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**EFFECTS OF CYBERBULLYING ON STUDENT SUCCESS**

A Dissertation

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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By

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## **ABSTRACT**

The level of diversity among colleges and universities is at its greatest level. This level of diversity has proven to be beneficial in several key areas for all students. With this increase in diversity, there have been other consequences as well. One form of bullying, cyberbullying, has been on the rise due to greater use of technology, increase of social media platforms, accessibility of smartphones and a shift from in-person instruction to virtual instruction. Although copious amounts of research can be conducted on cyberbullying on adolescents, there is a deficiency of information on whether cyberbullying exists within higher education as well as the impact it may have on students.

This was a mixed methods study which included a survey of the undergraduate population within a university on the east coast of the United States. There were a total of 148 survey respondents and four interviews conducted.

The findings indicate that that cyberbullying does, in fact, exist within colleges and universities at the undergraduate level. In addition, different groups of people experience cyberbullying at different levels and frequencies. Also, it has been noted that cyberbullying impacts these different groups in a variety of different ways. Some groups were not impacted at all, while others were impacted a great deal.

The implications from this study demonstrate that there is the need for improvement in a couple of key areas pertaining to policy and practice. Those areas are the training for faculty staff and administration, support services and additional programming available for students.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Thomas Sheridan. My father passed away in 2017 after a lengthy battle with heart disease. Only receiving a modest education, my dad understood the true value of education for his six sons. As a child, I easily recall how hard he worked to ensure my five brothers and I received the best education available to us. Although he may have not always understood what I was doing in life, he never hesitated on offering his full support and words of encouragement.

I am a first-generation college student. I am the only child in my immediate family to earn an undergraduate degree. I was the only one to complete a graduate degree. And now, I proudly say, I have accomplished another feat. I am Dr. Sheridan. I know my dad would be proud.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Special thanks to the remaining members of my dissertation committee, Dr. James Earl Davis, Dr. Jean A. Boyer and Dr. Benjamin Altschuler. Each of you provided additional insight that helped develop this topic into further research. Thank you for being part of my academic journey.

Thank you to my mom for providing the emotional support, when necessary, but, often, just allowing me to bend her ear. Whether it was over complaining about how tough Dr. Stull was or feigning to have an interest in or comprehension of multiple regressions, crosstabs and frequencies, your support has been appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Jim Werner. You graciously put up with me working on this degree for the past four years. When my patience wore thin, you took the brunt of it. When class schedules got in the way, you took on more responsibilities at home. You made sure I spent the necessary time on my studies and assessments, even when I wanted to watch Netflix just a little bit longer. I am so thankful that you have been there for me.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

More than ever, colleges and universities are racially and ethnically diverse. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there has been a consistent increase of non-White students attending post-secondary institutions over the past four decades. From 1976-2017, the percentage of Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander college students has been increasing (Snyder et al., 2019). During that time, the percentage of Latinx students rose from 4 percent to 19 percent and the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander students rose from 2 percent to 7 percent. The percentage of Black students increased from 10 percent in 1976 to 14 percent in 2017. During the same period, the percentage of White students fell from 84 percent to 56 percent in post-secondary institutions (Snyder et al., 2019).

This level of diversity has proven to be beneficial in a number of key areas for all students. A more diverse campus environment enriches the educational experience. This provides students with the opportunity to encounter various cultural backgrounds, negate stereotypes, collaborate with different-minded people and prepares students for a more pluralistic society as they enter the workforce. This diversity in the classroom also contributes to the overall personal growth of the students (Rizvi et al., 2019).

In addition to these advantages of greater diversity, there are several challenges as well. Marginalized groups experience being alienated, excluded or unwelcome throughout campuses and in the classroom (Rizvi et al., 2019). These groups often include women, students of color, those that identify as LGBTQ+, physically/mentally challenged students, non-traditional students and others (Rizvi et al., 2019). An overall

lack of acceptance can have a negative impact on a student's academic success. Areas, such as a sense of belonging, campus involvement, academic work, student retention and completion have been known to suffer when a student does not feel a connection with the institution (Museus et al., 2017).

With this increase in diversity, there have been other consequences as well. Bullying has always been found in the hallways of high schools, schoolyards of middle schools, the playground, school busses and even in the classroom. Although bullying predominantly occurs among adolescents, it can occur at any age. Bullying can be demonstrated in several forms. Physical bullying is the most common form. It occurs when physical actions are used to overpower another individual. Physical bullying can manifest by means of hitting, slapping, pushing, pinching, tripping, spitting or destroying possessions. Verbal bullying is the act of saying hurtful or mean things and can be demonstrated through teasing, threatening, name calling, and even the use of inappropriate sexual comments. Prejudicial bullying involves the use of stereotypes and prejudices that people have toward others. Very often this type of victimization occurs because of one's race, religion or sexual orientation (Chatters & Zalaquett, 2018). With advancements in technology and accessibility of the Internet and mobile devices, as well as the prominent use of social media, cyberbullying is another widespread form of bullying. Some of the common ways individuals are cyberbullied include online harassment, electronic impersonation, digitally sharing inappropriate photos, creating fake profiles/websites to "troll" others and even shaming individuals with the online use of videos. Cyberbullying has become known as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (Hinduja &

Patchin, 2009, p. 3). This form of bullying occurs at all levels of schooling and even within colleges and universities (Walker, 2014).

Institutions of higher education are not exempt from the problem of bullying. Because of the greater use of technology and accessibility among students, the level of cyberbullying has continually increased (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010). Over the past year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, there has been an extensive shift from traditional classroom instruction to a virtual platform. This shift has made the number of cyberbullying incidents increase dramatically because of stay-at-home orders and online learning across the United States (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020).

Because of this issue, administrators within four-year institutions need to recognize the situation and address the concerns. Large public institutions of higher education have a responsibility to ensure the physical and mental safety of its students. Knowing that cyberbullying exists within the campus environment and because they are aware of the negative impacts of cyberbullying, university administrators have an obligation to impose policies, programs and procedures to address the concerns (Schafer et al., 2016). For example, counselors can be put into place to create outreach programs to educate students on cyberbullying, its harmful consequences and extend assistance to at-risk students who might not seek help otherwise.

Also, instructors – especially teaching in an online learning environment – can take a more active role in the prevention of cyberbullying among college students. College administrators can require instructors to be trained in recognizing various methods of cyberbullying and provide assistance to those students that are being victimized. A procedure for reporting cyberbullying can be implemented to ensure those

being bullied have an outlet to have their concerns addressed. If administrators are able to produce these increased areas of support, this may lead to an overall reduction in cyberbullying activity (Schafer et al., 2016).

Post-secondary education institutions are more diverse than ever. Universities with a diverse student population experience both positive and negative consequences. One such effect is the presence of bullying. Bullying, including cyberbullying, has been rooted in Social Dominance and Labeling Theoretical Frameworks. Cyberbullying has results in a wide array of problems for victimized students. Due to the negative impacts of cyberbullying, college administrators need to be aware of the presence of cyberbullying and implement policies to prevent it as well as address the overall problems associated with it (Schafter, et al., 2016).

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

There are three theoretical frameworks that apply to this area of research: Social Dominance, Labeling, and Symbolic Interactionism. The first two theories apply to the social expectations and norms, the latter applies to the individual navigating the social world. Cyberbullying applies within both the social and individual points of view.

The foundation leading this problem is rooted in Social Dominance Theory. This theory is applied to help understand the significance that bullying can play into the psyche of those being victimized and those that carry out the bullying. Social Dominance Theory bullies are those that take advantage of creating social hierarchies to maintain their augmented power or authority over others (Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003). Very often, the three main classifications that feed into Social Dominance Theory

are age, sex and other defining qualities like race, religion or national origin (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). A college campus that contains a more diverse student population is going to have a greater abundance of those three classifications that will bolster into the Social Dominance Theory.

Discrimination is a direct motive for these social hierarchies being created. Dominance Theory attempts to explain the influence social hierarchies have on society. Human nature is to adhere to these hierarchies. Often, these hierarchies lead to various levels of power, prestige and privilege. The more powerful groups maintain increased levels of authority, wealth and social status. Groups on the lower end of the hierarchy encounter negative social value resulting in lower levels of power and social status (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Human nature has a tendency to utilize events and conflicts to support these forms of oppression. Cyberbullying is a manifestation that occurs to feed into separation of society.

As part of Symbolic Interaction theory, labeling theory can be applied to understand what some of these students are experiencing. Labeling theory suggests that when students experience micro-level interactions – such as bullying and other forms of victimization – it eventually plays into their sense of worth...or worthlessness. Labeling theory is known as the perspective that labeling someone as a "deviant" leads an individual to engage in deviant or abnormal behavior (Becker, 1963). Originating in the 1960s, labeling theory explains why some people's behavior clashes with society may deem as “normal” in various settings. Once someone becomes labeled, they are likely to be cut off from traditional society, more likely to become ingrained in deviant social groups, at risk for developing a deviant identity, and at increased risk of engaging in acts

of deviance with greater intensity and frequency (Becker, 1963). These feelings of lower self-worth can also contribute to withdrawal symptoms such as absenteeism, lower grades or dropping out of school altogether.

A weakness connected to the labeling theory has to do with the withdrawal symptoms that those being labeled may experience. People who are labeled do not feel “good enough” to be around those that determined the societal standards. They have a tendency to anticipate and even perceive that they will be negatively treated by members of society (Link, et al., 1989). Some additional weaknesses include the idea that once a person is labeled, then it is only inevitable that they will become a “deviant”. Finally, another problem with the labeling theory is that it only focuses on placing the label; instead of attempting to find out what causes the initial deviant behavior initially (Broadhead, 1974).

An additional area where labeling occurs is within those with developmental disabilities – whether they are physical and/or mental. While some limitations may exist, those with the disabilities are labeled by how they look or their limited abilities, instead of what they can actually do. This causes a continuous stigma that stays with them for a good portion of their life (Green, 2003). Unfortunately, this stigma caused by labeling applies, not only to those with disabilities, but there is a tendency to carry them on to the families caring for them as well (Green, 2003).

Perhaps, those people who are applying these labels to others believe they are doing a good thing or a service to the community. In their minds, maybe labeling people helps put people into categories and helps them navigate the world a bit better.

Researchers do not quite see it that way. As indicated earlier, the negative consequences from the application of the labeling theory outweigh the benefits (Rist, 1977).

