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Young People's Conceptualizations of the Nature of Cyberbullying: A Systematic Review and Synthesis of Qualitative Research (Accepted Manuscript)

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Abstract

Introduction Cyberbullying is a serious public health problem facing young people. Adults do not have first-hand experience of being immersed in social media in their youth and this necessitates the inclusion of youth voice in efforts to understand and address cyberbullying. This study aimed to synthesize qualitative studies which had explored young people's conceptualizations of the nature of cyberbullying, with a view to informing conceptual and intervention development.

Methods A systematic review and meta-ethnographic synthesis of qualitative studies was conducted. Nine databases were searched from inception to July 2018. The Critical Appraisal Skills Program assessment tool was used to appraise the quality of included studies.

Results Of 4,872 unique records identified, 79 were reviewed in detail and 13 studies comprising 753 young people from 12 countries were included. 5 key concepts were identified: Intent, Repetition, Accessibility, Anonymity and Barriers to Disclosure. A "line of argument" illustrating young people's conceptualization of cyberbullying was developed.

Conclusion The significance of information and communication technology in young people's lives, and the complexity of the cyber world in which they connect, must be recognized. The distinctive features of cyberbullying identified in young people's characterization can be used to inform bottom-up research and intervention efforts.

Keywords: cyberbullying, young people, qualitative research, systematic review, synthesis, meta-ethnography

1. Background

Amidst a rapid growth in information and communication technology (ICT), cyberbullying has emerged as an international public health concern (David-Ferdon & Hertz, 2007). Involvement in cyberbullying impacts negatively on the physical, psychological, and social wellbeing of both victims and perpetrators (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014). It is associated with anxiety, depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation, and reportedly has a stronger association with depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation than traditional bullying (Bottino, Bottino, Regina, Correia, & Ribeiro, 2015; Fahy et al., 2016; Hamm et al., 2015; John et al., 2018; Katsaras et al., 2018; Nixon, 2014; van Geel, Vedder, & Tanilon, 2014). Cyberbullying, therefore, presents complex challenges for parents, teachers, and policy-makers and is a serious problem for young people whose lives are increasingly immersed in technology (Cassidy, Faucher, & Jackson, 2013; Deschamps & McNutt, 2016; Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011; Marées & Petermann, 2012; Sigal, Tali, & Dorit, 2013).

In light of the known risks to young people's health and wellbeing presented by cyberbullying, over and above that of traditional bullying, reviews highlight a need for targeted evidence-based, prevention and intervention efforts (Della Cioppa, O'Neil, & Craig, 2015; Hutson, Kelly, & Militello, 2017; Mishna, Cook, Saini, Wu, & MacFadden, 2010). Cyberbullying is a contemporary problem and adults do not have first-hand experience of being immersed in social media in their youth, therefore, the development of appropriate interventions requires a thorough understanding of the nature of cyberbullying from the perspective of young people (Craig et al., 2013; Michie, Stralen, & West, 2011; Spears, Slee, Campbell, & Cross, 2011; Spears, Taddeo, Daly, Stretton, & Karklins, 2015; Spears & Zeederberg, 2013). As 'digital natives' young people are experts in their technology-rich lives and as such can provide unique insight (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008; Cross, Lester, Barnes, Cardoso, & Hadwen, 2015; Mishna & Van Wert, 2013; Peter & Petermann, 2018; Spears & Zeederberg, 2013). The omission of their perspective may lead to a misinterpretation of cyberbullying and subsequently to misguided prevention and intervention strategies.

The literature indicates that efforts to understand and address cyberbullying have been rooted in traditional anti-bullying methods and have lacked engagement with young people

(Cross et al., 2015; Peter & Petermann, 2018; Smith, 2019; Spears & Zeederberg, 2013). The longstanding definition of traditional bullying has three basic components: intent to harm, repetition and a power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator (Olweus, 1997). These components are consistently applied in cyberbullying research with the addendum that aggression is conveyed through electronic devices (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Kowalski et al., 2014; Tokunaga, 2010). Debate about the application of these criteria to cyberbullying is ongoing and the absence of consensus on the conceptualization and operation of the phenomenon has hindered efforts to understand and address it (Berne et al., 2013; Deschamps & McNutt, 2016; Dooley, Pyzalski, & Cross, 2009; Kota, Schoohs, Benson, & Moreno, 2014; Kowalski et al., 2014; Langos, 2012; Menesini & Nocentini, 2009; Peter & Petermann, 2018; Thomas, Connor, & Scott, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010).

Qualitative research offers the opportunity to gain insight into young people's thoughts and feelings about themselves and their worlds. It allows for young people's subjective definitions, meanings and experiences of cyberbullying to be brought to the fore (Barter & Renold, 2000; Mishna, 2004). A number of studies have explored young people's characterizations of cyberbullying using qualitative methods. These studies highlight that while there are commonalties between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, there are also a number of factors unique to cyberbullying due to the complexity of the cyber world and the ambiguous nature of some of the interactions which take place within it (Baas, de Jong, & Drossaert, 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Jacobs, Goossens, Dehue, Völlink, & Lechner, 2015; Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014). A synthesis of these qualitative studies has the potential to achieve greater conceptual understanding of cyberbullying from young people's perspective (France et al., 2014).

This study reports the first meta-ethnography of young people's conceptualizations of the nature of cyberbullying. Meta-ethnography uses rigorous qualitative methods to synthesize existing qualitative studies and aims to produce novel interpretations that transcend individual study findings; it is particularly suited to the development of conceptual models (France et al., 2019; France, Wells, Lang, & Williams, 2016). The objectives of this study were to systematically review, appraise, and synthesize the findings of qualitative studies of young

people's conceptualizations relating to the nature of cyberbullying, with a view to informing conceptual and intervention development and the future conduct of cyberbullying research.

2. Methods

2.1 Design

The study was guided by the seven step model of meta-ethnography as developed by Noblit and Hare (1988) and informed by methodological accounts and worked examples (Atkins et al., 2008; Britten et al., 2002; Evans & Hurrell, 2016). Similar to traditional systematic reviews, this process can generate new insights, highlight gaps in our knowledge and show areas of data saturation where no further primary research is required (Campbell et al., 2011). Meta-ethnography focuses on constructing translations and interpretations that are grounded in people's everyday lives. It is commonly used in the synthesis of qualitative health-research and has been used successfully to synthesize qualitative studies of young people's perceptions and experiences (Pound, Langford, & Campbell, 2016; Wilkinson, Whitfield, Hannigan, Ali, & Hayter, 2016).

2.2 Review Team

The multidisciplinary research team comprised members from the clinical and social sciences. Of relevance, members have expertise in sociology, psychology, public health, youth work, mental health, systematic reviewing, along with qualitative and participatory research methods.

2.3 Locating relevant studies

The literature search focused on primary studies which had used qualitative methods to explore young people's perceptions of cyberbullying. Mixed-method studies were included if the qualitative component was clearly delineated. Studies including open-ended questions as a qualitative element in an otherwise quantitative questionnaire were excluded. In an effort to create a homogeneous sample, participants were required to be aged between 10 and 19, as per the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of adolescence, and recruited from the school setting (Patton, 2002; World Health Organisation, 2018). Studies with mixed samples, for example those including parents or teachers, were excluded. Studies were included if they were English-language, peer-reviewed and published in full.

A comprehensive search strategy (Supplementary File 1) was devised using the qualitative PICo (Population, Interest, Context) formula (Stern, Jordan, & McArthur, 2014). Numerous and varied labels have been ascribed to bullying through electronic devices, therefore, an initial sweep of the literature was undertaken to identify a list of relevant terms. The search terms included a combination of Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and keywords synonymous with the following: "adolescents" (Population), "bullying" (Interest) and "cyber" (Context). The initial search was developed in MEDLINE and adapted for use in other databases. Nine databases, encompassing a variety of relevant disciplines, including health, education and the social sciences, were searched from inception to July 2018: Academic Search Complete, CINAHL (the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature), Education Full Text, ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre), MEDLINE, PsycINFO, SocIndex, Social Science Full Text (all EBSCO) and EMBASE (Elsevier). The database search was supplemented by, a review of the reference lists of included studies, contacting authors of conference abstracts and key authors in the field, and a hand-search of four key journals: Computers in Human Behavior, Cyberpsychology Behavior and Social Networking, the Journal of Adolescence and the Journal of Adolescent Health.

2.4 Inclusion decisions

The citations and abstracts of retrieved studies were exported to reference management system EndNote X7 and duplicates were removed (EndNote, 2015). In the first instance one reviewer (RD) conducted a preliminary screening of titles to exclude records that obviously did not meet the inclusion criteria. Second, using a screening strategy devised in line with the inclusion and exclusion criteria, two reviewers (RD, KW) independently screened study titles and abstracts. Third, these reviewers independently reviewed the full-texts of the remaining studies. Discrepancies and indecisions at both stages were resolved through discussion between both reviewers and in consultation with two additional reviewers (SM, EA) where needed.

2.5 Quality appraisal of included studies

The review team actively read and re-read the included studies throughout the stages of the meta-ethnography (Lee, Hart, Watson, & Rapley, 2015). Two reviewers (RD, SM) read and independently appraised the quality of included studies using the Critical Appraisal Skills

Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative research (CASP Qualitative Appraisal Checklist, 2013). Disparities were resolved through discussion and consensus decisions. Studies were not excluded from the synthesis on the basis of the quality assessment but the process uncovered useful information about ethical procedures and methods of data collection and analysis.

2.6 Analysis and synthesis process

The full-texts of included studies were imported to QSR's NVivo 12 Software to facilitate the qualitative analysis and synthesis (NVivo 12, 2016). An inclusive approach to data extraction was implemented (Noyes & Lewin, 2011). One reviewer (RD) documented and tabulated all relevant contextual and methodological data presented in the included studies according to a standardized data extraction form (Supplementary File 2). Relevant data included: study aims; study context; ethical review and consent procedures; youth involvement in the research process; sample size; participant characteristics; research methods. Focusing on the findings and discussion sections of the papers, first-order interpretations (views of the participants) and second-order interpretations (views of the authors) of the included studies were analyzed thematically (Atkins et al., 2008). Three conceptually rich studies were identified and these were purposefully read and open-coded independently by two reviewers (RD, CS) to ensure inter-coder reliability and validity in the coding process (Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010). Codes and potential categories were discussed and differences in interpretation were considered by the review team to enhance the analytical process before one reviewer open-coded the remainder of the studies in chronological order.

