

“It Was Just a Joke...”

Cyberbullying in the Age of MySpace

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**SOCIAL
EMPOWERMENT
PROGRAMS**
of New Mexico



Digital Natives

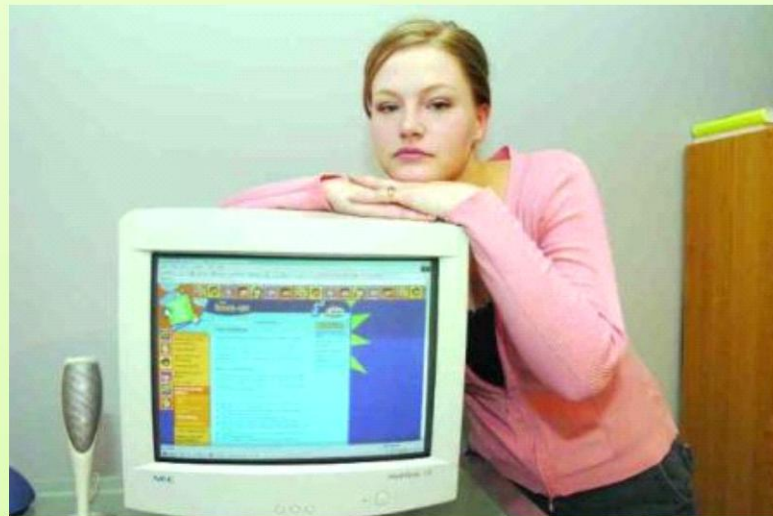


Digital Immigrants

(Prensky, 2001)

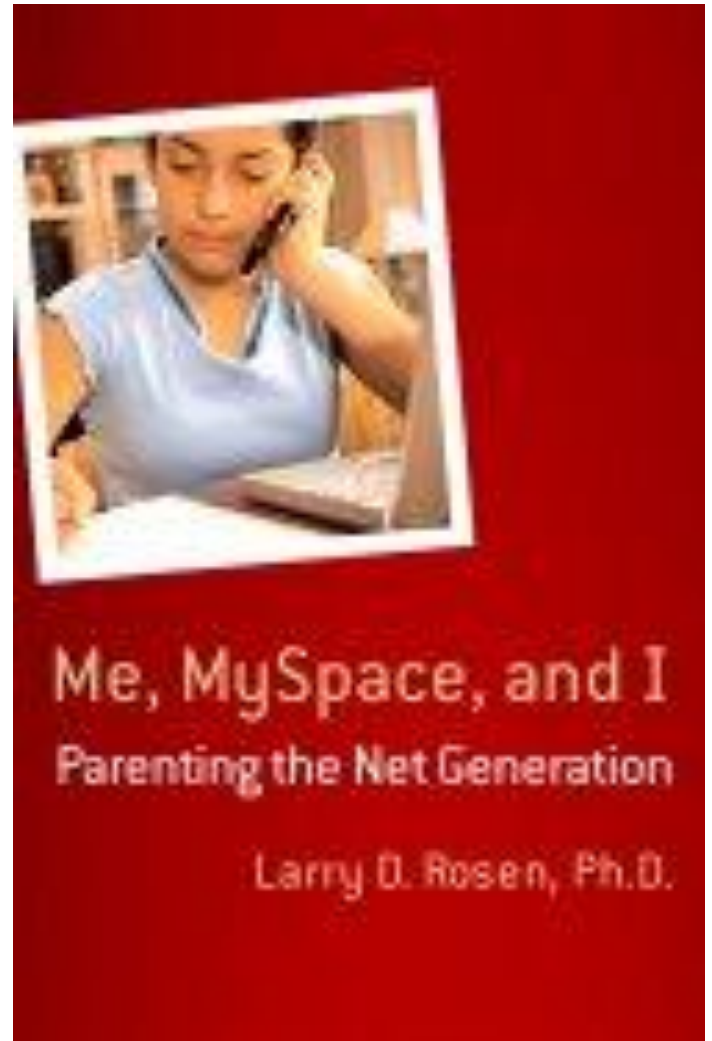
Americans Online

- 1.26 Billion people – 19% World Population
- 335 Million – 70% North American Population



