning environment of the school is a growing concern for educators and administrators at Springfield High School and other schools. To develop an appropriate action research, it is necessary to first review existing theories to aid in understanding the social interaction and relationships of adolescents and its connection to cyberbullying. Investigating the possible underlying rationales of aggressive and negative student interaction provides greater understanding and insight into the motivation and perceptions of high school students.

The theoretical base for this study centers on the theory of Social Dominance. Within this theory, the presumption is within almost all societies contain a desired privileged status that one wishes to obtain. Within Social Dominance, hierarchies develop along with inevitable disparities formulated based on areas such as gender, socio-economic status and race (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In order for one to achieve a higher status socially, others must be subjugated below those in power. The most vulnerable
victims often exhibit characteristics of lower self-esteem, are less assertive than their peers and do not fit in with other adolescents. Dominant and subservient hierarchies are established as early as the age of five years of age, with students entering elementary school (Halpern, Jutte, Colby & Boyce, 2015).

The emergence of social hierarchy and the importance placed on social status by adolescents begins to develop within early education as same age peers spend significant periods of time together interacting socially (Brown, 2004). Social cliques, or groups, emerge based on similar interests, views or beliefs and often tend to be exclusive. One study of adolescent cliques and hierarchy investigated social status. According to Pattiselanno, Dijkstra, Steglich, Vollebergh and Veenstra (2015) girls tended to exhibit relational aggression as opposed to the physical aggression of boys to ascertain their individual status. Within cliques there can exist its own hierarchy with individual competing for the highest status level.

The motion picture industry early on reflected in film society’s accepted and desired behaviors (Fearing, 1947). Following the Social Dominance Theory, movies such as Mean Girls (2004), The Duff (2015), and Heathers (1988) are further evidence of Olweus’s observation that bullies are often viewed as popular among their peers. Thus, even though their actions are harmful, aggressors are often portrayed in mass media as beautiful and admired, as well as feared, by their classmates. In Mean Girls (2004), the popular girls at school are feared by others; yet they are also idolized as the top of the social chain. Through portraying their behavior of insulting, mocking, and demeaning other classmates, and each other, as well as the new girl’s desire to be accepted by adopting the popular girls’ behaviors, the movie promotes forms of harassment and
bullying as acceptable. This is related to another important feature of cyberbullying: female adolescents are more likely to perpetrate cyberbullying than male adolescents. Indeed, cyberbullying is most often perpetrated by females toward other females (Li, 2005). Studies have shown that the main reasons females commit acts of cyberbullying toward other females are jealousy and the desire to gain greater social status over their target (Austin, 2015). Carrington (2013) surmised that there was a connection between the evolution of feminism and female violence. Citing Adler’s (1975) “Sisters in Crime” theory Carrington observed that the feminist movement encouraged women to be equal to men in all areas, including asserting themselves and moving away from the stereotype of the docile, weak female who needed the protection and intervention of a male to solve her dilemmas.

Another important area of research concerning the PoP in the current action research is the psychological impact of interactions through social media. Freud’s original theories on human interaction in the 1920s and the causes of different reactions to varying situations have been modified and updated with the introduction of social networking sites (Lasala, Galigao, & Boquecosa, 2013). With the internet, the ability to interact with people that users previously could not personally encounter allows for new interactions in a cyber community, where people never have to see each other face to face and where users can create fake personal profiles. In other words, “social interactions in the virtual world are practically without responsibility and self-accountability” (Lasala et al., 2013, p. 85). Public figures are especially prone to intense online harassment. Although artists, athletes, and musicians initially used social media as a mode of
publicity to connect with fans and to promote their persona, businesses, and endorsements, it has evolved into a forum of criticisms, threats, and relentless scrutiny.

Females are often targets of online criticism and harassment. In one example, actress Leslie Jones was a target of organized cyberbullying from online editor Milo Yiannopoulos and his tens of thousands of followers, and the cyberbullying ultimately ended in the deactivation of her social media account. The hate-filled social media campaign and threats toward Jones began after she responded to Yiannopoulos’s negative review of the release of her film, *Ghostbusters* (Zuppello, 2016). Jones was inundated with negative and racist comments, threats on her life, and pornographic photos posted on her public site. Yiannopoulos was eventually banned by Twitter, but not before Jones had deactivated her account as a result of the onslaught of harassment and the lack of response by Twitter when she reported him (Altman, 2016). In the cyber world, personal inhibitions are removed, and the users have opportunities to take liberties they would otherwise refrain from. This is analogous to running a stop sign in a vehicle. If the driver believes that he or she would not be caught running through a stop sign because there was no one to witness the action, would the driver break the law and do so? Social media users face the same temptations, which entice them to commit acts they normally would not if they could be witnessed and identified by others.

**Historical Context**

**Bullying**

One important factor in conducting this study successfully is to understand the historical context of the PoP, and I will begin with presenting the history of bullying in schools. Understanding how bullying in schools has evolved helps formulate the
appropriate perspectives to investigate how 21st-century technology presents unique challenges to combating bullying in schools.

Social media has revolutionized how people communicate with each other; especially for adolescents, it has created a whole new forum for them to be heard and changed the social norms in which regular communication from day to day occurs (Hatch, 2011). Social media offers avenues for those who do not wish to confront someone face to face to do so using internet technology, and it is from this context that cyberbullying arises.

Nevertheless, bullying certainly did not originate with the advent of smartphones or social media platforms. Bullying behaviors were recorded as early as 1530 (Donegan, 2012), when adolescents many significant hours of the day together for school instruction. The educational philosophy of common schooling in early American history emphasized conformity to the traditions promoted by the government (Sping, 2014), and those who did not conform or meet the expectations could be targets of ridicule or taunting, which is still applicable in today’s society. Donegan (2012) and Allanson, Lester, and Notar (2015) both argued that the educational system instills an ideology into children that only the best or toughest are successful. Young adolescents have different perceptions on how to achieve that status and often will use negative methods such as bullying to assert their dominant role within the group.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2015) identified bullying as “unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance, and is repeated over a period of time.” The first time we see bullying referenced in literature is in Thomas Hughes’s 1857 novel, Tom Brown’s School
Days (Allanson et al., 2015), in which a young man (Cuff) was bullied through name calling, physical harassment and beaten by another student. Again, with this novel was the same theme of being the best at sports and school, showing courage and meeting government (Imperial England) expectations of behaviors.

Dr. Dan Olweus is known as one of the original researchers in bullying within schools. His seminal work, Aggression in the Schools: Bullying and Whipping Boys (1978), discusses the findings from a study in which he collected data from teachers, students, and parents of schools of varying sizes in Scandinavia (Olweus, 1978). Olweus concluded that bullies tended to be more self-confident and popular among their peers and had fairly good relationships with their parents, compared to the “whipping boys” (or victims), who were introverted, insecure, and unlikely to commit any act to warrant being targeted by the aggressor, other than being an easy target who would not necessarily fight back (Olweus, 1978). Olweus (1978) also noted that socioeconomic background was not a factor in bullying. These observations are significant, indicating that bullies are usually popular among their peers and have an overall aggressive personality from a young age (1978). This supports the theory that bullies’ actions are not condemned by their classmates; in fact, their aggression toward others may even be admired or viewed as sign of authority or strength. In today’s media, it is easy to find portrayals of mean, aggressive adolescents as the popular students in school.

Olweus, as a result of his studies, developed an intervention and prevention program designed for elementary and middle school students. The program targets younger students because he identified acts of bullying to occur more often in the primary grades and saw a dissipation of the behavior in higher grades (Olweus, 1978). The
Olweus Bullying and Prevention Program (2016) proposes whole community involvement of parents, school administrators, teachers, support staff, and students toward preventing bullying.

In “A Time Line of the Evolution of School Bullying in Different Social Contexts,” Hyojin Koo (2007) referenced the first recorded suicide, in 1452, attributed to bullying. It involved a Korean soldier who was mistreated by his comrades for a year through a practice called “Myunsinrae” (p. 111), an initiation process for new officers where they were essentially hazed to build up their mental and physical stability. One of the most public bullying incidents witnessed in the United States in the 20th century occurred during the desegregation of public schools after the court in *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruled that the concept of “separate but equal” was unconstitutional in 1954 in Topeka, Kansas. African-American students attempting to integrate into previously all-white schools were faced with ridicule, hostility, and large groups of protesters attempting to block their entry into school (Library of Congress, n.d.). The first recorded incident in the United States of school shooting related to bullying occurred in 1999 at Columbine High School in Colorado, where two male students went into their school and shot 23 students, killing 13 of them before committing suicide (Langman, 2009). Since then, mass media has brought notoriety to perpetrators of shootings such as Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, helping to glorify their actions or inspire copycat shooters looking to be infamous (Mushert, 2007). The Columbine massacre was shocking and unimaginable to the nation at the time; however, 33 mass shooters since 1999 have named Klebold and Harris as the inspiration for their actions of revenge and desire for notoriety (Richardson, 2018).
Evolution of Social Media

With the spread of internet use in the 1990s, electronic communication began with access to the World Wide Web for online forum communication and on-one email communication (Boyd, 2015). As technology has become more supplicated and widely accessible, communication methods have also changed, especially among the younger segment of society. The current population of high school adolescents grew up in the age of social media (Ahn, 2011). The first online social media website was SixDegrees.com, created in 1997 (Zhang & Tu, 2009). The name for the website originated from the idea of six degrees of separation: any two people who do not originally know each other can find a connection through six other people at the most (Zhang & Tu, 2009). SixDegrees.com did not last longer than three years, but it opened the door for the development and introduction of other social media sites such as MySpace and Facebook. By the time Facebook became a household name and tremendously popular among adolescents, we also saw increased accessibility of mobile smartphones. Adolescents began to view themselves as part of online communities, where they regularly interact through social media with people they might not necessarily see in everyday life (Reich, 2010). Although Facebook reached more than one billion members in July 2016, teenagers report using social media sites such as Instagram and Snapchat more than Facebook (Lee, 2015). Technology is constantly evolving, and new social media sites and applications are replacing previous sites in popularity. While the usage of social media by adolescents has become a norm in their everyday life, there is still a lack of standard instructional curriculums in schools that educate adolescents on the responsible usage of social media in the online community.
Facebook currently has the longest success rate of existing social media sites, with a reported daily access rate of one out of every seven people on earth (Zeevi, 2013). Although new social media venues are regularly introduced into the mainstream, Facebook was the catalyst in popularizing social media among the masses. Started originally by Harvard students Mark Zuckerberg, Cameron Winklevoss, Tyler Winklevoss, and Divya Narendra in 2004, it has now evolved not only as a social networking site for personal interactions but for promotions of brands, movies, personal or celebrity fan sites, and other marketing groups (Sweeney, 2015). It is also reported that access to sites such as Facebook and the images posted expose students to excess activities such as smoking, illegal drugs, and alcohol, which, adolescents reported, has made them more inclined to use these substances (Schill, 2011). This is because social media exposes teens to a wide range of peer influences—particularly from those considered popular, athletes, musicians, and anyone with a large social-media following—and shapes the teens’ social development, sense of self, expression, beliefs and aspirations (Christofferson, 2016). In a study conducted in 2009, Sook Jung Lee noted that young children are increasingly using the internet for the purpose of social interaction rather than to obtain information or educational resources. As a result, parents and families are displaced by social media as the main influencer of adolescents’ social and emotional development (Lee, 2009).

Adolescents today have moved from chat rooms toward social media sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Lenhart (2015) found that in 2015, 41% of teens 13 to 17 years of age use Facebook most often out of the other social media sites, followed by Instagram (20%) and Snapchat (11%). Snapchat is appealing to adolescents because its
features are designed for youths, including the ability to edit photos with drawings, filters, lenses, and texts, which allows for more creativity than Facebook (Anwar, 2015). Another unique feature of Snapchat is that videos and pictures are removed from the social media site after being viewed by the recipient, which provides a perceived security to adolescents when sending items they do not wish for individuals other than the intended recipient to receive. However, the reality is that nothing is ever erased or disappears from cyberspace, and the result for teens who send messages, pictures, or videos can be extremely detrimental and used against them by others (Rosen, 2010).