From several different areas of research reviewed, the labeling theory approach has become a way for several people within society to hide behind their racism, homophobia, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination (Sen, 2006). Only what those people value as “normal” then becomes acceptable. Because of these various forms of profiling, discrimination and ignorance, there have also been multiple violent attacks on these marginalized people (Sen, 2006). From here, we are moving away from the idea of using labelling to identify those that might be deviant and moving toward a society where we are criminalizing and harming others simply because they are different.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As previously stated, bullying is an ongoing concern among today’s youth. Bullying has existed for a number of years in the hallways of high schools, schoolyards of middle schools, the playground, school busses and even in the classroom. Although bullying predominantly occurs among adolescents, it can occur at any age. Bullying can be demonstrated in several forms. Physical bullying is the most common form. It occurs when physical actions are used to overpower another individual. Physical bullying can manifest by means of hitting, slapping, pushing, pinching, tripping, spitting or destroying possessions. Verbal bullying is the act of saying hurtful or mean things and can be demonstrated through teasing, threatening, name calling, and even the use of inappropriate sexual comments. Prejudicial bullying involves the use of stereotypes and prejudices that people have toward others. Very often this type of victimization occurs because of one’s race, religion or sexual orientation. With advancements in technology



and accessibility of the Internet and mobile devices, as well as the prominent use of social media, cyberbullying is another widespread form of bullying. Some of the common ways individuals are cyberbullied include online harassment, electronic impersonation, digitally sharing inappropriate photos, creating fake profiles/websites to “troll” others and even shaming individuals with the online use of videos. Cyberbullying has become known as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p. 3). This form of bullying occurs at all levels of schooling and even within colleges and universities (Walker, 2014).

The use of social media has made it much easier for those to engage in cyberbullying. With over 300 million and 2.7 billion users each month, respectively, Twitter and Facebook are an easy way for bullies to victimize others (Lin, 2020; Clement, 2020). Through the use of mobile applications or apps, these social media platforms are an easy way for bullies to target their prey. The ability to maintain a level of anonymity allows people to say and do just about whatever they want without fear of repercussion. In addition, with just about all of Americans now in possession of a mobile device with smartphone capabilities, instant messaging via texting has become another avenue for bullies to target others.

Due to the aforementioned matters of concern and the lack of existing information, the need for research which addresses the issue of cyberbullying and the impact on undergraduate student success is paramount. Given the level of diversity within colleges and universities as well as the increase in the use of social media and other forms of technology, it is essential to examine if students are cyberbullied and how it impacts them. The information obtained from surveys and interviews provided

additional insight into understanding the perspective of those affected in order to develop a short- and long-term goals to better support them moving forward.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

Bullying continues to be a widespread problem in the United States among all age groups. Seelman and Walker (2018) identify bullying as “unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves real or perceived power imbalance” (p. 2302). This type of behavior is often repeated and can exhibit itself in a number of different forms. From physical, verbal and social actions to those being conducted electronically.

In the past, bullying was widely acknowledged, especially with adolescent boys, as a traditional part of growing up. Initially accepted as an adage “boys will be boys” (Jones, 1994, p. 3), the far-reaching negative impacts of bullying have been identified and questioned (Walker, 2014). Research has shown that bullying has been known to cause its victims serious concerns. Victimized students experienced withdrawal symptoms including lower grade point averages, a decline in commitment to their studies, desire to attend school late or not at all. These occurrences have also been partly responsible for students leaving school altogether (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Goodboy et al., 2016). Goodboy et al. (2016) focused on the lasting effects of being a cyberbully victim as students transitioned from high school to college when they collected survey data on the effects of being bullied to their first-semester college adjustment, a difficult time for most students. They found lasting effects to attend and do well in college.

When looking at things from a social perspective, a number of negative impacts occur due to the victimization brought on by instances of bullying. When an individual is bullied, it significantly increases the risk of binge drinking and overall alcohol

consumption (Rospenda et al., 2013). In addition, when bullying is associated with school aged children, these students are known to experience negative outcomes such as low levels of self-esteem, anxiety issues and long-term bouts of depression (Olweus, 1993). Research has shown students exposed to bullying experience withdrawal symptoms, absenteeism, poorer overall health and are more susceptible to suicide. These behaviors often carry with the bullied student throughout adulthood (Seelman & Walker, 2018). In addition, it has been found that children who experience frequent bouts of bullying are known to suffer from depression and higher levels of anxiety (Rigby, 2000).

Because of the greater use of technology and accessibility among students, the level of cyberbullying has increased (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010). More than ever, young adults are increasing the amount of time spent on the Internet. With the prominent use of social media platforms, we are now seeing the transition from physical bullying to a more emotionally damaging experience that is conducted online as Odora and Matori (2015) found in their study of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school students in a South African school. Interestingly, these researchers found gender differences with girls more apt to be the recipients and boys more apt to be the bullies. Walker (2014) in her survey study of almost 700 college students, updated the definition of cyberbullying to:

Cyberbullying is the use of web-based communication media or hand-held technologies by an individual or group to deliver slanderous, harassing, demeaning, obscene, racist or other offensive messages, images, or video either directly or indirectly that result in emotional harm to the target of the communication. (p. 65).

While there are various similarities between the traditional form of physical bullying and cyberbullying, there are several differences as well. In both cases, there is typically the aggressor and the victim. However, a very distinct difference with

cyberbullying is that the instigator can, and very often does, remain anonymous. With cyberbullying, those conducting the bullying can hide behind the creation of fake profiles and personas or text messaging (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). By this level of anonymity, cyberbullying adds another layer of complexity for the victims. They begin to experience levels of angst in trying to determine the identity of the bully. Very often, they begin to question the relationship of their friends trying to figure out whether someone close to them could be the culprit (Bauman, 2011). Because of the affordability of mobile devices, widespread connectivity and popularity of social media platforms, cyberbullying continues to be a growing problem (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

According to their study of 2,118 incoming freshman at eight higher education institutions, Rospenda et al. (2013) found this to be an ongoing problem existing within colleges and universities. More and more higher education institutions are embracing the virtual experience. With greater mobile use, the level of cyberbullying is on the rise as well (Lindsay & Krysik, 2012). Using a Bayesian time-varying paradigm of monitoring cyberbullying related public tweets, Karmaker and Das (2020) identified online attacks have increased, due to the effects of COVID-19, with most education institutions moving to a virtual platform.

This aggressive action toward others is not limited to adolescents. Although much of the research shows that bullying occurs within schoolyards, classrooms and school buses; there is evidence that it extends elsewhere. In fact, data conclude it extends through postsecondary education and even into adulthood. Numerous studies have reported the existence of various forms of bullying in colleges and universities (Lund & Ross, 2016; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010) based on 14 studies that reported the

existence. However, relatively little is known about the consequences college students endure as a result of bullying – especially cyberbullying.

### **Research Objective**

What yet remains to be studied is the impact of cyberbullying among college students. There is a considerable focus on adolescents, primarily in middle and high school. By expanding into college age students and exploring deeper into the effects of being bullied, additional conclusions on the negative consequences can be identified. The hypothesis is that being bullied, regardless of age, will have negative impacts on those students being victimized. Since cyberbullying is a form of bullying, it is assumed that those impacts will be present as well. Some of the negative outcomes being investigated are academic outcomes (i.e. GPA, missing classes, length of completion and retention rates) as well as social outcomes (i.e. withdrawal, isolation, conduct issues, health, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide and other forms of violence).

It is vital for college and university administrators to recognize the situation of cyberbullying and address the concerns associated with the problem. Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to ensure the physical and mental safety of its students. Knowing that cyberbullying exists within the campus environment and because they are aware of the negative impacts of cyberbullying, university administrators have an obligation to impose policies, programs and procedures to address the concerns.

Cyberbullying not only impacts adolescents and young children but is also affecting college students. With the prevalence of mobile devices, increase in smartphone capabilities, development of additional and lack of oversight with social

media platforms as well as college and universities utilizing online learning, more and more opportunities for victimization through technology is occurring. Cyberbullied students are suffering in various ways that impede on their success within higher education. Administrators recognizing and addressing cyberbullying can utilize this information to develop a better institution.

### **Research Approach**

A mixed methods research approach was used consisting of first a survey to be completed followed up with interviews with selected individuals. The survey responses provided breadth of information and the interviews the depth proposed for this study. In particular, this study focused on exploring the perceptions of the participants in order to understand the essence of the phenomenon of cyberbullying and the consequences on students' experience at a four-year institution. A visual representation of the conceptual project model is provided below under Figure 1.

### **Research Question/Hypothesis**

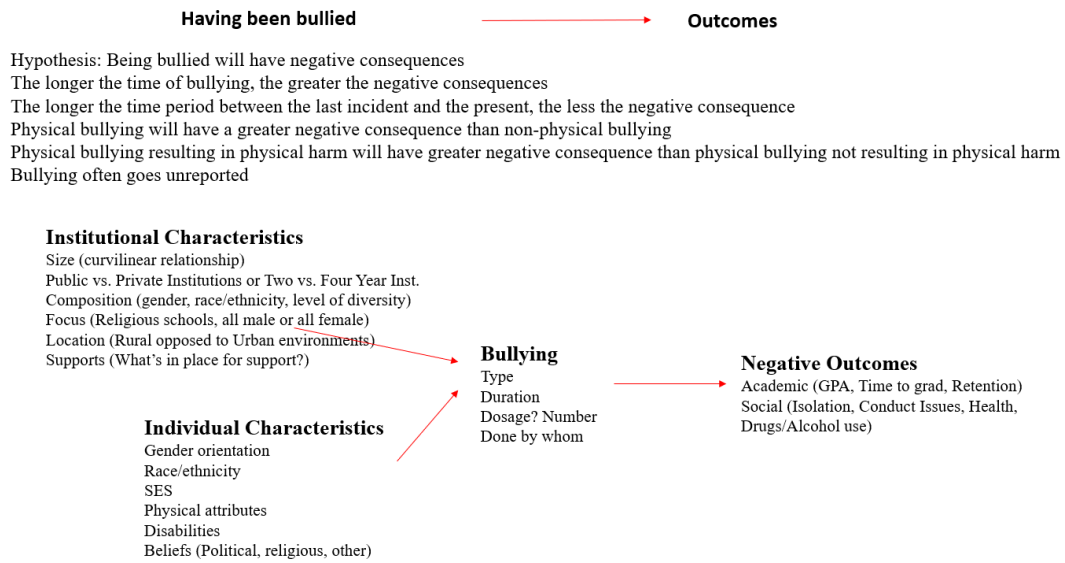
The current study will examine the following research questions:

1. While relatively well-researched in adolescents, does cyberbullying exist in post-secondary education institutions. If so, what are the similarities/differences that exist between the two?
2. What are the short- and long-term effects of cyberbullying on student success?
3. What effects, if any, are there by subgroups such as by gender or race/ethnicity?

