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Emotional Responses and Coping Strategies Associated with Cyber Victimization  
via Social Media

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An undergraduate honors thesis submitted to  
the faculty of the Psychology Department  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
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### Abstract

This study examined the impact of different forms of social media on the emotional and behavioral response to cyber victimization. Via Survey Monkey®, participants viewed a hypothetical post on either Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram. This post mimicked a cyberbullying scenario that targeted the victim's weight. Participants were asked to consider a number of different responses to the cyber victimization including: severity of bullying, behavioral response (e.g. liking, sharing, blocking, etc.), emotional responses, and coping strategies. They also completed measures of empathy and cyber victimization experience. They were grouped into one of two cyber victimization groups: history of less victimization vs. more victimization. Results suggested that the Facebook post was perceived as more severe than posts on Twitter or Instagram. Individuals also reported that they would be significantly more likely to engage in behaviors that encourage the continuation of cyberbullying on Instagram than on Twitter. Those who had experienced cyber victimization more often reported feeling less empathy towards others. Finally, individuals who had been victimized less often reported likely use of maladaptive coping strategies in response to the hypothetical cyberbullying scenario.

Emotional Responses and Coping Strategies Associated with Cyber Victimization  
via Social Media

In recent years, there has been an explosion of the use of social media. The frequency at which individuals are accessing social media sites, whether on their computers or by mobile devices, has increased drastically in the last two years (Morrison, 2014). Not that long ago, social media sites such as MySpace and AOL chatrooms were the leading networking sites in society (Morrison, 2014). However, in a short time, these sites have been replaced by Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. While these sites may phase in and out over time, the desire for connections via social media continue. Mark Hawtin of Global Assessment Management points out that from March 2013 to September 2015, the total number of daily Facebook users has increased from around 650 million to 936 million users (Morrison, 2014). Further, the number of daily users via a mobile device has increased to around 850 million as of September 2015; both of these findings far exceeded the predicted outcome of Facebook usage. Since 2008, Twitter users have increased to 554.7 million while Instagram follows at 150 million users since its creation in 2010 (Morrison, 2014).

In particular, the millennial generation has greatly contributed to the rise in social media use as college students admit to visiting these sites numerous times a day. According to the latest study conducted by College Explorer, it was found that college students spent an average of 3.6 hours per day on their cell phones or smart devices; a three hour increase from the previous year (Tech-Savvy College Students, 2013). In a recent report, the term “almost constantly” was coined by 24% of teens who access social media on their phones or smart devices (CampusQuad, 2014). Montgomery (2015) stated that one of the primary reasons college students create public profiles on social media sites is so that they may establish their identity. All individuals have an

idea of the image they want to portray to the public. Social media feeds into this need to be approved of by offering a variety of ways in which people can portray themselves. Park and Lee (2014) discussed the concept of computer-mediated communication and its role in college students' need for gratification. When communications are computer based, individuals are enabled in their attempts to create a positive self-presentation for society. Although individuals do maintain social media accounts to keep in contact with friends or family, post pictures, or to express themselves, Park and Lee (2014) found that the strongest correlation was between Facebook use and entertainment. It seems that users of social media are most interested in keeping tabs on the daily activities of other users. Those users who revealed that they visit social media sites "almost constantly," are not as concerned with their own profiles as they are with monitoring those of others.

Although the majority of individuals accessing these sites are adolescents and young adults ranging anywhere from 14-29, older adults are also making the transition towards social media use (Pew Research Center, 2013). In fact, as of September 2013, 78 percent of adults between the ages of 30-49 were using social networking sites. The Pew Research Center also reveals that of the social media sites available to Internet users, the most popular sites include Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Further, in regards to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, the number of adults accessing these social media sites has increased steadily from 2012-2014 (Pew Research Center, 2014).

With increased usage comes increased risk of cyber victimization for users of social media. According to a study completed by Pew Research Center in 2014, forty percent of adult internet users state that they have dealt personally with some form of online harassment. (Lenhart, 2014). Most commonly, both men and women experience harassment in the form of

being called offensive names. Other common forms of harassment include being purposefully embarrassed, stalked, sexually harassed, being harassed for an extended period of time, and being physically threatened. Further, a more detailed analysis revealed that 66 percent of all online harassment took place via social networking sites. An additional study completed by the Pew Research Center in 2014 revealed that there is no existing clear-cut legal definition of what constitutes online harassment. If the act of cyber harassment cannot be clearly defined, the risk of having no consequences for the perpetrators of these actions also increases. Further, perpetrators may be under the impression that the impact of their bullying is bound to the Internet, but the consequences have great potential to carry over into the real world. In addition, findings from the 2014 survey disclosed that the source of cyber victimization was often an acquaintance (24%) or a friend (23%). Lastly, research reveals that cyberbullies spend significantly more time online than other teens, overall by a total of 12 hours (Lenhart, 2015).

An additional factor to consider concerning an increased risk of cyberbullying is the increased access that adolescents and adults have to social media apps. In a study conducted by Pew Research Center in 2014 and 2015, researchers found that 88 percent of American teens have an access to a mobile phone, and that 73 percent of those teens have smartphones. Smartphones in particular allow easy access to these apps and teenagers admit to checking the multiple social networking sites numerous times throughout the day (Lenhart, 2015). Access to a desktop or laptop is also common among American teens at 87 percent. This statistic in relation to college students is likely even greater, as many young adults purchase laptops to aid in completing college assignments. Recent studies suggest that among those individuals attending college, 83 percent use the Internet and 90 percent are users of social networking sites (Duggan & Brenner, 2013; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2006). These factors alone give great power to

the adolescents and young adults in the facilitation and, in some cases, intervention of cyberbullying.

### **Forms of Bullying**

Norwegian scholar Daniel Olweus (1993) defined bullying as a behavior that occurs repeatedly, marked by an imbalance of power and strength. This behavior may be physical, verbal, or emotional. Although many individuals associate the idea of bullying with physical behaviors, bullying encompasses physical, verbal, and emotional actions targeted towards a person. More specifically, Espelage and Swearer (2003) distinguished between the different types of aggression that have been associated with bullying. Proactive aggression, which is characterized by aggressive actions that are carried out without motive or reason, is the most common form of aggression. Bullies acting on proactive aggression often have little or no provocation for their action, seeking out their targets and harassing them for extended periods of time. The goal of the bully may be to obtain power, status, or material items from the target. Another form of bullying stems from reactive aggression, or aggression that takes place as the result of frustrations or anger directed at the target. Lastly, relational aggression is marked by the bully's goal of damaging or destroying a relationship. Relational aggression can take place both overtly (directly) or covertly which involves verbal assault such as the spreading of rumors (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). It is important to note that those individuals who have experienced victimization often become the perpetrator, and that individuals who have bullied in the past will likely continue the pattern of behavior. Therefore, in considering the transition from traditional bullying to cyberbullying as individuals age, it has been discovered that those who were victimized in the past have become cyberbullies themselves (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Unlike traditional bullying, where victims can often easily identify the perpetrator, victims of cyberbullying are never able to identify the bully in some cases. Cyberbullying allows for an individual to remain anonymous while targeting another individual. An additional characteristic of cyberbullying is that the perpetrator can target an individual on either a public or private platform. Advances in social networking sites and mobile phones allow individuals to make public posts for others to view or to directly and privately communicate with a single individual. Although users of social media and mobile phones are not truly anonymous because numbers and accounts can be traced, it is the perception of anonymity that makes the impact.

In an effort to make a clear discrepancy between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, Wingate, Minney, and Guadagno (2013) stated that traditional bullying is comprised of three specific elements: intent to cause harm to the victim, a behavior that is repeated and chronic, and a power differential existing between bully and victim. Because the act of bullying has been defined using numerous criteria, researchers have struggled to generalize information across studies. Further, to date there is little research regarding how the many aspects of bullying might transition in individuals at different ages. Ryoo, Wang, and Swearer (2014) conducted a study in which they examined the status of bullying in individuals beginning in fifth grade and continuing until the ninth grade. Ryoo and colleagues (2014) found that traditional bullying tended to increase from grades six through eight and decreases into grades nine and ten. Cyberbullying however, had the opposite effect, increasing through adolescence and into adulthood. Ryoo and et al. (2014) deemed that the increase in cyberbullying during this time may be credited to an increased use and familiarity with the Internet.

When young adults enter the college atmosphere, they often experience difficulties in adjusting to the new lifestyle; a lifestyle commonly marked by impulsivity and carelessness.



Many college students may begin to experience bouts of depression and anxiety, increased levels of stress, and peer pressure to take part in activities that they may have previously strayed away from. The presence of cyberbullying in this environment only strengthens the possibility for the occurrence of these mental health conditions. A survey study of 200 college students revealed that females who were involved in cyberbullying in any way were four times more likely to meet the criteria for clinical depression. Further, those perpetrators of cyberbullying were also four times more likely to experience symptoms of depression and to abuse alcohol (Brauser, 2015). Findings from this study suggest two ideas: first, that contrary to common belief, college aged students are just as susceptible to cyberbullying as younger adolescents and second, it is not only the victims who suffer from the effect of cyberbullying; the perpetrators are also experiencing serious mental health issues (La Motte, 2015).

As cyberbullying becomes an ever increasing issue in our society today, countless definitions of the term have emerged in researchers' attempts to explain the criteria and concepts involved. Cyberbullying is deemed to encompass all aspects of traditional bullying (intentionality, repetition, and power imbalance) that are constrained to a verbal or relational aggression. Some wish to simply extend the definition of traditional bullying by stating that cyberbullying follows the same principle but does not occur in a face-to-face context. However, Wingate et al. (2013) argued that in addition to the three criteria established to classify an act as traditional bullying, two other conditions have the potential to be present in the act of cyberbullying: anonymity and public exposure.

