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Parental perceptions of gender differences in child technology use and cyberbullying

Mallory Bolenbaugh[1] | Megan Foley-Nicpon[1] | Rachel Young[1] | Melissa Tully[1] | Nikki Grunewald[1] | Marizen Ramirez[2]

[1]University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, USA

[2]University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Correspondence
Mallory Bolenbaugh, University of Iowa, Lindquist Center, 240 South Madison St, Iowa City, IA 52240, USA.
Email: mallory-ermler@uiowa.edu

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Abstract

Cyberbullying is a major health concern for today's youth and a pervasive stressor for adolescents and their families. This study offers qualitative insights into how parents perceive their children's technology use and engagement in cyberbullying based on gender. Eight focus groups were conducted with 48 parents of adolescents ages 10–17. Findings indicated parents perceived their children over-use technology and lack awareness of what cyberbullying is. Specific to gender, parents suggested their daughters use technology for social connection, and parents were more concerned about their daughter's technology use than their son's, which they believed was related to specific interests. In response to cyberbullying scenarios, parents encouraged females but not males to socialize with peers. This is the first qualitative study to obtain an in-depth understanding of the ways in which parents perceive and socialize their children in regard to technology use and cyberbullying scenarios. These results may help school systems, school psychologists, researchers, and parents gain awareness of the gender-stereotypical socialization process that unfolds in parental monitoring of technology use and cyberbullying situations. We conclude by offering suggestions for how school systems and personnel might intervene.

KEYWORDS
adolescents, cyberbullying, gender, parental perceptions

Approximately 33% of U.S. students report ever having been cyberbullied in their lifetime, and 11.5% report having bullied others online (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2016). Cyberbullying is defined as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text" (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, p. 152). Psychology, psychiatry, and pediatric experts have documented that both cyberbullying and in-person bullying often results in negative consequences for children, including psychological problems, physical health concerns, and increased risk of suicide (Gini & Espelage, 2014; Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011). Preliminary research indicates cyberbullying is more highly correlated with suicidal ideation than traditional bullying (Gini & Espelage, 2014). Furthermore, certain youth, including girls, are at higher risk for becoming targets of cyberbullying (Gini & Espelage, 2014; Hong et al., 2016). While many studies have documented the general importance of considering parental perceptions of their children's technology use, only a few to date have examined parental perceptions of gender and technology use (Hale, Fox, & Murray, 2017; Midamba & Moreno, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to examine parental perceptions of female- and male-identified technology use and involvement in cyberbullying. In comparison to in-person bullying, theoretical foundations to guide our empirical investigation of cyberbullying are scarce (Espelage, Hong, & Valido, 2018; Espelage, Rao, & Craven, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010), though some experts propose social cognitive theory as a promising way to examine how cyberbullying impacts children and families (Espelage et al., 2018).

1 | SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Although the social cognitive theory has been used to explore aggressive behavior for decades (Bandura, 1978), it is just beginning to be applied in cyberbullying research since the phenomenon is relatively new (Bauman, 2009; Espelage et al., 2018; Perren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012; Swearer, Wang, Berry, & Myers, 2014). Yet social cognitive theory provides a strong basis for understanding cyberbullying, in part due to the theory's strength in conceptualizing in-person bullying and other forms of aggressive behavior. Due to the theory's emphasis on learning, thinking, and reasoning, it is well-suited to provide an understanding of the current study, and is recognized as an effective strategy to address bullying (Boxer & Dubow, 2002; Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2000) and potentially cyberbullying behavior.

The social cognitive theory supports triadic reciprocal determinism, or reciprocal causation among behavior, cognition, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1978, 2001, 2011). Although biology constitutes the basis for sex differentiation, gender differentiation is a psychosocial process (Bandura, 2011). Models serve as major sources of sex-role information that children observe and therefore learn; although children learn a variety of sex-role information from men and women, they are selective in what they express behaviorally (Bandura, 2011). Cognitions often provide motivation to match one's gender conception, but this is exaggerated by the influences of gender-normed institutional systems and sanctions (Bandura, 2011). In sum, modeling, cognitions, and social determinants all interact in complex ways to support a gender-stereotypical socialization process, according to social cognitive theory.

1.1 | Gender differences in cyberbullying

Quantitative research on sex differences in cyberbullying shows mixed results. Findings from one study demonstrated that sex-related differences in cyberbullying were moderated by age, such that females were more likely to report cyberbullying during mid-adolescence, whereas males showed higher levels of cyberbullying during later adolescence (Barlett & Coyne, 2014). A systematic review of research articles (including surveys, reviews, meta-analyses, and randomized controlled trials), legislative documents, governmental documents, community response data, books, and

book chapters about cyberbullying behavior found girls have a slightly higher chance of being cybervictims and boys have a slightly higher chance of being cyberbullies (Aboujaoude, Savage, Starcevic, & Salame, 2015), although other studies have shown girls are more likely to be perpetrators of cyberbullying than boys (Pornari & Wood, 2010; Smith et al., 2008). More recently, researchers showed that both sexes perpetrate cyberbullying at similar rates (Sharma, Kishore, Sharma, & Duggal, 2017).

How cyberbullying manifests may differ between the genders; that is, girls may be more likely to be cyberbullied for sexual reasons and boys for sexual orientation and skill/talent reasons (Brody & Vangelisti, 2017). However, newer research indicates both male and female sexual minority youth are cyberbullied substantially more than heterosexual and cisgender peers (Abreu & Kenny, 2018). No conclusions have been drawn as to whether sexual minority females or sexual minority males experience more cybervictimization (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012; Rice et al., 2015; Schneider, O'Donnell, & Smith, 2015). In summary, gender and sex differences in cyberbullying likely exist, but patterns are less definitive than the trends observed from in-person bullying (Dooley, Pyżalski, & Cross, 2009).

1.2 | Parents' role

Parents perceive the internet and social media to be integral parts of their children's lives, but that their children use technology too much, access harmful and inappropriate content online, and do not understand the implications of their inappropriate communication via technology. All of these issues are concerning to parents and may result in emotional distress among their children (Symons, Ponnet, Walrave, & Heirman, 2017). Parents have previously expressed hopelessness at having the knowledge or tools necessary to help their children in cyberbullying situations (Hale et al., 2017; Midamba & Moreno, 2017), frustration with the way their children use technology for communication, and concern for the potential consequences of what their children post online (Midamba & Moreno, 2017).

