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INTRODUCTION

What makes cyber bullying so dangerous … is that anyone can practice it without having to confront the victim. You don't have to be strong or fast, simply equipped with a cell phone or computer and a willingness to terrorize.

(King, 2006)

Bullying creates memories that often last a lifetime. Simply hearing the name of a person who bullied them, even years or decades after the bullying occurred, may be enough to send chills up the backs of many people. When most adults think of bullying, they conjure up the image of a big thug who terrorized kids on the playground at school. Usually a male, he was someone to be feared. As horrible as encounters with this bully[1] may have been, though, the end of the school day often brought a reprieve as the victim left school and went home.

Cyberbullying, however, is a bit different. In spite of recent media attention devoted to the topic, many people are still not familiar with the term. But, for those who are and who have experienced it, the memories, like those of traditional bullying, may also last a lifetime. Cyberbullying, also known as electronic bullying or online social cruelty, is defined as bullying through e-mail, instant messaging (IM), in a chat room, on a Web site, on an online gaming site, or through digital messages or images sent to a cellular phone. Although sharing certain features in common with traditional bullying (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of this), cyberbullying represents a somewhat unique phenomenon that has been receiving

increasing attention in recent years in both the popular press and in academic circles. Cyberbullying not only looks and feels a bit different than traditional bullying, but, as will be discussed later in this book, it presents some unique challenges in dealing with it, especially for parents, educators, and other adults who interact with children. In discussing the relationship between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, a reporter for MSNBC stated: "Kids can be cruel. And kids with technology can be cruel on a world-wide scale" (Sullivan, 2006). As is clear from its definition, cyberbullying is a method of bullying made possible because of technological advances over the past 15–20 years. Two of the most notable of these advances are the Internet and the cellular phone.

One of the interesting questions that is often raised in connection with the Internet is: To what degree has it changed the lives of the adolescents who are using it? We believe that this is really the wrong question. Although the Internet may have changed the lives of the parents of these adolescents, for the adolescents themselves the existence of the Internet is all they have ever known. It simply *is* part of their life. The fact that parents of many of these children did not grow up with cellular phones and in-room computers, whereas these technologies are prevalent in the lives of the adolescents, accounts, in part, for the gap between parents and children in understanding both the uses and risks of the Internet (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011).

Parents, at least initially, tend to view the Internet as a helpful tool to aid their children with homework. Similarly, in parents' eyes, cellular phones are a means for kids to call home in emergencies. Children and youth, on the other hand, perceive the Internet, cellular phones, and related technologies as critical tools for their social life. For most parents, this technology is relatively new and somewhat foreign and, therefore, something about which their children need to be cautious. For children and youth, on the other hand, these communication technologies have always existed, so they have a comfort level with technology that is foreign to many of their parents. Many parents candidly admit that their children are the ones who have taught them most of what they know about the Internet and related technologies. For example, in a focus group interview about cyberbullying, one teenager stated that she had taught her father how to access her brother's computer search history. In another study (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011), just over 27% of the parents perceived that their technology skills were equal to or worse than those of their children.

Importantly, though, what children are doing today isn't all that different from what their parents did when they were growing up – it is just that the

vehicle through which they are doing it differs. For example, Lindsay Notwell referred to text messaging as "the note-passing of the new millennium … the Game Boy of wireless communications, for people who think with their thumbs" (Carpenter, 2003). Researchers with the Media Awareness Network (Wing, 2005), in discussing the extent to which the Internet affords adolescents the opportunity to try on new roles and identities, pointed out that kids have been playing "dress up" for centuries. The technological mediums used today, however, present some unique challenges that didn't confront children two or three decades ago. Traditionally, notes were passed between two individuals, often in class, and hidden from the view of the teacher and most other students in the class. Today, "notes" are passed via instant messaging and e-mail for a much wider audience to see. Hand-held electronic devices, such as Game Boys, that might, only a few years ago, have been played while a child watched television in the living room have been replaced by X-Box Live that is played with multiple other people on a computer that most likely resides in the child's room.

