

Risk and Resilience of Online Social Media Relationships and Networks

Linda Charmaraman,
Huiying Bernice Chan, Amanda Richer, &
Budnampet “Pet” Ramanudom

For more information, contact:
mediaidentityproject@wcwonline.org

<http://www.wcwonline.org/Active-Projects/media-and-identity-study>

Shaping a
Better World
through
Research
& Action

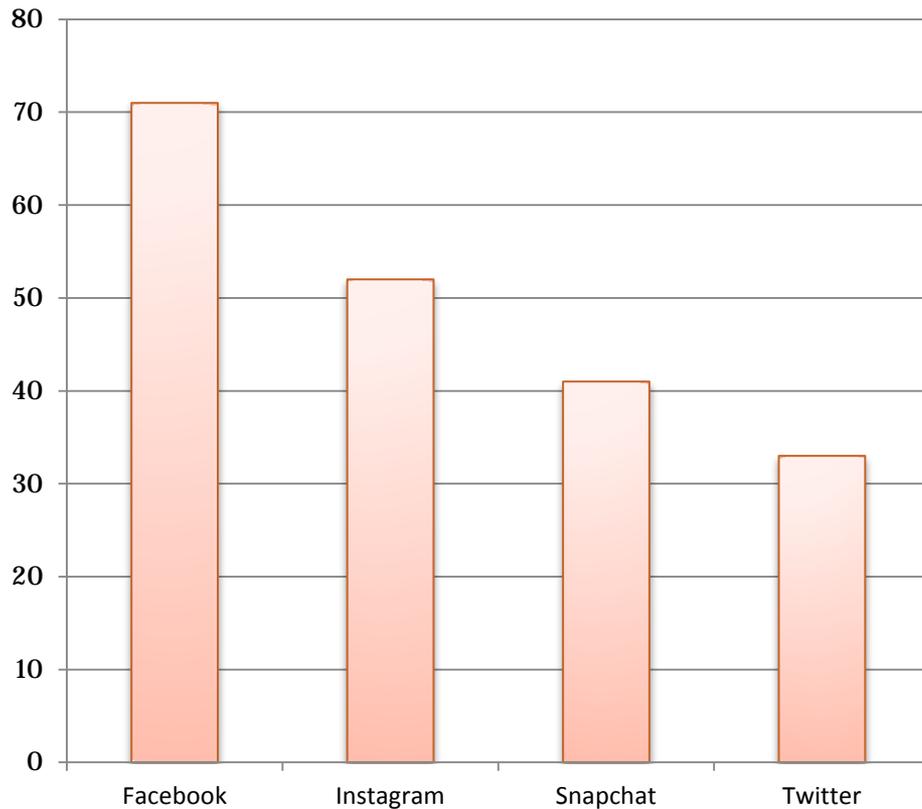
**Wellesley
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Women**

Overview

- Why should we care about adolescent social media use?
- Background on theoretical orientation and methods used
- Selected results and new substudy from the Media and Identity Project
 - **Study 1** – Women of color cultivating virtual social capital (Huiying)
 - **Study 2** – Cyber harassment: sexual and non-sexual (Amanda)
 - **Study 3** – Gender, race, and opportunity: Occupational identity, media stereotypes, and civic engagement (Pet)
- Dissemination and Future directions

