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CORRELATES OF INTIMATE PARTNER CYBER-HARASSMENT AMONG MEXICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Thesis

by

ERICA MARIA BENAVIDES-MOORE

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2022

Major Subject: Sociology

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ABSTRACT

CORRELATES OF INTIMATE PARTNER CYBER-HARASSMENT AMONG MEXICAN

AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS (May 2022)

Erica Maria Benavides-Moore, B.A., Texas A&M International University;

Co-Chairs of Thesis Committee: Dr. Fei Luo
Dr. John C. Kilburn

The social issue of intimate partner cyber-harassment among Mexican American college students continues to affect dating violence. While there is a considerable amount of literature focusing on various forms of criminal behavior in cyberspace, such as cyberbullying, cyber-pornography, hacking, online fraud and identity theft, less attention has been paid to violence facilitated through cyber-communications and digital/electronic means such as CH. This thesis examines Mexican American college students to identify which factors correlate to cyber harassment (CH) offending and which correspond to cyber victimization. In this context, intimate partner cyber harassment (IPCH) is defined as a pattern of repeated behaviors by a current or ex-partner via electronic or Internet-capable devices such as computers, tablets, or mobile phones using social media (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) or texting to commit behaviors in which one partner has clearly established are unwanted and harassing.

To test the hypotheses that higher levels of assimilation, alcohol, low self-control, and most importantly, that Mexican American females would be positively associated with a greater likelihood of IPCH as offenders, a survey was developed in SurveyMonkey and shared via SONA. A non-probability, convenience sampling technique was used to analyze student

responses. The results showed positive direction as hypothesized in all but one: assimilation and offending. However, key findings showed that Mexican American females are more likely to be offenders of IPCH than males. This study also found that higher level of assimilation decreases the likelihood of victimization as well as low self-control and alcohol effecting both offending and victimization as hypothesized.

These results suggest that research on Mexican American college students is neglected and therefore there is a deficit in research that needs to be addressed. On this basis, the concept of IPCH among Mexican American college students should be taken into consideration when addressing the phenomena in order to effectively contribute to policy, preventive models for IPCH, and most especially educating students.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my husband, my mother, and my children who have always encouraged me and reminded me that with a little sacrifice anything is possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Today, most people have an online existence regardless of age, gender, social status, education, or culture. We utilize technology for just about everything. With more platforms for communication available technology is facilitating how crimes are committed, and in this case, how intimate partners are harassed and abused. Existing research shows that cyber-harassment takes multiple forms, varying from bombarding strains of messaging to electronic distribution of intimate, embarrassing, and inappropriate content of another person or rumors on social media (Henry & Powell, 2015).

This thesis focuses on a Mexican American college student population. It examines how micro-level social factors such as assimilation, education level, drug and alcohol use, peer and family influence, level of self-control, and gender influence cyber harassment. This study analyzes the degree to which Mexican American college students are offenders of or victimized by cyber harassment. Current legal statutes are inadequate to prevent or deal with growing cyber technology and its uses due to the internet's constant evolution. This fact raises critical concern over the ability to successfully address intimate partner cyber harassment. Cyber harassment is as serious as the physical form of intimate partner harassment.

Cyber harassment is emerging and has begun to appear in scholarly articles and journals (Winkelman et al., 2015). In studies, the term "cyber-harassment" has often been used interchangeably with terms such as "cyberstalking," "cyber abuse," and "cyberbullying." This suggests that cyber harassment has various subcategories. In this study, the term intimate partner cyber harassment (IPCH) is defined as *a pattern of repeated behaviors by a current or ex-*

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This thesis uses the model of *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.*

partner via electronic or Internet-capable devices such as computers, tablets, or mobile phones using social media (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) or texting to commit behaviors in which one partner has clearly established are unwanted and harassing (Henry & Powell, 2016; Tokunaga & Aune, 2015; White & Carmody, 2016; Woodlock, 2017).

This study defines an intimate partner as a member of a relationship that is or was monogamous and mutually considered to be romantic and sexual - Intimate. Based on previous research, cyber harassment unlike, physical harassment, can involve instantly distributed images, video, and rumors to millions of Internet users, allowing the audience to hear and see the damaging content and allowing them to contribute to the harassment. The psychological impact of cyber harassment can be extremely severe. In some cases, cyber harassment causes emotional distress such as anger, fear, sadness, anxiety, or helplessness and, suicide (Henry & Powell, 2015). Examining contributing factors to such behaviors will provide further understanding and insight to aid in developing operative and more effective policies to deter cyber harassment.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Ecological Theory

The *World Report on Violence and Health* (2002) discusses Ecological Theory as a cohesive model identifying factors for intimate partner violence. The Ecological Theory examines how individuals are shaped into who they are by the environment they exist in. A risk factor is any action that places a person at a higher prospect of committing intimate partner violence or, in turn, of falling victim of domestic abuse. A protective factor is a component that lessens the opportunity of occurrence in a relationship, in this case, intimate partner cyber harassment, which occurs in cyberspace by electronic communication. For instance, when applied to intimate partner violence involving a Mexican American male who is traditionally expected to be "head the house," may have a negative sentiment towards his wife working or earning a higher wage. In this instance, the stress may threaten the male ego and cause strain in the relationship, leaving it in a vulnerable state, increasing the likelihood of intimate partner violence (Davis & Lyon, 1998). Therefore, intimate partner violence may take the form where an individual could respond similarly via digital means, using digital devices, as a vehicle to harass and abuse their partner. Additionally, intimate partner harassment may be influenced by race and culture.

Although intimate partner cyber harassment can be affected at all levels, this study explores the micro-system platform on the individual level. In this tier, the main influence is the individual and their ecological circumstances. The likelihood of a risk factor depends on elements that lead to stress caused by poverty, depression, substance abuse, and employment. Experience of violence as a witness or victim, such as childhood victimization and other life-altering events can also be factors that lead to violent behavior (Caetano et al. 2000, 2004, 2007).

For instance, an individual prone to heightened risk factors is also one who may have a lower level of self-esteem. Witnessing domestic abuse or being a victim can also heighten the risk of offending (Card et al., 2008). For instance, the victim-offender overlap theory suggests that there is a defined link between victimization and the perpetration of crime and delinquency. More specifically, this theory states that behaviors co-occur with individuals who were victims who then become offenders. Jennings, Piquero, and Reingle (2012) have stated this overlap as well-established "fact" in criminology reporting that over half of victims are offenders and vice-versa. Researchers have added that the correlation between victim and offender is substantial in comparison to other effect sizes found in criminology (Hsieh, & Pugh, 1993; Pratt, & Cullen, 2000.) Mental or emotional problems can also increase the likelihood of both offending and victimization (Smith, & Ecob, 2007). In turn, with IPCH, the behavior would be less physical and more psychological as it takes place in virtual space. Such behavior would include the act of "drunken texting," or sending a string of violent, threatening, degrading, abusive text messages through cell phone or messaging platform to, or about a partner or ex-partner of an intimate relationship.

The Ecological theory provides a beneficial system that seeks to offer possible factors to help avert and possibly prevent IPCH from occurring. Through this analysis of Mexican American college students, I provide a more thorough understanding and identification of specific traits that trigger and contribute to intimate partner victimization among this group and can provide awareness to aid in prevention and intervention.

General Theory of Crime

General Theory of Crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) can explain multiple types of criminality, including all cybercrime. The main source of the General Theory of Crime

emphasizes that low self-control is the predicting factor in criminality. Gottfredson and Hirschi claimed that people exposed to ineffective parenting, indicated by lack of bonding, poor monitoring and supervision, and inconsistent discipline had a higher likelihood of developing lower levels of self-control (Gibbs et al., 1998; Gibbs et al., 2003). These individuals overlook the long-term consequences of their actions and are concerned with self-centered behaviors that are impulsive and risky (Gibbs & Giever 1995; Grasmick et al. 1993).

The General Crime theory provides a valuable approach that aims to predict causes of crime and can therefore prove useful in predicting IPCH. Through the use of this theory an in-depth understanding and documentation of traits that predict IPCH provides awareness to assist in deterrence and intervention in the evaluation of Mexican American college students.

Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime is simple and can be used to explain cyber harassment. However, this theory pays inadequate attention to gendered power differences and their impact criminality. In other words, it assumes gender is neutral when in reality, it is not. Indirectly this theory poses standards on the behavior of women suggesting that women, who in Mexican American culture are primarily responsible for childcare and socialization of their children, are essentially responsible for criminal behavior. This theory has its limitations. However, as discussed, its simplicity can help explain occurrences of cyber harassment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research indicates that cyber harassment (CH) is an emerging trend in intimate partner violence (IPV) among young dating adults in college (Woodlock, 2017). Unlike traditional harassment, which takes place face to face, cyber harassment is done online through the use of technology such as text messaging, posts, or emails. In traditional harassment, a person can be harassed in school, work, or public place and others can participate. In this case, it is also easy to identify who is harassing the individual. However, with cyber harassment it is difficult to identify who the offender(s) are because the person can be using a false identity. Because of the anonymity the internet presents, low self-control might be more common in the online environment than in a face-to-face situation. With this in mind, unlike traditional harassment, online harassment can contribute to mass encouragement of harassment as millions of users can participate in encouraging or adding to the offense. Intimate partner violence is a serious issue in spite of the development of interventions. Less attention has been focused on violence facilitated through cyber-communications and digital/electronic means of cyber harassment even though there is a considerable amount of literature on cyberbullying, cyber-pornography, hacking, online fraud and identity theft. (Henry et al. 2015; 2016; Woodlock, 2017.)

Although most cyber harassment is limited to a smaller social group, individuals may become "trolled" or targeted by an extended group that involves individuals beyond friends and family because of social media network connections – followers. "Trolled" is a term used to describe being targeted by someone who purposefully posts or makes comments to harass an individual online. The "force-multiplying effect" of cyber communication instantly distributes content to millions of internet users, who not only witness the damaging content but may also participate in the harassment, which has the power to psychologically impact the victim (Henry

& Powell, 2015; Tokunaga & Aune, 2015). Exploration of micro-social factors such as drugs and alcohol use, family support, assimilation, and gender can help understand what exactly leads to cyber harassment experiences and behaviors for both the offender and the victim. It is possible that IPCH, may have similar influences compared to physical harassment in general.

Gender

Intimate partner violence experiences are often gendered. Gender in its biologically traditional form is dyadic, but in this study, gender will be measured by four components: male, female, transgender, and other. Henry & Powell (2015), determined that, just as in traditional harassment, young men are less likely than young women to be victims of cyber harassment. In addition, less likely to experience unwanted and uncomfortable flirting and sexual harassment than young women are in cyberspace. In one study, 16% of boys and 35% of girls, reported having "unfriended" or blocked an individual who made them feel uncomfortable instigating unwanted behavior online (Lenhart et al., 2011). More current research on traditional IPV, using Mexican American college students, found that females are more likely to engage in verbal aggression than males (Luo, Warner, Alaniz 2020). Because cyber-communication is a form of verbal expression, as opposed to physical expression, it is possible that the latter could predict that Mexican American females may be more likely to offend.

In another study, over 50% of the participants, consisting of 433 college students ages 18 to 30 years, had been victims of a form of cyber dating abuse in the last six months (Borrajo, et al., 2015.) Victims of cyber dating abuse in Borrajo et al.'s (2015) study were found to be victimized repeatedly, an average of 23 times in the last six months. The data also showed that IPV appeared in the context of jealousy. Gender did not determine IPV (Borrajo et al., 2015). Both Zweig et al. (2013) support this finding in their study. This result could be explained by the

idea that women have a greater tendency to engage in relational aggression, such as spreading rumors as opposed to men who have a greater probability of engaging in direct aggression (e.g., physical aggression) (Björkqvist, 1994; Owens, et al., 2000; Card et al., 2008.)

Assimilation

The traditional definition of assimilation is the phenomenon that result when groups of people with diverse cultures continuously come into first-hand contact with consequent changes of their original cultural patterns (Redfield et al., 1936). Graves (1967) determined differences between assimilation in a collective or group-level phenomenon and that of psychological assimilation. According to Berry & Sam (1997), this distinction between levels is important for two reasons: 1) to examine systematic relationships between the sets of variables, and 2) because not all individuals participate to the same extent in the general assimilation experienced by their group. Assimilation changes may be reflective in the group; however, on the individual scale, people are known to differ in the degree to which they each participate in these community changes (Berry, 1970). For instance, research on IPV is often modelled on native-born or immigrant samples who have had cultural and language stability within the family and with exposure to American culture. Everyone has their own experiences, and although they are exposed to the same culture, they each participate to their own degree. This study will employ the term, *assimilation*, to refer to the general processes and outcomes (both cultural and psychological) measured by a set of questions on the Frequency and Correlates of Cyber-Harassment and Cyber-Stalking survey.

In recent studies of intimate partner violence, men with greater assimilation used communication and tracking technology to monitor women at work to exercise control (Luo & Warner, 2018). *Assimilation level* to any new culture is an ecological risk factor for both male to

female (M/F) and female to male (F/M) violence (Caetano et al., 2007). *Assimilation strain* arises when a person struggles to adapt to the differences between the culture of the country of origin and the new culture where they now reside. Stressors may create problems when an individual has difficulties assimilating to the new culture. However, as mentioned, assimilation level varies between individuals in a group. Studies have found that varying assimilation levels among couples consequently are at less of a risk of IPV when there is a combination of highly to moderately assimilated in the couple (Caetano et al., 2004).

Research has also demonstrated that a lower assimilated individual, for both males and females, is connected to higher levels of stressors associated with heightened IPV risks (Caetano et al., 2007). Garcia et al., (2005) discovered a direct correlation between reporting IPV and assimilation level in Hispanic women as well. Jasinski (1998) also agreed that that level of assimilation affects IPV incidences. Further research contended that IPV is directly affected by the level of assimilation. (Caetano et al., 2007).

Level of assimilation can impact a couple negatively, as it jeopardizes the stability of the traditional Mexican gender role heightening the risks of IPV (Galvez et al., 2015). Further research suggests that individuals who are more assimilated experience increased stress due to different cultural norms, resulting in awareness of their limited access to education and social-economic opportunities (Caetano et al., 2000; Galvez et al., 2015; Jasinski, 1998).

Alcohol and Drugs

According to Luo, Warner, & Alaniz (2020), age and maturation impact drug and alcohol abuse in IPV. Thus, drugs and alcohol may have a major impact on CH behavior. For instance, in one case, drug and alcohol influenced individuals to post or had nude or semi-nude photos taken of them and then distributed and shared online on peer networks (Henry et al. 2016).

Additionally, Warner & Luo (2018) found that drinking behaviors have the most impact and significant factors for both victimizations and offending despite gender. Moreover, research showed that respondents who engaged in binge drinking and experimented with prohibited drugs had a much higher likelihood of becoming offenders. According to Warner & Luo (2018), these data are consistent with the victim-offender overlap theory suggesting that both parties share similar traits and risk behaviors. Earlier studies show that the same individual is often both an offender and a victim (Jennings et at., 2010; 2012). According to Warner & Luo (2018), a major theoretical explanation for this occurrence is that those who engage in risky or criminal behavior such as drinking and prohibited substances, put themselves in ideal situations for being victimized. Smith & Ecob (2007) agree that their routine activities, drinking and drug use, make them both suitable targets and offenders.

Legislation

State legislatures and the federal government have added language to and altered statutes to address the evolving nature of electronic communication and cyber harassment to current statutes. The Interstate Communications Act and Federal Interstate Stalking Punishment and Prevention Act have made penalties for offenders more severe than past legislation and expanded the behaviors considered CH (Cox, 2014). Victims now also have the opportunity to file a civil protection order, which provides faster protection than the criminal justice system or family court (Shimizu, 2013). Civil protection orders now deter harassers and abusers from participating in the continued threatening and illegal behavior and provide aid for the victim if custody or finances is an issue (Marcum et al., 2008). Every state has different standards as to what defines CH, but these protection orders are granted based on the same standards as stalking in the physical sense (Marcum et al.,2008.)

Young people who experience cyber-harassment are often advised to block the perpetrator, change their security settings on their smartphones or social media sites, and/or to turn off their electronic devices (Henry et al., 2015; Lenhart et al., 2011; Tokunaga & Aune 2015). Incidence estimations suggest that around 20% to 40% of Internet users are victims of CH (Tokunaga & Aune 2015). Tokunaga & Aune (2015) estimated up to 40% of Internet users are victims of CH.