(Patchin&Hinduja 2008, Miniwatts Marketing Group 2008)

- “With its millions of members, MySpace is the **6th largest country in the world**...It is the virtual equivalent of the 50s drive-in: the place to be because everyone seems to hang out there.”
Larry Rosen



It's 2-way now: we need traffic rules

- Internet safety:
 - Predators
 - Pornography
- Internet ethics:
 - Plagiarism
 - File-sharing
 - **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying



Definition:

- “The use of modern technologies to embarrass, humiliate, threaten, or intimidate an individual in the attempt to gain power and control over them”

Cyberbullying is:

- Sending or forwarding threatening or abusive e-mail
- IM or text-messaging blitzes
- Voting booths (“ugliest” or “most gay”)
- Impersonating
- “Outing”
- Photoshopping images
- Gaming “griefers”
- Chat rooms/“Bash Boards”
- Setting up hate websites
- Third-party (or “by proxy”)



Prevalence of Cyberbullying

- ❖ 90% of mid-school students polled had feelings hurt
- ❖ 65% of students between 8-14 were involved directly or indirectly in a cyberbullying incident
- ❖ 50% had seen or heard of a website bashing another student
- ❖ 75% had visited a website bashing
- ❖ 40% had password stolen & changed by bully who locked their account or impersonated them,

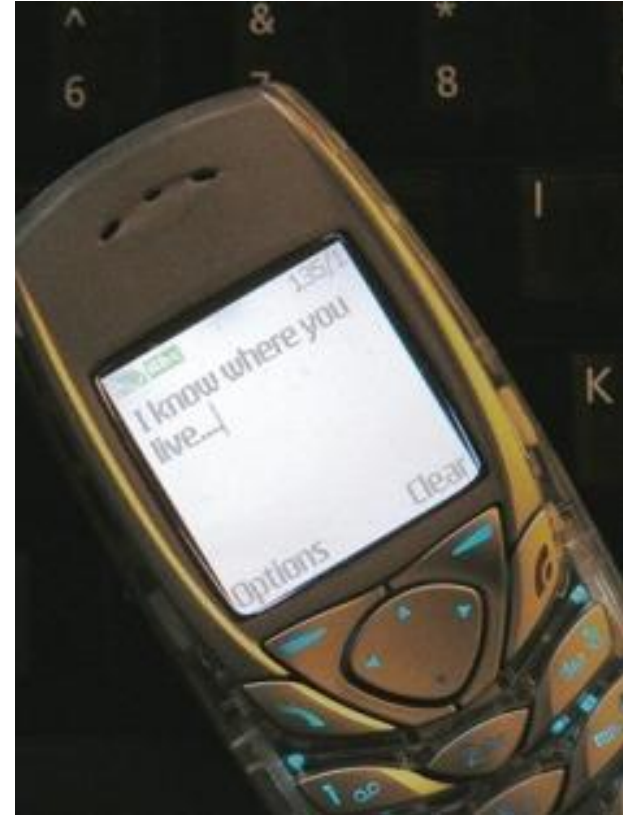
and...

- ❖ ...Only 15% of parents polled knew what cyber bullying was.

Parry Aftab, in slide by Russell Sabella

Textual Harassment

- U.S. Justice Dept. study:
 - 23% of harassment victims in 2006 reported being harassed by text or email.
 - Victims can request service provider to identify number. They can then file charges.



Cyberbullying by Proxy

- Elizabeth Thrasher:
arrested August
2009 under
Missouri's new law
against
cyberbullying.



Target was 17-year-
old girl

Sexting

- 22% of teen girls (11% ages 13-16) report having posted or sent nude or semi-nude images of themselves.
- 18% of teen boys
- 33% of young adults

National Campaign to Prevent Teen & Unplanned Pregnancy
“Sex and Tech” Study 12/08

What do you think are the reasons that **girls** send/post sexy messages or pictures/video of themselves?

