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CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN RESEARCH CENTER RECEIVES GRANT TO STUDY CYBERBULLYING AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

UNH researchers seek to learn more about how online and in-person bullying negatively impact youth.

DURHAM, NH. The Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire has received a grant amounting to over $100,000 from the Digital Trust Foundation to study cyberbullying among adolescents and young adults in the U.S.

The project will utilize data collected as part of the national Technology Harassment Victimization (THV) Study, originally funded by the National Institute of Justice, focusing on how often and in what ways technology plays a role in peer harassment and bullying. The data are the result of telephone interviews conducted in 2013-2014 with 791 American youth ages 10-20 (49 percent male). Of these, 34 percent reported 311 harassment incidents in the prior year. Among the harassment incidents, 54 percent were in-person only; 15 percent involved technology only; and 31 percent involved a combination of the two.

Serving as Principal Investigator, Dr. Kimberly Mitchell is joined by Co-Investigator Dr. Lisa Jones from the Crimes against Children Research Center. Over one year, the project will analyze data from the THV Study to document cyberbullying experiences among youth with different types of disabilities and of different ages. They will also exploring the degree to which bullying and harassment plays a role in thoughts of suicide for youth and develop a better understanding of how power imbalances (social, physical) between victims and aggressors affect the negative impact of peer victimization. Findings will be presented in a variety of ways in order to reach diverse stakeholders, including community members, fellow researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

The researchers said the survey was designed in a way that allowed them to gather extensive details about separate harassment incidents and to examine new technology as one aspect of many possible aggravating incident features. Research on cyberbullying to date has mostly been conducted separate from or parallel to research about in-person bullying, they said.

“We believe that our understanding of bullying and cyberbullying should be based on research, and viewed within the context of other peer victimization experiences of youth. This reduces our reliance on assumptions and will best aid education and prevention experts who are trying to identify and prevent the most serious and harmful bullying,” Mitchell said.
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The Crimes against Children Research Center conducts research to combat crimes against children by providing high quality research and statistics to the public, policy makers, law enforcement personnel, and other child welfare practitioners. CCRC is concerned with research about the nature of crimes including child abduction, homicide, rape, assault, and physical and sexual abuse as well as their impact.