One reviewer grouped codes into categories of shared meaning, using conceptual mind maps to explore and express relationships within and across categories (RD). All reviewers on the team engaged in concept development allowing for the consideration of multiple perspectives. Following an iterative process five key concepts that reflected the main findings of the included studies were identified. A grid was developed to assist in identifying the relationship between studies and the contribution of each study to a key concept (Supplementary File 3) (Britten et al., 2002). The constant comparative method common to qualitative research was employed to determine how the first and second order

interpretations from each study related to each other and to the identified concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In order to retain the context of the primary data, geographical details, type of school, gender, and involvement in cyberbullying were explored systematically (Atkins et al., 2008). Similarities and differences in interpretations and contexts were pursued allowing for the reciprocal and refutational translation of studies into one another. Third-order interpretations (views of the reviewers) were developed by synthesizing the translations in each key concept. These interpretations were then linked to create a "line of argument", reflecting an overarching understanding of cyberbullying from the perspective of young people within the published literature (Noblit & Hare, 1988). The "line of argument" is presented in the discussion section of this paper and is presented graphically in Figure 2. Reporting of the review and synthesis is informed by the eMERGe guidance on improving the reporting of meta-ethnography (France et al., 2019).

3. Results

3.1 Searches

The search process is expressed using the PRISMA Flow Diagram in Figure 1 (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009). The electronic database searches returned 4,872 unique records after duplicate removal. Four additional records were identified through other sources, two from the hand-search and two through consultation with experts in the area. Preliminary title screening excluded 2,781 records and title and abstract screening excluded a further 2,012 records. The full-texts of 79 articles were assessed for eligibility, 66 were excluded leaving 13 articles for inclusion in the meta-ethnography.

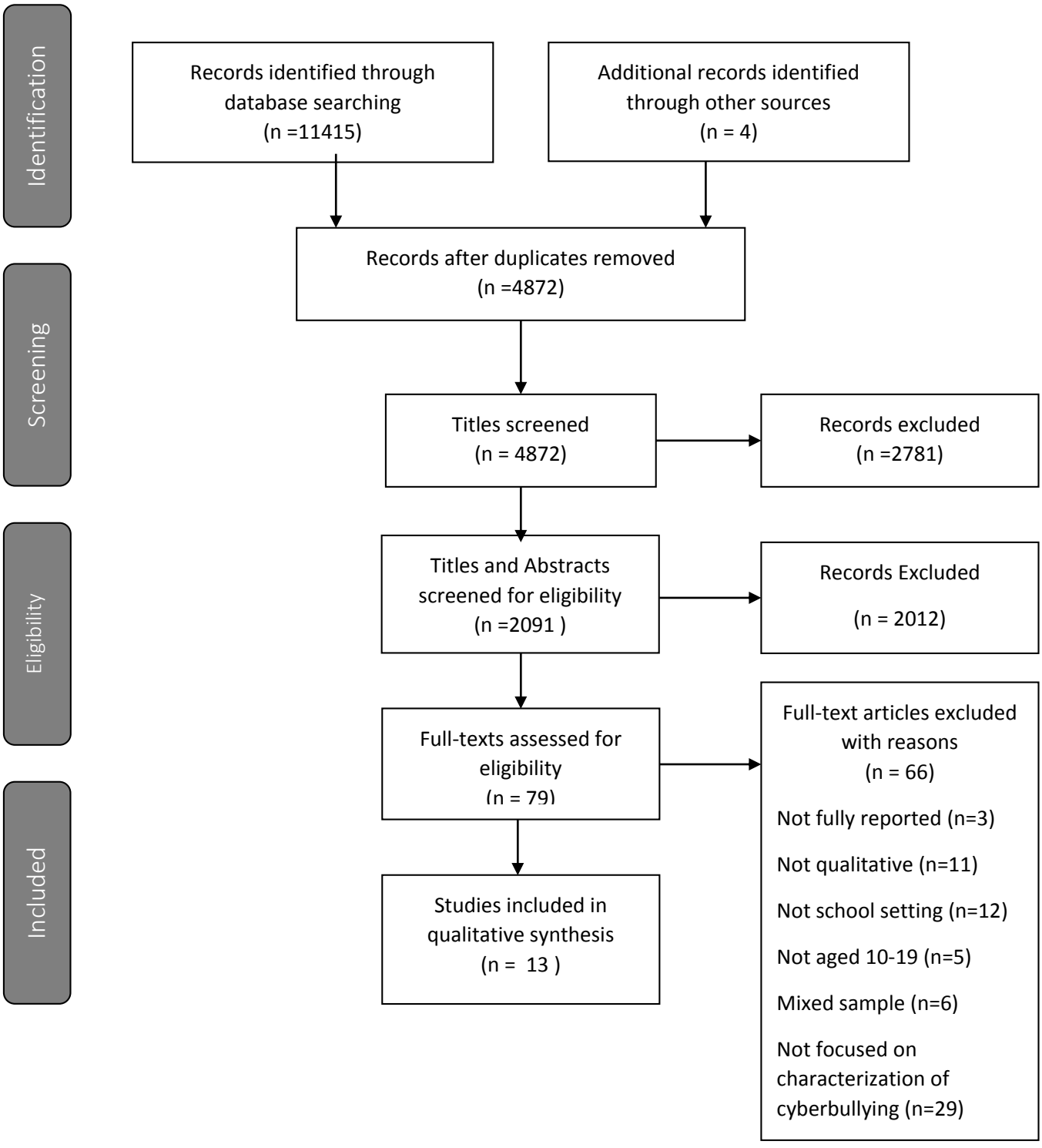


Figure 1 PRISMA Flow Diagram of Search Strategy

3.2 Characteristics of studies and participants

The characteristics of the 13 included studies are presented in Table 1. In summary, a total of 753 young people aged between 10-19 were involved as research participants across 12 countries. The majority of studies used focus groups for qualitative data collection (Berne, Frisén, & Kling, 2014; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Naruskov, Luik, Nocentini, & Menesini, 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Smith et al., 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Three studies incorporated vignettes or scenarios to frame group discussion (Berne et al., 2014; Naruskov et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010). In the one study which utilised a participatory approach, young people were involved in selecting topics for discussion and data were collected using various enabling techniques including writing and reciting stories (Baas et al., 2013). No other study reported the active involvement of young people in the research process.

Table 1 Characteristics of Included Studies

STUDY	YEAR	COUNTRY	STUDY AIM	SCHOOLS N=	SCHOOL TYPE; GRADE(S)	QUALITATIVE PARTICIPANTS N=	GENDER MALE % FEMALE %	AGE	QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION	QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS
ABU BAKER	2015	Malaysia	Construct a grounded theory of cyberbullying phenomenon on the basis of adolescents' reports about their own cyberbullying incident	5	1 primary and 4 secondary schools	105	NS	12-18	Interviews and focus groups	Grounded theory
BAAS ET AL.	2013	Netherlands	Explore children's perspectives on the problem of cyberbullying	4	Elementary schools	28	M=54% F=46%	11-12	Drawing, writing and reciting stories and poems, magazine clippings, flipchart	Grounded Theory
BERNE ET AL.	2014	Sweden	Explore adolescents experiences of appearance related cyberbullying	2	One private and one public school; 9	27	M=52% F=48%	15	Focus groups	Thematic analysis
BETTS ET AL.	2016	UK	Examine technology use and conceptualisation of cyberbullying	2	One secondary school and one high school; 7-13	29	M=62% F=38%	11-15	Focus groups	Interpretive phenomenological analysis
BURNHAM & WRIGHT	2012	USA	Examine cyberbullying attitudes, beliefs and opinions among middle school students.	2	Middle school; 7-8	13	M=62% F=38%	NS	Focus groups	NS
JACOBS ET AL.	2015	Netherlands	Gain insight into cybervictims experiences, perceptions, attitudes and motivations related to cyberbullying	5	Vocational secondary school; 1st Class	66	M=47% F=53%	12-15	Focus groups	Thematic analysis
MISHNA ET AL.	2009	Canada	Explore technology, virtual relationships and cyberbullying from the perspective of students	5	NS; 5-8	38	M=45% F=55%	NS	Focus groups	Grounded Theory
NARUSKOV ET AL.	2012	Estonia	Investigate students' perception and definition of cyberbullying	1	Secondary school; 6 & 9	20	M=50% F=50%	12&15	Focus groups	Thematic analysis
NOCENTINI ET AL.	2012	Italy, Spain & Germany	Examine students' perceptions of the term used to label cyberbullying, behaviours and the perception of definitional criteria	NS	NS	70	M=57% F=43%	11-18	Focus groups	Thematic analysis
PELFREY & WEBER	2013	USA	Address deficits in the literature around student perceptions of	3	One high school and two middle schools; 6-12	24	M=33% F=67%	NS	Focus Groups	Thematic analysis

			the actualisation, nature and impact of cyberbullying							
SMITH ET AL.	2008	UK	Examine the nature and impact of cyberbullying in secondary schools	6	Secondary schools	47	NS	11-15	Focus groups	*"… content analysed to give main themes*"
TOPCU ET AL.	2013	Turkey	Investigate the perceptions of Turkish high school students about cyberbullying	1	High school; 9	7	M=86% F=14%	15	Interviews	Content analysis
VANDEBOSCH & CLEEMPUT	2008	Belgium	Develop a clear definition of cyberbullying that is congruent with the experiences and views of youngsters	10	General, technical and vocational schools	279	M=51% F=49%	10-19	Focus groups	*"analysis focused on the detection of general trends…differences in answers between sub-groups"*

3.3 Quality appraisal

Findings from the quality appraisal are outlined in Table 2. The overall quality of the included studies was high. Three studies were judged to be less valuable because of a lack of clarity across the CASP domains, particularly with regard to research methods (Burnham & Wright, 2012; Smith et al., 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Researcher reflexivity was found to be lacking in the majority of studies; only one study made explicit reference to the adult-child relationship and its impact on the research process (Mishna et al., 2009). Ethical issues were not discussed in four studies (Abu Bakar, 2015; Naruskov et al., 2012; Topcu, Yıldırım, & Erdur-Baker, 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Five studies reported approval from an ethics committee (Berne et al., 2014; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Mishna et al., 2009; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Smith et al., 2008) while a Dutch study reported that ethical approval was deemed unnecessary by an ethics committee in the Netherlands (Jacobs et al., 2015). Seven studies discuss obtaining consent from a parent/guardian (Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2008). Consent/assent from the young people involved was discussed in five of these cases (Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009). One study reported consent from a teacher only (Berne et al., 2014) and another stated that consent protocols were followed but these were not specified (Pelfrey & Weber, 2014).

