Cyberbullying among College Students: A Look at Its Prevalence at a U.S. Catholic University

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Abstract: The intention of this study was to make a positive contribution to the scant literature on cyberbullying at the post-secondary level. Participants were 187 undergraduate students matriculated at a large U.S. Northeastern metropolitan Roman Catholic university. The focus of the study was on the prevalence of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration at the university. Eight students (4.3%) indicated that they were victims of cyberbullying at the university level; a total of 14 (7.5%) students acknowledged having participated in bullying at that level. A significant finding had to do with the comfort level of students in reporting cyberbullying. A comparison of the results of our study to those of the only other study of cyberbullying conducted at an institution of higher learning with the same religious affiliation revealed similar results.

Keywords: *Cyberbullying, college students, catholic university*

Introduction

Like doctors without borders, 21st Century bullying is an issue without borders. Traditionally, bullying was primarily a schoolyard phenomenon. This is no longer the case; contemporary forms of electronic communication have had a transformational impact on the nature of bullying extending its borders well beyond the schoolyard. Cyberbullying, a term coined by Canadian Bill Belsey (www.cyberbullying.ca), invades the privacy of our homes and slithers beyond our national borders making it a global issue (Campbell, 2005).

Until the 1970s bullying was not deemed all that serious; those bullied were advised not to allow it to bother them, not to be so sensitive; they were told to toughen up and, in fact, it was even thought to be a normal part of growing up. This kind of thinking changed with the in-depth study of school bullying undertaken by Swedish researcher and Professor of Psychology Dan Olweus at the University of Bergen, Norway (Olweus, 1973). Since, there has been a body of research into the matters of both traditional (i.e. in person) bullying and cyberbullying in the schools, grades K-12 (Ang & Goh, 2010; Aricak, et al., 2008; Campbell, 2005; Li, 2007, 2008; Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2007; Raskauskas and Stotz, 2007; Shariff and Gouin, 2006) primarily with a focus on middle school and in the workplace, coupled with the emergence of bullying prevention programs. In the 1980's Qlweus conducted the first intervention study against bullying now: Olweus' Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP); it is widely regarded as the finest of such programs. The negative consequences of traditional bullying have been documented (Beale & Hall, 2007; Campbell, 2005; Finkelhor, Mitchell & Wolak, 2000; Herring, 2002; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Rigby, 2003; Ybarra, Diener-West & Leaf, 2007). Research into consequences of cyberbullying on adolescents is still in its infancy (Campbell, 2005; Patchin, & Hinduja, 2006).

Although researchers have been studying cyberbullying, the newness of this phenomenon makes for a scarcity of literature on cyberbullying compared to that on traditional bullying and, hence, a need for more research in this area (Hanewald, 2009). Moreover, when it comes to bullying research in higher education (i.e. at the college or university levels) there is an obvious void; although research in this area is growing, until recently, little research has focused on the areas of both traditional and cyberbullying in post-secondary education. It is almost as if it were presumed that bullying simply ends when students leave high school and enter the ivory towers. This accounts for the element of surprise when Englander's study (2009) revealed that bullying did occur in college when this was not initially anticipated. Yet, the very existence of workplace bullying is an indicator that this presumption is unwarranted (Kowalski, Toth & Morgan (2018); Yamada (2008); Herelick (2011); Fapohunda (2013). There is no apparent

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justification for believing that bullying ends in high school and picks up again in the workplace after students are awarded college degrees. Rather a more viable alternative is that bullying follows one to college (*Wall Street Journal, 2010*). In fact, it wouldn't seem so bizarre to suggest that it follows one from just about cradle to grave. There is, then, an unfortunate gap in the literature and hence a need for researchers to study both traditional bullying and cyberbullying in post-secondary education (MacDonald, 2010; Sellers, Wray, Meeker & Moulton, 2009; Walker, Sockman & Koehn, 2011).This study is intended to make a positive contribution to the scant literature on cyberbullying in higher education recognizing like Englander (2009) that it too will be a small start in a wide-open field of study. It is unfortunate that it took the untimely 2010 suicide of a college student, Tyler Clementi, who was cyberbullied, to prompt researchers to pay more attention to post- secondary cyberbullying (Baldasare, Bauman, Goldman & Robie, 2012).