As previously reviewed, both theory and research propose that bullying victimization results in negative consequences. Therefore, it was hypothesized that being a victim of cyberbullying had negative consequences on a student's success.

**Figure 1.0**

***Conceptual Project Model***





## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This study utilized a mixed methods research approach. The use of mixed methods involves collecting, analyzing and incorporating quantitative and qualitative data into a study (Creswell et al., 2003). Mixed methods allowed for a better understanding of a topic than looking at just the qualitative or quantitative data alone.

This study focused on the experiences of undergraduate students within a four-year institution regarding cyberbullying. Several key elements were examined. The research aided in determining if cyberbullying exists in post-secondary education institutions. Also, if present, what short- and long-term effects of cyberbullying impacted student success.

The quantitative research approach gave the opportunity to systematically measure students' experiences as they encountered cyberbullying. This aided in determining validity, frequency and reliability of cyberbullying occurrences. The qualitative approach provided additional insight by speaking with the students, giving them a voice where they discussed specific occurrences and the impact cyberbullying has had on them. A visual representation of the conceptual project model is provided in Appendix A.

#### **Sample**

The study was conducted at large, public, urban university on the East Coast of the United States within the School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management. The

study included all undergraduate students actively enrolled in the Spring 2021 academic semester. The students in the study were pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Sport & Recreation Management or a Bachelor of Science in Tourism & Hospitality Management. At the time of the study, the total number registered for the Spring 2021 semester was 719 students.

### **Data Collection**

In order to obtain the participation of the cyberbullied students, formal permission was pursued through the university's Institutional Review Board for approval. It was necessary to construct, submit and revise materials to be submitted for IRB consideration and approval. Materials to the IRB included documentation of procedures, recruitment emails and consent forms. The timeline of material development and implementation were also made available. Participants were recruited through an email that explained the study and contained a link to the survey. The email described the research study and asked whether they would be interested in participating in the study through completion of the survey and follow up interviews. Each individual who agreed to participate in the study was contacted and a time convenient to them was established. Interviews were conducted via Zoom.

Two data collection methods were used: an email survey and an interview. The initial data collection instrument was based on a previous survey developed and used by Walker (2014). Among the data collected were the students' demographics and educational backgrounds as well as to determine previous experiences with cyberbullying (Appendix A). It highlighted the characteristics underlying the victimized students' encounters, actions, and experiences. The data from the survey contributed context and

supplemented the data collected from interviews. The survey was sent via email to registered undergraduate students whom met the criteria. Students were asked within the survey to indicate whether they were interested in being interviewed for the study. The initial email was sent out in mid-April 2021. A follow-up email was sent approximately one week later. Two additional emails were sent: mid-May and early-June.

The second method of data collection was semi-structured interviews of survey participants who indicated an interest in an interview. In addition to interviews, data were collected from other sources such as field notes taken during the interviews or materials brought by the participants. The interviews were held via Zoom based on the respondent preferences. The researcher initiated the interviews with the participants by using open-ended questions to let participants reference the subject matter they viewed as relevant. Then the researcher asked the participants to reflect on their experiences being bullied. All of the interviews were held in a conversational style with the participants being tape-recorded. The length of the interviews varied. During the interviews, the researcher took notes on the behavior of and interaction with the participants. The process for interviews is detailed in the interview protocol. See Appendix B for additional information on the interview instrument.

### **Interview Protocol**

The last question on the survey asked students if they were willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview and to provide their email address. This interview protocol was prepared and reviewed by the researcher prior to each interview. The interview began with the interviewer introducing themselves and discussing the purpose of this study on cyberbullying students and the impacts of cyberbullying. The participants were assured

the information from the interview was to remain confidential and anonymous. Following this, the interviewer inquired whether the interviewee had any questions. Then the interviewer initiated with the question: “Have you been cyberbullied while attending East Coast University?” The goal of the opening question was to start informally and prompt the participant to begin thinking about their experiences.

The content questions primarily centered upon facets of the student’s encounters with cyberbullying in order to learn more about the participants’ understanding, interactions, and experiences with it. Interview content questions included: What has been your experience as a student at East Coast University, have you been cyberbullied while here, and what has that done to interfere with your success as a student?

The content questions order and type varied based upon the direction of the interviewee’s responses. Based upon the interviewee responses, they were asked to either clarify what they said or to elaborate upon it and if needed to . about details, explanations, and information mentioned. For instance, when participants were asked questions such as: could you tell me more, what happened next, could you give an example, could you tell me a story about this, or can you explain that? The conclusion of the interview involved the interviewer thanking the interviewee for their time and information. Also, the interviewer inquired as to whether they would be interested in a follow up interview. The interviewer closed the interview with another reminder that the information will remain confidential and asked if there any remaining questions.

The interview data and resulting qualitative analysis were used in this study were used to inform and provide further context for the quantitative findings. The grounded theory method was used for qualitative analysis. Grounded theory focuses on creating a

theory based upon information collected in the field. It involves examining processes, interactions, or actions meaning for a group of individuals (Creswell, 2013). In this study, this involved assessing the incidence of and effects of being cyberbullied. The grounded theory approach for analysis allowed for a more thorough exploration of the backgrounds and experiences of these students during their four- year college experience in order to gain deeper understanding of how they conceptualize their satisfaction as well as their success. Data analysis through this method included a review cycle of the transcriptions and notes from the semi-structured interviews. Initial data review involved open coding in order to create categories and organize the highlighted clusters of data. Secondary review of data then included using axial coding to develop connections between the code categories. Based upon the categories and connections found, themes were identified.. The survey and interview questions are detailed in the appendix.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

#### **Introduction**

The focus of this study was to determine if cyberbullying existed at the university undergraduate level and, if so, what effects it may have had on the overall success of students. This was achieved by examining a number of students' characteristics in conjunction with their experiences with cyberbullying and how it impacted them. As previously noted in Chapter 3, the project model used for this research study, found in the appendix, provides a framework for the work completed.

Several independent variables were examined as part of the study. Among them were students' race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and current grade point average (GPA). Also, they included size of hometown, when the student started at the university, age and socioeconomic status. The dependent variables used in the study were related to the level the student experienced cyberbullying and how it influenced them. Those dependent variables used to identify the existence of cyberbullying included how often a student received unwanted tokens of affection, unwanted explicit messages, unwanted pornographic messages, been deceived by social media, had personal information taken via social media, received hurtful messages, been harassed or made fun of, been blocked by others, had private or personal photos or videos published, had identity used by others. The dependent variables determining how a student was affected included being saddened, hurt, angered, scared, or had no effect at all. A Likert scale was used for each effect. Table 4.0 showcases the relationship between the research questions, data sources and analyses for both the quantitative and qualitative data.

**Table 4.0**

*Research Questions, Data sources and Analyses*

Research Questions	Hypotheses	Data Sources	Analyses	
While relatively well-researched in adolescents, does cyberbullying exist in post-secondary education institutions. If so, what are the similarities/differences that exist between the two?	Cyberbullying exists well beyond adolescents, including within post-secondary education institutions.	Survey	Quantitative	
		Interview	Qualitative	Emphasis on interviews to support findings of quantitative analysis of collected data.
What are the short- and long-term effects of cyberbullying on student success?	Students encountering cyberbullying experience negative outcomes including impacts on GPA and mental health.	Survey	Quantitative	
		Interview	Qualitative	Emphasis on interviews to support findings of quantitative analysis of collected data.
What effects, if any, are there by subgroups such as by gender or race/ethnicity?	Underrepresented students experience cyberbullying at increased levels.	Survey	Quantitative	
		Interview	Qualitative	Emphasis on interviews to support findings of quantitative analysis of collected data.

## Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Working with the dean of the School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management at Temple University, the survey was sent to 719 undergraduate students registered for the Spring 2021 semester. A total of 148 survey responses were received, representing a 20.5% response rate. Of the responses, most were female (86, 58.1%) rather than male (62, 41.9%). Most respondents identified as living in a town with a population of 15,000-30,000 people (55, 37.2%), followed by a large central metro area with a population greater than a million (40, 27.0%). The third largest response rate was for a principal city of a population of 200,000 to 1 million (30, 20.3%). When it came to race/ethnicity, an overwhelming number of respondents were white (110, 74.3%) followed by Asian (17, 11.5%), Hispanic/Latinx (10, 6.8%), African American (9, 6.1%), and other (2, 1.4%). Because of the low numbers of non-White respondents, all other categories were collapsed into a single category – minority. Minorities represented 38 respondents (25.7%).

Regarding sexual orientation, 129 or 87.2% of the respondents identified as heterosexual followed by bisexual (8, 5.4%), gay (5, 3.4%), lesbian (5, 3.4%), or other (1, 0.7%). Because of the low number of non-heterosexual respondents, the remaining categories were collapsed into a single category – queer. From the survey, queer students represented 19 respondents (12.8%).

When asked what year they were born, 37 (25.0%) respondents stated 1999, followed by 2000 with 28 (18.9%) respondents, 2001 with 26 (17.6%) respondents, 1998 with 23 (15.5%) respondents and 2002 with 13 (8.8%) respondents. The remaining 19



(12.8%) respondents varied from 1984 to 1997. This information falls in line with the idea that the currently enrolled students are between the ages of 19 and 23.

From the information obtained, most respondents were academically strong individuals. For example, (129, 87.2%) reported having a grade point average (GPA) above 3.00. Of those, 86 (58.1%) respondents report having a GPA 3.50-4.00. Only one student reported having below a 2.00 GPA.

### **Characteristics of Interview Respondents**

One of the final questions of the survey asked respondents if they were willing to speak further about their experiences with cyberbullying via Zoom. The function of the interviews was to give additional depth than the surveys alone. From the 148 respondents, four follow-up interviews were secured and conducted. Below are the descriptions of those that participating in the hour-long interviews.

