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Reification of the Teenage Victim: How Canadian News Frames Cyberbullying as a Social Problem

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Reification of the Teenage Victim: How Canadian News Frames Cyberbullying as a Social

Problem

by

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Abstract

This study utilizes framing theory to conduct a mixed method content analysis of Canadian print news coverage of four high-profile teen suicides linked with cyberbullying. Results demonstrate that print news discourse frames cyberbullying as a social problem. News coverage of these deaths emphasizes more female victims than males, demonstrating a predisposition to focus on more ideal victims in the construction of social problems. Each case involves a process of reducing complicated circumstances leading to the teen's death down to overly simplified caricatures portrayed as victims for the cause of cyberbullying. The social problem frame emphasizes the need for public attention and awareness of cyberbullying as well as new legislation to address an emerging issue. It is unclear whether legal changes in response to such extreme cases will impact the more common instances of what the literature describes as cyberbullying.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my father, Eugene Arden Watson, who was not able to live long enough

to see it finished. My father firmly believed that each person he met was a potential friend. He

had a knack for turning angry people into friends and for being able to start up a conversation

with anyone. He saw the best in humanity. He also believed in the value of new media and liked

to be on the cutting edge of technology. I thank him for teaching me kindness and for

encouraging me forward, from the family electronic typewriter to our Atari to the Mac he bought

me when I first left for college. He always had confidence in me and saw to it that I had access to

the tools that would allow me to succeed.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Epigraph

Modern technology is no more neutral than medieval cathedrals or the Great Wall of China; it embodies the values of a particular industrial civilization, especially those of elites that rest their claims to hegemony on technical mastery.

Andrew Feenberg

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Canada Faces a New Problem

The headlines are familiar. "Death by a thousand clicks" (T Star 13 April 2013). "Teenager's death is leading to an outpouring of concern about cyberbullying, and justice ministers are debating what to do" (Globe and M 24 April 2013). "Justice Ministers urge Ottawa to tackle cyberbullying" (Globe and M 19 April 2013). "Lessons from teen tragedy" (Calgary H 13 Oct. 2012). "The problem with 'cyberbullying'" (Globe and M 19 Oct. 2013). "New 'holistic' legislation coming in the fall to stop cyberbullying" (CP4 26 Sept. 2013). The mediated discourse of several high-profile teen suicides have recently aggregated to form a new social problem on the heels of an established concern for schoolyards.

How does Canadian media frame the concept of "cyberbullying"? By examining national representations of suicides preceded by computer-mediated harassment, I examined the methods journalists use to construct cyberbullying as a social problem. Where do media representations tend to attribute blame? Do the reports trivialize criminal behaviour in youth by suggesting a technologically deterministic stance? Does representation of cyberbullying as a problem remain consistent across coverage of different victims? My experience as a high school teacher, a reporter, and an advisor for a school and town paper led me to form these questions. With this background, I conducted a content analysis of main-stream public discourse on cyberbullying. My analysis reveals a social problems frame in the news coverage of high profile teen suicides attributed to cyberbullying. The social problem frame reifies complex cases to a simplistic representation in order to establish a pattern aimed toward public attention and new legislation as a solution to the established problem.

Teen suicide, even when preceded by peer harassment, is rarely covered by main-stream

news media, primarily because it is believed that such news coverage may lead to "copycat"

incidents (Russell, 2006, p. 117, 167). However, when the harassment is technologically

mediated, reporters frame the term "cyberbullying" and act as agenda setters and gatekeepers in

prioritizing these cases to publicize. The Canadian Press Stylebook cautions reporters on

coverage of suicide:

> To be sure, care is always called for when covering stories that involve suicide. Media
> outlets have long been mindful of 'suicide contagion' – a phenomenon in which coverage
> of a news story that involves someone taking their own life can heighten the risk of others
> trying to follow suit (McCarten, 2013, p. 26).

According to the stylebook, an exception to this rule is made when there is "a compelling public

interest" such as "the teen targeted by online bullying" (p. 26). The specifically identified

exception of teen cyberbullying to the restriction against suicide stories in the most recent edition

of the CP stylebook is evidence that cyberbullying is coming into its own as an established social

problem.

The term "cyberbullying" is increasingly used by politicians as well as reporters,

educators, parents, and students. At least nine provinces in Canada have recently considered

new legislation aimed at preventing cyberbullying (Panjvani, 2013). National legislation, in the

form of Bill C-13: Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act, recently received Royal Assent

and became law in March 2015. Implied with the application of this term is the belief that the

nature of harassment as mediated through technology differs significantly from non-mediated

verbal or physical attacks.

1.2 How to Spell Cyberbullying

The word cyberbullying is just over a decade old. Some of the earliest scholarly sources

to use the term kept it separated as two words "cyber bullying." As the public endorsed this term

to describe computer-mediated peer harassment usually aimed at teens, researchers began hyphenating the two words as a compound gerund. This is currently the correct way to spell cyber-bullying, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). However, most scholars who have used the term in the past few years opt to drop the hyphen and make cyberbullying a single word. This three-step progression from cyber bullying to cyber-bullying and on to cyberbullying reflects the public endorsement of this term representing a specific phenomenon. Although the OED prefers a hyphen, I have opted to represent the term as a single word, reflecting the more common use of it in the current cyberbullying literature.

1.3 Evolution of a Social Problem

Peer harassment is not a new phenomenon. While the term bullying goes back at least to the 18th Century (OED), the establishment of it as a social problem originates in Norway during the 1980s. In 1982 three Norwegian boys, aged 10 or 14, died by suicide attributed to bullying. In response, trait psychologist Dan Olweus took on a government commission to study the issue (Rodkin & Fischer, 2012). Since that time, Olweus has grown into the world's foremost bullying expert. In response to his work, many European nations began to look critically at schoolyard peer aggression. Bullying research and governmental responses followed internationally. In fact, by 2002, the World Health Organization conducted one of the most comprehensive bullying studies, involving 35 countries and more than 162,000 youths (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008). They found that on average, 11 percent of children bullied others at least twice a month during the survey window and the same percent claimed to be victimized at least twice a month. These rates differed greatly by country, however. Victimization rates were as low as 4 percent for females in Malta and Sweden and as high as 36 percent for males in Lithuania (p. 20). Studies like this cemented bullying as an international social problem.

Japan framed bullying as a social problem beginning in 1984-1985 when media outlets reported on the suicides of 16 students attributed to ijime (bullying). What westerners might call bullicide, the Japanese called ijime-jisatsu, or suicide linked to bullying (Shariff, 2009). Because suicide was once viewed as a responsible method for handling a no-win situation, it does not have the same taboo present in most western societies. By 1985, however, this attitude began to shift with ihime-jisatsu deaths. As electronic communication technology reached students, the term netto ijime (bullying on the Net) was coined to describe computer-mediated harassment. Bullying done by cell phones, however, gained its own phrase: gakko ura saito (mobile-bullying). This is more common with Japanese youth because most have a cell phone with little monitoring or regulation from their parents while their home computer use is more restricted (Shariff, 2009).

Interestingly, treatment of bullying as a social problem did not register as quickly in North America. Although media supported a focused campaign against "hazing" in the mid-1990s, the United States largely ignored the bullying movement spreading from Norway and Sweden across Europe. All that changed with the Columbine mass shooting in 1999 (Rodkin & Fischer, 2012; Shariff, 2009). Many media outlets portrayed the shooters as bullied youths acting out against a school system and peers who marginalized them. Kowalski et al. (2012) note a dramatic rise in attention to the issue after that event. Running a Lexis/Nexis search with the terms "bullying" and "school," they found only 86 results in 1998 and a steady increase leading to 1,930 in 2010. Follow-up coverage of other school mass shootings supported the anti-bullying movement. This perception was supported when "the U.S. Secret Service study of school shooters determined that more than two-thirds of the shooters had been the victims of bullying, some of which reportedly reached the level of severe tormenting" (Willard, 2007, p. 39). The

result of this attention was a state-by-state legislative response. Within a few short years, 30 states had specific bullying laws (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008); as of April 2014, all but one state (Montana) have bullying laws, mostly requiring schools to have specific bullying policies and preventative measures (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014).

In the midst of this state-by-state legislative response to bullying, several high profile cases shifted the conversation from bullying to what the media termed cyberbullying. Perhaps the first case to receive media attention was the Oct. 2003 death of Ryan Halligan. After his grieving father, John Halligan, reviewed Ryan's computer and electronic communications, he uncovered years of harassment from peers who called him gay, a female peer who pretended to like him over the summer only so she could shame him in front of her friends in the fall, and a former friend who encouraged him to kill himself. In response, Halligan actively lobbied for cyberbullying legislation in Vermont and began speaking to school groups.

Some attribute first use of the term cyberbullying to Canadian Bill Belsey in 2005 and others to American lawyer Nancy Willard in 2003 (Shariff, 2009). Although a 2007 version of the Oxford English Dictionary had a sub-listing for the term "cyber-harassment," the term disappeared in 2009 when "cyber-bullying" entered the OED. Discussion around Halligan's death included efforts to separate his harassment experiences from what people thought of as ordinary bullying.

The next teen death attributed to cyberbullying gained intense international attention, due largely to the nature of her persecutors. After Megan Meier's Oct. 2006 suicide, police uncovered the identity of the boy who initially flirted with Megan only to turn on her and tell her the world would be a better place if she died. To the shock of much of the world, this MySpace profile was operated by Lori Drew, the mother of one of Megan's former friends. Prosecutors

attempted to convict Drew of every related crime for which they could possibly lay charges. This focused on her breaking MySpace user agreements and lying to open the account. Although initially convicted, the ruling was overturned on appeal. Public outrage that more justice could not be sought for Megan led to a federal proposal for what was called the Megan Meier Act. Though the legislation died in committee, this was the first push for a national response to cyberbullying.

Zinga (2010) notes that early international media coverage of cyberbullying focused on blame and punishment mixed with a sentiment for victims to shake it off or just not go online. This conversation shifted once the public saw such a powerful example of a youth being actively persecuted by an adult hiding behind a screen profile. The need to protect a child from a more powerful perpetrator altered the global view of this issue. Following the Meier case, Zinga noted a shift to holding people accountable for their actions and a push to create new laws. The coverage went from being reactive to proactive about cyberbullying.

Global acceptance of the problem also grew. Shariff remarked in 2009 that "Many countries have only recently become aware of the fact that cyber-bullying exists" (2009, p. 14). This strong assertion that cyberbullying is a "fact" is accompanied by a review of international cases, mostly of youth deaths associated with cyberbullying, including Japan, China, Canada, India, Australia, England, and America. While Megan Meier's death did not solidify cyberbullying as an international social problem, her news coverage did raise general awareness that then paired with more local cases to advance public discourse.

As American legislators debated a federal response, media outlets continued the public discussion of cyberbullying through incidents such as the 2010 suicides of Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi as well as the 2012 Steubenville, Ohio rape case. Prince was harassed by peers

largely for being different, an immigrant from Ireland. Following her death, Massachusetts passed anti-bullying legislation and six teens from her high school were prosecuted for crimes ranging from criminal harassment and stalking to statutory rape. Five of the six plead guilty to lesser charges, and the family dropped charges against the sixth. Tyler Clementi died by suicide after his college roommate used a webcam to broadcast Clementi's romantic encounter with another male while texting announcements advertising the show. The roommate, Dharun Ravi, was convicted on 15 counts of invasion of privacy. He is currently appealing the ruling. The identity of the victim in the Steubenville rape case is protected. A viral photo of several males carrying her unconscious body through a party so they could gang rape her along with countless texts and other teen photos and shared videos is what led to mass public attention in this case. Trent Mays and Ma'lik Richmond were convicted of rape for this incident.

Sustained media attention to cyberbullying through these American cases led to action. As incidents such as these fueled public debate, many states amended their existing bullying legislation to include cyberbullying. To date, 20 states have legislation specifically addressing cyberbullying and 47 states (all but Alaska, Montana, and Wisconsin; again, Montana is the only state with no bulling legislation) have legislation addressing electronic harassment (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014).

The other outcome of such media attention is the development of cyberbullying experts. These experts come from several different fields of study. Robin Kowalski and Susan Limber are both psychologists. Michele Ybarra is from the Family Online Safety Institute, and Kimberly Mitchell is from the Crimes against Children Research Center. Nancy Willard is a lawyer and the Director of the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use. With a criminal justice background, Sameer Hinduja and Justin Patchin have built their careers on cyberbullying, much

like Dan Olweus has done with bullying. Patchin and Hinduja launched the website cyberbullying.us in 2005 and regularly conduct survey research. According to the website, they have presented to more than 100,000 educators. They even offer support material for educator groups to conduct book groups using their materials. They have co-published four books and countless articles on cyberbullying, mostly focusing on their research of over 14,000 youth. They have even served as "expert witnesses" in court cases and consulted with attorneys. Outrage generated by news coverage of several high profile deaths has led to the stable status of cyberbullying as a social problem in the United States.

Canadian progression of cyberbullying as a social problem took a familiar path but followed a separate timeline. It was really a pair of youth suicides in 2000 that first spurred a bullying focus in Canada. In March 2000, Hamed Nastoh's death received mild news coverage. A Factiva search of his name in Canadian newspapers produces 86 articles; however, only ten of these articles appear before the second teen suicide that year. The first article to report his death is a CBC piece titled "Teasing Drives Teen to Suicide." It is a short piece that uses the term bullying in the article but not in the title. Many of the other nine early articles focus on the suspension of two teachers who added to the "teasing" because they claimed the boy was gay. When Dawn Marie Wesley died in November 2000, the term "bullying" appeared in even the first reports of her suicide. For example, one of the first articles was titled "Girl's Death to Escape Bullying Shocks Town" (Alphonso, 2000). Part of what kept this death in media focus was the prosecution of two teen girls this case. One was convicted (at age 16) of criminal harassment while the other was acquitted of uttering threats. The case drew international attention for setting a precedent of prosecuting teens for peer harassment.

In April of 2003, Quebec teens published a video file of one of their fellow students, Ghyslain Raza, who was imitating Darth Maul's light saber fighting. They did this without his knowledge or his permission. Labelled The Star Wars kid, Raza's video went viral; in just three years, it was viewed at least 900 million times. It also inspired countless edited versions, adding visual and sound effects. Raza spoke out against what he called cyberbullying due to the viral video. When Raza's family sued the families of the students who posted the video, the defendants settled out of court, agreeing to pay damages of an undisclosed amount. Despite use of the term cyberbullying in this incident, public awareness did not lead to any calls for legislation or government intervention beyond the civil law suit. Though the Star Wars kid became infamous, his claims that he had been cyberbullied did not seem to hold resonance with the general public. Fans of the video, however, did lobby to have Raza granted a cameo appearance in the next *Star Wars* film. This is one of the earliest high profile cases of Canadian cyberbullying, but use of the term by Raza did not incite public advocacy in his behalf.

It was the suicides of Amanda Todd in 2012 and Rehtaeh Parsons in 2013 that made cyberbullying a Canadian social problem. In Todd's case, an unknown perpetrator convinced her to lift her shirt for the webcam as he chatted with her through social media. He captured the image and threatened to expose the photo to her peers if she did not provide a show for him. This online harassment continued for years. Ultimately, he started a Facebook page with that image as the profile photo. Todd moved several times but at each school, she found the perpetrator had contacted teens at the new school and forwarded the image as well as insulting comments. It wasn't until 2014 that Dutch police identified her perpetrator, Aydin Coban, and arrested him for exploiting and extorting victims in the Netherlands, UK, and Canada. He reportedly had male and female child and adult victims. Part of what made Todd's death an international news story

was the nine minute video she posted to YouTube prior to her death. In it, she details the harassment she experienced from her unknown cyberbully as well as other peer conflicts she faced by holding written cards in front of the camera. As of July, 2014, the video had been viewed more than nine million times.

Parsons' case is eerily similar to the Steubenville rape. It was the photo of her severely intoxicated, mostly unconscious and being sexually violated by a male while he gestured a thumbs up to the camera that provided the main source of her taunting. The image was sent throughout her peer group, leading to many derogatory comments online and in person. At least four males were involved in the incident. Although police decided not to make any initial arrests, public outcry after her death led to a reversal of that decision. Two teens were arrested. One plead guilty to producing child pornography, and the other plead guilty to distributing child pornography (CBC 15 Jan. 2015). Each was sentenced to a year of probation.

These cases led to local legislative changes such as the Nova Scotia Cybersafety Act enacted in May 2013 and the New Brunswick Education Act, which was amended by Bill 45 in 2012. The Department of Justice Canada provides an overview of cyberbullying legislative movements inspired by high profile cases. The footnote to this comment lists both Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons (Ha, 2014). At least nine provinces now have legislation or new laws addressing cyberbullying (Panjvani, 2013).

Anti-cyberbullying attention is moving from provincial to national responses. Even before either of these deaths, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights received an assignment to research cyberbullying in November 2011. This assignment came due to Canada's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Ha, 2014). In December 2012, they issued a report titled "Cyberbullying Hurts: Respect for Rights in the

Digital Age." In June, 2013, the Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials Cybercrime

Working Group issued a report to the FPT Ministers responsible for Justice and Public Safety.

The report was titled "Cyberbullying and the Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images."

It focused on looking for gaps in the criminal code. In response to this report and public pressure

regarding cyberbullying, legislators proposed Bill C-13, the Protecting Canadians from Online

Crime Act, in the fall of 2013. This legislation received Royal Assent in November 2014.

For Canada, the issue of cyberbullying probably begins with Olweus and early anti-

bullying claims. This issue gained broad acceptance as a social problem following the

conviction of Dawn Marie Wesley's tormentors. The Star Wars kid brought some of the earliest

Canadian attention to cyberbullying, but public reaction did not create much of a sentiment of

injustice, and Ghyslain Raza was able to settle his civil case against the boys who posted his

video. As bullying and cyberbullying received global attention throughout Europe and Japan, the

United Nations convention called for steps to protect children from all forms of harm, both

physical and mental violence. This call for action included cyberbullying (Ha, 2014). Despite

the agreement to research and report on this issue, legislative proposals to address cyberbullying

began in earnest following the intense media coverage and public outcry in response to Todd's

and Parsons' suicides.

Most cyberbullying research adopts a positivist approach and examines it as an extant

problem. While this approach allows for a quantitative analysis, it overlooks the consideration

that in order to measure and study this issue, one must first define the term and the parameters of

the study. In essence, each study of cyberbullying examines past use of the term in order to

construct its meaning. Each positivist study, by examining how others defined the parameters of

what behaviors qualify for the term cyberbullying and which do not, participates in the

construction of its definition, all while treating the phenomena as an existing problem measured and quantified by the study. This stance relies on an objectivist epistemology. I take a constructionist approach to the examination of cyberbullying. This stance recognizes that understanding of cyberbullying develops through the shared meaning established through every day usage. For example, peer aggression delivered through media is not revolutionary. Nevertheless, application of the term cyberbullying is common enough to easily distinguish it from harassment through passing notes or other older forms of media. The distinction between what is currently considered cyberbullying and what is often termed bullying is socially constructed. The meaning of the term is dynamic and evolves in a manner reflecting common use. While attention to the issue has progressed internationally, this progression has been largely driven by public discourse generated from news coverage of teen deaths. This is certainly the case in Canada.

In order to analyze the construction of cyberbullying, I conducted a frame analysis of media coverage of four teen suicides associated with peer computer-mediated harassment. This research focuses on news coverage of the deaths of Jamie Hubley, Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, and Todd Loik. In chapter two, I first examine literature on social problems then literature specific to cyberbullying. Given my aim to examine the construction of cyberbullying through media discourse, I apply frame theory to reveal media characterization of this issue. Chapter three focuses on the terms of framing theory and how I characterize it. While methods such as discourse analysis or semiotics each might have provided adequate study results, I chose to conduct a quantitative and a qualitative content analysis due to the size of my data set. Chapter four explains this methodology. I limited my data by selecting a date range between the death of each teen and the date when local officials announced some form of policy change as a result of

the public concern generated by the teen's death. In chapter five, I discuss results from this analysis which indicate that in framing cyberbullying as a social problem, reporters reify the complex stories of each of these teens to a more simplistic case consistent with the cyberbullying pattern being established through accumulated news coverage. This oversimplification is effective in generating policy change but not in conveying the whole story behind the death of the teens involved. I conclude with a discussion of the results in chapter six, including my suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Social Problems Literature

A social problem begins with public awareness of recurring circumstances presented as detrimental to society. This recognition becomes a social problem when it has gained enough saturation of awareness for the common public to recognize the issue as a set of social conditions that generate concern. Mass media is a common venue for facilitating the public discourse necessary to achieve this process. A social problem is essentially a collective subjective awareness of a set of distressing social conditions.

Social problems research often takes a social constructionist approach. This means that scholars examining how an issue of concern becomes one that people identify as a problem happens through a process of individuals intersubjectively creating the meaning of the problem. "Social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the process by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live" (Gergen, 2003, p. 15). This stance does not assume that the world exists a priori in a realist sense as much as seeing the nature of understanding resulting from an active process of interpretation and co-creation.

I begin this chapter by reviewing some of the debates surrounding the use of the constructionist approach to social problem research. Critics such as Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) express concern over objective hypocrisy in the constructionist stance. However, Ibarra and Kitsuse (1993) refute these concerns by calling for a focus on analyzing claims making methods. Best (1989) also rejects the criticism while recommending a contextual constructionist approach to social problems work. He outlines a framework for the social problems process. I conclude this chapter by reviewing several case studies devoted to examining social problems. I classify

these studies into four categories: social problems work, hollow constructs, valence issues, and position issues. I discuss how researchers examined the reinforcement of existing constructs such as battered women, sexual assault victims, sexual harassment, and court-ordered incompetence under the social problems work category. I then discuss the critical constructionist approach to examining hollow constructs such as road rage and Satanism. Under position issues, I address research into postabortion syndrome as well as gun control. These are established social problems like those in social problems work, but position issue research focuses on how claims makers utilize differing methods to sway public views of entrenched binary position social problems. I end the chapter with an examination of workplace bullying as a valence issue—one that generates awareness but little debate.

2.1.1 Debates on Social Problems Research

Research on social problems took a fundamental shift when Malcom Spector and John Kitsuse published their book *Constructing Social Problems* in 1977. The book, along with many subsequent articles, primarily published in the journal *Social Problems*, argued that researchers should not examine social problems from a realist stance that sees these issues emerging from an objective reality. Instead, they claim that the reality of these problems are, in fact, social constructions. Spector and Kitsuse define social problems as "the activities of groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions" (quoted in Miller & Holstein, 1993, p. 6). This constructionist approach calls for an examination of the politics of claims making. It is contrived in response to the structural functionalist approach to social problems. The structural functionalist approach considers social conditions existing separately from the interpretation of members of society. Spector and Kitsuse suggested a move away from

15

normative to an interpretative paradigm that looks more at how problems are constructed (Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993, p. 26).

> Now, in the normative conception, sociologists can 'objectively' (and independently of members) view 'social conditions' and designate them as social problems . . . By contrast, in the constructionist perspective the sociologist observes/interprets members as perceiving subjects actively engaged in constructing social conditions (or 'putative conditions) as moral objects" (Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993, p. 26).

Thus, conventional sociologists take on the role of expert while constructionists examine how others agree on meaning. The social constructionist call to arms led to a flurry of social problems research that adopted this stance. However, it also led to critical responses. Hazelrigg, for example, criticized the constructionist formulation for being "internally inconsistent" (Ibarra & Kitsuse, p. 27).

Perhaps the most notable critics of social constructionist approaches to social problems are Woolgar and Pawluch. Their 1985 critical response, titled "Ontological Gerrymandering," claimed that because social constructionist researchers act as objective analysts, their practice does not align with their message. To "gerrymander" is "to manipulate in order to gain an unfair advantage" (OED online, 2013). For Woolgar and Pawluch, "selective 'objectivism' represents a theoretical inconsistency in the definitional approach since it manipulates an analytic boundary to make certain phenomena problematic while leaving others unquestioned" (Miller & Holstein, 1993, p. 9). They see constructionist researchers making certain objective claims about socially constructed problems while claiming a relativist stance and discrediting objectivism.

The Woolgar, Pawluch critique generated several defenses from social constructionists. Ibarra and Kitsuse (1993) respond by acknowledging that many who claim to conduct social construction analyses of social problems do, in fact, blend objective observations with their subjectivist approaches. However, they claim that to do so is against the original criteria set out

by Spector and Kitsuse in 1977. The original formulation, they assert, had "little interest in the sociohistorical circumstances associated with social problems definitions" (Miller & Holstein, 1993, p. 10). It is better, they argue, for researchers to focus on how claims-making happens. "Thus, Spector and Kitsuse analyze social problems as real to the extent that claims-makers are able to convince others to honor their claims, and state that it is sociologically counter-productive to ask whether claims-makers' definitions are accurate or warranted" (Miller & Holstein, p. 10). Ibarra and Kitsuse note that the constructionist way of looking at social problems examines both the member's and the sociologist's concept. Constructionists act as experts in naming and describing what they see others socially constructing. Thus, a social problem is, for them, both a technical and a vernacular term (Ibarra and Kitsuse, 1993, p. 28). Social problems are not "talked into being. Rather social problems are what elicit their [members'] acts of judgment" (p. 29). In other words, for Ibarra and Kitsuse, the validity of proposed claims is not as interesting as the measures that elicit value stances. Therefore, constructionists should focus analysis on the methods claims makers use to create recognized and named problems.