Literature Review

An examination of the literature at the post-secondary level reveals an absence of consistency in findings Faucher, Jackson and Cassidy's study (2014) found that well over 20% of college students had been victims of cyberbullying within the past 12 months, yet they cite other studies in which the prevalence rate varies anywhere from 7% to 62%. Faucher, Jackson and Cassidy's study used a 100 item online survey distributed through the mailing lists of a number of university groups. The survey consisted of yes/no, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. At the start of the survey, cyberbullying was defined as the use of"… language that can defame, threaten, harass, bully, exclude, discriminate, demean, humiliate, stalk, disclose personal information or contain offensive, vulgar or derogatory comments. Cyberbullying is intended to harm or hurt the recipient."

The other studies that they reference include that of: Finn (2004) in which 10%-15% of undergraduates at the University of New Hampshire were found to have been cyberbullied; Molluzzo and Lawler (2012) in which 7% of students at the university level reported having been cyber-bullied; Schenk and Fremouves (2012) which found that 9% of the students surveyed experienced cyberbullying at least four times; Walker, Sockman and Koehn (2011) which found that 11% of undergraduates at the university level have been cyberbullied; Wensley and Campbell (2012) which reported that 12% of first year undergraduates were victims of cyberbullying in the last 12 months, and Zhang, Land and Dick (2010) which found that 62% of students were victims in the past year.

Finn's (2004) measure was a survey of undergraduate students focusing on two specific kinds of online harassment: e-mail and I-M. The term cyberbullying was not used. Instead he spoke of online harassment and used the term cyberstalking which he said includes threatening and/or harassing behavior through the use of computers which made the receiver afraid.

Molluzzo and Lawler's (2012) study's measure was an electronic cyberbullying perception survey. Participants were Pace University students taking a required computer course. They were queried as to their perceptions regarding the prevalence and prevention of cyberbullying. Bullying was defined as "a form of aggression in which one student or a group of students, physically or psychologically, harasses another college student over a long period of time.' (Hazier, Hoover and Oliver, 1992). Cyberbullying is defined as "any behavior performed through digital or electronic media by college students or groups of college students that repeatedly (overtime) communicates aggressive or hostile messages intended to inflict discomfort or harm on other students (Tokunaga, 2010, p.278). As such, it is taken to be an extension of bullying.

Schenk and Fremouves's (2012) measures included a demographic questionnaire, a 47 item internet experience questionnaire focusing on cyberbullying perpetrators, traditional experiences of bullying and cyberbullying victimization with a sample of 856 participants over the course of one academic year. Cyberbullying was defined as "a repeated, intentional act with the purpose of harming another person through technologies such as e-mail, cell phone, messaging, social networking, chat rooms, and instant messaging." Having used Olweus' definition of traditional bullying, he notes that it contains elements that overlap with the definition of cyberbullying that he has given.

Walker, Sockman and Koehn (2011) used a 27 item survey of 127 undergraduate students from the departments of science, technology and education. Queried were instances of cyberbullying experiences by students and forms of cyberbullying. Besides closed demographic questions and closed questions inquiring about instances of hearing about and experiencing cyberbullying at the university, an open-ended question was also included to permit students to offer other experiences of cyberbullying. Haber and Haber's (2007) definition of cyberbullying was employed.

Zang, Land and Dick's (2010) study employed an online survey, but to increase the response rate and to better able generalization of their research results also used was a paper-based survey. There were 87 responses to the online survey and 47 responses to the paper-based survey. The definition of Smith et al. (2008) was adopted for the study, "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contacts, repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself."

Additional studies also demonstrating the disparity of findings at the university level include: Schenk's (2012) which found 8.6% were victims of cyberbullying; Kraft and Wang's (2010) which reported that 10% were cyberbullying victims and, the studies of Dilmac (2009) and Aricak, et al. (2009) at Seleuk University which found that 55.3% and

54.4% of students were cyberbullied respectively. Zalaguett and Chatters (2014) found that 19% of the students surveyed were victims of cyberbullying in college; 35% were victims in high school and, Selkle's study at three Midwest and one Western college disclosed that 27.2 % had experienced some form of cyberbullying while in college (45% were victims; 19% were bully victims; 8% were bullies).