Previous researchers have found gender differences in technology use and experiences with cyberbullying, but these findings are mixed. The social cognitive theory would suggest there are differences in the way children are socialized to interact with technology and engage as bystanders, victims, or perpetrators of cyberbullying. Additionally, risky behaviors, such as cyberbullying perpetration, can result from internalizing gender cues (Navarro, Yubero, & Larrañaga, 2015). In relation to cyberbullying, research shows gender influences the way parents address children's bullying behavior, with mothers being more likely to give prosocial and help-seeking advice and fathers being more likely to encourage children to address cyberbullying more directly (Lester et al., 2017). Therefore, the current qualitative study examined parents' perceptions of children's technology use and cyberbullying experiences through the lens of gender.

Researchers have called for more descriptive studies on computer-mediated communication (Parks, 2009) and qualitative data to supplement quantitative findings on the topics of online behavior and technology (Mao, 2014). This study adds to the current literature regarding the nuanced ways gender may contribute to youth cyberbullying behaviors, and how parental perceptions of gender's role in cyberbullying and technology use may affect those behaviors. Awareness of the socialization processes involved in gendered behaviors of cyberbullying and parental perceptions of gender's role in cyberbullying may help combat negative gender stereotypes and decrease cyberbullying among youth.

1.3 | Rationale for study

Gender differences in cyberbullying are not well delineated in the current literature, especially in comparison to those noted in traditional forms of bullying research (Dooley et al., 2009). Social cognitive theory suggests that

socialization processes may be one reason for gender differences, if they do indeed exist in how parents react to their children's cyberbullying behaviors (Bandura, 2011). These issues are relevant for school psychologists and other school personnel who interface with parents regarding students' bullying and cyberbullying behaviors. Additionally, researching gender differences in parental socialization processes and in cyberbullying may provide school systems and school personnel with patterns of behavior to look for in cyberbullying prevention efforts. Therefore, the present qualitative investigation uses a phenomenological lens to answer the following research questions:

(1) Do parental reports of their children's technology use differ based on child gender identity?
(2) Do parental responses to children's involvement in actual experiences of cyberbullying, as well as hypothetical cyberbullying scenarios, differ based on child gender identity?

We hope results from this study will assist school system stakeholders in supporting parents to effectively monitor and communicate with their children about cyberbullying situations, help parents and children recognize cyberbullying situations as they occur, and allow school personnel to more easily recognize possible gender-related patterns in cyberbullying behaviors as they design prevention and mitigation efforts (Young & Tully, 2019; Young, Tully, & Ramirez, 2017).

2 | METHOD

This study was part of a larger, mixed-method investigation focused on (1) identifying parents' motivations and strategies for addressing online aggression and perceived barriers to adopting prevention strategies, and (2) developing and piloting a survey tool to measure parenting styles, strategies, and barriers related to cyberbullying prevention. Our University Institutional Review Board approved all study procedures, which were funded in part by a grant from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

2.1 | Participants

We recruited parents from five school districts in three Midwestern states. Parent participants were predominately female (77%) and White (91.6%; see Table 1 for additional details about parent and child demographics). Of note, all participants reported their children's sex and gender were consistent (i.e., no parents reported their child identified as transgender or gender nonconforming). Therefore, although the term “sex” was used when appropriate, the focus of the study was on gender.

2.2 | Measures

Participants completed a demographic form containing the following information: age, gender, occupation, ages, and genders of their children, highest level of education completed, race, and ethnicity. Focus group facilitators (author names listed here) first concentrated on broad questions related to parents' approaches to mediating their child's technology use and their perceptions of their child's cyberbullying and other risky online behavior (see Appendix A for the focus group questions).

Next, facilitators presented three cyberbullying scenarios (bystander, [cyber]victim, and [cyber]bully/perpetrator; see Appendix B). Bystander, perpetrator, and victim are the three main roles that have been identified, described, and

TABLE 1 Parent and child demographics

Age	Gender	Occupation	Ages and gender of children	Highest level of education	Race
46	F	VP	7F, 15F, 17F	Master's degree	White
50	M	Insurance underwriter	17F, 19M	4 year college degree	White
53	F	Sales	16F, 18M	4 year college degree	White
48	F	Homemaker	17,[a] 19[a]	4 year college degree	White
49	M	Actuary	16F, 18F, 21M	4 year college degree	White
54	F	Insurance claim consultant	17F, 19M	4 year college degree	White
51	F	Teacher	15F, 19M, 22F	Master's degree	White
43	M	IT Director	15F, 17M, 19M	4 year college degree	White
54	F	Stay at home	15F, 15F, 18M	Some college	White
46	M	Utility worker	16F, 17M	Some college	White
47	F	Speech-language pathologist	11M, 14M, 15F	Master's degree	White
48	F	Underwriting/insurance	15F, 16M	4 year college degree	White
47	F	Photographer	12M, 16F, 16M	Master's degree	White
47	M	Manager	12M, 16M, 16F	Master's degree	White
54	M	Building maintenance worker	16F, 18M	High school/GED	White
[a]	F	Photographer/health coach	12M, 16F, 16M	[a]	White
[a]	F	[a]	17F, 19F	[a]	White
39	F	Retail merchandiser	12M, 15F	Some college	White
41	F	Business manager	11F, 14M	4 year college degree	White
45	M	UPS driver	10F, 16M	4 year college degree	White
37	F	Dental hygienist	10,[a] 16[a]	2 year college degree	White
39	F	Anesthesia Tech/CAN	7F, 14M, 17M	Some college	White
40	F	Senior pension consultant	12F, 15F	2 year college degree	White
54	F	[a]	[a]	4 year college degree	White
40	F	Graduate student	13F	Master's degree	Asian
48	F	Writer	12F, 13F	4 year college degree	White
35	F	Bilingual customer service	12,[a] 14[a]	Some college	Other race, Hispanic/Latino
47	F	Food service/school/pet sitter	12,[a] 15,[a] 18[a]	4 year college degree	White
44	F	Small business owner	[a]	4 year college degree	White
48	F	Pilates instructor	13F, 15F	Master's degree	White
46	F	RN	11F	4 year college degree	White
46	F	Spanish adjunct professor	7M, 12F	Master's degree	White