In contrast, Joel Best responded to Woolgar and Pawluch by acknowledging that gerrymandering does happen on the part of social constructionist researchers. It just is not a problem, he claims. For Best, "calling a statement a claim does not discredit it" (1989, p. 247). Actually, efforts to avoid ontological gerrymandering might undermine social constructionist's efforts. A social constructionist must ask important questions about claims-making. Best distinguishes between what he calls the "strict constructionist" approach and the "contextual constructionists." Best sees Schneider's (1985) responses to the Woolgar and Pawluch criticism as taking this strict constructionist approach. Strict constructionists refuse to evaluate the

17

accuracy of claims because they recognize the claims as a constructed reality. In contrast, he views Gusfield's (1985) response as a contextual constructionist method, one he prefers because he sees the need to ask important questions about claims-making. Contextual constructionists maintain the view that the purpose of research is to gain insights to social problems movements and the social conditions surrounding their construction. This includes the examination of sociohistorical conditions and allows researchers to question the validity of claims making. Strict constructionists might avoid ontological gerrymandering by "refusing to evaluate the accuracy of claim's-makers' claims" while contextual constructionists "treat the evaluation of social problems claims as an important part of their analysis" (Miller & Holstein, 1993, p. 11). Best sees the value in examining the sociohistorical context Ibarra and Kitsuse favor ignoring. He is essentially claiming that the social constructionist is like a fish identifying the water around her. Although constructionists might need to form an occasional stance that can be classified as objectivist, this does not keep them from recognizing that all objectivist claims still rely on a social construction of reality. The fish is merely aware of the water around her. She may comment on the currents, but she does not, in doing so, cease to be a water-dependent creature. "Some people worry that, if sociology is one more social construction, we can't really have confidence in social knowledge. The response, of course, is that we can have exactly the same sort of confidence in sociology that we have in our other sorts of knowledge" (Best, 2013, p. 16). This perspective answers the concerns of the Woolgar Pawluch claim and allows for many forms of social constructionist analyses.

　　　　With the contextual constructionist stance, Best recently generated a framework for social problem construction (2013). He calls it the basic natural history model of the social problems process. The six stages of this model include the following: claims making, media coverage,

public reaction, policymaking, social problems work, and, finally, policy outcomes. He

acknowledges that not every social problem will fit the model but asserts that this is a typical

pattern of emergence. He sees social problems not as conditions but as agreed upon concerns (p.

319). While some social problems constructs might seem more valid, more urgent, or more

critical than others, each must compete for attention in what Best calls the "social problems

marketplace" (p. 46). As an example, he imagines a claims maker who might have scheduled a

press conference to present some aspect of a social problem on September 12, 2001. No matter

how worthy that cause might have been, the message would be lost altogether in the news

generated from the events of the day before. Which social problems gain attention have little to

do with merit and more to do with a complex market competing for attention to claims.

> There is no *theoretical* reason to assume that any individuals or groups, or any organized settings, are more appropriate than others as sites of social problems work. Instances of social problems may be constructed anywhere social problems rubrics might be invoked, anywhere problems become interpretive possibilities. As a practical matter, settings where problematic or troublesome behavior is routinely and specifically topicalized are the most likely to produce social problems discourse (Holstein & Miller, 1993, pp. 167-168, emphasis in original).

According to Best, there are many ways researchers may want to examine the range of topics

that might be considered social problems. Constructionists can examine claims, claims makers,

or even how the public or the press establish or respond to claims (Best, 2001, p. 2).

2.1.2 Classifications of Social Problems Research

Social problems research addresses a plethora of social issues. The body of research can

be loosely separated into four general categories: social problems work, hollow constructs,

valence issues, and position issues. The first term is defined by Miller and Holstein; the second

is my own construction, and the last two are defined by Best. Each of these groupings reflect

research from the constructionist view. First, social problems work, according to Miller and

Holstein, is the "reality assigning practices that link public interpretive structures to aspects of everyday life" (1993, p. 16). Researchers of social problems work examine the processes individuals and organizations undertake to reinforce established social problems categories. Second, I define hollow constructs as those representing a problem that lacks credibility. Some researchers examine the validity of what they consider to be unwarranted claims. They might question the motives of the claims makers or the manner of presentation. These studies might be termed examinations of hollow constructs. Other social problems researchers look more at the process of constructing social problems than how they are reinforced. Both the third category of valence issues and the fourth category of position issues are usually examined this way. Best (2013) distinguishes between valence and position issues in the claims making process. A valence issue is one that creates a general sense of agreement. According to Best, these "claims face little resistance, quickly gaining widespread acceptance among those who hear them" (p. 41). He cites claims about child abuse, child pornography, and other threats to children as examples. In contrast, he sees position issues as extreme "claims related to entrenched controversies that probably never will lead to consensus" (p. 41). Abortion is such a case. While these are not exhaustive categories, they serve to effectively differentiate social problems research.

2.1.2.1 Social Problems Work

Many scholars look more at the way categories of social problems are reinforced once broadly established. Loseke (1989) noted that discussion of wife abuse led to several socially constructed notions such as "battered women," "wife abuse," and "women's shelters." She examined methods gatekeepers used to determine who fit the criteria necessary to receive services from a shelter for battered women. While media representation, academic writing, trade

journals, and public hearings provided the criteria for establishing what might be characterized as a battered woman, Loseke examined actual processes used in such a shelter. She interviewed workers, observed participants, and examined log books to study how clients were constructed as "battered women." She found that clients were evaluated based on claims and evidence of physical abuse, economic need, and emotional isolation. Shelter workers relied on precedent recorded in the log book to determine which potential clients best fit the mold to receive services. If the shelter was already quite full, the criteria became more selective. In such circumstances, a woman experiencing harassment other than physical forms of abuse or one with financial means to fund a hotel stay or family and friends to rely on was less likely to receive help. In this way, shelter workers reinforced what characterized a battered woman by formulating limiting criteria (Loseke, 1989).

Similarly, other social problems researchers, such as Spohn, Beichner, and Frenzel (2001), examined how the justice system establishes who qualifies as a sexual assault victim (pp. 206-235). They refer to a 1991 study showing that prosecutors construct typifications of credible victims based on certain criteria. In order to test the replicability of those findings, Spohn et al. analyzed data from all 1997 Miami County sexual assault cases. They also interviewed some of the attorneys involved with those cases. In this instance, the researchers did not find evidence that the victims whose cases went to trial were based on ideal rape victim characterizations. Instead, they cited amount of evidence and victims' willingness to testify in trial as stronger factors influencing which cases attorneys sought to prosecute.

One of the more commonly discussed socially constructed problems is the term "sexual harassment." While women experienced uncomfortable workplace circumstances including unwanted sexual attention from co-workers long before the feminist movements of the 1960s and

1970s, it was only as a result of these movements that the condition became known as a named

social problem. Dellinger and Williams (2002) were interested in how employees in differing

work places might characterize sexual harassment. They conducted in-depth interviews and

participant observations of employees working for two very different magazines. One of the

magazines was considered a feminist publisher. The other printed heterosexual pornography.

Their findings support what many might suppose. Employees at the feminist magazine were far

more likely to name border-line behaviour as sexual harassment than those working at the

pornographic magazine. Although sexual harassment is broadly accepted as a social problem,

what behaviour specifically qualifies under that framework differs according to circumstance and

local cultural and group norms.

Holstein (1993) analyzed the interpretive practice that led to decisions regarding court-

ordered incompetence. He observed live proceedings in five different jurisdictions for American

defendants who had been involuntarily confined to mental health facilities. Holstein's

conversation analysis examined judges, lawyers, psychiatrists, and patients. He concluded that

the psychiatrist's professional testimony was less influential in verdict outcomes than the

patient's ability to demonstrate competency through speech style. He analyzed methods defense

attorneys used to minimize what he called "crazy talk" from the defendants (p. 94). Defense

attorneys had a tendency to ask questions likely to produce a short and direct response. If they

noticed their clients exhibiting "crazy talk," they quickly interrupted with a follow-up question

that altered the topic. In contrast, the prosecution was more likely to ask open-ended questions

requiring longer responses in hope of producing "crazy talk" from the defendants. Holstein

claims that these mental health patients were characterized as competent and capable of taking

care of themselves based more on their ability to communicate and speak intelligently than on

what their doctors claimed about the patient's capacity. The legal proceedings in these cases, according to Holstein, demonstrate the social construction of mental incompetence.

2.1.2.2 Hollow Constructs

Other researchers examine less of the regular practices assigning meaning to concrete cases and more on the claims and the claims makers in the construction of social problems. Hollow constructs are social problems that lack validity. They are more hype than substance. Much of the literature grouped as hollow constructs takes a critical constructionist approach. According to Heiner (2006), critical constructionism is a synthesis of conflict theory and symbolic interactionism. Conflict theory emerges from Karl Marx's examination of the bourgeoisie and their exploitation of the proletariat. The focus is on inequality and abuses of power. Symbolic interactionism developed from scholars such as George Herbert Mead and looks at the daily interactions between people. The language, acts of interpretation, and symbols of communicators are all examined. This perspective provides the notion that social problems must be defined. Social constructionism, according to Heiner, sees social problems distinctly. Such researchers see the identification of phenomenon as problematic. They seek explanations for the causes that become social problems. They also recognize that it takes persuasion for others to view a problem as one that needs a solution. Heiner claims that critical constructionism undertakes all the projects of social constructionism but also emphasizes the role of elite interests in the process of problem construction. "Popular constructions of social problems are those that sway social policy, and elite interests are most in need of critical scrutiny because they are so often obscured or confused with societal interests" (Heiner, 2006, p. 10). The intent is not just to examine social problems but to give voice to the less powerful groups in society. This is

23

necessary, Heiner claims, because elites shape what is considered common sense. What Gramsci would call hegemony, is the systems of social practice that normalize power structures.

For Heiner, it is the management of hegemony by the bourgeoisie that prevents the proletariat from revolting as Marx predicted. Some of this hegemonic process of establishing normal conditions and of legitimizing social problems happens through the power of mass media. Heiner quotes Brent Cunningham in the *Columbia Journalism Review* by saying that "the press has the power to shape how people think about what's important, in effect to shape reality . . . The chances that a problem will receive much attention – or have societal resources mobilized against it – are almost nil without media coverage" (p. 15). While politicians are also part of the process for social problem construction, Heiner notes that politicians manipulate or criticize media messages for their political agenda. He also points to the historical changes in corporate mass media. Media corporations have largely consolidated to form huge conglomerates. In fact, some of the largest companies in the world own most of the television networks and newspapers. This circumstance creates a natural corporate bias for mass media producers. According to Heiner, these media circumstances necessitate a critical approach to the construction of social problems.

Such approaches serve to measure the substance of social problems claims and to examine how claims serve to benefit some over the needs of others. Critical social constructionists aim to identify inflammatory claims that might serve to benefit only certain claims makers.

Best and Furedi (2001) take a critical constructionist approach to the social problem termed "road rage" (pp. 107-145). Much of their analysis relied on a comparison between American and British construction and use of the terms. They found differences in the venues

claims makers operationalized. While British media relied more on main-stream news coverage,

American press moved quickly from front-page news to opinion and magazine coverage.

British frames suggested a cultural shift to a more American style of driving while American

coverage ignored the UK stories altogether.

> One leading transport editor called road rage a 'convenient myth' used to describe routine, road-related violence; he noted that, in October 1996, one of Britain's largest insurance brokers had forced 52,000 customers to buy road-rage coverage, yet a year later, there had not been a single related claim (Moore, 1997, quoted in Best & Furedi, 2001, p. 114).

Despite the increased coverage, Best and Furedi note that the numbers of violent acts associated

with driving in the UK actually decreased during the years when road rage was a common news

story. In both cases, most primary experts earned their paycheck from roadside assistance

agencies who stood to financially gain by selling products to protect fearful drivers. In both the

UK and the US, media coverage led to government attention despite a lack of real life incidents

to support media-fueled concerns.

Another hollow construct Best examined is what he called "the Satanic panic" (1993, pp.

130-138). He noted how American television talk shows and other prime time shows devoted

special episodes warning the public about Satanism from about 1983 to 1989, roughly. This

coverage led to books, magazine articles, and newspaper coverage, although specific incidents

were rarely defined. This attention led to special seminars for social workers and police officers,

instructing them on how to see the signs of these "occult or ritual crimes" (p. 130). The satanic

rituals were said to involve a "huge, powerful, secret conspiracy, a blood cult centered around

rituals of sexual abuse and human sacrifice. U.S. Satanists were estimated at more than one

million, their sacrificial victims at sixty thousand per year" (p. 130). Officials were warned that

this cult behaviour was linked to serial murders, cases of missing children, child sexual abuse,

and drugs. Practitioners and victims were linked with multiple personality disorder, heavy-metal

music, and fantasy role-playing games "in one great web of evil" (p. 130). Best cited a Ronald

Holmes (1989) book *Profiling Violent Crimes* as showing that Satanism appears in academic and

professional literature for "criminology, child welfare, psychiatry, and other helping professions"

(Best, 1993, p. 131). He also pointed to a Texas poll from the early 1990s that showed 63

percent of respondents characterizing Satanism as a very serious problem while another 23

percent thought of it as a somewhat serious problem.

Claims makers discussed and described the problem until a well-formed characterization

existed. The general public, as well as those dedicated to protecting them, knew well what a

Satanist looked like, did, and represented. Concerns of Satanic rituals then spread from the

United States to other English speaking countries such as Canada, England, and Australia (Best,

2013, p. 295). With all this coverage, the death toll and victim costs must have been blatant.

However, Best quoted FBI agent Kenneth Lanning about "the failure to find even one victim's

body" (1993, p. 136).

> Not only are no bodies found, but also, more important, there is no physical evidence that
> a murder took place. Many of those not in law enforcement do not understand that, while
> it is possible to get rid of a body, it is much more difficult to get rid of the physical
> evidence that a murder took place, especially a human sacrifice involving sex, blood, and
> mutilation . . . Those who accept these stories of mass human sacrifice would have us to
> believe that the Satanists and other occult practitioners are murdering more than twice as
> many people every year in this country as all other murders combined" (Best, 1993, p.
> 136).

Best examined the characterization of this social problem as well as the claims made. He then

contrasted these claims with the counterclaims of skeptics who had professional credibility. He

thus demonstrated the hollow nature of the satanic problem construction. Satanism, like road

rage, remains a term most people would recognize in a common social construct. Nevertheless,

each problem receives far less, if any current news coverage, representing a dated issue, one that

has been replaced for importance in the social problems marketplace. Other issues experience sustained coverage with bursts of attention as new arguments emerge to shift mindsets.

2.1.2.3 Position Issues

Some social problems engender deeply rooted binary positions for both claims makers and the public. Most agree that these issues represent noteworthy concern, yet consensus over the appropriate response to the issue is unlikely. Abortion is one such position issue. Given the long-standing nature of such an issue, social constructionists are less likely to adopt a critical stance and are more likely to examine type of and effectiveness of claims.

Lee (2001) considered the manner in which US and UK activists framed the condition "postabortion syndrome" to advocate for greater restriction of abortions. In the United States, abortion has long been considered a legal and political issue. Ever since the 1973 Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision, American women have been guaranteed the right to opt for pregnancy termination within the realm of certain term conditions that have varied by state and historical interpretation. The key word here is "right." Proponents for abortion have long relied on the mantra "pro-choice," emphasizing American values of freedom and choice. Those in opposition to this position make similar value appeals by calling for "pro-life." Neither party claims an "anti" stance, and both make value appeals. According to Lee (2001), pro-life advocates of the 1990s made claims that women who elected to terminate pregnancies were experiencing something they termed "Postabortion Syndrome" (PAS). These claims were broadly covered by journalists. Psychologists relied on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and its description of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to validate the claim. The surgeon general undertook a governmental investigation known as the Koop Inquiry. The policy outcome of this governmental action was a state-by-state informed consent law, requiring

women to sign a risk acknowledgement form before terminating a pregnancy (Lee, 2001). The

PAS claim gained some traction for pro-life advocates because instead of focusing on the rights

of the unborn child, a tired claim most opponents had grown deaf to hearing, trauma for the

woman cut at the value claims of pro-choice advocates who emphasize freedom of choice for the

pregnant woman.

In the UK, abortion has never been a major political or legal issue. The matter has

always been considered a medical one (Lee, 2001). If two doctors agree on the medical

necessity to terminate a pregnancy during the first 24 weeks of development, then any woman

may receive an abortion. Because the UK constructs abortion outside of politics, a medical

appeal is a more effective way for claims makers to gain advocates. After a medical report

praising improved methods suggested that women would now be able to see a doctor, terminate a

pregnancy, and recover in a matter of hours, critics emerged to question the potential

consequences of "lunchtime abortions" (Lee, p. 40). Claims makers adopted the PAS appeal,

sometimes calling it "postabortion trauma" or "postabortion syndrome" (p. 39). This move of the

PAS claim from the US to the UK is what Lee called a relational diffusion. Both countries share

a common language and share a history of considering abortion as a social problem. However,

the nature of the problem is medical in the UK and political in the US. British journalists

emphasized ongoing health issues for the potential mother, suggesting that abortion leads to a

woman's disease. While anti-abortion advocates in the UK raised medical rather than moral

concerns, they never received the same level of endorsement by large coalitions as US claims

makers did with the same PAS appeal. The government action suggested a UK Lord

Investigation. The Rawlinson Report showed that the participants of this investigation did not

include what Americans would call "pro-choice" participants. The overall reaction to this report

did not inspire a media frenzy. Medical journals recommended doctors follow-up with their patients after terminating pregnancies, and little media coverage continued (Lee, 2001).

Instead of critically examining the claim, Lee examined this position issue by comparing American and British treatment of PAS. She analyzed the history and cultural context and briefly discussed research supporting and refuting the claim, mostly analyzing how claims makers relied on medical and psychological experts to validate the claim. She examined how claims makers argued using medical precedent and relied on similar established medical criteria such as PTSD. This is a typical way in which analysis of position issues differs from that of hollow constructs.

Another interesting position issue that highlights the differences of how advocates construct social problems differently depending on cultural values is gun control. Lilly (2001) conducted a constructionist analysis of the claims making that led to the UK 1997 Firearms Act. Historically, Lilly claims that British citizens viewed guns as a cultural artifact, a possession of the gentry in reaction to the Boer War of 1899-1902. However, in 1987, Michael Ryan killed sixteen people and then himself in what journalists called the "Hungerford Massacre." This led to the 1988 Firearms Act in which automatic weapons were banned. Locals near the killings also voluntarily surrendered 48,000 firearms. After a 1996 school shooting in Scotland, in which sixteen children and one teacher were murdered, journalists referred back to the Hungerford Massacre and began questioning what they called the new "dangerous gun culture." Many reports sought to establish a pattern, something critical to the construction of social problems. Gun violence was no longer seen as an anomaly but as symptoms of a disease. They also made comparisons to American culture and suggested that gun ownership was irresponsible. "Constructionist analysts suggest that most successful claims contain 'cultural resonance,' or

threaten the mores and values of a society" (Lilly, p. 73). Lilly's analysis focused on the forms of appeals in news coverage. Journalists blamed the problem on guns leaking in from the EU and a gun culture seeping in from the US. Essentially, the argument was that guns were decidedly not British. The term "gun culture" was not used in earlier discourse of gun violence. Some coverage not only compared gun violence to American culture but also tied it to improper sexual mores. Each of these appeals relied on British values for their effectiveness. Following these reports, gun owners went from being respectable members of upper society to "nutters" (p. 83). Lilly conducted an "examination of claims and counter-claims" and analyzed cultural conditions influencing these claims. He pointed to government action such as the Firearms Act that resulted, he said, from polls and official inquiry.

In the process of establishing social problems, "New crimes offer the mass media, activists, government officials, and experts fresh stories" (Lilly, p. 85). They provide a platform for claims makers to restructure past incidents and establish a pattern. These claims are always culturally dependent. The British appeals reframed gun ownership as undesirable and relied on national loyalty, pointing blame at the EU and American influences. In the US, any mass media responses to gun violence face immediate opposition from powerful coalitions such as the National Rifle Association as well as freedom and rights claims based on the second amendment. Not all social problems create automatic opposition, though.

2.1.2.4 Valence Issues

American political scientists describe valence issues as those that possess a strongly symbolic character, elicit a strong, fairly uniform emotional response and do not engender an adversarial quality (Furedi, 2001, p. 94). Furedi (2001) examined the British and American construction of workplace bullying as a social problem. While "virtually any negative, uncivil

30

encounter can be and is defined as bullying" (Furedi, p. 89), workplace bullying "involves mainly 'subtle types of aggression, including ignoring a person's contributions, flaunting status, pulling rank, making unwanted eye contact, and openly belittling individuals'" (p. 89). His examination of the issue focused first on British claims then on American ones. "One reason why this campaign was so successful was that the issue of bullying was framed in a way that was unlikely to raise controversy" (p. 94). In 1991, Andrea Adams devoted two BBC radio news programs to the issue she called workplace bullying. She linked her discourse to schoolyard bullying and relied on UK reports showing high workplace harassment. Furedi noted that since these surveys were conducted by advocacy groups, the methodology and phrasing of questions was likely to produce desirable results. After starting the discussion on her radio programs, Adams published a book in 1992. She and a "small group of claims makers found influential allies in the British trade union movement" (Furedi, p. 92). This union power encouraged more discussion, often using the phrase "bullying at work." Victims also came forward, speaking as experts. As Joel Best noted, victims "possess the power to own and define social problems" (Furedi, p. 99). By 1996, most news media endorsed the term "workplace bullying." Alarmist reports, documentaries, surveys, and lawsuits led to a 1998 national campaign titled "No Excuse: Beat Bullying at Work." Furedi noted that "social problems do not simply appear out of nowhere" (p. 98). He noted that workplace bullying is considered a social problem in the UK, Sweden, and other Scandinavian countries. Gary and Ruth Namie are claims makers endeavoring to establish it as a North American social problem as well. Furedi noted that American claims lacked the backing of powerful work unions and therefore garnered less attention than those in the UK. While American claims makers successfully established the terminology of workplace bullying, their efforts led to little political or systematic action.

31

2.1.3 Conclusion

Some social constructionists approach analysis of social problems by examining the historical movement leading to the acknowledgment of social problems. Others choose to critically examine the validity of claims or the motivations of claims makers, looking for hollow constructs. Some analyze the effectiveness of rhetorical claims involved with deeply entrenched position issues. Those looking at social problems work examine the processes of reinforcing established issues in concrete cases. According to Best, strict constructionists would limit their analysis by refusing to evaluate the accuracy of claims while contextual constructionists allow for the full evaluation of social problems. Although Woolgar and Pawluch might consider this approach ontological gerrymandering because constructionist scholars would thus make certain objective claims, Best does not see this as a problem because social constructionists recognize that any objective claim only seems so once socially constructed. Thus the effective analysis of social problems may examine any aspect of the history, the claims, the claims makers, and the practitioners who reinforce the daily management of these issues and their social construction. In the next section, I examine the international history of cyberbullying as well as the Canadian claims and claims makers. It is through my analysis of print news stories that I consider the daily management of the issue and its social construction.

2.2 Cyberbullying Literature

2.2.1 An Emerging Canadian Social Problem

Cyberbullying is an emerging social problem that has gained advocacy across the globe and, following the high profile suicides of Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons, is currently in the stages of being established as a Canadian social problem. Extant research on cyberbullying focuses primarily on surveys and quantitative approaches aimed at establishing its status as a

problem worthy of social consideration. This research relies heavily on paper, phone, or online

surveys completed by adolescents and focuses largely on describing the profile of cyberbullies

and victims while distinguishing differences between bullying and cyberbullying. A review of

the literature reveals emerging experts and social actors advocating legal changes and

educational reform in response to what they portray as both a local and a global concern. Most of

this literature comes from psychological, legal, criminological, or educational perspectives.

What the literature lacks is an examination of the construction of cyberbullying as a

social problem. While many articles systematically consider high profile cases or legal

precedents, almost none investigate media treatment of the issue; rather, they tend to view

cyberbullying as an existing problem requiring measurement and intervention instead of one

socially constructed. Shariff (2009), a Canadian researcher, laments the lack of qualitative

studies. She notes that news media clearly frames cyberbullying according to certain patterns but

acknowledges a lack of research in this area (pp. 182-183). Perhaps the only study to specifically

address media framing of cyberbullying was conducted in New Zealand in 2011 (Thom,

Nakarada-Kordic, O'Brien, & Nairn). Thom et al. investigated media frames of three high profile

suicides attributed to cyberbullying. While this study serves as an example for cyberbullying

frame analysis, it does not consider media portrayals of Canadian cases, nor does it represent the

construction of cyberbullying as a Canadian social problem. One other potential exception is a

case study by Zinga (2010) that focuses on international cases and potential legal responses. In a

small part of this article, Zinga takes a brief look at media treatment of Megan Meier news

coverage (an American case) but does not specifically apply framing theory.