For better or for worse, technology is here to stay, and it is a staple in the lives of adolescents today. *Time* magazine's 2006 selection of "You" as the person of the year attests to this (Grossman, 2006). In trying to select a person who helped to shape the course of history, writers at *Time* realized that the story of 2006 was "a story about community and collaboration … It's about the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people's network YouTube and the online metropolis MySpace" (Grossman, 2006). In focus groups conducted with Canadian children in grades 4 through 11, researchers found that children and adolescents view the Internet as "an opportunity to explore the adult world without supervision" (Wing, 2005). This preference is in keeping with their need to test their wings outside the family. A majority of children (57%) also use the Net to explore topics that interest them on an average school day, and a significant proportion use it to express themselves on their own Web sites (28%) or in online diaries and Web logs (15%; Wing, 2005).

Children and the Internet

So many kids use the Internet and its many communication venues that it has been referred to as the "digital communication backbone of teens' daily lives" (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005, p. iii). Want to punish a teenager? Simply threaten to take their computer or cell phone away. To a teenager,

that may seem to be a punishment worse than death (or, at least, a punishment that is the equivalent of a social death).

Several large-scale surveys have given us a picture of the prevalence of the use of technology among teenagers today and some of the potential dangers faced by teens. According to *The 2010 Digital Future Report* (Center for the Digital Future, 2010), released annually over the last decade, Internet use among Americans has continued to increase, as has overall time spent online. In 2005, 79% of Americans spent time online, averaging 13.3 hours a week, a significant increase over the previous four years. In 2009, 82% of Americans spent time online, averaging 19 hours a week. In the 2005 report, among all Americans e-mail was the most frequent online activity, with instant messaging appearing ninth in the list. In 2009, instant messaging was the most common method of communicating online. Social networking sites are increasing as a communication tool of choice with 58% of individuals using social network sites at least once a week, an increase of 14% from the previous year. Notably, 100% of individuals surveyed under the age of 24 spend time online. This high rate of Internet activity among children and young adults has led people such as Bill Belsey, President of Bullying.org Canada, to refer to teenagers today as the "always on generation."

The 2010 Pew Internet & American Life Project report indicated that 93% of the 800 teens between the ages of 12 and 17 surveyed spend time online. Over half of these teens (63%) reported that they spent time each day online (Lenhart, 2010). Thirty-six percent of these go online several times a day. Three fourths (75%) of the adolescents had their own cell phones, compared to 45% in 2005 and 18% in 2004; notably, 58% of 12-year-olds had a cell phone. Just under three-fourths of all teens send text messages, translating to 88% of all teens with cell phones (Lenhart, 2010). The average teen sends/receives 50 text messages a day, although one-third send/receive approximately 100 texts a day or 3,000 a month (Lenhart, 2010). Given these statistics, it is hardly surprising that texting has now surpassed instant messaging as the most common mode of communication among teens. Eight percent of the teens in this survey visited virtual worlds, such as Second Life. The use of virtual worlds was more popular among younger teens than older teens, and more popular among teens than adults. Highlighting the "wired" nature of today's youth, the survey found that the average youth has 3.5 gadgets out of 5 surveyed: cell phones, MP3 players, computers, game consoles, and portable gaming devices (Lenhart, 2010).

The biggest leap in online activity occurs between the 6th and 7th grades, according to the Pew report (Lenhart, 2010). Whereas 83% of 6th graders indicated that they used the Internet, 92% of 7th graders reported online activity. In a demonstration of technology trends, the 2005 Pew report noted that boys (particularly 6th grade boys) were much less active in their use of the Internet than girls. Whereas only 44% of the 6th grade boys reported going online, 79% of 6th grade girls reported using the Internet. Girls also were more likely than boys to use instant messaging. Seventy-eight percent of girls and 71% of boys said that they had tried instant messaging. Girls also tried instant messaging at an earlier age than boys. In the 2010 report, however, Lenhart found that boys and girls were equally likely to go online. Seventy-three percent of teens between the ages of 12 and 17 use social network sites, an increase of 18% since 2006 (Lenhart, 2010). Girls and boys were equally likely to use social networking sites. Only 8% of teens 12–17 reported using Twitter. Older teens were more likely than younger teens to use this social networking service, and, among older teens, girls reported being more likely to tweet than boys (Lenhart, 2010).

