What Do We Know About Cyberbullying?

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- We used to say there was a "**generation gap**" between adults and adolescents.

- Now we talk about the "**digital divide**" to highlight the vast differences in the types, uses, and knowledge of technology between youth and adults (Universal McCann, 2006). Most young people are *digital natives,* while adults are *digital immigrants* (Prensky, 2001).

Monday May 26, 2008

What is cyberbullying?

"Cyberbullying is being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material, or engaging in other forms of social cruelty using the Internet or other digital technologies." Willard (2006)

Cyberbullying means using electronic/digital tools like cell phones and the Internet to hurt someone (by threatening, humiliating or embarrassing, ruining friendships or reputation).

What makes it so dangerous?

- We may not know who did it (it can be *anonymous*), and that's scary. It could even be a friend.
- People say things in texts or online that they would NEVER say in person: *online dis-inhibition effect* (Suler, 2004)*.

- We can't see their faces or body language, so it might be "just kidding," but we can't tell (absence of paralinguistic cues).

- So many people can see the content (vast audience).

- It can happen at any time, any place (24/7). Victims don't think they can escape.

- Kids don't tell adults, because they worry that they will take their phones or computers away. So they suffer alone.

How much do young people use technology?

- Young people ages 8 – 18 spend more than 7 ½ hours per day using electronic devices (smart phones, computers, television) accessing 11 hours of media content (by multi-tasking) (Lewin, 2010).

- Media use increased more from 2005-2010 than from 1999-2004.

- Young people use cellphones more for other purposes than for talking (texting, accessing media).

- Children are exposed to technology from infancy.

- The Norton Online Living report states that 76% of U.S. teens ages 13-17 "constantly" or "frequently" visit social networking sites (http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/index.cfm?i=54295)

- In 2009, 38% of 12-year-olds were using social networking websites.

- About 3.6 million monthly visitors to Facebook are under 12 years of age.

- The average U.S. teen sends 3,339 texts per month!

- The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (1998) prohibits websites from collecting information from children without parental consent.

- Getting and authenticating parental consent is difficult and expensive for websites.

Recent Developments

- Wide adoption of smart phones
- Additional cases got wide media exposure
  - Tyler Clementi
  - Casey Heynes incident
  - Smut list incident
- Popularity of *thedirty.com, collegeabc.com, formspring.me* on some campuses

- Tyler Clementi – interesting perspective
- Clementi's parents blame Rutgers for the tragedy, claiming it "failed to act, failed to put in place and/or failed to implement and enforce policies and practices that would have prevented or deterred such acts." They have filed intent to sue Rutgers.
- The Clementi family will be launching the Tyler Clementi Foundation to raise awareness of bullying and internet privacy.

Video Of Bully Victim Casey Heynes Bodyslamming His Bully

Play again ▶

00:41/00:41

Legislation

- 46 states have anti-bullying laws; 4 others have bills pending

- 30 states include a provision in educational codes prohibiting cyberbullying

- 35 states have enacted cyberbullying laws from 2006 – 2010.

- States are constantly revising laws in an effort to keep up with new developments. The effectiveness of legislation has not been detected empirically.

- In March, 2011, U.S. Senator Lautenberg re-introduced federal legislation to require colleges to prohibit bullying and harassment, to distribute the policy to all students with information about what to do if an incident occurs, and to include information about counseling and other services available.
  - Cyberbullying would be recognized as a form of harassment
  - A new grant program would be created to help institutions develop prevention programs.

Why do cyberbullies do it?

- They think it's funny.
- They avoid consequences of face-to-face confrontation.
- They are bored and like to create drama.
- They don't think about how the victim feels.
- They do it to impress their friends or make their friends laugh.
- They think they can't get caught.
- They think everybody does it.

Sexting

4% of teens report sending these images; 6% of 12-13 year olds and 18% of 14-17-year olds have received them (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Sexting has Serious Consequences

- In Mass., police were considering criminal charges after an 8th grade girl sent nude pictures of herself to her 8th grade boyfriend, who sold them to other kids for $5.00

- In FL, an 18-yr-old h.s. senior emailed all his former girlfriend's (age 16) contacts nude pictures of her that she sent to him only. He was convicted of possession of child pornography and will have to register as a sex offender.

What do you think?

Student suspended over Facebook post
Source: HLN

Some Research Findings

- Interpretation of findings and comparisons across studies are hampered by differences in:
  - Definition
  - Measures
  - Methods

Themes from my own research:

- Cyberbullying occurs, but not as often as conventional bullying, and often they occur together.