Table 2 Quality Appraisal of Included Studies

AUTHORS AND YEAR OF PUBLICATION	WAS THERE A CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH?	IS A QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY APPROPRIATE?	WAS THE RESEARCH DESIGN APPROPRIATE TO ADDRESS THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH?	WAS THE RECRUITMENT STRATEGY APPROPRIATE TO THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH?	WAS THE DATA COLLECTED IN A WAY THAT ADDRESSED THE RESEARCH ISSUE?	HAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE PARTICIPANTS BEEN ADEQUATELY CONSIDERED?	HAVE ETHICAL ISSUES BEEN TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION?	WAS THE DATA ANALYSIS SUFFICIENTLY RIGOROUS?	IS THERE A CLEAR STATEMENT OF FINDINGS?	HOW VALUABLE IS THE RESEARCH?
ABU BAKER 2015	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Valuable
BAAS ET AL. 2013	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Valuable
BERNE ET AL. 2014	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Valuable
BETTS ET AL. 2016	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unclear	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Valuable
BURNHAM AND WRIGHT 2012	No	Yes	Unclear	Unclear	Yes	No	Yes	Unclear	No	Some value
JACOBS ET AL. 2015	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Valuable
MISHNA ET AL. 2009	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Valuable
NARUSKOV AT AL. 2012	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unclear	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Valuable
NOCENTINI ET AL. 2012	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Valuable
PELFREY AND WEBER 2013	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Valuable

SMITH ET AL. 2008	No	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Unclear	No	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Some value
TOPCU ET AL. 2013	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Valuable
VANDEBOSCH AND CLEEMPUT 2008	No	Yes	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear	No	No	Unclear	Yes	Some value

3.4 Translation of Included Studies

At a descriptive level young people equated cyberbullying with "*bullying via the Internet"* (Mishna et al., 2009; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). It was portrayed as repeated victimization that is intended to harm or is perceived as harmful by the victim (Abu Bakar, 2015; Baas et al., 2013; Berne et al., 2014; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Jacobs et al., 2015; Naruskov et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Topcu et al., 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). However, young people's characterization of the phenomenon was complicated by the all-consuming and complex nature of the cyber world and the ambiguous nature of many interactions that take place within it (Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014). No consensus was indicated on the sex of those involved in cyberbullying victimization or perpetration. A Turkish study, conducted with young people active in cyberbullying, indicated that boys were more likely to be involved in cyberbullying (Topcu et al., 2013). However, a number of studies suggested that girls were more likely to be involved in cyberbullying as victims and perpetrators (Berne et al., 2014; Jacobs et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2008). A Dutch study suggested that "cyberbullying is in some respects like indirect bullying, in which girls are more often involved" (Jacobs et al., 2015, p. 57).

Five meta-themes that reflect young people's conceptualization of cyberbullying are reported below: Intent, Repetition, Accessibility, Anonymity and Barriers to Disclosure. Sub-themes are highlighted in ***bold italics***. Themes are illustrated by first-order interpretations (views of the study participants; *italicized quotations*) and second-order interpretations (views of the authors; non-italicized quotations). Contextual data is reported where available (Atkins et al., 2008).

3.4.1 Intent

The intent to harm was reported by several studies as a key element within young people's descriptions of cyberbullying (Berne et al., 2014; Naruskov et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010; Topcu et al., 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Intent to harm was often motivated by revenge, sometimes for face-to-face bullying (Betts & Spenser, 2017; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Naruskov et al., 2012; Topcu et al., 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Jealousy was also reported as motivating factor,

commonly aimed at those considered popular (Baas et al., 2013; Berne et al., 2014; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Jacobs et al., 2015; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Topcu et al., 2013). A 15 year-old girl in a Swedish study explained: "*If I wrote something mean then it would be like pure jealousy, because I would feel like…'She is so fucking perfect, she's got a perfect life and I want that too,'…Ah, but then I'll write a mean comment, so that she doesn't get such an actual perfect life*" (Berne et al., 2014, p. 529).

It was perceived that victims are intentionally targeted because of physical and social characteristics including appearance, sexuality, personality, friends (or lack of) and popularity (Baas et al., 2013; Berne et al., 2014; Jacobs et al., 2015; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Topcu et al., 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Young people perceived cyberbullies as insecure and recognized cyberbullying acts as enhancing the self-esteem of the perpetrator (Berne et al., 2014; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Jacobs et al., 2015). Some studies reported that perpetrators of cyberbullying choose vulnerable victims, "which in their eyes may be anyone who is weaker or different" (Baas et al., 2013, p. 252), "because they are expected not to defend themselves" (Topcu et al., 2013, p. 147).

Intent, however, was portrayed as a "...subjective notion, with potential problems of interpretation for both victims and bullies" (Baas et al., 2013, p. 251). Several studies reported that the "***effect on the victim and his/her perception of the acts*** can…be more relevant" (Nocentini et al., 2010, p. 139) to young people in characterizing cyberbullying than the intention of the supposed aggressor (Abu Bakar, 2015; Berne et al., 2014; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Naruskov et al., 2012; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Several studies reported that online joking or banter, described as jocular interactions between friends with no malicious intent, has the potential to progress to cyberbullying because of potential ambiguity in how the message is interpreted by the recipient. This highlights that there may be *"*a difference between the way things [are] intended and the way things [are] perceived" (Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Smith et al., 2008; Topcu et al., 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008, p. 501). One student from the Netherlands explained: *''I hacked my friend's MSN account for fun. He was at home sitting at his computer saying 'Sh*t, sh*t, sh*t, I can't log on anymore'. He calls me in panic saying*

his computer has been hacked. And then I say: 'Joke'!" (Baas et al., 2013, p. 251). It was considered that if the act is perceived as a joke then it is not harmful, but if the target of a behavior is negatively impacted this was interpreted as cyberbullying (Betts & Spenser, 2017; Nocentini et al., 2010).

It appears that the interpretation of messages, and their effect on the recipient, is fluid and is influenced by contextual and external factors (Abu Bakar, 2015; Jacobs et al., 2015; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014). What might be agreeable one day may mean something very different to an individual "on a day where exogenous stressors…have created a sense of internal tension" (Pelfrey & Weber, 2014, p. 404). Some studies suggested that the relationship between those involved in banter online can influence the interpretation of the behavior (Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2017). Close friends may "grant each other some leeway in these exchanges" (Pelfrey & Weber, 2014, p. 405) and are more likely to interpret the behavior as a joke. Casual friends may not understand the intended humor and, consequently, "may take offense which leads to an escalating conflict (Betts & Spenser, 2017; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). However, a male high school student in the USA outlined: *"… we would be having fun but…they get offended by you or my friend gets offended, basically when it goes too far that's when it gets to escalate*" (Pelfrey & Weber, 2014, p. 404).

Many studies highlighted how the ***absence of face-to-face interaction*** in the cyber world contributes to the ambiguous nature of intent (Abu Bakar, 2015; Baas et al., 2013; Mishna et al., 2009; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Smith et al., 2008; Topcu et al., 2013). Due to the absence of physical cues it is difficult for victims to express their distress and, consequently, for perpetrators to recognize the impact of their actions (Abu Bakar, 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Smith et al., 2008). Consequently, perpetrators "tend not to empathize with the victim" (Baas et al., 2013, p. 252) and this may lead to "more harshness in teasing and jokes" (Pelfrey & Weber, 2014, p. 404). Likewise, "victims may find it hard to estimate the presumed bully's intentions, and therefore are more likely to interpret intended jokes as forms of cyberbullying" (Baas et al., 2013, p. 252). In the case of intentional harm, the absence of face-to-face interaction was thought to make it easier for the perpetrator, as explained by a 13 year-old girl in a Canadian study: *"...It's easier to say more hurtful comments because sometimes you don't like to say things to people's faces but when you do it for revenge*

on MSN or something...you do not see how much they are hurt by it" (Mishna et al., 2009, p. 1224). One study, conducted in elementary schools in the Netherlands, noted that the ambiguous nature of intent gives perpetrators with harmful intentions the defense that their behavior was intended as a joke and, therefore, the power to "laugh away the seriousness of their actions" and avoid culpability (Baas et al., 2013, p. 252).

3.4.2 Repetition

Several studies reported that repetition indicates intentional cyberbullying. One-off or occasional events were depicted as tolerable and "not directly a form of cyberbullying". However, it was perceived that if the behavior is repeated it cannot be unintentional. It was recognized that repetition differentiates between a joke and an intentional attack and characterizes the severity of the action. (Baas et al., 2013; Jacobs et al., 2015; Naruskov et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). An elementary school student in a Dutch study articulated that: "*Just a couple of pranks is not so bad, it can even be funny. But if it happens more often, it is not nice anymore"* (Baas et al., 2013, p. 251).

However, repetition in cyberbullying is complicated by the potential public nature of the acts with many studies noting that "***one-time actions may have repetitive effects"*** (Baas et al., 2013, p. 251) if executed in the public domain (Abu Bakar, 2015; Berne et al., 2014; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). It was highlighted that young people "may not be aware of the lasting consequences of one-time actions" (Baas et al., 2013, p. 251). Damaging material lingers online "for anyone to download or forward" (Abu Bakar, 2015, p. 339); students in Germany perceived that "each person receiving the information about the victim…counted as an additional incident" (Nocentini et al., 2010, p. 137). Cyberspace empowers young people to disseminate damaging content easily and quickly to a large number of people, therefore, it was deemed preferable to bully others through means of technology (Berne et al., 2014; Topcu et al., 2013). For the victim, the "nature of social media can exponentially increase the number of persons who view or hear about potentially embarrassing issues" (Pelfrey & Weber, 2014, p. 409). Visual cyberbullying, the distribution of disparaging pictures or videos online, was perceived as particularly damaging (Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Smith et al., 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Students in an Estonian study

perceived visual cyberbullying as more serious as it was more humiliating and more convincing, they articulated that "*a picture can paint a thousand words*" (Naruskov et al., 2012, p. 333) It was suggested that perpetrators may share photos or say mean things about others to obtain peer rewards or a higher social status through the amusement of the wider audience (Berne et al., 2014; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Naruskov et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2008).