In 2011, Wang, Chen, and Liang investigated the impact of social media on postsecondary students at Johnson and Wales University. They found that the most prevalent social media sites among the students included Facebook, MySpace, World of Warcraft, and Sim City. Using a random sampling with an anonymous questionnaire, the researchers found that the majority of the participants (68%) accessed social media sites using desktop computers, and only 20% reported using cell phones to access sites (Wang et al., 2011). Participants reported that the main purposes for accessing social media was to cultivate personal relationships with peers (Wang et al., 2011). While the study did not draw a direct connection between social media usage and academic performance, it did conclude that students admitted to accessing the sites at times when they should have been engaged in academic coursework (Wang et al., 2011). This study is significant, as it reflected the effect of social media at a time when mobile apps and smartphones had only permeated the society for three years. In July 2008, Apple’s introduction of the iPhone with app technology for consumer purchase revolutionized the purpose of mobile phone usage (Gruman, 2014). In the decade that followed, as mobile phones become more
widely available and mobile apps were developed at breakneck speed, the majority of users access social media sites using smartphone technology as opposed to desktop computers (Lenhart & Page, 2015).

**Cyberbullying**

The term “cyberbullying” was first coined in 2004 to describe incidents of bullying using online forums and social media (Peebles, 2014). Although not all states have passed legislation that criminalize cyberbullying, many have enacted bullying legislation (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Studies have identified varying reasons for those who perpetrate cyberbullying, including boredom, the ability to remain anonymous as the aggressor, and revenge, among others (Notar, Padgett & Roden, 2013b). Cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying in that the perpetrator can remain anonymous by creating fake identities or profiles on social media, thereby avoiding the consequences of their actions (Cooper, 2005). The ability to remain anonymous also has motivated more people to commit acts of cyberbullying compared to traditional bullying.

A study conducted by The National Crime Prevention Council reported that 40% of adolescents claim to have been a victim of some type of cyberbullying, but only 10% of those victimized ever reported it to their parents (as cited in Teasley, 2013). Because cyberbullying is often perpetrated through social media forums, the act tends to be more public, allowing for more than the intended victim to witness the abuses. Since Dan Olweus’s pioneering work on bullying in the 1970s, Hymel and Swearer (2015) found, bullying studies over the past 40 years show that while. Adults tend to rely on adolescents to report cyberbullying instead of watching out for warning signs. Hymel and Swearer (2015) also characterized the typical cyberbully as someone who is confident and not a
social outcast. Further, adolescents who are popular among their peers have the ability to influence others to support their negative actions (Downs & Rose, 1999).

Previous studies have explored the impact of internet and social media usage on the world’s population. As Whittaker and Kowalski (2015) noted, there has been a significant increase in research on cyberbullying and its connections to social media technology. Whittaker and Kowalski’s (2015) research included three separate studies to investigate cyberbullying among college-age students. The first study, involving 244 college students, concentrated on connections between internet use and cyberbullying in an attempt to determine which modes of social media technology are most often used in incidents of cyberbullying. Data were collected using online questionnaires to determine demographic information, internet technology exposure and experience, and personal experiences with cyberbullying. Specific definitions and examples of cyberbullying were provided to the participants, and the responses collected were placed onto a Likert scale. The data showed that most participants began using social media usage at 13 years old. Texting was the top form of technology used by the participants, followed by email, and then social media platforms. Participants reported being victims of cyberbullying at least once within the last year. Much of the time, these incidents were perpetrated by people the participants considered to be friends. Participants responded to cyberbullying differently, from no response, to asking the perpetrators to stop or blocking them from their social media. The study also noted the role of the bystander and the importance of education not only on cyberbullying itself but also on the role bystanders can take in preventing or stopping cyberbullying. By not intervening when witnessing acts of cyberbullying or by participating in sharing inappropriate messages and photos, the
bystander, in effect, validates or approves of the perpetrator’s action (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015)

This study was especially relevant to the development of the current action research, because it identified the age at which students typically enter the digital world and start using social media, which aided in designing intervention and prevention strategies. Therefore, this finding supported the decision to conduct the social media presentation with ninth-grade students as opposed to students in higher grade levels. While the intervention could be beneficial to all, the ability to reach students in a preventative measure early on can more effectively result in lasting change before more permanent habits are developed (Guan & Subrahmanyam, 2009).

The second study in Whittaker and Kowalski’s (2015) research surveyed 197 undergraduate students to determine their perceptions of cyberbullying and its relationship to how well or little the participants personally knew the victims. Again, an online survey was conducted to gain demographic data and information on internet usage and experience, but this time the experience was isolated to social media use. Participants were provided examples of posts on social media and were asked to categorize those posts as offensive, acceptable, hurtful, funny, or malicious. Data collected was placed on a Likert scale for evaluation. The study concluded that the participants had a higher inclination to view posts as hurtful or offensive if the posts were directed at their peers than if the posts were intended for adults, professors, or recipients the authors did not know personally. Whittaker and Kowalski (2015) concluded that intervention programs for cyberbullying need to be fluid because the mode of social media technology changes so often. They also concluded that the act of cyberbullying is not easily identified and
that the opinion of the observer is dependent on how well he or she knows the victim of
the negative behavior.

This second study provides valuable information for me in gaining background
information on how to develop an effective social media responsibility presentation and
questionnaire. Perceptions of cyberbullying and what is and is not acceptable are often
determined by one’s personal connection to the victim. This study also elucidates the
perceptions of bystanders in social media interactions, more specifically how they
perceive whether a behavior is acceptable. Padgett and Notar (2013) also offered insight
into bystanders’ involvement in cyberbullying. They reported that bullying is often
perpetrated by a group as opposed to an individual and that bystanders who do not
intervene or express disapproval of bullying are viewed as giving support for the negative
behavior. This is a frequent occurrence at Springfield High School, the site of the current
action research. Indeed, students often stay quiet and decide not to report to adults or
authorities when they witness cyberbullying because they do not feel that they are part of
the problem. If they do not know the victim personally, they have an even lower
inclination to feel empathy or to seek help for the victim.

The third and final study conducted by Whittaker and Kowalski (2015) explored
the use of technology programs to identify incidents of cyberbullying. For this study, a
program called Salesforce Radian6 was used. The program has access to any public site
that is not password-protected or to search for key words and phrases identified as
possibly aggressive. The study found that Facebook had the most common occurrences of
aggressive language or negative posts. Most often the negative statements occurred in
comments sections, as opposed to part of a main post. This study also concluded that
cyber aggression occurred more often when someone could be anonymous or had created a false profile to remain anonymous.

The most valuable information from this study that could be applied to the current action research is the increased likelihood of users to exhibit aggressive, bullying, or negative behavior if they are able to be anonymous. Anonymity allows the perpetrator to act without consequences and remain hidden to the victim(s) and bystanders (Peebles, 2014). In developing the social media responsibility presentation, I must remember the importance of discussing the different forums in which people can be considered active participants of cyberbullying, even though they are not the original perpetrator of the offense. This reinforces the previous study’s findings about the importance of including strong prevention education about bystanders’ influence in preventing and stopping cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is facilitated through different mediums of digital communication. With the evolution of smartphone technology, increased social communication between peers can result in the strengthening of teen friendships and relationships as well as increased incidents of negative interactions through different forms of bullying. Indeed, friendships and relationships are formed over social media interaction, often with individuals meeting online first rather than in person (Lenhart, Smith, Anderson, Duggan & Perrin, 2015). In a Pew Research study, 68% of adolescents reported having witnessed negative interactions or cyberbullying while using social media (Lenhart et al., 2015). Certain social media platforms, such as Snapchat and Twitter, are designed to provide faster access to large groups of individuals, which provides ideal circumstances to create “drama.” Eight in ten Snapchat and three-quarters of Twitter users report witnessing
adolescents using the social media app for negative purposes such as cyberbullying (Lenhart et al., 2015).

Cyberbullying can have physical and mental health ramifications on adolescents. Victims can experience depression, anger, anxiety, low self-esteem, and suicidal tendencies (Li, 2010). Because the attacks are over cyberspace, a victim cannot escape the harassment as easily as those victimized by traditional bullying. Studies show that girls are perpetrators of cyberbullying more than boys, who tend to commit more traditionally bullying (Li, 2010). Marcum, Higgins, Freiburger, and Ricketts (2012) found that females focus more on psychological attacks than physical. The same study showed that those who were physically weaker also had a propensity to cyberbully.

In 2012, Schneider, O’Donnell, Stueve, and Coulter (2012) conducted a study to determine connections between having been the victim of cyberbullying and psychological distress in adolescents. Using data collected from the Pew Research Center, Schneider et al. (2012) found that 93% of adolescents use the internet, and 75% of adolescents own a cellular phone, which, the authors stated, indicates that internet technology expands the pool of potential bullying victims. Many adolescents who would not necessarily be victims of traditional bullying may be victims of cyberbullying due to the ease and anonymity of cyberbullying attacks. Schneider et al. (2012) distributed a biennial census survey to students in western Boston, Massachusetts, area through their high schools. Across 26 schools, 20,406 students participated in the survey. The researchers concluded that approximately one-third of all participants had been victimized by some type of bullying, especially among female adolescents. They found that traditional bullying dropped dramatically as students entered high school, but
incidents of cyberbullying did not decrease. The study showed that psychological distress occurred most frequently among those who were victims of traditional and cyberbullying, followed by those who reported being victims of cyberbullying. The study also showed that depression and suicidal tendencies were often attributed to bullying. Finally, the researchers concluded that stronger intervention programs were needed for preventing cyberbullying, especially in schools.

I incorporated the findings of this study in the action research study to explain the impact of cyberbullying on mental health. School counselors at Springfield High School who receive reports of cyberbullying state that cyberbullying victims also tend to report feelings of emotional distress, and sometimes even suicidal tendencies (PowerSchool, 2009). Schneider et al.’s (2012) research was also important because it included a large number of participants. However, there were identified limitations to the study that could have caused some errors in reporting. The surveys were mailed to 26 schools, and 22 of them chose to participate. However, there were no regulations concerning the administration of the survey, and participants might not all have been completely honest in their responses of victimization or feelings of emotional distress as a result of cyberbullying. When developing the pre- and post-presentation questionnaire in this action research, I took into consideration the types of data to be collected, how best to administer the survey, and how the questions should be worded and organized.

Cyberbullying has escalated into a prominent concern for schools because of its prevalence and devastating impact on the victims. As technology is evolving, it is important for school districts to remain informed of advancements such as social media to develop guidelines for students’ appropriate usage. Given that the purpose of public
schooling is to develop good and productive citizens, it needs to include digital
citizenship education by teaching adolescents social media responsibility.

**Legislation**

In the United States, all states and the District of Columbia have passed
legislation that addresses bullying, but only 23 states, including South Carolina, have
specific cyberbullying legislation (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Further, while all states
require schools to have policies on bullying and cyberbullying, the majority of states,
South Carolina included, do not have policies that extend to actions committed outside of
the school day that school officials can address (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). In 2005,
Colorado became the first state to pass legislation that requires schools to have
curriculum and plans on appropriate internet usage, including education on online
bullying (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2010). Regulating
cyberbullying in schools is difficult because the bullying actions can quickly extend to a
large number of people, even outside of the schools. School administrators need to be
careful not to address actions that are not within the jurisdiction of the school even
though the act inevitably affect the school environment (Stuart-Cassel, Bell, Springer,
2011). Further, legislation passed for public schools do not necessarily impose the same
accountability for private schools. In the Supreme Court of Ohio case of *Iwenofu v. St.
Luke School* (1999), the Ohio court ruled that private schools had discretion to make their
own rules and are not required to abide by the legislations for public schools for bullying.

In some cases, parents can be held responsible for their children who cyberbully if
the action does not cease (Patchin, 2013). The first state to hold parents accountable for
the actions of their children was Colorado, in 1903 (Patchin, 2013). Educators themselves
can be sued if it can be proven that they were aware of detrimental actions among their students and did not intervene and respond appropriately (Patchin, 2013).

Aside from penalizing cyberbullying, there are also laws to ensure privacy rights for social media users. Responding to the fear that the information posted on personal or social media sites, including personal opinions or photos, could be accessed by employers or educational institutions, 25 states and Guam passed legislation, making it illegal for employers to compel an individual to provide access to their privately restricted sites to prevent any information gained this way to be used against them (NCSL, 2016). In contrast, only 15 states have similar legislation that also extends to educational institutions (NCSL, 2016).

