

## Cyber Bullying: Plugging In to the Problem

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An Evening of Information  
Hillcrest High School  
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### Lecture Topics

- Technology: Understanding a New Culture
- Bullying vs. Cyber Bullying
- Uniqueness and Characteristics of Cyber Bullying
- Prevalence
- Types of Cyber Bullying
- Privacy and the Law
- Prevention and Intervention
- Limits to the Research
- Resources

### The Stats

- Over 80% of adolescents own at least one form of new media technology (i.e., cell phone, computer) (David-Ferdon et al., 2007)
- According to comScore Networks, 713 million people aged 15 and older used the internet in June 2006, 153 million being American (Lipsman, 2006)
- Of 1100 American youth (12 to 17 years old), 87% were online, 51% go online daily (Lenhart et al., 2005)

### Cyber Youth

- While adults tend to use technology for its functionality, children have grown up with technology and it has been incorporated into their culture
- The internet has augmented the ability of youth to meet, interact, and keep in contact, regardless of demographic or geographic restrictions (Hinduja et al., 2008)

### The Always-On Generation

- Cyberspace allows youth to remain connected wherever and whenever
- Within cyberspace youth use their own language of acronyms and emoticons
- Text messaging, blogs, Facebook, MySpace are not so much a means of communication as they are relationships (Beatrice Schriever, 2007)
- For many kids, their social life has moved from a real world to one that includes a virtual world as well, that has fewer adult rules and can at times feel misleadingly safe

### Cyberspace 101

#### Definitions

- Blog
- Social Networking Sites
- Chat rooms
- Instant messaging
- Text Messaging
- Emoticons

## Bullying vs. Cyber Bullying

### Bullying

The bully is someone who actively seeks out weaker targets, and purposefully and repeatedly harasses them, with the primary intention being to express dominance and power through the infliction of harm

### Cyber Bullying

Involves the use of information and communication technologies to intentionally frighten, embarrass, and/or harass a targeted individual.

## The Uniqueness of Cyber Bullying

- While bullying is often hidden from adults, the younger generation's better understanding of technology means that Cyber Bullying can be more easily hidden
- Cyber bullies can remain anonymous
- The hurtful messages can obtain a wide audience with incredible speed
- Cyber bullies don't have to own up to their actions because they are very difficult to identify

## Uniqueness Continued

- Cyber bullies do not get immediate feedback on pain cues and therefore, may not know when to stop
- Without clear feedback on their bullying, cyber bullies will have more difficulty being guided by empathy
- Most cyber bullying occurs outside of school and therefore, often outside of the legal reach of the school

## Uniqueness Continued

- Victims of cyber bullying are afraid to report it to adults because of concerns that adults will take away their cell phone or limit internet access (that can be socially isolating)
- School policies banning cell phone use means that victims bullied on their cell phone won't tell because they broke a school rule
- Cyber bullies often know their victims but their victims may not know them
- Cyber bullying can happen anytime and anywhere. Home is no longer a safe place.

## Cyber Bully Characteristics

- Ybara and Mitchell, 2004
- N=1501, Ages 10 to 17 years old
- Data collected between September 1999 and February 2000
- Rude or nasty comments on the internet
- Using the internet to harass or embarrass someone
- 219 identified as online harassers

## Cyber Bully Characteristics

- Caregiver-child relationship very poor 44.3% (19.1%)
- Frequently disciplined, 32.4% (16.2%)
- Infrequent monitoring, 53.4% (30.2%)
- Frequent substance use, 31.5% (9.9%)
- Depressive symptoms, 15.5% (5.6%)
- Delinquency, 36.5% (12.6%)
- Target of traditional bullying 50.7% (29.8%)
- Frequency online of 4 or more days per week, 63.9% (37.9)
- Target of online harassment, 19.6% (4.3%)

## Cyber Bully Characteristics

- Williams and Guerra, 2007
- 3339 youth in grades 5, 8, and 11, fall 2005
- 2293 youth from original sample in follow-up, spring 2006
- Verbal bullying highest followed by physical and then internet bullying (email and instant messaging)
- Physical and internet bullying peaked in middle school and declined in high school
- No gender differences for internet and verbal bullying

## Prevalence

- Adolescents who experience and perpetrate cyber bullying are a minority
- Victimization rates range from 9% to 34%
- Perpetrator rates range from 4% to 21%
- Growing victimization rates (Wolak et al., 2006) from 2000 to 2005 there was a 50% increase in youth victims of online harassment

## Impact

- Once it is out there it is out there
- One attack can be repetitively experienced (Star Wars Kid, 15 year old boy)
- Cyber victims more likely to ditch or skip school and exhibit higher rates of behaviour problems at school

## Types of Cyber Bullying

1. Instant Messaging/Text Messaging Harassment
  - Sending hateful or threatening messages
  - Using a similar screen name in chat rooms and saying cruel things
  - Warning Wars
  - Text wars or Text attacks

## Types of Cyber Bullying

2. Stealing Passwords
  - Use password to enter chat rooms as the other kid
  - Use password to change the victim's profile and add embarrassing information or identifying information
  - Locking victim out of their own account