3.4.3 Accessibility

Several studies highlighted that ICT is the dominant medium of communication in young people's lives and is integral to young people's interactions and relationships. When away from the online environment young people report feeling isolated from social life (Abu Bakar, 2015; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Mishna et al., 2009; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Topcu et al., 2013). Some studies characterized young people as dependent on ICT (Abu Bakar, 2015; Mishna et al., 2009). A 14 year-old girl in the UK asserted: "*I actually don't think people can live without technology now…"* (Betts & Spenser, 2017, p. 24). It was reported that the omni-present nature of ICT facilitates ***relentless cyberbullying*** and distinguishes it from traditional face-to-face bullying. Traditional bullying is believed to have a clear cut-off point but cyberbullying can happen at any time of the day or night reflecting young people's continual engagement with ICT (Abu Bakar, 2015; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014). A secondary school student in London highlighted that "*it's constant all the time"* and "*really hard to escape"* (Smith et al., 2008, p. 381). Many studies reported that cyberbullying takes place more often outside of school and is commonly experienced while at home, facilitated by technological access and insufficient adult monitoring and regulation (Burnham & Wright, 2012; Mishna et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2008). A Canadian study highlighted that an expectation of safety in the home can make cyberbullying feel particularly invasive. A 10-year-old boy from this study articulated: *"You can't physically hurt somebody through cyberbullying, but you can definitely hurt your feelings. You can say many hurtful things and make you feel really sad, because you're in your own safe place. You're in your home"* (Mishna et al., 2009, p. 1224).

It was highlighted that, enabled by technology, ***victimization traverses the physical and cyber worlds*** which can result in *"non-stop bullying"* (Mishna et al., 2009, p. 1224). A large overlap

between cyberbullying and traditional bullying was noted, with victims sometimes targets of both (Jacobs et al., 2015; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Several studies described cyberbullying as an extension of school bullying with perpetrators empowered to continue their harassment in cyberspace after the school day (Betts & Spenser, 2017; Mishna et al., 2009; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Topcu et al., 2013). Conversely, some young people highlighted that issues that begin in cyberspace can sometimes result in physical violence in the school setting (Baas et al., 2013; Berne et al., 2014; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014). A Dutch study noted that for young people the "fear of possible escalations to physical violence appeared to be even stronger than the fear of cyberbullying itself" (Baas et al., 2013, p. 250). A study conducted in the USA described the "cyclical nature" of cyberbullying which "often begins in cyberspace, becomes apparent within the school walls, and revolves back to cyberspace again" (Pelfrey & Weber, 2014, p. 411).

3.4.4 Anonymity

It was suggested that knowing the identity of the individual behind a cyberbullying act "made it possible to put the action into perspective…and to react accordingly" (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008, p. 502). However, anonymous acts can make it difficult for a victim to determine a perpetrator's identity (Mishna et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Several studies reported that the unknown created by anonymity contributed to the insecurity, distress, fear, and powerlessness experienced by victims. This was recognized by young people as a large part of the power and impact of cyber bullying (Baas et al., 2013; Mishna et al., 2009; Naruskov et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008).

The anonymity afforded by social media enables perpetrators to engage in cyberbullying acts with little fear of repercussion (Betts & Spenser, 2017; Mishna et al., 2009; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014; Smith et al., 2008; Topcu et al., 2013). The absence of consequence "means that behavior is no longer constrained by the norms and rules of social interactions" (Betts & Spenser, 2017, p. 31; Mishna et al., 2009; Topcu et al., 2013). It was reported that anonymity can "…empower those who were unlikely to become real life bullies or who were even victims

of traditional bullying", to engage in bullying behaviors (Abu Bakar, 2015; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008, p. 502). Perpetrators of traditional bullying are often characterized as having a strong physique or as belonging to a powerful group. However, these characteristics are irrelevant in the cyber world where the ability to be anonymous means that "everyone can harass others regardless of their conditions as long as they are online" (Abu Bakar, 2015, p. 401). This perspective was illustrated by a female victim of cyberbullying in a Dutch study who said "*Yes **everybody can be a bully**. Whether it's someone who's very small with glasses and whatever, or someone who's very tall and who looks like a bully…"* (Jacobs et al., 2015, p. 58). Similarly, young people indicated that "everyone is equally likely to be the target of cyber bullying" (Berne et al., 2014; Topcu et al., 2013, p. 146). A Belgian study outlined that "in some instances, persons who were perceived as more powerful in real life" and therefore, unlikely to be victims of bullying in the physical world, "were the target of cyber-attacks" (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008, p. 502).

Many studies reported that although the perpetrators of cyberbullying were often perceived as anonymous, cyberbullying commonly takes place in the context of young people's ***social groups and relationships*** (Abu Bakar, 2015; Baas et al., 2013; Berne et al., 2014; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Topcu et al., 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Young people in a Belgian study who perpetrated cyberbullying explained that "they had mostly operated anonymously or disguised themselves and that their victims were often people they also knew in the real world" (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008, p. 501). It was noted that victims sometimes discover the identity of an anonymous perpetrator (Baas et al., 2013; Mishna et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008) and it was suggested that the impact can be more severe if the perpetrator is a familiar person (Baas et al., 2013; Naruskov et al., 2012). Many studies reported that anonymous cyberbullying within peer groups often takes the form of hacking and impersonation (Abu Bakar, 2015; Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Jacobs et al., 2015; Naruskov et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010; Topcu et al., 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008); as described by one ten-year old girl in a Canadian study: "*…sometimes cyber bullying is some friends that are really close to you and they want to get back at you and so…they hack into your account and email and say mean things to other people and other people will think it's you who did it."* (Mishna et al., 2009, p. 1225).

3.4.5 Barriers to Disclosure

Some young people perceived ***anonymity*** and the perpetrators ability to evade responsibility as a barrier to telling parents or teachers, as they make it impossible for the victim to prove the cyber incident or to identify the perpetrator (Mishna et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2008; Topcu et al., 2013). Young people highlighted that engaging in anonymous cyberbullying allows perpetrators to use the "excuse that someone had hacked in to their account or used their computer whilst they were still logged in" (Betts & Spenser, 2017, p. 28). This was illustrated by a 13-year-old girl from an urban school in a Canadian study "*If you say it in person, then that's you saying it for sure, but if you say it over MSN or something and they tell on you, you can easily just say someone hacked your account or something. It was someone else pretending to be you*" (Mishna et al., 2009, p. 1225).

Several studies highlighted a tension between the desire to disclose their experiences of cyberbullying to adults and young people's ***fear of the consequences of reporting*** (Betts & Spenser, 2017; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2008). Young people perceived adults as oblivious to the cyber world and inept in dealing with cyber issues (Baas et al., 2013; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Mishna et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2008); as a result, they often remained silent about cyberbullying. A female victim of cyberbullying from a Dutch study shared: "*Most of the time I don't talk about it to no one, really no one and I keep it to myself*" (Jacobs et al., 2015, p. 56). Young people were fearful of parents ill-considered actions in response to a report of cyberbullying, afraid that adult intervention would lead to an intensification of cyberbullying or an escalation to physical violence (Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Burnham & Wright, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2015; Mishna et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2008). There was divergence in young people's perception of adults' ability to help when they were informed about cyberbullying. Some young people were satisfied that they had received appropriate support while others reported that they did not get any help (Burnham & Wright, 2012; Topcu et al., 2013). This was articulated by a male victim of cyberbullying in a Dutch study: "…*I went to a teacher, however they hardly did something about it. They only said 'We'll keep an eye out' and even that they didn't do"* (Jacobs et al., 2015, p. 55).

The desire to be constantly connected was a barrier to seeking support (Betts & Spenser, 2017; Pelfrey & Weber, 2014). Some studies highlighted young people's reluctance to report cyberbullying to adults for fear that their access to ICT would be removed. The restriction of access was perceived as a punishment, even if undertaken as a supportive action, as it meant the "loss of their connection with their social world" (Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2017; Mishna et al., 2009, p. 1226). The significance of the removal of the internet in young people's lives was exemplified by an elementary school student in a Dutch study: "*losing your Internet connection is like losing your soul"* (Baas et al., 2013, p. 252).

4. Discussion

Efforts to understand and address cyberbullying have been predominantly top-down and rooted in the concept of traditional bullying, with the appendage that the bullying takes place through electronic devices (Gladden et al., 2014; Tokunaga, 2010). This suggests that the two types of bullying differ only in the medium through which harm occurs and, therefore, does not account for the contextual impact of the cyber world. Findings from this meta-ethnography reveal that the fundamental role of ICT in young people's lives, and the complexity and ambiguity of the cyber world in which they connect, cannot be disregarded. This study contributes a bottom-up perspective to the conceptualization of cyberbullying by channeling and interpreting young people's voices from published qualitative studies. In accordance with the meta-ethnographic method, the "line of argument" presented below extends beyond the findings of the individual qualitative studies included in this review and reflects an overarching interpretation of young people's perspectives of cyberbullying (Noblit & Hare, 1988). The line of argument is presented graphically in Figure 2.