Please mark all that apply.

	Teens (13-19)	Young Adults (20-26)%
Get or keep a guy's attention	85	80
Guy pressured them to send it	47	38
As a "sexy" present for a boyfriend	74	73
To feel sexy	72	77
Get a guy to like them	76	66
Pressure from friends	23	16
To get positive feedback	57	56
To be fun/ flirtatious	78	76
To get noticed	80	79
In response to one she received	31	30

More twists...

- Teacher receives sext from male student
 - Sexual Harassment?
 - Cyberbullying?
- School principal Ting-Yi Oei
 - charged with possession of child porn images
 - Later exonerated, after career & reputation ruined



Teens surprised by charges

- 6 teens in PA arrested on child porn charges
 - 3 girls (aged 14 & 15) charged with manufacturing, disseminating & possession
 - 3 boys charged with possession
- Sentencing guidelines unclear
- Registered as sex offenders for 10 years

Child Pornography Laws

- Felony for minors to receive sexually-explicit images on their phones
- Taking and sending sexually-explicit photos may be charged as production & distribution of pornography

Photoshopping: “Moshzilla” 2005



Posting threats often illegal

- First Amendment Rights
 - Protects freedom of expression of beliefs
- Civil Rights Act
 - Protects freedom from discrimination
 - includes race, gender, religion, sexual orientation
- Hate speech or threats
 - Not specifically protected by First Amendment
 - Slander, assault, “fighting words”

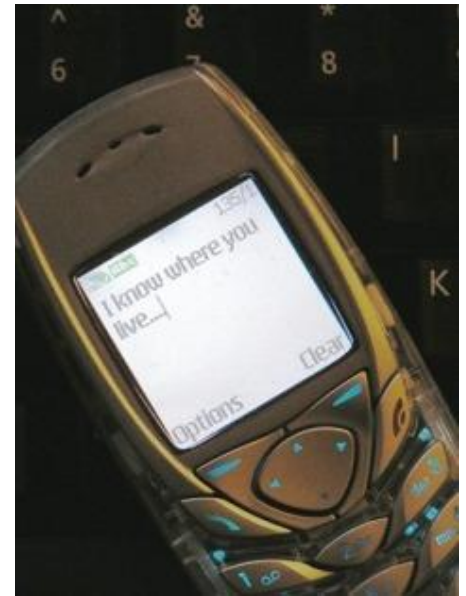
Criminal Charges

- Harassment
- Stalking
- Death Threats



Cyberstalking

- Threatening, scary or mean messages implying real-life stalking
- Illegal in New Mexico
- Postings may trigger cyberstalking by predators:
- If intentional, it's 3rd-party cyberbullying