## Types of Cyber Bullying

3. Blogs
  - Using one's blog to disparage another
  - Setting up a blog under the name of the cyber victim and then writing things that will get him/her in trouble
4. Web Sites
  - Designing sites to humiliate another child

## Types of Cyber Bullying

5. Sending Pictures through Email and Cell Phones
  - Mass emails to other users that include nude, degrading, or doctored photos
  - Happy Slapping - one person assaults another, while someone records it on their cell phone
  - Taking photos in the locker room, bathroom, dressing room

## Types of Cyber Bullying

6. Internet Polling
  - Who's hot? Who's not? Who is the biggest slut in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade?
7. Proxy bullying
  - Provoke victim and then when he/she lashes back the communication is saved and forwarded to the parents of the victim

## Privacy and the Law

- Even if messages are sent and received out of school, the problems come back to school the next day
- Raises questions about what authority and responsibility schools have for off-campus activity.
- In the US, the fact that cyber bullying contributes to a hostile school environment makes the school accountable and responsible to act

## Privacy and the Law

- Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District
  - While students do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate, the court acknowledged "the special characteristics of the school environment," permitting school officials to prohibit student speech that would "substantially interfere with the work of the school or impinge upon the rights" and "safety" of the other students
- The courts have tended to rule in favour of schools when school safety is the issue

## Privacy and the Law

### Canada

- Under the Criminal Code of Canada it is a crime to communicate repeatedly with someone if your communication causes them to fear for their safety or the safety of others
- It is a crime to publish defamatory libel
- Cyber bullying may also be violating the Canadian Human Rights Act if it spreads hate or discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or disability

## Privacy and the Law

### Ontario

- April 2007 Cyber Bullying was added to offenses for which one can be suspended or expelled from school
- June 2007 it passed unanimously and is a part of the Safe School Act (Bill 81)
- In the city of Ottawa, every school is assigned a specific School Resource Officer (SRO) as their personal police contact

## Prevention and Intervention

Smith et al., 2008

Top 3 strategies suggested by students (N=533)

1. Avoidance – block messages or identity (75%)
2. Tell someone (63%)
3. Change email address or phone number (57%)

## Prevention Tips for Youth

- Don't give out your private information (i.e., full name, address, school name)
- Never send a message when you are angry
- Protect your password and change it if you feel it has been compromised
- Remember that people online aren't always who they say they are
- Don't accept files, emails or links from people you don't know
- Be respectful to others online, don't swear, degrade, etc.

## Prevention Tips for Youth Continued

- Don't post what you didn't write
- Don't post anything your parents or principal shouldn't see
- Remember that what goes online stays online
- Check what your friends are posting about you
- If you make your social profile public be prepared to have future employers, schools etc. search and find it
- Don't support others in their cyber bullying

## Prevention Tips for Parents

- Talk to your kids about safe internet use
- Ask to see their profile page, tomorrow. This will give them time to remove inappropriate content and is a way to teach them what not to post
- Ask your child to help you set up a profile and then ask to be included as a friend
- Set up a cyber safety contract with your child
- Have the computer in a part of the house that is easier to monitor
- Speak with your child's school about their Cyber Bullying policies

## Intervention Tips

- If someone is bothering you in Instant Messaging, block them
- Notify your internet, instant messaging, or mobile phone service provider
- Do not keep this to yourself. Tell an adult that you know and trust
- Inform your local police or your school SRO

## Intervention Tips

- Don't reply to messages from cyber bullies. They want a reaction.
- Do not erase or delete messages from cyber bullies as you may need them for evidence
- If your account has been stolen, contact the service provider to get it back
- You may need to delete your current email or cell phone accounts and set up new ones

## Limits to the Research

- New literature
- The same terms can mean different things in different studies
- As technology changes the type of bullying changes and the impact of new forms of bullying will have to be studied separately
- Time frame of when bullying occurred and how often varies
- Lack of a clear measure of electronic aggression and its impact
- Different prevalence rates for different types of cyber bullying

## Resources

- School Resource Officer (SRO) Program
  - Ottawa Police Youth Intervention and Diversion Unit (613) 236-1222, ext 5355
  - Contact school and ask for the name of the SRO
- Chat Translator
  - <http://www.teenangels.org>
- Cyber Bullying Educational Sites
  - [www.cyberbullying.ca](http://www.cyberbullying.ca)
  - [www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org)
  - [wiredsafety.org](http://wiredsafety.org)

## Resources

### Software Solutions

- eMailTrackerPro
  - Allows you to track internet emails back to the IP address of the sender
- McAfee Parental Controls
  - Offers chat filtering protection for both instant messaging and chat rooms
- Predator Guard
  - Scans all text on the computer screen in any software program and identifies when text could be threatening and can end the communication

## Best Resource

- Begin or continue building a relationship with your child/youth that is based on mutual respect
  - It encourages honesty and openness
  - It increases the chances that he/she will let you into his/her world

## Copy of Presentation

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