Schenk's (2012) measures included a demographic questionnaire and internet experience questionnaire (IEQ) and a SCL-90-R self -report survey. The demographics queried the student's age, ethnicity, marital status, class status, GPA, mental health services history and Internet use.

The IEQ was a 47 item questionnaire inquiring as to perpetration and victimization of cyberbullying and types of cyberbullying. The SCL-90-R survey assessed symptoms of psychopathology, etc. The study was conducted over the course of one academic year and had 856 participants, students enrolled at the time in an undergraduate psychology course who were offered extra credit for participating. Cyberbullying was defined as "a repeated, intentional act done with the purpose of harming another person through technologies such as e-mail, cell phone messaging, social networking, web sites, chat rooms and instant messaging."

Kraft and Wang's (2010) study was a 69 question online survey sent by email to sophomores, juniors and seniors at a public liberal arts college. Freshmen were not included in the study as the authors did not feel that they had sufficient college experience. Five of the questions were open-ended; the others were multiple choice questions. A lottery for a $50 Amazon.com gift certificate served as an incentive. Of the 5,806 surveys sent out, 471 were completed and returned. Cyberbullying was presented to respondents as, "Cyberbullying occurs when someone uses technology such as e-mail, cell phones, web cameras, or pagers to offend or embarrass others." In addition, examples of cyberbullying were also presented to respondents.

Dilmac's (2009) study contained three sections. The first section contained five demographic questions regarding age, sex, department, class year and socioeconomic level. The second contained questions specifically about cyberbullying, and the last section consisted of the Adjective Check List (ACL) (Gough, & Heilbrum, 1983). The participants were 666 undergraduate students from 15 programs in Turkey's Seleuk University's Faculty of Education.

Cyberbullying was defined as "an individual or groups willfully using information and communication involving electronic technology to facilitate deliberate and repeated harassment or threat to another individual or group by sending or posting cruel text and/or graphics using technological means" (Belsey, 2008). Participants were provided with this definition along with a set of examples of the same.

Zalaguett and Chatters' (2014) study used a 23 question survey consisting of two sections; one section contained demographic questions and the other questions regarding cyberbullying experiences. Cyberbullying was defined as "any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups who repeatedly communicate hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others (Smith, 2008; Tokunaga, 2010).

Selkie, et al. (2015) conducted an online survey of female students from undergraduate courses in communications, biology, nursing, and psychology. A $5 Starbucks gift was used as an incentive to participate. Participants were asked to respond "Yes," or "No" to a question asking whether they ever had witnessed, experienced, or engaged in cyberbullying while in college. Students answering "Yes" or "Don't Know" moved on to another set of questions asking what experiences they had with cyberbullying. They were then given 11 concrete examples of cyberbullying to each of which they responded whether they had been a victim, a perpetrator, or an observer. Noting that cyberbullying has no standardized definition, Selkie et al. references two commonly used definitions which include "willful and repeated harm inflicted though the use of computers, cell phones and other electronic devices," (Patchin and Hinduja, 2006) and "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself." (Smith, et al., 2008)

A literature review of the prevalence of cyberbullying among college students conducted by Cowie (2013) revealed additional findings: the UK's National Union of Students (NUS) Student Experience Report found that 7% of students were bullied while in college; a Finland- Student Health Survey (Porhala & Kunttu, 2008) found that 5.6% of college students were bullied relatively much or very much; also in Finland, another study found that 1% of university students were at least occasionally cyberbullied (Porhola, 2012) ; a study in Portugal (Almeida et al., 2012) found that 7.5% were victims of cyberbullying by mobile phone and 4.6% victims though the internet In addition, Englander's study (2009) at Bridgewater State College, found that 8% of the students reported having been cyberbullied; an Ohio State study (Smith et al., 2012) reported that 16.7% indicated that they were cyberbullied and, MacDonald's study (2010) at Indiana State University reported 21.9% of students were cyberbullied. In sum, the prevalence of cyberbullying at the post-secondary level ranges anywhere from 1% to 62%. This phenomenon is in need of further research.