A media-savvy generation

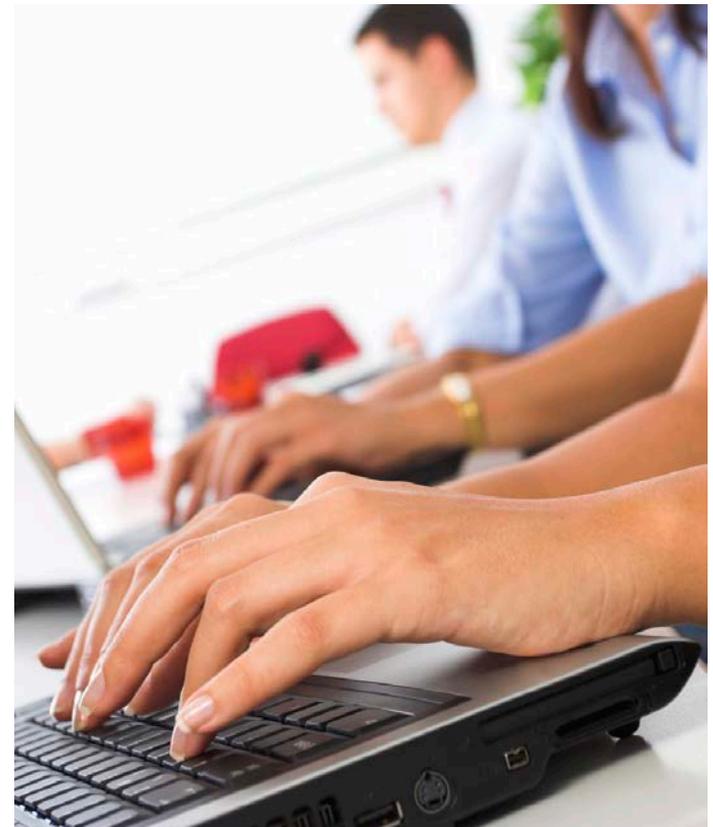
Percentage used by 13-17 year olds



- Pew Internet Project's Social Networking Fact Sheet (2015):
 - 95% of adolescents are now online and 81% of them are using social media site
 - Narrowing digital divide:
 - 79% of <\$30,000/yr vs. 78% of > \$75,000/yr
 - even homeless youth are on Facebook (75%)

Risky consequences of social media use

- creation and display of inappropriate content
- discovering unwanted pictures of themselves posted by other people
- higher exposures to sexual solicitations and bullying,
- psychosocial consequences such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness
- → higher likelihoods of substance abuse or unsafe sex



Promoting resiliency and well-being through technology

- Internet and Social media are
- Communication Tools that
 - Provide information, advice, life skills, services, employment, and support
 - Enable connectedness with others and an opportunity for self-identity formation
- Virtual Environments that
 - Establish and maintain relationships with peers, family, schools, work, community, services
 - Have the potential to empower and mobilize communities and individuals to initiate their own actions to promote well-being
 - Can deliver online interventions

(From Technology for Well-being Conference, Dublin, WHO, 2013)

Conceptual Frameworks – From traditional media to new “social” media

- Adolescent Identity, Media, and Sociocognitive Schema (AIMSS) (Lloyd, 2002)
 - The identity formation process is mediated by adolescents processing media either through using
 - proactive (i.e., **resilient**) schema — cognitive orientation toward positive peer interactions and healthy identity formation
 - or reactive (i.e., **risky**) schema — tendency to organize perceptions of a social environment based on maladaptive characteristics
- Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, 1974)
 - People are aware of their needs, decide between various outlets and content, weigh alternatives, and determine the media that they believe will provide the gratifications they seek
- Social Surrogacy Theory (Derrick et al., 2009)
 - Media provide opportunities to feel a sense of belonging and a refuge from social isolation

Gaps in prior research

- Research on how media messages can influence one's sense of occupational identity are scarce
- Vulnerable groups such as racial/ethnic minorities or women of color may use social media in unique ways that need in-depth study
 - Studies that include a large enough sample of Asian Americans for racial group comparisons are rare
- Most cyber harassment studies have been conducted on teens and there is less public attention on young adult cyber harassment
 - even less known about cyber sexual harassment
- Few studies compare across different measures of SES to find how the can be uniquely associated with cyber harassment victimization

Methodology

- Survey

- Purposive sampling for hard-to-reach vulnerable adolescents
 - Reached out to 273 colleges, universities, middle schools and high schools selected from national databases based on racial/ethnic and SES composition; over 90 student clubs; over 100 non-school organizations.
 - Placed 14 different Facebook ads which reached over 1.7 million Facebook pages targeting 13-25 year olds
- Linear regression models for normally-distributed outcomes
- Logistic regression models for dichotomous outcomes
- Depending on sub-study, we controlled for gender, mother's education, and perceived social status.