In an academic sense, cyberbullying is a young topic, receiving relatively little attention

until the past decade or so. While many studies seek to solidify prevalence rates, identify risk

factors and profiles of typical cyberbullies and their victims, others argue legal precedents and potential criminal code revisions. Still others proffer advice for parents, educators, and police officers. What current research on cyberbullying lacks is a qualitative examination of how media channels frame extreme cases to promote it as a social problem.

2.2.2 Definitions

Definitions of the term cyberbullying vary. However, many research studies begin their definition relying on Olweus' bullying work (see, for example, Erdur-Baker, 2010; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Kouri, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2008 and 2012; Rodkin & Fischer, 2012; Shariff, 2009; Sticca, Ruggieri, Alsaker, & Perren, 2013; Wachs, 2014; and Willard, 2007). His definition of bullying includes three distinct aspects that separate bullying from other forms of teasing or peer conflict. Bullying is aggressive behavior, repeated over time, and involving a power imbalance. Most researchers begin with those three components and then add some description of electronic communication methods. Nancy Willard includes the following behaviors with her definition: flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing and trickery, exclusion, cyberstalking, and cyberthreats (2007, pp. 5-16).

Some definitions are overly limiting. For example, Dianne Hoff and Sidney Mitchell (2010) rely on a 2006 Patchin and Hinduja definition that narrows cyberbullying to electronic text. Such definitions would not include many of the high profile cases that primarily involve photo and video sharing. Other definitions are overly broad, allowing for common disagreements to fall within the net of cyberbullying. One Hinduja and Patchin (2012a) definition includes the phrase "when someone posts something online about another person that they don't like" (p. 540). If the ontology of cyberbullying includes anything posted online that is not agreeable to one party, the implication would be extremely limiting to free expression. Perhaps the most

34

concise definition calls cyberbullying "an aggressive act or behavior that is carried out using electronic means by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Slonje, Smith, & Frisen, 2013, p. 26). Sevcikova, Smahel, and Otavova (2014) phrase a very similar definition, noting that repetition and an imbalance of power are each key traits (p. 93).

Part of the struggle to establish cyberbullying as a social problem distinct from bullying resides in debates over how to define cyberbullying. Some, such as Willard (2007), note that because physical power is difficult to convey over electronic means, an imbalance of power is not as clearly tied to cyberbullying as it is to bullying. However, physical size is not the only source of power. In virtual environments, technological expertise can easily separate a cyberbully from his or her victim (McQuade, Colt, & Meyer, 2009). If the target of the bullying does not understand how to block or remove offensive material or, more importantly, if the target does not recognize and cannot easily identify the perpetrator, there is a clear imbalance of power. In a 2007 study by Kowalski and Limber of 3,700 middle school students, the researchers noted that about half of the study participants who reported incidents of cyberbullying did not know the identity of their perpetrator (Kowalski et al., 2012).

When peer harassment occurs in known social communities, peers carry social status and real world power differences with them into the virtual environment as well. This is more evident in the Parsons case. Even when the victim knows the person harassing him or her and feels equally capable of utilizing the technology involved, a feeling of powerlessness may still pervade. "A different aspect of power imbalance in cyberbullying has been suggested by Dooley, Pyzalski, and Cross (2009); that since the material exists in cyberspace it is harder to remove or to avoid it, and that this in itself can make the victim feel more powerless" (Slonje et al., 2013, p.

35

27). In a meta-analysis of 131 cyberbullying studies, researchers identified several potential

sources for cyberbullying power imbalances including the following: physical, social, relational,

and psychological; they imply that technological savvy and anonymity can play impactful roles

(Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014).

Some might question how repetition applies to cyberbullying since even a single picture

might be considered a source of torment. However, in cases severe enough to be called

cyberbullying, even a single picture, such as what Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons faced,

tends to appear repeatedly as peers forward the image and then comment on it. The viral nature

of cyberspace allows single images, such as Ghyslain Raza's *Star Wars* video, to spread

relentlessly. As Slonje et al. noted, "One cyberbullying act may readily 'snowball' out of the

initial control of the bully, due to the technology used" (2013, p. 26). Even if critics argue that

cyberbullying does not involve ongoing harassment, as noted earlier, not every cyberbullying

study includes repetition as part of its definition. Rivers, Chesney, and Coyne, for example, cite

several prominent studies that include "single or occasional reports, as well as those that have

suggested a concerted campaign against an individual" (2011, p. 214).

In defining cyberbullying, many scholars make a distinction between it and what they

refer to as "traditional bullying" (e.g. Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2008, 2012; Li,

2007; McQuade et al., 2009; and Slonje et al., 2013). I have, heretofore, simply referred to them

as bullying and cyberbullying. I do recognize what Shariff observes: "Historically bullying was

not seen as a problem that needed attention but rather has been accepted as a fundamental and

normal part of childhood" (2009, p. 23). Nevertheless, choosing the term "traditional" to

describe bullying suggests a connotation of approval. Traditions are cultural and are passed

down to subsequent generations. I contend that even if bullying did not receive critical attention

36

until the 1980s, it should never be described with such an accepting term. However, I do see

some benefit in adding a separate adjective to describe bullying when it is being compared with

cyberbullying. Therefore, I use the term "conventional bullying" when comparing the two. The

literature contains a few alternate terms such as face-to-face (Den Hamer, 2014; Butler, Kift &

Campbell, 2009), schoolyard (Shariff, 2009), and classic (Benzmiller, 2013) bullying. None of

these alternatives seems to fully encompass the behaviors commonly attributed to this term,

however.

Most researchers see an overlap between conventional bullying and cyberbullying.

Nevertheless, many draw clear distinctions between them. This is an important step in

establishing cyberbullying as a social problem. Rodkin and Fischer (2007), for example, note

that unlike conventional bullying, cyberbullying is ubiquitous, relentless, anonymous, extended

in physical distance, hard to detect, of variable duration, and reaching both an unknown and

potentially infinite audience. Other ways cyberbullying differs includes the following: it depends

on technical expertise; it is primarily indirect rather than face-to-face; the bully does not

immediately see the victim's reaction; there are more complex bystander roles; it is less about

gaining status than conventional bullying; there is an increased breadth to the potential audience;

and it is more difficult to escape (Slonje et al., 2013). Kowalski et al. (2014) add to that list the

delayed response time of cyberbullying since conventional bullying often involves the instant

gratification of seeing the victim's emotions. Uhls (2012) agrees with many of those differences

but suggests that due to the separation between victim and bully, cyberbullies may not realize the

impact of their actions, noting a higher rate of depression among cyberbullying victims as

compared to conventional victims. Holladay (2012) also suggests that parents may be more

aware of their children's involvement with conventional bullying than cyberbullying because the

actions and effects are harder to see given that parents are largely unaware of their kids' online

activities. McQuade et al. (2009) list many of the above distinctions, adding that it is much easier

in cyberspace to falsify and hide identities. Shariff (2009) also expresses concern regarding the

prevalent sexual and homophobic harassment in cyberspace, adding that cyberbullying

constitutes more permanence of expression than conventional bullying. Finally, Kowalski et al.

(2008) add that victims are reluctant to tell adults about the harassment because they fear the

consequences of phone and computer restrictions. Certainly the conditions of electronic

communications alter the conditions of bullying. While many cases of peer harassment may

involve an overlap of conventional and cyberbullying behaviors, the distinctions are clear

enough to cause concern for many and to justify distinct terms for the separate forms of

harassment as advocates seek acceptance of the term cyberbullying.

2.2.3 Prevalence

Given the broad range of cyberbullying definitions, it is not surprising that its reported

prevalence ranges anywhere from 4.5 to 43 percent. Many studies report a 25-30 percent range

of victimization. In fact, studies that provide particularly broad definitions return much higher

results. For example, one of the options in the iSAFE America study found that 57 percent of

respondents "reported experiences of someone saying hurtful or angry things to them online"

(Lankshear & Knobel, 2010). This definition, however, does not rely on the qualifiers of

repetition or of any kind of power imbalance. Perhaps the most extreme result comes from a

Juvonen and Gross study in 2008. They report 72 percent of their survey respondents as having

experienced "mean things" online (Kowalski et al., 2014).

There are several other factors that influence the wide range of prevalence findings.

Results are difficult to compare across studies since some researchers limit the response to the

past two months, or the past year, or ever. Another inconsistency that can stimulate varied

results is the prompt provided for respondents. Most studies measuring cyberbullying prevalence

are surveys; however, while some use the term cyberbullying, others do not, simply describing

behaviors considered cyberbullying by the researchers. The Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS)

is an example of one that asked for specific behaviors. Kowalski et al. note that "prevalence rates

are likely to be lower when using a single, global item to assess overall bullying behavior than

when using multiple specific items to assess different forms of bullying behavior" (2014, p. 37).

In order to test a similar hypothesis, Ybarra and Mitchell (2007) conducted a study in which

participants received one of four surveys: one had a definition and the term bully; one had only a

definition; one had only the term bully; the last had no definition or term; each of the surveys

included descriptions of behaviors the researchers considered to be bullying. The results

indicated the highest prevalence of bullying victimization from the group who was given neither

a definition nor the term bully. This is interesting because it is evidence that use of these socially

constructed terms carries with them certain preconceived notions that alter reporting data.

Survey findings are hampered by the inherent survey bias associated with the connotations and

beliefs participants associate with the language used.

The most recent major Canadian study acknowledges this concern. Pettalia, Levin, &

Dickinson (2013) describe specific behaviors considered by Nancy Willard to represent the

spectrum of cyberbullying behaviors. The survey included 260 Ontario students aged 12-15.

Their survey showed that 95 percent of these students use the internet two days per week or

more. The majority of the students were coded as combined cyberbully/cybervictims (44.6%).

The next group consisted of those not involved (33.1%). Cyberbullying victims came next

(17.3%) with the smallest group being cyberbullies (5%). The students were far more likely to

report cyberbullying to friends than to their parents or teachers. The researchers questioned how much of this peer reporting might also be an extension of the cyberbullying in the form of gossip. Overall, this study shows that Canadian students use the internet regularly, and at least two thirds of them are involved in cyberbullying in one way or another. One aspect of this study that is unclear is what part repetition of behaviors played in the students' self-reporting.

A review of 29 studies conducted in 12 countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, and USA)[1] shows that international cyberbullying prevalence varies by country. Despite the variance in statistical findings over the twelve countries involved, there are several trends in the numbers that hold true across each of these studies.

The first trend common in these studies is that cyberbullying is less common than other forms. Some, such as bullying expert Olweus (2012), argue that cyberbullying concerns are overly inflated and that public focus should remain on conventional bullying. Indeed, all of the 28 studies that measured cyberbullying against conventional bullying reported prevalence for conventional bullying showing a higher rate, most reporting it about twice as common as cyberbullying. For example, Li (2007) reports 54% as conventional bullying victims and 25% as cyberbullying victims; 32% were bullies and 15% cyberbullies. Sabella et al. (2013) quote the National Center for Educational Statistics 2013 Report finding that 27.8% of students claim to be bullying victims with 9% claiming to be cyberbullying victims; they also cite Ybarra et al.

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[1] Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler, & Kift, 2014; Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Estevez, Villardon, Calvete, Padilla, & Orue (2010); Festl & Quandt, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2012b; Lankshear & Knobel, 2010; McQuade, Colt, & Meyer, 2009; Li, 2006, 2007; Olenik-Shmesh, Heiman, & Eden, 2014; Pettalia, Levin, & Dickinson, 2013; Schultze-Krumbholz, Jakel, Schultze, & Scheithauer, 2014; Sticca, Ruggieri, Alsaker, & Perren, 2013; Wade & Beran, 2011; Walrave & Heirman, 2010; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007.

(2012) for finding 25% bullying victims and 10% cyberbullying victims; Swearer (2012) reports

the same numbers with 25% conventional bullying in American schools and only 10%

cyberbullied. These studies agree that there is a clear overlap between conventional bullying and

cyberbullying. As Rodkin and Fischer claim, "Cyberbullying and traditional bullying may be

gateways for one another . . . the existence of one makes the other more likely" (2012, p. 630).

Even studies that emphasize the unique nature of cyberbullying tend to acknowledge the

likelihood of cyberbullies and victims to be involved as well with conventional bullying in some

form or another. Hinduja & Patchin (2012a) acknowledge Olweus's concerns that bullying

remains more prevalent in schools but contend that cyberbullying still deserves attention in its

own right.

Most of the international studies sought to separate respondents into categories such as

cyberbullies, cybervictims, and uninvolved. However, seven of the 29 studies also allowed a

category for those coded as combined cyberbully/victims. Most research discussing bullying

traits or effects acknowledge an overlap between cyberbullies and victims. Rodkin and Fischer

(2012) argue that bullying is a relationship. They admonish researchers to resist coding

respondents into categories of victim and perpetrator. "This procedure puts bullies and victims

into separate boxes and overemphasizes their separateness . . . Reality is more complicated" (p.

631). Kowalski et al. agree. "Bullying is more accurately understood as a group phenomenon in

which children may play a variety of roles" (Kowalski et al., 2008, pp. 32-33). They list a

continuum of eight roles participants may take ranging from the person who initiates the bullying

to the one who is bullied, noting overlap and movement between roles. An important lesson here

is that both bullying and cyberbullying are phenomena involving complicated social roles

between many parties.

Bauman, Toomey, & Walker see the overlap between victim and bully as evidence that power is less of an issue. "The strong correlation between being victimized by cyberbullying and cyberbullying others indicates that the dynamics of cyberbullying may be different from traditional bullying. Cyberbullying may be more of a reciprocal behavior and less about power differential" (2013, p. 347). A public attitude that the victim deserved harassment due to his or her retaliatory actions as a bully is a potential hurdle for victims' advocates. Scholarly attempts to categorize and quantify this social problem risk reifying complex issues and varied instances into overly simplified catch phrases, yet some simplifications may be necessary for broad public awareness campaigns.

2.2.4 Characteristics of Those Involved

One of the most controversial findings across cyberbullying studies involves the role gender plays for those involved. Many studies strongly assert that males are more likely to be cyberbullies and that females are more likely to be victims (e.g., Festl & Quandt, 2013; Lankshear et al., 2010; Li, 2006, 2007, although the 2007 study shows no gender differences for victims; and Pettalia et al., 2013). Others assert that females are more likely to be victims but that no significant gender differences exist among perpetrators (Wade & Beran, 201). However, more researchers acknowledge conflicting gender results between studies, some showing no significant difference between gender roles for victims and perpetrators and others showing reversed results from those previously cited. This has led many scholars to report gender findings with acknowledgment of the conflicting results (e.g., Kowalski et al., 2012, 2014; McQuade et al., 2009; Rodkin & Fischer, 2012; Shariff, 2009; and Slonje et al., 2013). Hoff and Mitchell (2010) provide one plausible explanation for the variance in these findings. They conducted a second analysis of their 2007 cyberbullying study, looking only at the gender results

by examining whole surveys individually instead of looking at a single question across the entire respondent sample. They uncovered several inconsistent gender results. For example, there were female respondents who self-identified as victims but seemed to admit to bullying behaviors in open-ended responses. Likewise, male respondents often denied being victims but in open-response comments would discuss how they retaliated when they were cyberbullied. Hoff and Mitchell concluded that people give socially desirable responses when completing surveys.

While actual online behavior might not follow typical gender norms, survey respondents seem far more likely to admit being victimized if female and being aggressive if male. Early Canadian cyberbullying studies reflect this finding (Li, 2006, 2007). Canadian characterizations of cyberbullying may rest on gender expectations; however, mixed gender results and findings from research less prone to survey bias suggest that cyberbullying may involve males and females alike.

Most research demonstrates the bulk of cyberbullying existing in junior high school years with a peak at about eighth grade (Kowalski et al., 2014). In fact, Wachs (2014) claims that grade eight students are four and a half times more likely to experience cyberbullying than those in other grades. The Pre-Teen Caravan survey shows that only 17% of preteens aged 6-11 experienced cyberbullying in the past year while 36% of teens aged 12-17 had (McQuade et al., 2009, pp. 86-87). Walrave and Heirman (2010) also note that perpetrators tend to be older than victims. These findings correlate with the two highest profile Canadian cases. For Parsons, her cyberbullying started when she was 15; Todd's began at age 14. Todd's harasser was an unknown adult male while Parsons faced cyberbullying from peers her own age.

Cyberbullying has received enough global attention for researchers to distinguish cultural trends. Several researchers note a trend that UK and Australian cyberbullies seem to prefer using

mobile phones while US and Canadian cyberbullies are more likely to use the internet to harass (Kowalski et al., 2008; Shariff, 2009). Zinga (2010) supports this observation, noting that the US and Canada are more likely to produce ranking websites such as schoolscandals.com and a Canadian website that launched "National Kick a Ginger Day." Ellen Kraft (2010) points to controversies surrounding the American website juicycampus.com, which was designed to spread college campus gossip.

Shariff (2009) makes several observations of eastern cultural cyberbullying differences. China, for example, considers internet pranks (kuso) to be a socially acceptable form of entertainment. Japanese cyberbullies, like UK ones, tend to prefer texting and email over social media or internet avenues. However, unlike western cultures, Japanese cyberbullies tend to work more as groups to collectively isolate their victim. In South Korea, cyberbullying involving mobs publishing personal contact information and financial records is so rampant all police stations now include a cyber-terror unit. South Korea also passed a 2007 law preventing ISP users from hiding their identity (Shariff, 2009). India, on the other hand, does not consider cyberbullying to be a social problem. Rather, it is socially accepted between castes. This leads to prevalent electronic harassment, often related to sexual harassment (Shariff, 2009). My analysis of the Canadian construction of cyberbullying reveals an emphasis on the non-consensual distribution of intimate images as well as written electronic messages as the most prevalent form harassment.

Many researchers seek to create cyberbully and cybervictim profiles. They aim to identify risk factors for each. This is part of the public awareness campaign aimed at finding solutions to the problem. Marginalized groups are, unsurprisingly, at greater risk of being cyberbullied. "Bullying often crosses gender lines, bullying behavior often involves sexual epithets, and is disproportionally directed at victims due to perceived sexual orientation. Any

notable difference between people that can be associated with power differentials, such as religion, disability, or ethnicity, has the potential to be seized upon as an object of harassment" (Rodkin & Fischer, 2012, p. 639). Shariff (2009) confirms this assumption, finding that typical physical/overt cyberbullying tends to involve sexual harassment or homophobic or racial threats as well as those against special needs children or those who are perceived as different for being too poor or too rich, usually as evidenced by clothing. Psychological/covert cyberbullying usually originates with social inequalities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and accent or else educational differences such as particularly good students or those with obvious learning disabilities. These findings suggest that anyone who stands out might be at risk of covert or overt bullying.

Cyberbullying, by definition, involves an abuse of power. Many of the victim profiles scholars construct reveal that reality. "Unpopular, rejected, aggressive boys are more likely to harass girls, whereas socially connected bullies tend to demonstrate within-sex bullying and dominance against unpopular targets. Boys use and are called homophobic epithets with increasing frequency over seventh to twelfth grade" (Rodkin & Fischer, 2012, p. 634). Sternheimer (2013) quotes two studies showing that homosexual teens are twice as likely to be cyberbullied.

The Crimes against Children Research Center "found that girls who had high levels of conflict with parents or were highly troubled were more likely than other girls to have close online relationships. Boys who had low levels of communication with parents or were highly troubled were more likely than other boys to form such relationships" (Willard, 2007, p. 57). Willard also notes that cyberbullying and sexual harassment overlap. Youths growing up in aggressive/abusive environments and those with less supervision are more likely to cyberbully

45

(2007). McQuade et al. agree: "In short, Internet harassers were found to have psychological issues and weak emotional relationships with caregivers (among other issues), and are more likely to experience harassment before or after they themselves harass" (2009, p. 81). Scholarship identifying risk factors supports the notion that society can respond to cyberbullying in some way by at least understanding predicators and responding to them.

2.2.5 Effects

Given that most of the highest profile cyberbullying cases make headlines only after the victim dies by suicide, it is not surprising that suicide is often discussed in correlation with cyberbullying. Karen Sternheimer (2013) recognizes the irony that though teens are often presumed to be at high risk of suicide, a 2009 CDC report shows that of all the age groups, teens are the least likely to die by suicide. This statistic is often misunderstood because teens are highly unlikely to die due to illness or health related problems. This translates into the more common statistic scholars (e.g. Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2013) cite from the 2009 CDC report: suicide is the third leading cause of death among teens. Social advocates present statistics from this CDC report, emphasizing different aspects of the findings, in order to better support their claims. For those who think cyberbullying suicides are creating a public overreaction, the finding that teens are the least likely age group to complete suicide attempts works best. Those seeking to advance anti-cyberbullying measures are more likely to cite the notion that suicide is among the leading causes of death for teens. Many note that bullying victims and perpetrators alike are more likely to attempt and to complete suicide (Hepburn, Azrael, Molnar, & Miller, 2012; Bauman et al., 2013).

Hinduja and Patchin set out to discover whether the same was true for cyberbullying. They found that victims of both conventional and cyberbullying were more likely to have

46

suicidal thoughts and attempts than non-victims. Both cyberbullies and victims were more

connected with suicide than conventional bullies or victims, and the group with the highest

likelihood of suicidal ideation was the cyberbully/victim (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). They

temper these findings with acknowledging other factors in many of the high profile cases noting

that they usually "coincided with other issues (such as offline mistreatment, emotional and

psychological problems, academic difficulties, low self-esteem, clinical depression, and a lack of

support structure, etc.)" (p. 208). This led the researchers to declare that "it is unlikely that

experience with cyberbullying *by itself* leads to youth suicide. Rather, it tends to exacerbate

instability and hopelessness in the minds of adolescents already struggling with stressful life

circumstances" (p. 217, emphasis in original).

These statements open a murky set of assumptions. Many studies establish a correlation

between cyberbullying and depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and other mental health

problems (e.g. Beckman, Hagquist, & Hellstrom, 2014; McQuade, 2009; Olenik-Shmesh, et al.

2014; Reinberg, 2012; Shariff, 2009). An Australian study that supports these findings notes an

important distinction, however: "Although these longitudinal studies are not proof of a causal

relationship between bullying victimisation and mental health problems, they do suggest a

cyclical pattern of influence" (Campbell et al. 2014). Do depressed and anxious teens become

victims more often than those without mental health problems or does victimization from

cyberbullying lead to mental health problems? If the suicide victims in high profile cases all

suffered from other emotional and psychological problems and seemed to endure conventional

bullying as well as cyberbullying, how does one determine what causes the other? No existing

research answers that question. What is clear is that there is an overlap between perpetration and

victimization, an overlap between conventional and cyberbullying, and an association between mental health concerns and suicide with cyberbullying.

Victimization may also be associated with later deviant behaviors. A Devlin 1997 study found that most British prison inmates were severely bullied as youths (McQuade, 2009). The implication is that a consequence of victimization is a likelihood to externalize the pain of former harassment by acting out against a society that did not protect them. McQuade et al. (2009) report similar findings, claiming that "boys identified as bullies are 4 times more likely to have a criminal conviction by age 24" (p. 26). Lester, Cross, and Shaw conducted a longitudinal study, finding that those victimized by cyberbullying at the start of secondary school (age 12) were more likely to have "engagement in problem behaviors" (2014, p. 206) in grade 9 (age 14). They conclude that "adolescents who bully and/or cyberbully others may feel that they have crossed the boundary of acceptable conduct and become part of a 'deviant' subculture, where these behaviours are more prevalent and acceptable" (pp. 206-207). McQuade et al. add that being either a victim or bully raises the odds of being violent in the future. Bullies, they say, are more likely to get into physical fights, damage property, steal, drop out, carry weapons, and own guns (2009, p. 29). These effects are not unique to perpetrators. They add that cyberbullying victims are more likely to have school behavior problems such as being truant as well as carrying a weapon and being disciplined at school more often.

Not all articles discussing cyberbullying seek to validate its status (e.g. Cesaroni, Downing, & Alvi, 2012; Cox, 2012). Social actors who demonstrate resistance to claims that cyberbullying is a social problem often criticize highly publicized cases. These girls, after all, suffered from many other problems in their lives. These girls may have killed themselves, but teens are among the least likely group to commit suicide, and suicide rates among teens are not

as high as they once were. Maybe these girls deserved some of their treatment as a result of their risky behavior decisions. They might have even retaliated against others in some way. The overall argument is that their deaths are unfortunate, but they are not really victims. The reality, according to the literature, is that cyberbullying is highly correlated with many problematic social conditions. A youth at risk due to less than ideal social factors is also more likely to be a victim of peer harassment. These are all obstacles faced by cyberbullying victims' advocates. One potential answer to why cyberbullying matters as a social problem, despite the fact that it is less prevalent than conventional bullying is the extreme and lasting effects for all parties involved. Several claims makers seek to redirect the conversation of cyberbullying by redressing a list of myths they identify and refute (e.g. McQuade et al., 2009; Sabella, et al. 2013; Shariff & Churchill, 2010).