Apart from the current study, the only other study of cyberbullying at a private Roman Catholic institution of higher learning is that of Zacchilli and Valerio (2011) which found that only 1% of 1st time in college students (freshmen) said that they had been cyberbullied while in college and only 5% said that they had bullied someone while in college; 2.9% of seniors said that they had been bullied while in college and 3.6% said that they had bullied someone while in college. Although both studies were conducted at private Roman Catholic institutions, Zucchilli and Valero's study was

conducted at a small liberal arts college; ours took place at a large metropolitan university. Since this study was also conducted at a religious affiliated institution, we found it to be of particular interest. The only other study of cyberbullying at an institution of higher education with a religious affiliation was that of Slovak, Crabbs and Stryffeler (2013) which was conducted at a small Midwest faith based university Christian but presumably non-Catholic. Their findings indicated a much larger percentage of both student victimization and perpetration (about 20%).

Zucchilli and Valero's study discusses the difference between traditional bullying and cyberbullying emphasizing the importance of having a clear definition of cyberbullying and proceeds to discuss various definitions (Patchin and Hinduja (2008); Smith et al. (2008); Vandebosch and van Cleemput (2008) but does not settle in on any particular one. The survey that their study used seemed to rely on the students' understanding of cyberbullying as it was not defined in the survey prior to students responding to the survey's questions. At the end of the survey were three open-ended questions one of which asked, "What is cyberbullying?" Unlike in Zucchilli and Valero's survey, prior to asking students to answer any questions pertaining to their experiences of cyberbullying, in our survey cyberbullying was defined as "the willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones and other electronic devices (Cyberbullying Research Center).

Zucchilli and Valero conducted two studies: one with the sample being freshmen and the other seniors. Our study's sample consisted of mostly freshmen and sophomores as the courses in which the survey was administered were introductory courses. Both studies were very similar in that they assessed cyberbullying perpetration and victimization in both college and primary/secondary school, and the means or technology (e.g. email, Facebook, etc.) employed, and student's reactions to the cyberbullying. The current study assessed the student's comfort level in reporting; Zucchilli and Valero inquired as to whether the student spoke to anyone about his/her having been a victim of cyberbullying and if so, to whom he/she spoke. Zucchilli and Valero suggested that it would be worthwhile for future studies to examine the effect (i.e. emotional reaction) of those who were perpetrators or victims; the current study did address this matter.

Method

The current study was conducted at a major northeastern metropolitan Roman Catholic university with a diverse student population of over 20,000. Three professors in diverse disciplines, accounting, philosophy and theology, from the College of Professional Studies who agreed to participate were asked to obtain permission to distribute surveys in their classes. A total of 187 undergraduate students (99 female and 88 male) were surveyed during the 2014 spring semester in six undergraduate courses. Approximately 165 students (88.2%) fell between the ages of 18 and 21; 57 students (38%) were freshmen, 28 (19%) sophomores, 40 (27%) juniors, and 23(15%) seniors; 28 students (15%) classified themselves as Asian, 37 (19.8%) black, 28 (15%) Hispanic, 66 (35.3%) white and the remainder said they were of two or more ethnic groups, and a total of 100 respondents (53.5%) identified themselves as being Roman Catholic; 28 (15%) Protestant; 20 (10.7%) professed no religious affiliation and the remainder all other groups.

Surveys were distributed to students in class; students were informed that participation was voluntary (i.e. that they were not obligated to participate) and that it was anonymous, and were thanked in advance for their participation. It was estimated that students should be able to complete the survey in about five minutes. However, no set time limit was placed on completion so as to ensure that students were able to carefully reflect on and answer the questions posed, and if this meant needing more time that they would have it. All students were able to complete the survey in or about the estimated time. Out of the 187 students surveyed 180 were valid responses. Near the semester's end, the survey's authors, both tenured professors at the university, one a philosophy professor and the other a business professor with a specialization in statistics, conducted an analysis of the data which was imported to excel.