- Interview

- Interviews were conducted by the PI and 3 trained undergraduate interns, following a semi-structured interview guide.
- Independent coders employed content analysis (Patton, 2002) to develop a codebook of themes and sub-themes.
- Used Nvivo to increase our data administration and archiving capabilities (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as well as enhance our ability to identify inconsistencies in analysis (Bergin, 2011).

Media & Identity study demographics

- Online Survey (Funded by WCW 35th Anniversary Fund)
 - N = 2168
 - 74% female, 18% male, 2% transgender/other
 - 51% racial/ethnic minorities
 - 33% Asian Am, 7% Black, 6% Hispanic, and 5% Multiracial
 - 19% LGBT
 - 96% US-based (47 states), 4% came from 26 countries
 - Mean age 19.32 (SD=2.164); 14% aged 12-17
 - Mean mom's education = 3.68 (did not complete college)
- Interviews (Funded by RWJF New Connections program)
 - 1-2 hour long interviews
 - 34 young women of color – double minority status
 - 14 Asian American, 8 Black, 4 Latina, 8 Multiracial: 3 Latina/W, 3 Black/W, 1 Asian/W, 1 Native/W
 - 35% Queer/homosexual/bisexual/bicurious/questioning
 - 11 different U.S. States, representing all regions of the country (west, east, midwest, south)

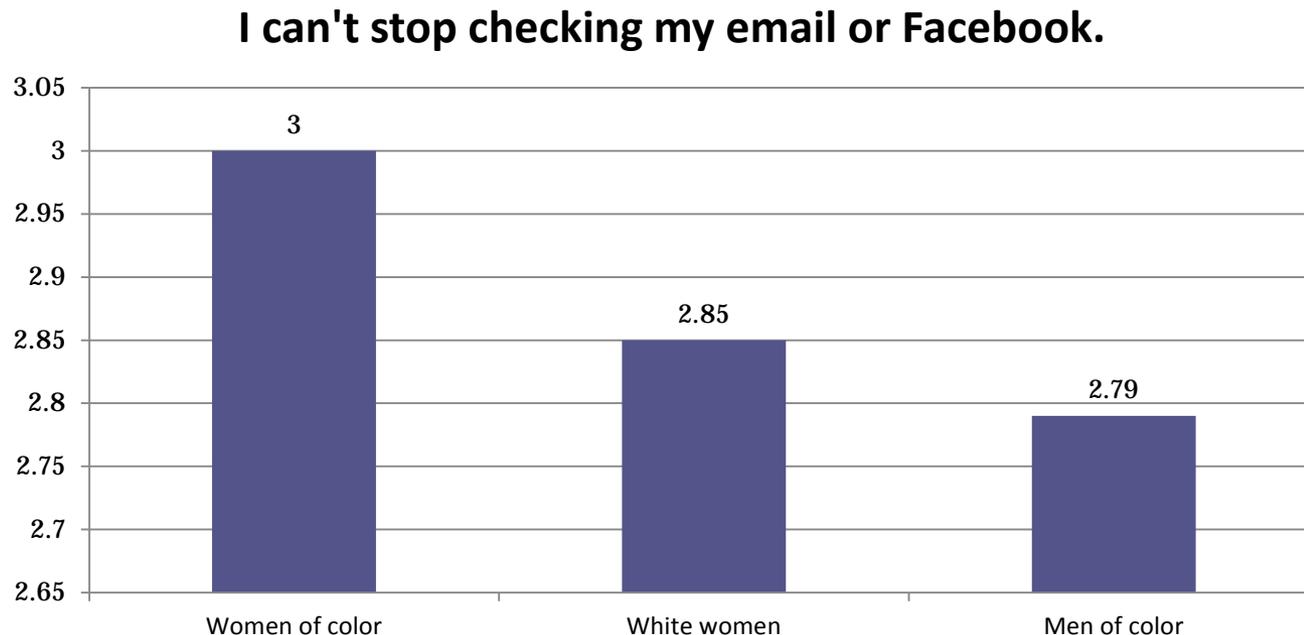
- Compared to White women and men of color, how central is social media use in the daily lives of women of color?
- How and when do women of color reach out to their online friends when times are tough?
- How are women of color participating in virtual spaces that are safe spaces? Do women of color believe they have potential social, political, or professional impact on others' lives through their activities on social media sites?