Civil Liability

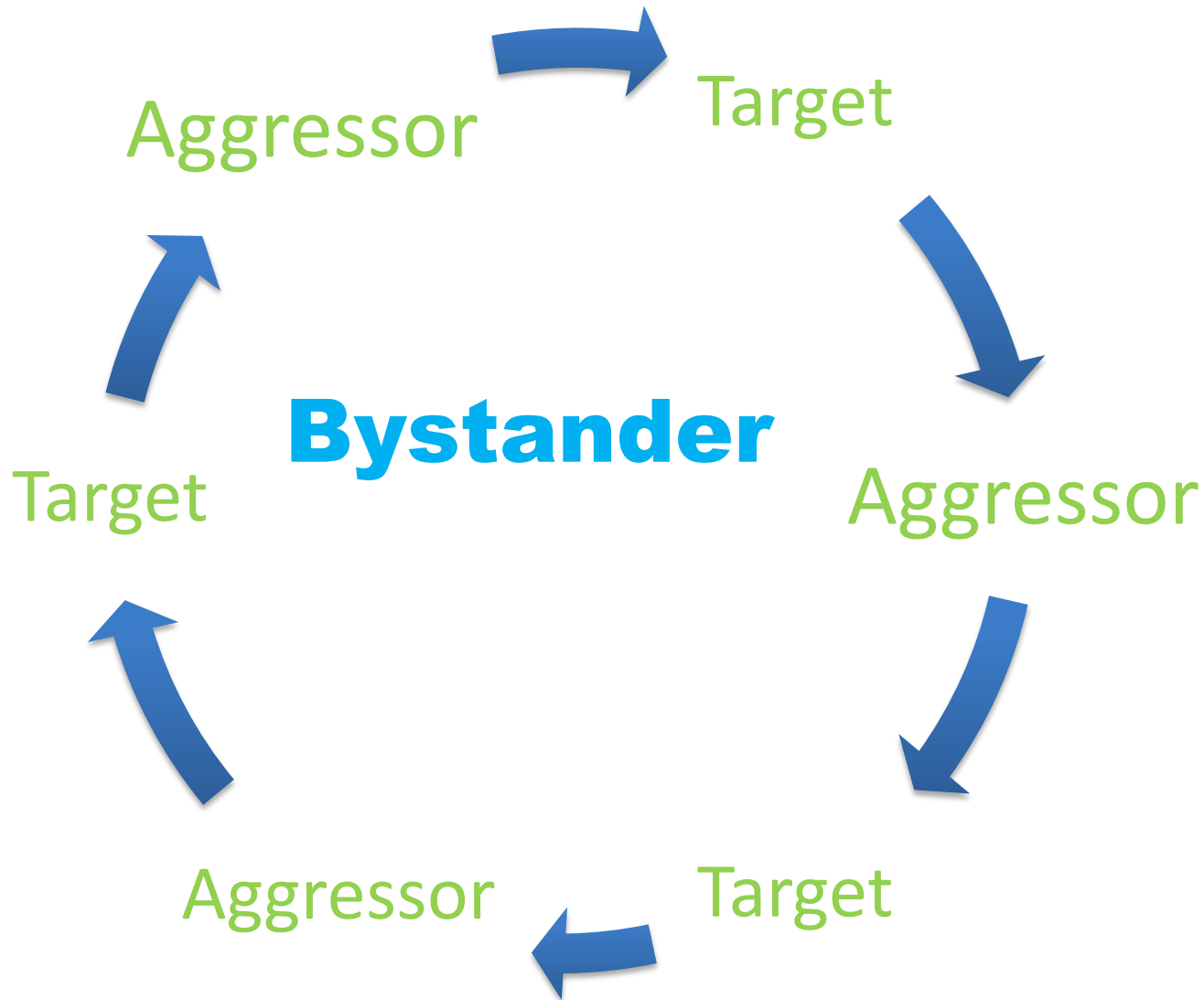
- Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress
- Invasion of Privacy
- Wrongful Death

Being constantly threatened and humiliated

- Like a form of torture:
 - Fear for your safety
 - No way to escape
 - Feeling hopeless, powerless, ashamed, worthless



People can be both Target and Aggressor



Web
2.0

Cyberbullying!

Generation
Gap

Adolescence

Culture

the
Ophelia
project®

Why do people do it?

- Retaliation: “She started it.”
“He deserved it”
- Boredom: entertainment
“just joking around”
- Power-seeker: enjoys control over others
- Inadvertent: hitting “send” without thinking



Developmental Factors

- Thinking: Kids don't learn to take others' perspective until adolescence, so they can't easily anticipate emotional effects of their actions
- Emotional: impulsive, moody
- Social: intense need to belong to group until their individual identity forms
- Moral: "Wrong" is what you get in trouble for doing. Not caught, not wrong...