2.2.6 Remedies and Advice

The ultimate question once a social problem is established is what to do about it. Cyberbullying literature is replete with recommendations and advice for parents, schools, law makers, and the public. As cyberbullying gained acceptance as a social problem, scholars often reviewed cases and legal precedents according to each country involved. Butler et al. considered Australian case law in 2009. Gardner performed a UK legal review in 2010. Several scholars took on US legal reviews at about the same time (Cheung, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2008, 2012; Meredith, 2010; Pauken, 2010; Stefkovich, Crawford, & Murphy, 2010; Zinga, 2010). Raboy and Shtern (2010) conducted an international review of legal cases. In most instances, the purpose of these legal reviews is to explain legal options and means for redress. Most American reviews note that the US approach to cyberbullying is dominated by the notion of imminent

49

physical harm (Cheung, 2012). Following high profile school shootings, Americans have little

tolerance for threats of violence; however, free speech usually trumps all other concerns.

Lidsky and Garcia (2012) review US legal cases in order to justify their case that

educational intervention is preferable to passing new laws for cyberbullying. "The critical

constitutional flaw in much of the new criminal legislation is that, in its attempt to 'eliminate'

cyberbullying, it conflates the definition of cyberbullying as a social problem with the legal

definition of cyberbullying as a crime, leading to laws that violate the First Amendment" (Lidsky

& Garcia, 2012). Cox (2012) agrees that society should leave cyberbullying intervention to

schools and parents, not to police. Shariff agrees: "We always believe that the law will resolve

everything and that after we punish the perpetrators, all will be well. Regrettably, this is never

the case" (2009, p. 6). In contrast, Swearer (2012) claims that prevention programs do little to

reduce bullying saying instead that programs that emphasize reporting and punishing are more

effective. Cassidy, Brown, and Jackson (2012) share an interesting incident from their study that

might support this claim. Following a school assembly meant to prevent cyberbullying, a group

of students decided to target one student using the very techniques they were advised against in

the assembly. "One of the perpetrators admitted that they got the idea from the assembly and that

they were also testing out the policy to see if the punishment would be doled out" (p. 525).

Though many, such as the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (2012), advocate for

reliance on existing laws over actions to pass new ones, educators may find themselves unable to

enforce anti-cyberbullying policies without sufficient legal backing.

Several researchers offer advice for schools in how to prevent and address cyberbullying

(Kowalski et al., 2012; McQuade et al., 2009; Willard, 2007). Rodkin and Fischer (2012) are

particular advocates for schools intervening in cases of cyberbullying. "Part of teacher

development should consist of training in classroom management that increases attention and responsiveness to the development of unhealthy peer social dynamics" (p. 635). This view assumes that better teacher training could improve classroom climates enough to reduce peer victimization. "One goal for research on bullying should be to provide educators with knowledge and means to scaffold peer social ecologies, putting educators in a position to provide an ongoing risk assessment regarding student social networks rather than reactive zero-tolerance identify-and-segregate procedures that exclusively punish and exclude children who sometimes bully" (Rodkin & Fischer, 2012, p. 640). Positive school climates are associated with lower cyberbullying prevalence (Kowalski et al., 2014). In the US, nearly all states have responded to bullying and cyberbullying by passing laws. The majority of those laws, however, focus attention on requiring school districts to have policies and prevention measures in place. No federal legislative proposals have moved past committee reviews to become actual legislation.

Despite the vast rhetoric arguing one intervention method over another, very little research has evaluated the actual effectiveness of any prevention methods. Both New Zealand and Australia, however, have implemented interesting, comprehensive programs to address bullying and cyberbullying. The New Zealand program Kia Kaha calls on multiple stakeholders such as police, school administration and teachers, students, parents, and the community at large to work together at preventing bullying. Research shows that schools and communities involved with the program have lower rates of bullying than those who do not or who only implement limited aspects of the program (Palmer & Raskauskas, 2010). One very promising aspect of programs like this is the coordination between police officers and schools, thus preventing the tendency to try and make intervention someone else's responsibility. An Australian project titled "SuperclubsPLUS" works to teach students responsible internet practices and use (Masters &

51

Yelland, 2010). This program is modelled after a similar one tried in the UK. SuperclubsPLUS provides on online social networking environment for elementary students. It is interesting that so much of the cyberbullying literature seeks to establish aspects of the problem and make recommendations for stake holders while very little of the research involves intervention measures.

Research considering remedies specific to Canada are not as prolific as those in other countries. This reflects the recent status of cyberbullying as a Canadian problem. Broll and Huey (2014) note that Nova Scotia, Regina, Saskatchewan, Port Coquitlam, and British Columbia all have by-laws prohibiting cyberbullying with fines and jail time up to 90 days and $2,000. Smaller communities such as Blackfalds, AB and Hanna, AB have fines up to $10,000 for repeat offenders. Ng (2012) reviews American and Canadian legal precedents claiming that after looking at American efforts to make cyberbullying a criminal offense, it is not the best course for Canada to take. "Using school resources to educate students, parents and others regarding the social unacceptability and consequences of bullying online would be more effective than criminal prosecution" (Ng, 2012, p. 81). Shariff (2009) agrees. After reviewing international case laws, she argues that it is always a choice to follow a law and that real change must come from within. She also argues that Canada has more of an expectation for teachers to monitor the social development of students than other nations like the US and claims that if doctors can be sued for malpractice, teachers should face greater obligations for the psychological health of their students (p. 91).

2.2.7 Conclusion

Cyberbullying has gained global acceptance as a social problem, usually on the heels of media reports of extreme cases such as teen suicides attributed to ongoing harassment.

Movement around the globe has spurred a great deal of cyberbullying research in recent years.

Just the 29 studies mentioned in the international review involve more than 32,000 total

participants. A cyberbullying definition seems to be solidifying as intentional harm perpetuated

by the use of electronic communication methods over an extended period of time and involving a

power imbalance between the perpetrator(s) and the victim. Prevalence rates vary depending on

the survey measurement tool but seem to be between about 25-30% of students victimized. It is

clear that conventional bullying is still more prevalent than cyberbullying. However, there is a

recognizable overlap between these practices. There is also strong evidence of ongoing effects

such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and suicide ideation for victims and perpetrators

alike. Cyberbullying is about power abuse, and marginalized groups are more likely to be

victimized. Public arguments for methods to prevent or redress cyberbullying often amount to a

debate of whether it should be a school matter or a legal one. Very few researchers have

examined actual intervention measures. However, comprehensive programs in New Zealand and

Australia show promise, if they can be reproduced elsewhere.

Lankshear and Knobel (2010) observe a trend that cyberbullying research often reflects a

pattern in which advocates seek to "reify, measure and treat." They compare this historically

with the literacy movement for public education. Both efforts, they claim, oversimplify complex

problems by trying to reduce them to simple issues that can be measured and corrected. As

Canada debates cyberbullying through the mass media and in political courts, the findings of this

literature review should prove instructive. Indeed, cyberbullying is an emerging global social

problem and, following several high profile deaths, it is currently under review by the court of

public opinion in Canada. However, most existing research approaches cyberbullying as if it is

an existing problem, one they can measure and define. They seek to profile victims and

53

perpetrators while struggling with survey results that indicate blurry lines between bullies and victims. What the literature lacks is an examination of cyberbullying from a constructionist approach, recognizing that social problems are framed, constructed, and adopted. Such research requires a critical review of media outlets as a public forum for debating, establishing, and constructing this social problem. In my next chapter, I will outline how framing theory best applies to the analysis of cyberbullying as mediated through mass media.

Chapter Three: Framing Theory: A Multi-faceted Paradigm

3.1 Introduction

In order to apply a constructionist approach rather than the more common a priori stance taken in the literature, I will be using framing theory to position my analysis of news media treatment of cyberbullying. Framing theory is one of the more mature and fully developed concepts in communication studies. It works well with social problems research because of its emphasis on the style of presentation claims makers adopt. Frame analysis is important because it reveals the subtle beliefs that affect message delivery and prime an audience to endorse the ideology promoted by claims makers of social problems. In this chapter, I begin by defining frame theory. Much of the criticism of framing theory focuses on either the overlap between the concept of framing and other terms that might be applied in its place or researcher application of the theory. Once I define framing in general, I address these concerns by creating a taxonomy that positions ideology, agenda setting, priming, framing, collective action frames, cultural stock frames, primary frameworks, and schemata as separate concepts. I conclude the chapter by addressing concerns of whether framing lacks a stable paradigm and requires a single, unified method of application. This discussion includes ways framing is applied to both a sociological and psychological research. Lastly, I discuss ways in which framing is applied to news reporting.

3.2 Definition

According to a review of mass communication journals, researchers used framing theory more than any other from 2000 to 2004 (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). It is a favorite theory among mass media scholars. The concept of framing really begins with Erving Goffman. His 1974 book *Frame Analysis* laid out the primary framework that researchers have adapted to

55

several fields of study and applied in various ways over the succeeding decades. Goffman's

frame analysis begins by questioning how individuals make sense of a given moment. The way

an individual interprets a set of events is based on social understanding, not just private

interpretation. One frame he focuses on, for example, is the theatrical frame. If a communicative

event is framed as performative, the audience associates notions of fiction with any meaning

conveyed or perceived. The theatrical frame is not a concept individually conceived each time it

is encountered; it is a frame recognizable to all. Each given situation is framed with different

contexts that shape the interpretation of the event.

Broadly speaking, the conception of framing developed into to what Porismita Borah

(2011) called the sociological and the psychological foundations. Frame analysis in the field of

psychology tends to focus on individual cognitive schemata while sociological analysis sees

frames as part of a larger discourse (Bruggemann, 2014, p. 63). Communication studies falls

under the umbrella of sociological frame foundations. "In general, this research tends to focus on

the 'words, images, phrases, and presentation styles' (Druckman, 2001, p. 227) that are used to

construct news stories and the processes that shape this construction" (Borah, p. 247). Even

within the limited sociological foundation of framing, however, the actual practice of applying

framing theory to research varies greatly. This has led some to criticize the theory. Despite the

critics, however, framing continues its broad use. Because of the frequency of its application and

the need for scholars to question and defend it, framing theory has blossomed into a practical and

useful perspective for communication scholars.

3.3 Clarification of Terms

Framing theory relies on many core concepts. These terms must be held distinctively to

apply framing theory in any meaningful way. Debates surrounding the lines distinguishing one

term from another are ongoing. Like everything else, these terms are socially constructed and therefore subject to change based on the agreement of social actors. For the sake of this research, I group these terms in a ladder of abstraction like Russian dolls. The most concrete of these concepts is schemata, followed by primary frameworks, cultural stocks of frames, and collective action frames. Surrounding collective action frames are the three concepts of framing, priming, and agenda setting, which all work together. The most abstract level surrounding each of these concepts is ideology.

As noted in the social problems section of chapter two, Joel Best identifies six stages in the process of social problems. This begins with claims making, followed by media coverage. The third stage is public reaction and then policy making. The fifth stage is social problems work followed by policy outcomes. Advocates of social problems move their causes through these stages. Framing theory takes a close examination at the first two or three stages of this process. In order to achieve policy making, claims makers must activate public reaction through the media coverage of their claims. The intention is to set an agenda by priming the public toward their cause. Such priming relies on set ideology. This ideology is determined by the collective action frames the claims makers successfully activate. These collective action frames call on a stock of cultural frames, ones with resonance because they are situated in a manner that supports existing cultural assumptions. This cultural stock exists due to the primary frames individuals utilize to make sense of complex information. Finally, all frames rely on an organized set of schemata.

Applications of framing theory vary in their definition of the terms frame and framing. This is one of the criticisms of this theory. However, many researchers rely on Entman's (1993) definition.

57

> "Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52).

Framing is an interpretation and presentation of reality. For Goffman, to frame is to "locate, perceive, identify, and label" (1974, p. 21). Kitzinger (2007) compares framing to photography. To reconstruct a scene, a photographer makes choices about what details remain in focus, which are out of view, and which are left in the background, as well as how fuzzy those background details look. In this manner, a photographer "frames a particular view" (Kitzinger, 2007, p. 134). This metaphor supports Reese's claim that "Frames organize and structure, and thus are bigger than topics" (2010, p. 18). In the photography metaphor, an analyst might describe the subject of the photo as the topic while the choices about focus, detail, and angle of the shot would all be worth exploring as aspects of the frame. As Kitzinger observes, the mere act of explaining framing theory involves crafting and applying a frame. It is about choices. Frame analysis, then, involves identifying the choices of claims makers as well as the effects of those choices. Entman describes framing as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (2010, p. 336 and 2007, p. 164). Applying frame theory to the analysis of news text, then, requires a close examination of the assembled narrative. Referring back to Entman's earlier definition of framing, such analysis would consider how claims makers define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies (1993).

3.4 Taxonomy of Framing and Its Criticisms

Before applying the terms of frame theory to my analysis, I situate these terms against each other. This is done to clarify how these terms are used in the literature as well as how I

operationalize them. I discuss each term in order from the most general to the most specific, beginning with ideology and ending with schemata.

Table 1

Terms of Framing Theory
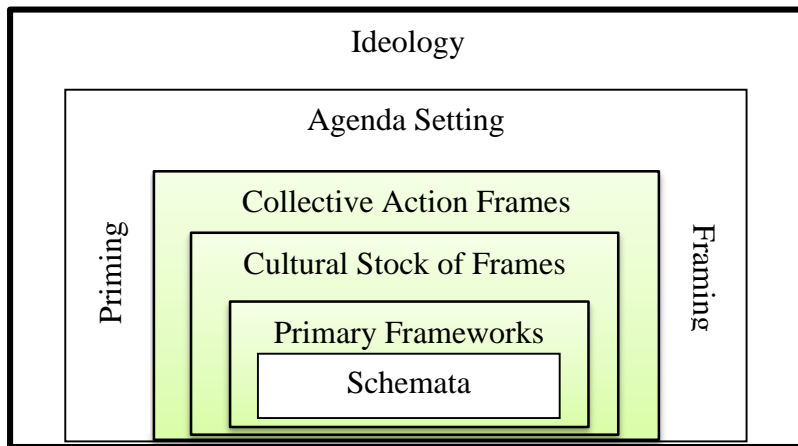
3.4.1 Ideology

As all mature theories, framing has faced its share of criticism. For example, Entman (1993) sought to clarify what he calls the fractured paradigm of framing, while Marc Steinberg identified what he calls "cracks in the frame" (1998, p. 847). Pamela Oliver and Hank Johnston focus on one of the cracks Steinberg identified. They criticize frame theorists for transposing frames with the notion of ideology (2005). Snow and Benford (2005) respond to this criticism by noting several misunderstandings Oliver and Johnston express in their analysis of framing. One of those misunderstandings is "the authors' failure to grasp that frames and framing are embedded within social constructionist processes that involve thinking and reasoning by the parties involved" (p. 207). They go on to explain that ideology is a cultural resource for framing. "From a framing perspective, ideologies constitute cultural resources that can be tapped and exploited for the purpose of constructing collective action frames and thus function

59

simultaneously to facilitate and constrain framing processes" (p. 209). They note several other distinctions between ideology and framing such as the notion that "framing, in contrast to ideology, is an empirically observable activity" (p. 210). This is due to the fact that frames are not solely cognitive processes but rather socially constructed.

Westby (2005) responds to Oliver and Johnston's criticism by noting that ideologies are relatively stable, historical, and that they define the values of movements. "Frames, on the other hand, have none of these qualities, but are relatively shallow, situated specifically in arenas of contention, and compared to ideologies, which must be studied and learned, are assimilated relatively easily and quickly" (p. 219). While some show concern that framing theorists conflate ideology with frame, Snow and Benford (2005) note the socially constructed aspect of frames while Westby notes that frames are more context specific and adaptable than ideologies. A specific news article might reflect the ideology of a social group; however, the article itself will also frame the content in a certain way. A set of news articles on the same issue may reflect similar frames of that issue. Ideology is a more firm and broader construct than frames, thus I position it on the outside ring of my figure.

3.4.2 Priming, Agenda Setting, and Framing

Framing theory is often clustered together with priming and agenda setting. A 2007 edition of the *Journal of Communication* focuses on exploring theoretical explanations and distinctions between these three concepts. Entman (2007) argues that they can be conceptually grouped under the umbrella of bias. For him, "Framing works to shape and alter audience members' interpretations and preferences through priming. That is, frames introduce or raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas, activating schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way" (Entman, 2007, p.164).

To prime something is to prepare it for action. Most people are familiar with priming a lawn mower or other small engine. A small amount of fuel is released to the engine before ignition, in preparation for the rapid change. Priming creates a similar effect in mass media. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) first applied the term priming to mass communication studies. "By calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged. Priming refers to changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations" (p. 63). Referring back to Best's (2013, p. 46) social problems marketplace, the general public is limited in its attention span for specific issues. Media agenda setters prime the public toward certain issues. Priming analysis has taken many forms. As Kitzinger points out, cognitive psychologists note that the phrasing of survey questions often leads to certain responses (2007, p. 136). Survey respondents are primed to react a certain way because of the predisposed direction of the frame of certain phrasing. For example, some researchers examine both framing and priming in order to improve work place communication, such as between doctors and patients (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). Awareness of priming involves an awareness of how frames predispose mindsets.

Scheufele and Tewskbury (2007) note that in political communication literature, "*Priming* refers to 'changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations'" (p. 11, emphasis in original). Kuypers (2002) gives an example of this political use of priming. "Specifically, priming involves the correlation among patterns of news coverage and the manner in which the public evaluates the performance of politicians" (p. 6). Kuypers notes that the "public becomes primed to evaluate the president" based on how well he handles the issues covered by the media (p. 8). The more the press covers an issue, the more the public expects a

61

presidential response similar to the expectations they have formed as a result of the media coverage. Thus, frames work to prime audiences toward predisposed action.

Framing and priming work together to create agenda setting. As Entman (2007) notes, "Agenda setting can thus be seen as another name for successfully performing the first function of framing: defining problems worthy of public and government attention" (p. 164). He goes on to claim that "it is through framing that political actors shape the texts that influence or prime the agendas and considerations that people think about" (p. 165). Gate keepers influence all mass media. Editors make decisions regarding which stories to publish, where to publish them, and when to publish them. Reporters make decisions regarding which stories to pursue and what counts as newsworthy. In this sense, the press functions as an agenda-setting body. Kuypers (2002) states that "agenda-setting serves to focus public attention upon an issue" (p. 6). He also describes agenda setting as "the role the media play in focusing the public's attention on a particular object or issue over another object or issue, primarily by how much attention the media gives to that object or issue" (p. 8). If advocates of a social problem want attention paid to their concerns, they must set the agenda of discussion through priming with the proper frames.

Many social constructionists blend analysis of framing, priming, and agenda setting in their examination of mass media. Entman (2007) ties the three together with the concept of bias. He sees three versions of this: distortion bias, content bias, and decision-making bias. His argument is that framing theorists should focus not on distortion bias, implying a slant or political bias on the part of news providers. Instead, he believes the more interesting questions can be answered through analysis of content bias, when news favors one side over another, or decision-making bias, when media producers allow their own mindsets to influence their reporting (p. 163). Kitzinger (2007), in contrast, challenges the notion of bias.

62

> The notion of framing is also far more radical than the idea of bias because it acknowledges that *any* account involves a framing of reality. The notion of 'bias' suggests that there is an objective and factual way of reporting an issue 'correctly', but that some reports distort this. The notion of 'framing', by contrast, suggests that all accounts of reality are shaped in some way or other. Indeed, without the ability to frame, the world would be a confusing morass of sensations—we would be lost with no sense of meaning and significance (2007, p. 137, emphasis in original).

This social constructionist perspective acknowledges the necessary presence of frames. They are used in a phenomenological sense to process and perceive information. Thus, any notion of completely bias-free reporting is impossible.

Weaver (2007) recognizes the similarities in the three concepts and claims that "focusing on framing does not necessarily mean discarding the findings of much agenda-setting research that is more concerned with which issues are emphasized (or what is covered) than how such issues are reported and discussed" (p. 142). As Scheufele and Tewskbury (2007) note, however, that priming and agenda setting focus on social problems. Framing may examine the representation of any story, but it may also be used effectively to examine social problems and agenda-setting as well. While they prefer a distinction between framing (applicability) and processes of accessibility for the sake of clarity, they conclude the 2007 *Journal of Communication* with the concession that the three concepts can work together in analyzing social problems. Since the terms are distinct but heavily interrelated, I group them together, under ideology.

3.4.3 Collective Action Frames

Collective action frames are culturally situated. Benford and Snow (2000) claim that "collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization" (p. 614). As such, social movement scholars often examine them. They are ways of organizing information in the

world in a manner that mobilizes bystanders for a cause. Benford and Snow (2000) state that

collective action frames accomplish three core tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational

framing. Though applied in a broader sense, these tasks resemble Entman's (1993) distinctions

that any frame should define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest

remedies. The difference is that Entman applies his criteria to frames at a more specific and

individualistic scale. When Benford and Snow discuss collective action frames, they refer to the

frames utilized by social movement organizations in a deliberate way to change ideologies,

prime audiences for action, set agendas in the social problems marketplace, and thus influence

change. Snow and several of his colleagues advocate for framing theorists to examine four frame

alignment processes: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame

transformation (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). They aim these analytic tools at

the examination of the collective action frames of social movement organizations. This is more

of a macro approach that applies well to social problems supported by large organizations.

When the claims makers of a social problem are not well organized or motivated, this method of

analysis is less applicable.

3.4.4 Cultural Stock of Frames

Van Gorp (2007) forms six assumptions based on the idea of the cultural stock of frames.

First, frames have alternatives, so it is wise for researchers to examine frame dominance.

Kitzinger (2004) makes a similar assumption. "Once particular frames and associated discursive

cues have been identified then researchers can map how particular frames dominate the

representation of an issue" (Kitzinger, 2004, p. 142). Second, the text and the frame are not the

same item. The text is merely a manifestation of the frame, a place where observers can locate

and examine the frame. It is generated from the culture not the text. Third, the social

construction of frames is subtle. No one notices it. Therefore, a frame often seems like the natural interpretation. Fourth, "Because frames are part of a culture, they are not the same as a personal mental structure, and there are probably no strict individual frames" (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 63). Fifth, frames are persistent and change little over time. This is essentially due to the notion that they are the embodiment of a coordinated management of meaning. Sixth, frames rely on social interaction. Therefore, there is an interplay between all social actors, and each has an influence on frames.

3.4.5 Primary Framework

Goffman (1974) first introduced the concept of primary frameworks. "When the individual in our Western society recognizes a particular event, he tends, whatever else he does, to imply in this response (and in effect employ) one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation of a kind that can be called primary (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). A primary framework renders the meaningless meaningful. It is an approach or a perspective. Most people are generally unaware of their primary frameworks. Even when they do become aware, they are unlikely to be capable of describing what their frameworks are. Individuals usually apply several frameworks to understanding any given moment or event. Goffman notes that people cannot even glance at something, for the most part, without applying a primary framework to understand what is being perceived.

> Taken all together, the primary frameworks of a particular social group constitute a central element of its culture, especially insofar as understandings emerge concerning principal classes of schemata, the relations of these classes to one another, and the sum total of forces and agents that these interpretive designs acknowledge to be loose in the world (Goffman, 1974, p. 27).

Understanding cultural movements requires an examination of primary frameworks. Goffman claims that we actively project our frames of reference into the world around us and do not

notice the frames because our predictions are generally confirmed. This keeps us from seeing

our own assumptions for what they are.

Goffman separates primary frames into two categories: the natural and the social.

Natural frames are purely physical; "no actor continuously guides the outcome" (1974, p. 22). In

contrast, social frames constitute basic background understandings for any event involving "the

will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human

being" (p. 22). He characterizes social frames as "guided doings" (p. 22). He also provides

several examples. A written report stating facts about the weather would count as a natural frame

while a meteorologist giving a weather report would use a social frame. The sun coming up

would be a natural event while a person pulling down the shades would be a guided doing. When

a coroner reports on a cause of death, he or she would be giving a natural framework as opposed

to the manner of death which would be a social framework.

Taken together, both natural and social primary frameworks rely on sets of schemata to

form predictions. Several primary frameworks reinforced over time create the cultural stock of

frames individuals select from in order to process meaning and form understanding.

3.4.6 Schemata

Another criticism of framing theory is that like ideology, schemata are also sometimes

confused with frames. Scheufele (2006) distinguishes between how these concepts differ in news

reporting. He establishes that a cognitive schema applies to either a singular object or a relation

between objects. Several of them combined form a consistent set of expectations known as a

cognitive frame. "For example, the frame 'immigration problem' is set up by the notion that

asylum seekers would be typical victims (victim schema), that riots in front of their hotels would

be typical events (event schema) and that all this is due to politicians not solving the asylum

problem (causes schema)" (Scheufele, 2006, p. 66). In this sense, a combination of schemata

lead to frames or to what Goffman would identify as primary frames. Stable frames might then

ultimately become the ideologies imbedded in a culture through their resonant and frequent

appearance in mass media.