Research Questions

Women of
color
cultivating
virtual social
capital

Fixation on email or Facebook

- **Women of color** are more likely to be unable to stop checking their email/Facebook, compared to White women and men of color



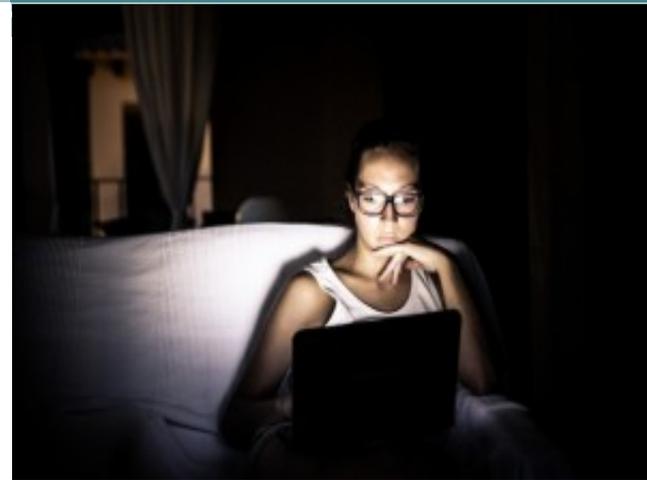
Fixation on social media

- “I mean I had to **deactivate** it for a little while because there was kind of an event that I was doing at school and it was than I expected, but I still caught myself like trying to go on and then I forgot—I realized I couldn’t. And it’s kind of scary—I wouldn’t say **addicted** but how used to it I am, and dependent on it almost.”
- “I might miss some **breaking news but that’s about it. I’m most concerned that someone who I love and care for will be in an emergency situation and won’t be able to contact me.**”
- Pretty hard not to check any of those on a daily basis. I feel like I always kind of feel **empty without it.**
- “I think it’s mostly just the desire to kind of stay connected. Sometimes it’s really just **boredom.**”
- So it is very difficult for me to stop checking the site so much. And I think that’s because I’ve been **stressed out** mostly, and also because I use it as a way to communicate with my friends or to see what my friends are doing as well
- →Greenfield (2000) suggests that those who are compulsive Internet users engage in escapism because of unpleasant emotions related to boredom.
 - →Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Women of color and men of color were significantly more likely to post about their bad days on Facebook compared to White women.

“I think after my last breakup actually, you just notice that you post a status and people are just – it’s gonna be okay. Just people liking your status more than they used to once.” – Black participant

“Just to know that people are there and that they care—that they actually took the time to sit there and write something. It made me feel like I had a support system even though I felt alone in that moment—seeing people’s faces, little pictures, and seeing their comments it made a connection— Latina participant



“I think if I am upset over something, I won’t write a status, ‘Oh I’m so mad at so-and-so,’ but I might write or type up some passage I read in a book that I think is interesting and maybe will help me get some more stress out. And my friend will like it and then it’s like, ‘Okay, so I have some support.’ And it’s kind of like affirming.” – Latina participant

“So sometimes on Facebook or Tumblr people would like talk to me first and be like ‘I notice you deactivated your account,’ or ‘I noticed you haven’t posted in a while,’ and like, ‘Miss you and I want to talk. Is everything okay?’ – Asian participant

Resilience: Safer virtual spaces for young women of color

Minority women were significantly more likely to report having written a blog (59%) compared to White women (47%) and men of color (34%).

- “[Tumblr] is a place that’s supported my learning in terms of my identities — ethnic identity, racial identity, gender identity”

Strategically friending and unfriending for safer virtual spaces

- “I mean there’s always the people that post things that are like ‘funny,’ but it’s actually not because **it’s a joke about women or people of color** —it’s the whole get back to the kitchen thing. It’s like can you *not*? If it’s a regular thing for one person I’ll just unfriend them.”