With all the new technological advances and its organic being, the internet has provided the world with new ways to harass each other. Prior to social media, people had to be face to face to insult or via telephone torment each other. Nowadays, applications, or "apps," have facilitated unwanted behaviors by providing instant access to individuals regardless of location. Additionally, this harassment does not necessarily be one on one, but may be an opportunity for mass public shame. Such issues have led to the creation of Online Harassment laws in Texas. The general harassment provision is found in the Texas Penal Code, 42.07 through subsection (a)(7), shown below:

> A person commits an offense if, with intent to harass, annoy, alarm, abuse, torment, or embarrass another, the person: (7) sends repeated electronic communications in a manner reasonably likely to harass, annoy, alarm, abuse, torment, embarrass, or offend another. (1) "Electronic communication" according to this statue, means a transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by wire, radio, electromagnetic, photelectric, or photo-optical system. The Term includes:
>
> (A) a communication initiated through the use of electronic mail, instant message, network call, a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, text message, a social media platform or application, an internet website, any other internet-based communication tool, or facsimile machine; and
>
> (B) a communication made to a pager
>
> Texas Penal Code 42.07

To date, the Texas' Electronic Communications Act of 2001 has been put in place to prohibit CH and various forms of online abuse. CH acts are considered serious criminal offenses in Texas and are deemed a form of mental assault and can take several forms such as, but not limited too; cyberbullying, Facebook abuse, encouraging others to harass someone, monitoring someone's Internet activities, false claims or accusations, and reputational damage due to online posting. CH can also involve internet sex crimes such as unwanted sexting or improper visual recordings or photography that is shared with others or without consent of the other individual. Charges for CH can range from a Class B misdemeanor to a third-degree felony. In other words, an individual charged for CH could spend years in prison and face a fine of up to $10,000. In general, it is safe to infer that any comments made online via any means can be construed as harassment if a person deems it so. The clear issue with this statute is the broad definition which can lead to issues in prosecution. Legislation on cyber harassment is also left to local governments to prosecute with limited skills, funding, and staff. Counties, with tight budgets, are less likely to investigate and prosecute IPCH.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Research Questions and Hypotheses are as follows:

Q1: Does an individual who is highly assimilated offend more often?

H1: Higher levels of assimilation will increase the likelihood of IPCH offending.

Q2: Does an individual who has higher levels of assimilation become a victim less often than one who is not assmiliated?

H2: Higher levels of assimilation will decrease the likelihood of IPCH for the victim.

Q3:Does amount and frequency of alcohol use affect likelihood of IPCH offending?

H3: Alcohol use will be positively associated with a greater likelihood of IPCH offending.

Q4: Does amount and frequency of alcohol use affect the likelihood of IPCH victimization?

H4: Alcohol use will be positively associated with a greater likelihood of IPCH victimization.

Q5: Are Mexican American females more likely to be IPCH offenders than males?

H5: Mexican American females will be associated with a greater likelihood of IPCH as the offender.

Q6: Does the level of low self-control an individual have affect IPCH victimization?

H6: Low self-control will increase IPCH victimization.

Q7: Does the level of low self-control an individual have affect IPCH offending?

H7: Low self-control will increase IPCH offending.

METHODS

Data and Measures

This study focuses on the 599 student respondents who identified themselves as Hispanics of a total of roughly 630 students. The sample was collected from Texas A & M International University in a predominantly Mexican American origin population of students located on the U.S. and Mexico border (n=599). The co-ethnic population in this region is over 95% Latinx. Cultural values in this region, place enmeshed family interaction as a key component of everyday life (Ruiz, 2005.)

To achieve the goal of the study, a survey was developed in SurveyMonkey and shared via SONA. SONA is an online platform where a subject may voluntarily sign up to participate in research, enabling universities to manage research and recruit participants in a cloud-based environment. Due to convenient accessibility and proximity, a non-probability, convenience sampling technique was used to analyze student responses. Participation for this study was completely voluntary and anonymous. Participants for the study were recruited from the university mid Fall 2018, Spring and Summer 2019. The survey was done entirely online. The student respondents were able to participate at their convenience using personal or private computer. The survey allowed respondents to take the survey in a private or personal location of their choosing, allowing questions to be answered honestly while guaranteeing their confidentiality.

At the start of the survey, a debriefing page was displayed prior to beginning the questionnaire. This debriefing page that explained the purpose of the study and provided information to the respondent. The questionnaire consisted of seventy-two questions divided into four categories: demographic information, student behaviors, partner/ex-partner behaviors,

personal experience as offenders and/or victims, and witness/bystander experiences and characteristics (see survey in appendix). Respondents were asked to answer to the best of their knowledge and honestly regarding personal experiences of offending and victimization occurrences. The IRB consent form consisted of the name of the project and an introduction to the study. The survey was approved by the university IRB (Protocol # 2018-10-25).

Dependent Variables

This research examined two dependent variables: intimate partner cyber-harassment victimization and intimate partner cyber-harassment offending. Cyber-offending is measured by three questions. Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency they have done the following on social media: 1) I looked through partner/ex-partner's photos on social media to find pictures with old/new partner? 2) I updated status to make partner/ex-partner jealous? 3) I wrote post on wall to taunt partner/ex-partner? Responses were coded in numerical order from 1 to 5 possible answers (0=Never; 1=once a week; 2= 2 times in a week; 3= 3 to 4 times a week; 4= daily). The reliability of this victimization scale is (α=.611).

Responses to seven survey questions dealing with cyber-harassment actions by the respondent were used to construct the victimization scale (α=.747). The seven questions asked were, "Partner/ex-partner updated status to make you jealous? Partner/ex-partner posted on wall to taunt me? Partner/ex-partner created a false profile on social media of me to cause me problems? Partner/ex-partner used a social media account to spread rumors of you? Partner/ex-partner posted inappropriate or embarrassing photos of you? Partner/ex-partner wrote inappropriate or mean things about you on friend's wall? Partner/ex-partner posted nasty or spiteful comments on a photo of you? (0=no and 1=yes).

Independent Variables

  Variables included in the analysis were assimilation, alcohol and drug use, gender, low self-control, violence acceptance, and peer influence. Relevant questions for each variable were asked to rate or answer according to the respondent's personal experience.

  Low self-control was measured through a set of seven questions rating their response to each question on a scale of 0-4 (0=not true; 1=a little true; 2=somewhat true; 3=pretty true; 4=very true) ($\alpha = .799$). Questions consisted of "I often try new things just for fun or thrills, even if most people think those are a waste of time." "When nothing new is happening, I usually start looking for something exciting," "I often do things based on how I feel at the moment," "I sometimes get so excited that I lose control of myself," "I like it when people can do whatever they want without strict rules and regulations," "I often follow my rules, without thinking through all the details," or "I change my interests a lot, because my attention often shifts to something else." The minimum score was 7 and the max score was 35.

  Assimilation was measured with responses to four questions: "What language(s) do you prefer to speak at home? What language(s) do you prefer to speak with your friends? In general, in what language(s) are the movies, T.V. and radio programs you prefer to watch and listen to? In what language(s) do you usually think?" five possible responses for these questions were coded from 1 to 5 (All Latinos/Hispanics to All Non-Hispanics). ($\alpha = .845$) Minimum score was 4 with a max of 20.

  Alcohol was measured by responses rating on a scale of frequency of substance use. A rating scale of drinking habits of 4 possible numbered 1 through 4; 1=Never; 2=Less than once a month; 3=1-3times a month; 4=4 or more times a month. Questions asked were: "During the past year, how often did you have at least one drink of alcohol? *Drug use* was measured by asking

respondents "During the past year, how often did you use any type of prohibited drug?" This study also examined friends' use of drugs and alcohol. Participants were asked to indicate "Do you have any friends who used any prohibited drugs?" and "Do you have any friends who usually drink five or more drinks on one occasion?" Responses were coded as 0=No and 1=Yes.

It was important to know if childhood victimization was a factor in cyber harassment. *Childhood victimization* was measured using questions regarding childhood incidences including: "During your childhood or adolescence, did you experience any of the following acts at the hands of your parents or caregiver? They shouted or yelled at you? Hit you with a fist/belt or kicked you? Threw or knocked you down? Slapped or spanked you?" (0=No and 1=Yes).