3.5 Response to Criticisms of the Application of Framing Theory

While some criticisms take the form of noticing overlapping definitions in terminology,

others see problems in the application of the theory. Benford (1997) expresses concern that most

framing researchers look at frames in a descriptive way instead of a method that examines causes

of frames. He also notes that some reify frames and think of them as static rather than dynamic

terms. Johnston (2005) responds to these criticisms. He suggests that the answer to these

concerns is to encourage "an empirically grounded language with which researchers can discuss

and test the causal influence of collective action frames" (p. 237). With a stable set of terms in

place, Johnston believes researchers would be enabled to examine frames in a comparative

manner. He sees frames as both individual and social because they are "mental templates of

appropriate behavior for common situations, acquired through socialization and experience and

fine-tuned by the individual on the basis of what worked in the past and/or what others report as

useful" (2005, p. 239). This characterization of frames reflects primary frameworks, as well as

the cultural stock of frames. It even hints at collective action frames. In the phenomenological

sense, frames are necessary for individuals to form meaning out of a disorganized set of

sensations and information. In the social sense, frames are tested through an intersubjective

construction of reality, as all concepts of reality are. Thus Johnston (2005) hopes that a stable set

of term definitions will prevent framing analysts from reifying the frames they observe. Since

frames are socially constructed and not stable, a comparison of how they change by context,

situation, and over time, allows for interesting scholarship. Given that terms can be overlapped and used in alternate ways over time, it is critical for a researcher to explain how potentially overlapping terms are used in a particular project. This is why the figure separating ideology, priming, agenda setting, framing, collective action frames, cultural stock frames, primary frameworks, and schemata is necessary to this analysis.

As mentioned earlier, Entman (1993) sought to clarify what he called the fractured paradigm of framing. His approach to this task was to clarify a comprehensive framing definition, as cited earlier in this paper. He, like many framing theorists responding to his call for unified terms, sought to clearly distinguish between and define framing, priming, and agenda setting. He also alluded to a common set of culturally situated stock frames (1993). Entman seeks a unified paradigm for framing theory.

However, Paul D'Angelo (2002) disagrees with Entman, writing

> That there is not, nor should there be, a single paradigm of framing. Rather, knowledge about framing has accumulated because the research program encourages researchers to employ and refine many theories about the framing process under the guidance of distinct paradigmatic perspectives on the relationship between frames and framing effects (p. 871).

He notes that framing theory applied to cognitive, constructionist, and critical paradigms adopts different angles, and that it should. Vliegenthart (2012) agrees with D'Angelo that framing is multiparadigmatic and uses different approaches to the three main paradigms. He claims that each approach grew out of different disciplines but that framing is applicable to many disciplines, especially mass media studies.

3.5.1 Psychological Framing

Understanding framing effects, however, requires acknowledging scholarship for both the sociological findings as well as the psychological results. While this may not call for a unified

paradigm forcing both psychological framing and sociological framing to apply identical templates, a strong application of framing theory understands what each field of framing has to offer.

One of the psychological approaches to researching framing is to measure their cognitive effects. Baden and Lecheler (2012) developed a knowledge-based model to explain why some framing effects persisted longer than others. Their research is predicated on a concept they borrowed from Price and Tweksbury. "The persistence of framing effects depends on whether frames 'can help determine what knowledge is activated – and once activated, presumably used – when people are called on to make politically relevant judgments" (Baden & Lecheler, 2012, p. 360). They determined that "durable faming effects" occur whenever the respondent encounters something novel or whenever some sort of learning takes place (p. 374). When respondents encounter frames for long-standing position issues, only temporary framing effects occur. Similarly, when people already have a dense knowledge base on an issue or when they are primarily ignorant on the topic, framing effects do not endure for long. This occurs because frames do not appear novel to the more knowledgeable recipients. For the ignorant ones, there is no similar knowledge base for the frames to attach to and become enduring. Therefore, Baden and Lecheler find that "Lasting framing effects should be most prominent among medium-knowledgeable people" (p. 375). The final tenet of their model claims that "successive effects of competing frames interact only to the degree that the first frame is stored and still sufficiently accessible at the time of the second exposure to be retrieved as context for the second frame" (p. 375). This find recognizes some of the effects of competing frames.

Entman (2010) also suggests that exposure to competing frames does not reduce framing effects but complicates them (p. 332). Baden and Lecheler (2012) also note that frames not only

"manipulate belief importance" but also convey new information (p. 376). Again, these findings rest on a psychological or cognitive approach to framing studies. Frames affect thinking most often when respondents have a certain base of knowledge to connect with. This knowledge base is culturally situated. Without an existing set of beliefs, what others might call schemata, frames have no foundation to form lasting impressions. To the other extreme, when frames characterize an issue people already know much about or have deep set opinions in place, a new frame is not necessary and so has little enduring effect.

This all ties back to phenomenology. Humans have limited sensory capacity for interpreting information. We must categorize and store experiences in frames that allow us to form quick judgments. If we did not do this, we would be unable to operationalize complex data. We must be able to form quick impressions of likely scenarios. When we enter a new room, there is an abundance of sensory information to process. This limits our capacity to notice fine details. When we have entered a room multiple times and are familiar with it, we are more primed to recognize small changes and details. We rely on frames to provide a sense of predictability for recurring situations. Once a first impression frame is reinforced, it becomes the predictable set we can rely on in a similar situation. Being able to call on the pre-formed frame frees our senses to attend to other processes. That is why new frames have little lasting effect for people with already formulated frames on those issues. The new frame is not necessary for making sense of the situation. It is also why new frames struggle to provide lasting effect for those with no existing frame to process a situation. A completely new issue or topic requires so much sensory processing, frames then need repetition in order to endure. People presented with a consistent frame applied to multiple early exposures of a new issue will likely adopt that frame as their own. Chong and Druckman (2007) note that "framing effects depend on a mix of factors

70

including the strength and repetition of the frame, the competitive environment, and individual motivations" (p. 111). They also support the notion that when an issue is new to the social problems market place, people are unsure how competing frames might align with their existing values (p. 113).

Many scholars have noted the importance of culture when considering frame resonance. Reese claims that frames are embedded in a web of culture – a "historically rooted but dynamic cultural context" (2010, p. 18). Borah notes that "Individuals use a set of available beliefs stored in memory" (Borah, 2001, p. 252; see also Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 111) and suggests, like Baden and Lecheler, that ambivalence is key. Bruggemann (2014), too recognizes that "the individual is always nested within different contexts" and that frames grow out of culture which "manifests itself at the individual, organizational, and social level" (p. 67). He claims that journalists draw from a frame repository in order to craft their stories.

Kolker (2004) examined funding activism in the American breast cancer movement from 1990 to 1993. She cites the success of claims makers due to their application of "culturally resonant frames" (p. 820). Kolker examines the shift of focus from breast cancer being the private problem of an individual woman to a public health concern. This shift is associated with a suggestion that the government bears a responsibility through insufficient funding for the health crisis of breast cancer. She identifies "three core sets of culturally resonant frames" in her examination of congressional testimony and media reports. The first is that breast cancer is an epidemic; the second made breast cancer a gender equity issue; the third framed breast cancer as a threat to families. She cites the cultural viability and resonance of these frames with the campaign's success at gaining an increase of funding from $89 million federal dollars in 1990 to $341 million in 1993 (p. 138). She also discusses how the frame of gender equity qualifies as a

collective action frame. An effective application of framing theory needs to recognize the importance of cultural resonance in regards to the effectiveness of frames.

3.6 Frames in the News

Some might question why an analysis of news frames matters at all. Most social scientists reject the notion that news media providers possess a hypodermic needle—that audiences openly receive the messages fed to them by these providers. Nevertheless, this view shifted when Bernard Cohen famously[2] claimed that the press "may not be very successful in telling its readers what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (1963, p. 13). Entman (2007) criticizes Cohen; "The distinction misleads because, short of physical coercion, all influence over 'what people think' derives from telling them 'what to think about.' If the media really are stunningly successful in telling people what to think about, they must also exert significant influence over what they think" (2007, p. 165). Kuypers (2002) adds that "the press not only tells us what to think about (agenda-setting), but it also tells us *how* to think about it" (p. 198, emphasis in original). He suggests that priming and framing constitute the component of how. Framing theory does not presuppose that the frames identified in a specific news piece directly translate to the views of consumers. Entman (2012), for example, applies what he calls a cascading model to his frame analysis of political scandal. This cascade model recognizes the influence of strategic actors (politicians and interest groups), journalists, and members of the public as well as the flow of influence between these actors (p. 7). Elsewhere, he calls it a cascading network activation model, saying that "perceived public

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[2] This Cohen quote is included in many agenda setting and/or framing theory analyses. See, for example, the following: Entman, 2007; Kitzinger, 2004; and Kuypers, 2002.

opinion can and does feedback to influence the future framing behavior of elites and journalists"
(Entman, 2010, p. 333). He notes that journalists, social scientists, film directors, everyone
frames. Therefore, news frames are a fertile ground for analysis. While public opinion is not
entirely shaped by journalists, they certainly exert influence.

Scheufele and D'Angelo recognize the influence of both reporters and their sources
(D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010, p. 4). D'Angelo identifies what he calls the frame construction
flow. This is a paradigm that examines two frame building processes. The first would be
journalists relying on the frames of other social actors while the second would be the use of those
frames to construct new frames by crafting stories (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010, p. 4).

In a similar but more detailed fashion, Bruggeman (2014) recently developed a model he
calls the "journalistic framing practice continuum" to represent how the frames of reporters and
the frames of their information sources work together to influence the output of news stories. On
the far left of this continuum are the "conduit accounts"; in these cases, reporters simply repeat
the frames presented to them by their sources. On the far right are the "filtered accounts";
reporters shape these stories with their own frames. Along the middle of this continuum is a
blending of varying levels of "interpretive accounts"; these stories blend both the frames of the
interview sources and the reporter's frames (2014, pp. 64-66). Bruggeman advocates for
research that examines what conditions push news articles along one end or the other of his
journalistic framing practice continuum. His recommended method for accomplishing this feat is
to conduct a qualitative content analysis of news articles followed by qualitative interviews of
the reporters who wrote the stories examined. Researchers would then compare the frames of the
reporters with the frames present in their articles. While this style of research would certainly be
interesting, there are a few challenges with this method. "Dynamic, collective processes of

73

framing cannot be controlled by individual actors, but individuals do contribute to the frames that arise from their interaction with other actors" (Bruggemann, 2014, p. 70). Therefore, it is useful to examine frames and all the parties involved in their creation but folly to try and place blame on individual reporters for the nature of a frame under consideration.

Another potential problem with this method is that interviews directed at revealing reporter frames tend to face obstacles at accessing reporter opinions. Barbara Schneider, for example, conducted research similar to what Bruggemann proposes. She examined news media characterizations of homelessness and followed up by interviewing many of the reporters who wrote the articles she and her team examined. "During the interviews, we asked the journalists whether they saw themselves as advocates in some way for homeless people. This question clearly posed a threat to their professional identities, and they used a number of strategies to deflect the suggestion that they are advocates" (Schneider, 2012, p. 9). Because journalists see themselves as objective, bias-free, conduits of information, interviews aimed at revealing their opinions face the obstacle of reporter reluctance to share any thoughts that might reveal personal bias.

The presence of frames in news writing does not necessarily suggest bias. One of the foundational tenets in journalistic writing is objectivism. Another is balance. Reporters write with the intention of fairly representing all sides of an issue. They also aim to remove any evidence of their own opinion in their writing. Instead, a journalist relies on the quotes of his or her sources in order to express any opinion or value statement present in his or her writing. A news article may contain all these elements and still convey certain frames. That is due to the essential nature of frames. "Even the most 'objective' or 'neutral' journalism will inevitably

74

contribute to the social construction of reality" (Bruggemann, 2014, p. 65). Journalists must

make decisions about which facts are more relevant and which sources are more valid.

3.7 Conclusion

As an often applied and developed theory, framing has many practical applications. It is

commonly used in mass media studies but is also applied to many other fields of study. This

broad application has led to certain criticism that framing theory lacks a united core of principles

and definition of terms. Entman suggests that scholars should unite the terms agenda setting,

priming, and framing under the umbrella of bias. However, like Kitzinger, I recognize frames as

a necessary step all humans use in making sense out of the world. The presence of frames does

not necessarily coincide with overt bias. Reporters may consciously pursue the journalistic

values of objectivity and balance while still reproducing the frames of their sources. In order to

control for the source of frames, Bruggeman advocates for interviewing journalists and

comparing their personal frames with the frames that appear in their writing. While this method

might indicate a source of frames, identifying a source to blame for existing frames seems

fruitless.

I am interested in examining the dominant frames present in media representations of the

deaths attributed to computer-mediated harassment. I examine the implications of the

"cyberbullying" frames and consider the cultural relevance of those frames. As Johnston

suggested, with a stable set of definitions for the terms often associated with framing theory, I

conducted an examination of the social construction of news frames by comparing coverage of

different cases utilizing a mixed method content analysis, which I explain in the next chapter on

Methodology. This examination focuses on framing, the grey boxes in my chart positioning the

terms of framing theory.

As evidenced by federal legislation recently passed, the cyberbullying social problem is quickly moving through Best's stages of social problem development. Once salient, frames are resistant to change. Nevertheless, even a position issue as entrenched as global warming can experience a frame change. Many social actors now apply the competing frame of climate change. Since, as Van Gorp stated, frames are socially constructed in such a subtle manner that most members of the public never question a frame or consider its nature, a careful examination of the relatively new collective action frame of cyberbullying is warranted.

Chapter Four: Methodology: Mixed Method Content Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this study, I combine qualitative content analysis (QlCA) with quantitative content analysis (QnCA) in what Spicer calls methodological plurality (2012, p. 483). It is a choice to use multiple methods of analysis in order to compensate for the inevitable pitfalls that come with any methodological choice. I will begin this chapter by distinguishing between QlCA and QnCA while explaining my choice to focus more of my research on QlCA. I then explain the choice for methodological plurality before specifically identifying the method I used for my analysis and why it is appropriate for a framing analysis.

4.2 Conflict in Meaning

Although content analysis evolved from a more quantitative epistemology, there is a distinct qualitative version of content analysis as well. Bernard Berelson's 1952 book, *Content Analysis*, defined the method as a solely quantitative means. That same year, Siegfried Kracauer countered Berelson's claim by arguing that content analysis should not be limited to quantitative methods. Many scholars pick up on Kracauer's criticism of Berelson's quantitative definition (Kohlbacher, 2006). Glaser and Laudel (2013), for example, point to Kracauer's observation that Berelson ignores the varying elements and meanings of text. Schreier (2012) identifies three key elements in Kracauer's response. Firstly, meaning is often complex, holistic, and context dependent. Secondly, meaning is not always manifest or clear at first sight. Lastly, frequency is not always the best indicator of meaning (see also George, 2009 and Stan, 2010).

The difference between manifest and latent meaning is one often cited as the reason for using QnCA or QlCA respectively (Budd, Thorp, & Donohew, 1967, p. 3; David & Sutton, 2011, p. 342; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Julien, 2008; Kohlbacher, 2006; Merrigan, Huston, &

Johnston, 2012; Schreier, 2012; Seale & Tonkiss, 2012, p. 463-464; Sumser, 2001, p. 200; Wester, Pleijter, & Renckstorf, 2004; and Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Merrigan, et al. simplify the difference by saying that manifest meanings get used to make predictive claims while latent meanings create reformist claims (2012, p. 130). More specifically, manifest meaning is the surface meaning of a message (Sumser, 2001, p. 200). It is the layer of meaning that will be obvious or apparent to almost anyone who encounters the message (Merrigan et al., p. 130). By contrast, latent meaning is the underlying meaning or implications of the message; it is always more disputable than manifest meaning (Sumser, 2001, p. 200). It is a layer of meaning that is implied but not expressed directly through the message (Merrigan et al., p. 130).

A strictly QnCA definition is quite limiting. Berelson proposes a continuum with clearly manifest content such as the news reports of a train wreck on one end and something more complex such as a poem at the other end of the spectrum. In Kracauer's response, he notes that content analysis by Berelson's definition would need to stick clearly to "manifest content [that] does not lend itself to being interpreted in different ways" (1952, p. 634). When content analysis sticks to such manifest content, it is most objective, reliable, and systematic. However, if meaning relies on historical context for understanding, it is naturally more latent and less manifest. Such data calls for a different approach. Although news coverage of a teen suicide may seem constructed of more manifest meanings, each article exists in a cultural context and rests in a larger set of coverage, relying on understanding of related past public discourse. Even articles written with an intentionally objective reporter voice are laden with latent meaning.

Stan (2010) notes that early QnCA focuses mostly on frequency, which limits textual examinations. Frequency, he claims, might miss important aspects of meaning. A simple frequency analysis might misrepresent the number of instances a concept appears. For example,

78

if I only coded use of the word death to describe a set of effects of cyberbullying in my data set, phrases such "taken off life support" would be missed in an oversimplified frequency quantification. Again, as I code the concept of suicide, phrases such as "died by hanging" could be easily missed without a close, qualitative reading of the text. On a macro scale, while each article can be identified by certain criteria such as gender of the victim focused on in the article, specific comments within the article might refer to another case and should not, then, be attributed to gender or other characteristics of the primary victim associated with the article.

QnCA alone misses a good deal of meaning. Kohlbacher (2006) cites Ritsert for noticing that QnCA misses context, latent structures, distinctive individual cases, and meaning that does not appear in text. One of the reasons researchers like Berelson attempt to limit content analysis to a quantitative form is to improve accuracy in the research process. However, "overemphasis on quantification tends to lessen the accuracy of analysis" (Kracauer, 1952, p. 631). Because individual aspects of data might collectively point in the opposite direction to the cumulative meaning, frequency counts can "rest on uncertain ground" (Kracauer, p. 633).

Given the limitations of QnCA, there are many instances in which QlCA is preferable. For example, when one is looking for causal mechanisms (Glaser & Laudel, 2013), when working in an interpretive paradigm (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009), and when looking to uncover "patterns, themes, and categories important to a social reality" (Zhang & Wildemuth, p. 5). My research takes an interpretive approach and seeks to uncover the patterns, themes, and categories reflected in the construction of cyberbullying as a social reality, thus QlCA comes closer to meeting my research goals. "Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be

manifest or latent in a particular text. It allows researchers to understand social reality in a

subjective but scientific manner" (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1).

At the most abstract level, QnCA relies on a positivist epistemology and an objectivist

ontology while QlCA uses an interpretivist epistemology and constructivist ontology (Oleinik,

2011). For Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), there are four dichotomies distinguishing the methods.

QlCA explores the meanings underlying physical messages, is inductive, involves purposely

selecting texts, and produces descriptions or typologies. In contrast, QnCA counts manifest

textual elements, is deductive, uses a random sampling of data, and produces numbers. Perhaps

the most elaborate attempt to distinguish these methods comes from Margrit Schreier (2012). She

compares them along seven features. For her, QnCA focuses on manifest meaning; requires little

context; utilizes a strict handling of reliability; values reliability as more important than validity

checks; uses fewer inferences to context, author, and recipients; follows a strict sequence of

steps; yet is still partly concept driven. QlCA, on the other hand, focuses on latent meaning;

requires much contextualization; utilizes a variable handling of reliability; values validity as

equally important with reliability; uses more inferences to context, author, and recipients; allows

for variability in carrying out steps; yet is still partly data driven.

Despite all the differences between these methods, there is still a degree of overlap. That

is why they are both called content analysis. As Schreier acknowledges, the qualitative method

still relies on data and the quantitative method is both number and concept driven. While many

scholars link QnCA with deduction and QlCA with induction, Krippendorff and Bock (2009)

claim that both methods really rely on abductive reasoning, a blend of the two. My approach

does just that, utilizing both inductive and deductive reasoning to create categories and

descriptors for analysis.

4.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

QlCA and QnCA have much in common, yet QlCA is also a distinct research method. Schreier classifies it as "a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material. It is done by classifying material as instances of categories of a coding scheme" (2012, p. 1). Julien, who calls QlCA interpretive or latent content analysis, says, "Qualitative researchers using a content analytic approach recognize that text is open to subjective interpretation, reflects multiple meanings, and is context dependent (e.g., part of a larger discourse)" (2008, p. 121).

Researchers should balance flexibility with careful practices. While QnCA controls for validity and reliability, some measure QlCA along a scale of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Gruba, 1985; Julien, 2008; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009; Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen, & Kyngas, 2014). Several of them equate trustworthiness with terms such as credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability, and authenticity. My analysis priority was to trustworthiness, so my analysis focused more on the qualitative approach although I follow the systematic steps of content analysis aimed at improving reliability.

QlCA should not be confused with discourse analysis, semiotics, or other qualitative means. "Qualitative content analysis is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material. It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding scheme" (Schreier, 2012, p. 1). It is this systematic examination with focus on selected aspects of material that precludes the type of holistic overview of data used by other qualitative methods. Many note that QlCA works to reduce data (David & Sutton, 2011; Glaser & Laudel, 2013; Julien, 2008; and Schreier, 2012). For Julien, this reduction of data is to derive meaning.

Schreier talks about QlCA limiting information for relevance and reducing data by categorizing the concrete in an abstract way. By creating categories, it is possible to synthesize hundreds of news representations and discover themes in representation. Schreier (2012), recommends researchers develop categories from theory but allow subcategories to evolve from the reading of a certain portion of the analysis such as about a third of it. Rigid categories should then be followed for the remaining two thirds. QlCA is flexible in that it allows researchers to create a coding scheme unique to each set of data.

As mentioned earlier, Krippendorff and Bock (2009) claim that both QlCA and QnCA make use of abductive reasoning. Nevertheless, many researchers equate QlCA with inductive reasoning (Julien, 2008; Schreier, 2012; and Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). This inductive reasoning forms the units and the categories of QlCA. Zhang and Wildemuth quote Hsieh and Shannon to show three approaches analysts can use based on inductive methods. The second is directed content analysis. In this method, coding starts with a theory and evolves into more categories during data analysis. It is a more structured approach. I take the directed content analysis approach by identifying the first four categories I apply to my data set from Entman's definition of what frames do. The subsequent four categories used for my analysis developed inductively during my pilot study.

The systematic steps of QlCA are a vital aspect of the method. Many analysts describe an eight-step process (Schreier, 2012; Wester et al. 2004; and Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). I followed the Zhang and Wildemuth eight steps. This begins by preparing data. The second step is to define a unit of analysis. There is, as mentioned before, a great deal of flexibility with this choice; however, they recommend looking for themes rather than linguistic units. The third step is to develop categories and a coding scheme. Again, there is flexibility in this process. The

coding scheme might develop from the data, from related studies, from theory, or from a combination of them. The categories should be as homogenous and heterogeneous as possible. The researcher should also create a detailed coding manual with category names, definitions, and examples. The fourth step is to test the coding scheme on a sample of text. It is important at this point to check for consistency. The fifth step is to code all the text. In the sixth step, researchers assess coding consistency with the total data. The seventh step is to draw conclusions from the coded data. Lastly, researchers report their methods and findings. I will discuss my specific choices along this process under the "Method" heading.

4.4 Methodological Plurality

QnCA, especially when facilitated by computer assessment tools, allows researchers to aggregate vast data. The method is incredibly reliable given that computers provided consistent search criteria will return a consistent set of results. As soon as cultural context or other latent meaning factors influence understanding, QnCA begins facing complicating factors that mitigate validity. If the researcher's priority for validity is higher than that for reliability, QlCA is a better method for understanding the latent meaning of more interpretive texts.

One way of dealing with the pull between the costs and benefits of each version of content analysis is to apply both of them. Many authors speak of the benefits of mixed method research (Julien, 2008; Kohlbacher, 2009; Mayring, 2001; Oleinik, 2011; and Wester et al. 2004). For Kohlbacher, methodological plurality "can potentially generate what anthropologists call 'holistic work' or 'thick description'" (2009, p. 609, quoting Jick, 1979). Essentially, the use of multiple methods of analysis improves the resulting picture quality.

Spicer's explanation of "multiple methods" provides an effective way to address the limitations of both QnCA and QlCA while appreciating the benefits of each approach. In this

83

process, researchers would use QlCA for the micro and QnCA for the macro. Quoting McLafferty (1995, p. 440), Spicer notes that "By coupling the power of the general with the insight of the particular, such research illuminates people's lives and the larger contexts in which they are embedded" (Spicer, 2012, p. 486).

Of course, it is important, when combining qualitative and quantitative methods, to recognize many of the epistemological differences between them. Positivism and interpretivism are not completely incompatible. As Spicer notes, though quantitative analysts downplay their subjectivity, they still make choices because analytic categories are constructs (2012, pp. 481-483). Postmodernists recognize that any knowledge formation is necessarily subject to interpreter bias. The positivist belief that numbers reflect an objective reality does not negate the value of quantifiable results for interpretivists. Numeric results are useful but should always be situated with clear explanations about the limits inherent in their use.