Sociopolitical awareness

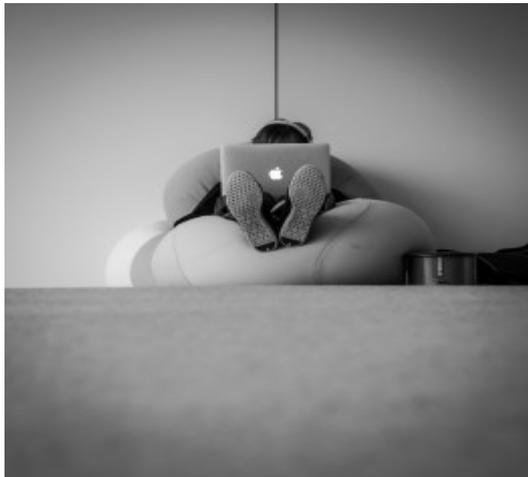
“With the whole abortion debate in Texas there were a bunch of people that were standing up on Facebook and saying things, which felt nice because **sometimes it feels like you’re the only one.**”

“There was a high school friend who posted something about **getting raped by an exam** and I very quickly but politely told him that using ‘rape’ in such a context is just really wrong on so many different levels and he removed it.”



Cyber Harassment: Research Questions and Definitions

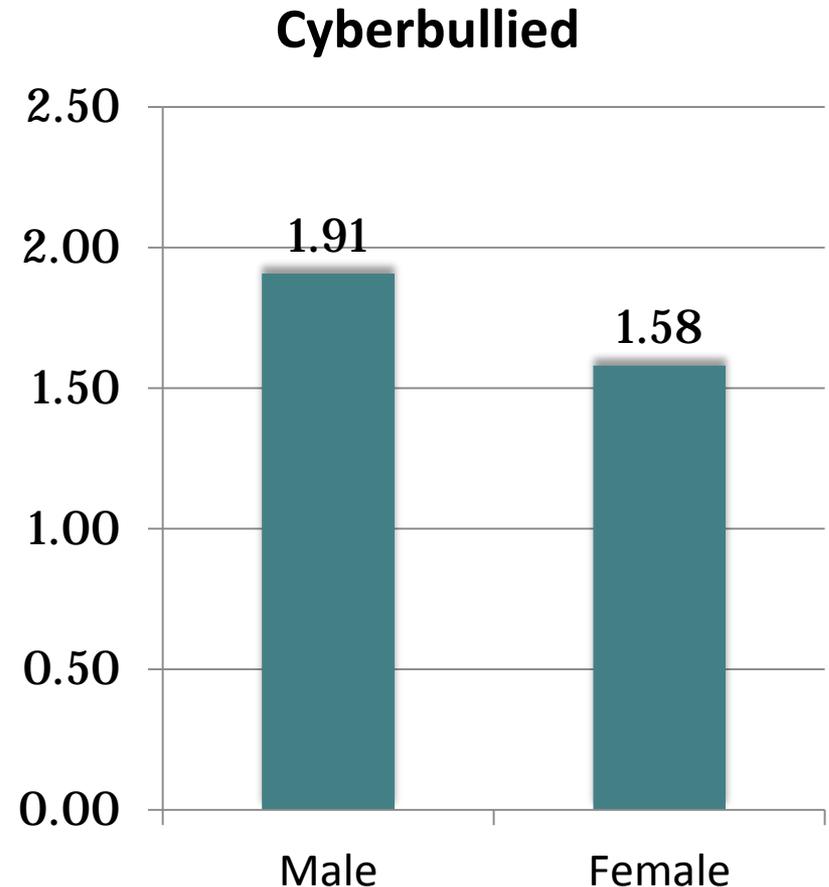
- Are there any group differences based on gender, race, or sexual orientation?
- How do socioeconomic status, school standing, and perceived social status relate to being cyber harassed?
- Is cyber harassment related to being sad?
- Is cyber harassment associated with the type of college one attends (e.g., public vs. private)?