- Cyberbullying and cyber-victimization are strongly related.

- Self-blaming attributions are associated with greater distress when victimized.

- Higher levels of moral disengagement are associated with acting out when victimized.

- The form of bullying is not as important a distinction as are other factors (Abusive, Embarrassing, Sexual).

Bullying, cyberbullying, and suicide:

- Analysis of 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (grades 9 – 12) for one state
- Odds ratios for suicide attempts:
    - Depression: **6.3**
    - Conventional Victimization: **2.1**
    - Conventional Bullying: **2.9**
    - Cyber-Victimization: NS
    - Cyber Bullying: **3.00**
- Variance in suicide attempts explained by these predictors is about 22%.
- Much of bullying/victimization's effect on suicide is mediated by depression.
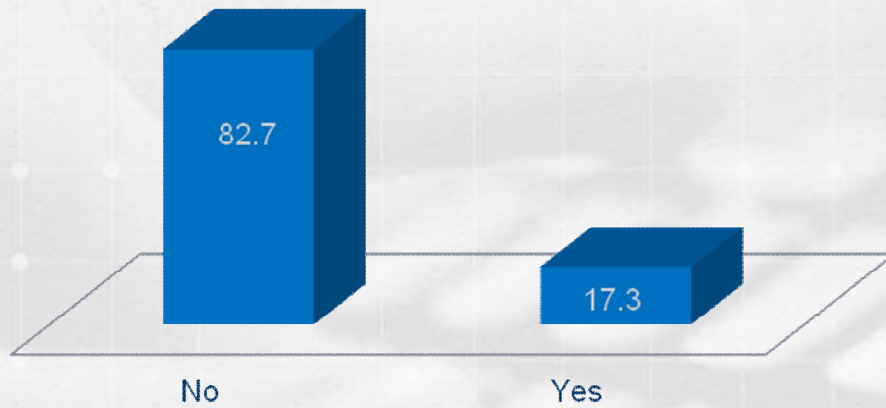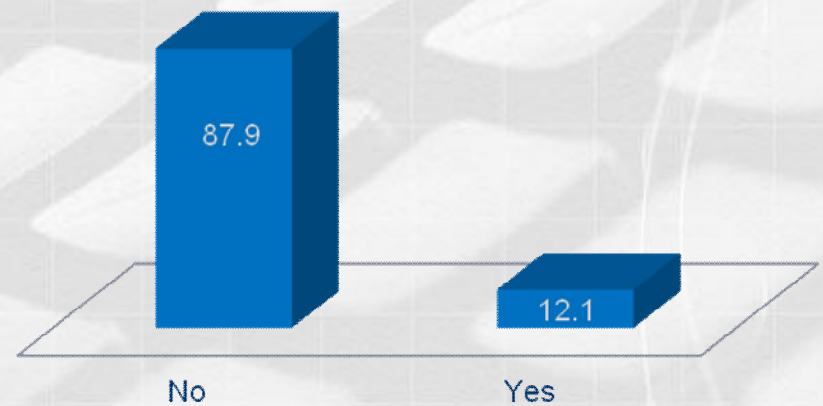
Depression

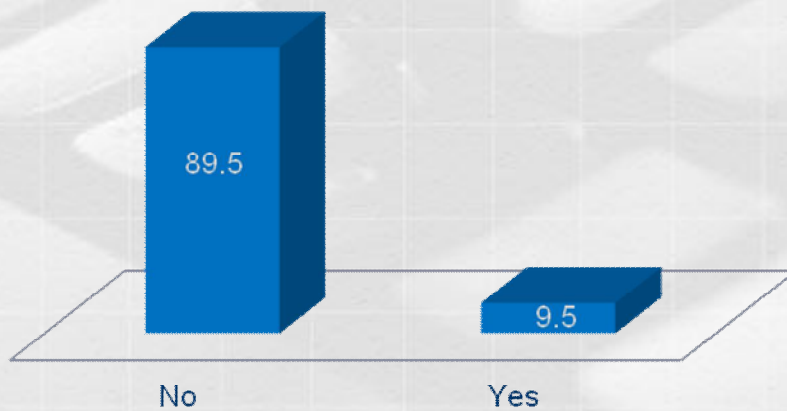Bullying/ Victimization

Suicide Attempts

Considered Suicide

82.7 (No) 17.3 (Yes)