4.1 Line of Argument

Cyberbullying, largely, occurs within young people's social groups and relationships. The prevalence and significance of technology in young people's lives can mean that cyberbullying is a risk to which many young people are exposed. Exposure to the risk of cyberbullying is outweighed by young people's desire for continuous digital connectivity and fear of social disconnection. Cyberbullying is highly complex in nature, characterized by a degree of ambiguity not seen within traditional conceptualizations of bullying and by the intersection of a range of possible components, all of which do not have to be present for it to occur. A

power imbalance influenced by the physical, psychological and social characteristics of perpetrators and victims may exist where the perpetrator is identifiable. However, a preexisting power imbalance of this nature is not necessary. The nature of the cyber world alters the distribution of power and within cyberbullying power relations can be identified as fluid and changeable. Features such as anonymity, ambiguity, accessibility and public exposure are experienced as disempowering by victims and empowering by perpetrators. Young people believe cyberbullying can occur whether or not there is intent to harm; they conceptualize its occurrence based on the seriousness of victim impact, as well as intent. Intentional cyberbullying is motivated by internal factors including jealousy and revenge and also by the features of the cyber world that serve to empower perpetrators. Negative impact is determined by victims' perception of events as influenced by the same cyber features and by contextual and external factors that shape victims' interpretation of online interactions. These include the relationship with the sender or exogenous stressors such as school and family stressors. Repetition may or may not be required for cyberbullying to occur. One action can constitute cyberbullying, due to the degree of rapid and widespread public dissemination facilitated by ICT. Further, negative anticipation regarding the consequences of reporting cyberbullying to adults, such as an escalation of bullying or the restriction of ICT access, can deter victims from seeking help, thereby, maintaining a cycle of victimization that in some instances spans the physical and cyber worlds.

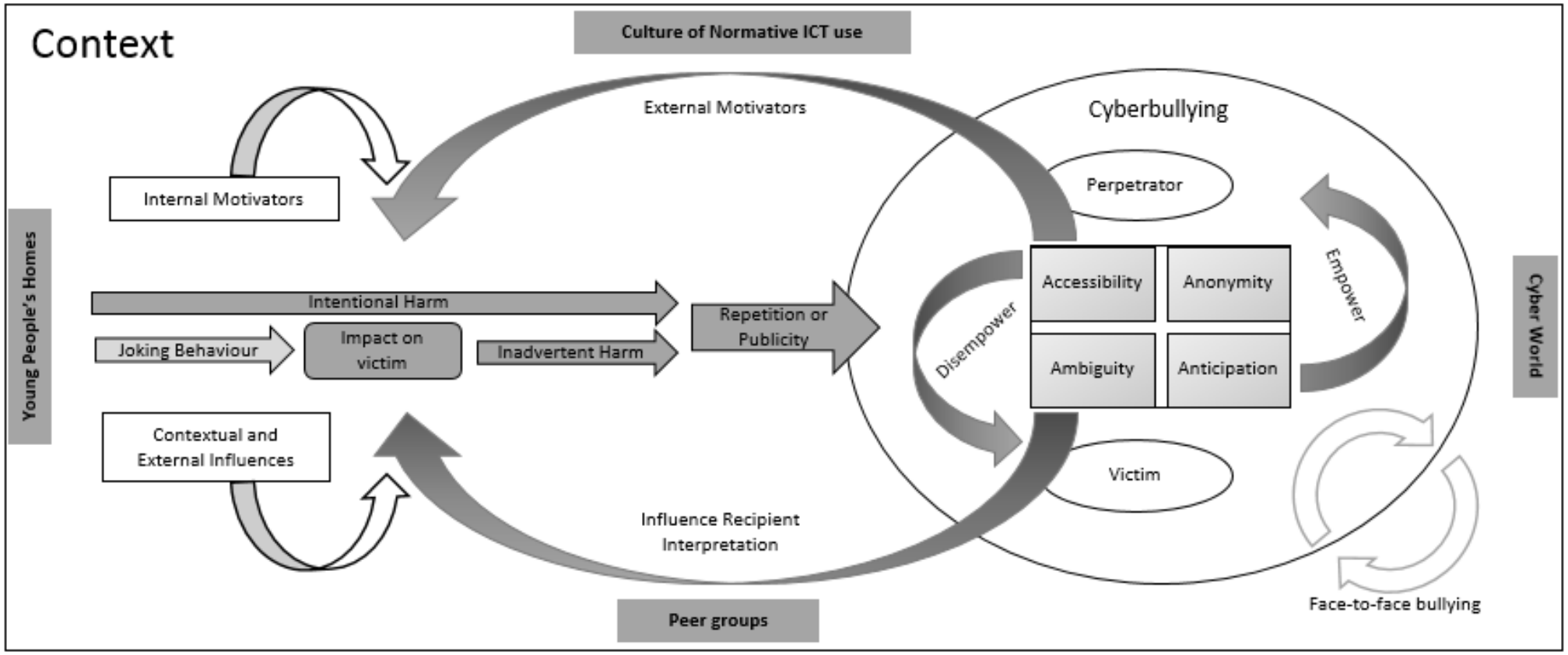


Figure 2 Young People's Conceptualisations of the Nature of Cyberbullying

4.2 Comparison to previous research

Consistent with previous studies, this meta-ethnography indicates that the unique features of cyber technology increase the severity of cyberbullying and may instill feelings of powerlessness and lack of control in victims (Dooley et al., 2009; Dredge, Gleeson, & de la Piedad Garcia, 2014; Langos, 2012; Nixon, 2014; Sticca & Perren, 2013; Tokunaga, 2010). Cyberbullying may generate a multi-dimensional experience of fear for its victims, including fear based on the nature of abusive content and commonly, the anonymity of the perpetrator; fear of public humiliation arising from the dissemination of negative content; fear of missing out or social isolation if one chooses to digitally disconnect; fear of possible negative consequences if one reports cyberbullying, including escalation to physical bullying or the restriction of ICT access by adults. Such a multi-dimensional experience of fear has the potential to create very negative psychological and physical consequences for young people during the major developmental phase which is adolescence. It is possible that these factors contribute to the exacerbated effect on young people's health over and above that of traditional bullying (Katsaras et al., 2018; Kelly, Zilanawala, Booker, & Sacker, 2019; Kowalski et al., 2014; Sticca & Perren, 2013; van Geel et al., 2014).

Debate regarding the presence of a power imbalance in cyberbullying is ongoing (Peter & Petermann, 2018). It appears that in the context of the cyber world power is constructed through technology. This notion has been proposed in previous studies, however, there is no consensus on the factors that contribute to power relations in cyberbullying (Cassidy et al., 2013; Dooley et al., 2009; Dredge, Gleeson, & Garcia, 2014; Hemphill et al., 2012; Kowalski et al., 2014; Langos, 2012; Menesini et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2015; Vaillancourt, Faris, & Mishna, 2017). Power in the physical world is delineated by the physical, psychological, and social characteristics of perpetrators and victims but consistent with previous studies, findings suggest that in the cyber world the potential for anonymity, including the ability to assume a new persona, means that these characteristics are less relevant (Dooley et al., 2009; Langos, 2012; Thomas et al., 2015; Tokunaga, 2010). This synthesis adds that young people's habitual use of cyber technology and the features of the cyber world can establish and maintain asymmetrical power relations. Brey's (2008) theory of the technological construction of power signals that power relations do not require intentionality but the exercise of power always does. Findings from this synthesis indicate that many young people perceive that the

intentional perpetrator has the ability to exercise power at their discretion by engaging the characteristics of the cyber world: anonymity, ambiguity, and accessibility including public access to the victim. Furthermore, as reflected in previous research, findings from this synthesis indicate that young people are reluctant to seek support, particularly from adults who they perceive as ignorant to the cyber world. (Cassidy et al., 2013; Fenaughty & Harré, 2013; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Vaillancourt et al., 2017). This may influence power relations increasing the capacity of perpetrators to sustain harassment without consequence while instilling a sense of powerlessness and lack of control in the victim.

Findings from this synthesis illustrate that young people acknowledge the intent to harm but more strongly judge victim impact, as determined by the victims' perception of events, when characterizing cyberbullying. Intentional harm is common to existing conceptualizations of cyberbullying and to the established definition of traditional bullying on which they are based (Olweus, 1997; Peter & Petermann, 2018; Tokunaga, 2010). However, victim impact has not featured in popular definitions of cyberbullying which focus on the acts of the perpetrator (Tokunaga, 2010). In a concept analysis of the defining attributes of cyberbullying Peter and Petermann (2018) also highlight victim perception as an important key cyberbullying attribute. It should be noted that their understanding of this attribute is largely based on findings from qualitative studies with young people (Ševčíková, Šmahel, & Otavová, 2012; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008), one of which is included in this meta-ethnography (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008).

The findings from this synthesis indicate that intent is a subjective concept with problems of interpretation for both victims and perpetrators. Echoing a previous review, findings from this synthesis indicate that deciphering intent and impact in the cyber world is complicated by the absence of verbal and visual cues, leading to difficulties in interpretation (Cassidy et al., 2013). Perpetrators inability to witness the victim's reaction may diminish their empathetic response potentially leading to more harshness in the cyber behaviors that contribute to either intentional or inadvertent harm. Disinhibition in the cyber context encourages young people to say and do things that they would not ordinarily because self-boundaries and norm adherence are reduced in the absence of face-to-face interaction (Suler, 2004; Voggeser, Singh, & Göritz, 2018).

Repetition is a well-established criterion for traditional bullying, however, debate regarding its nature and importance in characterizing cyberbullying is ongoing (Dooley et al., 2009; Langos, 2012; Olweus, 1997; Tokunaga, 2010). Findings from this synthesis indicate that repetition is key in young people's characterization, differentiating one-time acts of aggression or joking behavior from cyberbullying. However, they support the interpretation that the nature of repetition is altered in cyber space where it can occur in the form of direct multiple attacks by the perpetrator and/or through the perpetrators execution of an act in the public domain where one-time actions can have repetitive effects (Cassidy et al., 2013; Cuadrado-Gordillo & Fernández-Antelo, 2016; Langos, 2012; Peter & Petermann, 2018). Findings from this synthesis indicate that young people perceive public cyberbullying as more harmful than that which is hidden from others' attention. This echoes previous research which suggests that a victims lack of control over the situation may be a core aspect in the evaluation of bullying severity (Peter & Petermann, 2018; Sticca & Perren, 2013).

4.3 Implications

This synthesis highlights a number of opportunities for policy and intervention development. The subjectivity of victim impact raises concerns about the appropriateness of this criterion in characterizing cyberbullying. However, the significance of negative impact in young people's conceptualization, which is echoed in previous qualitative research, indicates that it is a key factor in their experience and, therefore, warrants recognition in conceptualization and intervention efforts (Dredge, Gleeson, & Garcia, 2014). Repetition, including public acts of aggression should also be considered in any efforts to understand or address cyberbullying. This synthesis suggests that the features of the cyber world can empower perpetrators and disempower victims simultaneously and increase the severity of cyberbullying. Intervention efforts, therefore, should focus on addressing the factors that contribute to asymmetrical power relations: young people's dependence on ICT, the accessibility of victims, the ambiguity of cyber communication, public victimization, anonymous perpetration and adult responses to disclosure.