- **Cyber harassment**
 - “Someone made rude or mean comments to you,”
 - “Someone spread rumors about you whether they were true or not”
- **Cyber sexual harassment**
 - “Someone tried to get you to talk about sex online when you did not want to”
- **Socioeconomic status** – highest level of mothers’ educational attainment
- **School Standing** – how students see themselves in relation to their peers at school
- **Perceived social status**
 - Subjective SES scale (Adler et al., 2000)
 - Indicate where you rank in U.S. society in terms of income, education, and occupation
 - → Lower perceived social status correlated with poorer health trajectories, linked to greater stress

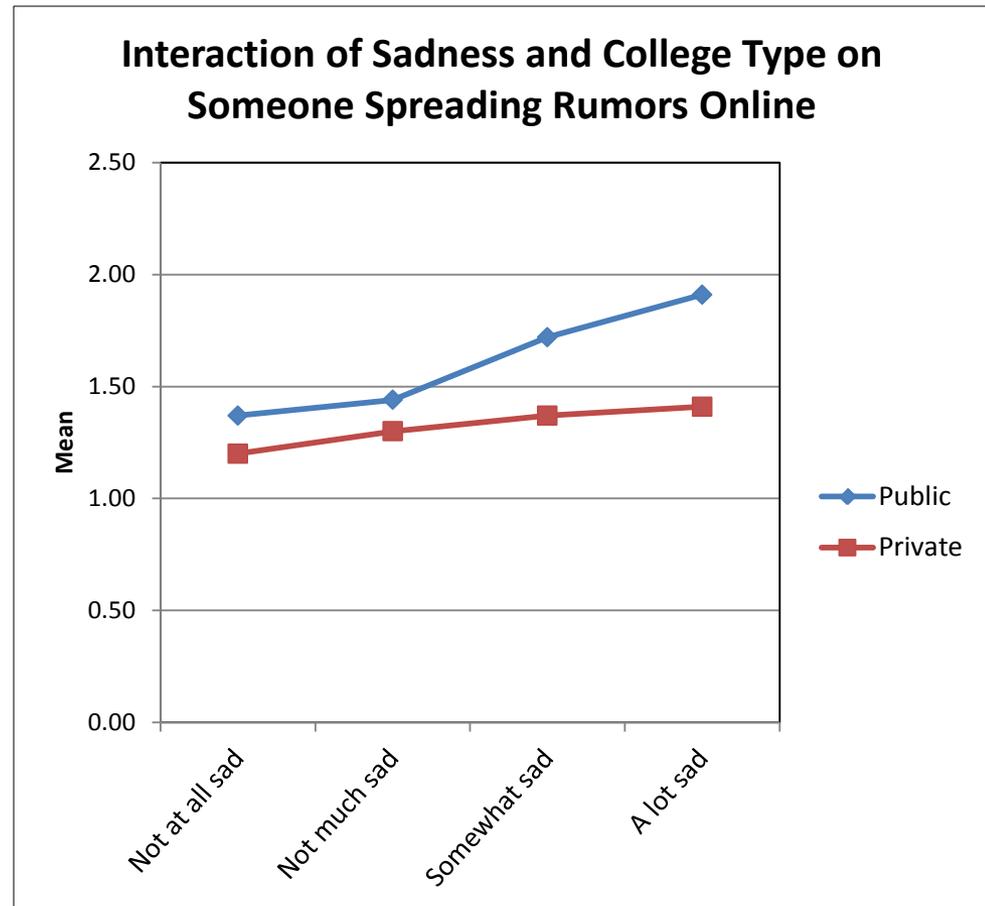
Cyber harassment impacts which groups most?

- **Males** experience significantly more cyber harassment than females,
 - no gender differences in online sexual harassment.
- **Sexual minorities** are cyber harassed (both non-sexually and sexually) significantly more compared to heterosexuals.