- Respondent A was a 21-year-old Caucasian female. With a 3.77 grade point average, she is anticipated to graduate with an undergraduate degree in tourism and hospitality management in Spring 2022. She identified as heterosexual.
- Respondent B was a 22-year-old Caucasian female. She graduated with an undergraduate degree in tourism and hospitality management in December 2021 with a 3.68 grade point average. She identified as a lesbian.
- Respondent C is a 23-year-old Asian American. At the time of the interview, she held a 3.13 grade point average. She is expected to complete her undergraduate degree in Spring 2022. She identified as a heterosexual.

Respondent D was a 21-year-old Indian American majoring in tourism and hospitality management with a current grade point average of 3.79. His anticipated undergraduate completion date is Spring 2023. He identified as heterosexual.

**Research Question #1: While Relatively Well-Researched Among Adolescents, Does Cyberbullying Exist In Post-Secondary Education Institutions? If So, What Are The Similarities/Differences That Exist Between The Two?**

Evidence of the existence of cyberbullying was captured using a quantitative survey with various items. All measures were conducted using a Likert scale. Each individual item was considered. Those items with statistical significance have been listed below with the remainder included in the appendix. A discussion of the summed scale to provide the level individuals may have experienced relative to cyberbullying is included.

Statistical analysis was used to determine the relationship between student respondents and the frequency of events. Listed are the frequency distributions for students who received unwanted tokens of affection, unwanted explicit messages, unwanted pornographic messages, been deceived by social media, had personal information taken via social media, received hurtful messages, been harassed or made fun of, been blocked by others, had private or personal photos or videos published, had identity used by others. Four response choices were presented for each action: never, once, 5 to 7 times, more than 7 times.

Respondents were asked how often they have received unwanted tokens of affection by others. The most selected response was never (45.9%, 68 respondents). The

second most selected response was once (41.2%, 61 respondents). See Table 4.1 for further details.

**Table 4.1**

***Received Unwanted Tokens of Affection***

	Frequency	Percent
Never	68	45.9
Once	61	41.2
5 to 7 times	7	4.7
More than 7 times	12	8.1
Total	148	100

Respondents were asked how often they have received unwanted messages by others online. The most selected response was never (51.4%, 76 respondents). The second most selected response was once (35.1%, 52 respondents). See Table 4.2 for further details. When speaking with Respondent A, she indicated “As a female, guys are always DM’ing you things. And you’re like ‘what’? I think it’s their way of starting a conversation, even if it’s pretty crude sometimes.”

**Table 4.2**

***Received Unwanted Messages***

	Frequency	Percent
Never	76	51.4
Once	52	35.1
5 to 7 times	6	4.1
More than 7 times	14	9.5
Total	148	100

Respondents were asked how often they have received unwanted pornographic/obscene images or video by others online. The most selected response was

never (44.6%, 66 respondents). The second most selected response was not far behind at once (41.2%, 61 respondents). See Table 4.3 for further details.

**Table 4.3**

***Received Unwanted Pornography***

	Frequency	Percent
Never	66	44.6
Once	61	41.2
5 to 7 times	15	10.1
More than 7 times	6	4.1
Total	148	100

Respondents were asked how often they have been deceived by others online. The most selected response was never (48.0%, 71 respondents). The second most selected response was once (43.9%, 65 respondents). See Table 4.4 for further details.

**Table 4.4**

***Been Deceived Online***

	Frequency	Percent
Never	71	48
Once	65	43.9
5 to 7 times	6	4.1
More than 7 times	6	4.1
Total	148	100

Respondents were asked how often their person information was taken by others online. The most selected response, with more than half the respondents, was never (53.4%, 79 respondents). The second most selected response was once (38.5%, 57 respondents). See Table 4.5 for further details.

**Table 4.5**

***Personal Information Ever Taken***

	Frequency	Percent
Never	79	53.4
Once	57	38.5
5 to 7 times	11	7.4
More than 7 times	1	0.7
Total	148	100

Respondents were asked if they have ever received hurtful messages by others online. The most selected response was never (49.3%, 73 respondents). The second most selected response was once (40.5%, 60 respondents). See Table 4.6 for further details.

According to Respondent D, “I think people are more brave online. It’s like they’re able to hide behind the computer. People have sent me some bad chat messages that I don’t think they would ever say to my face.”

**Table 4.6**

***Received Hurtful Messages***

	Frequency	Percent
Never	73	49.3
Once	60	40.5
5 to 7 times	9	6.1
More than 7 times	6	4.1
Total	148	100

Respondents were asked how often they have been harassed by others online. The most selected response, with more than half the respondents, was never (52.7%, 78 respondents). The second most selected response was once (38.5%, 57 respondents). See Table 4.7 for further details.

**Table 4.7**

*Been Harassed Online*

	Frequency	Percent
Never	78	52.7
Once	57	38.5
5 to 7 times	8	5.4
More than 7 times	5	3.4
Total	148	100

Respondents were asked how often they have been blocked by others online. The most selected response was never (49.3%, 73 respondents). The second most selected response was once (40.5%, 60 respondents). See Table 4.8 for further details.

**Table 4.8**

*Been Blocked Online*

	Frequency	Percent
Never	73	49.3
Once	60	40.5
5 to 7 times	9	6.1
More than 7 times	6	4.1
Total	148	100

Respondents were asked how often they have had any photos or videos published by others online. The most selected response was never (52.7%, 78 respondents). The second most selected response was once (45.3%, 67 respondents). The remaining number of responses are negligible. See Table 4.9 for further details.

**Table 4.9**

***Personal Photos/Videos Published Online***

	Frequency	Percent
Never	78	52.7
Once	67	45.3
5 to 7 times	2	1.4
More than 7 times	1	0.7
Total	148	100

Respondents were asked how often they have had their identity used without their consent by others online. The most selected response was never (52.7%, 78 respondents). The second most selected response was once (46.6%, 67 respondents). The remaining number of responses are negligible. See Table 4.10 for further details.

**Table 4.10**

***ID Used Without Consent***

	Frequency	Percent
Never	78	52.7
Once	69	46.6
5 to 7 times	1	0.7
Total	148	100

An open-ended question toward the end of the survey asked respondents, “Why do you think cyberbully others?” While several chose not to answer the question, there seemed to be a common theme between those that did respond. For example, several respondents believed those that guilty of cyberbullying were simply demonstrating their insecurities. A survey respondent wrote, “I think people cyber bully because they are insecure and want a place where they can ‘hold the power’ without being actually in front of the person.”

## Bivariate Analyses

Although a great deal of information was uncovered, the following relationships have been identified as being statistically significant. Indicated by Table 4.11, with a Chi-square of 7.409 ( $p=.06$ ), there is marginal statistical significance between males and females when it comes to receiving unwanted tokens of affection. On a percentage basis, females were more apt to receive unwanted tokens of affection.

**Table 4.11**

### *Gender by Incidents of Unwanted Tokens of Affection*

	Never	Once	5 to 7 times	More than 7 times	Total
Male	29 (46.8%)	30 (48.4%)	2 (3.2%)	1 (1.6%)	62 (100%)
Female	39 (45.3%)	31 (36.0%)	5 (5.8%)	11 (12.8%)	86 (100%)
Total	68	61	7	12	148

$\chi^2=7.409$ ,  $p=.06$

With a Chi-square of 11.567 ( $p=.009$ ), the Null Hypothesis of no relationship between gender and receiving unwanted messages is rejected. On a percentage basis, females are more likely to receive them more than once. See Table 4.12 for more details.

**Table 4.12**

### *Gender by Received Unwanted Messages*

	Never	Once	5 to 7 times	More than 7 times	Total
Male	32 (51.6%)	28 (45.2%)	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)	62 (100%)
Female	44 (51.2%)	24 (27.9%)	5 (5.8%)	13 (15.1%)	86 (100%)
Total	76	52	6	14	148

$\chi^2=11.567$ ,  $p=.009$

There is a statistical significance between gender and receiving unwanted pornography with a Chi-square of 10.796 ( $p=.013$ ). On a percentage basis, males are



more likely to never receive unwanted pornography or only once. Females are more likely to receive unwanted porn more than once. See Table 4.13 for more details.

From the interviews conducted, Respondent A acknowledged receiving unwanted obscene photographs repeatedly. Referring to direct messages she has received through various social media channels, she indicated, “I have gotten at least 20 dirty pics from guys through my Instagram and Snapchat DM’s over the past year.”

**Table 4.13**

***Gender by Received Unwanted Pornography***

	Never	Once	5 to 7 times	More than 7 times	Total
Male	32 (51.6%)	28 (45.2%)	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)	62 (100%)
Female	34 (39.5%)	33 (38.4%)	14 (16.3%)	5 (5.8%)	86 (100%)
Total	66	61	15	6	148

$\chi^2=10.796, p=.013$

With a Chi-square of 7.181 (p=.066), there is marginal statistical significance between males and females as it pertains to receiving hurtful messages. As shown in Table 4.14, on a percentage basis, males are more likely to never receive hurtful messages or only once. Females are more likely to have received hurtful messages more than once.

**Table 4.14**

***Gender by Received Hurtful Messages***

	Never	Once	5 to 7 times	More than 7 times	Total
Male	38 (61.3%)	24 (38.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	62 (100%)
Female	41 (41.7%)	37 (43.0%)	6 (7.0%)	2 (2.3%)	86 (100%)
Total	79	61	6	2	148

$\chi^2=7.181, p=.066$

On a percentage basis, more heterosexual students are likely to receive unwanted online messages never or once than queer respondents. However, queer respondents are more like to receive more than seven unwanted messages. With a Chi-square of 9.935 ( $p=.019$ ), there is statistical significance between sexual orientation and receiving unwanted online messages. See Table 4.15 for more details.

**Table 4.15**

*Sexual Orientation by Received Unwanted Messages*

	Never	Once	5 to 7 times	More than 7 times	Total
Queer	11 (57.9%)	3 (15.8%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (26.3%)	19 (100%)
Hetero	65 (50.4%)	49 (38.0%)	6 (4.7%)	9 (7.0%)	129 (100%)
Total	76	52	6	14	148

$\chi^2=9.935$ ,  $p=.019$

As indicated in Table 4.16, with a Chi-square of 7.898 ( $p=.048$ ), there is a statistical significance between sexual orientation and receiving unwanted pornography online. On a percentage basis, more heterosexual students are likely to receive unwanted pornography never or once. However, queer respondents are more likely to receive greater than five unwanted pornography online over three times as much as heterosexual respondents.