Cyber victimization was measured using seven items. To the best of their knowledge, the respondent was to identify whether an action or behavior was committed against them (α = .747). Violence approval was scored using a series of questions with a scale of 1 to 4 (1. Always disapprove, 2. Sometimes disapprove, 3. Sometimes approve, or 4. Always approve.) Four items were measured. Question examples included: 1) "A husband (or male intimate partner) is acting in a verbally aggressive or verbally abusive way toward his wife (or female partner) on social media or via digital means (i.e. on Facebook, Twitter, email, or text), 2) A wife (or female intimate partner) is acting in a verbally aggressive or verbally abusive way toward her husband (or male intimate partner) on social media or via other digital means (i.e. on Facebook, Twitter, email, or text), 3) Use a romantic partner's personal e-mail password without their knowledge, and 4) Use a current romantic partner's social media password without their knowledge.

Gender was identified using one question: What is your gender? (1= Male, 2 =Female) *Sexual orientation* was recorded using one question: What is your sexual orientation? Variable was scaled by 4 items (1 Heterosexual (sexually attracted to people of the other sex), 2

Homosexual (sexually attracted to people of one's own sex), 3 Bisexual (sexually attracted to both men and women) or 4 Asexual (a person who has no sexual feelings or desires). This variable is further dichotomously coded as 1=heterosexual and 0=other due to the small number of cases in other categories.

Education level was measured by asking, "what is your university classification?" Five items were used for this scale ranging from 1 to 5, 1=freshman, 2= sophomore, 3= junior, 4= senior, or 5 =graduate student.

Relationship status was measured as a nominal variable with three categories: Single not dating, single and dating, and in a monogamous relationship/married. (1 = Single not dating; 2 = Single and dating; 3 = Married/monogamous).

Table 1: Variables Table

Variables	Measurement	Survey Questions
Dependent Variables		
Cyber Harassment Victimization	0=no and 1= yes	Q26 to Q32
Cyber Harassment Offending	5-point scale (0=Never; 1=once a week; 2= 2 times in a week; 3= 3 to 4 times a week; 4= daily)	Q18 to Q20
Independent Variable		
Assimilation	5-point scale (1=Only Spanish; 2=More Spanish than English; 3=Both equally; 4=More English than Spanish; 5=Only English	Q13 to Q16
Low self-control	5-point scale (0=Never; 1=once a week; 2= 2 times in a week; 3= 3 to 4 times a week; 4= daily)	Q47 to Q53
Alcohol and Drug Use	Frequency of substance use (1=Never; 2=less than once a month; 3= 1-3 times in a month; 4= 4 or more times a month)	Q54 to Q58
Childhood Victimization	0=no and 1= yes	Q60 to Q64
Violence approval	4-point scale 1= always disapprove; 2=sometimes disapprove; 3= sometimes approve; 4= always approve)	Q67 to Q72
Education Level	Student classification (1=freshman; 2= sophomore; 3= junior; 4= senior; 5= graduate)	Q5
Relationship status	1 = Single not dating 2 = Single and dating 3 = Married/monogamous	Q6
Gender	1 = male; 2 = Female	
Control Variables		
Age	Student's age	Q1
Mother/Father relationship	Quality of relationship with parent (5-point Scale)	Q65 & Q66
Peer influence	0= no and 1= yes	Q57 & Q58

RESULTS

The goal of this study is to explore the risk and protective factors of intimate partner cyber harassment. Descriptive statistics are reported in table 2.

The results show that seventy-eight-point eight percent reported "yes" to friends' binge drinking and 21.2% reported "No." In other words, results show that there is a high likelihood of binge drinking among college students. Friends' drug use, on the other hand, appeared to be split with 49.2% reporting "Yes" and 50.8% reporting "NO" meaning that about half the students have friends who use a form of illegal drugs. In terms of cyber victimization, 30.6% of the respondents reported yes in contrast to approximately 69% reporting not having experienced cyber victimization by a current or ex-partner. This study showed that over half of the student respondents did not experience cyber harassment by an ex or current intimate partner. The study also revealed that only about half of Mexican American college students will ask for help from family or friends. Data also showed 57.6% reported an offense vs. 42.4% who did not report. Gender reported is approximately 74% female and about 26% male. The average age was about 23 years old. The minimum age of respondents sampled was eighteen and the maximum age was 52. Marriage status observed in the table showed a marginally proportionate divide of about 35% single not dating, 37.8% single but dating, and about 27% in a monogamous relationship or married. Since this table was determined using a five-categories ordinal level variable education was treated as a continuous variable. Skewness was about -.638 which indicated that this is not seriously skewed. The mean is 3.04 and the median is 3. In other words, the majority of the respondents were classified as juniors.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean/%	SD	Min.	Max.
Low Self Control	18.61	5.80	7	35
Assimilation	14.19	3.32	4	20
Alcohol	2.49	1.05	1	4
Drug Use	1.25	.70	1	4
Friend Binge Drinking				
Yes	78.8%			
No	21.2%			
Friend Drug Use				
Yes	49.2%			
No	50.8%			
Childhood Victimization	1.94	1.20	0	4
Cyber Offending	.59	1.25	0	10
Cyber Victimization			0	1
Yes	30.6%			
No	69.4%			
Reporting to Friends/Family				
Yes	57.6%			
No	42.4%			
Violence Approval	4.87	1.57	4	16
Age	23.07	5.24	18	52
Gender				
Female	74.3%			
Male	25.7%			
Education Level	3.04	1.04	1	5
Sexual Orientation	1.1	.31	1	2
Heterosexual	89.4%			
Homosexual	3.2%			
Bisexual	6.9%			
Asexual	.5%			
Relationship status				
Single Not Dating	35.5%			
Single Dating	37.8%			
Monogamous	26.8%			
Relationship/Married				
N	599			

Table 3 presents the correlation results. The results show that there is a significant relationship between cyber offending and cyber victimization (r=.249, p<.001). Low self-control demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with both cyber offending (r=.168, p<.001) as well as cyber victimization (r=.220, p<.001). Data also indicated a significant relationship between alcohol use with both cyber offending and cyber victimization. This implies that alcohol use influences both victimization and offending alike. Drug use on the other hand only demonstrated a significant relationship with cyber victimization (r=.109, p<.01). Another significant relationship found in the study was between friends' binge drinking and cyber offending (r=.084, p<.05). However, friends' binge drinking has a stronger relationship with cyber victimization (r=.184, p<.001). Continuing on to friends' drug use, correlation coefficient shows a significant relationship between cyber offending (r=.114, p<.01) and cyber victimization (0.189, p<.001). Looking into those who experienced childhood victimization, the information in Table 3 suggests a significant correlation between childhood victimization and cyber victimization. Violence approval also showed a significant correlation to cyber offending (r=.149, p<.001). The relationship between violence approval and cyber victimization also indicated a significant correlation (r=.171, p<.001). Contrastingly, the correlation between assimilation and cyber offending along with assimilation and cyber victimization indicated no statistical significance. Drug use and cyber offending did not have a significant correlation as well. However, drug use and victimization on the other hand showed a positive correlation (r=.109, p<.01).

Table 3: Bivariate Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Cyber Offending	1.00	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
2.Cyber Victimization	0.249***	1.00	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
3.Low Self Control	0.168***	0.220***	1.00	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
4.Assimilation	-0.027	-0.094	-0.28	1.00	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
5.Alcohol Use	0.101*	0.098*	0.196***	0.015	1.00	---	---	---	---	---	---
6.Drug Use	-0.021	0.109**	0.155***	0.059	0.235***	1.00	---	---	---	---	---
7.Friend Binge Drinking	.084*	0.184***	0.189***	0.029	0.306***	0.078	1.00	---	---	---	---
8.Friends' Drug Use	0.114**	0.189***	0.181***	0.073	0.138***	0.326***	0.339***	1.00	---	---	---
9.Childhood Victimization	-0.004	0.154***	0.127**	-.008	0.07	0.124**	0.087*	0.200***	1.00	---	---
10.Report to Friend/Family	-0.082	-0.140	-0.038	0.069	-0.010	0.064	-0.058	-0.023	-0.36	1.00	---
11.Violence Approval	0.149***	0.171***	0.167***	0.009	-0.014	0.054	0.114**	0.115**	0.092*	0.001	1.00

*$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Table 4 examines regression results of significant variables and cyber offending. As shown in the data of regression results of cyber offending, low self-control is positively associated with cyber offending (B=.021, p<.05). Individuals with higher levels of low self-control were more likely to offend. Assimilation on the other hand did not indicate a significant relationship with cyber offending (B=-.005, p>.05). Alcohol use showed no statistically significant relationship with cyber offending. Drug use, like alcohol use, also showed no statistical correlation with cyber offending. Observing friend binge drinking, like the previous, also showed no significant relationship with cyber offending. Essentially, Alcohol, drug use, and friend binge drinking suggested little to no influence on whether a person will offend. However, in contrast, friends' drug use did show a positive correlation with cyber offending (B=.285, p<05). Childhood victimization had a negative but not significant correlation. Cyber victimization, on the other hand, was positively associated with cyber offending (B=.548, p<.001). In other words, this finding suggests that an individual who has experienced a cyber victimization at any point in life is at a higher likelihood of becoming an offender. The regression coefficient of violence approval and cyber offending also demonstrated a significant relationship (B=.091, p<.01). When examining gender, one can determine that gender also has a positive relationship with cyber offending, meaning females in this sample were more likely to be involved in cyber offending than the male respondents in this study. Interestingly, data shows that those who are single not dating are also at a higher risk of becoming cyber offenders (B=.204, p<.05) than those who are single but dating, married and in a monogamous relationship.

