



# CYBER BULLYING

Beatings without bruises

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# Seminar Overview

- Case studies
  - What is cyber bullying?
  - How does cyber bullying occur?
- What does the research say?
- Implications for practice & future research

# What is cyber bullying?

“Cyber bullying is *wilful* and *repeated* harm inflicted through the medium of *electronic* text”

(Patchin & Hinduja, 2008)

# Bullying terminology

Bullying

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graph TD; Bullying[Bullying] --> Direct[Direct Bullying (overt)]; Bullying --> Indirect["Indirect (covert) bullying is..."]; Indirect --> Lack["- Lack of any direct confrontation"]; Lack --> Cyber["Cyber bullying"];
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Direct Bullying  
(overt)

Indirect (covert) bullying is...  
"A more subtle, often hidden, form of non-physical, aggressive behaviour aimed at inflicting harm through peer relations, friendships, feelings of acceptance & self-esteem" (Aus. Covert Bullying Prevalence Study, 2009)

- Lack of any direct confrontation

Cyber bullying

# Media Attention



# Why is cyber bullying a problem?

- Victims of traditional bullying often report increased rates of mental health problems (Field, 2007)
- **Long term?** Allison et al. (2009) - Later in life victims experienced poorer physical and mental health than those not bullied
- So far, the short-term research is indicating that the impact of cyber bullying appears to be similar to that of traditional bullying (Dehue, 2008; Pathchin & Hinjura, 2006)

# Why is cyber bullying a problem?

- Cyber bullying can be inescapable
  - 73% have mobile phone (ABS, 2009)
  - 93% have access to the internet at home (ABS, 2009)
- Cyber bullying can be anonymous (Li, 2005)
  - 84% of bullies knew their victim but only 31% of victims knew the identity of their bully (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004)

# Why is cyber bullying a problem?

- Parents often lack technological skills (King, 2007).
  - They don't fully understand what is going in their child's online world
  - 20% of 7-14 y.o's report that they have visited sites they know they should not have visited
  - 1 in 3 have an online friend they have never met (New Generations Survey, 2010)
- Most parents set rules about internet/mobile phone use but are largely unaware of actual harassment (Dehue et al, 2008)
- Confusion over who is responsible for intervening - schools or parents?

# Why cyber bully?

- Out of anger, revenge or frustration
- For entertainment or to get a reaction
- Because they're bored
- By accident
- To torment others
- In "self defence"
- To bolster or remind people of their social standing
- To right a wrong or stand up for others

# Rates of cyber bullying

- HPU study (in preparation, 2010)
  - 20% have been **victims of cyber bullying** (last 3 months)
    - Mean = 4.47 times
  - 13% have **cyber bullied others**
    - Mean = 3.25 times

# Prevalence of cyber bullying

- Annual Youth Poll (2008)
  - Senator Natasha Stott Despoja
  - 22% were threatened or upset by someone online.
- Australian Covert Bullying Study (Cross et al., 2009)
  - 7-10% victims of cyber bullying in Years 4-9
- Cyber bullying is an international phenomenon – rates range from 5-25%  
(NCH, 2005, Dehue, 2008, Wolak, 2007, Hinjura & Patchin, 2008)

# Gender and cyber bullying

- Girls and boys cyber bully at equivalent rates  
(HPU, in prep 2010)

## ■ Girls

### ■ Relational bullying

- to humiliate and ostracise other from their friendship groups  
(Subrahmanyam et al., 2003)

### ■ 50% bully with friends

(Dehue, 2008 )

## ■ Boys

### ■ Sexual harassment

- Homophobic bullying
- Sexual harassment of females (unwanted attention, coercion)  
(Subrahmanyam et al., 2003)

### ■ 30% bully with friends

# Age and cyber bullying

- Cyber bullying peaks in the first few years of high school
- Direct bullying declines after approx 15 y.o.
- Cyber bullying follows this decline but not as steeply

(Cross et al., 2009; HPU, in prep; Williams & Guerra, 2007)

# Profiles in cyber bullying

## BULLIES

- School climate where bullying is acceptable
- Favourable attitude toward bullying
- Access to internet & no internet monitoring at home
- Bully face to face
- Victim of all types of bullying

## VICTIMS

- School climate where bullying is acceptable
- Access to internet & no internet monitoring at home
- Cyber bully others
- Report lower levels of self esteem