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Age	Gender	Occupation	Ages and gender of children	Highest level of education	Race
50	F	Project manager—communications	12F, 14F, 22M	4 year college degree	White
49	M	Teacher/coach	12,[a] 14,[a] 21[a]	4 year college degree	White
35	F	Wells Fargo home mortgages	12F, 13F	4 year college degree	White
45	F	Mental health counselor	11F, 13M	Master's degree	White
42	F	School social worker	11F, 16M	Master's degree	White
49	M	IT consultant	10F, 12M, 14M	4 year college degree	White
46	F	IT analyst	11M, 11M, 13F	Some college	White
43	F	Homemaker	12M, 14F	4 year college degree	Asian
48	M	Software engineer	12M, 14F	Professional degree	Asian
45	F	Occupational therapist	8M, 10M, 11M, 12M, 13F	Master's degree	White
45	F	HR	8F, 12M	Master's degree	White
38	F	Teacher	8M, 12M	Master's degree	White
42	M	Teacher	8M, 12M	4 year college degree	White
[a]	F	Finance	11F	[a]	White
[a]	F	Teacher	7M, 13M, 14F	[a]	White
[a]	F	Teacher	5M, 10F, 13M	[a]	White

[a]Missing data.

studied within cyberbullying encounters, building from traditional in-person bullying literature (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996; Sutton & Smith, 1999). It is important to study all three roles because (1) children may inhabit more than one role (Gámez-Guadix, Gini, & Calvete, 2015) and (2) personality traits and other variables, such as empathy or narcissism, may vary among roles (Zych, Baldry, Farrington, & Llorent, 2019). Two authors of this manuscript developed the three scenarios for the present study after reviewing content analyses of cyberbullying news coverage and the research literature describing common cyberbullying situations (e.g., Milosevic, 2015; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008; Young, Subramanian, Miles, Hinnant, & Andsager, 2017). The two authors wrote the scenarios specifically for this study with the goal of creating stories that participants could imagine applying to their own child. The scenarios were intentionally brief and general, without identifying details or conclusions, as to allow parents to imagine their own child in each scenario. For instance, the bully scenario included the suggestion that a child may have been involved in cyberbullying and that a parent learned about the bullying when receiving a call from the school. We included this detail because of research with school administrators, who say parents rarely know about a child's online bullying until schools intervene (Young, Tully, et al., 2017).

In addition, scenarios were general because the goal was not just to elicit parents' responses to those particular situations, but also to prompt additional discussion about cyberbullying roles and parents' personal experiences. Therefore, the scenarios were designed as discussion aids or prompts, which are commonly used in focus group research (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013; Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2013) argue that using open-ended prompts "that allow users to *take over* discussions almost always result in richer and more complex conversations" (p. 70, emphasis in original). In research on sensitive topics like

TABLE 2 Focus group details

Location	Date	~Population, metropolitan area	Rural, urban, suburban designation	Number of participants
City A	3/1/17	27,000	Rural	3
City B	3/7/17	53,000	Urban	9
City B	3/7/17	53,000	Urban	8
City C	3/8/17	2,000	Rural	6
City D	3/9/17	630,000	Suburban	9
City D	3/10/17	630,000	Suburban	6
City E	5/23/17	3,500,000	Suburban	3
City E	5/23/17	3,500,000	Suburban	4

Note: Population data were obtained from U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Rural/urban/suburban designation data were obtained from U.S. Census Bureau (2020) and U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.) (see reference for additional details).

cyberbullying, these kinds of aids are useful in prompting discussions without personally implicating any of the participants or, in this case, their children (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013; Stewart et al., 2007).

2.3 | Procedures

We conducted eight focus groups with 48 parents of middle- and high-school students between March and May 2017 (see Table 2). Parents of children aged 10–17 attended focus groups. Investigators conducted follow-up interviews with a subset of these parents, but data from those interviews are not reported here. We recruited participants via school administrators and staff who distributed study information emails and fliers to parents. The inclusion criterion for this study was parents who had at least one child ages 10–17. We did not require child experience with cyberbullying given the use of cyberbullying scenarios; however, several parents volunteered their child's personal experiences with cyberbullying throughout the focus groups.

Parents were members of the focus groups, which had a mean of six participants and lasted between 45 and 70 min. They took place in public locations such as school libraries and community centers. The focus groups followed a structured discussion guide. Facilitators informed participants of the study goals, participants' rights, and confidentiality before they asked parents to sign an informed consent document. Then, parents were asked focus group questions (Appendix A) related to their child's technology use (use, rules, concerns), perceptions of their cyberbullying and other risky online behavior, and the role of schools in cyberbullying prevention. Facilitators then presented the cyberbullying scenarios (Appendix B) and led subsequent discussion.

Facilitators audio recorded and took notes during all focus groups. Researchers transcribed the focus group discussions and analyzed data using the general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006) and guidelines for phenomenological qualitative research (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007). The goals of the general inductive approach include (1) condensing textual data into a brief summary format; (2) establishing connections between research objectives and data; and (3) developing a framework of the experiences that arise from the raw data (Thomas, 2006). This complements the phenomenological method nicely in that phenomenology also reduces data to significant quotes, combines them into themes, and develops a summary of descriptions to convey the essence of what participants experienced (Creswell et al., 2007). Phenomenological researchers work to set aside their own experiences to perceive participants' statements as clearly as possible (Creswell et al., 2007).

Given that this study of gender differences in parental perceptions of children's technology use and cyberbullying involvement is a relatively new area of inquiry, we chose phenomenology for data analysis as it allows

researchers to obtain a sense of the true lived experiences of the participants (Creswell et al., 2007). The phenomenological approach was specific to data analysis and was not utilized for study development. The general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006) and phenomenological qualitative research (Creswell et al., 2007) methods were utilized for data analysis as the goal was to describe what all participants had in common with the research topics. In other words, we wanted to share the participants' experiences related to gendered patterns in parental socialization and cyberbullying.

Two authors initially analyzed the data; one identified as a White American woman and the other identified as an Indian-American woman. The research team held one a priori hypothesis that there would be perceived gender differences in technology use and cyberbullying experiences among parents. Research team members read transcripts line-by-line and summarized the text into meaningful units, with a focus on gendered themes (Creswell et al., 2007). All themes emerged from the data, consistent with phenomenological methodology. Then, both team members used Microsoft Excel to independently label summarized segments of the transcripts to create initial themes and reach consensus on overarching theme names (Creswell et al., 2007). Then, the two research team members met in person to collapse and assemble themes until there was no redundancy (Creswell et al., 2007). If members disagreed about themes, they discussed biases and the resulting potential impacts on interpretation until they reached agreement (Creswell et al., 2007).

Originally, there were 257 themes; the same two authors discussed all 257 themes and condensed them into 30 themes. They condensed the 257 themes by carefully examining them for overlap and word choice. The two authors then further condensed the 30 themes into 15 themes to reduce redundancy and overlap. For example, they collapsed “daughter avoids real-time social communication in preference of texting” and “daughter constant use of social media” into the overall theme of “girl technology use” and then finally into the gender-neutral theme “technology overuse.” The five final general themes had four subthemes, and the authors created six themes in response to the cyberbullying scenarios (one male and one female theme for each scenario). After agreement was reached on themes and subthemes, authors identified quotes corresponding with the themes.