Working with young people to understand and navigate the cyber world has been shown to be more effective in protecting them from victimization than implementing restrictions on

ICT access (Elsaesser, Russell, Ohannessian, & Patton, 2017). Enabling young people to engage safely and appropriately with the cyber world, developing cyber communication skills, encouraging empathy, and highlighting the challenge of interpretation in this context, may reduce escalations to cyberbullying. Previous research indicates that social support may mitigate the negative impact of cybervictimisation (Machmutow, Perren, Sticca, & Alsaker, 2012). Potential support networks require resources to provide an appropriate and effective response to disclosures of cyberbullying. Young people who perceive that they have been victimized should be provided with appropriate support regardless of the prevailing definition of cyberbullying. This synthesis supports the view that efforts should focus on the education and empowerment of young people as well as peers, parents, and school personnel, however, further qualitative research is needed to clarify young people's needs and to establish the best approach (Cassidy et al., 2013; Fenaughty & Harré, 2013). Victims must be enabled to seek support without fear of consequence, they should be listened to and any course of action should be developed collaboratively with them and, importantly, acted upon. Where cyberbullying is motivated by jealousy the promotion of alternative avenues for building self-esteem may be of benefit, while training in conflict resolution and positive coping skills may serve to mitigate the risks of cyber-revenge.

The complexities involved in conducting research with young people are widely discussed. The conduct of ethical and meaningful research is complicated by the power dynamic in the adult-child relationship, informed consent procedures, the context in which research takes place, and the presence of gatekeepers, particularly in the school setting (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Hill, 2006). While word limits imposed by journals may impede the reporting of qualitative research, nonetheless, consideration of these issues was poorly reported in some of the included studies and there was significant variation in the consent procedures employed. Given the potential vulnerability of those involved in cyberbullying, the conduct and reporting of ethical and meaningful research with young people must be a priority in future studies.

5. Strengths and Limitations

The process of retrieving qualitative studies is a challenge due to inconsistencies in indexing and, therefore, it is possible that a potentially relevant study was omitted (Shaw et al., 2004).

However, a comprehensive search strategy was implemented to reduce this risk. A key strength of this review is the systematic and rigorous approach employed, including the critical appraisal of the included studies. Cyberbullying research spans multiple disciplines, hence, searches were conducted in education and social science databases, as well as those with a health focus. Steps were taken to ensure reliability in the retrieval of studies, quality appraisal and analysis. Efforts were made to retain the nature and context of the original studies throughout data extraction, analysis and reporting (Atkins et al., 2008). However, it must be recognized that analysis and interpretation is limited by the contextual and conceptual thinness of some of the included studies (France et al., 2014). As discussed above, this may be influenced by the constraints imposed on the reporting of qualitative research by many journals restrictive word counts.

In this study the collaboration of a multidisciplinary team ensured multiple perspectives were considered. This enhanced the analysis of the included studies, contributing to a novel and in-depth interpretation of young people's perspective which highlights the nuances in their conceptualizations of cyberbullying. This meta-ethnography is, therefore, a useful complement to the existing knowledge base (Peter & Petermann, 2018).

6. Conclusion

The novelty of cyberbullying requires that young people, as digital natives, are central to efforts to understand and address it. This synthesis draws from young people's contributions to develop a deeper insight into this phenomenon; it highlights the central role of ICT in young people's lives and how the complexity and ambiguity of the cyber world in which they connect, cannot be disregarded. The distinctive features of young people's conceptualization of cyberbullying identified in this study can be used to inform bottom-up research and intervention efforts in the school setting. Given the potential negative impact on young people's health and wellbeing, further primary qualitative research is needed to expand youth input in this discourse, particularly in regard to intervention design. It is the right of young people to have a say in matters that affect them (United Nations, 1989) and collaborating with young people as co-researchers in cyberbullying research may enhance efforts to ethically and meaningfully channel youth voices. Consideration of the intricacies of research

with young people and improved reporting by qualitative researchers, will help to inform best practice in cyberbullying research.

Supplementary File 1
Medline (EBSCO) Search Strategy (was adapted for use in other databases)

Database: Medline (EBSCO)	
	Search Terms
Concept 1 Population-Adolescent aged 10-19	
1.	MH Adolescent
2.	MH Young Adult
3.	TI "Young People*"
4.	AB "Young People*"
5.	TI "Young person*"
6.	AB "Young Person*"
7.	MH Students
8.	TI Pupil*
9.	AB Pupil*
10.	MH Child
11.	**S1 OR S2 OR S3 OR S4 OR S5 OR S6 OR S7 OR S8 OR S9 OR 10**
Concept 2 Bullying Terms	
12.	SU Cyberbullying
13.	TI Cyberbull*
14.	AB Cyberbull*
15.	TI Cybervictimi#ation
16.	AB Cybervictimi#ation
17.	TI Cybermobbing
18.	AB cybermobbing
19.	**S12 OR S13 OR S14 OR S15 OR S16 OR S18**
20.	MH Bullying
21.	MH Aggression
22.	TI Aggressi*
23.	AB Aggressi*
24.	TI Victimi#ation
25.	AB Victimi#ation
26.	TI Harass*
27.	AB Harrass*
28.	TI Abuse
29.	AB Abuse
30.	**S20 OR S21 OR S22 OR S23 OR S24 OR S25 OR S26 OR S27 OR S29**
Concept 3 Context of Bullying	
31.	TI Cyber
32.	AB Cyber
33.	TI Electronic
34.	AB Electronic
35.	TI Internet
36.	AB Internet
37.	TI Online
38.	AB Online
39.	TI phone
40.	AB phone
41.	TI Text
42.	AB Text
43.	TI "Social media"
44.	AB "social media"
45.	**S31 OR S31 OR S32 OR S33 OR S34 OR S35 OR S36 OR S37 OR S38 OR S39 OR S40 OR S41 OR S42 OR S44**
46.	**S30 AND S45**
47.	**S19 OR S46**
48.	**S11 AND S47**
49.	**Limiters - English Language; Age Related: Child: 6-12 years, Adolescent: 13-18 years, Young Adult: 19-24 years**
Notes MH Exact Subject Heading SU Subject	

Supplementary File 2 Data Extraction Form

Study	Year	Country	Study Aim	Ethical Review	Parent/Guardian Consent	Young Person Consent/Assent	Youth Involvement in Research Process	Schools n=	School type; grade(s)	Qualitative Participants n=	Male % Female %	Age	Qualitative Data Collection	Qualitative Data analysis

Supplementary File 3 Translations and Line of Argument

Themes Authors	Intent	Repetition	Anonymity	Accessibility	Barriers to Disclosure
ABU BAKER 2015	…messages will often be misinterpreted when the receiver tries to construe the meaning via their own analysis that is frequently influenced by the receiver's present contexts and conditions …the near absent of non-verbal communication produced several impacts among adolescents. For instance, by using any online applications, the perpetrators will not know the extent of severity of their wrongdoings. Victims will not be able to express their depression, resentment, humiliation, etc. when facial or non-verbal expression is not present during cyberbullying…there will often be no immediate feedback to clarify matters… not until the damage has already been done	Many cyberbullying experts suggest that to meet the term bullying, the act of bully must be repetitive…although the act of bullying occur only once, sometimes the harassing material uploaded lingers forever for anyone to download or forward it to others. This is due to the difficulty to remove it as soon as it is online.	To perform traditional bullying, a bully logically must have a strong physique in order to harass his or her victim or the perpetrator comes in group so that they can perform the action of bullying. However, now everyone can harass others regardless of their conditions as long as they are online…the researcher, therefore, concludes that online media has the opportunity to alter its users' behaviour due to its capabilities of being anonymous. Users can be anybody they want when online and remain hidden from others.	Informants described the inevitability to avoid online communication to socialise. The researcher conceptualised this as the permanence of expression. Researches show that adolescents and technologies cannot be separated. This inseparability, which is very difficult to erase, is exposing them to cyberbullying	
BAAS ET AL. 2013	Even more important, according to the children, are the presumed bully's intentions: they only speak of cyberbullying when the bully has harmful intentions. the problem with intention is that it is a subjective notion, with potential problems of interpretation for both victims and bullies. Victims experience difficulties in estimating the intentions of the presumed bully Presumed bullies tend not to empathize with the victim and may underestimate the effects of their actions, which they primarily see as innocent pranks or harmless jokes. Victims may find it hard to estimate the presumed bully's intentions, and	According to the children, one-time occurrences would be bearable and not directly a form of cyberbullying *Just a couple of pranks is not so bad, it can even be funny. But if it happens more often, it is not nice anymore* Although repetition is quite clear in traditional bullying, online one-time actions may have repetitive effects. An example mentioned was that a video is posted on YouTube and watched by many viewers. Bullies may not be aware of the lasting consequences of one-time actions	The anonymity of the bully was one of the most frightening features. A loss of trust in friends and classmates was another: anyone could be the anonymous bully *I was bullied for a long time several years ago; online and offline. Eventually I found out that one of the bullies actually was my best friend, this got me really upset*	*'I hacked my friend's MSN account for fun. He was at home sitting at his computer saying 'Sh*t, sh*t, sh*t, I can't log on anymore'. He calls me in panic saying his computer has been hacked. And then I say: 'Joke'!'* Interventions for lowering the threshold should focus on creating a safe haven in the home and school context.	Another reason for not seeking help is that victims may be afraid of the consequences. The obstacle to talking to their teacher involves the fear of group discussions about their problems, which may have adverse effects *(''You're afraid other children hear about it and start bullying you as well.'').* The obstacle to going to their parents or caregivers involves the fear of ill-considered actions like contacting the teacher, the bully, or the bully's parents (''*My mother will immediately contact my teacher or the bully's parents, and that's something I really don't want.'')* Moreover, they are afraid of losing their Internet