Given the legislation in almost all states against bullying in some form, public schools and administrators face a growing responsibility to appropriately address reports of cyberbullying while ensuring that they are not acting outside the scope of their authority (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011). South Carolina cyberbullying legislation, passed in 2008, called for school districts to develop and implement identification and prevention programs for bullying (NCSL, 2016). Most school districts have some form of code of conduct that extends to actions that occur outside of school hours and campus, so that such actions fall under school jurisdiction if it can be proven that it causes a direct disruption to the school environment.

To combat cyberbullying, schools need to show a concerted effort to document and address concerns when it is identified. Provini (2013) proposed guidelines for schools to ensure they meet their legal obligations to protect students by appropriately handling reported bullying incident. Failure to respond has resulted in lawsuits against
school districts. In one instance, a 12-year-old middle school student committed suicide following repeated bullying incidents at school that the parents stated were never reported to the parents and were inadequately documented by school officials (Thevenot, 2014). It is recommended that school officials document all reports of any form of bullying, make an honest effort in researching the reported incident, and determine if the incident has a direct impact on the student’s ability to learn at school. Schools should also ensure educational prevention programs are in place to promote a positive school environment where the students feel safe, with the knowledge that the school does not tolerate bullying (Provini, 2013).

**Glossary of Terms**

*Bullying*. The American Psychological Association (2018) defines bullying as a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying can take the form of physical contact, words, or subtle actions. Bullied individuals typically have trouble defending themselves and do nothing to “cause” the bullying.

*Cyberbullying*: Hinduja and Patchin (2015) defined cyberbullying as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices.

*Responsible Digital Citizen*: This is a term for someone who adheres to the norms of appropriate, responsible technology use (retrieved from digitalcitizenship.net).

*Freshman Presentation*: The freshman presentation is an elective course designed for ninth-grade students at Springfield High School to provide additional support in areas such as organization, study skills, and habits to assist in their transition to high school (Dorchester School District 2 2016–2017 course guide).
Social Media: Social media technology refers to web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage, and share new user-generated or existing content in digital environments through multi-way communication (Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & Gonzalez Canche, 2012)

Conclusion

The purpose of the action research is investigating the influence of a social media responsibility presentation on ninth-grade students’ perceptions about internet and social media use in interacting with peers, as well as their future propensity for cyberbullying. The existing research that has examined cyberbullying has also stated a need for intervention and prevention programs, although there is scarce research on social media and its impact. Bullying is a centuries-old social phenomenon that has evolved into new forms of harassment with a larger audience through the internet and social media technology. In developing the social media responsibility presentation for this study, I have relied on theories on gender interactions, the psychological impact of the cyber world and social media technology, and the influence of mass media on social perceptions. The literature on these topics guided me to more effectively investigate the participants’ personal experiences, views, and interactions with social media and cyberbullying.

The next step in investigating this phenomenon among adolescents is to assess the value of educating students on social media responsibility. Will the presentation influence how participants use social media to interact with their peers and their inclinations toward cyberbullying? The research aims to generate findings that help in developing a larger-
scale program of presentations to be implemented in the future for all freshman students at Springfield High School as part of the freshman presentation curriculum.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology for the present action research study on social media responsibility and its effects on cyberbullying among a selected group of ninth-grade students at Springfield High School. The purpose of this quantitative study was to measure any reported differences of opinion of students’ knowledge and perceptions of cyberbullying after participating in a social media responsibility presentation. At the end of the four-week study, I determined the potential effect of implementing a school-wide presentation that is designed to teach social media responsibility to all ninth-grade students and to curb cyberbullying.

An action research methodology was determined to be the most appropriate for the research inquiry, as it allowed me to investigate and develop a response that directly affects those involved in the original research. Additionally, action research is conducted by a researcher within the institution he or she is a member, in order to bring about change to an identified area of need (Mertler, 2014). Based on the increased inclusion of technology at schools over the past decade, in 2015–2016 Springfield High School (SHS) students were finally allowed to carry personal electronic devices (primarily smartphones) to school. This new policy gives adolescents at SHS constant access to social media venues and online communication via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. School officials have determined that this policy change has prompted increased reports of cyberbullying and negative usage of social media among the student
body (Educators’ Handbook, 2016; Pearson, 2009). The most appropriate way to investigate and address this concern at SHS was to conduct action research at the site.

Due to the time constraints of the study, collecting quantitative data was determined to be the most efficient method for this action research to ascertain the potential influence of the presentation on the students. While some portions of the pre- and post-presentation questionnaires allowed for a free response, the qualitative data derived from those portions was minimal and served to supplement the quantitative data by adding insight into the possibility of future research on a more significant and larger scale.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative action research study was to ascertain in what way an informative presentation on social media responsibility influenced high school students’ knowledge and perception of cyberbullying. The teacher served as a researcher and worked with participants from a single, randomly selected freshman presentation class. The guiding research questions for the action research is the following:

RQ: What are the differences in attitudes toward cyberbullying for ninth-grade students after participating in a social media responsibility presentation?

The action research methodology allowed me to take an active role in the investigative process, because it was designed to evaluate and determine the value of a social media responsibility presentation on cyberbullying at Springfield High School. Specifically, I developed a social media presentation and administered it to the participants over a four-week period, and I collected quantitative data from the participants using pre- and post-presentation questionnaires. By personally presenting the
presentations to the students, I could interact directly with the participants and observe student responses and reactions through speech and body language to determine their interest and engagement. The findings of the research will also help in developing a larger-scale intervention program in the future and in determining whether the current presentation and presentation structure should be maintained, expanded, or revised. The goal is for the developed presentation to be incorporated into the freshman presentation curriculum to disseminate the education and cyberbullying prevention information to all ninth-grade students, in order to increase social media responsibility and decrease incidents of cyberbullying.

**Research Context**

I am an administrator at Springfield High School, a suburban school located in the greater Charleston area of South Carolina. The school district in which the school resides contains three high schools, of which SHS is the largest, with approximately 2,900 students. According to information provided by the South Carolina State Report Card for the 2014–2015 school year, 57.1% of SHS students were in poverty. The school has an overall graduation rate of 83.3%, and 72.5% of their graduates go on to postsecondary education (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). The school is on a traditional eight-period day, with 47-minute class periods and one schoolwide one-hour lunch period to allow students to attend clubs, receive tutoring, and take advantage of reassessment opportunities. The 2015–2016 school year was the first time the school district allowed students in all three high schools to carry personal electronic devices to school and use them on school grounds. According to the Springfield School District Parent/Teacher Handbook (2015–2016), students may use their electronic devices before and after
school, in the hallways during transition times, during the lunch period, and in the classroom for educational purposes under the direction and with the permission of the students’ teacher. The guidelines prohibit the use of any electronic device to bully, harass, threaten, or intimidate another person, but the electronic devices are referred to as “paging devices” and further details are not provided on what qualifies as bullying with electronic devices. Clearly, district policy does not address the most recent technological advancements and terminology, which shows a need for district officials to address this concern given the prevalence and severity of cyberbullying problems. Currently, the three high schools do not incorporate a common training module within the curriculum to address students’ appropriate electronics usage. Since electronics and the internet are accessible to students throughout the day, it was important to investigate areas of possible concern and regulate student usage of this technology.

**Statement of the Problem in Practice**

The identified problem of practice (PoP) for the present action research study involves cyberbullying and social media responsibility at Springfield High School (SHS), a suburban high school located near Charleston, South Carolina. With the advancement of technology and the increase in the number of adolescents who carry a smartphone with data capability, there have been increased reports of cyberbullying. However, studies showed that many students do not report incidents to their school counselors or administrators because they believe the adults would be unable to help them (Agatston et al., 2007). Other studies have shown that instituting educational programs can have an effect on decreasing negative behaviors. One anti-bullying program, the Olweus Bullying
Prevention Program, was conducted for a 36-month period across 40 schools and was shown to reduced reported cyberbullying incidents by 20%–70% (Olweus, 2005).

Data from Springfield High School’s PowerSchool student log entries and Educator’s Handbook disciplinary statistics show that during the 2015–2016 academic year, the first year the school district began to allow personal electronic devices at school, ninth-grade students reported incidents of cyberbullying that occurred through mediums such as text messages, but most reports involved the usage of some type of social media (Educators’ Handbook, 2016; Pearson, 2009).

Research Design

This section discusses in further detail the action research design to explain the general approach used in four phases of the research study: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting on the identified problem of practice. This discussion aims to describe and provide the rationale for the selected study site, context and development of the study, identified participants, and the reflection process.

Planning

The identified problem of practice at the research site concerns social media responsibility among adolescents and its relation to cyberbullying. In reviewing related literature, I found that the use of smartphones and social media applications is widespread within today’s society. I chose to focus on this topic because Mertler (2014) recommended that educators select relevant research topics that would provide value to education and possibly make a positive difference in their institutions, and cyberbullying is indeed a growing concern at the school I work. Lenhart (2015) reported in a recent study that 92% of adolescents went online every day, and Springfield High School
administration has seen an increase in incidents of conflict between students that involve using threats against or bullying another student via some form of social media. Action research in this area is crucial, given that 71% of adolescents in the United States report being a victim of cyberbullying at least one to two times per school year (National Education for Education Statistics, 2013). The present action research sought to determine the potential impact of educating students on ways to use social media appropriately, which can reduce cyberbullying incidents in schools.

In planning how to best conduct this action research, I consulted school administrators, school resource officers, and school guidance counselors on the potential value of research in this area. All parties reported increased reports of cyberbullying since the allowance of electronics in school, and all parties reported that the main mode of the cyberbullying involved the usage of social media such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram. I then formulated the hypothesis that an educational presentation on social media responsibility might influence student technology usage and cyberbullying. It was determined to be a feasible possibility, and school officials agreed with me that first-year students would benefit the most from the study, as they could apply the presentation throughout their high school education.

In reviewing the research on cyberbullying, I noticed several studies that used a qualitative method to collect data. A qualitative study design provides an opportunity to investigate to a deeper level students’ perception of social media responsibility and its effect on student perceptions toward cyberbullying. Considering the time constraint of four weeks to conduct the research and the research inquiry, I selected a quantitative methodology as the most effective format to collect the desired information, using mostly
a multiple choice model to gauge students’ knowledge and perceptions (Schwalbach, 2003).

The main goal of the study was to obtain as much information as possible from the students on their experiences and knowledge of social media and cyberbullying before participating in the survey in order to gauge whether the presentation produced any differences in their opinions and knowledge. I therefore developed a pre-presentation questionnaire containing multiple-choice survey items. From the pre-questionnaire, I noted the only free response question solicited a limited response with only about half of the students providing feedback. The post-presentation questionnaire contained Likert-scale answer choices designed to ascertain student opinions after participating in the presentation. The questionnaires were designed to be easy to fill out while still allowing participants to express their opinions, which was important to ensure quality data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

**Acting**

In order to determine if the social media responsibility presentation influenced students’ knowledge and perception of cyberbullying, I collected and evaluated quantitative data through pre- and post-presentation questionnaires issued to the participants. A single, randomly selected freshman presentation class was used for the action research. An informational letter was provided to participants and parents, along with an opt-out letter for anyone who did not wish to participate. Baseline data was collected through a student questionnaire issued prior to the social media responsibility presentation, to assess the participants’ personal level of exposure, experience, and views
of using the internet and social media sites, and how social media usage correlates with cyberbullying.

Mertler (2014) noted the importance of ensuring the validity of research data collected and the credibility of the information provided by the participants. To achieve this, each student-participant was assigned an identifying numerical designation for anonymity purposes. At the end of the action research I conducted member checking with the participants by providing conclusions from the action research for informational purposes and to allow the participants to provide feedback on their opinion of the validity of the results (Mertler, 2014).

**Developing**

The pre-presentation questionnaires contained multiple-choice answer selections that focused on the student’s current knowledge and experience with social media and cyberbullying. The questionnaires also collected demographic information such as students’ age, gender, and race. Two free response questions were also included to encourage participants to elaborate on questions and explain what they wished to learn from the presentation. The post-presentation questionnaires collected answers on a Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) to gather data to determine any changes to student opinions on cyberbullying after completing the social media responsibility presentation.