A convenience sampling was used to collect data from primarily freshmen and sophomore students enrolled at the university. Students were asked about their cyberbullying experiences in a 20 item closed question survey developed by the survey's authors. To insure the validity of the questions, a pilot survey was conducted before the primary survey. The questions comprising the survey were reviewed for integrity by the IRB and received their approval.

The survey contained five demographic questions inquiring as to the student's gender, age, ethnicity, class status (freshmen, sophomore, junior or senior) at the university and religious affiliation, and 15 questions querying their cyberbullying experiences. A definition of cyberbullying preceded the questions on the students' cyberbullying experiences. Cyberbullying was defined as "the willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices." (Cyberbullying Research Center). The15 questions regarding cyberbullying experiences followed. Students were asked whether they had ever been a victim of cyberbullying while in college by another student or were ever a perpetrator and if so, to what extent and whether there was any specific characteristic that the cyberbullying targeted. Students were then asked about their comfort level in reporting cyberbullying to university faculty and/or administration. Like questions pertaining to the student's experience of cyberbullying in grade school and /or secondary school followed. Students were then asked about the technology that was involved in their cyberbullying experiences followed lastly by an inquiry as to the ways in which they were affected by the cyberbullying (the survey instrument is included in Figure 1 in the Appendix).

Findings

Eight students (4.3%) indicated that they were victims of bullying activity at the university level. A total of 14 (7.5%) students indicated that they had participated in bullying at that level. With respect to the ease with which students felt about reporting bullying activity, 20 (10.7%) reported being uncomfortable reporting it; 56 (29.9%) said that they would find little comfort in reporting it to university faculty or administrators; 60 (32%) indicated that they would have "moderate' comfort in reporting it, and 51 (27.3%) said they would be totally comfortable in reporting such activity. At the secondary school level, 52 students reported being victims (27.8%). A total of 14 students (7.5%) indicated that they did some bullying. Regarding technology and cyber-bullying: 32 students (17.1%) indicated that Facebook as the medium used; 22 (11.8%) indicated texting as the medium; next was Twitter and the remainder found e-mail, Instagram, Ask.fm, Flicker, Snapshot, chat rooms and on-line gaming sources of cyberbullying.

The effects of cyber-bullying were manifested in a number of ways: the majority of students (120/64.2%) indicated that it did not affect them at all; next most critical was decreased self- esteem followed by anxiety, loss or withdrawal from social contacts and experiences. It is interesting to note that only 27.3% of the students were totally comfortable in reporting cyber-bullying to the university. A total of 10.7% reported no comfort; 29.9% indicated little comfort; 32.1% were moderately comfortable in reporting cyber-bullying (Figure 1).
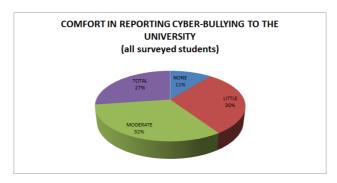

Figure 1. Comfort in reporting cyber-bullying to the university.

Results regarding level of comfort in reporting cyberbullying to the university when broken down by ethnicity are: Asian students: 10.7 % reported no comfort; 25% reported little comfort;35.7% reported moderate comfort, and 28.6% reported total comfort. Black students: 10.8% reported no comfort; 27.0% reported little comfort; 27% reported moderate comfort, and 35.1% reported total comfort.

Hispanic students: 21.4% reported no comfort; 25.0% reported little comfort; 28.6% reported moderate comfort, and 25.0% reported total comfort. White students: 6.1% reported no comfort; 31.8% reported little comfort; 37.9% reported moderate comfort, and 24.2% reported total comfort. Students of two or more races: 12.0% reported no comfort; 40.0% reported little comfort; 24% reported moderate comfort, and 24.0% reported total comfort. For percentage distributions with respect to comfort level in reporting cyberbullying by ethnicity (see Table 1 below).

Table 1 Comfort in Reporting Cyberbullying in College by Ethnicity

Comfort in Reporting Cyberbullying by Ethnicity Percentage Distributions					
Comfort	**Asian**	**Black**	**Hispanic**	**White**	**Two Or More**
None	11	11	21	6	12
Little	25	27	25	32	40
Moderate	36	27	29	38	24
Totals	28	35	25	24	24

Comparing victimization at the grade school level and the university level, there appears to be a statistically significant relationship (Table 2).