To enhance the credibility of the data, we conducted consistency checks via independent parallel coding (Thomas, 2006). The first author independently coded the raw data and then compared the outputs generated by the second data analyst; discussion of the categories that were divergent or convergent led to the more robust and final set of 15 themes. Lastly, one author, who identified as a White American woman, independently audited the analyzed data by reviewing each data analysis process and its outcomes, including the summaries of texts, themes and subthemes, and corresponding quotes. The two authors who analyzed the data were not parents, although the auditor was. Therefore, the research team reviewed the auditor's comments for parental bias before implementing her recommendations.

3 | RESULTS

Via the inductive and iterative data analysis process, five themes with four subthemes emerged in response to the first research question regarding parental reports of children technology use. Six themes emerged in response to the second research question regarding real and hypothetical cyberbullying scenarios (one male and one female theme for each scenario: bystander, cybervictim, and cyberbully). We discuss themes related to children's broad technology use first then themes generated from the scenario prompts. We used pseudonyms to protect participants' identities.

3.1 | Themes related to children's technology use

The following themes emerged in response to the first research question: Do parental reports of their children's technology use differ based on child gender identity? As delineated below, some themes were similar across gender, while other themes differed based on gender.

3.2 | Technology overuse

Parents extensively discussed their children, both sons and daughters, being "addicted" or constantly being connected to technology ($n = 33$). They noted this technology overuse occurred in multiple settings, such as at home, in the car, in public, and at school. One parent stated, "My two stepsons, if they go to their house, the minute they get in their car when they're picked up from school, they are attached to the thing [cell phone]. It's nonstop and it is a huge behavioral issue (Ashley, City D)." Another parent said:

> *I have noticed this with our youngest daughter and her friends. They are all at a table together at a restaurant… I'm like, "Ladies, can we just put the phones down and actually speak to one another? I'm like, 'Why did we all go out to dinner together so you can all be on your phones?' That just drives me crazy.*
>
> (Sarah, City D)

Parents discussed this technology overuse impacting their children in negative ways. One parent stated, "I just wish kids communicated more in person. I think the social skills are lacking a lot. I think that is suffering a lot" (Andrea, City B).

3.2.1 | Parental burden/exhaustion of monitoring

Each focus group simultaneously expressed the themes of technology overuse ($n = 33$) and parental monitoring burden throughout each focus group for both genders ($n = 29$). These were the most general and widely expressed themes across all groups. Associated with parental perception of technology overuse was parental burnout of monitoring their children's technology use. One parent explained, "I lost the battle… when he was 13/14… I said, '… Absolutely no social media.' He would sneak an app here and there… You just, at some point, say, 'I guess I'm going to have to give up the battle" (Hannah, City D), referring to the burden and exhaustion associated with monitoring her son's sneaky behavior around social media. Another parent said, "You're not going to be able to monitor it all the time… they are going to stumble across something… you don't want them to see, even though you have all of the parameters… it is still going to happen" (Mike, City D).

3.3 | Lack of awareness about cyberbullying and impact

Parents expressed concern about both genders having a lack of awareness about what constitutes cyberbullying ($n = 16$) and the impact cyberbullying has on others ($n = 14$). Parents said their children indicated they were not aware of how their posts might negatively affect others or might be considered cyberbullying, although the parents felt the posts were clearly hurtful to their children's peers. For example, one parent recounted, "There was an incident with my son freshman year… and he goes, 'What's wrong with that?' I'm like, 'Okay, you don't…' I mean, they have no perception of why that is negative or why that would be bad (Janie, City B)." Another parent said:

> *I actually just asked my daughter not too long ago to take this photo down that she had posted. She just had this girl triangle fight at school and it was a disaster, but she had posted a picture of her friend and said something about so-and-so not liking her anymore. She kind of was putting her down in this post and I don't think she realized how that came across.*
>
> (Rachel, City D)

Parents expressed frustration about their children's lack of awareness around this issue, and oftentimes narrated heated discussions or arguments that ensued following parental requests to delete the posts.

3.4 | Female themes

3.4.1 | Gendered concerns about behavior online

Overall, parents were more concerned about daughters being cybervictims and being preyed upon by online predators than sons ($n = 23$). One parent explained, "I make sure whenever that's [online safety topics] in the news, that I hammer that into my daughter's head more than my son's… He just uses his apps, he's not texting people all the time or anything (Jack, City B)." Another parent said, "I think it's definitely more scary [*sic*] for me… with having a girl compared to what he's doing… I have to approve her posts before she puts them on there (Kayla, City C)." However, parents also contradicted their perceptions of concern about female's presence online by normalizing certain cyberbullying behaviors for females.

Parents normalize female cyberbullying behaviors. Some parents discussed cyberbullying as a phenomenon specific to or more commonly encountered by females ($n = 8$). These parents talked about cyberbullying going hand-in-hand with the female gender in a matter-of-fact way. For example, when asked to define cyberbullying, one parent stated, "At my house it's girl drama, exponential girl drama (Eva, City E)," completely leaving out the male gender in her definition. Another parent said, "I don't know if cyberbullying is a huge thing, at least not in my family. I would assume it would be bigger with girls (Lauren, City C)," to which another parent replied, "That's what I was going to say… I think it is a bigger deal with girls, for sure. Girls are so mean" (Tyler, City C).

Females lack awareness of when they are cybervictims. In addition to parental concern about children's lack of awareness about cyberbullying for both genders, they expressed concern that females were not aware of situations in which they are cybervictims ($n = 7$). One parent hypothesized this was the result of the increased frequency of cyberbullying, saying:

> *The other thing that I'm seeing, too, though is that the more that this is happening, because it's becoming such a widespread problem, is that victims aren't feeling so victimized anymore. I think that is the saddest thing for me this year is that when the one incident did occur where a girl was videotaped without her knowing and then was passed around to everybody, I was so devastated for her and she was not. I mean, she was very casual about it. Like, "Well, yeah, it happens. He didn't know I was being videotaped. His friend did it." It was just very scary to me that she was not more upset than she was. For me to kind of tell her, "You are a victim in this. You have been violated." She was kind of like, "Well, okay." That was even scarier to me, and I don't know if that's because it's happening so much that girls aren't feeling so much of a victim.*
>
> (Alyssa, City D)

Another parent said, "They don't understand…how to put that into words…how it affects them emotionally…In another state it was…peer pressure for pictures of nudie stuff…I don't think that my daughter really understood…that was kind of bullying" (Eva, City E). Parents discussed females' lack of awareness of being victimized by cyberbullies. They did not think females were concerned about the situations, even when parents or others told of the seriousness. Parents communicated females almost thought this cybervictimization was typical.