In a discussion of the common characteristics associated with cyberbullying, Görzig and Ólafsson (2012) discussed the impact of deindividuation and disinhibition of a person's aggression towards another. Because cyberbullies have the "luxury" of hiding behind a social

media site or mobile phone, they are not forced to witness the reactions of their targets in person. In response, the perpetrator fails to view the target as an individual with feelings and vulnerabilities. They are simply a target that will fulfill some social desire for the bully. In addition, a perpetrator's inhibition may be weakened as they feel they will not be identified or caught in the act. Often the perpetrator will lack the feeling of remorse as they do not witness the psychological and emotional turmoil that their targets experience. Górzsig and Ólafsson (2012) distinguished between two types of disinhibition which may be characteristic of a cyberbully. Benign disinhibition is presented in a manner in which the perpetrator would maintain a "sincere self-presentation" while toxic disinhibition involves the perpetrator acting on more impulsive and socially unacceptable terms. Understanding the motivations behind bullying tactics is an essential factor to consider when planning intervention techniques for victims as well as bystanders. Among the most common reasons that have been discovered for bullying behavior are: social pressure, ignorance of consequences, and the factor of anonymity. In fact, 81 percent of teens state that they believe it is easier to get away with bullying online versus bullying someone in person and around 75 percent of students reveal that they visit social networking sites where they have witnessed a fellow student being bashed (Connally, 2014). If we do not address these motives, or prompt perpetrators to face the consequences of their online actions, the behavior will continue and likely increase in volume.

The General Aggression Model is a theoretical concept commonly referenced when making assertions regarding motivations behind cyberbullying behaviors. Anderson and Bushman (2002) posed that in any instance that an individual shows aggression, they will consider the consequences of their actions and allow those consequences (or lack thereof) to dictate future actions. Therefore, as applied to cyberbullying, if a perpetrator targets an

individual and realizes that the victim will not respond, they are more likely to continue and perhaps worsen their attacks. Just as B.F. Skinner discovered through operant conditioning that a being would continue behaviors for which they were reinforced and decrease behaviors for which they were punished, Anderson and Bushman (2002) asserted that if cyberbullies are reinforced for their behaviors, they will continue that behavior. Further, if reinforced for cyberbullying, perpetrators attitudes towards the act will also increase, leading to a higher frequency of the incident (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Further, Görzig and Ólafsson (2012) assert that an individual's abilities and experience with Internet usage may play a role in their cyberbullying behavior. If individuals become confident in their ability to use the Internet, specifically social media, they may be more likely to target other users. It is important to understand the factors that might encourage or enhance the bully's ability to perpetrate their victims. Because social media sites vary in their portrayal of how information is displayed and to whom the information is available, it is possible that some sites make it easier and/or more likely for perpetrators to bully others.

### **Emotional Responses to Bullying**

Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2011) discussed the importance of understanding the various ways in which an individual may respond emotionally to victimization. Because traditional bullying can be carried out both overtly and covertly, the victim's response to the incident may vary. If bullying occurs in an overt manner, such as physical aggression, the victim may respond in an aggressive manner to defend themselves. However, if the victimization occurs indirectly, such as spreading rumors or excluding the individual, the victim may respond in a more passive way. If bullying occurs in a covert manner, the victim may feel unsure of whom to approach or

trust with their concerns as they do not know who is truly supportive. This uncertainty often leads the victim to isolate themselves to a great degree as they feel alone.

Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchan, Calmaestra, and Vega (2009) studied the emotional responses of individuals to traditional and/or cyberbullying. Participant ages ranged from 12 to 17 years old. For the purposes of the study, participants were asked to consider examples of both traditional bullying (hitting, insulting, making fun) and cyberbullying (via text messages, social media, photos, and videos), and to reveal their potential feelings and behaviors regarding those examples. Ortega and colleagues (2009) distinguished between five basic emotions that would likely be associated with bully victimization including: being not bothered, angry, sad, fearful, or shamed. Of those five emotional classifications, researchers found that most often, anger was associated with the act of bullying. For cyberbullying in particular, popular responses of the participants included feeling alone and defenseless, as well as embarrassment. Because bullying can take on numerous forms in numerous settings, it is reasonable to believe that different emotions may be elicited based on those specific conditions. Ortega et al. (2009) suggested that one reason those individuals who experienced cyberbullying did not relate as strongly to feelings of anger and sadness might be due to their perceived distance from the perpetrator. Unlike traditional bullying, victims of cyberbullying sometimes do not know the aggressor or are not forced to confront them face-to-face. While it is not the case for all victims of cyberbullying, some individuals may feel less bothered by the attacks because of the perceived distance. However, as attacks continue over an extended period of time, the emotional responses of victims may begin to intensify (Ortega et al., 2009).

Although one might assume that bullying begins to subside when an individual enters adulthood, the opposite is true. Dehue, Völlink, and Pouwelse (2012) studied the impact of

bullying in the workplace and how victimization is related to a number of emotional and psychological responses. Research has found that after only two days of victimization occurring, individuals begin to experience psychosomatic symptoms (e.g. headache, nausea) as well as negative emotional responses such as stress, sadness, anxiety and depressive traits.

In assessing the emotional responses related to bullying, it is essential to note the severe effects, both short and long-term, for victims. Common responses of the victim include becoming withdrawn, experiencing psychosomatic symptoms such as headache or nausea that prevent them from social activities including school, and in some cases, contemplating suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). In addition those individuals who report a history of victimization state that they experience feelings vengeful (38%), angry (37%), and helpless (24%) (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Victims may also become preoccupied with avoiding the perpetrator whether it be in person or through cyberspace. Further, social media networks provide an additional avenue through which youth and adults seek affirmation and acceptance; however, rejection and exclusion can easily become the result for some users. This rejection, in turn affects the victims' ideals regarding self-worth. The emotional strain that results from this victimization places individuals at risk for psychological issues far into their futures that cannot easily be resolved.

In a study conducted by Kowalski and Limber (2013), participants were asked to anonymously disclose their experiences with bullying and cyberbullying as the victim, bully, and or bully/victim. Both middle and high school students participated in the study. Results suggested that individuals who were bully/victims for traditional and/or cyberbullying were at the greatest risk for psychological, physical, emotional, and academic issues. Kowalski and Limber (2013) emphasized that for many, the perpetration or victimization may begin in middle school and extend into high school and college years. Many of the individuals who experience

victimization and respond with feelings of vengeance or anger turn to revenge in order to cope. This revenge may take on the form of bullying or cyberbullying. The findings from the study conducted by Kowalski and Limber (2013) emphasize the importance in not only identifying the ways in which individuals cope with and emotionally respond to bullying, but how these responses can affect their long-term psyche and the continuation of bullying.

A study conducted by Kochenderfer-Ladd in 2004 assessed the emotional responses of children and preteens to bullying behaviors. Participants were presented with hypothetical scenarios that depicted a traditional bullying situation and were asked to imagine that they were the target of these behaviors. Following the presentation of the scenarios, the children were asked to rate how intensely they might experience five emotional reactions including: anger, fear, embarrassment, being upset, and feeling like crying. To demonstrate the powerful impact of emotional responses, Kochenderfer-Ladd (2004) then assessed specific coping strategies that the child might employ following the experience. Results revealed that those children who experienced emotions such as anger were more likely to utilize maladaptive coping strategies. In fact, anger was the most commonly experienced emotion, which unfortunately, predicts the use of maladaptive coping techniques. Further, these maladaptive coping strategies were linked to a continuation of the bullying behavior as the children were not assertive in ending the behavior (e.g. not seeking help, not confronting the bully). It is important that there be a better understanding of how the various types of social media might elicit particular emotional responses to cyberbullying and how these responses could impact the tendency to cope either adaptively or maladaptively.

### **Coping with Bullying**

The manner in which a victim responds emotionally to victimization is not the only psychological risk associated with bullying. Garnefski and Kraaij (2014) discussed the importance of the coping strategies that adolescents utilize after being victimized by a bully. Those individuals who employ negative coping strategies often tend to carry those mechanisms into adulthood, often resulting in negative psychological outcomes. Dehue, Bolman, Vollink, and Pouwelse (2012) defined coping as an individual's ability to assimilate thoughts and behaviors to deal with internal and external events. Most commonly, it appears that victims of bullying respond passively in an attempt to avoid confrontation with the bully (Dehue et al., 2012). There are some victims who employ a more active approach in an attempt to end the victimization; however, these problem-solving strategies often fail to aid the victim in coping with the experience. In 2001, Garnefski, Kraaij, and Spinhoven distinguished between nine possible strategies an individual would exercise in response to victimization. These strategies included: self-blame, blaming others, rumination, acceptance, catastrophizing, refocus on planning, putting into perspective, positive reappraisal, and positive refocusing. In researching the correlations between coping strategies and depression and anxiety, Garnefski and Kraaij (2014) found the strongest relationship between self-blame and rumination and depression/anxiety. This finding demonstrates that victims are more often employing maladaptive strategies in an effort to deal with the perpetration. If victims of cyberbullying perceive that they cannot seek help from others or recover from the experience and rather ruminate or resort to self-blame, these maladaptive strategies will likely lead to greater short and long-term consequences for the individual.