**Table 4.16**

*Sexual Orientation by Received Unwanted Pornography*

	Never	Once	5 to 7 times	More than 7 times	Total
Queer	9 (47.4%)	4 (21.1%)	5 (26.3%)	1 (5.3%)	19 (100%)
Hetero	57 (44.2%)	57 (44.2%)	10 (7.8%)	5 (3.9%)	129 (100%)
Total	66	61	15	6	148

$\chi^2=7.898$ ,  $p=.048$

On a percentage basis, queer and heterosexual respondents experience having their personal information being taken online never or once at very similar levels. With a Chi-square of 6.946 ( $p=.074$ ), there is a marginal statistical significance between sexual orientation and having personal information being taken online. See Table 4.17 for more details.

**Table 4.17**

***Sexual Orientation by Personal Information Taken***

	Never	Once	5 to 7 times	More than 7 times	Total
Queer	10 (52.6%)	7 (36.8%)	1 (5.3%)	1 (5.3%)	19 (100%)
Hetero	69 (53.5%)	50 (38.8%)	10 (7.8%)	0 (0.0%)	129 (100%)
Total	79	57	11	1	148

$\chi^2=6.946$ ,  $p=.074$

In reviewing race/ethnicity, on a percentage basis, minority respondents are more likely to never receive hurtful messages online than White respondents. With a Chi-square of 7.321 ( $p=.062$ ), there is a marginal statistical significance between race/ethnicity and receiving hurtful messages. See Table 4.18 for more details.

**Table 4.18**

***Race by Receiving Hurtful Messages***

	Never	Once	5 to 7 times	More than 7 times	Total
Minority	22 (57.9%)	12 (31.6%)	2 (5.3%)	2 (5.3%)	38 (100%)
White	57 (51.8%)	49 (44.5%)	4 (3.6%)	0 (0.0%)	110 (100%)
Total	79	61	6	2	148

$\chi^2=7.321$ ,  $p=.062$

With the development of a bully depth bully scale, 20 (13.5%) respondents reported they had not experienced cyberbullying. While the possible maximum score on

the summative scale was 50, actual scores of those that have been cyberbullied ranged from 1 to 26, with a mode of 10. This is evidence that cyberbullying does exist at the college level. Furthermore, over a quarter of the respondents (26.3%) reported scored of 9 or 10.

**Research question #2: What Are The Short- And Long-Term Effects Of Cyberbullying On Student Success?**

To examine this question, statistical analysis was utilized to determine the relationship between student respondents and the effects brought on by those experiencing cyberbullying. Listed are the frequency distributions for students that experienced being angered, saddened, hurt, scared or had no effect at all as a result of cyberbullying. These results indicate there are impacts on students due to cyberbullying.

With a Chi-square of 4.961 (p=.026), there is statistical significance between sexual orientation and being scared by being cyberbullied. On a percentage basis, more than double the amount of queer respondents (9,47.4%) as compared to the hetero (30, 23.3%) were inclined to be scared by cyberbullying than heterosexual respondents. See Table 4.19 for further details.

**Table 4.19**

*Sexual Orientation by Being Scared*

	No	Yes	Total
Queer	10 (52.6%)	9 (47.4%)	19 (100%)
Hetero	99 (76.7%)	30 (23.3%)	129 (100%)
Total	109	39	148

$\chi^2=4.961, p=.026$

Respondent B, a lesbian, indicated that when she was cyberbullied, it added a layer of fear to any insecurities she felt due to her sexual orientation. “For the most part, everyone is cool.” She added, “But then you get these online threats from these nameless, faceless people that wake you up and can scare the shit out of you.”

With a Chi-square of 3.744 (p=.053), there is marginal statistical significance between sexual orientation and having no effect on being cyberbullied. On a percentage basis, the heterosexual respondents were more apt to be not affected by cyberbullying than queer respondents. For more information, see Table 4.20.

**Table 4.20**

***Sexual Orientation by Having No Effect on Respondent***

	No	Yes	Total
Queer	11 (57.9%)	8 (42.1%)	19 (100%)
Hetero	101 (78.3%)	28 (21.7%)	129 (100%)
Total	112	36	148

$\chi^2=3.744$ ,  $p=.053$

With a Chi-square of 8.086 (p=.004), there is statistical significance between gender and whether the respondents were saddened by being bullied. From a percentage basis, more than double the number of female respondents (34, 39.5%) as compared to male respondents (11, 17.7%) were inclined to be saddened by cyberbullying. See Table 4.21 for more details.

**Table 4.21**

***Gender by Being Saddened***

	No	Yes	Total
Female	52 (60.5%)	34 (39.5%)	86 (100%)
Male	51 (82.3%)	11 (17.7%)	62 (100%)
Total	103	45	148

$\chi^2=8.086, p=.004$

With a Chi-square of 9.121 ( $p=.003$ ), there is statistical significance between gender and whether the respondent was hurt by being bullied. From a percentage basis, almost triple the number of female respondents (30, 34.9%) as compared to male respondents (8, 12.9%) were inclined to be hurt by cyberbullying. See Table 4.22 for more details.

**Table 4.22**

***Gender by Being Hurt***

	No	Yes	Total
Female	56 (65.1%)	30 (34.9%)	86 (100%)
Male	54 (87.1%)	8 (12.9%)	62 (100%)
Total	110	38	148

$\chi^2=9.121, p=.003$

With a Chi-square of 15.629 ( $p=.000$ ), there is statistical significance between gender and whether the respondent was angered by being bullied. From a percentage basis, more than triple the number of female respondents (39, 45.3%) as compared to male respondents (9, 14.5%) were inclined to be angered by cyberbullying. See Table 4.23 for more details.

**Table 4.23**

***Gender by Being Angered***

	No	Yes	Total
Female	47 (54.7%)	39 (45.3%)	86 (100%)
Male	53 (85.5%)	9 (14.5%)	62 (100%)
Total	100	48	148

$\chi^2=15.629, p=.000$

With a Chi-square of 9.943 ( $p=.002$ ), there is statistical significance between gender and whether the respondent was scared by being bullied. From a percentage basis, almost triple the number of female respondents (31, 36.0%) as compared to male respondents (8, 12.9%) were inclined to be scared by cyberbullying. See Table 4.24 for more details.

**Table 4.24**

***Gender by Being Scared***

	No	Yes	Total
Female	55 (64.0%)	31 (36.0%)	86 (100%)
Male	54 (87.1%)	8 (12.9%)	62 (100%)
Total	109	39	148

$\chi^2=9.943, p=.002$

A Chi-square of 3.341 ( $p=.068$ ) allows for the rejection of the Null Hypothesis of there being no relationship between race/ethnicity and whether an individual is hurt by cyberbullying. On a percentage basis, minority students reported being hurt more than did White students (36.8%, 21.8%). See Table 4.25 for further details.

“Sometimes people think that, because I’m Asian I must be really cold and things to bother me. That’s not true. We might pretend that we don’t understand or get the

reference, but we do. And it stings.” Respondent C commenting on how, especially during the pandemic, Asian-Americans were being attacked and how it felt.

**Table 4.25**

***Race/Ethnicity by Being Hurt***

	Minority	White	Total
No	24 (63.2%)	86 (78.2%)	110
Yes	14 (36.8%)	24 (21.8%)	38
Total	38 (100%)	110 (100%)	148

$\chi^2=3.341, \rho=.068$

With a Chi-square of 3.532 (p=.060), allows for the rejection of the Null Hypothesis of there being no relationship between race/ethnicity and whether an individual is angered by being bullied. From a percentage basis, minority students reported being angered more than did White students (44.7%, 28.2%). See Table 4.26 for more details.

**Table 4.26**

***Race/Ethnicity by Being Angered***

	Minority	White	Total
No	21 (55.3%)	79 (71.8%)	100
Yes	17 (44.7%)	31 (28.2%)	48
Total	38 (100%)	110 (100%)	148

$\chi^2=3.532, \rho=.060$

A Chi-square of 3.463 (p=.063) allows for the rejection of the Null Hypothesis of there being no relationship between race/ethnicity and whether cyberbullying has no effect on an individual. On a percentage basis, minority students reported being affected more than did White students (86.8%, 71.8%). See Table 4.27 for further details.



**Table 4.27**

***Race/Ethnicity by Having No Effect***

	Minority	White	Total
No	33 (86.8%)	79 (71.8%)	112
Yes	5 (13.9%)	31 (28.2%)	36
Total	38 (100%)	110 (100%)	148

$\chi^2=3.463, \rho=.063$

**Research Question #3: What Effects, If Any, Are There By Subgroups Such As By Gender Or Race/Ethnicity?**

As indicated in Research Question #2, in several instances, the data allowed for the rejection of the Null Hypothesis of there being no relationship between various subgroups and whether respondents were impacted by cyberbullying. Below are examples of evidence of the existence of the impact of cyberbullying on underrepresented groups – specifically, females, and non-White respondents.

With a Chi-square of 4.961 (p=.026), there is statistical significance between sexual orientation and being scared by being cyberbullied. On a percentage basis, more than double the amount of queer respondents (9,47.4%) as compared to the hetero (30, 23.3%) were inclined to be scared by cyberbullying than heterosexual respondents. See Table 4.19 for further details.

**Table 4.19**

***Sexual Orientation by Being Scared***

	No	Yes	Total
Queer	10 (52.6%)	9 (47.4%)	19 (100%)
Hetero	99 (76.7%)	30 (23.3%)	129 (100%)
Total	109	39	148

$\chi^2=4.961, \rho=.026$

With a Chi-square of 3.744 (p=.053), there is marginal statistical significance between sexual orientation and having no effect on being cyberbullied. On a percentage basis, the heterosexual respondents were more apt to be not affected by cyberbullying than queer respondents. For more information, see Table 4.20.

**Table 4.20**

*Sexual Orientation by Having No Effect on Respondent*

	No	Yes	Total
Queer	11 (57.9%)	8 (42.1%)	19 (100%)
Hetero	101 (78.3%)	28 (21.7%)	129 (100%)
Total	112	36	148

$\chi^2=3.744, p=.053$

With a Chi-square of 8.086 (p=.004), there is statistical significance between gender and whether the respondents were saddened by being bullied. From a percentage basis, more than double the number of female respondents (34, 39.5%) as compared to male respondents (11, 17.7%) were inclined to be saddened by cyberbullying. See Table 4.21 for more details.