	therefore are more likely to interpret intended jokes as forms of cyberbullying. From both perspectives, it appears that cyberbullying is more ambiguous than offline forms of bullying. Real cyberbullies, with harmful intentions, may use this ambiguity to laugh away the seriousness of their actions				connection if they tell their parents (''*Taking the Internet away is one of the worst punishments there is. Even a bully would not deserve that. It is better to take a beating from all of your classmates than to be isolated from the Internet.*''). Having Internet access appears to be a necessity of life *(''Losing your Internet connection is like losing your soul.'').*
BERNE ET AL. 2013	*If I wrote something mean then it would be like pure jealousy, because I would feel like…'She is so fucking perfect, she's got a perfect life and I want that too,'…Ah, but then I'll write a mean comment, so that she doesn't get such an actual perfect life*	I think, because many people want to, like, show off, show that they are big and strong, you know. And to do that on Facebook where you've got maybe two, three, four hundred friends, and then, ah, and then other people see it, and then it's quite a lot who will see it.	Just as anyone could be a victim of appearance-related cyber-bullying, the adolescents perceived that a cyberbully generally also could be anyone	…the boys talked about getting back at someone who is cyberbullying others, by using violence. One boy described it this way: "*If someone had commented on my photo, it does not matter who the person is, me and my friends had looked them up, found them and beaten them."* Interestingly, the girls in the focus groups commented that girls tended to take greater offence and to be quieter about the incident than the boys.	
BETTS ET AL. 2017	*I would say it's more the content of the message and not the media, medium it which it was delivered "cause [..] a message could have a lot of threats, insults [.] and all these kind of things which can affect you. The medium doesn't really matter it's still cyber bullying whichever way you look at it.* Common to all of these examples of cyberbullying was the notion that the target of the behaviour is likely to take offence to the action or that the action would be interpreted as hurtful. Regardless of the media used to cyberbully and the nature of the act, participants acknowledged the importance of recognising the effect on the target	Whilst the literature has debated whether behaviour needs to be repeated for it to be considered cyberbullying…for the participants of our study whether an act was defined as cyberbullying was dependent on the effect that it had the on target. If the recipient of the act was "affected," then regardless of the medium this was taken to be cyberbullying.	anonymity could operate on many levels including: the target not being aware who the perpetrator was and the perpetrator could be hidden from the consequences of their actions because they were not in the same physical environment as the target. further, because the perpetrator of the bullying behaviour may not be identifiable this was regarded as empowering the bully to continue their acts*: Cyber, cyber bullying it's like taking [.] aim at someone coz they won't give it back to you, so it's like going for the weak person just coz you won't get it back.*	Participants discussed how cyberbullying was an extension of face-to-face bullying and involved carrying out acts of bullying using digital means. However, whilst there was overlap between how face-to-face bullying occurred and cyberbullying, participants were also aware that cyberbullying had some unique characteristics. for example, participants talked about cyberbullying having the potential to be constant because of the nature of technology used and their potentially unlimited access to it. Specifically, the participants described how cyberbullying could happen at any time of the day or night which reflected their constant	there was a tension between a desire to disclose their experiences of cyberbullying to an appropriate adult and the fear of the consequences of this disclosure. The fear took many forms including making the situation worse, the potential unknown consequences of disclosing experiences of cyberbullying, and the possibility of exacerbating cyberbullying in to face-to-face bullying *People get, yeh, that's, people get scared of telling of telling adults and things like that because they don't know what's, if they did tell an adult they don't know what's going to happen to them afterwards […] which is wrong,*

	Participants also made the distinction between cyberbullying and banter, suggesting that whilst banter could easily become cyberbullying because of potential ambiguity of how the message could be perceived, banter between known individuals was regarded as harmless. Banter was also seen as something that occurred between friends and was considered to be a bit of fun			engagement with, and access to, technology. Conversely, face-to-face bullying would typically only occur in the presence of peers and, as such, could have a clear cut-off point.	*it's [yeah]. People should be able to tell people confidentially but like what they are going through and things like that without being in fear of, being punched or beaten up or whatever.*
BURNHAM & WRIGHT 2012	*Misunderstandings often dominate cyberbullying* numerous middle school discussions centred on confusion (i.e., in the eyes of students some of the cyberbullying incidents were misunderstandings or jokes that got out of hand, implying that many times malicious intentions did not exist, but once escalation started, cyberbullying became inevitable			…cyberbullying is more prevalent [at home] and fewer parents closely monitor online interactions *Home is the most likely place to by cyberbullied*	*…we [often] go to friends to see what we could do about cyberbullying before we go to our parents* …students were frank about educators' and parents' understanding of cyberbullying (i.e., believing that they are often inadequate or inept in dealing with cyber issues and not technologically savvy). Students noted that some educators and parents were too overwhelmed to help and others were emotionally unavailable. Consequently, when adults are inept or ill---equipped, students will confide in peers rather than adults. …educators and parents may not be consulted about cyberbullying issues until the issues have accelerated
JACOBS ET AL. 2015	*Sometimes I think calling names isn't bullying, sometimes you do that as friends* …some behaviors are not seen as cyberbullying (e.g., gossiping, calling each other names while being friends), and perception depends on the context and/or being in a fight. In case of these behaviors—contexts and	*It depends, when you're in a fight you call each other names and offend each other as well, that doesn't mean that it's bullying. However, when they always do that, and with more people, then I think it is [cyberbullying]* Apparently, victims do not see themselves as cyberbullying victims, but rather as adolescents who once or	*Yes, everybody can be a bully. Whether it's someone who's very small with glasses and whatever, or someone who's very tall and who looks like a bully…* In four groups, victims experienced that someone—known (e.g., brother) or unknown to them—pretended to be	…a lot of victims spontaneously talked about experiences with traditional bullying as well (i.e., physical bullying, being called names, being threatened, and being excluded).	*Most of the time I don't talk about it to no one, really no one. And I keep it to myself* …some victims mentioned that they did not want to bother their parents (e.g., boy: "*No, but I'll not tell my parents. It would only be bad for them, because they'll*

	being in a fight—apparently adolescents do not always see themselves as cyberbully or cyberbullying victim.	twice experienced cyberbullying. Similarly, they do not see themselves as cyberbullies but rather as adolescents who occasionally tease someone else, and therefore cannot be called bullies. These findings suggest that the repeated nature…really is important in the perception of cyberbullying: single or occasional events are not often perceived as cyberbullying.	someone else (i.e., impersonation), which made it possible to bully anonymously.		*stress out and stuff. While that's not necessary at all, I think."*
MISHNA ET AL. 2009	*I've heard that sometimes cyber bullying is some friends that are really close to you and they want to get back at you* *Some people do cyber bullying as a joke and don't know what it feels to be bullied* *I think cyber bullying is just a different way that you do it. It's not face-to-face. It's easier to say more hurtful comments because sometimes you don't like to say things to people's faces but when you do it for revenge on MSN or something, it might be easier to do because you do not see how much they are hurt by it*		The participants explained that anonymity lets individuals behave in ways they might not otherwise and that would not otherwise be tolerated. Some students attributed this power of anonymity to individuals feeling more comfortable in their homes with little fear of repercussions or of being traced, which the students believed enables aggressors to threaten, harass, or denigrate others and to even assume a new persona or character online. According to the participants concealing one's identity is usually intended to invoke distress or fear in the victimized child. The participants believed that aggressors concealed their identity in order to bully and increase their power by remaining "hidden behind the keyboard. "*I think cyber bullying is so horrible because nobody really knows, like if you're being bullied nobody knows, you don't know who's doing it and it's just so silent and even if you do know who's doing it, you feel really bad, you can't see her, you can't really tell to her face how you feel.*	One child coined the term "*non-stop bullying*" to capture the phenomenon of cyber bullying due to bullying occurring at school and continuing online when the child returns home at the end of the day. According to a number of participants, children expect to feel safe and protected from bullying in their own homes. Consequently, the cyber bullying they experience while on the computer at home, and often in their own bedroom, may feel particularly invasive. *cyber bullying is when bullies already bullied someone, but got in trouble by a teacher, so they want to make it silent, so they go on a computer and they try to be hidden and secretive, but still hurting*	…prime reasons for not disclosing to parents or other adults were fear that their computer privileges would be taken away and the belief that if they told, adults would not be able to find evidence of the cyber bullying or to identify the aggressor. *some people that may be cyber bullied, if they do tell their principals, a lot of people will just lie and be like 'that wasn't me on MSN. That was someone else*

NARUSKOV ET AL 2012	In the context of intentionality, if the intention to hurt lay behind the bully's act, then the behaviour was considered bullying or even psychological violence and therefore very serious as well. Older students said that "*here he/she sends these things intentionally, it is not a joke anymore, he/she literally wants to hurt others and this is a form of psychological violence".* The results showed that it was important to the students to know how the victim reacted to the bullying "*if C. didn't care, then it was just a senseless incident"*	*if M sends something once and then leaves [the victim] alone then it is not significant but if it is repeated, then perhaps it is a serious case* it seemed that if the bullying action was public instead of private, then it was evaluated as very serious…in the case of public cyberbullying there is a large audience involved, and therefore, the victim's reputation may become damaged	There was more disagreement about the anonymity criteria. On the one hand, it was not considered very severe because if you do not know the person, then it does not seem to be a problem compared to the situation where the perpetrator is a familiar person. On the other hand, the presence of anonymity was considered severe because it is unknown who is behind these kinds of acts; he or she may be a dangerous person.		
NOCENTINI ET AL. 2010	If there is the intention to hurt someone it is bullying All participants agreed that if the victim is affected by the behaviour then the behaviour constitutes bullying…the effect on the victims and his/her perception of the acts can also be more relevant than the intention of the aggressor	Adolescents agreed that the criterion of repetition can differentiate between a joke and an intentional attack and it can characterise the severity of the action. One of the German groups stated explicitly that the behaviour cannot be unintentional if it is repeated. Thus, repetition and intention are perceived as related. However, participants in Italy and Germany paid attention to the relation between repetition and publicity: if the act is public and thus it is sent (or showed) to several people, although it is done only once this can be considered as done several times. The terms proposed by German adolescents well represent this meaning: *'mass bullying'* or '*multiple bullying* In all countries, students rated public cyberbullying as the most serious incident, because of the role of the bystanders. The victims might worry about what others think about them.	Anonymity is important for the impact on the victim, but not as definitional criterion to discriminate cyberbullying from non-bullying incidents. Not knowing who the contents are from can raise insecurity and fear, while if the perpetrator is someone the students know it could hurt more if it was someone they trusted or were friends with. On the level of personal relationships, however, coping is easier. The anonymous scenario was perceived as worse than the control scenario. *If you know the person, you can have a talk, positively or negatively and you can better understand if it is a joke or not*.		