Pieschl, Porsch, Kahl, and Klockenbush (2013) conducted a study in which they considered the various forms of cyberbullying and how they might impact an individual's

reaction or coping. Specifically, Pieschl et al. (2013) considered the acts of harassment, impersonation, outing (publicly announcing public information about the target), trickery, and exclusion. Participants were presented with a number of hypothetical vignettes and were prompted to assess their potential mood as well as how they might cope if the scenario presented was targeted towards them. Types of coping were also categorized for the purposes of the study. Types of coping included Social (seeking out help), Aggressive (retaliation), Helpless (not knowing how to respond), Confrontation (active-problem solving), and Rationalization (seeking an explanation). Although other coping strategies are available to victims of cyberbullying, Pieschl et al. (2013) encompassed a very broad range of possible reactions. In this particular study Pieschl and colleagues (2013) found the specific characteristics of the bully (e.g. popularity) played a role in the level of distress for the victims. In general, when a bully was perceived as more popular, victims of cyberbullying reported feeling a greater sense of helplessness, experiencing a more negative mood, and utilizing a more helpless and less aggressive style of coping (Pieschl et al., 2013). In addition, Pieschl et al. (2013) found that the type of cyber victimization that took place also impacted the response of victims. In their sample, the specific tactic of harassment yielded more active coping styles compared to strategies such as outing where adaptive coping styles were not as pronounced. Gender differences were also observed as girls insinuated a tendency to use a more social coping style (seeking support from friends) than boys, who alluded to a more aggressive approach (some form of retaliation).

Dehue et al. (2012) assessed the impact of bullying in the workplace. To measure coping, Dehue and colleagues (2012) referenced a measure that distinguished between four types of coping including: compensation, denial, adopting a positive attitude, and seeking social support. It was found that those employees who had a history of being victimized in the workplace most



often used compensation as a coping strategy for the stressor. The act of compensation is a passive strategy that allows for the individual to find an outlet to attempt to avoid the negative feelings (psychological, physical, emotional) that are associated with their victimization. In turn, this approach provides a short-term solution to the issue but will not prevent or lessen any long-term consequences that may result. In identifying intervention strategies addressing cyberbullying, it is essential that an emphasis is placed on those coping strategies that will benefit victims both in the short and long-term. Grasping a more thorough understanding of the types of coping strategies employed in response to cyberbullying across social media sites will allow for more efficient and effective interventions through the social networking avenue.

### **Empathy and Bullying**

An additional variable that interests researchers studying the effects of bullying is the concept of empathy. Empathy is defined as a person's ability to understand and share another person's emotions or feelings (Merriam-Webster). Ciucci and Baroncelli (2014) conducted a study in which their goal was to better understand the role of callous-unemotional traits in the act of bullying. In general, three specific traits were found to be positively associated with bullying. Traits included callousness (lack of empathy or guilt), uncaring (lack of care for one's own performance or the feelings of others), and unemotional. For the purposes of the study, Ciucci and Baroncelli (2014) distinguished between cognitive empathy and affective empathy. Results indicated that affective empathy is influenced most in younger children who specifically display the uncaring personality traits. However, as adolescents mature, all three callous-unemotional traits seem to progress, affecting the level of empathy expressed to others. Ciucci and Baroncelli (2014) assert that these traits are more apparent during late adolescence as an individual's

personality becomes more solidified, meaning that college-aged students are most at risk for dealing with these traits.

Barlinska, Szustr, and Winiewski (2013) discussed the essential role of empathy as an inhibitor to cyberbullying. As aforementioned, when an individual embodies empathy, they are able to process and take into consideration the feelings of another person. Barlinska et al. (2013) stated that in studying cyberbullying, the concept of empathy is perceived on a developmental continuum ranging from affective empathy to cognitive empathy. Affective empathy involves an individual being able to almost effortlessly sense the emotions of another person due to direct contact. This type of empathy does not require action as the individual simply must take notice of the emotions being conveyed by the other person. Cognitive empathy on the other hand requires the ability to not only sense the emotions of others, but to understand what they are conveying. Further, possessing cognitive empathy also means that an individual has the ability to anticipate how their actions or reactions might impact others. Unlike affective empathy, an individual does not have to have direct contact with someone to employ cognitive empathy. Barlinska et al. (2013) noted that in the case of cyberbullying, one's ability to express empathy to others should to some degree lessen the effects of victimization. However, those individuals who choose to cyberbully have been found to lack both cognitive and affective empathy towards their victims.

Although empathy has been studied in relation to experiencing cyber victimization and cyberbullying, there is little research surrounding the impact of the type of social media on levels of empathy. Because social networking sites are rather unique in their presentation (e.g. only text, only photos, both), it would be beneficial to identify any particular factors of a social media site that might affect empathetic responses from users. The distinction made between three social

media sites in this study (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) allow for the analysis of how their unique qualities play a role in the feeling of empathy.

### **Overview of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram Use**

Created by a student at Harvard University, Facebook started out as a hobby project that literally launched into a popular social networking site in countries all over the world (Yadav, 2006). When Facebook was originally created, only users who were affiliated with colleges, universities, and organizations in the United States and Canada could become members. In a study conducted in 2005, only a year after the launch of the social networking site, 80 percent of college students had accounts, with 60 percent of individuals logging in daily (Yadav, 2006). For Facebook specifically, the numerous options offered to users in managing their profile foster a reliance on the social media site to maintain a certain image. Facebook allows its users to create a personalized profile that they may share with any member of the public they so choose. Through this profile, individuals have the option of uploading pictures or videos, posting “statuses” regarding any topic they wish, as well as “sharing” or forwarding along the information posted by others. In 2005, users of Facebook were uploading 1.5 million photos per day, providing evidence that that feature of the social media site is popular in its use (Yadav, 2006). Facebook allows its users to search for other users and to become “friends” with those individuals. Becoming friends on Facebook allows individuals to view one another’s personal profile. For many, Facebook provides a link through which they may connect with coworkers, classmates, and/or acquaintances. Users of Facebook can show their acknowledgment of other posts by “liking,” “commenting,” or “sharing” a post. The drawback being that feedback can just as easily be negative as positive for users.

Today, the social media site Twitter is worth \$5 billion and is steadily climbing as the number of users continues to increase. Created in 2006, the original idea behind Twitter was that an individual could send a text message to one number where it could then be broadcast to a group of friends (Carlson, 2011). From this brainchild, Twitter now provides the option for Internet users to post only 140 characters for the public to view. There are nearly 320 million users worldwide. The idea of Twitter is that users can access information almost instantaneously about current events. The first successes of the Twitter site can be credited to the news announcements of major events such as national disasters. The site has become popular for everyday users ranging from preteens to adults who often “tweet” about events taking place in their lives. Further, users have found that celebrities create accounts to update fans on their everyday lifestyles; many users send direct tweets to these celebrities in hopes that they will be recognized. One of the most popular activities for Twitter users today is to tweet about current news or television events. If an individual happens to scroll through Twitter on a Monday night, one will likely see countless tweets about the Bachelor or a particular awards show. In these tweets, there are often ruthless comments picking apart the talents and appearance of celebrities. When Caitlyn Jenner made her debut to the public at the end of 2015, #CallmeCait became one of the most popular hashtags for the year (Parry & McPhee, 2015). Celebrities may be among the greatest populations that faces scrutiny on a daily basis. Cyberbullying does not know an age limit nor a socioeconomic class.

Twitter allows users to “follow” other users, meaning that they have the ability to view all posts. Users may directly tag other users, as well as “like,” comment, and “retweet” the posts of others. The idea behind Twitter is that users provide a very brief update about experiences throughout their day. In an analysis of the most popular contact found on Twitter, Patel (2014)

discovered that 62 percent of tweets are centered on some type of humor. Though this may seem like a positive attribute for the social networking site, users must be careful in their assessment of what is humorous. One of the most common responses from perpetrators of cyberbullying is that they are only “joking” when making comments regarding their victims (Patel, 2014).

The main focus of the social media site Instagram is the sharing of photos. Following its launch in 2010, the creators of Instagram made a profit of one billion dollars after only 551 days. In an article published in 2012, Instagram had 30 million registered users who visited the site regularly. In addition, a new member joined the site at a rate of every two seconds (Leonard, 2012). Instagram allows its users to post only pictures, with some individuals adding a brief caption. Like Facebook, users can acknowledge another post by “liking” or commenting on the picture. Rather than attaining “friends,” Instagram users approve for others to “follow” their posts, allowing them to view all pictures on their profiles.

Again, users are able to manipulate the way that they portray themselves to the world as Instagram offers a variety of editing options to enhance the photo being posted. Individuals have the choice of placing a filter, cropping, sharpening, and rotating their photos all before sharing them with the public eye (Lagorio-Chafkin, 2012). The overarching goal of Instagram users is to portray a lifestyle that is unique and entertaining. Further, users want to acquire as many followers as possible. The idea of “follow for a follow back” has even been created in order to entice users to support one another in their quest for likes (Hussey, 2015). Although Instagram is the most recent social networking site of those used in this study, it has quickly become popular with young adults. A demographic analysis of Instagram users reveals that 53 percent of individuals who use Instagram are between the ages of 18-29 (Hussey, 2015). With the rising use of this particular social media app and the rise in young adults’ need to be affirmed by their

peers, it is essential that we investigate this site as well as others to determine their role in cyberbullying. Because different sites provide different ways in which a person can display information (length of text, photo, emojis) it is important to understand the role of these characteristics. Facebook allows its users to post an unlimited amount of text along with photos and videos, while Instagram only allow for photos, and Twitter approves a limited number of characters. These unique features have the potential to influence the perceptions of cyberbullying as well as how an individual might respond to victimization, making it essential that these sites be monitored closely.