3 Cyber-Myths

- “I’m anonymous”
 - “...so I can say whatever I want”
 - “...so I won’t get caught”
- “I’m invisible”
 - ...I can’t see them, so they don’t have feelings”
- “Real life and online life are different”
 - “Online stuff doesn’t count: it’s all a game”
 - “It’s my freedom of speech”

Teach Internet Ethics

- Similar to driving: you are responsible for yourself and your effect on others, too.
- Reflect before you send: if it's not allowed in real life, it's not allowed online either
- People you can't see are still people
 - It still counts if you hurt them

You Can't Take It
Back



Competing Rights

Freedom of Speech:

“I have a right to express my beliefs and opinions”

Human Right:

“Everyone has the right to live without fear of harassment, torment, emotional and physical harm being inflicted by someone else.”

My rights aren't more important than yours...

Online Life = Real Life

- Who you are online is who you are in life
- Online actions impact offline world
- May cause serious real-world damage
 - Emotional
 - Physical
 - Legal

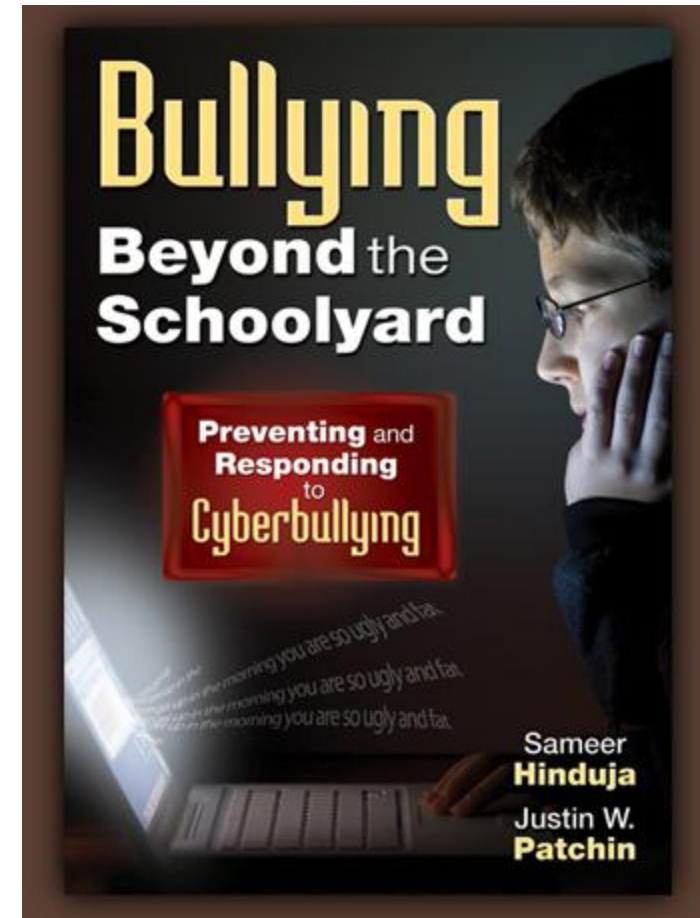
Schools' dilemma

- “If schools harshly discipline alleged cyberbullies, they risk litigation from angry parents. ‘It’s a delicate balance of free speech, child protection ,and parental supervision...’”

– USA Today 3/6/05

6 Elements of Effective School Policy:

- 1. Publish Specific Definitions of:
 - Harassment
 - Intimidation
 - Bullying (including electronic)



2. Rubric of graduated consequences & remedial action:

- Samples along spectrum of severity:
 - Parental contact
 - Behavioral contracts
 - Loss of privileges
 - School service work
 - Removal of student from class
 - Suspension

Tips for designing consequences:

- Suspend extracurricular activities or privileges
 - Not academic obligations
 - Even if suspension impacts team competition, school play
 - Need parent agreement & cooperation
- Need logical ties to offense
- Apology to affected school community
 - Not just to target in private
 - No forced or premature apologies
- Place burden of change on bully
 - Protect & support target.