4.5 Method

As I prepared my data set, I wanted to balance my case studies between males and females. I selected news coverage of two male and two female Canadian teens whose suicides were associated with computer mediated harassment. Using Factiva, I ran a key word search applying both the first and last name of the victim to a date range framed between the date the teen died and the date when government officials announced proposed legislation or policy changes as a result of the suicide. I also limited the search to Canadian publications.

Jamie Hubley, a 15-year-old from Ontario, died 15 Oct. 2011. On 30 Nov. 2011, officials announced the Ottawa Accepting Schools Act. This date range produced 154 unique articles, once duplications were eliminated from the set. Amanda Todd, a 15-year-old from British Columbia, died 10 Oct. 2012. Just five days later, on 15 Oct. 2012, officials announced a House

84

of Commons Motion to study cyberbullying. While the motion was already in process, media coverage following her death purportedly caused an earlier release for this motion. Five days of news coverage for Amanda Todd produced 192 unique articles. Rehtaeh Parsons, a 17-year-old from Nova Scotia, died 7 April 2013. A few weeks later, officials announced the Nova Scotia Cyber Safety Act on 25 April 2013. This date range produces a set of 407 unique news articles. Finally, Todd Loik, a 15-year-old from Saskatchewan, died 9 Sept. 2013. Though Loik's province already had cyberbullying legislation in place following the trend of past deaths, officials announced the Saskatchewan Anti-bullying Action Plan 14 Nov. 2013. This date range produced a data set of 48 unique articles once duplicates were eliminated.

I began with a QnCA of a data set of 815 articles from the Factiva key word search. These articles were saved as separate documents and given a name using the teen's last name followed by the newspaper name and the date of publication. If more than one article appeared per publisher on a given date, I added a number after the title of the newspaper. It should be noted that while most of this data set focused on newspaper publications, the Factiva search also returned a handful of radio announcements and printed CTV interviews.

I uploaded these articles to the mixed method research tool Dedoose. Each article was coded with the following identifiers: date of publication, victim of focus, genre, publication title, and gender of victim of focus. During this initial process of coding, I reduced the data set to 801 articles due to duplications. For example, newspapers in two cities, both of which are affiliated with Post Media, sometimes published identical articles with slightly different titles. In this case, Factiva did not recognize the duplication, but as I coded identifiers, I discovered the duplication.

I defined genre according to common journalistic practices set forth by the Canadian Press Stylebook, 17th ed. (McCarten, 2013). Editors categorize the articles of their paper into

certain news genres. Typical categories include opinion, news, feature, and sports. None of the data set included sports writing; however, the Factiva search returned news, opinion, and feature articles. Editors might have labelled the articles I term "feature" as "life" or "other." Since the writing style for each of these sections does not differ, I collapsed all such articles into the category of "feature." These distinctions matter because the expectation is that feature writing maintains many of the typical news standards for balance and professionalism but allow for more presentation of the writer's opinions. The greatest freedom for sharing opinions appears in the editorial section, in articles I categorize as "opinion."

Next, I focused on a reduced portion of my data set to conduct mixed method QlCA and QnCA. In order to code the data, it was necessary to bring the data sample for each victim to a more evenly distributed set. In order to not skew the results with a disproportionate sample, I sought to evenly represent the news coverage over time and publications and across subjects. This meant I could not simply choose exactly 50 articles each. Given that the smallest sample, the Loik articles, initially had 50 articles (before further duplications were identified), I aimed to select at least 50 results for each victim. Using what Deacon et al. (1999, p. 46) call the systematic sampling method and Budd et al. (1967, p. 22) call the interval method, I randomly selected articles in each set following a chronological order. The Hubley set began with 154 articles, so in practice, I coded one article then skipped the next two as they were arranged in Dedoose (according to the title I had assigned moving from last name, publication title, and date). I coded a total of 51 Hubley articles. There were 192 Amanda Todd articles, but coding one in four of them produced less than 50, so I also coded one in three articles from her set. This produced 64 articles. The Parsons set included 407 articles, so I coded one in seven of that set

and created 58 QlCA coded documents. Finally, the Loik set produced only 48 unique articles, so I coded each of them.

My QlCA of the reduced data set involved interpreting the content of each article for both latent and manifest meaning. As Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) recommend, I defined my unit of analysis as a theme. In application, this varied from a single word such as "depression" or "suicide" as examples of the category of effects to the several sentences it might take for a claimant to blame the death of the victim on cyberbullying. During my analysis, I refer to these units as excerpts. Once each excerpt was coded, I used Dedoose and Excel to quantitatively examine the qualitatively produced results.

"You should always test a coding scheme on a small portion of your sample data before you begin a full content analysis" (Merrigan, et al. 2012, p. 135). In order to develop my categories and coding scheme, I began my analysis with a pilot study. This pilot study involved a primarily QlCA of every *Toronto Star* and every *Globe and Mail* article appearing in the collected data set reporting on Rehtaeh Parsons. I selected these publications for having the first and second highest circulation rates in Canada, respectively. As indicated earlier, I used the directed approach to select my first four categories of analysis from what Entman claims a frame does: definitions, causes, remedies, and moral judgments (1993). The other four categories developed inductively from my coding during the pilot study. These categories include the following: effects, placing blame, establishing a pattern, and defending actions.

After completing this pilot study with a fully descriptive analysis of these eight categories, I developed a more complex coding scheme to apply to my data set. Applying this coding scheme relies on both mutually exclusive categories and tags as well as descriptors that allow for overlap. What this means is that each excerpt is assigned a single category (of the eight

87

listed). I also applied a claimant tag to identify the claims maker for each excerpt. Initially my claims maker list included the following: expert, family member of the victim, friends or peers of the victim, government official or politician, journalist, member of the general public, none specified (reporter voice), RCMP (judicial official), school official, and victim. During my analysis, I added two more claimants to this list: celebrity and religious leader. Each excerpt was also tagged as either addressing cyberbullying in general or focusing on a specific victim.

As I began applying my coding tree to the reduced data set, I sought to practice my code application in order to increase reliability. In order to develop the descriptor list for each of the eight categories, I hand-coded three articles for each of the four victims. I selected an article from the beginning, middle, and end of the date range for each victim. I was careful to select different news publishers in order to sample a more diverse set. This allowed me to test my developing coding scheme on a sample of text. For a complete list of primary and secondary descriptors per category of analysis, see Appendix 1: Coding Tree.

While each excerpt was unique and not attached to more than one category, many of the excerpts overlapped. For example, consider the following sentence. "In the wake of Rehtaeh's suicide, minister pushes to outlaw distribution of intimate, malicious photos" (Postmedia6 22 April 2013). The first excerpt in this sentence is "Rehtaeh's suicide." This is coded under the category of 'effects' with the descriptor of 'suicide' and the tags 'specific to victim' and 'government official' as the claims maker. Each excerpt is given at least four codes to identify the category, the primary and (if applicable) secondary descriptors, and the claimant tag as well as specific to victim or topic in general tag. Another excerpt from this sentence is the phrase "outlaw distribution of intimate, malicious photos." This excerpt falls under the category of 'remedies' and fits the descriptor of 'new legislation.' The two tags would remain the same as

the previous excerpt. The final excerpt overlaps with the previous one but does not contain all the same words, "distribution of intimate, malicious photos." This was categorized as 'definition' with two primary descriptors, 'circulating humiliating photos' and 'deliberate harm.' Again, the same two tags were applied.

I coded headlines and photo captions as well as the primary text. This created a total of 4,249 excerpts with 18,251 codes attached. Each excerpt, even if it overlapped with other excerpts, was assigned one category, one claimant tag, one specific or general tag, and as many primary and secondary descriptors as necessary to convey the full manifest and latent meaning of the excerpt.

Claims makers were distinguished according to the source of power that allowed them to make their claim. For example, a former prime minister might not still count as a government official or politician, however, that past position provides the basis for the claim, so the tag fits. However, Laureen Harper, the current prime minister's wife, might be famous for her husband's position, but her claim is based on fame instead of a specific governmental position. Therefore, her claims were tagged as a celebrity. Jamie Hubley's father, Alan Hubley, was both a politician and the father of a victim, however, the power of his claims reside in being the father, so he was tagged as a family member of the victim. The civil disobedience group "Anonymous" center the power for their claims in being unnamed representatives of the general public, so that is how they are tagged.

Because journalists often write news articles in an objective voice, I make a distinction between statements which are crafted by the writer of the article but not attributed to any source and the statements reporters make when they claim their voice, such as with opinion and feature articles. For example, one editorial excerpt tagged with the journalist code defines cyberbullying

as "malicious sexting and slut shaming." Another definition excerpt called it "circulation of a graphic picture." In this instance, the journalist wrote with the reporter voice expected in news writing. For the editorial piece, the journalist wrote with more subjective language and allowed for emotional expression. This 'journalist' voice usually identifies the writer as the speaker while the 'none specified' reporter voice uses objective writing and often passive voice to state claims as facts without specifically attributing those claims to the writer of the article.

Most of the mutually exclusive categories, defined in Appendix 2: Code Tree Definitions, are easily distinguished from each other. The difference between a cause and blame relies on the focus. Causal excerpts present a cause for cyberbullying. Blame excerpts attribute blame for the death of the teen. Effects excerpts focus on the effects the teen experienced as a result of the harassment described in the article. Since the public discourse of cyberbullying permeates the discussion of these teen suicides, definition excerpts focus on descriptions of the harassment they experienced whether the term cyberbullying is applied in the context of the article or not. Moral judgment excerpts were associated with emotional reactions such as condemnation of either the harassment or the death of the teen. These differ from blame excerpts because they do not attribute a source or cause for the death but emotionally focus on the death or the harassment itself.

Once all 221 selected articles were coded with QlCA, I returned to this data set and read through the excerpts a second time to assess consistency. After a second general reading, I conducted three more checks of each excerpt. One reading confirmed claimant tags, another confirmed topic tags, and the final reading confirmed category designations. My intracoder reliability was fairly high. During the four proof readings, I made a total of 113 changes in the form of adjustments or corrections to the data set of 18,251 code applications. This rate of

90

consistency is largely due to both the pilot study and the early coding by hand of twelve sample articles.

4.6 Conclusion

Qualitative content analysis is a systematic and flexible method for coding and unitizing qualitative material in a manner that enables the interpretation of latent as well as manifest meaning. I chose to use both QnCA and QlCA in the form of methodological plurality to strengthen my research results by allowing a blend of the pros and cons of each method. This allows me to process a large quantity of data while still making a close examination of a smaller set. The Postmodernist stance allows for the blending of the positivist QnCA with the interpretivist QlCA because even an "objective truth" is still socially constructed. Numbers and textual interpretation need not rest in separate fields of study. In this case, my analysis is both descriptive and supported by quantifications of the thick description provided by the blend of these two methods.

Chapter Five: Results

5.1 Introduction

Public discourse of Canadian mass media frames cyberbullying as a social problem. This frame reifies complex cases involving diverse individuals in order to establish a pattern and suggest a solution. The concept of reification is often associated with Marx, Weber, Simmel, and the Frankfurt school of thought. Axel Honneth (2007) credits George Lukacs for coining the key concept of it as taking an abstract concept and making it into something concrete or embodied. In this sense, the abstract concept of cyberbullying is reified by the concrete details of the lived experiences embodied in these teens. However, Honneth (2007) discusses reification in another sense as well. "It signifies a type of human behavior that violates moral or ethical principles by not treating other subjects in accordance with their characteristics as human beings, but instead as numb and lifeless objects – as 'things' or 'commodities'" (p. 19). News portrayals of these suicides systematically overlooks the complicated details of each case and reduces their portrayals into characters representative of a cause. Lukacs, according to Honneth (2007), thought journalism was the "apogee" of social reification (p. 19). He saw reification as "a relation between people" that had "taken on the character of a thing" (Honneth, 2007, p. 21). It is essentially objectifying something human. For Honneth (2007), the alternative is "empathetic and existential engagement" (p. 29). Ultimately, Honneth sees reification as "forgetfulness of recognition" (p. 57). While abundant news coverage of a teen's death might not, at first, seem like an instance of forgetting to recognize that teen, the manner in which they are portrayed illustrates a character, the cyberbullying victim, rather than an actual human recognized for all the complexities of full personhood.

Government leaders were compelled to respond in some way, given the public outrage generated through social media and parental advocates who initially blamed RCMP and other officials for the death of their teen. Such outrage was coupled with the pressure of vigilante justice from the civilian group Anonymous. This response largely reflects the tenor of media coverage on these cases. Press coverage of each teen suicide begins with description of complicated, individual issues and develops into simplified characterizations of a victim who died because of cyberbullying. Dominant public discourse frames new legislation restricting non-consensual distribution of intimate images as the solution to the cyberbullying problem. While this legislative response to the dominant frame may genuinely protect potential victims, media coverage also reflects a minority voice arguing that these teens and the circumstances leading to their suicides are more complicated. Nevertheless, acknowledging the minority voice calling for recognition of individual circumstances does not support the creation of a unified social problem. Media gatekeepers and politicians each benefit from treatment of cyberbullying as a valence issue. The less covered and competing frame in Canadian news coverage, however, argues that these teens are real people living complex lives with deep suffering preceding their deaths and that they do not deserve to be martyrs for a cause.

5.2 Quantitative Findings from Full Data Set

Although media coverage of the death of each of these teens leads to proposed policy change, coverage varies significantly with each victim. Only one fourth of the articles in this data set are for the two male victims. Fully half of the articles focus on Parsons. The 45 days it took for Ottawa to announce the Accepting Schools Act averaged 3.42 Hubley articles per day. The five days between Todd's death and the House of Commons Motion to study cyberbullying averaged 38.4 articles per day. For Parsons, the 18 days between her death and the announced

Nova Scotia Cyber Safety Act produced an average of 22.61 articles per day. Finally, the 48

days between Loik's death and the announcement of Saskatchewan's Anti-bullying Action Plan

had only an average of 1 article per day. Media gatekeepers opted to focus more on female

victims than on males. This is unsurprising given that heteronormative gender stereotypes are

more likely to portray female teens as sympathetic victims than gay or straight male teens.

Figure 1
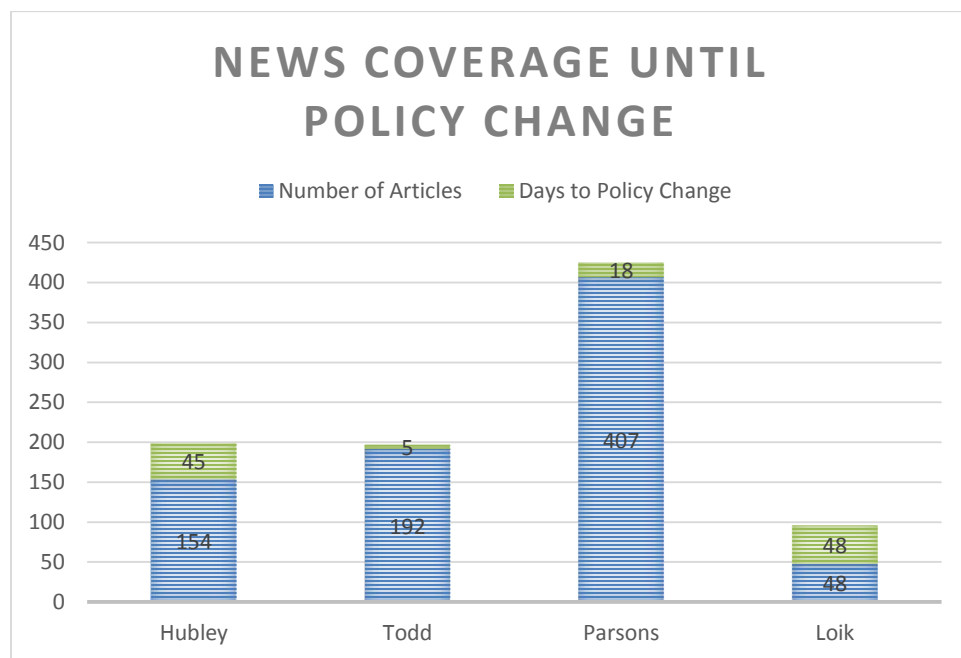
Figure 1 – Chart depicting quantity of articles as well as duration of time between death of the
victim and announced policy change for full 801 article set.

5.3 Quantitative Findings from Reduced Data Set

The data set reduced to reflect a more even sample between the four victims also yielded

interesting numeric results. These findings come from the mixed methods research I conducted

while coding excerpts with eight categories. This section discusses the more quantitative results

from the reduced data set. I will discuss the qualitative results in the next section. Quantitative

results from the reduced data set demonstrate how claims makers apply the cyberbullying as a social problem frame.

The most prevalent category present in news coverage of these deaths is Remedies of Cyberbullying (35%), followed by Effects of Cyberbullying on the Victim (22%) and Definition of Cyberbullying (13%). Figure 2 shows that only thirty percent of the coded excerpts fit the remaining five categories. The following sections summarize noteworthy numeric results from the qualitative content analysis that focused on the data set reduced to more evenly represent each teen. These results are organized according to the categories identified. However, since nearly all of the instances of defensive excerpts appear in the Parsons data set, results for that category are not discussed again.
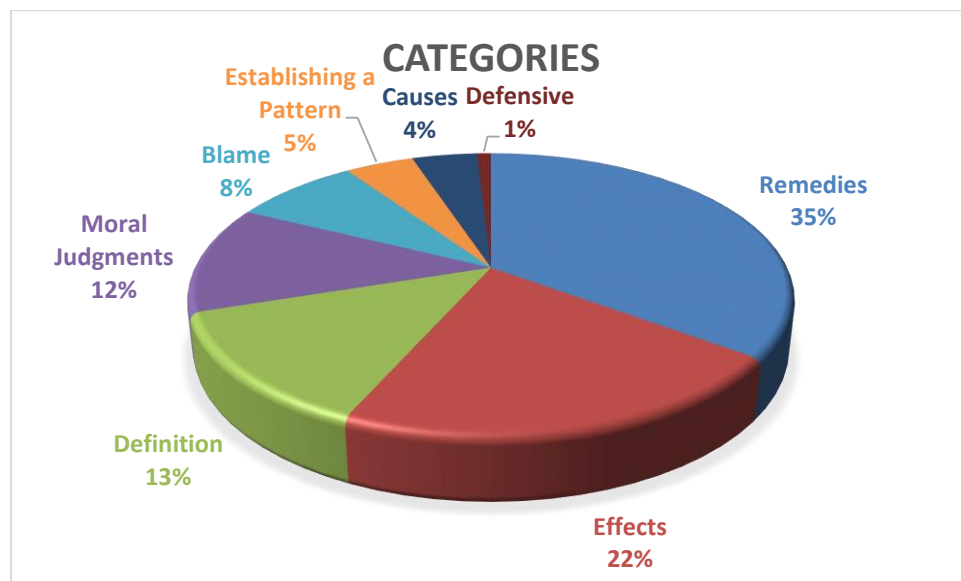
Figure 2

Figure 2 – Pie chart depicting ratio of prevalence for each category of analysis for reduced 221 article data set.

5.3.1 Remedies

As claims makers utilize the social problem frame for cyberbullying, the emphasis is on reform. Much of the public discourse debates solutions to this emerging problem. Figure 3 lists all primary descriptors that appeared in this category along with the number of instances in which that descriptor appeared. Half the excerpts coded as Remedies for Cyberbullying call for public attention and legislative change. This is followed closely by calls for school responses and education, then by criminal investigations. The emphasis of public awareness and responsibility falling on public institutions such as legislative bodies, the school system, and the judicial system demonstrate that treatment of cyberbullying in these articles focuses more on a social problem than on an individual one. Remedies aimed more at teens and their families, such as parental intervention, resolving conflict with the bully, seeking counseling, and seeking retribution all appear less frequently than calls for a more systemic reform.

Furthermore, although two-thirds (66%) of the excerpts across all eight categories focus on the specific teen instead of cyberbullying in general, excerpts in the remedy category emphasize the general issue over specific victims. Remedies is the only category in which excerpts are tagged more frequently as covering Cyberbullying in General (898 excerpts tagged) over Comments Specific to the Victim (596). Even though the majority of the articles in this data set are published in reaction to the death of a specific teen, remedy discourse focuses not on what would remedy his or her individual case but what would improve societal conditions on the general problem of cyberbullying. Their deaths are utilized to provide a forum for discussion of a larger issue. Details of their life and their death are glossed over or else emphasized only to

96

support claims in a larger discourse. Remedies in this social problem frame emphasize a cure for

cyberbullying in general rather than redress for specific events.

Figure 3
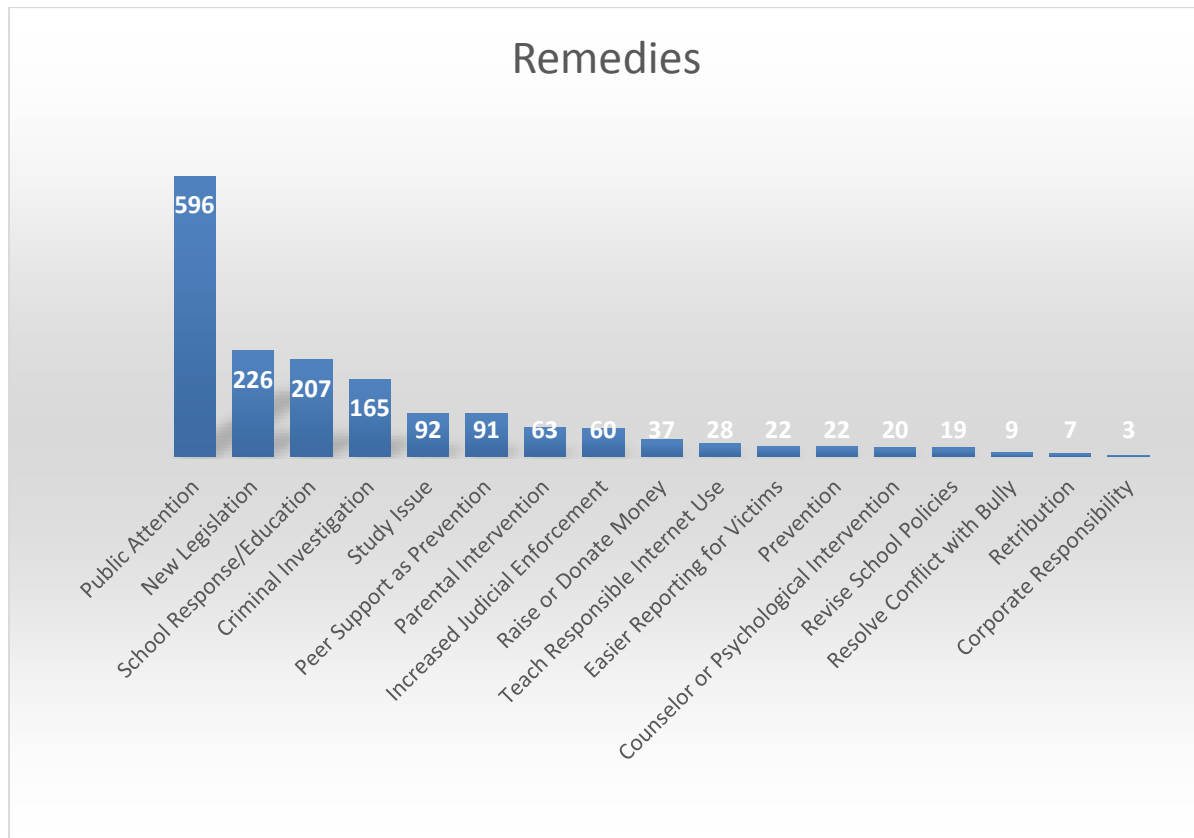
Figure 3 – Bar chart depicting number of excerpts coded for each primary descriptor of the
Remedies for Cyberbullying category across coverage of all four teens for reduced 221 article
data set.

5.3.2 Effects

The social problem frame of cyberbullying implies a high mortality rate. Taken together,

suicide (44% of primary descriptors for effects) and death (25%) account for more than two-

thirds of the descriptors of effects for the four teens. This is unsurprising given that a typical

cyberbullying case would not make the news, and these cases became newsworthy only after

their suicides. However, it is noteworthy that writers presented fourteen other effects from cyberbullying in addition to suicide and death. These effects do not receive the same focus for some teens as they do for others.

The Effects of Cyberbullying category appears most frequently in Todd articles. Suicide (125 of Todd effects excerpts) and death (91) are the two most common descriptors for the effects of cyberbullying on Todd. This is also the case with the other three teens in this study. However, both are mentioned more often for Todd than for the others. There is also more description of other effects on her life than reported for the other three. In fact, the Parsons set describes 13 separate effects, the Hubley set describes 10 effects, and the Loik set describes just seven effects. Coverage of Todd's death describes all 16 effect descriptors in the coding scheme. After suicide and death, the next most common descriptors are depression (34), registering with a new school or moving to escape harassment (24), not completed but attempted suicide (15), losing friendships (13), pain and emotional hurt (11), non-fatal self-harm (10), anxiety (9), and substance abuse (8). Again, most of these descriptors quote or reference her YouTube video as a source for these effects.