The data collected from the questionnaires helped answer my main research question about the presentation’s influence on the students’ social media accountability and their propensity to be involved in cyberbullying. The data allowed me to develop findings that I can use to determine if incorporating a social media responsibility
presentation in a similar format into the freshman presentation curriculum would be beneficial for the ninth-grade SHS class as a whole.

**Reflecting**

Reflection is an essential part of action research. Mertler (2014) defined reflection as “the act of critically exploring what you are doing, why you decided to do it, and what its effects have been” (p. 13). Reflection throughout the action research process was important to maintain a focus on the initial goal of the study. It helped ensure that the data collected and the results determined from the action research have addressed the identified problem of practice and research question. As the researcher, I reflected on the results gained from the action research and how the study could best benefit the stakeholders at my school who connected social media application usage to cyberbullying: school administrators, school resource officers, and school guidance counselors. Reflecting on and involving all stakeholders’ perspectives facilitates a more effective evaluation of research results (Willis, 2008). Further, the results of the action research will be shared to solicit additional feedback on the value of monthly presentations on social media responsibility. The overall long-term goal of the action research is to determine if the presentation is effective in effecting change by providing a safe and inclusive atmosphere for students to grow and learn. This cannot be assessed in the limited time allotted for the current study but will be researched at a deeper level in an expanded study that includes a larger sampling of the student population.

**Summary**

The availability of technology to adolescents continues to grow substantially each year. According to a 2015 survey by the Pew Research Center, 88% of adolescents have
access to and use a smartphone (Lenhart & Page, 2015). Currently, 98% of all public schools have some type of internet access. This creates an immediate need for additional curriculum to educate students on responsible use of internet technology (Stevens, 2015).

The purpose of this action research study was to determine the possible influence a social media responsibility presentation would have on students’ knowledge and perceptions of cyberbullying. This overarching inquiry was guided by this question: What possible influence does education have a student’s sense of accountability with social media? This chapter also discusses four stages of the research methodology: Planning, Acting, Developing, and Reflecting.

In the Planning stage, the problem of practice (PoP) was identified and a research question was developed based on the needs of the school and a review of relevant scholarly literature. In the Acting stage, I determined the format in which the quantitative data for the action research was to be collected. In the Developing stage, I reviewed the results of the action research to formulate a plan to incorporate a social media presentation on a larger scale for all freshman presentation students. Finally, in the Reflecting stage, I reviewed the purpose of the action research and the methodology for the research, to determine if the study remained focused on the research inquiry, if the collected data effectively addressed the research questions, and if the results have probative value to Springfield High School.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS FROM DATA ANALYSIS

The widespread integration of digital technology and advancements in handheld electronic devices have revolutionized the manner in which society communicates and interacts on a daily basis. Various modes of correspondence are available to users that enable them to instantaneously exchange or disseminate information to a singular or group of recipients. Research estimates that 67% of American citizens are owners of a smartphone (Smith, 2015). In the adolescent population, the number of smartphone users is significantly higher. In a survey conducted as far back as 2009, 78% of adolescents reported being owners of a smartphone with which they communicated via text messaging on average 50 times per day (Lenhart, Ling, & Campbell, 2011). Social media applications such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and public online forums have provided platforms for individuals to post messages, videos, and photos to a large number of recipients within seconds. With this ability comes the inevitable negative side effect: public interactions and postings that are threatening, harassing or inciting.

In 2017, approximately 40% of Americans stated they were victims of harassment online, while 67% of Americans reported having witnessed online bullying or harassment toward others (Duggan, 2017). Young adults under the age of 30 report significantly higher number of experiences involving name-calling, threats, humiliation, and stalking compared to older users (Duggan, 2017). This clearly indicates a need to teach young people how to use the technology available to them to appropriately communicate with
others. Thus, this action research was designed for the purpose of identifying a method to properly educate adolescents on appropriate social media usage in order to curtail cyberbullying. It used a quantitative method, in which data was collected through surveys administered before and after participants attended presentations on social media responsibility. The presentations were intended to be incorporated into civics courses that teach adolescents how to behave as responsible digital citizens, especially in the school environment.

This chapter presents the data collected through the research, including demographics, initial perception and experience with social media, and post-presentation knowledge and attitudes toward social media and cyberbullying. The data was collected through multiple-choice questions as well as Likert-scale survey items. After presenting the data, the chapter proceeds to discuss the interpretation of the study results.

**Sample Size**

Springfield High School (SHS) is a large suburban school located in the Charleston, South Carolina, metropolitan area. Serving approximately 2,900 students from grades 9–12, Springfield contains 163 certified teachers in a variety of college preparatory, vocational, and special education courses. For this study, as the researcher, I targeted the youngest group of students at SHS in order to generate the most significant effect in students’ perception of social media and appropriate usage. A single freshman presentation class was selected, comprising 24 ninth-grade students in their fourth period traditional schedule course. The teacher of the class assisted in facilitating surveys and was present during all presentations.
An informational letter was provided to all students, with an opt-out letter (Appendix A) for anyone who did not wish to participate. One female student did return the opt-out letter and was given an alternative location within another Freshman Presentation instructor’s classroom on the days when the social media responsibility presentations were given. This student did complete the pre-presentation survey on social media knowledge and experience on the first day, and her responses were removed from the study. Therefore, the sample for the study was 23 students from the class.

**Data Collection Tool**

Each of the 23 participants were issued a number by their freshman presentation teacher during the study. As the researcher, I was not provided the information of which number correlated to which student. The cooperating teacher maintained this information so that students had the correct number to identify themselves on any documents and ensured that no data was recorded in error. This allowed students to remain anonymous during the pre-presentation and post-presentation surveys.

**Pre-Presentation Survey Questions and Results**

The pre-presentation survey (Appendix B) collected background information on the students’ demographic data and personal experiences with social media. Demographic information collected included students’ ages, gender, and race. Information collected regarding social media experience included at what age the students became active on social media, cell phone ownership and usage, how often students access social media applications, parent knowledge on their usage, and experience with cyberbullying.
Questions 1 through 4 focused on demographic information from the participants, and Figures 4.1 through 4.5 present the participant responses.

Question 1: “What is your age?” Out of the 23 students who participated in the study, the majority (14) reported a current age of 15 years, six students reported a current age of 14 years, and the remaining three students reported a current age of 16 years at the time of the study (Figure 4.1).

![Age Distribution](image)

Figure 4.1. Age distribution of participants

Question 2: “What is your gender?” The class consisted of 11 male students and 12 female students (Figure 4.2). Dividing the students into age groups, among the 14-year-old students, four were male and two were female. Of the students who reported to be 15 years of age, five students were male and nine were female. Of the three students who reported to be 16 years of age at the time of the study, two were male and one was female (Figure 4.3).
Figure 4.2. Gender distribution of participants

Figure 4.3. Gender distribution of participants by age group

**Question 3: “What is your race?”** Approximately half (52%) of the participants were Caucasian. The next highest group (31%) were students of mixed origin (two or
more races), followed by African-American origin (13%) and American Indian / Alaskan Native (4%) (Figure 4.4). Figure 4.5 also shows participants’ race by their reported age.

Figure 4.4. Race distribution of participants

Figure 4.5. Race distribution of participants by age group
**Question 4: “Are you Hispanic or Latino?”** Two 15-year-old male participants reported to be of Hispanic or Latino origin (Table 4.6).

![Hispanic vs Non-Hispanic](image)

Figure 4.6. Racial distribution of participants

Questions 5 through 14 collected information on students’ experiences with social media applications. This included how early the participants began using social media on their mobile devices, which applications are used, and the level of parental knowledge and supervision of their use of applications. Figures 4.7 through 4.14 present the participant responses to the following questions.

**Question 5: “Are you active on any social media sites?”** All students reported to be active on social media. Only one 15-year-old female respondent stated her social media activity was occasional (Figure 4.7).

**Question 6: “At what age did you first start using social media?”** Responses to this question did not reveal a pattern or typical age for participants’ first contact with social media. The most common response was 11 years of age (six respondents),
followed by 9 years of age (five respondents). The remaining responses varied from younger than 7 years of age to 14 years of age (Figure 4.8).

**Question 7: “Do you own a cell phone?”** All participants reported owning a cellular phone (Figure 4.7).

**Question 8: “If you have a cell phone, do you have social media apps on your phone?”** All participants, with the exception of one 15-year-old male respondent, reported having social media applications on their cellular phones (Figure 4.7).

**Question 9: “What social networks are you using (check all that apply)?”** The top four social media applications used by the participants are Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, in the order of usage frequency. Other listed social media applications were used by one or two of the participants (Figure 4.9).

**Question 10: “Do you have mobile access to the internet (on your cell phone)?** All participants reported having mobile access to the internet on their cellular phone, except for one 14-year-old male respondent, who stated that he “did not know” (Figure 4.7).

**Question 11: “Do you access social media sites on your mobile device during school?”** Out of the 23 participants, 17 reported they do access their social media applications while at school. Six students stated they did not access social media during school. One explanation could possibly be that Springfield High School’s cellular service within the school is extremely poor, making it almost impossible to access the internet without using Wi-Fi services, which are not available to students (Figure 4.7).

**Question 12: “How often do you access/look at/check your social media a day?”** More than half of the students (13 out of 23) reported accessing or checking their
social media more than 20 times within a day. Four students reported accessing or checking social media six to ten times within a day, with the remaining responses ranging from 11–15 times a day, 1–2 times a day, and 16–20 times a day. No respondents reported accessing or checking social media 3–5 times a day (Figure 4.10).

**Question 13: “Do your parents know about every social media site you use?”**
Eighteen of the 23 participants reported that their parents were aware of all of their social media usage. Five participants reported that, while their parents were aware of some of their social media usage, they were not aware of all of them. None of the participants reported their parents were not aware at all of their usage of social media (Figure 4.11).

**Question 14: “Are your parents connected to your social media (do they follow you?)”** Approximately half of the participants (12 students) stated their parents are not connected to their social media. Ten students reported their parents do follow their social media accounts, while one student reported their parents follow most, but not all, of their accounts (Figure 4.12).

**Question 15: “Do your parents monitor your online activity?”** Three of the 23 participants reported their parents have complete access to their social media accounts using the students’ passwords. Six participants reported their parents view their accounts and monitor their public activity but do not have their password. The majority of the participants (14 students) reported no parental supervision of their social media accounts (Figure 4.13).

**Question 14: “Have you ever received any training or education on using social media sites?”** Fourteen of the 23 respondents stated they had received some type
of instruction or education on using social media sites. Nine respondents reported not having received any training or instruction (Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.7. Mobile devices and social media usage

Figure 4.8. Earliest age of social media usage
Figure 4.9. Social media platforms frequented by participants

Figure 4.10. Frequency of social media usage
Figure 4.11. Parental knowledge of participants’ social media usage

Figure 4.12. Parental interaction with students’ social media
Questions 17 through 26 collected information on participants’ experiences with cyberbullying. This included their own personal definition of what constituted as cyberbullying, whether the participant experienced cyberbullying personally, whether
students reported incidents of cyberbullying and why or why not. Figures 4.15 through 4.23 summarize participant responses to the following questions.

**Question 17: “Cyberbullying is ... (select all that apply).”** Students were provided with the following statements and were invited to select as many as they felt were applicable to cyberbullying:

- a. When you confront someone about an issue on a public site
- b. When you like or share mean text messages or pics
- c. When you pretend to be another student online
- d. When you use a student’s cell phone to get them in trouble
- e. When you call another student names online
- f. When you send mean text messages or pics to another student
- g. When someone bullies another student on the internet

All 23 students selected the response “When someone bullies another student on the internet.” The next highest student responses, which received 18 selections, are “When you call another student names online” and “When you send mean text messages or pics to another student.” Fourteen students selected “When you like or share mean text messages or pics online.” Nine students selected “When you pretend to be another student online.” The statements receiving the fewest student selections are “When you confront someone about an issue on a public site” and “When you use a student’s cell phone to get them in trouble,” receiving six and five selections, respectively (Figure 4.15).
Question 18: “Have you ever been cyberbullied?” Eight of the 23 students reported to have experienced cyberbullying personally (Figure 4.16).