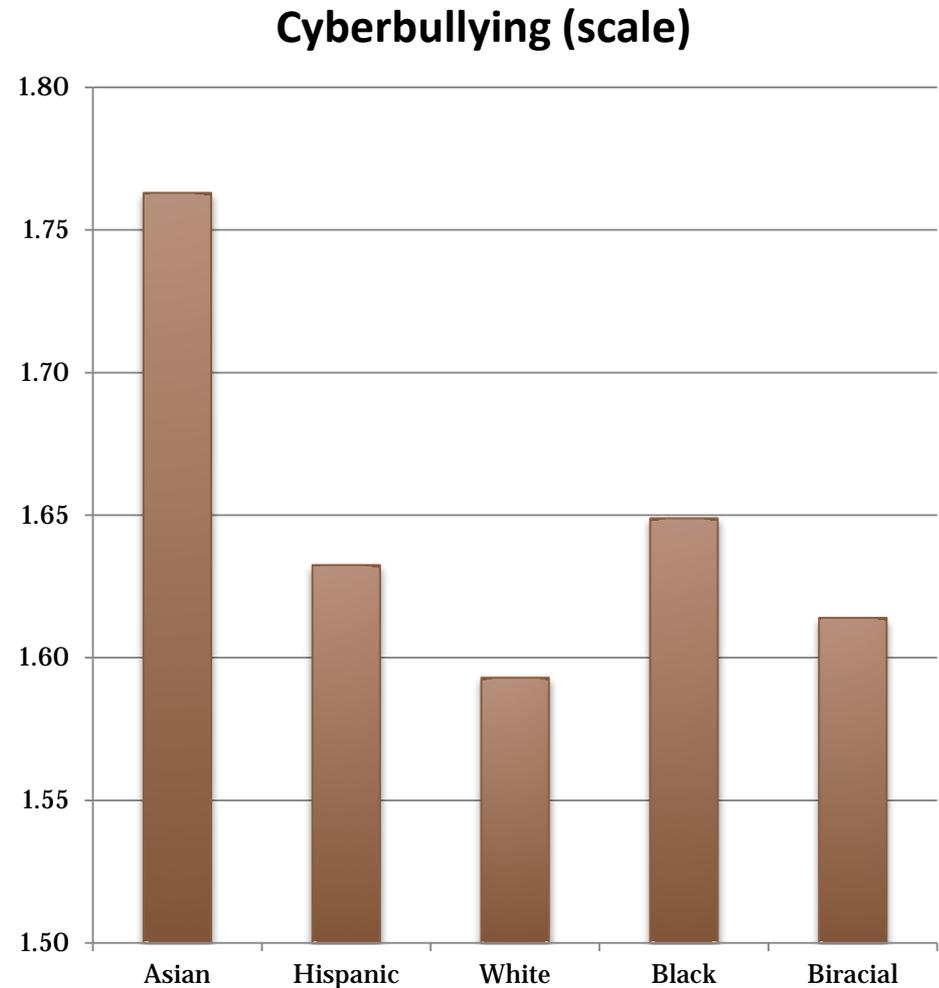
Cyber harassment impacts which groups most?

- **Adolescents** with low school standing are cyberbullied significantly more than their higher standing peers.
 - No relationship between social standing and online sexual harassment
- Online harassment for **all ages** (sexual and non-sexual) is significantly associated with
 - **being sad,**
 - **lowest levels of mother's education,**
 - **attending a public college or a community college (college aged only)**



Racial differences in cyber harassment

- **Asian Americans** have highest levels and Whites have lowest levels of cyber victimization.
 - AA have the smallest online networks and reach out significantly less often on SMS when stressed or sad than all other racial groups
 - In AA, cyberbullying increases likelihood of substance use (Goebert et al., 2011)
 - → binge drinking and marijuana use (2.5X), depression (almost 2X), and suicide attempts (3.2X)



Witnessing or experiencing mean or rude comments online

- They'll post a status—a rape joke, or post a status about something about women having to be in the kitchen and making a sandwich. I don't feel like their intention really was to be rude for most kinds of comments, but it does affect me because it's still like, 'Come on, you're promoting that stereotype. **C'mon, you're better than this. You know, that's why we're still friends on Facebook.** So yeah, it does hurt me from time to time and I do try to point it out.
- I think people post hurtful things all the time. I mean like if they take a joke too far or whatever. So I see something offensive like that my friend posted on someone else's wall and he thought that was stupid so he deleted it. So off the top of my head, I'm thinking, if you post a comment on someone else's wall and it was deleted **maybe you should think, 'Oh, well that was kind of offensive. I should be more careful in the future.'**

Gender, race, and opportunity: Occupational identity, media stereotypes, and civic engagement

- 1) Did media messages while growing help shape women's occupational identities?
- 2) How do women balance their desire for an occupational identity with other competing identities, such as gender, race?
- 3) What are women's gender and racial attitudes about opportunity and work in the U. S.?
- 4) How does gender and race factor into civic engagement?