**Table 4.21**

*Gender by Being Saddened*

	No	Yes	Total
Female	52 (60.5%)	34 (39.5%)	86 (100%)
Male	51 (82.3%)	11 (17.7%)	62 (100%)
Total	103	45	148

$\chi^2=8.086, p=.004$

With a Chi-square of 9.121 (p=.003), there is statistical significance between gender and whether the respondent was hurt by being bullied. From a percentage basis, almost triple the number of female respondents (30, 34.9%) as compared to male

respondents (8, 12.9%) were inclined to be hurt by cyberbullying. See Table 4.22 for more details.

**Table 4.22**

***Gender by Being Hurt***

	No	Yes	Total
Female	56 (65.1%)	30 (34.9%)	86 (100%)
Male	54 (87.1%)	8 (12.9%)	62 (100%)
Total	110	38	148

$\chi^2=9.121, \rho=.003$

With a Chi-square of 15.629 ( $p=.000$ ), there is statistical significance between gender and whether the respondent was angered by being bullied. From a percentage basis, more than triple the number of female respondents (39, 45.3%) as compared to male respondents (9, 14.5%) were inclined to be angered by cyberbullying. See Table 4.23 for more details.

**Table 4.23**

***Gender by Being Angered***

	No	Yes	Total
Female	47 (54.7%)	39 (45.3%)	86 (100%)
Male	53 (85.5%)	9 (14.5%)	62 (100%)
Total	100	48	148

$\chi^2=15.629, \rho=.000$

With a Chi-square of 9.943 ( $p=.002$ ), there is statistical significance between gender and whether the respondent was scared by being bullied. From a percentage basis, almost triple the number of female respondents (31, 36.0%) as compared to male respondents (8, 12.9%) were inclined to be scared by cyberbullying. See Table 4.24 for more details.

**Table 4.24**

***Gender by Being Scared***

	No	Yes	Total
Female	55 (64.0%)	31 (36.0%)	86 (100%)
Male	54 (87.1%)	8 (12.9%)	62 (100%)
Total	109	39	148

$\chi^2=9.943, \rho=.002$

A Chi-square of 3.341 (p=.068) allows for the rejection of the Null Hypothesis of there being no relationship between race/ethnicity and whether an individual is hurt by cyberbullying. On a percentage basis, minority students reported being hurt more than did White students (36.8%, 21.8%). See Table 4.25 for further details.

“Sometimes people think that, because I’m Asian I must be really cold and things to bother me. That’s not true. We might pretend that we don’t understand or get the reference, but we do. And it stings.” Respondent C commenting on how, especially during the pandemic, Asian-Americans were being attacked and how it felt.

**Table 4.25**

***Race/Ethnicity by Being Hurt***

	Minority	White	Total
No	24 (63.2%)	86 (78.2%)	110
Yes	14 (36.8%)	24 (21.8%)	38
Total	38 (100%)	110 (100%)	148

$\chi^2=3.341, \rho=.068$

With a Chi-square of 3.532 (p=.060), allows for the rejection of the Null Hypothesis of there being no relationship between race/ethnicity and whether an individual is angered by being bullied. From a percentage basis, minority students

reported being angered more than did White students (44.7%, 28.2%). See Table 4.26 for more details.

**Table 4.26**

***Race/Ethnicity by Being Angered***

	Minority	White	Total
No	21 (55.3%)	79 (71.8%)	100
Yes	17 (44.7%)	31 (28.2%)	48
Total	38 (100%)	110 (100%)	148

$\chi^2=3.532, \rho=.060$

A Chi-square of 3.463 (p=.063) allows for the rejection of the Null Hypothesis of there being no relationship between race/ethnicity and whether cyberbullying has no effect on an individual. On a percentage basis, minority students reported being affected more than did White students (86.8%, 71.8%). See Table 4.27 for further details.

**Table 4.27**

***Race/Ethnicity by Having No Effect***

	Minority	White	Total
No	33 (86.8%)	79 (71.8%)	112
Yes	5 (13.9%)	31 (28.2%)	36
Total	38 (100%)	110 (100%)	148

$\chi^2=3.463, \rho=.063$

In order to extend the discussion to capture the complex relationships among the variables and to distil what each is contributing to how people are affected by cyberbullying, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was run. The Effects of Cyberbullying Intensity scale was constructed that captured the depth and functioned as the dependent variable. The descriptive statistics of the variables are shown in Table 4.28 below.

**Table 4.28***Descriptive Statistics for Variables Entered in the Regression Analysis*

	Mean/ Proportion	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Effects of Cyberbullying Intensity Scale	6.99	5.7	0	26
Female student	0.58		0	1
Age	21.86	2.26	19	37
Non- minority student	1		0	1
Agreed to be interviewed	0.14		0	1
GPA - A student dummy	0.59		0	1
Heterosexual orientation	0.87		0	1
Student from a town or small city	0.64		0	1
Female and nonminority	0.41		0	1
Exposure to cyberbullying scale	1.15	1.51	0	104

The R-Square of .334 means that 33.4% of the variation in the dependent variable was explained by the nine independent variables taken together. Not unexpectedly, the F-stat of 7.527 was significant at the  $p < .001$  level. The independent variables were selected to reflect the literature and the bivariate findings in this research. One variable was constructed to test for the intersectionality (also known as the interaction) of race and gender (female \* nonminority), a theme from the literature. This variable, female and nonminority student, was entered into the analysis along with both female status and non-

minority status to be able to test the effect of that particular case along with just female or nonminority status.

Six of the eight variables entered into the analysis proved to be statistically significant or marginally so. *Ceteris paribus*, being a nonminority student lowered the cyberbullying effect scale score by 1.445 point, as did being from a small town rural area by .698 points, and being willing to be interviewed by .823 points. Thus, non-minorities were less affected as were rural or small town residents. Does this mean non minorities feel less threatened? Residents of rural areas or small towns feel more secure in people accepting them for who they are or are simply toughened to labelling? The willingness to be interviewed was entered as a proxy for how “comfortable” they were with what had happened. Those being willing to be interviewed was less affected by cyberbullying. Not unexpectedly, for everyone one more type of cyberbullying experienced, the score on the dependent variable increased by .093 points.

Being a female student was marginally significant ( $p = .076$ ) and the coefficient was negative indicating the being female lowered the cyberbullying effect scale score by .865 points. Thus being female lowered the score as did being a nonminority student. Was there intersectionality? Yes, being both female and nonminority was statistically significant and raised the score on the cyberbullying effect scale by 1.748 points over what would be the case for students who were male and nonminority, male, and minority, or female and minority. What this means is that “solving” the cyberbullying issue needs to be more nuanced. See Table 4.29 for further details.

**Table 4.29*****Regression***

	Regression coefficient	Beta	t
Female student	-0.865	-0.284	-1.786
GPA - A student dummy	-0.078	-0.010	-0.137
Age	-0.023	-0.035	-0.465
Non- minority student	-1.445	-0.423	-3.33***
Exposure to cyberbullying scale	0.093	0.357	4.85***
Heterosexual orientation	-0.219	-0.049	-0.677
Respondent female and nonminority	1.748	0.572	3.1890***
Student from a town or small city	-0.698	-0.222	-2.94**
Agreed to be interviewed	-0.823	-0.193	-2.58**
Constant	2.666		1.97*

P = .05, \*\* p=.01, \*\*\* p=.001

Dependent variable= Cyberbullying Effect Scale

In conclusion, the information obtained by the completion of this mixed methods research aided in forming a comprehensive overview of the impacts cyberbullying have on students at the university level. Therefore, this encourages further conversation into understanding how cyberbullying affects students' success, implications for policy and practices and the recommendations for additional research moving forward.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Introduction**

Colleges and universities are more diverse than ever. Different students contribute to a more enriching educational experience. While this level of diversity has proven to be helpful in several ways, underrepresented populations experience being alienated, excluded or made to feel unwelcome throughout higher education.

Cyberbullying has existed in various forms for years. Research completed has emphasized the existence of cyberbullying within adolescent-aged students. As previously speculated, cyberbullying continues beyond adolescence and continues at the university level. In addition, some groups are more inclined to experience cyberbullying and have it impact their lives.

#### **Summary of the Study**

This study was conducted at a public, urban, research university located in the northeast corner of the United States. It included an undergraduate population within the School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management. A survey was established to collect data on the students, their experiences with cyberbullying and the effects it may have had on their success. Via email, a survey was sent several times to 719 students April through June 2021. The response rate for the survey was 20.58% or 148 valid responses. Toward the end of the survey, respondents asked if they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Of the 148 respondents, 21 indicated they were interested in an additional interview. Students were contacted by email in October and November for the follow-up interviews. A total of four students were interviewed. As

part of the interviews, students were asked to expand on their initial survey responses. They were asked questions pertaining to previous cyberbullying experiences, how it may have impacted them and how they feel the university handles the issues surrounding cyberbullying.

### **Summary of Findings**

From the study, it was determined that cyberbullying exists within the college level. In addition, different groups of people experience cyberbullying at different levels and frequencies. Also, it has been noted that cyberbullying impacts these different groups in a variety of different ways. Some groups were not impacted at all, while others were impacted a great deal.

When conducting a bivariate analysis of the data, a relationship was established between several variables. Overall, gender appeared to be the most important factor in understanding the effects of cyberbullying as evidenced by the number of elements that were statistically significant. Females are more likely to receive unwanted tokens of affection online, unwanted online messages, unwanted forms of pornography as well as hurtful online messages. Data indicate females are more likely to experience feelings of being hurt, saddened, scared and angered by cyberbullying as opposed to men.

Furthermore, race/ethnicity, from a marginally statistically significant viewpoint, appeared to be a factor as well. The data indicate there is a relationship between White and Non-White respondents when it comes to ways that cyberbullying occurs. Non-Whites are more likely to receive hurtful online messages than White respondents. This

provides evidence of a relationship between Non-Whites being angered and hurt than White respondents.

Statistical significance is noted within sexual orientation as well. Queer students are more likely to receive unwanted online messages, in receipt of unwanted forms of pornography and have their personal information taken online than heterosexual students. This provides evidence of the relationship between queer respondents and being scared when these types of cyberbullying are experienced.