Question 19: “If you have been cyberbullied, did you report it to anyone?” Of the eight students who reported to have been victims of cyberbullying, three reported it, while five did not (Figure 4.16).
Question 20: “If you reported it, who did you report it to?” (Check all that apply).

Selection options included:

a. Teacher
b. Counselor
c. Police/SRO
d. Friend
e. Parent
f. Sibling/Family member

All three students who reported cyberbullying did so to their teacher, counselor, police / school resource office, and parent. Two of the three students also informed a friend, and one of the three informed a sibling or family member (Figure 4.17).

Figure 4.17. Reporting of cyberbullying
Question 21: “If you didn’t report it, and were cyberbullied, why not?” This survey question provided a free response area. Figure 4.18 present the reasons given by the five participants who stated they were victims of cyberbullying but did not report it. The responses included the following: that cyberbullying is childish; “it didn’t really bother me”; not wanting the perpetrator to “get in trouble”; not wanting the perpetrator to come and “make my life horrible”; and “I didn’t want anyone to die” (Figure 4.18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you didn't report it, and were cyberbullied, why not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It didn't really bother me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is childish if you let anything get to your head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn't want them to get in trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn't want anyone to die.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They might come after me to make my life horrible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.18. Reasons for not reporting cyberbullying

Question 22: “How often do you think cyberbullying happens?” Five statement option were provided for the students to select from. Only two were selected, “It happens all the time,” by 19 of the 23 respondents, and “It happens too often, but not all the time,” by the remaining four respondents. The three remaining statements, which were not selected by any respondent, were “It never happens,” “It hardly ever happens,” and “It happens sometimes” (Figure 4.19).
Question 23: “Finish this statement: ‘Cyberbullying happens mostly to’ . . .”

Students were given the following options.

a. Both equally
b. Boys
c. Girls
d. Not sure

More than half of the respondents (13 students) believed “girls” are the victims of the most occurrences of cyberbullying. Eight respondents believed cyberbullying occurred “equally” to boys and girls. One respondent selected “boy,” and the remaining respondent selected “not sure” (Figure 4.20).
Figure 4.20. Participant estimate of cyberbullying victims’ gender

**Question 24:** “Please select all the answers that apply to you.” Students were given the following statements and could select as many as they wished.

- a. We’ve had cyberbullying incidents in my school
- b. Friends of mine have been cyberbullied
- c. I have reported someone for sending/spreading inappropriate messages or pics of someone else
- d. I know someone who has talked about suicide because of issues with cyberbullying
- e. Reporting cyberbullying just makes it worse
- f. Others have said mean things to or about me online, but I don’t consider it cyberbullying
- g. I have had someone steal my password/cell phone and pretend to be me
- h. I have been cyberbullied by a close friend
i. I have said nasty things to others online, but don’t consider it cyberbullying

j. I have cyberbullied others

k. Cyberbullying is no big deal

l. I don’t know what cyberbullying is

Figure 4.21. Participant perception of and experience with cyberbullying

The top four selections were “We’ve had cyberbullying incidents in my school” (n = 14), “Friends of mine have been cyberbullied” (n = 12), “I know someone who has talked about suicide because of issues with cyberbullying” (n = 9), and “I have had someone steal my password/cell phone and pretend to be me” (n = 8). The least selected responses were “Others have said mean things to or about me online, but I don’t consider it cyberbullying” (n = 2), “I have cyberbullied others” (n = 1), and “I don’t know what
cyberbullying is” (n = 1). No participant selected the response “Cyberbullying is no big deal” (Figure 4.21).

**Question 25:** “If you could write a school policy on cyberbullying, what would it provide?” Students were given the following statements and could select as many as they wished:

a. Schools would have to teach kids about cyberbullying
b. Schools would be required to include lessons about cyberbullying
c. The police/SROs can arrest someone for cyberbullying
d. Schools would have a taskforce that specifically handles cyberbullying
e. Schools can punish kids for cyberbullying even if it happens outside of school
f. An anonymous way to report cyberbullying

All choices were selected with varying numbers. “An anonymous way to report cyberbullying” received the most student selections at 15. Selected 11 times were two statements: “The Police/SROs can arrest someone for cyberbullying” and “Schools can punish kids for cyberbullying even if it happens outside of school.” Selected by eight students was the statement “Schools would have a taskforce that specifically handled cyberbullying.” And statements selected by seven students included “Schools would have to teach students about cyberbullying” and “School would be required to include lessons about cyberbullying” (Figure 4.22).
Figure 4.22. Suggestions for cyberbullying policies

Question 26: “What do you want staff and your parents to know?” This survey question was open-ended, and student responses are listed in Figure 4.23. Similar themes were student belief that the situation is not going to change and that cyberbullying occurs often or more than people think.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you want school staff and your parents to know about cyberbullying that they do not know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just that it’s not going to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That it’s a big deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That it happens a lot but only if it effects someone it turns into a big deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That it happens often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is happens more than people think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That it happens more than people think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is scared to report it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just don’t put up with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That it happens all the time but doesn’t get reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It could really hurt someone’s feelings and make them feel stupid inside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is happens more than they think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That don’t cyberbully</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.23. What participants want adults to know about cyberbullying
Presentations on Social Media Responsibility and Cyberbullying

I presented PowerPoint presentations on social media responsibility and cyberbullying to the 23 participants over a four-week period, focusing on the following topics: The History of Social Media (Appendix C), Criminal Cases Involving Cyberbullying (Appendix D), and Cyberbullying and How It Affects Victims (Appendix E). During each presentation, participants were not restricted from asking questions and providing commentary; however, student inquiry was limited and the commentary was mostly reactions to the information and statistics presented. The cooperating teacher observed each presentation and provided the same presentation to her second section of freshman presentation students for congruity of course content across both sections, but this study did not collect feedback and data from the second section.

Observations from Presentation Presentations

While the action research collected quantitative data, some personal observations were included to assist in ascertaining student response to the three presentations. The first PowerPoint presentation focused on the history of social media. Participants were given information on the first social media sites, guidelines for registering for sites, and the evolution of current media sites, with correlating data on popularity based on age. This presentation appeared to pique some participants’ interest but did not really engage their attention. Very little interaction occurred from the participants by way of asking questions, and their body language did not indicate an active interest in the topic.

The second PowerPoint presentation discussed criminal cases involving cyberbullying. Participants were given information about under what conditions communication online becomes criminal, who can be responsible when the perpetrator is
a minor, and legal options for victims of cyberbullying. Two scenarios were provided for students to respond to. Scenario One asked the students: If you share a video of a fight on social media, can you be arrested? Scenario Two asked: Can your parents be arrested if you commit cyberbullying? For each scenario students were asked to raise their hands if they agreed and then if they disagreed. For both scenarios students were surprised to learn that one could be arrested for sharing videos of a fight on social media and that parents could be arrested if their child commits cyberbullying.

The presentation then proceeded to discuss actual criminal cases. The first case where cyberbullying was prosecuted involved the suicide of a 13-year-old female victim. Two additional cases were discussed, involving the suicide of two other adolescent victims. Finally, the presentation explained legal options within civil courts for victims of cyberbullying. The presentation concluded with the final slide where a video link was provided, of a YouTube video from CBS News discussing the cyberbullying of a 12-year-old girl who committed suicide after experiencing a year of online harassment. The CBS news story presented different aspects of the harassment and possible prosecution of the perpetrators, as well as response by the local school district. This presentation appeared to elicit higher interest and involvement from the participants, as actual cases involving similarly aged victims and perpetrators seemed relatable to the respondents. In each incident, the participants expressed surprise with the lack of severity of consequences issued by the courts for these crimes.

The third and final presentation focused on how cyberbullying affects the victims. The initial slides asked participants to estimate what percentage of teenagers report to be online daily, as well as how long the participants themselves can go without accessing
their social media or their cellular phone. The presentation invited the participants to reflect if they were possibly addicted to their mobile device. The presentation also displayed statistics on cyberbullying among adolescent males and females. Participants were then given a short questionnaire to fill out titled, “Have You Ever” (Appendix G). Participants responded to each statement by circling either “yes” or “no.” Questions involved different scenarios of social media interactions. The most significant, common experience among the participants (85%) was receiving contact on social media from a person the participant did not know and had never met. Responses to the questionnaire are displayed in Figure 5.1.

The presentation continued with information on the social-emotional ramifications of cyberbullying and its effect on a victim’s mental health. I told the stories of three adolescent cyberbullying victims, two females and one male, about the emotional impact they experienced from being cyberbullied. I then spoke more generally about the signs of depression and showed a video on the mental health impact of verbal assaults on victims. The presentation closed with a quote encouraging those mistreated by others to walk away rather than respond in kind.

**Post-Presentation Survey Questions and Results**

The post-presentation survey (Appendix F) collected quantitative data on student inclinations toward cyberbullying after attending all of the presentation presentations on social media and cyberbullying. Participants responded to 10 questions, providing answers on a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Figure 4.24 summarize participant responses to the post-presentation survey.
1. “Overall, I felt this presentation was beneficial for me.” The majority of participants (75%) reported the presentation to be beneficial, with 17% of those respondents strongly agreeing. Twenty-one percent of the respondents were neutral in their feelings, and four percent disagreed that the presentation was beneficial.

2. “I am more likely to report if I am cyberbullied to my parents/administrators/adults.” More than half of the respondents (62%) reported that they are more likely to report, compared to before the presentation, if they are being cyberbullied, with eight percent agreeing strongly. Thirty-three percent were neutral, with the remaining three percent strongly disagreeing.

3. “I am more likely to report cyberbullying that I have witnessed to my parents/administrators/adults after this presentation.” Twenty-nine percent of respondents agreed strongly to being more inclined to report cyberbullying after participating in the presentation. Forty-six percent agreed, 21% were neutral, and four percent disagreed.

4. “After this presentation, I believe that any form of cyberbullying is wrong.” The majority of participants agreed with this statement. After participating in the presentation, 46% of respondents strongly agreed that any form of cyberbullying is wrong, while 42% agreed with the statement. Eight percent reported to be neutral, and three percent strongly disagreed.

5. “I believe that there should be stronger penalties for those who commit cyberbullying after learning about the effects on victims from this presentation.”
Half of respondents (50%) agreed with this statement. Twenty-nine percent agreed strongly, while 17% reported feeling neutral, and four percent disagreed.

6. “This presentation would have been more helpful if given while I was in elementary school.” One-fourth of the respondents strongly agreed, while another one-fourth reported feeling neutral about the statement. Twenty-nine percent agreed that the presentation would have been more beneficial in elementary school, while the remaining 21% disagreed.

7. “This presentation would have been more helpful if given while I was in middle school.” Thirty-eight percent of respondents agreed the presentation would have been more beneficial in middle school. Another 19% agreed. An additional 19% reported to be neutral, and 24% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

8. “Presentations on cyberbullying and social media usage is something that would help students.” Half of all respondents (50%) strongly agreed that presentations on cyberbullying and social media usage is helpful to students. An additional 38% of students agreed, with eight percent feeling neutral about the statement and four percent disagreeing.

9. “I have learned information from this presentation on cyberbullying and social media that I did not know before.” Eighty-eight percent of respondents either strongly agreed (25%) or agreed (63%) with this statement. Twenty-one percent reported feeling neutral with the statement, and three percent strongly disagreed with it.

10. “Cyberbullying is a more serious issue for you now after the presentation.” Seventeen percent of respondents strongly agreed that cyberbullying is a more
serious issue after participating in the presentation. Fifty-eight percent agreed, while 21% report to be neutral. Three percent strongly disagreed.

Figure 4.24. Post-presentation survey on cyberbullying and social media usage

**Conclusion**

The current research study sought to determine any influence of a social media responsibility presentation on a student’s reported knowledge of and inclination toward cyberbullying through quantitative data gathered from pre- and post-presentation questionnaires. Students remained anonymous through number identification maintained by the cooperating teacher of the freshman presentation course. Anonymity was important to encourage participants’ honesty in their responses. The data analysis involved comparing the baseline data gathered from pre-presentation questionnaires against data from post-presentation questionnaires.