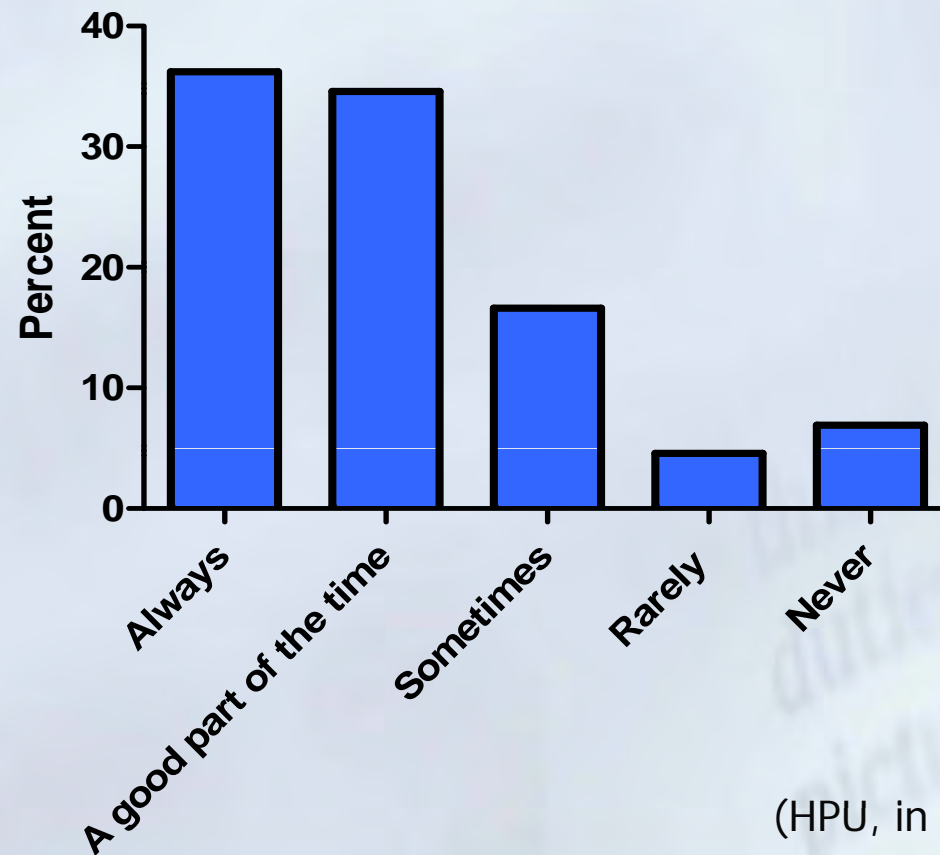
(Cross et al., 2009; HPU, in prep, Williams & Guerra, 2007)

# Cyber Safety Strategies (CSS)

- Protect your personal information
- Keep login information secret
- Only admit friends to social networking pages
- *Stranger Danger* principles
- *Netiquette: Would you do that in real life?*
- Think before you post (avoid flaming)
- [cybersmart.gov.au](http://cybersmart.gov.au)

# Do students use CSS?

- 95% of students reported knowing about CSS.



(HPU, in prep 2010)

# Responding to cyber bullying

	Took no action	Told teacher	Told parent	Avoided bully	Spoke back /replied	Confronted /fought	Blocked sender
Percentage of students	<b>21.7%</b>	4.7%	13.7%	19.2%	22.2%	15.3%	<b>52.5%</b>

- 60% of students who took no action said the bullying either continued or got worse
- Most blocked the bully and this tended to be the most successful action (50%), but still only a partial solution

# Prevention programs for cyber bullying

- Lack of evaluation research on preventative approaches to cyber bullying
- Experts in field recommend **strategic, comprehensive & integrated** programs (Cross et al., 2009; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006)
- Not reinventing the wheel
- Bullying programs modestly effective in decreasing bullying (Smith, 2008)

# Whole School approach – prevention programs

- **Goal of programs** – create a positive, supportive school environment.
- **School policy & procedures–**
  - Cyber use & bullying code of conduct
  - Encourage prosocial values and morals
  - Clear procedures to be followed
- Adjunct to already established bullying policy

# Training for Parents & Teachers

- Increasing awareness of extent and impact of cyber bullying
- Importance of social networking sites for identity formation in adolescents
- Familiarise with cyber safety strategies
- Importance of good adult role models

# Training for Parents & Teachers

## PARENTS

- Rules for internet usage – frequency and purpose
- Parental monitoring
- Anti-virus software & filters
- Open lines of communication

## TEACHERS

- Communicate to students about school policy
- Follow up policy violation

# Training students

- What constitutes cyber bullying?
- Empower students to deal with bullying
- Turn bystanders into defenders
  - *"Bad things continue to happen if good people do nothing"*
  - Bystander training: Trains bystanders to intervene and support victim
- Conflict resolution or assertiveness skills
- Empathy building exercises & citizenship skills

# Key to program success

- Research has shown that success in reducing bullying is related to the *intensity of effort* and *persistence over time*.
- These intervention programs need ongoing reviews
- Evaluation

# IN SUMMARY... 1

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- ✘ Cyber bullying is:
  - + Relatively common
    - affects approximately 20% of adolescents
  - + Difficult to escape
  - + Constantly evolving
  - + Harmful to mental health and development
- ✘ Cyber bullies and cyber victims have very similar profiles
- ✘ Cyber safety strategies are essential

# IN SUMMARY... 2

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- ✘ Cyber bullying interventions need to:
  - + Be comprehensive, integrated, and take a whole school approach
  - + Involve parents, teachers & students
  - + Be delivered over time and evaluated periodically.
  
- ✘ Research is continuing!

# Resources

- [www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org)
- [www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org)
- [www.netalert.gov.au](http://www.netalert.gov.au)
- [thewoodverdict.blogspot.com](http://thewoodverdict.blogspot.com)
- <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/>
- Safety, Privacy, Help & Cyber Bullying sections of social networking sites
- Shariff (2008). *Cyber-Bullying: Issues and solutions for the school, the classroom and the home*. Routledge Press: London.
- Kowalski, Limber & Agatston (2008). *Cyber Bullying: Bullying in the Digital Age*. Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford.





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