In 2000 and again in 2003, the Media Awareness Network (Wing, 2005) launched a series of research studies examining the online behavior of Canadian children and adolescents. In 2003, the organization conducted a series of focus groups with both parents and adolescents. Two years later, they administered a survey to 5,272 children in grades 4 to 11 to examine their online activities. Among other things, the study found that 23% of the children and youth had their own cellular phone. Twenty-two percent of school-aged children had Web cams. By the time they reached 11th grade, 31% had personal Web cams. Internet use tends to decline slightly once kids reach high school in part because most are driving or have friends who drive. Once they have the ability to see one another in person, they rely less on technology to keep in touch with one another. In addition, they are connecting with their friends differently, using cell phones more than computers at home. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents in grade 4 reported playing games online. As the ages of the children increased, the percentage that played games decreased and the percentage who used instant messaging increased. Across all age groups, instant messaging was ranked as the first choice of online activity by 62% of the girls and 43% of the boys. Of concern, only 16% of the respondents reported talking about their online activities with their parents.

The Canadian survey revealed some disturbing information about the kinds of sites that adolescents like to visit. Of the 50 favorite Web sites listed,

nearly one-third included violent or sexual information. In Quebec, the most popular site among girls in grades 8 to 11 is Doyoulookgood.com. "On this Montreal-based site, users post photos, videos and information about themselves so others can vote on their looks. Members can search for people by age, starting as young as 13" (Wing, 2005).

The use of social networking sites, such as Facebook, MySpace, Xanga, LiveJournal, Formspring, and Nexopia has increased markedly in the last few years. Facebook is currently the most popular social networking site worldwide, with over 800 million active users. An active user is defined as someone who has logged into their Facebook account at least once within the previous month. Half of these active users log into their accounts daily. Across all users, people spend in excess of 700 billion minutes a month on Facebook (Facebook statistics, 2011)! Nexopia, the Canadian equivalent of Facebook and the largest social network site for youth in Canada, has a user base of approximately 1.2 million. Bebo (Blog early, blog often), similar to MySpace except affiliated more with schools and universities, and more likely to be used by teens, has seen similar rates of growth. Within its first year, Bebo acquired 25 million users ("Focus: Brave new world," 2006). Currently, Bebo is the largest social networking site in the United Kingdom ("What is Bebo," 2010). Formspring, which launched in November, 2009, uses a question and answer style format for users to network with one another. Askers can choose to remain anonymous as they ask questions that are then responded to by the user to whom they are directed. The questions and answers are then posted on the user's profile. Users' profiles can be linked to other social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Ernie Allen, President of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, said, in reference to adolescents posting personal information on social networking sites: "What they're doing [when they post information about themselves online] is opening a window to people who may not have the best intentions" (Olsen, 2006b).

A survey conducted by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and Cox Communications oriented toward online and wireless safety examined the online experiences of 655 children between the ages of 13 and 17. The survey responses showed that 72% of 13–17-year-old children have a personal profile on a social network site ("Teen online," 2006, 2009). Sixty-two percent had posted photos of themselves on a blog or their social networking profile. Ninety-one percent listed a personal e-mail address, and 60% had a screen name that they used for instant messaging. Nineteen percent had engaged in sexting. Nine percent had sent a

sext, 17% had received a sext, and 3% had forwarded a sext. One in ten of the individuals who had sent sexts had sent them to someone that they didn't know. A similar survey conducted two years earlier with 1070 teens in the same age range found that 8% had had a face-to-face interaction with someone they had met over the Internet (a decrease from 14% in 2006). Sixteen percent said they were considering a face-to-face meeting with someone they had met online, a decrease from 30% in 2006. Sixty-nine percent had received a personal message from someone they didn't know ("Cox Communications," 2007; "Take charge," 2006).

In a desire to examine the online presence of even younger children, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Cox Communication's Take Charge program subsequently administered a similar survey to 1,015 tweens ages 12–15, all of whom had access to the Internet. The findings reinforced the wired culture in which our youth live. The presence of children online more than doubled between the 8–10 and 11–12 age ranges. Girls showed more of an online presence than boys. Fifty percent of tweens ages 11–12 reported having a cell phone and 34% of tweens in the same age range had a profile on a social network site. Twenty-eight percent reported that they had been contacted via the Internet by someone that they did not know. Almost 20% did not tell anyone about messages that they had received from strangers ("Tweens and Internet," 2011).