Table 2 Grade School Cyber-bullying Victims at College Level

| | **Grade School Victim** | | |
Undergraduate Victim	**No**	**Yes**	**Totals**
No	127	44	171
Yes	2	6	8
Totals	129	50	179

Of 179 individuals, 44 were victims in grade school but not in college; 6 were victims at both levels. This finding is suggestive of a need for a study of the characteristics of those 6 that make them different from the remainder of this group. A total of 129 students were not victims in grade school; 50 were victims in grade school and 127 were not victims at either level. The chi-square analysis of this group yielded a Pearson Chi Square of 9.216 (statistically significant). The p-value accompanying this statistic was .002. This means that, if the analysis is valid, the chances of seeing this pattern by chance are extremely low: 0.02%. There is, however, a cautionary note accompanying this chart- 1 cell had an expected count below 5 putting these conclusions on tentative grounds.

Further analysis of the data suggests that females are more likely to be bullied than males at the university level (Table 3).

Table 3 *Undergraduate Victims of Cyber-bullying by Gender*

| | **Undergraduate Victim** | | |
Gender	**No**	**Yes**	**Totals**
Female	92	7	99
Male	87	1	88
Totals	179	8	187

While there were 7 females that were victims the university level, there was only 1 male I nearly equal samples. This raises the question: Why is there a disproportionate impact on females?

Discussion

Findings of research on cyberbullying at the post-secondary level are inconsistent (Zang, et al., 2010) with cyberbullying victimization ranging anywhere between 1% and 62%. Although, macrocosmically, the current study adds to the inconsistency, microcosmically, there is some consistency. The consistency lies in the fact that victimization at those institutions of higher learning with a religious affiliation, specifically Roman Catholic, are very low in this very wide range of cyberbullying victimization. The findings of our study like those of Zuccilli and Valerio whose study was also conducted at a Roman Catholic institution were at the low end of this broad spectrum as well. Zuccilli and Valerio found that only 1% of freshmen and 2.9% of seniors were victims; our study found that only 4.3% of students surveyed reported being victims. With respect to perpetration of cyberbullying, students bullying others, our study and Zuccilli and Valerio's had similar findings: 7.5% and 5% respectively, relatively low percentages by comparison to percentages reported at many secular institutions.

Slovak, Crabb, & Stryffeler's study, the only other study of cyberbullying conducted at an institution of higher learning with a religious affiliation found a larger percentage of student victimization (20%). However, this institution's religious affiliation, although Christian, was not Roman Catholic.

The similarity of findings in both studies having a Roman Catholic affiliation with respect to both student victimization and perpetration of cyberbullying raises the question of whether the religious nature or affiliation of an institution could play a significant role with respect to the prevalence of cyberbullying. Because of the fewness of studies at religious affiliated institutions of higher learning, we can only speculate. Many more studies would need to be conducted before any viable conclusions could be drawn. And so, researchers at colleges and universities with religious ties must be encouraged to undertake studies of cyberbullying at their respective institutions.

A significant finding of the current study is that the majority of students were uncomfortable reporting instances of cyberbullying. Future studies need to attend to the question of why students feel uncomfortable reporting occurrences of cyberbullying. What accounts for this uncomfortableness? Knowing the reason(s) that students feel uneasy in reporting cyberbullying would be a step in the right direction toward seeing to it that students who are victims and those who are bystanders don't just stand by but instead report.