### **Social Media and Cyberbullying.**

While traditional bullying is more often associated with younger children in elementary and middle schools, there is an increasing risk of cyberbullying as children enter early adolescence and adulthood. In fact, there is a 95 percent increase in the prospect of cyberbullying between the ages of 9-16 (Lehart, 2015). In addition, the ease of access with which adolescents can connect to social media sites increases the risk of cyberbullying. As many of the individuals in society today have smartphones, or access to a smart device, mobile phones have become the most common resource used for cyberbullying (Görzig & Ólafsson, 2012). Whittaker and Kowalski (2015) stated that aside from email, the top four social networking sites in use at this time are the most likely source of cyberbullying. The most popular sites are Facebook at 86.5%, YouTube at 75.1%, Instagram 70.9%, and Twitter at 69.4%, with most users being victimized on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The ease of access with which individuals can create social media accounts also contributes to the ability for a perpetrator to harass their target. Users can create accounts under false names, providing false information about themselves to aid in remaining anonymous while

bullying an individual. In contrast, some perpetrators of cyberbullying choose to reveal their identity in an effort to portray power or higher social status among their peers, especially if they find it difficult to do so in face-to-face situations. Further, many perpetrators fulfill the need of notoriety and power simply by being publicly encouraged or supported by other users. Görzig and Ólafsson (2012) stated that often the intentions of the perpetrator can seem unclear as there are various reasons an individual might be motivated to target an individual. Again, social media sites provide a platform on which an individual is allowed to portray themselves in any manner that they wish with very few repercussions. The lack of consequences for perpetrators is one motivation for researchers to better understand the processes involved in cyberbullying. Wingate and colleagues (2013) state that often the perpetrators of cyberbullying term the act as simply “joking.” This finding suggested the need for education and intervention for all social media users, not only about cyberbullying, but about how to appropriately manage social networking sites in order to reduce cyberbullying.

Though a number of benefits have been identified with the use of social media, drawbacks also exist. Many users of social media state that one of the main reasons they so frequently access the sites is to form and sustain connections with other users (Park & Lee, 2014). For college students specifically, many attempt to stay in touch with peers from home, while connecting with new friends as well. Although some may argue that an increased use in social media may strengthen relationships, there is an alternative perspective to consider. Throughout society, it is not uncommon to find individuals constantly checking their phones, withdrawn from person to person interactions. It seems that social media users are becoming more concerned with maintaining their online persona than making impressions in person. In fact, Park and Lee (2014) maintained that the use of social networking sites is positively

correlated with an individual's self-esteem and well-being. This dependence on affirmation from social networking sites places users of social media at a great risk for self-image issues as they may not always receive the gratification that they seek.

Further, in subscribing to social media, an individual becomes vulnerable to society to a certain degree as they expose themselves to the public eye. Although there are privacy options available to users, many users are eager to promote themselves as much as possible. In making the details of one's life public, individuals run the risk of harsh criticism from others. For some, this criticism may take place very rarely, but for others, a troubling pattern may develop in which they become the target of cyberattacks. Cyberbullying is a rather recent phenomenon that seems to be ever increasing in the social media realm. In some cases, individuals have threatened and even carried out suicide as a result of being targeted by their peers or complete strangers (No Bullying, 2015).

One of the major threats associated with social media sites is that the audience of its users is potentially unlimited. Once released to the Internet, it is almost impossible to fully delete information. In addition, because social media use has become so popular and is so frequently used, the information posted can be spread in a matter of seconds. Each of the social media sites used for this study, as well as many others, give users the option of "sharing" or forwarding the information along with little to no effort. For victims of cyberbullying, this greatly hinders their ability to stop the information from being seen by others. In fact, for many cyberbullies, their main goal is for others to see and reinforce the information that they spread. Unfortunately, when bystanders make the decision to share this information or join in on the bullying tactics, they are only positively reinforcing the bully and encouraging future tactics.



In the last decade alone, the number of cyberbullying cases involving our youth is disturbing. Further, the consequences, or lack thereof for the perpetrators involved is a continuing issue. In relation, parents of youth who are targets of cyberbullying are realizing, in some cases too late, that their children are exposed to a cyberspace that has become a major avenue for the harsh treatment of others. In particular, the parents of Ryan Halligan, a 14 year old boy from Vermont, were shocked to find the remnants of his cyberbullying experience after he took his own life in 2003 (No Bullying, 2015). Ryan was a frequent target of traditional bullying through elementary and middle school; however, he believed that the issue was resolved after a confrontation with the bully. Instead, the perpetrator and others began to target Ryan online. A group of girls went so far as to pretend to like Ryan so that he would reveal personal details of his life. They exchanged a number of AOL instant messages through which Ryan naively bought into the bullies' scheme. Upon realizing that he was again the target of attacks, Ryan hanged himself at home in the family bathroom. Following the young boy's suicide, the teens who continuously target him received no repercussions for the actions; in the state of Vermont, no formal criminal law applied to the acts of the perpetrators. Now Ryan's parents are left not only to deal with their son's death, but the harsh reality that teens like those who targeted their son are not experiencing consequences for their extreme actions. It is a necessity that individuals have a better understanding of the common coping strategies and emotional responses among victims of cyberbullying across social media platforms to prevent circumstances like these (Ryan's Story, 2010).

In a study regarding cyberbullying via social media, Whittaker and Kowalski (2015) examined the venues on which cyberbullying most often takes place, particularly regarding the college-aged population. More specifically, a focus was placed on the features or characteristics

of the targets of cyberbullying on the various social media websites. Whittaker and Kowalski (2015) noted the taxonomy created by Pyszalski in 2012 which categorized the potential perpetrator relationships found in cyberbullying. Taxonomies included: cyber aggression against peers, against the vulnerable, aggression against random individuals, aggression against groups, and cyber aggression against celebrities. In assessing the most popular social media venues used for cyberbullying acts, Whittaker and Kowalski found that Facebook (86.5%), Instagram (70.9%), and Twitter (69.4%) were most popular for cyberbullying activity. Although specific social networking sites were identified as most popular for cyberbullying in this study, Whittaker and Kowalski (2015) did not investigate the unique characteristics of these sites that might contribute to or make more accessible the act of cyberbullying. Therefore, for the purposes of the present study, it appeared to be beneficial to consider the three social media sites of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram separately to identify any possible qualities of each that might affect cyberbullying activity.

Along with considering potential emotional responses and coping mechanisms, Pieschl et al. (2013) considered the particular form in which cyberbullying may be presented. The tactics of outing and harassment were considered for the purposes of this study. Pieschl et al. (2013) manipulated the medium through which participants viewed the cyberbullying. Four distinct experimental conditions resulted from the two by two design including: harassment via text, harassment via video, outing via text, and outing via video. Pieschl et al. (2013) found that of the scenarios presented to the participants, the use of videos for cyberbullying was more distressing than the use of text. The use of videos resulted in a more negative affect as well. In the present study, I will be examining social media sites that involved unique features such as presenting

both text and photo (Facebook), text only (Twitter), and photo only (Instagram). This analysis will allow for a better understanding of the impact of the form of medium on cyberbullying.

In considering the perceptions of college-aged students who were asked to consider cyberbullying, most often, students reported that aggressive comments directed towards peers were less acceptable, less humorous, and more offensive than comments directed towards groups, celebrities, or random people. Further, 54.3 percent of students reported cyberbullying to be less severe when the target was an acquaintance (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015). Most common and most acceptable were comments directed to individuals who were only known through the cyber realm. There are many potential explanations for the differing levels of empathy or perceived severity for different groups of people. However, it would be beneficial to further explore perceived severity as it applies to an acquaintance. One can rationalize that if the individual of cyberbullying is unknown to bystanders (celebrity, random person) a lesser degree of severity may be perceived because they have no personal ties to the person. However, an acquaintance presents an interesting scenario; the individual witnessing the attack can mentally picture that person and likely has some form of interaction with them on a regular basis whether (sharing a college course, coworker). Therefore, a valid question to ask is how bystanders can distance themselves enough to perceive the event as less severe. In the present study, I examine the perceptions of participants who were asked to consider that the post was targeted towards an acquaintance in order to better understand the social and emotional ties that may or may not exist.

### **The Present Study**

The purpose of the present study is to examine the various effects that different forms of social media have on responses to cyber victimization. As the number of users on social media

sites continues to increase, it is essential that we better understand the impact of such on cyberbullying. For the study, the social networking sites of Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter were used utilized to present hypothetical cyberbullying scenarios. These social networking sites, were chosen because they are sites most frequently used by adolescents and adults. Further, each of the social media sites selected offer unique options to its users regarding the manner in which they communicate with other users.

For the present study, hypothetical scenarios were presented to participants in a randomized process. Participants were either presented with a hypothetical Facebook post, Instagram post, or Twitter post of an individual who was being taunted for being overweight. First, participants were asked to consider the post from the perspective that the target of the cyberbullying was an acquaintance. After viewing this post, participants were asked to consider a number of variables concerning the post including: the severity of the post and the likelihood of various responses (e.g. ignoring, sharing, commenting on the post). Next, participants were asked to imagine that they were now the target of the same post. In response to this scenario, participants were asked how they might cope with the experience and how they might respond emotionally. Participants were also asked to disclose information regarding their own Internet use and their own experience with cyber victimization. Responses on the victimization scale were used to create a non-manipulated independent variable of those with less cyber victimization experience versus more experience.