3.5 | Females use technology for social interaction

Parents considered females' primary motivation in using technology was for social reasons, such as talking with friends or planning social events (n = 18). They talked about their daughters wanting to be constantly connected to their peers and aware of what was being posted on social media. One parent said, "That's what I'm finding with my 10-year-old daughter now. My daughter is on it constantly as a hangout tool. Now that she is 10, it's really getting crazy. I'm not used to that, because the boys really were different" (Kevin, City D). The "hangout" aspect of females' technology use was described in a variety of ways, with parents reporting females stayed connected to peers by checking social media posts, messaging others on social media apps or through texting, using video chat technologies such as Facetime, and creating social media posts.

3.5.1 | Females looking for social validation via technology

When discussing how their daughters used technology primarily as a tool for social interaction, parents also reported their daughters looked to technology for social validation (n = 10). Within this theme, parents discussed social validation via technology almost as a need—if their daughters were using technology and not receiving social validation, they described their daughters as being upset and/or concerned. At times, females specifically sought this social validation out. One parent said, "One of [my daughter's] friends was over, and she was on I don't know which app…But they wanted to up their likes on it… and they were texting other friends, 'Hey, I'm live right now. Like my thing" *(Kayla, City C)*.

Most parents reported this social validation seeking via technology was disruptive for the family or distracting to the child. For example, one parent said:

> *Being a teacher in middle school, especially middle school girls, it is a huge issue. It is almost a bad thing that they have it. …Don't worry about what somebody in Indiana thinks about your picture of your brother playing baseball. It's just ridiculous and it's gotten so deep and they are so entrenched that that's all they worry aboutgave our daughter the language.*
>
> (Mike, City D)

3.6 | Male theme

3.6.1 | Males use technology for specific interests

Parents perceived their sons as using technology for specific interests or learning in addition to social interaction, rather than only for social interaction (n = 9). In describing this general trend, one parent said, "with the boys, they are not as into it as far as… a necessary communication tool for them… they use it for school to do research and that and they just communicate on where they are going to meet (Kevin, City D)," contrasting this with their perception of females using technology for social interaction or as a "hangout tool." Parents reported their sons used technology to play video games and obtain sports information. One parent said, "My daughter likes to use Instagram. My son is all about football games, the NFL and all those kinds of things" (Megan, City D). Another parent said, "The other big one and that is more with my boys is the Xbox" (Christine, City B). As parents shared the ways they perceived their sons using technology, there was noticeably less concern about these trends compared to the way they discussed their daughters using technology for social interaction and validation.

3.6.2 | Cyberbullying scenario themes

The following themes emerged based in response to the second research question: do parental responses to children's involvement in actual experiences of cyberbullying, as well as hypothetical cyberbullying scenarios, differ based on child gender identity? As described below, one male and one female theme were present for each of the three cyberbullying scenarios.

3.6.3 | Bystander scenario

Parents discussed different ways they would encourage their children to respond to a cyberbullying bystander scenario based on gender. While no parent explicitly stated they would choose to direct their son to behave in a different way than their daughter, their child's gender was related to different themes parents presented.

In response to a bystander scenario, parents talked about encouraging their daughters to play supportive roles and reach out to those involved in cyberbullying situations (n = 13). One parent said, "If she knew… this person… whose picture was being distributed, I would have [her] somehow try to contact her or him or whoever and support them and just reach out and say, 'You know, I'm sorry this is happening" (Valerie, City B). Another parent discussed a time when her daughter was a bystander:

> *My husband and I… gave our daughter the language to say… you need to say something almost exactly like this… tell her please don't hurt yourself, I really like you… you need to make her feel really good about herself.*
>
> (Chloe, City E)

In contrast, the majority of parents with sons talked about encouraging their sons to stay completely out of the cyberbullying situation (n = 6). One parent explained:

> *We would just tell him to back out of it. Mind your own business, because he can get his nose in other people's business far too quickly… to praise him for coming to us and sharing it with us. I'm sure that's being handled, and you can still be a great friend to that student but stay out of it.*
>
> (Megan, City D)

3.6.4 | Cybervictim scenario

In response to a cybervictim scenario, parents discussed engaging in protective behaviors, such as removing their child from the situation, confronting the cyberbully, or connecting their child to other friends if the victim was their daughter (n = 18). However, parents were not as quick to name or elaborate upon how they would handle their son being a cybervictim (n = 4). This seemed less plausible to them, as some parents stated they would not be aware if their son was a cybervictim. To illustrate the protective nature of parents in a situation in which their daughter was a cybervictim, one parent said, "My first inclination would be take away her phone so that you would try to remove her from that hateful message. And just say, 'We're going to need to take a break… this is not healthy for you'" (Sophia, City E). Another parent discussed a more direct protective approach, stating, "I would probably message the kid and say, 'Would you please stop messing my daughter? You are no longer allowed to contact her because you're bullying her'" (Melanie, City D). A third parent said:

Yeah. I think, first, it's a lot of gathering where did this start? What was the root of this? How did it grow to this? Talking to them about, again, just because someone says this doesn't mean it's true. Just trying to nurture the child in that process while gatekeeping anymore damage and repairing the damage that occurred and communicating with the guidance counselor, communicating with administration, communicating with her core teachers that she connects with to connect with that, you know, trying to get her community around her again and not be feeling isolated from this one child or this one text or string of whatever. Just to get them back in the circle.

(Megan, City D)

In contrast, parents did not talk about protecting their sons if they were cybervictims. Instead, parents stated their sons would not be upset by the situation or they would not tell anyone about it. One parent didn't feel her son would be affected if targeted by a cyberbully saying, "Well, his personality, and he's a boy, he thought the comments were hilarious. I could see, though, like my daughter being a lot more offended by them" (Maggie, City D). Another parent stated their son would not tell anyone about the situation:

You should probably just talk, let a teacher know or an administrator know, especially in school, school situation, because they are in school eight hours and we only see them in the evening and then we shoot them back up to school. Hopefully, that information can get forwarded to the appropriate people who can take the appropriate actions. As my child, I would hope that [he] would let the right people know, but knowing my child he probably wouldn't, which is unfortunate.