Table 4: Regression Results of Cyber Offending

Variables	Cyber Offending	
	B	SE
Low Self Control	.021*	.010
Assimilation	-.005	.016
Alcohol Use	.102	.055
Drug Use	-.145	.082
Friend Binge Drinking	-.070	.145
Friend Drug Use	.285*	.123
Childhood Victimization	-.080	.045
Cyber Victimization	.548***	.121
Report to Friend/Family	-.107	.109
Violence Approval	.091**	.034
Age	-.002	.012
Gender	.276*	.122
Education Level	.108	.059
Sexual Orientation	-.253	.170
Single Not Dating	.302*	.147
Single Dating	.204	.146
Model Statistics		
R²	.131	

*p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p <.001*

Examining Table 5, I will explain regression results of cyber victimization key variables. Again, low self-control shows a positive and significant relationship with cyber victimization (B=.041, p<.05). As shown by the statistical significance, this implies that an individual with higher levels of low self-control is more likely to become a cyber victim. Assimilation has a negative relationship with cyber victimization suggesting that the higher levels of assimilation the lower the risk of becoming a cyber victim (B=-.066, p<.05). Supporting the hypothesis, alcohol use has a significant relationship to cyber victimization, meaning that the more an individual consumes alcohol, the higher the risk of becoming a victim of cyber harassment. Drug use, on the other hand, had no significance. The coefficient of friends' binge drinking indicates a strong and statistically significant relationship with cyber victimization. Individuals with friends who engage in binge drinking are more likely to be victims of cyber victimization. Coefficient of drug use and cyber victimization had no significant relationship refuting my hypothesis. Friends' drug use also had no significant relationship to cyber victimization. In other words. Drug use, either self or friend, has no viable impact on whether an individual will fall victim of cyber harassment. Further examination of the data in Table 5 suggests that an individual who has experienced childhood victimization, such as been spanked or hit by an adult, is also more likely to experience cyber victimization (B=.220, p<.05). Cyber offending and cyber victimization indicated a strong relationship (B=.364, p<.001). The coefficient between reporting to friend/family and cyber victimization indicated a negative but statistically significant relationship (B=-.499, p<.05) indicating that reporting an offense can lower the risk of falling victim. Lastly, violence approval and cyber victimization also demonstrated a significant correlation (B=.136, p<.05). This implies that an individual with higher approval for violence is more likely to become a victim of cyber harassment. In examination of regression results in table

5; age showed no correlation to cyber victimization. Education level also showed no significant impact on cyber victimization. Sexual orientation also showed little to no significant influence on cyber victimization as well as relationship status. When examining gender and cyber victimization, gender showed no significance in increase of cyber victimization.

Table 5: Regression Results of Cyber Victimization

Variables	Cyber Victimization	
	B	SE
Low Self Control	.041*	.019
Assimilation	-.066*	.032
Alcohol Use	.033*	.107
Drug Use	.197	.149
Friend Binge Drinking	.723*	.324
Friend Drug Use	.260	.237
Childhood Victimization	.220*	.092
Cyber Offending	.364***	.090
Report to Friend/Family	-.499*	.209
Violence Approval	.136*	.064
Age	-.059	.029
Gender	-.052	.238
Education Level	.001	.117
Sexual Orientation	-.578	.344
Single Not Dating	-.324	.301
Single Dating	.067	.283
Model Statistics		
Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2	.244	

*p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p <.001*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is important to note the significant possibility that intimate partner cyber harassment victims and offenders are often interconnected. As noted in table 4 and 5, cyber offending and cyber victimization were included in each of the regression results as variables due to the occurrence that one is likely to cause the other and likewise. Past research supports my findings concluding that victim-offender overlap exists for intimate partner victimization across a variety of measures (Tillyer, & Wright, 2014). The victim-offender overlap was first introduced by Von Hentig (1948) stating, those who commit violence and those who are victims of it are often the same individuals. Tillyer et al. (2014) examined the prevalence and correlates of intimate partner violence victimization and offending, as well as the overlap of the incidences. Results of the study suggested common correlations between both variables for both males and females across various measures of intimate partner violence. This study was indictive of similar findings showing respondents who reported being victims of a form of abuse, childhood and/or IPV, were also offenders. For instance, if an individual experience or witnessed abuse as a child, such as being spanked or witnessing his or her parents abuse, it is likely that this individual will not only be a victim but will also be an offender at some point in his or her life. It is safe to assume that this correlates with the variable of violence approval. Table 4 and 5 both demonstrate a positive relationship illustrating how violence approval impacts both cyber harassment victimization and cyber harassment offending. Further, those who reported offending behaviors also reported to have been victims at some point in life as well.

Findings in this study provided information on variables which are risk and protective factors, among a specific minority. This study shed light on the impact of IPCH among Mexican America students. As noted, drug use demonstrated little to no impact on cyber harassment but

showed some significance on victimization. It is possible that drug use can lead to behavior that can be considered inappropriate or embarrassing. This may therefore be witnessed by and captured by an ex-partner and then posted or shared resulting in increased likelihood of victimization. A photo or video of a person under the influence can be detrimental to the individual involved.

Results showed that low level of assimilation increased the risk of victimization, supporting previous research. In other words, the less assimilated an individual in a relationship is the higher the chances of victimization by their current or ex-partner. An example of this would be a relationship or ex-intimate relationship where levels of assimilation vary between a relationship. For instance, a woman highly assimilated and a lower-level assimilated male can result in an increased likelihood of male victimization.

Other variables demonstrated statistical significance which should raise awareness on which factors influence IPCH. For example, the indication that the level of low self-control plays an important role on an individual to be an offender and a victim. It is well speculated that a person with low self-control can result in criminal behavior as discussed in the General Theory of Crime. However, an individual with low self-control, as shown in this study, is more likely to have an increase likelihood of victimization as well as offending. In other words, it is possible that low self-control contributes to the lack of judgement and realization that their behavior can be subject to being used against them in retaliation for an ill terminated relationship or hostile breakup. Similarly, violence approval – how peers view and approve the behavior, also determines whether an individual will offend.

Results also showed that relationship status can affect offending. An individual who is single and currently not dating, for instance, is more likely to be an offender than an individual

who is currently single and dating or in a monogamous relationship. This could suggest that it can be due to lovers' scorn, a badly ended relationship, or resentment. Further, it can imply that those who are single may not be over the past relationship and still hold ill feelings towards the ex-partner. Those who "moved on" and are dating or in another relationship may have found closer and have no need to "get even" or offend the other person.

Looking at current and past studies, jealousy could also be an indicator and viable possibility for cyber harassment. CH follows similar patterns and trends regarding victimization and offending of its traditional-physical counterpart of harassment. As cyber harassment is on the rise, similarities between traditional-physical harassment and cyber harassment are vital to building a defense against cyber harassment. Just as relationships are being established and taking place in cyberspace, so is every aspect of life. People are no longer only using the internet to search for information but in turn, people are working online, communicating online, making, and breaking relationships online and thus having a life which takes place in virtual space. Crime is no exception. It is essential for cyber harassment crime to be addressed successfully and appropriately. It is imperative for researchers to study and investigate factors that lead to cyber harassment at a micro-social level so that we can understand and prevent this behavior. To prosecute, it is important to know and understand what causes the behavior. The hope is in deterrence and to do so, one needs to understand IPCH and consider cultural diversities, especially of those in this fast-growing minority.