**Hypothesis 1.** In regard to how severity was affected by the type of social media, it was hypothesized that participants would report the Facebook post as being most severe, as it presents both a photo and text, whereas Instagram uses only a photo and Twitter uses only text (Pieschl et al., 2013). Further, it was hypothesized that those individuals who were victimized

more would perceive the social media post to be more severe than individuals who were victimized less as they could relate to the experience in their personal lives. Because a similar situation occurred in their lives, which they likely considered to be severe, they would have a basis for viewing a similar situation as severe.

**Hypothesis 2.** In considering the behavioral responses of individuals viewing cyberbullying (encouraging or discouraging the behavior), it was hypothesized that individuals would most often encourage cyberbullying behaviors (like, share, comment in favor of the post) on Facebook and Instagram. It was hypothesized that individuals would most often discourage bullying behaviors (report, block, comment against the post), on Facebook because Facebook displays these options in word form under each post. It is possible that if individuals are presented with the words such as report or block, they may be more motivated to act in comparison to being presented with a simple icon (Twitter and Instagram). Regarding level of cyber victimization, it was hypothesized that those individuals who were victimized more would discourage cyberbullying behaviors more often than those who were victimized less. Again, if an individual can relate to a situation through personal experience, it is likely that they would be more proactive in intervening in similar situations. It was also hypothesized that individuals who were victimized less would encourage cyberbullying behaviors more often than individuals who were victimized more. More specifically, it was hypothesized that the individuals who were victimized more would discourage cyberbullying via the Facebook post more often than the Twitter or Instagram post, again because the Facebook post includes both a photo and text.

**Hypothesis 3.** Participants were asked to consider a number of potential emotional responses after viewing the hypothetical scenario that asked them imagine the post was targeted towards them. The emotions presented to participants were placed into three categories that were

deemed most representative of feelings that might occur following victimization. The three categories included: anger, shame, and despair. It was hypothesized that those participants who viewed the Facebook and Instagram post would experience feelings of anger, shame, and despair significantly more than the participants who viewed the Twitter post. The findings of Pieschl et al. (2013) suggest that individuals perceive a post including video to be more severe than words alone. Extending upon this assertion, it may be likely that because they perceive photos and photos in combination with text as more severe, their emotional responses will be significantly stronger than if the post were text alone (Twitter). In addition, it was hypothesized that those individuals who reported more victimization would more often experience anger, shame, and despair than individuals who reported experiencing less victimization. It is possible that an individual who has a large amount of personal experience with cyber victimization may be predisposed to experiencing these emotions at a more intense level. An interaction was predicted to occur between Facebook and Instagram posts and the individuals who reported being victimized more often, meaning that those victimized more were expected to report more anger, shame, and despair in the Facebook and Instagram conditions.

**Hypothesis 4.** For the purposes of this study, the coping strategies presented to participants were grouped and analyzed as being either adaptive or maladaptive strategies. It was hypothesized that that there would be no significant differences between social media type and the coping strategies utilized. Because the content of the cyberbullying scenarios was consistent across the social media types, it is likely that individuals would cope in similar ways. However, relating coping strategies and victimization level, it was hypothesized that individuals who had been victimized more often would employ adaptive coping strategies, while individuals who had been victimized less would utilize maladaptive coping strategies. If an individual has

experienced a large amount of cyber victimization, it is possible that they have sought help or identified adaptive ways in which they may handle the situation. In contrast, for individuals who have not been victimized as often, they may not be familiar with strategies that are beneficial and may impulsively resort to coping tactics such as withdrawal or revenge. There was no hypothesis regarding an interaction between victimization level and social media type.

**Hypothesis 5.** Lastly, when considering empathy, it was hypothesized that individuals who viewed the Facebook post would report higher levels of empathy than those individuals who viewed the Twitter or Instagram post. It is possible that because Facebook allows users to post photos or videos in combination with text, that an individual may feel more empathetic than if the post consisted of only word or only a photo. Again, the combination of these factors could potentially influence how we perceive the event. One might assume that because the post includes text and a photo, the target of the cyberbullying is experiencing a more severe situation that requires a higher level of empathy. Considering cyber victimization, it was hypothesized that the more an individual was victimized, the more empathy they would feel. In general, individuals find that they can relate to one another due to common experiences. If an individual has experienced a large degree of cyber victimization, it is likely that in witnessing this situation happen to another person, they feel empathy as they relate to the feelings associated with being bullied. Therefore, those participants who viewed the Facebook post and who reported being victimized more often would report the most empathy. The overarching goal of the study was to better understand whether behavioral and emotional responses vary depending on the media used to cyberbully and previous exposure to cyberbullying.

## Method

### Participants

There were 170 participants in this study. A total of 42 participant responses were excluded from data analysis either because they did not fully complete all survey questions, or because they did not reach the appropriate age requirement, leaving a total of 128 participants included in data analysis. There were 107 females and 20 males and one participant who preferred not to disclose their gender. Participants were recruited for the study multiple ways including: a post shared to Facebook asking individuals 18 and older to complete the survey, a flyer hanging in the Psychology building of a Mid-Atlantic liberal arts college, and by professors of the Psychology department asking their students to participate. The average age of participants was 20,  $SD=1.85$ . The majority of participants were White at 85.2 percent, followed by African American at 8.6 percent. Participation in this study was completely voluntary; however, participants who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course were given the opportunity to earn extra credit points for their participation in the study. Exclusion from the study only applied to those individuals who were not between the ages of 18 and 25, or those who did not fully complete the survey questions.

### Materials and Procedure

All information regarding the study was presented to participants through the online link to Survey Monkey® which was provided during recruitment. The study began with participants being presented with an informed consent form advising them that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they had the right to end their participation at any time should they feel discomfort. Participants were also informed of the purpose of the study and were given mental health and counseling resources should they need assistance following the study. Because



the survey was given online, participants were to type their name when giving consent in place of a signature (See Appendix A). Participants were then asked to provide demographic information and to disclose the social media sites for which they currently had active accounts, (including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). Participants were asked to rate the severity of the Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram post targeted towards an acquaintance as well as their potential behavioral response upon viewing the post (blocking, sharing liking). Next participants were asked to assess an identical social media post that was now targeted towards them. Following this assessment, participants were asked to consider potential emotional responses as well as potential coping strategies that might be employed after viewing the post. Lastly, participants were asked to consider their level of empathy and to disclose their own experience with cyber victimization within the last year.

**Demographics.** Participants were presented with a demographic form asking them to disclose information regarding their age, gender, and ethnicity. In addition, participants were asked to select from a presented list the social media sites for which they had an active account. Sites included: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat, Pinterest, and Vine. The three social media sites selected for use in this study were among the most commonly used sites with Facebook at 96.9 percent, Twitter at 71.9 percent, and Instagram at 89.8 percent. Lastly, participants were presented with a brief questionnaire regarding their Internet use, specifically on social media (e.g. how frequently they accessed sites, how often they make public posts). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Always to Never. (See Appendix B).

**Hypothetical Posts.** For the purposes of this study, participants were presented with two scenarios. First, participants were asked to consider a social media post that was targeted towards an acquaintance (e.g. classmate, coworker); following this hypothetical post, participants were

asked to consider the same social media post, but to imagine that it was now targeted towards them. In regard to the scenarios that mimicked Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, the type of social media presented to the participants was randomized. Those who were presented with the Facebook scenario viewed a post that included a picture of an overweight individual (whose gender could not be assumed) accompanied by text that was degrading towards the target. For the Instagram post, the same photo was presented, with brief hashtags (#sofat #repulsive #puttheforkdown) targeting the cyber victim. Lastly, those participants who viewed the Twitter post were presented with only text (“You are disgusting! Just stop eating! #sofat #repulsive #puttheforkdown”) mimicking a typical Twitter post; the words were identical to those used in the Facebook and Instagram posts for consistency across conditions (See Appendix C).

**Severity.** After viewing the scenario targeted towards an acquaintance, participants were asked to rate the severity of that post on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Not at All Severe to Very Severe.

**Behavioral Responses.** Participants were then asked to think about how they might respond to seeing the post that was presented to them targeting their acquaintance. Via a 5-point Likert scale, participants rated a number of different response types in which they determined how likely they would be to react in this manner. Responses either promoted the cyberbullying behavior (sharing, liking, or commenting in favor of the post) or discouraged the behavior (blocking the post, reporting the post, or commenting against the post) (See Appendix D).

**Empathy.** The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009) was also utilized for the purposes of the study as participants were asked to rate how frequently they might feel or act in the manner described to them relating to empathy. Responses were recorded via a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Never to Always. There were a total of 16 items

assessing an individual's level of empathy in general. Responses were scored so that a higher score represented a higher degree of empathy. Items 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15 were reversed scored. In testing for reliability of the measure, Cronbach's Alpha for the Toronto Empathy Scale was at .78 (See Appendix D).

**Emotional Responses.** Participants were then asked to recall the hypothetical scenario presented to them and imagine that the post was now targeted towards them. Accordingly, participants were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed that they would experience a number of different emotions in response to the post. The specific emotions presented to participants were grouped into three broad emotional categories for data analysis. The three categories included Anger (angry, vengeful), Despair (sad, hopeless, distressed), and Shame (embarrassed, shameful). Responses were recorded on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (See Appendix F).

**Coping Strategies.** Participants were also asked to assess how they might cope in a scenario like the one presented to them, where they were the target of cyberbullying. Questions from the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 2013) were utilized for this purpose. Responses were recorded on a 4-point Likert scale, with a score of 1 suggesting the individual would never participate in the type of coping strategy and a score of 4 suggesting that the behavior would occur often in that individual. For the purposes of this study, the various types of coping presented to participants in the survey were grouped as either adaptive or maladaptive techniques. Adaptive coping strategies yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of .81 and maladaptive strategies yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of .64 (See Appendix G).