Discipline is Training Opportunity

- Use restorative and reflective methods to deal with cyberbullies
 - Removal of inappropriate material from Net
 - Apology (a real one)
 - Reflective writing
 - Awareness project

3. Procedures for Reporting:

- Encourage students to report incidents of cyberbullying.
- When they do report, thank them!
- Informally assess the threat level.
- Ask if they have any printouts or evidence of the bullying
- Ask them what they would like to do about it
 - Gives targets sense of control

Reporting...

- Establish anonymous reporting opportunities:
 - Communicate these to students & parents
 - Consequences for false reports or for retaliation
- Give them 'next step' options
 - if threat is minimal.
- Make a commitment to respond to every reported incident, either:
 - Directly (by teacher receiving report)
 - Indirectly (referring student to staff ally)

4. Procedures for Investigating:

- Investigate and document each reported incident,
 - Even if you have no authority to act on it.
 - No follow-up erodes student morale & trust
- Collect statements from targets, bystanders
- Collect evidence
 - Search warrant may be necessary (e.g., cell phone)
- Put documentation in student file

5. “Substantial Disruption”

- Students’ off-campus speech or behavior can be subject to school disciplinary action if:
 - It causes “substantial disruption to learning environment.”
 - It infringes upon civil rights of other students or staff.
 - Policy has specific language addressing criteria.

6. Procedures for Prevention

- Education of entire school community:
 - Staff training
 - Parent education & collaboration
 - Family/school Internet-Use Agreements
 - Student Education & Involvement:

7. Prevention: Student Skill Building

- Teach decision-making skills
 - What’s private, and who decides?
 - Friends or “Buddies”?
 - Criteria for “Should I post... Should I pass?”
- Reflect before Responding
- Imagining consequences
- Online bystander intervention
- Role Play

Before they hit “Send...”

- Golden Rule?
- Say it to their face?
- Is there a rule against it?
- Want it on the evening news?



ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL





“Step away
from the
keyboard...”

- Hands off keyboards when upset
 - Don’t vent electronically
- Read it aloud before sending
 - How would it sound to someone in room?
- “If you wouldn’t say it, don’t type it”
 - They’re responsible for harm they cause
 - ...even if they didn’t mean to

Teach targets to:

- Keep a copy (or screenshot) of problem
- Delete and block the offender
 - (short term solution, but still...)
- Avoid retaliation
 - Aggressor may report them as the bully,
 - using “flame” as evidence
- Get support (not from a posse)
 - Someone they trust
 - www.wiredsafety.org or www.netbullies.com

Teach Bystanders to:

- Support targets, even if they don't know them.
 - It has a huge impact.
- *(If it feels safe and appropriate)* Say something:
 - Disagree with aggressor
 - Distract by helping target leave situation
- *(If it doesn't)* Talk to adult who can help, or
 - www.netbullies.com
 - www.stopcyberbullying.org
- Delete the drama: if they spread it, they're part of it.

Create an Alliance

- Help students form a leadership team
 - To support targets
 - To help change their school climate
- Create student 'court' for peer aggression
 - Youth generally change attitudes & behavior faster if it makes them more acceptable to each other.
- Implement a mentoring program with mid-schoolers

PREVENTION: Social Norms

- Identify current social norms about bullying
- Ask them:
 - “Do targets deserve to be bullied?”
 - Most kids don’t approve of bullying behavior
- Work with student committee to publicize responses & healthy social norms
 - Both face-to-face and online
- Create accountability for both students & teachers
 - Youth leadership team supports norms online

Community Involvement

Collaborate with:

- Resource officer or other law enforcement
- PTA or other parent organizations
- Community social service agencies
- School-wide task force:
 - Parents, staff, students, administrators, community

Bullying Prevention Policy Law

- Passed in Vermont 5/18/04
- “...for a child, the school is their community and when bullying occurs at school or online and it impacts the delivery of education...every adult has the moral and social responsibility to take ownership in addressing it and not remain as a bystander. We can't preach to kids that they should always intervene and help but not do the same ourselves.”

» John Halligan,
www.ryanpatrickhalligan.org/vt-netbullylaw



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