On the pre-presentation questionnaire, all participants reported owning a cellular phone and being active on social media sites. The age of initial use of social media varied
from younger than seven years of age to 14 years of age, but the majority of participants reported to first access social media between the ages of nine and 11. Social media is an active part of participants’ social experiences, as students rely on social media to check for updates on their peers’ lives and communicate, on average from anywhere from six to more than 20 times within a single day. Cyberbullying is a problem all participants recognized to occur often, yet there is minimal reporting of cyberbullying to family members, school officials, or police. The most common statement about cyberbullying that participants reported they wished staff and parents knew was that it happens more than people might expect. This is correlated to the student response on parental involvement, which indicates that parents are awareness of students’ social media participation but are not necessarily monitoring the children’s activity.

On the post-presentation survey questionnaire, approximately 75% of the participants reported the presentation to be beneficial. Students reported a greater inclination to report incidents of cyberbullying of others to adults but not necessarily if they were a victim themselves. The statements that garnered the highest agreement (88%), where participants either strongly agreed or agreed, were the following: “After this presentation, I believe that any form of cyberbullying is wrong” and “Presentations on cyberbullying and social media usage is something that would help students.” The statement that most participants disagreed with or expressed neutrality related to whether the presentation would have been more impactful or helpful if provided in elementary or middle school. Forty-six percent either disagreed with or were neutral regarding the increased impact at the elementary-school level, and 43% either disagreed with or were neutral regarding the increased impact at the middle-school level.
Overall, respondents agreed the presentation provided information not previously known to the participants. The majority concurred that presentations on cyberbullying and social media usage would be beneficial to students and, after participating in the presentation, they perceived cyberbullying to be a more serious issue than prior to their participation in the study. The area where the presentation generated the least impact for cyberbullying prevention or response was the participants’ inclination to report to a parent, administrator, or other adult if they are a victim of cyberbullying.

The participants in the study served as a representative sample of freshmen at SHS, and the findings of this study will inform administrators and educators seeking to stem cyberbullying at schools. The administrators at the school district where SHS resides has expressed interest in the current study and a future presentation that is more comprehensive and that can be incorporated in the curriculum of school district.
CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the findings of this action research, including the purpose of the study, research procedures, data analysis, and implications of the findings. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and recommendations for incorporation of social media responsibility presentations within school curriculums.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the present action research study was to ascertain any differences in attitudes toward cyberbullying for ninth-grade students after participating in a social media responsibility presentation. In addition, the study investigated whether providing education affects a student’s stated sense of accountability with social media. The conclusions of this study will help determine the need for education on social media usage and cyberbullying within school curriculums.

**Overview of the Study**

Following the development and increasing availability of smartphones, people of various age groups are now able to access the internet using Wi-Fi connections and cellular towers. The functional purpose of a cellular phone has shifted from verbal communication to a conduit of multiple purposes such as streaming audio and visual entertainment, photography, and gaming. The effect of instant access to a wide range of resources and activities through mobile devices has altered the culture in which users
meet, interact, and communicate with each other (Boulos, Wheeler, Tavares & Jones, 2011).

A Pew Research Center study reported that the average American uses three to eight social media applications regularly, and the younger the users are, the higher their amount of usage (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Since the majority of high school students regularly use cellular devices with smart technology, school districts have faced the need to implement policies and procedures for possession and usage while in school. Smartphones are not entirely frowned upon in the school environment, because educators have identified positive outcomes from adolescent usage of smartphones in the classroom. For instance, applications such as calculators, internet access, photography, and educational apps such as Quizlet and Gizmo have enhanced classroom instruction at schools that do not have the financial resources to purchase and maintain advanced educational technology. However, the availability of smartphone technology has brought negative effects to the classroom, and some of the concerns that educators have expressed include students’ accessing the internet, social media, or games during instruction; theft of cellular devices; and cheating (Maphalala & Muzi, 2014).

Outside of school hours, students’ usage of smartphones, particularly on social media platforms, can cause significant disruptions that carry over into the school environment. A growing concern among school administrators is that, through social media, students often become victims of threats and other bullying behavior, because embarrassing or even compromising pictures are easily shared with large groups of recipients within seconds. Therefore, it is necessary to educate adolescent students on appropriate social media usage and to implement preventative measures to discourage
cyberbullying at schools, in order to create a safe learning environment for today’s students.

Having served as a secondary-level school administrator in the past decade, I have seen a visible shift in students’ social interaction amidst the rise of social media usage. Studies have shown that 94% of adolescents access their smartphones daily (Lenhart & Page, 2015). Especially popular among users of this age group are social media apps such as Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, which allow adolescents to communicate to a large group of audience with the touch of a finger. This ease of communication has also facilitated online harassment, or cyberbullying, a growing concern that calls for increased research to develop measures for preventing negative social interactions. A survey conducted in 2017 by the Pew Research Center reported that 41% of Americans have been victims of cyberbullying, with a significantly greater percentage among the younger users (Anderson, 2017).

With experiences as a school administrator who has received reported incidents of cyberbullying, as well as existing research on the impact and influence of social media among adolescents, I identified the following problem of practice: the investigation of social media responsibility and its correlation to cyberbullying among ninth-grade students. To guide the action research, I formulated the following research question:

**RQ:** What are the differences in attitudes toward cyberbullying for ninth-grade students after participating in a social media responsibility presentation?

**Study Findings**

The action research study was conducted over a span of four weeks in the spring semester of 2018. A freshman presentation class was selected to serve as a representative
sample of the ninth-grade population at the site of the study, Springfield High School. This elective course, focusing study and organization skills, was available only to ninth-grade students. This selection of sample was appropriate, because the study aimed to generate maximal impact from the presentation, and high school freshmen can apply the knowledge gained from the presentation for the entirety of their high school career. The cooperating teacher agreed to allow one of her two sections to participate in the study and presented the same information to her other freshman presentation students, but this study did not collect any data from the other section of the freshman presentation.

Prior to the study, as the researcher, I scheduled a time to come and speak to the students from the selected class. I presented an explanation of the study and distributed an Informational Letter with an optional Opt-Out Form. I explained that students or their parents could opt to be removed from the study at any time. Each participant was issued an identifying number for data collection purposes by the cooperating classroom teacher. The teacher kept records of the correlating numbers, and I, as the researcher, did not have access to determine which number was associated with which student. From the 24 students within the course, one student returned the opt-out form. An alternative classroom location was provided for the student during each presentation with another Freshman Presentation instructor in which the student was able to continue with course instruction during the study.

Twenty-three participants were provided a pre-presentation survey consisting of 26 questions. The questionnaire covered three areas of preliminary information: student demographic information, experience with mobile devices and social media, and knowledge and experience with cyberbullying. Using the information obtained from the
pre-presentation questionnaire, I developed three PowerPoint presentations on the following topics: the history of social media, criminal cases involving cyberbullying, and cyberbullying and how it affects victims. Each week I presented one PowerPoint presentation.

At the end of the three weeks of presentations, students were asked to complete a post-presentation survey consisting of 10 questions on cyberbullying and social media usage. Answer choices were on a Likert scale with the following available responses: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. All 23 participants, using the same assigned number for the pre-presentation survey, completed the questionnaire. The cooperating teacher, who had maintained the record of correlating numbers, checked each student to ensure they had the correct number when completing the post-survey questionnaire.

Findings from the Pre-Presentation Survey Questionnaire

The information gathered from the pre-presentation survey questionnaire revealed several significant themes.

Adolescents are accessing social media at earlier ages. First, while almost all social media sites have a minimum age requirement of 13 years of age for registered users, initial exposure among respondents often begins earlier. The majority of respondents reported they began social media usage at 11–13 years of age, while some started even earlier. One respondent reported to start using social media before reaching seven years of age. Thus, the early exposure to social media indicates that students’ habits and behaviors regarding peer interactions on social media may be established before a student enters high school.
Parent involvement and monitoring of social media accounts. Almost all participants reported parental knowledge of their active use of social media but very few monitored their children’s social media activity and interactions. Some parents were connected to their children’s social media sites through “following” or “liking” their posts and pages, but fewer than five percent of the respondents reported their parents had their passwords to monitor all activity.

Developing policies and procedures to allow students to report cyberbullying anonymously. Cyberbullying is an occurrence well-known to the participants. Approximately one-third of the respondents reported to have been a victim of cyberbullying, but all respondents agreed that cyberbullying occurs often or all the time among their peers. The fear of retaliation or being viewed as a snitch by peers is a strong deterrent for victims from reporting acts of online harassment to family members or school officials. The most common school policy participants would suggest for cyberbullying was providing a way for students to report cyberbullying anonymously.
Findings from the Post-Presentation Survey Questionnaire

A post-presentation questionnaire was provided to the participants a week after the PowerPoint presentations concluded. The questionnaire, designed to collect Likert-scale responses, aimed to assess whether or not a presentation on social media responsibility affected the participants’ knowledge and perceptions of cyberbullying. In addition, the questionnaire explored the effect of the presentation on the participants’ sense of accountability with social media and in what way this form of education changed the participants’ propensity to be involved in cyberbullying.

The overall feedback provided by the 23 participants supported the hypothesis that a presentation on social responsibility positively affected the participants’ knowledge and perceptions of cyberbullying. Three-quarters of the respondents reported the presentation to be beneficial, and 88% reported gaining new knowledge about cyberbullying and social media. Participants also reported altered perceptions of cyberbullying post-presentation: 88% reported that after participating in the presentation they believed that any form of cyberbullying is wrong, and 75% perceived cyberbullying to be a more serious issue than they had thought before the presentation. Respondents affirmed that presentations on cyberbullying and social media usage would be beneficial to students, and they are more likely to report cyberbullying as a result of the presentation if they witnessed it, although fewer respondents were likely to report their own victimization: 62% compared to 85%.

Implications and Limitations

Information gathered from the participants’ responses to the pre-presentation and post-presentation questionnaires resulted in insight into the students’ experiences and
knowledge of social media and cyberbullying. Adolescent usage with mobile technology and frequency of social media interaction is an area that requires further study from administrators and educators. Although most social media platforms require the users to be a minimum of 13 years of age, regular exposure occurs at an earlier age than high school. With adolescents using smartphones and social media applications as part of social norms, it is important to educate students on safe and appropriate communication, so that social media can be used for the inclusion, not the exclusion, of peers.

Adolescents tend not to be receptive to being instructed on what to do. This was reflected in the participants’ reactions in the presentations; the students showed much more interest when the presentation was about actual criminal cases and stories of victims of similar age, which elicited students’ interest and compassion. Therefore, when implementing methods to combat cyberbullying and educating students on how to be responsible digital citizens, it may be more effective to focus on teaching empathy and clearly describing the consequences of bullying (Reneau, 2018). Further, responses on both the pre- and post-presentation survey showed that respondents were always aware cyberbullying was wrong and that it occurred often within their environment, but they became more inclined to report it after learning in the presentation about the serious consequences of cyberbullying.

Although the presentation was effective in some areas regarding students’ knowledge and perception of cyberbullying, reluctance to report when students themselves are victims remained after the presentation, and it should be a continuing area of concern and focus for school administrators. Peebles (2014) found that only 9%–25% of adolescents report they would inform an adult if they are a victim of online
harassment. They are deterred by the fear that reporting would worsen the situation of cyberbullying. In this action research, the most common response provided by the participants about a suggested school policy for combating cyberbullying was providing an avenue for anonymous reporting. Thus, school administrators should make it a priority to developing policies that allow students victimized by online harassment to report to school personnel without fear of repercussions or retaliation.

Several limitations in this action research prevented the ability to apply the results to represent the student population on a larger scale. One limitation subsisted of the number of participants within the study. With an approximate freshman class of 900 students at the time of the study, tripling or quadrupling the sample of participants would have provided a higher confidence level of the opinions stated pre-and-post presentation. Within quantitative studies, the margin for error increases with the decreasing of the sample size (Deziel, 2018). Subsequently, I used the information drawn to support the advocacy for continued expansion of social media responsibility presentations on a larger scale within the school, to which further data can be obtained to support or refute the conclusions drawn.