**Cyber Victimization.** Lastly, participants were asked to recall cyber victimization experiences of their own that had occurred within the last year, using the Cyberbullying Experiences Survey

(Doane, Kelley, Chiang, & Padilla, 2013). The survey consisted of four subscales that introduced different forms of cyberbullying. Subscales included Public Humiliation, Malice, Unwanted Contact, and Deception. Each subscale was tested for reliability. Cronbach's Alpha for the Public Humiliation subscale was at .83, Malice yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of .84, Unwanted Contact yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of .86, and Deception tested for reliability at .75. A total score for cyber victimization was calculated based on the items of the measure and a median split was used to categorize participants as less or more victimized.

### Results

In order to compare individuals with less cyber victimization experience to those with more cyber victimization experience, a median split was used to create two categories of cyber victimization level. Ideally, those participants one standard deviation above the mean would be categorized as having high levels of victimization and those one standard deviation below the mean would be categorized as having low levels of victimization, but upon examination of the data this would have excluded too many participants from data analysis and thus a median split was used to retain the full number of participants in analyses.

For the dependent variable of severity, the main effect of level of victimization was not significant  $F(1, 119) = .46, p = .49$ . Individuals who were victimized more ( $M = 3.50, SD = .80$ ) did not perceive the hypothetical social media post to be significantly more or less severe than individuals who were victimized less ( $M = 3.59, SD = .71$ ). The main effect of social media type was significant  $F(2, 119) = 5.87, p = .004, \eta^2 = .09$ . Post hoc analyses suggested that the hypothetical social media post was perceived as more severe on Facebook ( $M = 3.89, SD = .40$ ) than on Twitter ( $M = 3.30, SD = .82$ ) or Instagram ( $M = 3.50, SD = .81$ ). The interaction of level of victimization and social media type was not significant  $F(2, 119) = .53, p = .58$ .

For the dependent variable of behaviors discouraging cyberbullying, the main effect of level of victimization was significant  $F(1, 117) = 15.31, p = .000, \eta = .12$ . Post hoc analyses suggested that individuals who were victimized more ( $M=7.54, SD= 2.95$ ) were significantly more likely to discourage cyberbullying behavior (comment against, block, report the post) than individuals who had been victimized less often ( $M=5.18, SD= 3.59$ ). The main effect of social media type was significant  $F(2, 117) = 3.77, p = .026, \eta = .06$ . Individuals were significantly more likely to discourage the behavior on Facebook ( $M=8.00, SD= 2.53$ ) than on Twitter ( $M=6.95, SD=3.81$ ) but Instagram ( $M= 7.70, SD= 2.48$ ) did not significantly differ from either Twitter or Facebook.. The interaction level of victimization and social media type was not significant  $F(2, 117) = 1.88, p = .16$ .

For the dependent variable of encouraging cyberbullying (liking, sharing, commenting in support of the post), the main effect of level of victimization was not significant  $F(1, 119) = .08, p = .78$ . Individuals who were victimized more ( $M= .85, SD= 2.39$ ) did not engage in encouraging bullying behaviors significantly more or less than individuals who were victimized less ( $M= .92, SD= 2.30$ ). The main effect of social media type was significant  $F(2, 119) = 3.34, p = .04$ . Individuals reported that they would encourage the behaviors significantly more on Instagram ( $M= 1.52, SD= 2.11$ ) than on Twitter ( $M= .30, SD= .79$ ). Facebook ( $M= .66, SD= 2.11$ ) differed significantly from neither Instagram or Twitter. The interaction of level of victimization and social media type was not significant  $F(2, 119) = .12, p = .89$ .

For the dependent variable of anger, the main effect of level of victimization was not significant  $F(1, 116) = 1.64, p = .20$ . Individuals who were victimized more ( $M = 6.69, SD = 2.65$ ) did not experience feelings of anger significantly more or less than individuals who were victimized less ( $M = 6.03, SD = 2.76$ ). The main effect of social media type was not

significant  $F(2, 116) = .71, p = .50$ . The mean for Facebook was 6.79 ( $SD = 2.57$ ), the mean for Instagram was 6.31 ( $SD = 2.71$ ), and the mean for Twitter was 6.05 ( $SD = 2.86$ ). The interaction of level of victimization and social media type was not significant  $F(2, 116) = .37, p = .70$ .

For the dependent variable of despair, the main effect of level of victimization was not significant  $F(1, 113) = .45, p = .51$ . Individuals who were victimized more ( $M = 8.83, SD = 3.88$ ) did not experience feelings of despair significantly more or less than those individuals who were victimized less ( $M = 9.25, SD = 3.99$ ). The main effect of social media type was not significant  $F(2, 113) = 1.59, p = .21$ . The mean for Facebook was 10.06 ( $SD = 3.38$ ), the mean for Instagram was 8.33 ( $SD = 4.11$ ), and the mean for Twitter was 9.05 ( $SD = 4.01$ ). The interaction of level of victimization and social media type was not significant  $F(2, 113) = 1.77, p = .18$ .

For the dependent variable of shame, the main effect of level of victimization was not significant  $F(1, 117) = .99, p = .75$ . Individuals who were victimized more ( $M = 6.56, SD = 2.53$ ) did not experience feelings of shame significantly more or less than individuals who were victimized less ( $M = 6.68, SD = 2.83$ ). The main effect for social media type was not significant  $F(2, 117) = 1.21, p = .30$ . The mean for Facebook was 7.14 ( $SD = 2.28$ ), the mean for Instagram was 6.19 ( $SD = 2.86$ ), and the mean for Twitter was 6.68 ( $SD = 2.75$ ). The interaction level of level of victimization and social media type was not significant  $F(2, 117) = .70, p = .50$ .

For the dependent variable of empathy, the main effect of level of victimization was significant  $F(1, 110) = 6.80, p = .01, \eta^2 = .06$ . Individuals who were victimized more ( $M = 47.18, SD = 7.07$ ) experienced feeling empathy significantly less than individuals who were victimized less ( $M = 50.46, SD = 6.08$ ). The main effect of social media type was not significant  $F(2, 110)$

= 1.51,  $p = .23$ . The mean for Facebook was 50.65 ( $SD = 6.11$ ), the mean for Instagram was 48.15 ( $SD = 7.72$ ), and the mean for Twitter was 48.03 ( $SD = 5.81$ ). The interaction level of level of victimization and social media type was not significant  $F(2, 110) = .27, p = .76$ .

The various types of coping were grouped in a manner that reflected either adaptive coping or maladaptive coping. For the dependent variable of adaptive coping, the main effect of level of victimization was not significant  $F(1, 118) = 1.49, p = .23$ . Individuals who were victimized more ( $M = 13.11, SD = 4.48$ ) did not utilize adaptive coping strategies significantly more or less than individual who were victimized less ( $M = 14.11, SD = 4.78$ ). The main effect for social media type was not significant  $F(2, 118) = .78, p = .46$ . The mean for Facebook was 14.32 ( $SD = 4.52$ ), the mean for Instagram was 13.00 ( $SD = 5.08$ ), and the mean for Twitter was 13.76 ( $SD = 4.17$ ). The interaction level of level of victimization and social media type was not significant  $F(2, 118) = .17, p = .85$ .

For the dependent variable of maladaptive coping, the main effect of level of victimization was not significant  $F(1, 117) = 2.26, p = .14$ . Individuals who were victimized more ( $M = 4.90, SD = 2.95$ ) did not utilize maladaptive coping strategies significantly more or less than individuals who were victimized less ( $M = 5.61, SD = 3.38$ ). The main effect of social media type was not significant  $F(2, 117) = .20, p = .82$ . The mean for Facebook was 5.26 ( $SD = 2.84$ ), the mean for Instagram was 5.10 ( $SD = 3.11$ ), and the mean for Twitter was 5.45 ( $SD = 3.61$ ). The interaction of level of victimization and social media type was not significant  $F(2, 117) = 2.94, p = .06$ .

### Discussion

When considering the dependent variable of severity, the hypothesis regarding victimization was not supported but the hypothesis regarding social media type was supported. It was hypothesized that individuals who were victimized more would perceive

the hypothetical posts to be more severe than individuals who were victimized less because they could relate to the impact caused by the post due to experience; this hypothesis was not supported. Level of victimization was not significant, meaning that there was no substantial difference in perception for individuals who had experienced more victimization and individuals who had experienced less victimization. It is possible that this hypothesis was not supported because the scenario regarded making fun of someone's weight. This topic is especially sensitive in our culture and may be perceived as severe regardless of past experience with cyberbullying. In regard to the various types of social media, it was hypothesized that participants would perceive the hypothetical Facebook post to be more severe than the Twitter or Instagram post; this hypothesis was supported. Each of these social media sites have unique qualities in how they allow users to present information to the public. Because Facebook allows its users to post unlimited text in addition to photos or videos, it is possible that this combination appears more severe than only text (Twitter) or only a photo (Instagram).

Similarly, the study conducted by Pieschl et al. (2013) found that when cyberbullying behaviors were presented with text only and with a brief video, participants perceived the video as more severe. Therefore, a connection may be established between a video and a picture in combination with text which is what was displayed by the Facebook post. It appears that when individuals are presented with an image (or video) and some form of added commentary, whether it is a statement or spoken words, the bullying behaviors are perceived as more severe when compared to text alone. The Pieschl et al. findings along with the results of the present study suggest that when cyberbullying behaviors occur, not only



does the content of the message have an impact on perceptions and responses, but the format in which the message is presented is also an important factor.