Qualitative Procedures

- Revision of the interview protocol (iterative process)
- Training on interview techniques, ethics, and consent forms
- Recruitment of 10 new interview participants (44 combined total)
 - With new inspiration from WCW's Harold Benenson Memorial funding
 - Due to quantitative and qualitative findings to date, we will focus on Asian American young women
- Conduct 1-2 hour long phone, Skype, or in-person interviews covering media stereotypes, identity, social media use, and civic engagement
 - 5 interviews already completed!

Plans for WCW internship year (and beyond)

- Interview transcription and verification
- Development of a new codebook for new constructs
- Nvivo (qualitative data analysis software) training to code for themes and subthemes
- Literature review
- Develop a published paper, submit to Ruhlman conference, write a blog
- → Check out our website for updated findings or email us at mediaidentityproject@wcwonline.org
- [Like us on Facebook: Mediaandidentitystudy](#)

Future Directions

- Current presidential campaigning is ripe time for examining sociopolitical engagement through online media networking
- Need more studies on digital abuse in community colleges, low income communities, and in Asian American networks.
- Research is scarce on the **content of communication** within online networks for vulnerable groups (such as women of color, LGBT, early adolescents) and how it is related to psychosocial and behavioral health
- Health organizations are beginning to use SMS to conduct health campaigns and interventions, relying on peer networking to help push change related to norms, beliefs, and stigmas (Valente & Davis, 1999).
 - Online peer networking is as powerful as in-person networking and the geographic reach can be exponential and cost-effective

Dissemination – conferences, webinars, talks

- **Poster presentations**
 - RWJF New Connections Symposium, Princeton
 - Diversity Challenge, Boston College
 - Digital Media & Developing Minds, Irvine, CA
- **Panel presentations at major conferences**
 - Society for Research on Adolescence, Austin
 - Society for Research on Child Development, Philadelphia
 - International Communications Association, Puerto Rico
 - National Communication Association, Las Vegas
- **Webinar**
 - Co-panelist, *Using Technology to Address Health Disparities*, RWJF New Connections Webinar
- **Invited keynote speaker**
 - Keynote address for Forum on Youth, Sexuality, and Human Rights Initiative of Ford Foundation, hosted by Detroit Youth Passages

Online Dissemination

- Blog
 - RWJF Culture of Health Blog, *Facebook: Friend or Foe?*
- Fact Sheets/Briefs
 - Summary of social media use, network characteristics, and mental health
 - Summary of cyber harassment
- Newsletters
 - Wellesley Centers for Women *Research & Action Report*, Sp/Su 2015, Vol 36, #2

Dissemination - publications

- In progress/submitted
 - Sad, bored, or escaping from worries? A mixed-method exploration of young people's reasons for televised media use
 - Asian American social media use: From cyber dependence to cyber harassment
 - Stereotypes and stigma from televised media images: Differences across gender and sexual orientation
 - Sexual risk behaviors and early adolescent online networks
- In press
 - Charmaraman, L., Chan, B. H., Price, T., & Richer, Amanda. (in press). Surviving and thriving: Women of color cultivating virtual social capital. Manuscript accepted for forthcoming edited book, entitled *Women of color and social media multitasking: Blogs, timelines, feeds, and community*. Lexington Books: New York.

Next steps

Long-term goals:

- Strategizing with parents, educators, counselors, and health practitioners about how to recognize healthy and unhealthy media and SMS use in young people
- Designing tailored online interventions for particular age, SES, and racial subgroups that build healthier communities in order to positively impact psychosocial and behavioral health outcomes



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