When conducting a multivariable regression analysis of the survey data, a couple of things were noted. All other things being equal, the presence of being a white female from a town, city or rural area, that expressed being interviewed allowed us to reject the Null Hypothesis of no relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables taken together.

### **Implications**

While most students report low levels or no levels at all of cyberbullying, data indicate that there is some cause for concern. Therefore, findings argue that there is room for improvement in a couple of key areas. Those areas are the training for faculty staff and administration, support services and additional programming available for students.

### ***Training***

Additional training should be the first step toward reducing levels of cyberbullying with areas of higher education. Instruction can be provided to faculty, staff and administration – and anyone else that may have encounters with undergraduate students. Regarding training, educators can learn to watch for warning signs that indicate

a student is being cyberbullied. Those signs may include withdrawing from situations, spending more time attached to their phones or social media outlets, strong emotional responses at the thought of removing their phones, continually cancelling social media accounts and new ones and hiding their devices from plain view.

Training should also include a consistent response when staff, faculty and administration encounter students being mistreated. Because previously ideas accepted some forms of bullying as rites of passages, it is important for everyone to be united if/when the issue arises. Failure to do so would allow for cyberbullying to continue while demonstrating to those being victimized, that cyberbullying is being accepted by some within the school.

### ***Support Services***

The university offers a variety of support services to students. However, many of them seem vague to cover most topics at the surface level. By providing specific services to those being impacted by cyberbullying, students will realize there is help tailored to their circumstances. This may give victims the additional courage to come forward and share their experiences.

Also, unless a student is in dire need of attention, there is a lagged response time for them to receive additional support. Cyberbullying, to some individuals, may not be viewed as urgent as other matters. However, with the increasing use of social media, accessibility of smart phones and several other factors, cyberbullying can be truly a critical matter for that student being victimized.

### ***Student Programming***

Through the study, it was noted that students are spending more and more time on their mobile devices. This increase of screentime was due to the growing popularity and number of social media outlets, increased accessibility of smartphones, and availability of internet capability. In addition, the effects of COVID-19 have forced everyone, at one time or another, to go virtual since March 2020.

If students were able to fill their available time with something other than social media, it could be another deterrent to cyberbullying. Colleges and universities can assist in creating programs that could cause students to put down their phones, establish stronger roots in the community, sharpen professional development and so much more. Internships, job opportunities, career workshops and development also help with their self-image as well.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was conducted at one school – out of 17 schools – within just one northeast University. Given that the study was held at the School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management, participants were limited to the students within the majors there. Therefore, the participants shared a number of similarities as sport and recreation or tourism and hospitality students. Another limitation to the study is the number of participants. The study included all undergraduate students within the school registered for the Spring 2021 semester. That population consisted of 719 students with a total response rate of 20.58% or 148 responses. Similarly, of the 21 respondents who provided permission to be interviewed, only 4 responded and took part in an interview. Both the

survey responses and interview responses may be a result of self-selection bias as the students were contacted via email to volunteer to complete the survey as well as provide their contact information for an interview. This contact took place during the latter half of the Spring and Summer 2021 time period. Students may have disengaged in a number of ways, including checking and responding to emails, over this time. There is no way to assess this effect. However, respondents for the survey and interview were generally at the ends of the distribution. Therefore, the distribution does not appear to be skewed.

Finally, because the number of students within specific demographics were particularly low, they were lumped together in an attempt to depict a more accurate picture. For example, respondents of various race/ethnicities were combined into just White and Minority respondents. Similarly, for those sharing their sexual orientation, two categories, Heterosexual and Queer, were created.

### **Future Research Recommendations**

Based on the information obtained from the mixed methods research study, future research should be applied in a couple of areas. First, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the everchanging definition of bullying and what it may include. Whether it's a Twitter feud, blocking, deleting or unfriending someone on another form of social media, there are a number of ways that people are bullying and being victimized with the use of technology. Because technology evolves so quickly, it is important that our definition of bullying, particularly cyberbullying, evolves as well.

As noted earlier, this study was limited to one school within one university of similar students. Although colleges and universities have become more diverse, a study incorporating a greater level of diversity needs to be completed. Further research should

be made of students with a greater breadth of diversity. This may be able to provide a more succinct understanding of cyberbullying and its impact on student success.

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# APPENDIX A

## CONCEPTUAL PROJECT MODEL

**Having been bullied** → **Outcomes**

Hypothesis: Being bullied will have negative consequences  
The longer the time of bullying, the greater the negative consequences  
The longer the time period between the last incident and the present, the less the negative consequence  
Physical bullying will have a greater negative consequence than non-physical bullying  
Physical bullying resulting in physical harm will have greater negative consequence than physical bullying not resulting in physical harm  
Bullying often goes unreported

### Institutional Characteristics

Size (curvilinear relationship)  
Public vs. Private Institutions or Two vs. Four Year Inst.  
Composition (gender, race/ethnicity, level of diversity)  
Focus (Religious schools, all male or all female)  
Location (Rural opposed to Urban environments)  
Supports (What's in place for support?)

### Individual Characteristics

Gender orientation  
Race/ethnicity  
SES  
Physical attributes  
Disabilities  
Beliefs (Political, religious, other)

### Bullying

Type  
Duration  
Dosage? Number  
Done by whom

### Negative Outcomes

Academic (GPA, Time to grad, Retention)  
Social (Isolation, Conduct Issues, Health,  
Drugs/Alcohol use)

## APPENDIX B

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Gender
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
2. I am \_\_\_\_years old
3. My overall GPA currently is in the following range
  - a. 4.0-3.5
  - b. 3.49-3.0
  - c. 2.99-2.5
  - d. 2.49-2.0
  - e. Below 2.0
4. I describe my race and ethnicity as:
  - a. White/Caucasian
  - b. Hispanic/Latinx
  - c. Black/African American
  - d. Asian/Pacific Islander
  - e. Native American
  - f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
5. I describe my sexual orientation as:
  - a. Heterosexual
  - b. Lesbian
  - c. Gay

- d. Bisexual
  - e. Transgender
  - f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Please select the category that best describes your family (parents or guardians)
- a. Upper class (top-level executives, Ivy league education is common, annual income \$500,000+)
  - b. Upper middle class (professionals and managers, graduate degrees, annual income \$100,000-\$499,999)
  - c. Lower middle class (semi-professionals, some college education, annual income \$50,000-\$99,000)
  - d. Working class (blue collar workers, high school education, annual income \$20,000-\$49,000)
  - e. Lower/poor (poorly paid jobs or rely on government assistance, some high school education, annual income below \$20,000)
7. My hometown is:
- a. Large central metropolitan area (population > 1 million, ex. Philadelphia, NYC)
  - b. Principal city (population > 200,000, ex. Pittsburgh)
  - c. Large city (population 50,000-199,000, ex. Altoona, Erie, Bethlehem, Lancaster)
  - d. City (population 30,000-50,000, ex. New Castle, Easton, )
  - e. Town or Village (population 15,000-30,000)
  - f. Other (no city center, population less than 15,000)

Please rank the following regarding your experience with social media during your time as a college student. All answers are confidential and completely private. Completion of the survey indicates your consent of participation.

For the purpose of this research, social media is defined as:

Any internet based communication media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, email, TikTok, etc. In addition, communication via smartphones (texting, sexting, picture messaging, etc.) are all included.

1. How important is it for you to check your social media accounts?
  - a. Not important at all – Extremely important (Likert: 1-5)
2. Please indicate how often you interact with your social media accounts on average (reading messages/posts, sending messages/posting comments, tweeting, etc.)
  - a. Hardly ever
  - b. Once a month
  - c. Once a week
  - d. Once a day
  - e. Several times a day
  - f. Every hour
  - g. More than once every hour
3. I have received unwanted tokens of affection (e.g. poetry, songs, electronic greetings, praise, etc.) via technology while at college: Yes / No
  - a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:
    - i. One time
    - ii. 2-4 times

- iii. 5-7 times
  - iv. More than seven times
  - b. Rank the following based on how you felt getting the tokens of affection:
    - i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
    - ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
    - iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
    - iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
    - v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. In no, go to the next question.
4. I have received unwanted excessively, explicit messages (e.g. inappropriately giving private information about his/her life, body, family, sexual experiences, etc.) via technology while at college: Yes / No
- a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:
    - i. One time
    - ii. 2-4 times
    - iii. 5-7 times
    - iv. More than seven times
  - b. Rank the following based on how you felt after getting the message:
    - i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
    - ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
    - iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
    - iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
    - v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_



- c. In no, go to the next question.
5. I have received unwanted pornographic/obscene images or video (e.g. nude people or people engaging in sexual acts, etc.) via technology while at college:  
Yes / No
- a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:
    - i. One time
    - ii. 2-4 times
    - iii. 5-7 times
    - iv. More than seven times
  - b. Rank the following based on how you felt after getting the images or video:
    - i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
    - ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
    - iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
    - iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
    - v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. In no, go to the next question.
6. I have been deceived by social media messages from an individual or group pretending to be someone he or she wasn't: Yes / No
- a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:
    - i. One time
    - ii. 2-4 times
    - iii. 5-7 times

- iv. More than seven times
  - b. Rank the following based on how you felt after being deceived:
    - i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
    - ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
    - iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
    - iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
    - v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. In no, go to the next question.
7. I have had someone “friend” someone I know via social media to get person information about or images or me: Yes / No
- a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:
    - i. One time
    - ii. 2-4 times
    - iii. 5-7 times
    - iv. More than seven times
  - b. Rank the following based on how you felt about it:
    - i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
    - ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
    - iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
    - iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
    - v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. In no, go to the next question.

8. I have received harassing, hurtful or threatening messages via social media: Yes /  
No

a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:

- i. One time
- ii. 2-4 times
- iii. 5-7 times
- iv. More than seven times

b. Rank the following based on how you felt after getting the message:

- i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
- ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
- iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
- iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
- v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

c. In no, go to the next question.

9. I have been harassed or made fun of via social media because of my physical  
appearance, personality, sexuality or intelligence: Yes / No

a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:

- i. One time
- ii. 2-4 times
- iii. 5-7 times
- iv. More than seven times

b. Rank the following based on how you felt after being harassed:

- i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)

- ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
- iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
- iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
- v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

c. In no, go to the next question.