For the dependent variable of discouraging cyberbullying behaviors, level of victimization was significant. The hypothesis was supported as individuals who were victimized more discouraged cyberbullying behaviors significantly more than individuals who were victimized less. There are a number of reasons that those who have been victimized more might more strongly discourage cyberbullying behaviors. First, it is possible that these victims of cyberbullying are familiar with what it is like to be the target of these behaviors and therefore feels an urge to defend those who are experiencing a similar situation. In addition, it is possible that during a time that they were victimized, the individuals had support from others who discouraged the cyberbullying behavior that was directed toward them. This act of kindness might prompt them to do the same for another person. It is also a possibility that individuals who have been victimized more often are more familiar with how to discourage these behaviors on social media whether that be reporting the post or commenting against the bullying behavior. The common theme across each of these explanations is that an individual who has been victimized more would have more familiarity with the situation in a general manner and therefore might respond in a more active way. This finding suggests that although there are individual who are bystanders or who encourage cyberbullying behaviors, there are also individuals who understand the impact of cyberbullying and who are willing to take an active role in cushioning its effects. It would be beneficial to learn further about the motives of those who discourage bullying behaviors so that intervention can continue to take place.

It was also hypothesized that individuals would more often discourage bullying behaviors on Facebook than on Twitter or Instagram. This hypothesis was not supported; of the three social media sites used in this study, no site produced significantly more responses that insinuated discouraging bullying behaviors than another. One explanation for the lack of differences in this condition is that all three social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) readily provide options for users to interact on a post whether that be “liking”, sharing, commenting, blocking, or reporting. These options are located in relatively the same places on each site. Each individual post (on each site) displays a row of these options beneath it that are easily accessible to users.

For the act of encouraging cyberbullying behaviors, it was hypothesized that individuals would most often encourage cyberbullying behaviors on Facebook and Instagram. The type of social media was not significant. One explanation in interpreting these results is that fact that the ability to share, comment, etc. is equally easy across social media types. Users are simply required to click a particular button. This simple act might also aid in the individual’s avoidance of moral behavior. Simply clicking a button could be considered a thoughtless act that in turn does not foster any immediate consequences or emotions reactions for the user. Individuals may quickly take part in the act and be able to continue throughout their day without revisiting that choice.

An additional perspective to consider when analyzing the findings is that recently our society has seen a shift in the age range of users on Facebook. It is becoming more common for older adults to create profiles on Facebook; for this reason, adolescents and young adults might be making the transition to using Instagram more frequently. In turn, they may feel that because there are fewer older adults with Instagram accounts, they have more freedom

and security in perpetrating or endorsing cyberbullying behaviors. It may be less disruptive to the morals of individuals who encourage cyberbullying behaviors if they believe their behaviors are not being witnessed by adults.

For the dependent variable of emotional response, level of victimization, it was hypothesized that individuals who were victimized more would experience the emotions of anger, despair, and shame significantly more than individuals who were victimized less. This hypothesis was not supported as there was no significant difference in emotions experienced by the victimization groups. It could be that individuals who are victimized less could be experiencing emotions just as strongly as those individuals who are victimized more, but for different reasons. It was hypothesized that individuals who were victimized more would experience these emotions significantly more because they could relate to the scenario at hand. However, it is plausible that the individuals who are victimized less are experiencing these emotions for reasons regarding their levels of empathy and understanding, level of involvement, and coping abilities.

Regarding potential emotional responses to the hypothetical social media posts, it was hypothesized that participants would experience feelings of anger, shame, and despair significantly more after viewing the Facebook and Instagram posts than the Twitter post. Results yielded from the study indicated that none of the emotions presented to participants were experienced more significantly due to the type of social media that was viewed. Pertaining to anger specifically, these findings are inconsistent with the study conducted by Ortega et al. (2009) who found that anger was the emotion more often experienced following an act of bullying. Further, with cyberbullying, Ortega and colleagues (2009) found that individuals most often experienced emotions such as feeling alone, defenseless, and

embarrassment after the bullying occurs. In addition, the results of the present study are consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Kowalski and Limber in 2013 which found that the most common emotions experienced following victimization included feeling vengeful, angry, and helpless. Because cyberbullying occurred across all media types, this could explain the lack of difference in emotional responses.

As with any hypothetical scenario used in a research study, results may be limited by the ability of the participants to imagine themselves or others in a fictional situation. Participants may have reported experiencing these feelings more strongly on sites such as Facebook and Twitter that include verbal insults had there been some way of monitoring their response to an actual post on their social media feed. As previously stated, the combination of both text and photo could potentially have a stronger impact on perceptions than text or photo alone.

For the dependent level of empathy, it was hypothesized that individuals who experienced more victimization would feel significantly more empathy than individuals who were victimized less. However, results indicated that those individuals who were victimized more experienced significantly less empathy than individuals who were victimized less. One possible explanation for these findings is that due to the impact of their own trauma, the individuals who were victimized more have built up reluctance to feel empathy for others. It may be that during the time that they were targeted, they felt that no one expressed empathy towards them, so they do not feel obligated to offer such to someone else. Also, a victim may perceive that if they could manage the situation on their own, that others can handle it as well.

In their study conducted in 2013, Barlinska et al. discuss the development of empathy on a continuum, which differs for each individual. It may be that some individuals who were

victimized more lacked certain aspects of empathy and were therefore unable to understand or to employ this emotion when considering the circumstances of an acquaintance. In addition, Barlinska et al. (2013) discuss the role of affective empathy which that an individual sense the emotions of another person. Via social media sites, it may be extremely difficult to gage the emotions of others simply by viewing a photo or text. Although an individual may recognize that the bullying behavior is wrong, this may not result in a feeling of empathy as they cannot sense the emotions that the victim is experiencing.

Further, in a review conducted by the American Psychological Association in 2015, results of studies regarding aggressive video games and violence were assessed. More specifically, there is a discussion of how exposure to these violent video games is correlated to a decrease in empathy and sensitivity to aggression. Although these aggressive acts are taking place interactively through a gaming system, it is possible that the effects of being exposed to the aggression can have real-world effects. For example, if individuals become less empathetic towards aggression due to playing these video games, there is a chance that they will experience less empathy towards others when considering aggressive acts, such as cyberbullying in the real-world.

Social media type was not significant in regards to empathy experienced. It was hypothesized that the individuals who viewed the hypothetical Facebook post would experience feelings of empathy significantly more than individuals who viewed the Twitter or Instagram post, due to the combination of text and a photo. In addition, as the hypothetical scenario placed a focus on the issue on weight, it is likely that regardless of media type, individuals tended to feel empathic due to the topic. If the hypothetical scenario targeted

some other topic such as athletic ability, intelligence, or gender, the levels of empathy across social media types may have differed significantly.

For the dependent variable of coping, it was hypothesized that those individuals who were victimized less would employ maladaptive coping strategies significantly more than individuals who were victimized more. Further, it was hypothesized that those individuals who were victimized more would employ more adaptive coping strategies than individuals who were victimized less. In each case, the hypothesis was not supported as the individuals who were victimized more did not utilize adaptive coping strategies significantly more or less than individuals who were victimized less. In turn, individuals who were victimized less did not employ maladaptive coping strategies significantly when compared to the higher victimization group. In analyzing these findings, it is important to note the limitation brought about by the use of a median split. If level of victimization could have been categorized based on whether individuals were one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean, there may have been a more clear depiction of the level of victimization. However, a median split was required for analysis so that a large number of participants would not be removed from the study.

Concerning social media type, it was hypothesized that there would be no significant differences between social media types and coping styles. This hypothesis was supported as there were no significant differences in coping styles between Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In this instance, it is likely that the similarities across the social media sites impacted the way in which participants considered coping strategies. For the present study, it was essential that the content of the hypothetical posts was the same. Therefore, the individuals may have reported that they would cope utilizing the same strategies. In the study

conducted by Pieschl et al. (2013), results indicated that the specific tactic used by the perpetrator has an impact on the coping strategies employed by the victim. For the present study, the type of cyberbullying behavior was consistent across the social media types; therefore, Pieschl et al. (2013) would argue that coping strategies would likely be similar.

Limitations involved in this study that may have impacted the perceptions of participants across conditions, is the picture used for the hypothetical posts. It may have been difficult for participants to imagine themselves or an acquaintance using the picture presented to them, especially if the person viewing it was not overweight given that the picture was of an overweight person.. However, for ethical reasons, and to control confounding variables such as gender, it was essential that a gender neutral, unidentifiable photo be used. In future research, it may be possible for researchers to consider gender as an additional variable, having men view a picture of a male who is overweight and a women view a picture of a female who is overweight. Researchers could also use a picture that included both an overweight male and female that could be distributed to both genders. In addition, in order to keep extraneous variables consistent for the purposes of the present study, the content (photo and text when appropriate) of the cyberbullying behaviors was the same for each type of social media. It could be beneficial in future research to consider how different tactics such as outing, flaming, exclusion, cyberstalking, etc. used in cyberbullying might be more or less impactful on variables considered in this study (empathy, coping, severity, and the encouragement or discouragement of cyberbullying behaviors). It is important that we understand how these different approaches in cyberbullying might foster different emotional responses or coping strategies. It may be that individuals perceive one or more of these tactics as far more severe than the others. If this were the case, it would be essential that

social media sites like those used in the present study, find ways to intervene and prevent these behaviors. Further, it is essential that mental health professionals and parents understand these tactics so that they may better help individuals to cope using adaptive strategies.