(Mike, City D)

3.6.5 | Cyberbully scenario

Similar to the cybervictim scenario, no parent explicitly stated their discussion points were related to gender, but different themes were apparent based on gender. When considering reactions in response to their child being a cyberbully, parents expressed curiosity about what led their daughters to behave this way and noted how they would encourage their daughters to apologize to the cybervictim(s) ($n = 10$). However, parents did not mention these same topics when discussing their sons in the role of a cyberbully. Fewer parents elaborated on this scenario overall (of their sons being a cyberbully), but those who did stated they would have harsh punishments for their sons if they were cyberbullying others ($n = 6$).

When given a cyberbully scenario, parents were curious about what led their daughters to act as a cyberbully and encouraged them to apologize. One parent said, "If I found out that my daughter was the one bullying, knowing how she is, I would also look at it from okay, what is going on? Why is she doing this bullying… Something is going on there" (Sarah, City D). Another parent said,

Not just taking the device away, but okay, what did you do? Can you write out all of the things that you said? Make her physically write it out and read it out loud, you know, or maybe even go beyond that and say, "Okay, how much damage you did, now you need to repay that person." You need to go get together with them and apologize. Not only that, now you need to get to know them. See what was the issue. Why were they so different to you? Have a lot of people do those mean things because someone is different. A lot of times, different people are pretty cool and it's not a bad thing. It's just different.

(Maggie, City D)

In contrast, parents discussed having punishments for their sons or embarrassing them if they were cyberbullies. One parent said, "I would definitely need to take some deep breaths, and literally strip every privilege he has… just leaving him with his pillow, his blankets, because by law I'm obligated to leave him with a roof and with food" (Natasha, City E).

Another parent said:

> *My son at [an] early age at the other school was going that route. And I literally said you know what? I'm not going to hit you because that will go away. I'm not going to take anything away from you because you have nothing to take away. I'm going to go ahead and embarrass you at school. I'm going to go ahead and show up at school. I will take off work, and with a big poster go ahead and make you stand in the middle of the lunchroom and say I'm sorry to that person… I said you don't want to mess with the dark side. Literally, and this happened, and he said no, mom. And I literally took a picture with his poster and I said this will go viral. And it will go viral at school. Cause I will ask for their you know, their phone numbers, and I'll text them to them… If you do not want this then this needs to stop right now. So that's just me though.*
>
> (Eva, City E)

Throughout parents' responses to the bystander, cybervictim, and cyberbully scenarios, there was a consistent notion of encouraging and socializing females to talk with others. Parents typically thought they would instruct their daughters to reach out to peers involved in cyberbullying situations if there were a bystander and apologize and get to know cybervictims if they were a cyberbully. Yet, at the same time, parents frowned upon their daughters using technology for communication purposes. In contrast, parents noted their sons' independence. They suggested their sons would not tell parents or other adults if they were cybervictims and would stay completely out of cyberbullying scenarios if in a bystander position. If their sons were ever to be cyberbullies, parents indicated they would be punished for their behavior.

4 | DISCUSSION

This is the first qualitative study to obtain an in-depth look at the way parents perceive and socialize their children regarding technology use, cyberbullying, and cyberbullying scenarios. The gendered themes evident in the way parents talked about cyberbullying and technology use can be best understood through the lens of social cognitive theory (Espelage et al., 2012). Specifically, reciprocal causation among behavior, cognition, personal factors, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1978, 2001, 2011) in parental report of children's behaviors were evident. Parents had gendered beliefs about their children's behaviors with technology, awareness (or lack thereof) of cyberbullying, specific motivations for using technology, and environmental influences on how to interact with others through technology. Social cognitive theory posits gender-role learning occurs via peer interactions and authority figure messages (Bandura, 2011); authority figure (parental) messages regarding cyberbullying situations in this study showed a clear differentiation based on gender, which may be internalized by children and enacted in various ways with peers. The socialization processes that occur when parents normalize female cyberbullying behaviors or instruct their daughters to support cybervictims, for example, may be related to their stereotyped gender conceptions. Social cognitive theory posits typical behaviors expected of girls and boys are supported and directly taught by parents whenever appropriate occasions appear (Bandura, 2011). Our results suggest this may be true in relation to technology and cyberbullying. In sum, our findings demonstrated a complex interaction of anticipated gendered behaviors, gender differences, differential socialization processes, and gender stereotypes within the parents interviewed.

Themes gleaned from analyzing focus group conversations were occasionally similar across genders. For example, parents indicated both genders engaged in overuse of technology, which was associated with parental burnout of monitoring children's technology use. Many parents shared they felt they had to give up monitoring

altogether, or at least accept the fact their children would sometimes engage with technology in inappropriate ways without parental knowledge. These findings are supported by previous researchers (Midamba & Moreno, 2017; Symons et al., 2017) who found that although parents perceived the internet and social media sites as integral parts of their children's lives, they also believed children were using technology too much, which could result in emotional distress.

Historically, researchers have documented children's overuse of technology much like addiction. Pathological technology use (PTU) is defined as obsessive and addictive behaviors in response to use of technological media, such as the Internet or gaming, that resemble behaviors characteristic of substance addictions (Gentile, Coyne, & Bricolo, 2013). Similar terms, such as "problem mobile phone use" and "pathological Internet use," and related definitions have been developed (e.g., Bianchi & Phillips, 2005; Davis, 2001). However, a second body of literature has moved from classifying Internet and other technology overuse as "addiction" or as its own psychiatric disorder. Instead, one is to label these behaviors as problematic, but not addictive, unless related to one specific activity (such as gambling or pornography; Yellowlees & Marks, 2007), because of a lack of behavioral and neurobiological similarities between technology overuse and previously documented addictive behaviors (Billieux, Maurage, Lopez-Fernandez, Kuss, & Griffiths, 2015). Researchers have not concluded whether Internet, mobile phone, or other PTU constitutes a true behavioral addiction. Nevertheless, it is clear parents in the present study were concerned about overuse of technology among their children. Parents hinted at the addictive nature of their children's technology use, using words such as "constantly" or "24/7," and described decreases (or even exclusion) of face-to-face communication and engagement in other activities. Technology overuse, its similarities and differences to addiction, and its relation to sex and gender are topics that need further investigation given children's frequent use of technology is related to negative outcomes, such as obesity (Anderson & Whitaker, 2010; Arora et al., 2013; Bickham, Blood, Walls, Shrier, & Rich, 2013; De Jong et al., 2013; Do, Shin, Bautista, & Foo, 2013; Pagani, Fitzpatrick, Barnett, & Dubow, 2010), reduced physical activity (Anderson, Economos, & Must, 2008; Boone, Gordon-Larsen, Adair, & Popkin, 2007; Martin, 2011; Sisson, Broyles, Baker, & Katzmarzyk, 2010; Tandon et al., 2012) and poor physical and mental health (Martin, 2011; Rosen et al., 2014).