The use of quantitative as opposed to, or in conjunction with qualitative data was another limitation. Personal interviews and logged observations of student behaviors and responses could have assisted in providing a richer depth of data through a variety of perspectives. As the data collected involved student perception and opinion, incorporating a qualitative methodology could have further validated the findings, even with the smaller sample size (Ponce & Pagan-Maldonado. 2015).
Suggestions for Future Research

This action research was conducted on a limited scale with a small sampling of first-year high school students to gain preliminary information on the possible benefits of implementing instructional curriculum on social media and cyberbullying for adolescents. The results supported a positive influence on the participants, who agreed this type of education can promote appropriate usage and prevent and deter online harassment. Future research should broaden the scope to obtain larger-scale feedback from varied age groups within primary and secondary educational settings to gather data on the benefits of social media responsibility education at different levels of public education.

Other suggestions for future research based on the findings of this study include the following:

- Expanding research on the possible positive influence of an informative presentation on social media responsibility and cyberbullying in the context of elementary and middle schools. Suggested grades include fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

- Conducting research focused on victims’ reluctance to report cyberbullying to identify deterring factors and determine how to encourage victims to report incidents of cyberbullying to adults.

- Conducting research on school policies and disciplinary procedures in relation to online harassment, including investigating whether school districts have up-to-date action plans to handle and respond to cyberbullying incidents and if schools have current intervention and prevention programs in place to deter
cyberbullying. This line of inquiry should include how school districts handle actual reported cases of cyberbullying and if the measures taken were effective.

**Conclusion**

The study has supported the gravity of cyberbullying among adolescents, a growing problem that has plagued schools around the world since the advent of digital social media. Without adequate guidance on appropriate and safe online communication, or effective school policies to address cyberbullying, adolescents will continue to view the mistreatment of peers on social media platforms as an acceptable behavior. Therefore, education on being a responsible digital citizen needs to be incorporated into school curriculums, just as civics is covered in social sciences courses. Providing effective guidelines on appropriate social media usage and ensuring consistent and swift responses from school administration to incidents of cyberbullying will create school environments that allow mobile technology in the classroom while promoting students’ social-emotional well-being.

Based on the data collected from this action research, it is evident that cyberbullying should be a significant concern for school administration and educators. Participants in the study reported cyberbullying to be an often-occurring event, and they believed that adults did not recognize the regularity of online harassment. Parent monitoring of social media interactions is limited, and parents are often unaware of their children’s social media activity. However, respondents confirmed the benefit of informational presentations on social media and cyberbullying, which increased their willingness to report incidents of online harassment if they witness them, and they agreed that stricter school policies to respond to incidents of cyberbullying were required. An
area not as highly affected for the respondents involved increased propensity to report
when one is victimized by cyberbullying. Determining avenues in which adolescents can
feel protected from the fear of retaliation when reporting acts of cyberbullying is an area
that deserves significant research by school and district administration. Overall, the study
concluded the need for increased investigation on social media and cyberbullying
education within schools as an intervention as well as education to develop adolescents as
responsible digital citizens and prevent future acts of cyberbullying.
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Dear Parent(s):

Your child’s 9th grade Freshman Seminar class has been selected to participate in a six week study involving social media responsibility. The purpose of this study is to ascertain to the following: What is the impact of the Social Media Responsibility seminar on ninth-grade students’ knowledge and perceptions of cyberbullying? How does education change a student’s sense of accountability with social media? In what way does education affect a student’s propensity to be involved in cyberbullying? The students will be given a pretest, four one-period lessons on social media to be administered once a week, followed by classroom starter activities the remainder of each week focusing on the topic presented. The students will conclude the study with a post-test.

Students will be identified by a random student number issued to them at the beginning of the study. At no time will any identifying information on any student will be revealed or published. If at any time you do not wish for your child to participate in the study, or the student does not wish to participate, please fill out the opt-out form below. There is no academic penalty for opting not to participate. If there are any questions or concerns, you can contact Michele Leviner at mleviner@dorchester2.k12.sc.us or 843-873-6460 ext. 51013. The results of the study will be available upon completion in the Summer of 2018 for any student or parent upon request.

HTTP://DORCHESTER.GHS.SCHOOLFUSION.UG
OPT-OUT FORM

Student Name (please print): ________________________________

Parent Name (please print): ________________________________

I do not wish to participate in the Action Research on Social Media Responsibility. I understand that
I/my child will not be academically penalized for failure to participate. I understand that once opted
out of the study, I/my child cannot be reinstated back into the study.

Signature: ____________________________________________ Date: ____________________________

Reason for opting out of study (answer optional):

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

HTTP://DORCHESTER.GHS.SCHOOLFUSION.US
APPENDIX B. PRE-PRESENTATION SURVEY

Student Survey Cyberbullying

The results will provide valuable information about cyberbullying and SHS students. We will not disclose your identity to your school or parents, so you should be as honest as possible in your responses.

1. What is your age?
   - 13 years
   - 14 years
   - 15 years

2. What’s your gender?
   - male
   - female

3. What is your race (check all that apply)
   - White/Caucasian
   - Black/African American
   - Asian/Pacific Islander
   - American Indian/Alaskan Native

4. Are you Hispanic or Latino?
   - Yes
   - No

5. Are you active on any social media sites?
   - Yes
   - No
6. At what age did you first start using social media?
   - younger than 7 years old
   - 7 years old
   - 8 years old
   - 9 years old
   - 10 years old
   - 11 years old
   - 12 years old
   - 13 years old
   - 14 years old

7. Do you have your own cell phone?
   - Yes
   - No

8. If you have a cell phone, do you have social media apps on your phone?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don’t have social media apps on my phone

9. What social networks are you using (check all that apply)?
   - None
   - Facebook
   - Twitter
   - SnapChat
   - Tumblr
   - Instagram
   - Vine
   - WhatsApp
   - Kik
   - Other – please list ______________________________________________________

10. Do you have mobile access to the internet (on your cell phone)?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't know
11. Do you access social media sites on their mobile device during school?
- Yes
- No

12. How often do you access/look at/check your social media a day?
- 1-2 times a day
- 3-5 times a day
- 6-10 times a day
- 11-15 times a day
- 16-20 times a day
- more than 20 times a day

13. Do your parents know about every social media site you use?
- Yes – they know all my sites
- No – they know about some of my sites, but not all of them
- No – my parents do not know that I have/use social media accounts

14. Are your parents connected to your social media (do they follow you)?
- Yes
- No

15. Do your parents monitor your online activity?
- Yes – they check what I post
- Yes – they have my passwords so they can go into my accounts
- No – they do not monitor my social media

16. Have you ever received any training or education on using social media sites?
- Yes
- No

17. Cyberbullying is ....... (select all that apply)
- When some student bullies another student on the internet.
- When you send mean text messages or pics to another student.
- When you call another student names online.
- When you use a student's cell phone to get them into trouble.
- When you pretend to be another student online.
When you like or share a mean text messages or pics
○ When you confront someone about an issue on a public site
What else is cyberbullying? (please specify)

18. Have you ever been cyberbullied?
○ Yes
○ No
○ Not sure
Please describe what happened, if you have been cyberbullied.

19. If you have been cyberbullied, did you report it to anyone?
○ Yes
○ No

20. If you reported it, to whom did you report it to (check all that apply)?
○ Teacher
○ Counselor
○ Police/SRO
○ Friend
○ Parent
○ Sibling/Family Member
○ I did not report it

21. If you didn't report it, and were cyberbullied, why didn't you report it?

22. How often do you think cyberbullying happens?
○ It happens all the time.
○ It happens too often, but not all the time.
○ It happens sometimes.
○ It hardly ever happens.
○ It never happens.

23. Finish this statement: "Cyberbullying happens mostly to.....
Girls
Boys
Both equally
Not sure

24. Please select all of the answers that apply to you.

- I don't know what cyberbullying is.
- Cyberbullying is no big deal.
- Friends of mine have been cyberbullied.
- We've had cyberbullying incidents in my school.
- I have cyberbullied others.
- I have said nasty things to others online, but don't consider it cyberbullying.
- I have been cyberbullied by a close friend.
- I have had someone steal my password/cell phone and pretend to be me.
- I sent a joke to someone, but they thought it was cyberbullying.
- Others have said mean things to or about me online, but I don't consider it cyberbullying.
- Reporting cyberbullying just makes it worse.
- I know someone who has talked about suicide because of issues with cyberbullying.
- I have reported someone for sending/spreading inappropriate messages or pics of someone else.

25. If you could write a school policy on cyberbullying, what would it provide? (select all that apply.)

- An anonymous way to report cyberbullying
- Schools can punish kids for cyberbullying even if it happens outside of school.
- Schools would have a taskforce that specifically handled cyberbullying.
- The police/SROs can arrest someone for cyberbullying.
- Schools would be required to include lessons about cyberbullying.
- The police/SROs can arrest someone for cyberbullying.
- Schools would have to teach students about cyberbullying.
- What else would you want a school policy on cyberbullying to be able to do?
26. What do you want school staff and your parents to know about cyberbullying that they don’t know?
APPENDIX C. HISTORY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?
WEB SITES OR APPLICATIONS (APP) WHERE ONE CAN COMMUNICATE OR SHARE WITH OTHER PEOPLE USING THE SAME WEBSITES OR APPS FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION.

HISTORY OF SOCIAL MEDIA & SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS
THE FIRST HOME COMPUTER


APPLE COMMERCIAL 1986
WHEN DID THE INTERNET BEGIN?

ARPANET - ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY NETWORK

GOAL: TRANSMIT DATA BETWEEN COMPUTERS

CREATED BY U.S. DEPT OF DEFENSE

1983

FIRST SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATION

1997

SIXDEGREES

LISTED PROFILES, FRIEND LISTS & SCHOOL AFFILIATIONS

FOUNDED BY ANDREW WEINREICH IN 1996. WENT PUBLIC IN 1997

STILL ACTIVE ONLINE TODAY
MYSPACE.COM

STARTED IN AUGUST 2003 BY TOM ANDERSON & CHRIS DEWOLFE

2006 - #1 WEBSITE IN THE WORLD

DIFFERENT BECAUSE IT ENCOURAGED MUSICAL ARTISTS TO PROMOTE THEMSELVES ON THE SITE

CURRENTLY OWNED BY SPECIFIC MEDIA CO. & JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE.

2007 - VALUED AT 12 BILLION DOLLARS

MYSPACE 2007
FACEBOOK FACTS

- 79% of American use Facebook
- 93% of social media advertisers use Facebook, followed by Instagram with only
- Top 3 Facebook users, United States, India, & Brazil
- 82 million Facebook pages are fake
- Musicians and other artists use Facebook to promote their music
- 50 million businesses use Facebook
- 2008 took over from MySpace as the top social media site in the world
- $ made from ads for businesses placed in news feeds
- 2004
- Founded by Harvard students Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saerfin, Dustin Moskovitz, & Chris Hughes
- Started as web-based but also has cell phone app (2013) that can be downloaded
- 2.2 billion people use FB regularly need to be at least 13 years old with a valid email address
- Hashtags started in 2013
- 2 million current businesses marked on FB. Most are small businesses
CRISTIANO RONALDO – SOCCER PLAYER – HAS THE MOST FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS – 122.1 MILLION

TWITTER

ORIGINALLY LIMITED TO 140 CHARACTERS UNTIL 2017. NOW DOUBLED.