5.3.3 Definition

Most of the categories of analysis have dominant descriptors. Definition of Cyberbullying, however, does not. Figure 4 portrays the dozen descriptors appearing with this category as well as the number of excerpts coded with the mentioned descriptor. The news media conversation portrays cyberbullying as circulating humiliating photos (20%), online bullying (17%), repeated and relentless (16%), containing verbal or written harassment (12%), coming from social media (10%), portraying deliberate harm (9%), and often being accompanied with

sexual harassment (7%). This emphasis is more reflective of what Parsons and Todd experienced than what Loik and Hubley faced; however, this finding is another indicator that the discourse emphasizes a social problem frame. The definition of this problem emphasizes the more sympathetic female victims, even when discussing the problem in Loik articles.

Figure 4
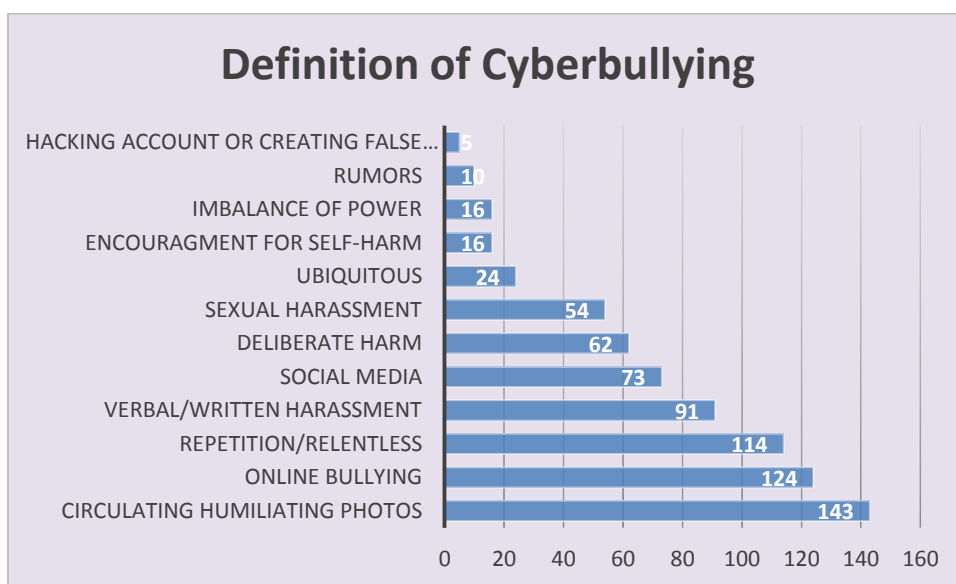
Figure 4 – Bar chart depicting number of excerpts coded for each primary descriptor of the Definition of Cyberbullying category across coverage of all four teens for reduced 221 article data set.

As with other categories, the details of a definition do not appear as often in the coverage of some deaths when compared to others. Much of the Todd media coverage seeks to define cyberbullying. Of the definition excerpts, 47.34 percent come from Todd articles, with 26.6 percent from Loik articles, 21.1 percent from Parsons articles, and just 4.96 percent from Hubley articles. Not an unfamiliar term, cyberbullying is most solidly constructed through mass media coverage of Todd's suicide. It is described as online bullying (63 Todd excerpts), repeated and relentless (45), circulating humiliating photos (44), using social media (43), written and/or verbal harassment (35), with deliberate harm intended (32), of an ubiquitous nature (15), involving an

imbalance of power (14), sexual harassment (14), including encouragement for self-harm and/or suicide (12), hacking a user's account or creating a false profile (5), and spreading rumors (3). Repeated characterizations of these details normalizes what forms of abuse public discourse associates with the term cyberbullying. These abusive practices are presented collectively as the cyberbullying social problem.

5.3.4 Moral Judgments

The general public might consider the topic of cyberbullying as simply an issue rather than a recognized problem if not for a sense of moral indignation conveyed in the social problem frame. Moral judgments, in the form of sympathy, condemnation, or other emotional reactions pervade news coverage of Todd's death (43.92% of moral judgment excerpts, compared to 22.81% for Hubley, 19.77% for Parsons, and 13.5% for Loik). By far, the most common descriptor for moral judgment excerpts in Todd articles was condemnation of harassment (117 excerpts), calling it "heartbreaking" (Ottawa Cit2 13 Oct. 2012) and "tragic" (National P 13 Oct. 2012). The case left "many still baffled how a young girl's pleas could have gone for unanswered for so long" (CTV 13 Oct. 2012). As B.C. Premier Christy Clark said in a press release, "No one deserves to be bullied, no one earns it, no one asks for it. It isn't a rite of passage" (Postmedia4 11 Oct. 2012). This is followed by emotional reactions to her suicide (64). Students were "devastated by her death" (Postmedia 15 Oct. 2012). Reporters also made note of the international "outpouring of grief" (Postmedia4 11 Oct. 2012).

5.3.5 Blame

Further evidence of the cyberbullying as a social problem frame comes from the category Placing Blame for the Death of the Victim. While many of the categories of analysis I selected

deliberately examined the manner in which cyberbullying was addressed in these articles, this category was open. If the discourse focused on other contributors to the death of the teen, the blame category is where such arguments would appear. However, a full seventy percent of the blame descriptors credit cyberbullying or bullying for the teen's death. As mentioned in the qualitative findings for Parsons, most of the remaining blame descriptors apply specifically to her. Twelve percent blame inaction of others, all of which appear in early Parsons news coverage. Another eight percent blame rape for the death of Parsons; however, many of those descriptors are paired with cyberbullying. Most of the final ten percent appear in Hubley articles. Five percent blame the death on mental health or emotional issues while an additional five percent blame intolerance (in the form of homophobia) for the death.

5.3.6 Establishing a Pattern

One key aspect of the social problem frame of cyberbullying is establishing a pattern. Something made clear in these articles is that the death of the teen in question is not an isolated event. One third of the excerpts coded as Establishing a Pattern make a generic claim that a pattern exists. Chronology of events is a factor for which teens are connected with each other; however, connections with Amanda Todd are most common (23%). A full twenty percent of the pattern excerpts connect the death emphasized in the article with another case, such as an international story. Another seventeen percent build a connection with Rehtaeh Parsons. Just five percent refer to Jamie Hubley and four percent to Todd Loik. All references to Loik also connect to one of the others as well.

5.3.7 Causes

Coverage of Parson's death portrays alleged sexual assault or rape (24% of cause excerpts) as the cause for the bullying she experienced. In Todd's case, sexual exploitation (15%) was most commonly indicated as the cause for her harassment. Almost no causes are indicated for Loik except to say that cyberbullying developed from conventional bullying (7%). Most of the excerpts in my data set indicating a cause for the harassment the victim experienced appear in the Hubley articles, and nearly all of those excerpts (41%) portray homophobia as the cause. The final descriptors appear distributed through each case, often referring to cyberbullying in general rather than the specific teen in question. They include the following: victim spending too much time using social media (7%), physical assault (3%), disagreement with former friends (2%), and bias against physical appearance (1%).

Discourse emphasizing causes of cyberbullying is minimal in this data set. When it appears, it emphasizes circumstances specific to the teen in question. The most prevalent descriptors pair cyberbullying with another social problem such as homophobia, rape, and sexual harassment. With causes minimized and remedies emphasized, the data reveals a solution focus rather than one of understanding.

5.3.8 Quantitative Conclusion

Quantitative results from the reduced data set demonstrate how claims makers establish cyberbullying as a social problem. With discourse emphasizing remedies, the primary focus is on reform. News coverage reporting on the death of these teens emphasizes public attention to cyberbullying and new legislation addressing it as the top remedies. Discussion does not emphasize an individual focus on the teen in question but more on a larger issue perceived as a

problem in society at large, an issue this teen's death characterizes. The dire nature of the

problem is conveyed with the second most common category: effects. These effects portray

mostly death and suicide, as if without a swift response to this social problem, more teens will

die. With an emphasis on remedies and the motivation of deadly effects, the next most common

category defines the problem of cyberbullying. The next most prevalent category condemns the

problem through moral judgments. Blame for the teen's death is attributed primarily on

cyberbullying. Even when other factors are associated with the suicide, cyberbullying is

typically grouped with them as a complicating circumstance. Claims makers then work to

establish a pattern by linking various teen deaths associated with similar forms of harassment.

Causes of cyberbullying are underemphasized, as the least prevalent category. This is likely due

to an emphasis on cyberbullying as a social problem rather than the individual circumstances of

the teens' lives. The focus is less on perpetrators and their actions than on conditions of teen

culture, as if cyberbullying is not the fault of individuals but a natural outcome to societal

conditions – conditions that must be remedied.

5.4 Qualitative Findings from Reduced Data Set

Of the eight categories identified in my analysis, remedies was, by far, the most common.

News coverage for each of these teens focuses heavily on remedies. Therefore, as I discuss my

qualitative findings, I will portray the unique remedy discourse in each case. I will also seek to

portray the manner in which each of these teens were reified as victims.

5.4.1 Jamie Hubley: 15 Oct. 2011 – 30 Nov. 2011

The first articles published on Hubley's death refer to him as a "15-year-old" and the

"son of Kanata South Councillor Allan Hubley." The brief articles indicate that he "died

suddenly" (Ottawa Cit 16 Oct. 2011); however, no mention is made regarding suicide, bullying, cyberbullying, or Hubley's sexual orientation. Initially, Hubley's death made the news because of his father's high profile as a politician. The teen kept a Tumblr blog, which allowed reporters to research several personal details they used to infer a cause for Hubley's death. Once his struggles with intolerance were quoted, Hubley went from being a 15-year-old to being an "openly gay teenager" (CP 25 Nov. 2011).

Not only was the word "gay" attached to his name in nearly every article, but the topic of homophobia dominated the discourse. Although reporters invoked the term cyberbullying while discussing the harassment Hubley faced, it was done more as a way to demonstrate the inescapable nature of that harassment. One reporter, for example, noted that "cyberbullying has created a new problem. There is no longer any refuge" from hate based on sexual orientation; Hubley "knew that his tormentors were reading his blog" (T Star 19 Oct. 2011). Unless an article refers to Hubley's blog, most of the news coverage refers to his harassment as bullying rather than cyberbullying. Though the term cyberbullying appears, it is not emphasized.

With the focus on homophobia leading to bullying rather than on cyberbullying, specifically, the remedy discourse emphasized public attention (24.59% of Hubley remedy excerpts), especially the 'It Gets Better Campaign.' Through this international movement, celebrities and average citizens record an internet message of hope urging teens to keep living despite whatever challenges of intolerance they might be facing. The campaign is specifically directed toward LGBTQ youth. Some of Hubley's final blog posts are portrayed as being in dialogue with this public campaign. In addition to the 'It Gets Better Campaign,' secondary descriptors of the remedy category focused on social media (11.01%), famous advocates (8.44%), and awareness programs (8.44%). After public attention, the most common descriptors

104

for a remedy called for school response (15.9%) and peer support as prevention (11.19%).

Reform, the news coverage indicates, must come from teens, schools, and the public. This

happens through public advocacy by celebrities such as Rick Mercer and Lady Gaga.

The consequences of not reforming are portrayed as dire. Even though the first few

Hubley articles mention his death without a specific cause attached, 107 effects excerpts mention

suicide while only 38 mention his death without indicating self-harm.

This leaves Jamie Hubley reified as a "gay teenager said to have taken his own life in part

because of bullying" (CP 20 Oct. 2011). It was "bullying that pushed [this] gay teen to take his

life" (CP4 20 Oct. 2011). This characterization apparently contrasts with how his family

perceived his life and his death. "He was not, as one headline suggested, a 'Canadian gay teen

driven to suicide by bullying,'" one article counters (Postmedia2 28 Oct. 2011). "Sadly, four

youths under the age of 19 are 'known' to commit suicide every week in Canada, according to

2007 statistics. Surely many of them had blogs and Facebook accounts, yet their stories don't

become major media events. Jamie's did for two reasons: his father is a public figure and Jamie

was bullied" (Postmedia2 28 Oct. 2011). The article continues with an appeal from Hubley's

parents. "But now that the glare of the media attention has dimmed, what the Hubleys want

people to know about their son James is that he was a real person whose complex life shouldn't

be hijacked for a cause, no matter how worthy" (Postmedia2 28 Oct. 2011).

With a few mentions of cyberbullying, the Hubley articles frame homophobic bullying as

a problem requiring public attention and social reform. According to his family, Hubley did, in

fact, face homophobic harassment. However, he struggled with depression they do not portray

as caused by either his sexuality or the harassment he faced. They also claim dissatisfaction with

the oversimplification of his experiences as portrayed in the press.

5.4.2 Amanda Todd: 10 Oct. 2012 – 15 Oct. 2012

Amanda Todd did not become a high profile case because of a well-known parent as Hubley did. Three weeks prior to her death, Todd posted a video on YouTube chronicling years of persistent threats and harassment from an unknown internet predator. She also detailed how that harassment spilled over to her lived experiences at school and in her community. The aesthetics of this video are noteworthy. Todd does not sit before the camera complaining about what she has suffered. She positioned the camera in such a way that her face is not the focus of the camera. She looks down and does not engage eye-contact with the viewers. Instead, she stands before the camera holding pages of ordinary paper on which she has hand-written her story. She holds up these papers, one-at-a-time, for a nine-minute explanation of how trapped she feels as a result of cascading harassment stemming from a moment years before when she agreed to lift her shirt for someone communicating with her over a webcam. Todd's YouTube video went viral, receiving well over a million views world-wide within two days of her death. No one issued a press release following her death. Her silent video generated enough international social media attention for main-stream media gatekeepers to address her story.

The high profile and emotionally charged nature of this case is reflected in the remedy excerpts of Todd's news coverage. Most remedy excerpts make note of the public attention paid to the case (27.93% of Todd remedy excerpts). The effectiveness of social media (18.39%) at drawing public attention comes next; these excerpts emphasize the viral video Todd posted weeks before her suicide. There are nearly equal calls for criminal investigation (7.01%), school responses (7.01%), and new legislation or policy changes (6.9%). Despite the relatively few calls for a political response, it took only five days for the House of Commons Motion seeking to study the issue and make recommendations. This is because the motion was already in process

before Todd's death. However, the motion was announced earlier than planned, presumably due to media attention of Todd's circumstances.

With an emphasis on social harassment, print media reifies Amanda Todd as a victim who spoke out through social media but died because of bullying. "A 15-year-old Vancouver area girl killed herself after posting a YouTube video where she told her story of being bullied" (Edmonton S 12 Oct. 2012). The blame is placed on bullying. She is the "Port Coquitlam, B.C. teen who took her own life Wednesday following years of torment from bullies" (24 Hours Tor 15 Oct. 2012). The online nature of her harassment is not lost in this reification. "Todd, 15, was found dead in a Port Coquitlam home last Wednesday—five weeks after posting a YouTube video outlining the abuse she endured both online and in person" (Postmedia2 14 Oct. 2012).

5.4.3 Rehtaeh Parsons: 7 April 2013 – 25 April 2013

News coverage for Rehtaeh Parsons' death focuses on cyberbullying stemming from sexual assault. Though most teen acquaintance rape and suicide cases are not considered news worthy, Parsons' died just months after Todd while cyberbullying was still a topic of public discourse. Parsons' parents also utilized social media sites such as Facebook to lash out at the justice and education system for what they called an inadequate response to her rape case. The tenor of these articles is not characterized by the sorrow and sympathy common in Todd's coverage. Rather, the tone reflects the two most common categories of excerpts found in this data set: blame and defensiveness.

Across all four cases, seventy percent of the excerpts assigning blame for the death of the teen describe bullying or cyberbullying as the cause of the death. As with the other teens, blame in Parsons' case is most commonly placed on bullying or cyberbullying; however, unlike the other teens, news coverage also conveys blame for her death on the sexual assault as well as the

inaction of others. Statements made in the neutral reporter voice stating that she "killed herself after an alleged rape and months of cyberbullying" (Kingston Whig St 17 April 2013) link her death to both cyberbullying and rape, leaving the choice of blame to the reader.

Blame, in this data set, moves from inaction and rape to cyberbullying as the story develops. In the earliest stories, quotes from Parsons' parents blame RCMP and school officials. Take, for example, one article just two days after her death: "A grieving mother's questions about the handling of her daughter's allegations of sexual assault, an incident the girl's mother says led to the teenager's suicide" (Postmedia3 9 April 2013). Several articles quote the parents as claiming that their daughter was "disappointed to death" and that "the justice system failed us completely" (Windsor St 11 April 2013). They questioned "How is it possible for someone to leave a digital trail like that yet the RCMP don't have evidence of a crime? What were they looking for if photos and bragging weren't enough?" (Postmedia9 12 April 2013).

By 11 April, Glenn Canning and Leah Parsons, Rehtaeh's parents, met "with Nova Scotia Justice Minister Ross Landry after he announced Tuesday night that his department was looking for ways to review how the RCMP handled the allegations" and "Landry initially ruled out the possibility of a review, but he said Wednesday that his change in position was driven by the public outcry over the case" (Windsor St 11 April 2013). Later, "Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter and Rehtaeh's mother Leah Parsons met with Stephen Harper, and her father, to discuss legislation which might prevent a recurrence" (Power Play 23 April 2013). Following these meetings, all new quotes from Parsons' parents blame cyberbullying and rape rather than inaction for their daughter's death. "The family of the 17-year-old Nova Scotia girl says she committed suicide after a photo of her being sexually assaulted was circulated" (CP2 24 April 2013).

Seeking to avoid libel, journalists are careful to never accuse an individual of a crime he or she has not been convicted of. Even though Parsons' parents claim four male teens were present and participated in their daughter's rape, even when citing the parents as a source, reporters are careful to call the incident an alleged sexual assault rather than a rape. They also do not identify the accused underage perpetrators. This tends to shift focus from teens who committed violent acts to the "photo of the alleged incident [that] was distributed" (Postmedia14 11 April 2013). A secondary effect of this passive construction and others like it, "a picture of the alleged assault was passed around" (Postmedia2 11 April 2013), is that without identifiable perpetrators, blame naturally shifts from individuals to the medium they use in their harassment. Since it is an uncommon journalistic practice to identify male teens as rapists and high school students as internet predators, by process of default, emphasis shifts to the circulated photo and reporters inadvertently take a technologically deterministic stance blaming technology rather than teens for the suffering of the victim.

Journalistic practices, however, do not extend to the general public. One major aspect of the Parsons' news coverage is the 'hacktivist' group Anonymous. This group is commonly affiliated with grass-roots activism in the name of justice and is associated with Guy Fawkes. As 'hacktivists,' those who consider themselves as part of Anonymous seek to use specialized computer skills to attain justice when they feel the justice system has failed. Reacting to the frustration of Parson's parents and the international social media attention generated, individuals claiming the name Anonymous posted that they had identified the male perpetrators in Parsons' rape and that they were prepared to publish their names and addresses if the police did not re-open their investigation. Little of that conversation reached main-stream news outlets.

RCMP spokespersons characterized Anonymous as vigilantes not bound by professional practices of investigation and prosecution. Discourse of Anonymous appears mainly through the defensive excerpts present in Parsons' articles. RCMP officials initially made several defensive claims arguing for why they did not prosecute the males involved in the case. Later, this defensive tone carried over to their justification for why they re-opened the case. "Investigators were aware of certain Internet postings but that they 'did not impact on us' reopening the investigation. He added that investigators had not reached out to any members of Anonymous" (Postmedia9 12 April 2013). Because this "new evidence (not from Anonymous) had come to light" (Globe and M 13 April 2013), RCMP could meet the demands of the public outcry without empowering vigilante justice. They commonly note that when Anonymous published a name and contact information for the alleged perpetrator in the Todd case (events that happened after the timeline of my data set), it turned out to be the wrong person, and a Canadian suffered unwarranted persecution due to faulty research and vigilante actions.

All but one of the defensive excerpts in the four cases come from Parsons' news coverage. The third form of defensive excerpts (other than defense of inaction and defense of new advocacy) is actually defense of the alleged perpetrators. Members of Parsons' community created a Facebook page in support of the teens involved in her case and placed several posters throughout Halifax in their support. "The brightly coloured posters bear the words 'Speak the Truth' in large, bold print and urge people to support the boys, though it does not identify them" (Victoria T C 19 April 2013). For fear of backlash, RCMP officials advised that the social media page and posters be removed, and they were.

As with the other cases, the most commonly discussed remedy was public attention (23% of Parsons remedy excerpts). Opinion pieces debated the effectiveness of Anonymous as well as

general public attention for motivating new RCMP action. Calls for a criminal investigation followed (11.59%) as the second most common remedy recommendation with legislative change (9.3%) and public attention through parental advocates (5.79%) next.

By the second half of the news coverage in this data set, Parsons' is reified to a girl who died because of the circulation of a photo of her rape. It was the "death of a Nova Scotia teenager, allegedly driven to suicide by sexual assault and cyberbullying" (CP5 11 April 2013). "The family of the 17-year-old Nova Scotia girl says she committed suicide after a photo of her being sexually assaulted was circulated" (CP2 24 April 2013). The Parsons news coverage refers frequently to the death of Amanda Todd and seeks to establish a pattern of cyberbullying, one that heavily defines it as the non-consensual distribution of intimate images (77 definition excerpts with circulating humiliating photos descriptors). Nevertheless, the public discourse does not escape the style of debate common with rape accusations. Even with overwhelming public anger and calls for action, those closest to the alleged perpetrators seek to defend them and lash out at Parsons. What some might call 'slut shaming' appears on memorial Facebook pages in Parsons' honor, and RCMP officials, while agreeing to re-open the case and investigate further, are reluctant to charge male teens involved in an incident in which the female came to the party willingly and chose to consume alcohol. The Nova Scotia Cyber Safety Act focuses on preventing cyberbullying, and news coverage reifies her death as one caused by cyberbullying which, in turn, was caused by the circulation of a photo of her sexual assault. Despite the cyberbullying focus, claims makers in her case underlie the injustice of rape more than online harassment.

5.4.4 Todd Loik: 9 Sept. 2011 – 14 Nov. 2013

"After another tragic death of a bullied teen" (Globe and M 27 Sept. 2013), Todd Loik's death is simplified to one more instance in a pattern of suicides caused by cyberbullying. His death does not make the news due to a famous parent or a viral video. He does not garner the attention of famous advocates because he suffered homophobic harassment such as Jamie Hubley did. Nor is he portrayed as the vulnerable victim of an unseen perpetrator as Amanda Todd was. Though his parents reached out to the media in a similar manner to what Leah Parsons did, Loik does not appear in newspapers due to a surge in attention from social media. His harassment remains somewhat undefined and vague, usually characterized simply as cyberbullying with descriptions coming almost solely from his mother.

As the most recent case, it is unsurprising that excerpts establishing a pattern appear most commonly in Loik articles. Despite the fact that news coverage in Loik's death provides greater opportunity to connect with past deaths of a similar nature, it is unlikely that media gatekeepers would have published details on Loik's death without the affiliation to cyberbullying and the pattern emerging through media channels. Even earlier articles in the Hubley and the Todd set contain many excerpts establishing a pattern of cyberbullying. Looking at the entire data set, most pattern excerpts are generic claims that a pattern exists (73). Connections to a specific person are most commonly tied to Amanda Todd (51), followed by connection to a specific case but not one examined in this study (44). Some excerpts connect to Rehtaeh Parsons (38) and some to Jamie Hubley (11), with only 8 specifically referencing Todd Loik. Of course, if another suicide tied to cyberbullying receives news coverage following Loik's death, this number might be higher. However, given the low-profile of his case, it is unlikely.

Details in Loik articles focus heavily on cyberbullying in general and on past cases. "Todd Loik, 15, killed himself earlier this month in North Battleford, Sask., after facing a torrent of cyber-bullying" (Globe and M 27 Sept. 2013). His story is almost lost to the pattern of "Recent tragic deaths, including those of Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, and Todd Loik" (Postmedia 16 Oct. 2013). Loik's mother characterizes the harassment he endured as relentless online bullying through social media, but she also referred to bullying in general. "Todd Loik, 15, committed suicide because students hounded him with 'nasty' messages, mother says" (Postmedia 15 Oct. 2013). Readers are never provided with the graphic details that spur such outrage over the victimization of Todd and Parsons. In fact, though the Loik articles contain the second highest percentage of definition excerpts (26.6%), most of the definition excerpts refer specifically to other cases. There are 21 excerpts describing the circulation of humiliating photos even though no such actions are claimed to have happened in his harassment.

The remedy discourse in the Loik articles focus most heavily on new legislation (25.06%). This is interesting since Saskatchewan already had cyberbullying legislation in place. Nevertheless, the call for legislative change grew from a provincial to a federal appeal. The articles in the Loik set are the only ones in which the mention of any remedy outnumbers public attention. It is still the second most frequent descriptor for remedies, though (17.83%). The third noteworthy remedy descriptor is school response (8.53%), which more closely matches the local response to his death. The Saskatchewan Anti-bullying Action Plan focuses on school response. Focus more on new legislation, however, demonstrates how Loik's death is used as part of a larger discourse calling on politicians to address cyberbullying.