It is important to educate Mexican American students on how to avoid becoming victims, offenders, and wrongfully accused because although there are laws in place to prosecute against IPCH violations it is difficult to determine exactly where a line is drawn, and an individual is truly committing a crime. For instance, acts committed by an intimate partner, or ex-partner, may

have been an unreasonable perception of communication. In other words, an individual can face

jail and or a fine due to a false claim made in retaliation or misunderstanding. Furthermore,

because Texas CH law leave it to the individual to deem behavior as criminal, various acts may

be construed as IPCH when, in fact, they are not. Sporadically checking in with someone is far

different from persistent unwanted behavior. The key is stating the behavior is truly unwanted

and acknowledging the behavior is undesirable. Because the law is extremely broad in this area

the only defense for an individual being wrongfully accused of IPCH is citing such unfounded

accusations. Other defenses can involve citing freedom of speech and proving no malicious

intent. On the other hand, proving IPCH victimization can be just as difficult because of the

laws' neglect to be specific which is why cyber harassment education is crucial. Just as cyber

harassment offending can be wrongfully determined, victimization can be overlooked or

neglected. A clear, concise, and universal definition needs to be set so that there are no blurred

lines or shades of grey for interpretation to avoid wrongful accusing and victimization neglect.

Additionally, the fact that "pager" is included in the wording of the Texas Penal Code

demonstrates that this law is outdated and needs to be revised so that it is more definite and

clearer. As the internet becomes more part of our daily lives, law should integrate and evolve

with it. It is crucial that there is no doubt for misinterpretation as previously stated, for the sake

of both individuals involved. As this study has suggested, individuals do report cyber

victimization to friends or family, however, the numbers are low. Why the reporting numbers are

low is concerning. The reason for low numbers of reporting could be due to lack of confidence

on law enforcement, beliefs that perhaps no repercussions will come to the offender, or simply

lack of information. Further investigation on the issue could provide necessary insight on

whether lack of reporting is due to belief that there is either no repercussions for the offender or the potential retaliation toward them for reporting it.

To futher illustrate the results of this study, Table 6: Summary Results of Hypothesis Testing, represent the research questions which lead to the hypotheses I set out to answer and their results.

Data revealed that hypotheses H1: Higher level of assimilation will increase the likelihood of IPCH offending, was refuted. Meaning that despite the level or amount an individual is assimilated to the host culture, the likelihood of IPCH offending is not increased. In other words, regardless if an individual is highly assimilated it will not affect whether he or she will become an offender to his or her current or ex-intimate partner. Research question Q2: Does an individual who has higher levels of assimilation become a victim less often than one who is not assmiliated? Lead to assumption made in hypotheses H2: that a higher level of assimilation will decrease the likelihood of IPCH victimization. Data findings did support this assumption showing that higher level of assimilation does potentially decrease the likelihood of victimization. As noted in my results section in Table 5, regression results of cyber victimization, assimilation had a negative but significant correlation to cyber victimization. In other words, higher levels of assimilation decreased the chances of becoming an offender. In this case, an individual who was less assimilated to its host culture was more prone to becoming a victim of intimate partner cyber harassment by a current or ex-partner, especially if the individual's current or ex-partner was highly assimilated in comparison. To assess this hypothesis, the study analyzed a correlation between cyber offending and assimilation factors and again correlation between cyber victimization and assimilation factors such as the parent's origin, the harasser/victim's origin.

Table 6: Summary Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses		Results
H1: Higher levels of assimilation will increase the likelihood of IPCH offending.	Rejected	There was no statistically significant relationship between assimilation and offending.
H2: Higher levels of assimilation will decrease the likelihood of IPCH for the victim.	Accepted	Higher levels of assimilation decreased the chances of becoming a victim.
H3: Alcohol use will be positively associated with a greater likelihood of IPCH offending	Accepted	Alcohol was positively associated with offending.
H4: Alcohol use will be positively associated with a greater likelihood of IPCH victimization.	Accepted	Alcohol was positively associated with victimization and increased likelihood of victimization.
H5: Mexican American females will be associated with a greater likelihood of IPCH as the offender.	Accepted	Females showed that they are more likely to be offenders.
H6: Low self-control will increase IPCH victimization.	Accepted	Higher levels of low self-control demonstrated an increased likelihood of offending.
H7: Low self-control will increase IPCH offending.	Accepted	Higher levels of low self-control increased the risk of victimization.

Research findings in this study also support H3 and H4 regarding affect of alcohol on IPCH offending and victimization. Research question R3 asked if the amount and frequency of alcohol use affect likelihood of IPCH offending. The third hypothesis made the assumption that alcohol use will be positively associated with a greater likelihood of intimate partner cyber harassment as the offender. Results showed that this finding was supported. The fourth hypothesis states that alcohol will be positively associated with a greater likelihood of IPCH for the victim. Research question Q4 was assessed and measured by the correlation between frequent alcohol consumption and the likelihood of posting a partner's embarrassing photo to test these hypotheses. The study found a positive correlation between alcohol consumption and the probability to become a victim. In other words, the more alcohol an individual consumed the stronger the possibility that the individual would become a victim. For instance, if an individual became inebriated he or she would have a higher chance of victimization. It is a general understanding that Alcohol use is a "liquid courage," it's curious that being inebriated makes it easier to unintentionally or intentionally offend or even fall victim of cyber harassment. However, in this study, alcohol deems more of a lack of self-control factoring not offending but victimization. For instance, due to drunken behavior of the victim, the offender takes advantage of the inebriated ex-partner by taking an embarrassing or inappropriate photo and posting it. The low self-control in turn comes from in ability to limit how much alcohol to consume and control their behavior. Drug use on the other hand, was insignificant to cyber harassment.

Interestingly, this study determined that gender does not play a role in victimization but does in offending. Findings in this study support hypotheses H5: Mexican American females will be associated with a greater likelihood of IPCH as the offender. Answering Q5: are Mexican-American females more likely to offend than males? In other words, results show that

Mexican-American females are more likely to be offenders of intimate partner cyber harassment more so than Mexican-American males. More specifically, results suggest that anyone can be victimized regardless of gender and sex. However, in terms of offending, Mexican-American female college students, are more likely to participate in intimate partner cyber harassment. Castro (2019) somewhat supports this finding, stating that one can become or fall a victim of an offending regardless of gender. Castro (2019) further determined in his study, there was no correlation between gender and online cyber-harassment and that if an individual is online, everyone has an equal chance of being subjected to cyber-harassment. Additionally stating that more than 45% of those posting their pictures online post fake pictures; thus, one cannot verify whether they are male or female. It is compelling, that in cyber space, one can disguise a person's true identity making it difficult to determine gender. One can infer that because ones' identiy on line can be masked by the anonymity of hiding behind a screen were anyone can be anyone it would provide confidence and courage facilitating the incidents of harassment of any given person at any time making it difficult for a victim to identify their offender. However, with this being acknowledged, one can study if a presumed profile is depicted as male or female This can further help determine if the profile is "female" or "male" leading to assume that perhaps one gender is more likely to cyber victim or cyber offender. For instance, regardless of whoever is behind the screen, the profile picture is non-binary and can lead to which would be more likely to be harassed. It can help determine if gender is truly a factor in cyber victimization and offending. Further conclusion of this finding suggests that male was underrepresented and therefore inaccurate and impractical to completely refute my hypothesis.

The sixth and seventh hypothesis H6 & H7: was supported in this study, as a strong correlation exists between low self-control and IPCH offending and victimization. The study

found a significant statistical correlation between low self-control and intimate partner harassment. Looking at Tables 4 (offending) and 5 (victimization), the relationship is both positive and significant. The findings suggest that higher levels of low self-control increase the likelihood of both the possibility of being a victim and an offender. Interestingly, like with more conventional domestic violence offending and victimization, both tend to be interconnected. In other words, as previously discussed, it is highly likely that if one is victimized the likelihood of being an offender also increases.

It is important to examine IPCH, as the gaps in research neglect key elements that are essential for policy making. Factors such as those found in this study support the idea that cyber harassment cannot be generalized to just males to females and age, but instead studied more in-depth and broken down to race. Some social groups, such as Mexican American women in this study, proved contradictory to previous research showing that females are not only victims but more likely to be offenders. My research demonstrates the need to break down groups further in order to more fully understand the factors that inform the increasingly prevalent phenomenon of cyber harassment and stalking. Understanding and explaining this phenomenon is imperative in creating effective and operative prevention procedures and policies for victimization and perpetration of intimate partner cyber harassment among all students, regardless of race or gender. However, just as with traditional intimate partner violence, it is possible that female Mexican American students may very well have different risk and protective factors than non-Hispanic whites and other minority groups linked to cultural differences that this specific study could not entirely prove. Although assimilation did not show significance in cyber harassment, it is possible that a more in-depth analysis is needed.