10. I have been the target of online social conversations or postings that included gossip or degrading remarks: Yes / No

a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:

- i. One time
- ii. 2-4 times
- iii. 5-7 times
- iv. More than seven times

b. Rank the following based on how you felt when seeing the remarks:

- i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
- ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
- iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
- iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
- v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

c. In no, go to the next question.

11. I have had or am having problems due to personal information shared about me without my consent: Yes / No

a. Rank the following based on how you felt getting the tokens of affection:

- i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)

- ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
- iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
- iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
- v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

b. In no, go to the next question.

12. I have been blocked by others in online discussions/postings: Yes / No

a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:

- i. One time
- ii. 2-4 times
- iii. 5-7 times
- iv. More than seven times

b. Rank the following based on how you felt being blocked:

- i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
- ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
- iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
- iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
- v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

c. In no, go to the next question.

13. I have had private, personal photographs and/or videos published via technology

without my consent: Yes / No

a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:

- i. One time
- ii. 2-4 times

- iii. 5-7 times
- iv. More than seven times
- b. Rank the following based on how you feel knowing the images were published:
  - i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
  - ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
  - iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
  - iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
  - v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. In no, go to the next question.

14. I have had other people use my identity online to speak with others without my knowledge.

- a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:
  - i. One time
  - ii. 2-4 times
  - iii. 5-7 times
  - iv. More than seven times
- b. Rank the following based on how you felt when they used your identity:
  - i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
  - ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
  - iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
  - iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
  - v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- c. In no, go to the next question.

Cyberbullying is defined as communication tools used to deliberately and repeatedly deliver slanderous, harassing, obsessive or obscene messages that result in harm to the recipient.

15. I have been cyberbullied during my time at college: Yes / No

- a. If yes, how often has this happened since you have been at college:
  - i. One time
  - ii. 2-4 times
  - iii. 5-7 times
  - iv. More than seven times
- b. Rank the following based on how you felt following this event:
  - i. Not sad to very sad (Likert 1-5)
  - ii. Not hurt to very hurt (Likert 1-5)
  - iii. Not angry to very angry (Likert 1-5)
  - iv. Not scared to very scared (Likert 1-5)
  - v. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. In no, go to the next question.

## APPENDIX C

### PERMISSION FROM DEAN TO INTERVIEW STUDENTS

#### Data collection

Jeremy S. Jordan <jeremy.jordan@temple.edu>

Tue 2/2/2021 9:06 AM

To: Michael F. Sheridan <michael.sheridan@temple.edu>

Good morning Mike,

Per our conversation, STHM will allow you to send a survey to our UG and G students as part of your dissertation. This is pending IRB approval and review of the survey by the STHM Dean's Office.

Best,

**Jeremy S. Jordan, PhD**

Associate Dean

Millard E. Gladfelter Research Fellow

School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management

NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative

Temple University

111 Speakman Hall | 1810 N. 13th St. | Philadelphia, PA 19122

T 215.204.3811 | F 215.204.8705

[jsjordan@temple.edu](mailto:jsjordan@temple.edu)



## APPENDIX D

### SURVEY EMAIL TO STUDENTS

Dear STHM Student,

Along with being an instructor, I am currently a doctoral student in the Higher Education program at Temple University. I am writing to request your participation in a brief survey that will be used in my research study. My research focuses on undergraduate students' experiences with cyberbullying.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and all of your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. If you are interested in volunteering to be interviewed further about the topic, you will be given the option to include your name and contact information at the end of the survey.

The survey will take about 5 minutes to complete and will be live for 2-3 weeks. Please click the link below to go to the survey (or copy and paste the link into your Internet browser). By completing the survey, you agree to be part of the study.

Survey link: <https://edtemple.wufoo.com/forms/wgm0wi50cp83bo/>

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 215-204-6705 or michael.sheridan@temple.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration!

-Prof Sheridan

## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW EMAIL TO STUDENTS\*

It was great seeing you at yesterday's NCOW fair.  
I love that STHM celebrates the diversity of our students.

I wanted to follow up with you about scheduling a Zoom interview as part of my research on cyberbullying.  
If not mistaken, you primarily are available in the evening. What I'd like to do is begin scheduling the Zoom interviews for early November. If you are still interested, does that work for you? Maybe one evening the week of November 8th.  
Thank you.

-Prof Sheridan

*\*Each email was customized to that particular student in an attempt to increase participation.*

## APPENDIX F

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Cyberbullying is defined as communication tools used to deliberately and repeatedly deliver slanderous, harassing, obsessive or obscene messages that result in harm to the recipient. Have you ever experienced any cyberbullying? If you don't mind, would you be willing to tell me about it? What was it? How did it affect you?
2. Have you ever received unwanted tokens of affection (e.g. poetry, songs, electronic greetings, praise, etc.) via technology? If you don't mind, would you be willing to tell me about it? What was it? How did it affect you?
3. Have you ever received or hear about someone receiving unwanted pornographic/obscene images or video via technology while at college? I assume that this was upsetting to you. What did you do?
4. Have you ever been deceived by social media messages from an individual or group pretending to be someone he or she wasn't? Was this upsetting to you? How did you handle it?
5. Have you ever heard about someone "friending" someone you know via social media to get person's information about or images of you?

- a. If you don't mind, would you be willing to tell me about it? What was it?  
How did it affect you?
  - b. How do you think you would react?
  - c. Do you know anyone this happened to or you heard about. How did they react?
  
6. Have you ever received harassing, hurtful or threatening messages via social media? If you don't mind, would you be willing to tell me about it? What was it?  
How did it affect you?
  
7. Have you ever been harassed or made fun of over the Internet based on your
  - a. Appearance?
  - b. Personality?
  - c. Gender preference?If you don't mind, would you be willing to tell me about it? What was it? How did it affect you?
  
8. Have been the target of online social conversations or postings that included gossip or nasty remarks? If you don't mind, would you be willing to tell me about it? What was it? How did it affect you?

9. Have you ever had problems with personal information being shared on the Internet without your consent? If you don't mind, would you be willing to tell me about it? What was it? How did it affect you?
  
10. Have you ever been blocked by others in online discussions/postings? If you don't mind, would you be willing to tell me about it? What was it? How did it affect you?
  
11. Have you ever seen or been told about a private, personal photograph and/or videos uploaded without your permission? If you don't mind, would you be willing to tell me about it? What was it? How did it affect you?
  
12. If someone came to to having been cyberbullying victimized, what would you say?
  
13. Is there anything that you think Temple should or could do?
  
14. Is there anything you would like to add?

## **APPENDIX G**

### **MINIMAL RISK CONSENT FORM**

#### **RESEARCH CONSENT**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. A person who takes part in a research study is called a research subject, or research participant.

#### **What should I know about this research?**

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- This form sums up that explanation.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- If you don't understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

#### **Why is this research being done?**

The purpose of this research is to examine how different types of college students are impacted by cyberbullying, and how this can affect their experiences within the institution. It will also focus on effects, if any, are there by various subgroups such as race, gender or sexual identity.

Up to 100 results from the survey are anticipated, with 10-15 participants for the interviews.

**How long will the participant be in this research?**

I expect that participants will be in this research for about 10 to 15 minutes while completing the survey. For those who volunteer to participate in an interview, you will be asked to meet for a 30-minute interview with the researcher. Collection of the survey data and interview data will take place over summer 2021. The interviews (both the initial and follow-up interview, if applicable) will be recorded.

**What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?**

All participants will complete the survey if they consent, and if they wish to be, they can include their contact information to be contacted for the interview and potential follow-up interview.

Participants will complete a brief 10-to-15-minute survey between June to August 2021. The survey will be the extent of involvement for the majority of participants. Participants will be anonymous. Participants will be given the opportunity to provide their contact information to voluntarily participate in a one-on-one interview between June to August 2021. The interviews will be held virtually, via Zoom. The interview time is expected to last approximately 30 minutes. The interview will be done in a conversational style with the researcher asking questions about participants' time as a student. Participants will be asked questions about their background, perceptions, and experiences as a student that has experienced cyberbullying. The interviews will augment the survey.

**What are the responsibilities of the participant of this research?**

The risk to participants in this study is minimal. The foreseeable risk is that participants may experience limited discomfort in the interviewing process.

**Could being in this research hurt me?**

There are no expected risks or discomfort for participating in this research.

**Will being in this research benefit me?**

There is no compensation for your taking part in this research. I cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. The process may prompt you to think about your college experience. Possible benefits to others include informing institutional practices and programs for undergraduate students to prevent cyberbullying in the future.

**What happens to the information collected for this research?**

Your private information will be shared with individuals and organizations (if applicable) that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research
- Temple University

I may publish the results of this research. However, I will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.



I protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. I cannot promise complete secrecy.

Data or specimens collected in this research might be de-identified and used for future research or distributed to another investigator for future research without your consent.

### **Who can answer my questions about this research?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think this research has hurt you or made you sick, talk to the research team at the phone number listed above on the first page.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or [irb@temple.edu](mailto:irb@temple.edu) if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about the research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

### **Can I be removed from this research without my approval?**

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- You are unable to keep your scheduled appointments

I will tell you about any new information that may affect your health, welfare, or choice to stay in this research.

**What happens if I agree to be in this research, but I change my mind later?**

If you decide to leave this research, contact the research team so that the investigator can remove your data from consideration in the study. Additionally, your decision to participate or to withdraw will be confidential and will not be shared with other participants.

**Statement of Consent:**

- Yes, I agree to participate in the study.
- No, I do not agree to participate in the study.

Please supply your name and email address below if you wish to be contacted about the interview. All other participants who do not wish to participate need not include their name and email address.

---

Name

---

Email address

## APPENDIX H

### BULLY DEPTH BULLY SCALE

Bully Depth Bully Scale		
	Frequency	Percent
.00	20	13.5
1.00	17	11.5
2.00	3	2.0
3.00	7	4.7
4.00	12	8.1
5.00	4	2.7
6.00	8	5.4
7.00	4	2.7
8.00	10	6.8
9.00	16	10.8
10.00	23	15.5
11.00	2	1.4
12.00	1	0.7
13.00	3	2.0
14.00	6	4.1
15.00	2	1.4
16.00	1	0.7
17.00	2	1.4
18.00	1	0.7
19.00	2	1.4
23.00	1	0.7
25.00	1	0.7
26.00	2	1.4
Total	148	100.0