A second major theme gleaned from the present findings was that parents perceive technology use to be gendered. For example, parents noted gender differences in gaming, which reflected gender stereotypes and norms specific to Western societies (van Reijmersdal, Jansz, Peters, & van Noort, 2013). Additionally, parents reported females used technology mainly for social interaction and validation, which is supported by previous research documenting that being female is significantly associated with addictive use of social media (Andreassen et al., 2016). Parents talked about their daughters' desire to seek out social validation from technology, yet none addressed how to combat the issue; rather, the focus was on fatigue from monitoring usage. In contrast, parents discussed sons using technology for specific interests, rather than primarily for social interaction. This finding has not been supported by previous research and therefore should be further explored.

Across genders, parents worried their children did not know how to define cyberbullying. Other researchers have found similar themes among a Spanish youth population (Navarro et al., 2015), as well as themes consistent with children not understanding the implications of their words communicated via technology (Symons et al., 2017). Additionally, parents in the current study reported being concerned females often may be unaware of when they are cybervictims. Potentially, this is because females are cybervictims more often than males (Aboujaoude et al., 2015; Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk, & Solomon, 2010), making the experience more common and more difficult for females to recognize.

Also notable was that parents were more concerned about females' than males' behaviors online, although they also normalized female cyberbullying behaviors as "girl drama". The increased concern for females' online behaviors may be warranted, as females are more at risk for becoming targets of cyberbullying (Gini & Espelage, 2014; Hong et al., 2016). The socialization process occurring when parents in the study normalized female cyberbullying behaviors may be related to their stereotyped gender conceptions (e.g., females are "dramatic," or more focused on relationships and relational communication) that affect how they perceive experiences (Bandura, 2011). In addition, social cognitive theory posits that parents teach gender-typical behavior whenever appropriate

situations arise (Bandura, 2011). Therefore, parents may normalize cyberbullying behaviors for females by either consciously or subconsciously teaching what they feel is gender-typical behavior.

Finally, parents approached the bystander, cybervictim, and cyberbully scenarios in part based on gender. Overall, parental responses to the scenarios encouraged daughters to communicate and develop relationships in the bystander or cyberbully scenarios but encouraged sons to distance themselves or stay out of the situations. Here again female stereotypical behaviors (developing relationships) were supported by parents. In contrast, parents discussed giving "harsh punishments" to males who were cyberbullies/perpetrators. For example, parents noted "stripping every privilege" or "embarrassing" their sons at school if they were cyberbullying others, whereas parents discussed asking their daughters about what led them to engage in that behavior and making them apologize. In response to the cybervictim scenario, parents protected their daughters by stating they would take away cell phones or directly intervene. Alternatively, they wondered if they would even know if their sons were cybervictims since they would not be as upset or affected by the situation as their daughters. In future research, it will be important to examine how these gendered messages from parents may be internalized by youth, as risky behaviors such as cyberbullying may result from internalized gender cues (Navarro et al., 2015). Additionally, future youth cyberbullying research should continue to incorporate parents because parents can become helpful advocates for their children when given the right tools (Lester et al., 2017).

4.1 | Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, this investigation was a part of a larger study; seeking gendered themes in technology use and in response to cyberbullying scenarios was not the purpose of the original study. However, this may have provided a more natural and realistic view of parental perceptions on these topics because parents were not asked about gender differences explicitly. Instead, themes developed spontaneously in response to other focus group questions.

Second, the sample used for this study was homogenous in terms of parents' geographic and race backgrounds. These are the perceptions of mainly White, American, middle-class parents, and it is unknown whether parents of different racial/ethnic backgrounds would express similar themes. Future qualitative investigations should be conducted with parents from other racial/ethnic and economic backgrounds. Race may be one identity that is especially salient, as African Americans may be more likely to be cybervictims compared to White Americans (Hong et al., 2016).

Third, the cyberbullying scenarios presented to participants included gender-specific pronouns. For example, the cybervictim scenario stated, "Several kids from her grade have been sending her hateful remarks, like 'Please die' and 'Everyone hates you.' She admits this has been going on for several weeks, and that she hasn't told anyone at school." This may have influenced participants to think first about females instead of males being cybervictims. Future researchers may think about presenting the same scenarios with both male and female pronouns or gender-neutral pronouns to examine if this has an effect on parental responses.

Finally, child gender conformity (or lack thereof) and heteronormative behavior were not measured in any way. Previous research shows children who are gender typified (children who show more interests, attitudes, and actions consistent with gender stereotypes) are less often cybervictims (Navarro et al., 2015). Therefore, gender conformity and heteronormative behavior are important variables to consider when examining patterns among cyberbullying, technology, and gender that were not specifically addressed in this study.

5 | IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

School systems can utilize these findings in a variety of ways. First, it was clear from our results that most parents do not feel confident or knowledgeable about how safely and effectively to monitor their children's technology use. Young and Tully's (2019) research findings support the need for improved communication between parents and

children surrounding cyberbullying topics. School systems may be able to help parents learn these skills by sharing strategies the school employs or by sending home educational materials about cyberbullying. Simply providing parents with information about the different monitoring options (e.g., co-use, active mediation, supervision, restrictive mediation, etc.) and the risks and benefits could be helpful (see Smahelova, Juhová, Cermak, & Smahel, 2017). Another option is for schools to hold an event where parents can hear from an expert in cyberbullying and/or share their own effective monitoring strategies with other parents dealing with similar issues.

Second, educating both parents and children on what cyberbullying is and how to recognize it may benefit families and potentially lessen or mitigate cyberbullying interactions. As parents in our study reported, they were not sure if their children (both genders) knew how to define cyberbullying and that their daughters may be unaware of situations in which they were cybervictims. Instruction on how to identify cyberbullying in one's own communications, as well as in others' communications, is needed for both children and parents (Young, Tully, et al., 2017). Cyberbullying scenarios may be especially helpful in this educational endeavor.

Third, providing parents with information about what to do once their child is an active participant or an observer in a cyberbullying scenario, whether the bully, victim, or bystander, may help families and school systems minimize harm. As our findings suggest, it may be important to watch for gendered ways in which youth react to bystander or cyberbully situations. While our findings are preliminary, they provide school personnel a starting point for predicting how children and parents may interact in these situations and deciding upon prosocial ways to respond.