Since this and other studies have supported the finding of a positive correlation between alcohol use and CH victimization and not significant in offending suggests other issues at play when examining Mexican American college students. This implies that alcohol does not influence the outcome of a person's reasoning when they want to indulge in a cyber-harassment among Mexican American college students but instead increases the chance of falling victim. Alcohol often leads to impaired judgment and therefore a person who drinks will behave inappropriately. With the internet at most people's fingertips, that person's behavior can be caught on video and instantly posted online spreading widely and rapidly. Cyber harassment is facilitated through the use of phones connected to cyberspace. Past research has shown that females are more likely to be victims, and males are at a higher risk of being offenders. However, as mentioned, males were underrepresented in my study. A person's origin or their parent's origin also does not influence cyber harassment perception. Low self-control plays a significant role in influencing and being a victim as well as being an offender online. It raises concern over whether alcohol abuse triggers low self-control thus influencing cyber harassment, as mentioned before, it is possible the idea of "liquid courage" serves as the vehicle to decrease self-control allowing the individual to post and offend an ex-partner. Curiously enough, becoming a victim in this case due to alcohol consumption suggests that it causes the individual to act in a way that causes their intimate partner to become jealous, resentful, or aggressive where that partner (ex-partner) then in turn posts a "drunken" photo or inappropriate photo or comment. The opportunity presented by the animosity of cyber space plays a role in whether one will be a victim or offender. This study had a few limitations which need to be addressed. Limited to only the used of Texas A & M International University, this study was restricted to one university. For future expansion of this research, it is recommended that research be

expanded to multiple universities along the border region with a majority of Mexican American college student population such as colleges and universities along the border of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The current study also limits the generalized ability of the sample due to the being all university students and of the same university. Expanding the pool of the sample would provide a broader view of the results. In addition to the aforementioned limitations, an additional concern and limitation is the fact that 75% of sampled respondents were female and of heterosexual orientation. Drawing in more male respondents and providing a more equal sample can help illustrate a clearer picture to cyber harassment victimization and offending. Also sampling a greater number of diversified individuals of sexual orientation and gender can lead to other avenues of study to uncover important details. Lastly, as this study used a convenience sample a response rate was unable to be calculated.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THIS STUDY

In this study, I sought to answer a number of research questions related to whether being a Mexican American college female increases the likelihood of being a victim and/or offender of cyber harassment and which factors contribute to the findings based on college students in this demographic. I asked about level of assimilation, drug and alcohol use, relationship status, gender, age, relationship with parents, peer influences and violence experiences. My main aim in this study was to address the lack of research evidence on Mexican American college students and intimate partner cyber harassment. I sought to investigate whether level of assimilation, alcohol use, being female, and whether level of low self-control affects intimate partner cyber harassment. In my investigation, I examined responses made in the survey, with special attention paid to the respondents reporting instances which resulted in IPCH.

Accordingly, the major practical contribution of this study derives from the uniqueness of my findings. These findings provide contradictions to previous research which generalizes male versus female IPCH focusing on age groups and gender while neglecting cultural difference. In addition to expanding upon the limitations of the current study, additional empirical and theoretical work in IPCH literature is greatly needed. Future researchers should conduct more qualitative studies on Mexican American and Hispanic college students' use of technology to harass their current or ex-intimate partners. Additional research is needed to clarify the varying functions of IPCH to understand why it is occurring and the severity of its impact on this demographic. Expanding on this study will not only facilitate academic coherence in current research but will also show what factors of IPCH current research measurements are missing. In addition, research should expand on the impact IPCH has on its victims and its offenders. As previously discussed, victims and wrongfully accused offenders are suffering due to the neglect

and lack of research in this area. Specifically, it may be valuable to pinpoint what IPCH acts cause the most emotional and psychological damage to create preventative and educational programs.

Essentially, further research of Mexican American college students in IPCH is needed before making clinical or policy recommendations based on these data. However, taken together with prior research, the current findings highlight the importance of IPCH as a factor of IPV that should be assessed in clinical settings to avoid limitations such as those in this study. As a result of the present findings, Mexican American students should all be educated on safety and privacy in the use of technology. For instance, a course or seminar offered to all new college students enrolled in the university to encourage individuals who may experience or may already be experiencing IPV to document the harassment (e.g., screenshot abusive text). Informing the student to sustain concrete evidence if they seek protection, not only from future harassment, but also to protect themselves from malicious retaliation or wrongful accusations. Educating upcoming freshmen or new admitted students can help prevent false accusations of offense and encourage victims to report. It is vital that college campuses consider educating students on the role of technology in IPV. Additionally, educational institutions should include IPCH in policies, regarding violence, which will help guarantee that students experiencing IPCH, or any other form of cyber abuse, will be protected and provided with technology safety resources.

Taking race into consideration, for instance, when evaluating cyber harassment can help identify prevalence among specific groups. Level of assimilation, for example, was found to be a key variable in cyber harassment victimization. Meaning, that the less an individual is assimilated the higher the likelihood of becoming a victim. Therefore, it can be assumed that if there is a disparity in level of assimilation in a couple or ex-couple, chances are that if the female

is more assimilated than the male, the likelihood the male will experience cyber harassment is increased. Essentially, identifying those who may be more vulnerable and at risk. This information will assist in pursuing a more in-depth study which will allow policy makers, law enforcement, and those who can design initiatives, system tools and proactive actions to better address cyber harassment offenders and prevent wrongfully accused offenders.

Additionally, monitoring system applications or "apps" can be created with better understanding and a clearer definition to detect such criminal behaviors online while using social media. For instance, although Facebook contains monitoring/reporting system, however, moderators are solely responsible for deeming a post harassment and taking action. In some cases, Facebook will not agree with the report and do nothing. In other words, Facebook will decide whether to suspend an account depending on their definition of harassment. More specifically, if an offender is reported by "X" number of users, the offender is band from use for a specific time. The offender is placed in "Facebook Jail." However, the offender must be reported before the social platform acts. In other words, if the offender is not reported or not reported by enough individuals, the offender will continue to harass. Additionally, Facebook must agree that what the offender posted is considered harassment by their definition. This study sheds light on the importance of education on cyber harassment and low self-control. For example, if an individual with low self-control can be educated on the hazards of drinking and potential victimization perhaps CH can be prevented. Understanding the limits and repercussions is essential and this study illustrates the potential of such occurrences.

It is without saying that there are a few differences between cyber harassment and traditional-physical harassment that can have implications for IPCH research. With cyber communications individuals lack social and physical cues that face-to-face communications

have. For instance, unlike with physical harassment, in cyber harassment a message sent to a current or ex-partner the sender and receiver have no visual "real-time" account of eachother. In other words they cannot see or hear the tone of voice that is being used or the facial expressions made and can therefore misinterpret the intent of the message. The sender in this situation also cannot see or hear the recipients reactions and therefore a misinterpreted message can go without consequences because the recievers perceptions are ultimately unknown. In other words, both individuals are ingnorant to how the opposite partner or ex-partner feel or interpreted the message having serious reprecussions. Face-to-face, the same exact message can be received in a completely different maner as both individuals are able to see and hear the other persons' intentions.

Ultimately, this study reveals and supports a clear deficit in research regarding IPCH. The reason for this neglect could be due to feminist and political purposes or in ability to establish efficient guidelines as to what truly defines cyber harassment. Regardless, the need for further research persists. Scholars studing intimate partner violence frequently utilize standardized methods to examine the occurrence of IPV but they fail to create an in-depth analysis containing the new forms of online intimate partner violence such as cyber harassment among Mexican American college students. It is highly possible that researchers are underestimating the occurrence of IPCH. Since there is limited research on IPCH, future research should consider current parameters and delve deeper conducting both qualitavive and quantitative studies to examine key variables ans contextual factors which may be associated with IPCH in diverse populations for a bigger picture.

This study evidently illustrated and provides valuable insight on IPCH among Mexican American college students which desperately calls for further assessment. Going beyond, this

study delves deeper and exposes the reality which researchers have failed to address which can provide more detailed information on the phenomena. With such information at hand, this research eluminates the possibility of contribututution to future development of effective policy, education initiatives, and preventative models for IPCH.