Made a Suicide Plan

87.9 (No) 12.1 (Yes)
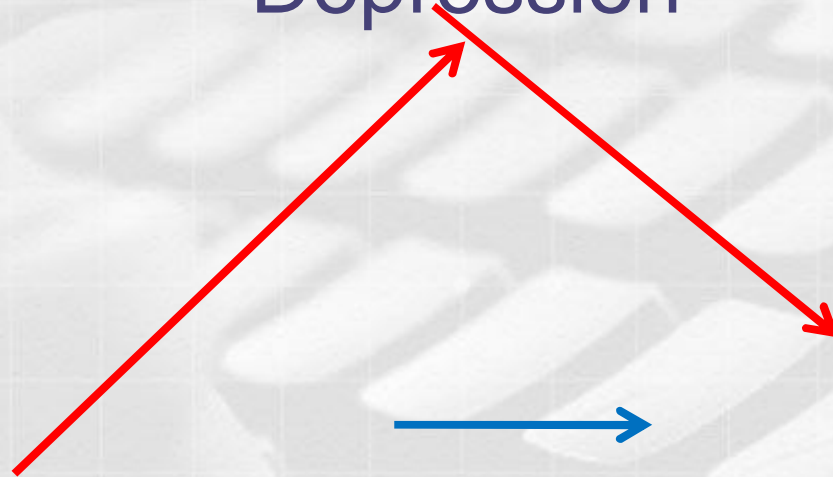
Suicide Attempts

89.5 (No) 9.5 (Yes)

Self-Reported Rates

	Male	Female
Conventional Victim	5.3%	4.5%
Conventional Bully	6.6%	2.8%
Cyber Victim	3.4%	2.3%
Cyber Bully	3.4%	.9%

Themes from focus groups with college students:

- Students do not identify with the university as a whole, but with sub-groups. Cyberbullying occurs in sub-group context.

- Although anonymity is thought to be a major factor in cyberbullying, several participants felt that they were more hurt by known bully.

- Easy access to technology encourages cyberbullying.
- Much of what is labeled cyberbullying is miscommunication.
- High profile (athletes, student leaders) individuals are targeted often, as are GLBTQ, other students with "differences."
- The ability to avoid consequences of actions (e.g., break-ups) is appealing.
- Jealousy and revenge fuel cyberbullying.

- Students who are impulsive, involved in Greek system, attention-seekers, and top scholars are more likely to cyber-bully others.

HOW WELL PREPARED IS THE UA COMMUNITY TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO CB?

IT'S UP TO THE VICTIM/PERSONAL PROBLEM
- It's up to the victim to seek help
- None of the University's business
- Outside sources should stay out of personal life
- Have to fend for yourself, just deal with it
- Rely on friends for support, not UA

NO AUTHORITY ONLINE
- CB is untraceable → Consequences are unenforceable
- UA does not take responsibility for online activity on any UA network
- Online activity is often misinterpreted → unintentional harm

UA NOT PREPARED TO RESPOND
- Currently no policies in place to address CB
- Unaware of any clear consequences
- Unaware of any available resources – wouldn't know where to turn
- UA response is dependent on severity of the CB
- Would only respond to protect UA image/reputation

GENERATION GAP
- Older generation not technologically savvy enough to respond

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR HOW THE UA MIGHT ADDRESS CB?

PROVIDE RESOURCES & EDUCATION
• Counseling
• Workshops
• Anonymous reporting system
• Provide CB training:
- Clubs/Organizations
- Faculty/Staff
- Residence Life (Specifically RA's)
• Freshman orientation (especially vulnerable)
• Intervention/mediation services
• Technology as a resource
- CB quizzes
- Email reporting

RAISE AWARENESS OF CB
• Posters/pamphlets
• Commercials/PSA's
• University website (link to resources)
• Advertisements

CAMPUS RESOURCES MENTIONED
• Residence Life
• Dean of Students Office
• UAPD
• CAPS
• Campus Health
• Professors (mixed comments on effectiveness)

UNIVERSITY POLICIES
• Incorporate CB, specifically, in policies
• Need _clear_ consequences for CB
• Student handbook
• Difficult w/rapid evolution of technology

ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
• Zero tolerance policy
• D2L discussion boards
• Address CB in class syllabus

THE ROLE OF THE BYSTANDER
• Engage student leaders
• Empower bystanders to speak up
• Peer accountability

IT'S UP TO THE VICTIM/PERSONAL PROBLEM
• Don't invade someone's _personal_ life
• Victim must speak up for self
• Only get involved upon request of the victim
• Don't get involved to avoid retaliation

Summary

- Cyberbullying is a serious problem for all age levels, with adolescents particularly at risk.

- Cyberbullying and conventional bullying are closely related.

- Adults need to become better informed in order to be credible resources for young people.

Thank you for your attention!

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