The details of Todd Loik's harassment, his life, his interests, are lost in the reification of him as a small part in a larger pattern. "Loik, 15, was found dead Sept. 9 after he was reportedly

taunted repeatedly on Facebook and through texts. His tragic story follows similar experiences by other Canadian teens" (Calgary S 27 Sept. 2013). "His was just the latest in a series of deaths that have been blamed on cyberbullying" (Globe and M 29 Oct. 2013). According to this mediated construction, he is simply the latest victim of something the public has come to expect: cyberbullying leads to teen suicide.

5.5 Conclusion

Media coverage of these four teen suicides demonstrates the development of a larger social movement through the mediated public discourse of print news. The overall message claims that "bullying has emerged as a societal problem from which no part of the country is immune" (Postmedia7 15 Oct. 2012). As "social media networks tell [the] story of a Vancouver area teen who committed suicide over cyberbullying" (Postmedia 11 Oct. 2012), claims makers frame cyberbullying as a social problem in need of a solution. The most common category of excerpts across the data set was remedies. In all, claims makers describe 27 different potential remedies. However, public attention stands out as the most common descriptor (24.53% of remedy descriptors) with use of social media to gain public attention (10.7%) as the most common secondary descriptor. This is followed by new legislation (9.19%) as the second most common primary descriptor for remedy excerpts.

The remedy discourse matches progression of the construction of cyberbullying as a social problem. Cyberbullying is well on its way through the stages Best (2013) describes in the development of social problems: claims making, media coverage, public reaction, policymaking, social problems work, and, finally, policy outcomes. In the case of the Canadian construction of cyberbullying, parents and teens (prior to their deaths) made the majority of the initial claims utilizing social media. The viral nature of these claims generated wide-spread media coverage

114

devoted to the topic. Public reaction to both social media and main stream media snowballed to generate more media coverage as claims makers debated ideal remedies and societal responses to the social problem as they were defining it, particularly in the news. This led to policymaking, first at the provincial level where these teens died, then finally at the federal level. With cyberbullying carefully defined, a pattern of examples established, and young policies in place, the next step will likely be cyberbullying social problems work. It is now up to law enforcement, parents, and school officials to begin applying the term to ongoing cases and test how and which incidents qualify as examples of the term. Only then can the public come to see the policy outcomes of this legislation.

The common print news frame of cyberbullying as a social problem demonstrates all four of the characteristics Entman (1993) ascribes to frames: definition, cause, remedy, and moral judgment. I also found trends establishing a pattern, discussing effects, placing blame, and making defensive claims. Due to the fairly one-sided public outrage and public attention, cyberbullying is being established as what Furedi (2001) would call a valence issue. No one claims to be an advocate for cyberbullying. No one would. The complex lives of Jamie Hubley, Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, and Todd Loik are reified through print news coverage to portray victims for the cause of cyberbullying. Of course, each of these teens have lived experiences more complicated than public discourse characterizes; however, most claims makers utilize Canadian print news of their deaths to advance the movement of cyberbullying as a social problem rather than address more complicated position and systemic issues.

Chapter Six: Discussion

Cyberbullying literature often focuses on measuring, diagnosing, and responding to the issue. What is under-represented in cyberbullying literature is an analysis of how disparate circumstances are grouped through public discourse to construct a commonly recognized problem. This process of construction directly impacts all praxis related to cyberbullying. The construction of the problem also directs the manner of research undertaken in the name of understanding and preventing the problem. Using frame theory and content analysis, this study examines public discourse of cyberbullying as represented in print news coverage of the deaths of four Canadian teens. Articles appearing early in the data set for each individual convey more depth to his or her story in the form of more details and a broader discussion. As the teen remains in the news, however, this coverage simplifies to focus less on the teen and more on cyberbullying as a social problem. As this shift occurs, specifics regarding the teen solidify to a reduced chunk of details repeated so frequently, the teen becomes little more than a caricature utilized to generate certain emotions such as sympathy and outrage in conjunction with discourse on cyberbullying. This discourse emphasizes a general problem affecting society as a whole, which holds the death of the teen up as a key example but limits full discussion on the individual in order to focus on the larger social problem.

Policies written in response to the mediated public discourse framing cyberbullying as a social problem risk addressing a skewed representation of this issue. If reporters removed the cyberbullying as a social problem frame from news coverage of the death of these teens, public discourse on their deaths would look very different. Without a pattern connecting these events to one another and an emphasis on remedying the problem, these deaths reduce to tragic individual incidents. Given that teen suicide rarely makes the news without some other factor of interest,

116

their deaths would likely characterize some of their suffering but would not snowball to generate future discussion or spur policy changes. In order to effect social change in response to a constructed problem, claims makers must rely on recognizable patterns. These teens are amalgamated into characters in order to promote social change and prevent cyberbullying tragedies. However, legislation drafted in response to overly simplified characterizations of the most extreme cases will likely not address more prevalent cyberbullying instances.

6.1 Dominant Frame

Framing studies from the field of psychology demonstrate that a medium knowledge base creates the most enduring frame effects. In the time frame of this data set, the Canadian general public advanced from occasionally hearing the term cyberbullying to the concept being established as a social problem addressed through local, provincial, and federal legislation. The dominant frames presented in this data set primed the general public to see cyberbullying as an important social problem on the public agenda.

The dominant frame relies first on individual schemata such as the notions of tragedy and suicide. These schemata build to primary social frameworks such as the notion of teens being reckless in general and needing protection through adult figures and legal guidelines. The primary framework of technology being an out of control and threatening entity is also necessary to the dominant frame. These cognitive perceptions create the cultural stock frames that since technology is dangerous, since teens need protection, and since cyberbullying leads to suicide, which is a tragedy, then cyberbullying is a new social problem. Since old laws struggle to keep up with advancements in technology, and since technology is to blame for these deaths, the solution is an increase in public awareness followed by new legislation to restrict use of dangerous new media. The consequence of inaction is portrayed as further teen deaths. Best

117

(2013) argues that public issues must compete in the social problems marketplace. Without schemata and cultural stock frames that resonate with the Canadian public, hard news stories conveying the death of these teens would not have generated follow-up feature news pieces or editorial stories. Without the sympathetic victims and a sense of guilt and responsibility for these teens on the part of the general public, the cyberbullying social problem frame would have been swallowed up in the temporary memory of yesterday's news.

This dominant frame of cyberbullying as a social problem treats it as a valence issue in this data set. It is portrayed in such a tragic tone, that no claims makers could ethically advocate for cyberbullying. Later news articles, beyond this data set, focusing on the federal legislative response seek to represent cyberbullying as a position issue in which protection of vulnerable youth conflicts with internet privacy rights. Position issues are recognized social problems with deeply imbedded polarized positions in the general public. This movement seeks to establish safe ground for a counter argument against cyberbullying legislation. However, by the time these news articles seeking to make cyberbullying a position issue reach the forum of public discourse, the more resonating frame of cyberbullying as a valence social problem endures. This is because cyberbullying has been overwhelmingly present in the social problems market place, particularly following Todd's and Parsons' deaths. The frames presented in their news coverage set the tone for public perception on this issue.

6.2 Female Teen: The Ideal Victim

My analysis considers news coverage of two male and two female victims. Results show that news coverage emphasizes females more than males. It is, after all, a common primary framework to consider female youths as requiring a greater degree of protection than males. Christie (1986) claimed that not all people who suffer injustices receive the label of victim

118

equally. For him, the 'ideal victim' resembles Little Red Riding Hood. She is female; she is young; she is naïve; she is focused on performing good deeds; however, a stranger attacks her (Christie, 1986; also Walklate, 2008). Such victimization activates a strong sense of injustice. This characterization closely fits Amanda Todd. Part of her tragedy is the unidentified stranger who preyed on a naïve young girl. Of the four teens in this case study, her death generated the most news articles per day and inspired policy change at the most rapid rate.

Carrabine et al. (2004) claim that there is a hierarchy of victimization (p. 117). At the top of this hierarchy are those who deserve to be victimized the least, someone like Christie's Little Red Riding Hood archetype. At the bottom of the hierarchy are those who are already marginalized by society but are perceived as persons who made choices to put themselves at risk for victimization. This includes groups such as prostitutes and the homeless. Somewhere in the middle of this hierarchy are those presumed to have enough power to prevent victimization. According to this view of victimhood, Todd, as a female teen, ranks near the top, likely followed by Parsons who is also a female teen but who made a decision to attend an event with alcohol. Moving down the hierarchy, Hubley would come next because he is male but is also in a minority as the only openly gay student at his school. Last would be Loik who is vulnerable because he is a teen but is perceived as someone who should be able to defend himself; he is a white male whose sexual orientation is not addressed in news coverage of his death.

This hierarchy of victimization fits media attention paid to the death of these teens. Loik only had an average of one news article per day from his death until an announced policy response. His window of time is also the longest. Hubley follows with more coverage and a slightly shorter time until officials announced policy changes. Parsons had the most articles in her data window; however, her death took much longer to inspire policy changes than Todd.

119

Looking at the number of articles per day between the death of the teen and proposed legislation, Parsons received less attention than Todd who sits at the top of the hierarchy as the ideal victim. The time it took for public discourse following their death to generate policy change and the amount of daily mainstream coverage on their deaths demonstrate a clear hierarchy among these teens. Claims makers emphasize the more sympathetic victims such as Todd over the less ideal victims such as Loik.

Table 2

Hierarchy of Victims

Teen	Range of News	Policy Proposed	Days until Policy	Mean articles per Day
Amanda Todd	10 Oct. 2012 – 15 Oct. 2012	House of Commons Motion to Study Cyberbullying	5	38.4
Rehtaeh Parsons	7 April 2013 – 25 April 2013	Nova Scotia Cyber Safety Act	18	22.61
Jamie Hubley	15 Oct. 2011 – 30 Nov. 2011	Ottawa Accepting Schools Act	45	3.42
Todd Loik	9 Sept. 2013 – 14 Nov. 2013	Saskatchewan Anti-bullying Action Plan	48	1

6.3 Valence Issue

The social problem frame of cyberbullying presents it as a valence issue. One way to examine social issues is to question the validity of the claims, seeking to identify a hollow construct. Some might question whether cyberbullying is anything new or should be separated from bullying in general. Some might question whether media portrayals of cyberbullying commonly leading to death might be sensationalist. However, with at least four dead teens, no news coverage seeks to frame cyberbullying as a hollow construct.

Despite the absence of hollow construct claims, most cyberbullying does not lead to death. However, nearly all news coverage of cyberbullying links it with suicide. The cyberbullied teens portrayed in the news do not demonstrate the same degree of and forms of electronic peer harassment measured in most cyberbullying studies. It is problematic that federal legislation meant to address cyberbullying closely reflects the social problem frame of cyberbullying from these extreme cases because the nature of cyberbullying as characterized by major studies presents a different image of peer electronic-mediated harassment. This academic definition often emphasizes written electronic harassment.

The teens in the news are portrayed as clear victims of an injustice. Rodkin and Fischer (2012), however, contest the clear lines between victims and perpetrators. Kowalski et al. (2008) see cyberbullying as a group phenomenon. The cyberbullying that concerns school officials is more indicative of group dynamic peer conflict than what Hubley, Todd, or Parsons faced. The cyberbullying Loik experienced is likely more reflective of the instances measured by cyberbullying studies. However, the details of his case are largely ignored in media portrayals of his harassment. Of the four teens in this study, he is also the only one whose parents did not testify in federal Bill C-13 hearings.

The pattern presented in these cases represents only the most extreme circumstances. In opinion articles, general public claims makers comment on the circumstances of these teens by relating to something they experienced. However, each correlation reveals a far less extreme circumstance of harassment. The four deaths in this case study also involve more complexity than just cyberbullying. Conditions of peer-on-peer physical aggression, depression, rape, international sexual extortion, and homophobia all contribute to the despair each teen faced before choosing suicide. While some of these details appear in the news coverage of their

121

deaths, the details are often swallowed in the larger narrative of cyberbullying as the center of discourse. Their lives are reified to create a clearer and more consistent frame of cyberbullying as a social problem, despite the fact that this frame is likely inconsistent with the more common forms of electronic-mediated harassment youths experience on a daily basis.

Conventional bullying is more prevalent than cyberbullying, yet the two are often correlated. The role of bullies and victims also commonly overlaps. Neither the greater prevalence of conventional bullying nor the overlap between bullies and victims serves the cause of a collective action frame, however. Advocates for change need simplicity. This requires reification of cases as well as sympathetic victims.

The literature shows that marginalized groups are more likely to be cyberbullied (Rodkin & Fischer, 2012; Shariff, 2009). In the four cases I examined, this was most emphasized with Jamie Hubley. His cyberbullying was generally attributed to his sexual orientation. The cyberbullying of Rehtaeh Parsons was also somewhat associated with 'slut shaming' typical of rape discourse; however, this characterization was more common from the discourse of members of the general public rather than reporters. Amanda Todd was generally portrayed as a complete victim. Though she willingly lifted her shirt to provide the image used to harass her, no public discourse vilifies this choice or portrays her as an otherwise marginalized teen. By openly admitting and owning her mistake through her online video confession, Todd gains complete public support. She becomes the beautiful teen who made a grave mistake and is not conveyed as a member of a typically marginalized group. Todd Loik, a white male whose sexual orientation is not openly identified or discussed in public discourse, is also not portrayed as someone others would expect to be harassed. However, he also receives the least news coverage. Vulnerable groups make better victims for a cause.

122

Sympathetic victims and simplified patterns are effective for spurring legislative responses to issues on the public agenda, especially when they are framed as a valence social problem. The power of enduring words from victims' social media accounts, YouTube videos, and the sympathetic figures of their parents as advocates for the cause demonstrate what Best (2013) claimed about the power victims have to own and define social problems. In mass media, that ownership is framed in a way to create a story worth publishing. While victims make only six percent of the claims in this data set and their family members make 13 percent, reporters make 44 percent of the claims. This is interesting given that two thirds of the excerpts coded refer specifically to a victim and not cyberbullying as a general issue. Though victims may have the power to own social problems, in print news, it is the writers who frame their story. This often involves simplification in order to resonate with what slowly becomes a familiar pattern leading to political response. However, quick fix legislation reflecting this valence social problem frame of cyberbullying will likely not change much in the daily lived experiences of the one third of teens who regularly face cyberbullying in its varied forms.

6.4 Limitations

Although defining the data sample by the window of time between the teen's death and proposed policy change provides a glimpse into the most influential public discourse, this decision does not create an even representation of the story development in each case. In particular, the Todd sample represents a mere five days. The common trend in news coverage was to provide more specific details related to the individual teen in early coverage followed by an increasing focus on cyberbullying as a social problem with teen portrayals reified as victims for the cause in later articles. Since Todd remained in the news for more than a year after her death, appearing in articles related to Parsons and Loik, a five-day sample likely portrays skewed

123

representations of complete Todd coverage, despite the number of separate articles represented in the time frame.

Another limitation to this study involves the Loik data set. Articles focusing on his death appear primarily through the Canadian Press (CP Wire) service rather than with specifically named newspapers. The tone of CP Wire articles is particularly characteristic of hard news stories. These articles are tightly condensed to portray key details in a skeleton format. Because the Loik set was already the least prevalent, it was not possible to balance this sample by selecting more editorial or feature pieces. Articles for the other three teens come from a far more diverse range of newspapers and of writing styles than the Loik sources. In fact, news articles appearing beyond this date range contest whether cyberbullying was a factor in Loik's death. Nevertheless, cyberbullying remains an active part of the discourse portraying his death during the time period of analysis, and this coverage preceded a cyberbullying policy response.

6.5 Future Directions

With federal legislation recently passed, cyberbullying is likely now an established social problem for Canada. One potential direction for future research into this area will be to conduct social problems work analysis examining how officials apply the term cyberbullying in both prevention and enforcement conditions. This will be interesting in the legal realm as well as in schools.

The scope of this study is limited, primarily, to the news coverage of each teen in these cases. However, it would be interesting to see a comparison of the news frames attached to articles covering federal Bill C-13 along with this data set. Much of this coverage seems to emphasize privacy concerns and to call into question the nature of and language of this legislation which was announced as a cyberbullying bill crafted in response to high profile deaths

such as Todd's and Parsons'. It would be interesting to compare the articles focusing on the legislation with those focusing on the death of the teen, especially if this comparison emphasized the frames presented by different claims makers.

One final recommendation for future research calls for a broader picture. It is clear that the modern social problems marketplace relies on both social media as well as mass media to effect political change. It would be valuable to see a study that considers the interplay between social media and mass media, using collective action frames to generate legislative and political changes.

6.6 Conclusion

Most cyberbullying literature takes an a priori stance, assuming that cyberbullying is an existing phenomenon waiting to be measured and studied. This thesis adopts a constructionist approach to examine the topic, one that assumes all social problems are constructed through public discourse defining real world events. As cyberbullying cases make international headlines, the issue has moved from country to country. The cases studied in this thesis represent two male and two female Canadian high profile deaths attributed to cyberbullying in the news. While print news is only one aspect of public discourse contributing to the construction of cyberbullying, it is an effective source for examining the tenor of discourse.

Framing theory allows for an examination of how claims makers present the details of these cases to construct a notion of cyberbullying. Both quantitative and qualitative results from the mixed method content analysis reveal cyberbullying as a social problem to be the dominant frame across coverage of all four cases. While articles for each teen differ, the emphasis is on remedying the social problem of cyberbullying.

This coverage reifies complicated and diverse circumstances to portray characteristic cyberbullying victims as part of a pattern of abuse. Their tragic deaths solidify cyberbullying as a valence issue, with no room for counter-claims because no one would advocate for another teen suicide. This portrayal of cyberbullying emphasizing the ideal victims such as Todd and Parsons effectively inspires social action in the form of policy change.

However, policies based on extreme instances and reified characters do not likely represent more prevalent instances of what social scientists and community advocates characterize as cyberbullying. The window of time represented in this data set saw cyberbullying move from a new term to a fully developed social problem in Canada. This development includes local policies, provincial legislation, and finally federal cyberbullying legislation. Much of these policy changes reflect the dominant frame of cyberbullying as a valence issue and a social problem. This frame reflects the high profile, ideal victim cases. Once established, a dominant frame is resistant to challenge. For Canada, that dominant frame reflects Todd and Parsons which leads to a remedy that emphasizes the prohibition of non-consensual distribution of intimate images, whether that is the more common form of cyberbullying teens experience or not.

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Coding Frame Manual

Excerpts that **define** cyberbullying

- Any description of actions implied to be harassment through technologically-mediated tools
- In these articles, the actions should be specific to the teen who died

Excerpts suggesting **causes** of cyberbullying

- This includes described actions or events that led up to or acted as catalysts for the harassment

Excerpts revealing **moral judgments** of cyberbullying

- This includes any value statements or specified emotional reactions to the death or events leading up to the death of the teen
- These value statements may appear as emotional reactions by observers to the events leading up to or following the death or to the death itself.
- This includes value statements regarding post-mortem electronic posts

Excerpts suggesting **remedies** for cyberbullying

- This includes any attempted or suggested calls of action in response to the death or to the problem.
- This may also include discussion about potential remedies when the speaker implies that the remedy under discussion should not be undertaken.
- This includes actions individuals or groups took in response to learning of the death

Excerpts describing **effects** of cyberbullying on the victim

- This includes any events or conditions implied to follow technologically-mediated harassment
- These effects are specific to the victim of the harassment

Excerpts that place **blame** for the death of the victim

- This differs from cause excerpts by suggesting a cause of death rather than a cause of cyberbullying
- Cyberbullying

- o This includes suggestions or direct statements that technologically-mediated harassment caused the death of the teen
- o The frame does not require use of the word cyberbullying. Any description of the events or details used in definition frames still apply here.
- Something other than cyberbullying
  - o This does not include blame for events that led to technologically-mediated harassment (such as alleged rape)
  - o This does include blame on the lack of response to sexual assault or technologically-mediated harassment by any parties involved

Excerpts **defending** persons or groups implicated as direct or indirect participants in

cyberbullying or events leading to the victim's death

- This includes any explanation for why action was not taken to intervene before the teen's death
- This also includes any reversal of opinion accompanied by an explanation for why the person now advocates action but did not before the teen's death
- This includes any quote or statement showing support for or defending the actions of those accused of assaulting or harassing the dead teen.

Excerpts **establishing a pattern** of cyberbullying

- This includes any reference to another case in discussion of the primary case the article was coded for
- This also includes generic claims that a pattern exists

Other limiting criteria (Tags)

Each frame is also coded by type of claims maker and topic of claim

Claims maker

1. None specified (reporter voice)
2. Family member of victim
3. RCMP or other police official
4. Government official or politician
5. Expert (as defined by writer of the article)
6. Member of the public at-large (such as what is used with opinion/editorial pieces)
7. Victim (teen who died)
8. School officials
9. Friends or peers of victim

147

10. Journalist (column or editorial voice)
11. Celebrity
12. Religious leader

Topic of claim

1. Cyberbullying as a general issue
2. Comments applying to a specific victim

Appendix 2

Coding Outline

1) Excerpts that **define** cyberbullying
   a) Online bullying
   b) Verbal/written harassment
   c) Sexual harassment
   d) Deliberate harm intended
   e) Social media
   f) Encouragement for self-harm and/or suicide
   g) Repetition, relentless
   h) Imbalance of power
   i) Ubiquitous (everywhere) (can't escape)
   j) Circulating humiliating photos (distributing images without consent)
   k) Hacking account or creating false profile
   l) Rumors
2) Excerpts suggesting **causes** of cyberbullying
   a) Conventional (school-yard or traditional) bullying
   b) Rape
   c) Alleged sexual assault
   d) Homophobia
   e) Victim spending time using social media
   f) Physical assault
   g) Sexual exploitation
   h) Disagreement with former friends
   i) Bias against physical appearance
3) Excerpts revealing **moral judgments** of cyberbullying
   a) Expression of sympathy (for victim or grieving family)
   b) Pre-mortem emotional reaction (Emotional reaction to perceived suffering before victim's death)
   c) Emotional reaction to news of suicide
   d) Condemnation of harassment (preceding death of victim)
   e) Condemnation of on-going post-mortem computer-mediated harassment
4) Excerpts suggesting **remedies** of cyberbullying
   a) Public attention
      i) Famous advocates (politicians, celebrities, musicians, athletes, etc.)
      ii) Create a legacy – online tributes
      iii) Social media
      iv) Vigils/memorial events

    v) Parental advocates

    vi) Vigilante justice

    vii) Awareness programs

    viii) Main-stream media attention

  b) Revised school policies

  c) New legislation

  d) School response (supports/intervention/punishments)

  e) Criminal investigation (police)

  f) Increased judicial enforcement

    i)   Better tools/training for officers

    ii) Emphasis of increased enforcement using existing laws

  g) Study issue (task force/report)

  h) Teach responsible internet use

  i) Easier reporting for victims (online, anonymous)

  j) Counselor of psychological intervention

  k) Resolve conflict with aggressor

  l) Retribution

  m) Corporate responsibility

  n) Prevention

  o) Peer support as prevention

  p) Parental intervention

  q) Raise or donate money to cyberbullying cause

5) Excerpts describing **effects** of cyberbullying on the victim

  a) Attempted suicide (but surviving)

  b) Suicide

  c) Death

  d) Registering at a new school/moving

  e) Depression

  f) Anxiety

  g) Substance abuse

  h) Non-fatal self-harm (cutting)

  i) Seeking counseling

  j) Feeling unsafe

  k) Lowered self-esteem, self-doubt

  l) Pain, emotional hurt

  m) Lost friendships

  n) Academic difficulties

  o) Deleting social media account

  p) Victim lashes back at others

6) Excerpts **placing blame** for the death of the victim
   a) Cyberbullying – computer-mediated harassment associated with death/suicide or conventional bullying
   b) Inaction of others
   c) Rape or alleged sexual assault
   d) Mental health, emotional issues
   e) Intolerance
7) Excerpts **defending** persons or groups implicated as direct or indirect participants in cyberbullying or events leading to the victim's death
   a) Defense of inaction by responsible parties before the death
   b) Defense of why speakers now advocate action when they did not previously
   c) Defense of alleged perpetrators
8) Excerpts **establishing a pattern** of cyberbullying
   a) Generic claim that a pattern exists
   b) Connected with Amanda Todd
   c) Connected with Rehtaeh Parsons
   d) Connected with Jamie Hubley
   e) Connected with Todd Loik
   f) Connected with another case

Each frame is also coded according to the following criterion:

Claims maker

1. None specified (reporter voice)
2. Family member of victim
3. RCMP or other police official
4. Government official or politician
5. Expert (as identified by reporter)
6. Member of public at-large (often opinion/editorial letters)
7. Celebrity
8. Friends or peers of the victim
9. Journalist (reporter claiming the observations as his/her own)
10. Religious leaders
11. School officials
12. Victim

Topic of Claim

1. Cyberbullying as a general issue
2. Comments specific to the victim