TWITTER: SHORT BURST OF INCONSEQUENTIAL INFORMATION

@ & # BECAME STAPLES OF APP

USED LARGE CONFERENCES TO SPREAD APP

“TWEETS”
INSTAGRAM

- Created in 2010 by Kevin Systrom & Mike Krieger
- Facebook bought Instagram in 2012 for one billion
- Provides filters for photos
- 8% of Instagram accounts are fake
- Need to be 13 years old to create an Instagram account
- Direct messaging made available end of 2013
- Photo sharing app for the iPhone

INSTAGRAM FACTS

- 68% of Instagram users are female
- 4.2 billion Instagram likes per day
- A user can only follow up to 7,500 accounts
- 80% of Instagram users are from outside the U.S.
- 63% of 13-17 years olds use Instagram daily
- 8 million businesses have an Instagram account, 2 million businesses advertise on Instagram monthly
- 34% of Instagram users use it daily
- Pizza is the most Instagrammed food followed by sushi
**SNAPCHAT FACTS**

- 300+ million users
- Only 18% of Snapchat users are from the US
- 70% of Snapchat users are female
- Snapchat makes money off of advertising – averages 300 million a year
- 187 daily Snapchat users
- Users spend 30-30 minutes a day on Snapchat
- 71% of Snapchat users are under 34 years old
- 1 million “snaps” a day

**KIK**

- Mobile messaging app
- Allows users to be anonymous
- Account holders need to be at least 30 years old
- Produces income through promoted chats
- Functions: one to one messaging, send messages, videos, pictures & gifs
- Often criticized as unsafe for teens because users are anonymous
COMMON THREADS

- All the social media apps were created/stared by college students.
- 81% of small businesses use social media.
- 91% of major businesses use at least 2 social media platforms.
- Profits made by advertisers.
- Celebrities and users with a lot of followers are paid to promote products & businesses.
- 3.03 billion people in the world are active social media users.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONCERNS

- Cyberbullying
- Stolen identity; hacked accounts
- Self-esteem or body dismorphia
- Stalking
- Targeting people for cults, terrorism, criminal activities
- "TMI" too much information
- Criminal use: pornography, monetary crime, pedophilia
- Edited versions of reality
- Fake news
- Mental health: depression, suicide
NEXT WEEK....

CRIMINAL / LEGAL CASES OF CYBERBULLYING
APPENDIX D. CRIMINAL CASES INVOLVING CYBERBULLYING

CRIMINAL / COURT CASES INVOLVING CYBERBULLYING
WHEN IS IT CYBERBULLYING?

When it is used to:
- threaten
- intimidate
- harass
- transmit insults

HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE VICTIM?

CONSEQUENCES

- Self-Esteem
- Isolation
- Anxiety
- Poor Grades
- Loss of friends
- Nowhere is safe
- Fear
- Violence
- Suicide
- Self-harm
WHEN IS IT CRIMINAL?

- Threats of violence that place the target in fear of harm.
- Sending/Sharing/Passing on sexual pictures (sexting)
- Targeting someone because of their race, religion, gender, or other aspects that may be covered under hate speech laws
- Using embarrassing information or false information to extort someone
- Stalking
- Constant and repeated threats or obscene communications
- Physically attacking or assaulting the target of the online threats

WHAT ARE YOUR LEGAL OPTIONS?

- The student committing the cyberbullying and their parents can be held criminally and civilly responsible.
- Victims can go to court and sue for:
  - Invasion of privacy
  - Causation of physical or mental harm
  - Defamation (damaging someone's reputation)
  - Threats that are unprotected by the First Amendment (Free Speech)
  - Intentionally causing emotional distress
  - Spreading libel (a known lie in print)
IF YOU SHARE A VIDEO OF A FIGHT ON SOCIAL MEDIA, CAN YOU BE ARRESTED?

YES  NO

YES YOU CAN, AND YES STUDENTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED

- Cleveland, North Carolina
- In a bathroom, boys videoed and shared on social media one boy hitting / beating up another boy.
- The boys shared the video on social media
- Police arrested the 15 year old boy who assaulted the other student in the video
- Police arrested three boys ages 14 and 15 and charged them with cyberbullying

“When people take video of a criminal act...just to torment them or cause a social media spectacle, there has to be consequences.”
CAN YOUR PARENT BE ARRESTED IF YOU COMMIT CYBERBULLY?

YES  NO

YES, YOUR PARENT CAN BE ARRESTED FOR WHAT YOU DO

- A 13 year old female middle school student was arrested for spreading naked photos of a female classmate to others.
- Police were able to use a high tech device to track where the photos went.
- 13 year old student who was the source of sending the photos – her mother was arrested because police stated they could prove she knew what her daughter had done.

“Going through the evidence, we found out that the mother of the 13-year-old suspect had knowledge of what was happening to a certain extent and there was a huge failure for her to be a responsible adult in this case”
WHAT HAVE KIDS BEEN ARRESTED FOR?

- A 12 year old in Arkansas arrested for “violent, racist, homophobic and sexually explicit Twitter updates” towards other students. Faced up to 90 days in jail.
- A 16 year old student was incarcerated for 79 days and had to go through a pysch evaluation for posting that he wanted to kill his classmates.
- Justin Carter wrote in a chat room for gamers, “I’m real messed up in the head. I’m going to go shoot up a school full of kids and eat their still, beating hearts.” He followed that with “LOL” and “JK” – he was arrested for making terrorist threats and stayed in jail for 4 months until he could post bail. He faces up to 8 years in jail.

FIRST CASE PROSECUTED FOR CYBERBULLYING

- In 2006, 13 yr old Megan Meier committed suicide three weeks before her birthday because of cyberbullying.
- Lori Drew, a 49 year old mother of Megan’s best friend, Drew, was arrested and charged for cyberbullying.
- She created a fake MySpace page and posed as a fake teenage boy who flirted with Megan and then eventually turned on, calling her names and telling her she should kill herself.
- It was difficult to convict for a felony charge. First prosecuted case involving the internet, bullying and false identity.
- Convicted of 3 misdemeanors: up to 3 years in jail and $300,000 fine.
BRANDY VELA

• Committed suicide in 2016 because of cyberbullying.
• Hundreds of texts
• Fake FB profile made of her, made comments about her weight and her looks.
• In 2017 her ex-boyfriend her his new girlfriend were arrested and charged with felony stalking and felony online impersonation

Michelle Carter

• Michelle Carter, 17 was “dating”/talking to Conrad Roy, 18.
• He had talked of depression of wanting to commit suicide.
• She encourage him to go through with it and when he said he didn’t think he could go through with it, she pushed him to follow through.
• She was arrested and found guilty of involuntary manslaughter
LORANGER HIGH SCHOOL

- 3 students created a website in response to another website created by a female student.
- Targeted people in school they called “The Preps”.
- Had a list of students at the high school
- Graphically violent poems about the students
- Talked about killing people and blowing up the school
- 3 students were arrested and put up for expulsion
- They are all three honors students

CIVIL COURT

- When going to civil court, you are suing for monetary damages. You need to be able to prove some type of personal injury:
  - The defendant owed a duty to the plaintiff (the injured party)
  - The defendant breached that duty (by acting unreasonably or recklessly)
  - This breach proximately caused the plaintiff to suffer an injury
  - The plaintiff actually suffered an injury (or damages).

  Proof of physical or mental harm
What can cyberbullying cause?
Rebecca Sedwick

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXNJ55yv5f4
APPENDIX E. CYBERBULLYING AND HOW IT AFFECTS VICTIMS

CYBERBULLYING & HOW IT AFFECTS VICTIMS

ONLINE MUCH?

How many teens say they are online every day?

56%  68%  88%  92%
WHAT IS THE LONGEST YOU HAVE GONE WITHOUT USING SOCIAL MEDIA?

ARE YOU ADDICTED TO YOUR PHONE?

1 in 8 people are addicted to their phone.

- You text while driving.
- You can’t leave home without your phone.
- You text more than you talk.
- You keep your phone where you can see/check updates.
- You mindlessly scroll through.
STATISTICS

Approx 34% of students report experiencing cyberbullying during their lifetime.

Girls are more likely to post mean comments.

Boys are more likely to post hurtful pictures or videos online.

15% of students admitted to cyberbullying others during their lifetime.

Girls are more likely to have experienced cyberbullying in their lifetime compared to boys (40.6% compared to 28.2%).

92% of teens (13-17) reported going online daily and 24% reported going online “constantly”.

HAVE YOU.....

Fill out the half sheet. Put your student number on it. How many of the questions did you answer YES to? A few? Half? All?
CYBERBULLYING & MENTAL HEALTH

Being intimidated, verbally abused or harassed online can cause depression

Today’s bullies are online and often anonymous but is usually someone the victim knows.

Only 1 in 10 adolescents report when they are cyberbullied. Others keep it a secret from family/adults.

Feel down on themselves, start believing what other people are saying about them online, start skipping school (either out of depression or as a way to avoid the bullies in real life), develop low self-esteem or start using drugs or alcohol as a way to self-medicate.

The more cyberbullying a teen experiences, the more severe his or her symptoms of depression.

PHOEBE

• 15-year-old girl who committed suicide in January 2010 after being bullied and cyberbullied
• A victim of cyber-bullying from girls at school who had an issue with her over who she was dating
• Stalked her and called her a slut — to her face, over the phone, on Facebook. They would knock her books out of her hands in the hallway, throw things at her and scribble over her picture on school walls. Occurred for months.
• One day girls drove past her while she was walking, threw an energy drink at her face. Phoebe went in her house and killed herself.
• The girls did not stop their comments after her suicide.
• Most serious charge - civil rights violation with bodily injury, criminal stalking and harassment
• 9 students were arrested and charged – mostly girls. Their names and pictures appeared on the news. They were kicked out of school. One lost a football scholarship to college. They all faced the possibility of prison time if convicted.

AMANDA

- She was blackmailed from a topless photo she sent when she was 12 years old.
- It was posted online and sent to her classmates
- She changed schools but her classmates always found out
- She was attacked by a group of girls because of a boy
- She attempted suicide and was mocked further for not being successful.
- Her family moved. Again the stranger who had blackmailed her with the topless photo found out where she was and spread her photo to her classmates again
- She committed suicide at 15 years old.
• 38 year old Dutch man arrested and charged in Amanda’s case
• He pretended to be a boy or girl and persuaded his victims to perform sexual acts in front of a webcam, then posted the images online or threatened to do so.
• Charges include blackmail, co-perpetration of rape, attempted rape, extortion, child pornography
• 33 other victims in the Netherlands, Australia, Norway, the U.K. and the U.S
• Some of the victims were harassed for years
• Sentenced to 11 years in prison

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

- Becomes upset, sad, or angry during or after using the Internet or cell phone.
- Withdraws from family or friends.
- Expresses reluctance or refuses to participate in activities previously enjoyed.
- Has an unexplained decline in grades.
- Refuses to go to school or expresses anger or dissatisfaction with a specific class or school in general.
- Increasingly reports symptoms of illness for which he or she wants to stay at home.
- Shows signs of depression or sadness.

VERBAL ASSAULTS CAN HURT AS MUCH AS PHYSICAL ASSAULTS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=104&v=MV5v0m6pEMs
If you ever get the chance to treat them the way they treated you, no matter how painful it was, I hope that you choose to walk away and do better

-- Najwa Zebian
APPENDIX F. POST-PRESENTATION SURVEY

Post-Presentation Survey – Cyberbullying and Social Media Usage

Please bubble in the selection that best fits your response to each question:

1. Overall, I felt this presentation was beneficial for me

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   ○             ○        ○        ○          ○

2. I am more likely to report if I am cyberbullied to my parents/administrators/adults

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   ○             ○        ○        ○          ○

3. I am more likely to report cyberbullying that I have witnessed to my parents/administrator/adults after this presentation

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   ○             ○        ○        ○          ○

4. After this presentation, I believe that any form of cyberbullying is wrong

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   ○             ○        ○        ○          ○

5. I believe that there should be stronger penalties for those who commit cyberbullying after learning about the effects on victims from this presentation

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
   ○             ○        ○        ○          ○
6. This presentation would have been more helpful if given while I was in elementary school

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<th>Neutral</th>
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7. This presentation would have been more helpful if given while I was in middle school

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8. Presentations on cyberbullying and social media usage is something would help students

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9. I learned information from this presentation on cyberbullying and social media that I did not know before:

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10. Cyberbullying is a more serious issue for you now after the presentation

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<th>Disagree</th>
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APPENDIX G. “HAVE YOU EVER” SURVEY

HAVE YOU EVER?

Have you ever posted a comment, photo or video and later regretted it?  YES  NO

Have you ever had an incident with social media that resulted in your losing a friendship with someone?  YES  NO

Have you ever untagged yourself in a photo?  YES  NO

Have you ever deleted comments posted on your social media?  YES  NO

Have you ever had your friend “call you out” on social media or a group chat?  YES  NO

Have you ever been contacted by someone on social media that you do not know and have never met? YES  NO

Have you ever not wanted to go to school the next day because of something posted on social media?  YES  NO

Have you ever had a face to face confrontation with someone over something they posted on social media?  YES  NO

Have you ever had someone message you on social media that you did not want to talk to and they won’t stop?  YES  NO

Have you ever had someone purposely share private information of you on social media without your permission?  YES  NO