An additional limitation involved in the present study involve the use of a median split to analyze the level of victimization for participants. In future research, it would be more beneficial to analyze data as if fall one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean. However, this technique would require a larger sample size. Analyzing data according to a standard deviation would allow for a more clear representation of the level of victimization experienced by individuals in comparison to the broad categories of more and less victimization used in the median split. Further, in the present study, there was a lack of ethnic diversity as well a gender represented. The majority of participants were Caucasian females; therefore, this study cannot be generalized to individuals who are Caucasian and those who are male. It would be beneficial in the future to conduct similar research perhaps at a larger university or institution where there is a more likely chance to reach a diverse sample.

It is essential that researchers continue to study the effects of cyberbullying in all different age groups. Not only is it important that we understand the motivations behind the actions, but the psychological consequences that follow. In addition, it is important the not only the victims, but the bullies and bully/victims are thoroughly understood. Cyberbullying is a process that involves multiple individuals with multiple personality factors. If researchers are able to identify consistencies in these populations, we will be more likely to formulate successful intervention and prevention programs. As social networking sites continue to evolve and the



population of users changes often, it is important that researchers stay abreast of these changes so that they may grasp a better understanding behind the workings of cyberbullying. To simply become educated about the act of cyberbullying is one step in aid intervention.

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**Appendix A**

**Demographic Information:**

**Please disclose the following information as it applies to you.**

**Gender:**

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Prefer not to disclose \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Race/Ethnicity:**

-White/Caucasian

-African American

-Latino

-American Indian

-Asian/Pacific Islander

**Active Social Media Accounts: Please select all social media sites for which you have an active account.**

Facebook \_\_\_\_\_

Pinterest \_\_\_\_\_

Twitter \_\_\_\_\_

SnapChat \_\_\_\_\_

Instagram \_\_\_\_\_

Vine \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix B

**Internet Experiences: In regards to your time spent on social media, please select the response most closely related to you on the Likert scale below.**

<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>	<b>Always</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

1. I actively post status updates on social media sites at least once per week.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4

2. I scroll through the newsfeed of social media sites, but do not post status updates.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4

3. I am comfortable posting information on social media.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4

4. I am comfortable responding to others posts on social media.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4

5. I have easy access to my social media accounts.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4

6. I visit my social media accounts numerous times throughout the day.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
0	1	2	3	4



Appendix C

Please read the following scenario carefully and try to imagine yourself in this situation: You log onto your [social media account], and while scrolling through your feed, you come across this post, targeted toward someone you recognize. Although you do not know this individual well, you are aware of who they are because you see them on a regular basis (fellow student/coworker). You would consider this person an acquaintance.

You are disgusting! Just stop eating! #sofat #repulsive #puttheforkdown



 Like

 Comment



mandaa\_gail #sofat #repulsive  
#putdownthefork

You are disgusting! Just stop  
eating! #sofat #repulsive  
#puttheforkdown

10/11/15, 11:49 AM



**Appendix D**

**Severity:**

Rate the severity of the post you viewed based on the Likert scale below.

Not at all severe	A Little Severe	Somewhat Severe	Severe	Moderately Severe	Very Severe
0	1	2		3	4

**Response Type Scale:**

There are many different ways people may respond to posts. If this were posted about an acquaintance of yours, think about how you might respond. For each of the following, rate how likely you are to respond in this way to the post about your acquaintance.

Not at All	A Little Likely	Somewhat Likely	A Lot Likely	Very Likely
0	1	2	3	4

1. "Like" the post

Not at All Likely	A Little Likely	Somewhat Likely	A Lot Likely	Very Likely
0	1	2	3	4

2. "Share" the post

Not at All Likely	A Little Likely	Somewhat Likely	A Lot Likely	Very Likely
0	1	2	3	4

3. Comment in favor of the post (e.g. say something agreeing w/post)

Not at All Likely	A Little Likely	Somewhat Likely	A Lot Likely	Very Likely
0	1	2	3	4

4. Comment against the post (e.g. say something defending the target of the post)

Not at All Likely	A Little Likely	Somewhat Likely	A Lot Likely	Very Likely
0	1	2	3	4

5. Block the post from your feed

Not at All Likely	A Little Likely	Somewhat Likely	A Lot Likely	Very Likely
0	1	2	3	4

6. Report the post

Not at All Likely	A Little Likely	Somewhat Likely	A Lot Likely	Very Likely
0	1	2	3	4

7. Continue scrolling/do nothing

Not at All Likely	A Little Likely	Somewhat Likely	A Lot Likely	Very Likely
0	1	2	3	4

## Appnedix E

**Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng, McKinnon, & Levine, 2009)**

Below is a list of statements. Please read each statement carefully and rate how frequently you might feel or act in the manner described. Select your answer on the response form. There are no right or wrong answers or trick questions. Please answer each question as honestly as you can.

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too	0	1	2	3	4
2.	Other people's misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal	0	1	2	3	4
3.	It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully	0	1	2	3	4
4.	I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy	0	1	2	3	4
5.	I enjoy making other people feel better	0	1	2	3	4
6.	I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me	0	1	2	3	4
7.	When a friend starts to talk about his/her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else	0	1	2	3	4
8.	I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything	0	1	2	3	4
9.	I find that I am "in tune" with other people's moods	0	1	2	3	4
10.	I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses	0	1	2	3	4
11.	I become irritated when someone cries	0	1	2	3	4
12.	I am not really interested in how other people feel	0	1	2	3	4
13.	I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset	0	1	2	3	4

14.	When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them	0	1	2	3	4
15.	I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness	0	1	2	3	4
16.	When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him/her	0	1	2	3	4

## Appendix F

**Now imagine that the post is targeted towards you.**

### **Emotional Experience Scale:**

Below are several emotions that people may or may not experience after viewing a post such as the one above. Rate how much you agree/disagree that **you** would experience each of the emotions if this post were about you.

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

1. Angry

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

2. Sad

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

3. Embarrassed

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

4. Vengeful

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

5. Disgusted

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

6. Hopeless

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

7. Guilty

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

8. Confident

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

9. Distress

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------

10. Shame

Strongly Disagree 0	Somewhat Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	------------------------	---------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------



## Appendix G

## Brief COPE (Carver, 2013)

**"If someone were to post this on Twitter/FB/Instagram about you, rate how often you might engage in the following behaviors using the Likert scale below."**

**1 = I would not do this at all**

**2 = I've would do this a little bit**

**3 = I would do this some**

**4 = I would do this a lot**

1. I would concentrate my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.

1                      2                      3                      4

2. I would say to myself "this isn't real."

1                      2                      3                      4

3. I would get emotional support from others.

1                      2                      3                      4

4. I would give up trying to deal with it.

1                      2                      3                      4

5. I would take action to try to make the situation better.

1                      2                      3                      4

6. I would refuse to believe that it has happened.

1                      2                      3                      4

7. I would get help and advice from other people.

1                      2                      3                      4

8. I would criticize myself.

1                      2                      3                      4

9. I would get comfort and understanding from someone.

1                      2                      3                      4

10. I would make jokes about it.

1                      2                      3                      4

11. I would do something to think about it less, such as going to movies, watching TV, reading, daydreaming, sleeping, or shopping.

1                      2                      3                      4

12. I would accept the reality of the fact that it has happened.

1                      2                      3                      4

13. I would try to get advice or help from other people about what to do.

1                      2                      3                      4

14. I would blame myself for things that happened.

1                      2                      3                      4

## Appendix G

### Cyberbullying Experiences Scale

Please answer the following questions regarding your own personal experiences within the past year based on the following Likert scale.

Please answer the following questions regarding your own personal experiences within the past year based on the following Likert scale.

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

1. Has someone distributed information electronically while pretending to be you?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

2. Has someone called you mean names electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

3. Have you received a nude or partially nude picture that you did not want from someone you were talking to electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

4. Has someone pretended to be someone else while talking to you electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

5. Has someone changed a picture of you in a negative way and posted it electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

6. Has someone been mean to you electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

7. Have you received a pornographic picture that you did not want from someone electronically that was not spam?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

8. Has someone lied about themselves to you electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

9. Has someone written mean messages about you publicly electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

10. Has someone cursed at you electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

11. Have you received an unwanted sexual message from someone electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

12. Have you shared personal information with someone electronically and then later found the person was not who you thought it was?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

13. Has someone logged into your electronic account and changed your information?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

14. Has someone made fun of you electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

15. Have you received an offensive picture electronically that was not spam?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

16. Has someone posted a nude picture of you electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

17. Has someone teased you electronically?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

18. Has someone printed out an electronic survey that was supposed to remain private but the answers were sent to someone else?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

19. Have you completed an electronic survey that was supposed to remain private but the answers were sent to someone else?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

20. Has someone logged into your electronic account and pretended to be you?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

21. Has someone posted an embarrassing picture of you electronically where other people could see it?

Never	Less than a few times a year	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day/Almost every day
0	1	2	3	4	5

# Perspectives on cyberbullying across various forms of social media

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research study is to examine the effects of cyberbullying via social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

**Participation:** Participants must be **18 years or older**. This survey will be completed online. You will be asked to consider two hypothetical social media posts presented to you and respond to the survey questions that follow.

**Time Required:** Your participation is expected to take about **10-15 minutes**.

**Extra Credit:** Participants have the potential to earn extra credit points depending upon the psychology course in which they are enrolled. Ask your professor about this opportunity.

**The survey can be found at this link: \*insert survey monkey link here\***

For any questions or concerns, you may contact the researcher, **Amanda Mayhew** at [mayhew\\_ag@lynchburg.edu](mailto:mayhew_ag@lynchburg.edu)