		However, this criterion is not necessary to define bullying			
PELFREY & WEBER 2014	when someone *abuses the Internet to hurt another person* Cyberbullying can result from two friends joking around – especially if one of the friends takes offense during the exchange. This can be fluid as different things happen to individuals everyday that could change their outlook on joking or teasing exchanges. What might be jocular one day may mean something very different to an individual on a day where exogenous stressors (grades, family issues, etc.) have created a sense of internal tension *It could happen to anybody—even between two friends you know … like teasing … and it would be OK because we would be having fun but then I try doing it to somebody else or they get offended by you or my friend gets offended, basically when it goes too far that's when it gets to escalate* The absence of immediate feedback (via both verbal and nonverbal communication modes) to comments may lead to more harshness in teasing and jokes.	It also does not need to be repeated as a single comment can initiate a cascade of events. As the male focus group participant indicated, it is scary and intimidating to go to school knowing that many of the other students you see on a daily basis have seen embarrassing text messages or Facebook posts. While all teens must deal with feelings of embarrassment, the nature of social media can exponentially increase the number of persons who view or hear about potentially embarrassing issues.	*If you were there in person there'd be no way you would say any of this stuff to anyone's face, but yet they write it on their status. Things like stuff that they would never say to you personally and then it gets into this big thing* These students thought that students often said things that they would never say in person. The masking effect of social networking interaction mitigates the nature of social interaction.	it can take place online, but it also has a cyclical nature which often begins in cyberspace, becomes apparent within the school walls, and revolves back to cyberspace again. There is a strong relationship between Facebook and in-school communication as it relates to gossip, rumors, and peer news. Students see each other at school then maintain high levels of contact through social media and texting during evenings and weekends. This constant access gives students the opportunity to maintain close relationships with friends but it also facilitates rumors, gossip, and cyberbullying activity. The role of technology distinguishes cyberbullying from traditional bullying through the omni-present nature of access to social media, texting, email, and phone calls.	
SMITH ET AL 2008.	the perpetrator is less likely to see any direct response from the victim; this might reduce direct gratification for pupils who enjoy watching pain inflicted on others, but might also reduce any inhibition of inflicting pain due to empathy at seeing the victim's distress	Cyberbullying could be worse [than traditional bullying]:…*'loads of people can see it if it's on the internet';*	'*there is less fear of getting caught'.* *'you don't know who it is, so more scared'; '[in face-to-face bullying] you know who it is – there's advantages and disadvantages to that*	*it's constant all the time*	Adults may seem less informed about cyberbullying issues and therefore less likely to be approached; this remains an untested hypothesis from our data, but if substantiated would reinforce the need for awareness raising amongst teachers and parents about cyberbullying and preventative measures.

TOPCU ET AL. 2013	…intentionally seeking to harm the cyber victim was expressed as another reason for cyber bullying by two of the participants…they believed that cyber bullying unquestionably aims to hurt or upset the cyber victim according to four of the seven participants, the main underlying motivation in cyber bullying is joking. They believed that people cyber bully others for fun and they do not intend to harm the victim Children might also continue to engage in cyber bullying if they are not able to empathize with the victim and are not able to identify with the experiences of the victim	Cyber space holds the promise of anonymity for the bully and gives considerable potential publicity to the cyber bullying act	Anonymity and confidentiality on the Internet provides a degree of protection for cyber bullies and reinforces the illusion of invulnerability. By its very nature, tracing cyber bullies is difficult and sometimes impossible, and those who are arrogant do not seem to have a fear of being caught	Can (a 15 year-old, male) said he experienced cyber bullying as a cyber victim; his girlfriend made up some rumors about him and disseminated these rumors to Can's friends by instant message after they had broken up. As a response to this cyber bullying act, Can tried to persuade his friends that his ex-girlfriend was lying and her words were not true, but he could not convince his friends. He voiced *"…I felt embarrassed and could not concentrate on my school tasks due to these rumors on the Internet for about a week…"*	participants shared information about acts of cyber bullying in the form of gossiping, intrusion into privacy, and stealing passwords and pretending to be someone else. In all of these, the common difficulty was the victim's inability to prove that he or she had been cyber bullied. When someone is disseminating gossip on the Internet, it is clearly difficult for a victim to defend him or herself; and similarly so, with sharing information through impersonation
VANDEBOSCH & CLEEMPUT 2008	…the perpetrator of cyberbullying really wanted to hurt the feelings of another person intended to hurt by the perpetrator and perceived as hurtful by the victim According to the respondents, cyberbullying was clearly different from teasing via the Internet or mobile phone. One huge distinction, according to the youngsters who participated in the focus groups, was that the perpetrator of cyberbullying really wanted to hurt the feelings of another person. Cyber jokes, on the other hand, were not intended to cause the victim negative feelings—they were meant to be funny. The respondents acknowledged, however, that there might be a difference between the way things were intended and the way things were perceived. What some perpetrators considered an innocent joke might be considered	Another aspect that students mentioned spontaneously when describing the difference between cyberbullying and cyber-teasing was that cyberbullying implied repetition This criterion did not necessarily imply several instances of electronic bullying. A single negative act via Internet or mobile phone that followed on traditional ways of bullying was also considered cyberbullying	From the side of the victim, not knowing the person behind the cyber attacks was often frustrating and increased the feeling of powerlessness. Knowing the individual(s) behind a certain action, on the other hand, made it possible to put the action into perspective (and to perceive it as negative or not) and to react accordingly. The focus groups showed that in the case of friends, the initial anonymity was often given up by the perpetrators themselves	The weaker victims were usually also the target of traditional bullying	

	an aggressive attack by the victim (or even the other way around				
Third Order Interpretations	Intent is a subjective concept with potential problems of interpretation for both perpetrators and victims. Although intent is important in young people's characterisation they also consider that if the recipient is negatively affected by the behaviour, then it constitutes cyberbullying. Cyber communication is often devoid of the physical and verbal signals that augment understanding in face-to-face interactions. The absence of these elements complicates the interpretation of online interactions making it difficult for recipients to determine the intention of online behaviour, for victims to convey their distress, and consequently, for perpetrators to recognise the impact of their actions. This facilitates the continuation and escalation of harmful behaviour. Additionally, the ambiguity of intent in the cyber world empowers perpetrators to engage in acts of intentional harm under the guise of teasing enabling them to avert the ramifications of their behaviour. This renders cyber-victims powerless to verify their victimisation and to hold perpetrators accountable.	Repetition is key in young people's conceptualisation of cyberbullying indicating the intent and severity of cyberbullying behaviours. The repetition of potentially harmful acts differentiates jocular behaviour from intentional harm. However, the concept of repetition is complicated in the cyber-world where solitary acts can have repetitive effects if executed in the public domain where detrimental material has the potential to reach a large audience. The ability to share information publically through cyber technology empowers perpetrators to cause significant damage to victims with little effort or risk. The relative permanence of online interactions and the sharing capabilities of technology and online media enable further distribution of harmful content by others and facilitate continuing victimisation. Although not essential in defining cyberbullying, publicity is significant because of the potential for reputational damage and public humiliation.	Although, perpetrators are often portrayed as anonymous, cyberbullying often takes places in known social groups, facilitated by anonymity. Anonymity gives perpetrators the power to cause intentional harm while remaining hidden, thereby, evading responsibility and repercussion for their actions. In the absence of consequence behaviour is no longer restricted by social norms and regulations. This enables young people to say or do things that they would not otherwise and empowers those unlikely to perpetrate acts of traditional bullying to engage in bullying behaviour.	The omni-present nature of cyber technology facilitates continuous cyberbullying and enables the extension of school bullying to young people's homes. Cyberbullying can also originate in the cyber world and manifest in the real world as physical violence. Subsequently, victimisation can traverse the victims physical and cyber worlds rendering young people powerless to escape.	The unknown identity of the perpetrator contributes to the fear experienced by victims and makes it difficult to report. A fear of the potential consequences discourages young people from reporting to adults. Adults are perceived as ignorant to the cyber world are not trusted by young people to adequately deal with cyber issues. Young people fear that adults' efforts to intervene will intensify cyberbullying or lead to physical violence. The potential for escalation to violence is a significant source of fear for young people. Cyber technology is central to young people's social interactions. Their desire to be constantly connected acts as a facilitator for cyberbullying and also serves as a barrier to seeking support as young people fear that their access to the cyber world will be removed in efforts to protect them.
Line of Argument	Cyberbullying, largely, occurs within young people's social groups and relationships. The prevalence and significance of technology in young people's lives can mean that cyberbullying is a risk to which many young people are exposed. Exposure to the risk of cyberbullying is outweighed by young people's desire for continuous digital connectivity and fear of social disconnection. Cyberbullying is highly complex in nature, characterized by a degree of ambiguity not seen within traditional conceptualizations of bullying and by the intersection of a range of possible components, all of which do not have to be present for it to occur. A power imbalance influenced by the physical, psychological and social characteristics of perpetrators and victims may exist where the perpetrator is identifiable. However, the nature of the cyber world alters the distribution of power and within cyberbullying power relations can be identified as fluid and changeable. Features such as anonymity, ambiguity, accessibility and public exposure are experienced as disempowering by victims and empowering by perpetrators. Young people believe cyberbullying can occur whether or not there is intent to harm; they conceptualize its occurrence based on the seriousness of victim impact, as well as intent. Intentional cyberbullying is motivated by internal factors including jealousy and revenge and also by the features of the cyber world that serve to empower perpetrators. Negative impact is determined by victims' perception of events as influenced by the same cyber features and by contextual and external factors that shape victims' interpretation of online interactions. These include the relationship with the sender or exogenous stressors such as school and family stressors. Repetition may or may not be required for cyberbullying to occur. One action can constitute cyberbullying, due to the degree of rapid and widespread				

	public dissemination facilitated by ICT. Further, negative anticipation regarding the consequences of reporting cyberbullying to adults, such as an escalation of bullying or the restriction of ICT access, can deter victims from seeking help, thereby, maintaining a cycle of victimization that in some instances spans the physical and cyber worlds.

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