Unlike universities where specific policies on cyberbullying are often lacking (Cowie et al, 2014), this is not the case at St. John's University. St. John's University's Student Code of Conduct contains a clause on Computing and Cyber

Harassment which is made available to students online. Cyberbullying is a kind of behavior that does not meet the expectations of a student at the university and is therefore considered a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and is subject to disciplinary action. In fact, the university was one of the first institutions of higher learning in the region to have a distinctive clause on the same. The university has specific reporting procedures in place as well; any member of the university community may report an alleged violation of the Student Code of Conduct, in writing or in person, to the Dean of Students or a Student Conduct Administrator. When reported, the university's Counseling Center provides support for victims; clients are routinely screened for anxiety, depression and other concerns using the CCAPS (Counseling Center Assessment of psychological Symptoms-62). In addition, the university has an active bystander campaign that addresses issues related to cyber-bullying. Based on the findings of our research, apparently, even having mechanisms in place for reporting and support for victims, are not sufficient to put students at ease where they feel comfortable enough to pick up the mantel and report occurrences of cyberbullying.

It is our intention to conduct another study asking students why they are uncomfortable reporting cyberbullying. Could students feel that there might be some sort of repercussions if they were to report? Could they feel that reporting would be an exercise in futility as the reporting would fall upon deaf ears? Could students be unaware of the fact that there are procedures, etc. in place for cyberbullying despite their existence? Could students perceive the university community as possibly not being as empathetic as it believes itself to be with regard to cyberbullying and other matters? or, could it have something to do with the religious nature of the institution? If a more empathetic culture is needed, curriculum development can be helpful; one of the authors teaches a philosophy course, *Bullying and Moral Responsibility*, which fulfills a philosophy/ethics core requirement. This course has an academic service learning requirement which culminates in a presentation on bullying/cyberbullying to approximately sixty middle school students that are invited to the university. We can only hope that the empathetic, compassionate environment created, felt and experienced in the interaction between university and middle school students at these presentations is more than a temporary thing.

Students in Zacchilli and Valerio's study also had reservations with respect to reporting occurrences of cyberbullying. Like the researchers of the current study, Zacchilli and Valerio also wonder whether it is due to the religious nature of the institution that students may be less likely to report the same. Zacchilli and Valerio suggest that a measure of religiosity be included in future studies to see whether there is any religious association with bullying. Unlike Zuccilli and Valerio's study, ours did include a demographic question inquiring as the students' religious affiliation. 53% identified themselves as Roman Catholics; 15% as Protestants; 10.7% as having no religious affiliation and the remainder as all other groups (i.e. Jewish or Muslim). The majority of students in our survey had a Christian affiliation.

The notion of a possible connection between religiosity and comfortableness in reporting cyber-bullying is certainly interesting and worthwhile pursuing. There is then a need for studies that focus on comfortability in reporting cyberbullying which incorporate a measure of religiosity; these studies need to be conducted at both religious affiliated and secular institutions of higher learning.

Conclusion

The intent of the current study was to make a significant contribution to the scant literature on the cyberbullying at the post-secondary level. Toward this end an anonymous survey was distributed to 187 students at a large U.S. metropolitan Northeastern Catholic university under a controlled environment. A total of 4.3% of students indicated that they had been victims of cyberbullying while in college and 7.5% indicated that they had participated in cyberbullying at the university level. This study also revealed a significant finding with respect to the comfort level of students in reporting cyberbullying. The majority of students felt some level of discomfort: 10.7% indicated complete discomfort. 29.9% indicated little comfort; 32.1% were moderately comfortable and, 27.3% reported being totally comfortable.

. Another study (Zuccilli & Valerio, 2012) also conducted at a Catholic institution of higher learning found a 1%.victimization rate. This finding, like ours is very low in the wide range of victimization findings of cyberbullying studies and makes one wonder whether students who attend schools with a religious identity are less likely to cyberbully than those who attend secular schools. More studies need to be conducted investigating this phenomenon. Additionally, as in our study, the majority of respondents to Zuccilli & Valerio's study also reported being uncomfortable in reporting cyberbullying. Commonality of findings at both institutions in this regard also raises the question of whether there could be a connection between an institutions religious identity and reluctance to report cyberbullying. Undertaking research investigating a possible connection between the religious affiliation of an institution and/or its students and, comfortableness in reporting would make a valuable addition to the body of cyberbullying research.

.Zuccilli & Valerio also wondered whether there is this connection and suggest that future studies include a measure of religiosity. Although the current study did inquire as to the religious identity of the students surveyed (over 90% of

students identified themselves as Christian; 53.5% as Roman Catholic), it did not measure the strength of their religious feelings. This aspect too is worth investigating.