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Appendix A
Frequency and Correlates of Cyber-Harassment and Cyber-Stalking

Instruction: please circle the best answer for you.
Section A: Demographic information:
1. What is your age? _____

2. What race/ethnicity do you consider yourself to be?
    1) Hispanic; 2) Non-Hispanic White; 3) African American; 4) Other

3. What is your gender?
    1) Male; 2) Female;   3) Transgender;   4) other

4. What is your sexual orientation?
   1) Heterosexual (sexually attracted to people of the
       opposite sex)
   2) Homosexual (sexually attracted to people of one's own
       sex)
   3) Bisexual (sexually attracted to both men and women)
   4) Asexual (a person who has no sexual feelings or desires)

5. What is your university classification?
 1) Freshman; 2) Sophomore; 3) Junior; 4) Senior; 5) Graduate student
 4
6. What is your relationship status?
 1) Single/Not Dating; 2) Single/Dating;3) In a monogamous
             relationship/Married

7. Were you born in the U.S.?
    1) No;   2) Yes

8. What is the zip code of the place you live? _____

9. Was your mother born in the U.S.?
  1) No;   2) Yes;   3) Don't know

10. Was your father born in the U.S.?
  1) No;   2) Yes;   3) Don't know

11. Was your partner/ex-partner born in the U.S.?
    1) No;   2) Yes;   3) Don't know

12. Regardless of your own immigration status, how much do you worry that you,
a family member, or a close friend could be deported?
    1) Not at all;   2) A little;   3) Some;   4) A lot

Please indicate your language preference for question:
1= Only Spanish;   2 = More Spanish than English;   3=Both Equally;
  4 = More English than Spanish;   5= Only English   6. Other language

13. What language(s) do you prefer to speak at home?   1 2 3 4 5 6

14. What language(s) do you prefer to speak with your friends? 1 2 3 4 5 6

15. In general, in what language(s) are the movies, T.V. and   1 2 3 4 5 6
radio programs you prefer to watch and listen to?

16. In what language(s) do you usually think?   1 2 3 4 5 6

17. Your close friends are:
                    1) All Latinos/Hispanics;
                    2) More Hispanics than Non-Hispanics;
                    3) About half & half;
                    4) More Non-Hispanics;
                    5) All Non-Hispanics;

Section B. In the last year, please indicate the frequency you (your partner/ex-partner) have done the following on social media within a period of a week:
18). I looked through partner/ex-partner's photos on social media to find pictures with old/new partner
0=Never; 1=once a week ; 2= 2 times in a week; 3= 3 to 4 times a week; 4= daily; 5= hourly
19). I updated status to make partner/ex-partner jealous
0=Never; 1=once a week ; 2= 2 times in a week; 3= 3 to 4 times a week; 4= daily; 5= hourly
20). I wrote post on wall to taunt partner/ex-partner
0=Never; 1=once a week ; 2= 2 times in a week; 3= 3 to 4 times a week; 4= daily; 5= hourly

Specify "yes or no or I don't remember/know" to the following:
21). Used social media to spread rumors about partner/ex-partner
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember/I Don't know
22). Created a false profile on social media (i.e., Facebook or Instagram) of my partner/ex-partner to cause them problems
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember
23). Posted inappropriate or embarrassing photos of partner/ex-partner
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember
24). Wrote inappropriate or mean things about partner/ex-partner on friend's wall
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember
25). Posted nasty or spiteful comments on a photo of partner/ex-partner
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember

Following questions are on your partner (ex-partner). Please answer to the best of your knowledge:

26). Partner/ex-partner updated status to make you jealous
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember/I Don't know

27). Partner/ex-partner posted on wall to taunt me
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember/I Don't know

28). Partner/ex-partner created a false profile on social media of me to cause me problems
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember/I Don't know

29). Partner/ex-partner used a social media account to spread rumors of you
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember/I Don't know

30). Partner/ex-partner posted inappropriate or embarrassing photos of you
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember/I Don't know

31). Partner/ex-partner wrote inappropriate or mean things about you on friend's wall
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember/I Don't know

32). Partner/ex-partner posted nasty or spiteful comments on a photo of you
    1) No; 2) Yes; 3)I Don't remember/I Don't know

Section C: <u>Thinking back to the previous set of questions in "Section B,"</u> please rate how strongly you felt with your partner (ex-partner)'s behavior. Not at all = "0" to Extremely = "7"

When the behavior first started, I felt: 33

33. Anger?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
34. Anxiety?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
35. Fear?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
36. Helplessness?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
37. Sadness?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
38. Sickness?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

As the behavior progressed, I felt: 34

39. Anger?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
40. Anxiety?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
41. Fear?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
42. Helplessness?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
43. Sadness?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
44. Sickness?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

45. If you were the victim of any of the above events mentioned in "Section B", did you or someone report to the police?
    1) No;   2) Yes

46. If you were a victim of any of the events mentioned in "Section B", did you seek help from other family members, friends, or social organizations?
    1) No;   2) Yes

Section D: Respondents Characteristics. Please identify how true each of the following statements are 37

0 = not true;   1= a little true; 2 = somewhat true; 3 = pretty true; 4 = very true

47. I often try new things just for fun or thrills, even if most   0 1   2 3 4
people think those are a waste of time

48. When nothing new is happening, I usually start looking for
something exciting   0 1 2 3 4

49. I often do things based on how I feel at the moment   0 1 2   3   4

50. I sometimes get so excited that I lose control of myself   0 1 2 3 4

51. I like it when people can do whatever they want, without   0 1 2 3 4
strict rules and regulations

52. I often follow my rules, without thinking through all the details   0 1 2 3 4

53. I change my interests a lot, because my attention often shifts   0 1 2 3 4
to something else

54. During the past year, how often did you have at least one drink of alcohol?"
     1) Never; 2) Less than once a month; 3)1-3 times a month; 4)4 or more times
a month

55. During the past year, how often did you have five or more drinks of alcohol on
one occasion?"
1) Never;   2) Less than once a month;   3)1-3 times a month; 4)4 or more times a
month

56. During the past year, how often did you use any type of prohibited drug?
     1) Never; 2) Less than once a month;   3)1-3 times a month; 4)4 or more times
a month

57. Do you have any friends who usually drink five or more drinks on one
occasion?
          1) No;   2) Yes

58. Do you have any friends who used any prohibited drugs?
          1) No   2) Yes

59. During the past year, on average how many hours do you spend on social media
such as Facebook/Twitter/Instagram **each day**? _____

Section E: Family experience

60. During your **childhood or adolescence**, did you observe your parents or people you lived with threatening one another or beating one another?
1) No   2) Yes

During your **childhood or adolescence**, did you experience any of the following acts **at the hands of your parents or caregiver**?
61. They shouted or yelled at you?   1) No;   2) Yes
62. Hit you with a fist/belt or kicked you? 1) No;   2) Yes
63. Threw or knocked you down?   1) No;   2) Yes
64. Slapped or spanked you?   1) No;   2) Yes
65. How is your relationship with your mother?
   1) Bad; 2) Not so good; 3) Good;   4) Very good;
5) N/A
66. How is your relationship with your father?
        1) Bad; 2) Not so good;   3) Good;   4) Very good;   5) N/A

Please rate your approval of the following situations:

67. A husband (or male intimate partner) is acting in a verbally aggressive or verbally abusive way toward his wife (or female partner) on social media or via digital means (i.e., on Facebook, Twitter, email, or text)
1) Always disapprove; 2) Sometimes disapprove; 3) Sometimes approve; 4) Always approve

68. A wife (or female intimate partner) is acting in a verbally aggressive or verbally abusive way toward her husband (or male intimate partner) on social media or via other digital means (i.e., on Facebook, Twitter, email, or text)
1) Always disapprove; 2) Sometimes disapprove; 3) Sometimes approve; 4) Always approve

69. Use a romantic partner's personal email password without their knowledge
1) Always disapprove; 2) Sometimes disapprove; 3) Sometimes approve; 4) Always approve

70. Use a current romantic partner's social media password without their knowledge
1) Always disapprove; 2) Sometimes disapprove; 3) Sometimes approve; 4) Always approve

71. Use your current romantic partner's bank account password without their knowledge
1) Always disapprove; 2) Sometimes disapprove; 3) Sometimes approve; 4) Always approve

72. Use a tracking app to monitor your significant other without their knowledge
1) Always disapprove; 2) Sometimes disapprove; 3) Sometimes approve; 4) Always approve

End of the survey. Thank you very much!

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