School psychologists are in a unique position to address the potential negative outcomes of the gender-stereotypical socialization processes outlined in our findings. School psychologists can address cyberbullying in a myriad of ways as outlined by Diamanduros, Downs, and Jenkins (2008), including promoting awareness of cyberbullying, assessing the prevalence and severity of cyberbullying relevant to a school's culture, developing prevention programs, and implementing school-wide interventions and policies. System-level cyberbullying interventions in the schools, rather than interventions at the individual level, may be most effective (Lancaster, 2018). Therefore, in light of the findings from the current study, system-level cyberbullying interventions addressing gender in general and gender socialization processes in particular, as well as obtaining parental involvement in prevention and intervention efforts, may reduce negative consequences for children.

System-level school interventions may include psychologists training administrative and teaching staff about digital citizenship, communication skills, empathy, and coping strategies (Lancaster, 2018). Emphasizing how to regularly incorporate these lessons into curriculum may reduce cyberbullying and/or mitigate the negative experiences children experience from cyberbullying. Additionally, it may be important for psychologists to provide training to administrative and teaching staff on gender differences in technology use and cyberbullying behaviors to enhance prevention efforts and tailor interventions. For example, school psychologists could encourage personnel to examine their own biases and assumptions regarding gender differences in technology use and cyberbullying behavior and be cautious not to state or otherwise encourage these potentially harmful societal biases. For example, normalizing, and therefore encouraging, cyberbullying behavior or “drama” for females, could be extremely harmful for all parties involved.

Because they are associated with a host of adverse mental health outcomes, school psychologists inevitably will be working with children who are affected by cyberbullying and technology overuse. School psychologists have the ability to recognize when gender-stereotypical socialization processes are occurring, provide feedback to parents about this phenomenon, and generate ideas for alternative responses. Additionally, psychologists in general are experts in relationships and human connection. It is clear technology use and cyberbullying situations can greatly impact interpersonal connections within adolescents' family systems and peer groups. Psychologists can help foster social support and provide social skills to adolescents who are exposed to cyberbullying and cybervictim scenarios.

From the findings of the current study, we learned that parents may unknowingly socialize their children to act in-line with gender stereotypes when using technology or engaging in cyberbullying via processes outlined in the

social cognitive theory. This can be detrimental to children who are reinforced to act in gender-typical ways, rather than being encouraged to express their gender in ways they prefer. Through school-wide trainings, school psychologists can help illuminate this process and discuss how to parent in more gender-neutral ways. Finally, as most programs addressing cyberbullying only have been implemented either in school or online (Lancaster, 2018), school psychologists can provide parents with interventions or best practices that can be implemented at home. This collaboration between school and home could potentially address the problem from a more holistic stance and lead to more positive outcomes for children whose world is becoming increasingly digitized.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interests.

ORCID

Mallory Bolenbaugh http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0396-3753
Megan Foley-Nicpon http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8677-3578

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APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Introductions

- First, we'd like to learn a little more about you so can you tell us your first name and how many kids you have, their ages and genders?
- Now, we'd like to hear a bit about how your kids' experiences with media and technology differ from when you were a kid.

(1) Approaches that they take with their children regarding technology and related behaviors or approaches that they have considered

- What technology (devices, apps) do your kids have access to? Do they have social media accounts?
- What rules do you have for technology use? (How do you monitor technology use?)
  - o What other strategies/rules have you heard of or considered? Have you looked for this kind of advice?
  - o What strategies/rules wouldn't work well for you? Why?

- [Use these as prompts as needed: limiting time; using technology in a shared space (not in bedroom); limiting access to certain sites either with rules or with blocking; "friending" kids on social media; having access to username/passwords for social media; tracking/monitoring software; having kids sign a contract]

- What concerns do you have about your kids and technology?
  - Prompt with question about safety, if it doesn't come up in previous question.
    - What about any safety concerns?
    - Have you or child initiated conversations about online safety and civility? Please describe.

(2) Parents' perceptions of cyberbullying and other risky online behavior

Now, we're going to talk about cyberbullying in more detail.

- What do you think of when you hear "cyberbullying"? Definition.
- Why do you think cyberbullying occurs?
- Is this a concern for you/your kids? How big of a problem is it compared to other things kids face?
- We want to talk through some scenarios [Hand out the scenario sheets or read the scenarios to the room]:

Bystander Scenario

- What questions would you have for your child?
- Would you give any advice on how to handle the situation? What would it be?
- Would you advise your child to speak up to the attackers? Why or why not?
- Would you advise your child to comfort the victim in any way? If so, how?
- Would you take any other steps (contact school, other parents, law enforcement, etc.)?

Victim Scenario

- What questions would you have for your child?
- Would you give any advice on how to handle the situation?
- Would you take any other steps (take screen shots of mean comments, contact school, other parents, law enforcement, etc.)?

Bully Scenario

- How would you approach the issue with your child?
- How would you approach the meeting with the principal?
- Would you take any other steps (contact victim's parents, punish your child, etc.)?

Cyberbullying is often lumped in with other risky or aggressive behaviors.

- What have you heard about sexting?
- What are your thoughts or concerns about sexting?

(3) Role of schools in cyberbullying prevention and partnership with parents

- What have you heard from your school about cyberbullying? Or technology use more broadly?
- Do you know your school or district policy? What about the state laws regarding bullying?
- How should schools respond to these issues?
- Have you received any materials from your child's school related to online safety and/or CB (e.g., tip sheets, information sheets)?
  - If, yes, have you used these? If no, would you like to receive these kinds of materials?

- Describe your ideal partnership between schools and parents in preventing cyberbullying or in responding to cyberbullying. [prompt about other online safety and civility concerns]

(4) Media representations of cyberbullying (if time permits)

- What have you seen in the media about cyberbullying or other online behavior?

Wrap up
Is there anything else that you want to add or that we missed?

APPENDIX B: CYBERBULLYING SCENARIOS

The bystander scenario stated:

> *Your child comes to you one night after dinner carrying his smartphone. He has a social media account pulled up. He says that someone he knows from school sent a naked picture to another student. The picture got passed around and posted to social media last night. Since then, other students have been attacking the student who sent the picture, posting cruel comments online. Your child has noticed that the student who sent the picture wasn't at school today.*

The cybervictim scenario stated:

> *Your child has been upset and withdrawn for several days but won't share what's wrong. After several days of no response, she finally breaks down in tears when you ask how her day was. She pulls up a social media account on her phone. Several kids from her grade have been sending her hateful remarks, like "Please die" and "Everyone hates you." She admits this has been going on for several weeks, and that she hasn't told anyone at school.*

The cyberbully scenario stated:

> *You get a phone call from the principal at your child's school. She says that she's received reports that your child and some friends have been attacking another student online. The victim reports that your child has been writing cruel things on social media sites for over a month. The principal wants you to come for a meeting to discuss the issue.*