Since the institution at which this study was conducted has in place a specific policy on cyberbullying, a procedure for reporting and provisions for the support of victims, the extent to which students indicated that they were uncomfortable reporting cyberbullying was unexpected. We hope that the findings of this study will encourage others to undertake research on this matter as well.

Given the recognition that cyberbullying at the post-secondary level has been under recognized (Selkie, 2016), we call for researchers to address cyberbullying at the post-secondary level as vehemently as they have at the K-12 level. Knowledge is power; the more we learn about cyberbullying the closer we come to conquering cyberbullying. This paper adds to the knowledge base of cyberbullying in higher education and demonstrates the need for more researchers to pursue a possible link between the prevalence of cyberbullying and an institutions religious affiliation and the strength of students' religious faith.

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Appendix

Survey on Cyber-bullying: Its Existence and Types at an U.S. Northeastern Metropolitan Catholic University

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey by_____, Associate Professor of Philosophy, St. John's University. Your feedback is important in order to ensure the validity of the survey.
This survey should only take about 5 minutes of your time. Your answers will be anonymous.
Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me at_____.

1. What is your gender?
 o Female
 o Male

2. What is your age? ____
3. What ethnicity best defines you?
 o Black / African American
 o American Indian/ Alaska Native
 o Asian
 o Hispanic/Latino
 o White
 o Unknown
 o Two or More Races
 o Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

4. What category best defines your student status?
 o Freshman
 o Sophomore
 o Junior
 o Senior

5. Religious affiliation:
 o Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox
 o Protestant (Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran)
 o Jewish
 o Muslim
 o Other
 o None

Cyber-bullying is the willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices (Cyberbullying Research Center)

6. Have you ever been cyber-bullied as a university student by another student?
 o Yes
 o No

 If yes, to what extent?
 o Little
 o Some
 o A lot

 If yes, was there a specific characteristic that the cyber-bullying targeted?
 o Race or ethnicity
 o Religion or creed
 o National origin
 o Gender
 o Sexual orientation
 o Disability
 o Other: Specify_____

While a university student, have you exhibited cyber-bullying behavior **toward another student?**
 o Yes
 o No

If yes, to what extent?
 o Little
 o Some
 o A lot

If yes, was there a specific characteristic that the cyber-bullying targeted?
 o Race or ethnicity
 o Religion or creed
 o National origin
 o Gender
 o Sexual orientation
 o Disability
 o Other: Specify_____

8. To what degree of comfort do you have in reporting cyber-bullying to university
 faculty and/or administration?
 o No comfort
 o Little comfort
 o Moderate comfort
 o Total comfort

9. Did you experience cyber-bullying in grade and/ or secondary school as a **victim**?
 o Yes
 o No
If yes, to what extent?
 o A little
 o Moderately
 o A lot

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyber-bullying targeted?
 o Race or ethnicity
 o Religion or creed
 o National origin
 o Gender
 o Sexual orientation
 o Disability
 o Other: Specify_____

10. Did you experience cyber-bullying in grade and /or secondary school; as one exhibiting the cyber-
 Bullying behavior?
 o Yes
 o No

If yes, did you do it
 o A little
 o Moderately
 o A lot

If yes, your target was
 o Race or ethnicity
 o Religion or creed
 o National origin
 o Gender
 o Sexual orientation
 o Disability
 o Other: Specify_____

11. What technology was involved in your cyber-bullying experience?
 o e-mail
 o Texting
 o Face book
 o Twitter
 o You Tube
 o Instagram
 o Ask.fm
 o Flicker
 o Snapchat
 o Other: Specify_____-

12. In what ways has cyber-bullying affected you?
 o Interruption of education
 o Decreases in grades (GPA)
 o Loss or withdrawal from social contacts and experiences
 o Decreased self-esteem
 o Depression
 o Increase in anger management issues
 o Anxiety
 o Suicidal ideation or attempt
 o Not at all

Thank you for your time and assistance in helping shed light on the cyber-bullying phenomenon.

This survey received IRB Approval.