Not surprisingly, given that children and adolescents communicate with all sorts of people on the Internet, some of whom are friends and others of whom are strangers, experiences with the Internet and related technologies may be positive or negative. Profiles of children and youth on the Internet, and data on the types of information to which they are exposed while surfing the Internet, change rapidly. For example, in comparing data from the first Youth Internet Survey (YISS-1; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), and the second Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS-2; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2006), which were conducted approximately five years apart, researchers reported that the percentage of children and youth who reported receiving online sexual solicitations had decreased from YISS-1 to YISS-2, but the proportion who reported online harassment and unsolicited exposure to sexual images had increased. A disturbing note to this reported increase in the number of children experiencing online exposure to sexual material is the fact that an increased number of parents (55%) in YISS-2 reported the use of computer blockers, filters, and keystroke software programs, compared to YISS-1 (33%). So, despite these increased parental controls, the number of children and youth who reported unwanted exposure to sexual material

continued to increase. Also disturbing, according to YISS-2 (Wolak et al., 2006) an increasing number of perpetrators of online harassment are friends or acquaintances of the victim: 46% in the YISS-2 survey compared to 28% in YISS-1. Furthermore, the proportion of respondents in YISS-2 (14%) who said that the individuals making online sexual solicitations were offline friends or acquaintances increased from YISS-1, by 3%.

Effects of Internet Use on Children and Youth

There is debate regarding the extent to which high levels of Internet use interfere with psychological functioning, particularly among children and adolescents. On the one hand, Internet use allows for the possible development of new relationships, and for the easy maintenance of existing friendships and relationships. Russell and his colleagues (2003) found that frequent Internet use broadened people's social networks, particularly for people who were shy and socially anxious (see also, Gross, Juvonen, & Gable, 2002; Mazalin & Klein, 2008; McKenna & Bargh, 2000). Related research by Roberts, Smith, and Pollock (2000) found that socially anxious individuals were more confident communicating electronically than face-to-face. With time, however, this confidence carried over into face-to-face interactions. Socially anxious individuals are also more likely than nonsocially anxious people to communicate electronically with strangers or acquaintances (Gross et al., 2002). Using Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) analogy, Bargh and his colleagues (2002) compared the Internet to talking to "strangers on a train": people often freely disclose to strangers sitting next to them on a train aspects of themselves that they would not reveal to others. The Internet affords people the opportunity to disclose aspects of their "true self" that they would not reveal in face-to-face interactions.

Thus, the Internet has the potential to increase students' social interaction and enhance collaborative learning experiences (Beran & Li, 2005). At the same time, however, Robert Mahaffey, a criminal investigator for the Mississippi Attorney General's cyber crime unit, stated that: "The Internet is the wild, wild West of the 21st century, and it should be viewed that way" ("FBI: Blogging can be dangerous," 2005). Just like the wild, wild West, the Internet is full of excitement and adventure, but it is also full of danger and often unknown "bandits." Using a similar analogy, Franek (2005/2006) stated that "we need to be vigilant sheriffs in this new Wild West – a cyber-world buzzing with kids just a few keystrokes away from harming other

people, often for no other reason than that the sheriffs are sleeping. As any-one who has ever been the victim of bullying and harassment will tell you, the bullets may not be real, but they can hurt" (p. 40).

On the positive side, the anonymity afforded by the Internet allows people to try on multiple roles and experiment with different "selves" without fear of negative evaluation or social sanctions that might follow such experimentation in face-to-face encounters. Significant numbers of adolescents (24%) in the 2005 Pew Internet & American Life survey admitted to pretending to be different people online (Lenhart et al., 2005). Fifty-six percent had more than one e-mail address or screen name. Users can pretend to be older or younger, male or female, African American or Caucasian, liberal or conservative, homosexual or heterosexual. The list of possible roles they can play and identities they can assume is endless. On the one hand, this can be beneficial to a teenager who is searching to discover who he or she is.

On the other hand, pretending to be someone they are not may lead children and adolescents to "meet" people online and, perhaps, subsequently in the real world, who also are not who they say they are. Indeed, 39% of the respondents in the 2001 Pew report (Lenhart, Rainie, & Lewis, 2001) admitted to playing a trick on someone or pretending to be somebody different when using instant messaging. Sixty percent of the teens reported that they had received e-mails or IMs from a stranger and 50% exchanged e-mails or IMs with a stranger. Seventeen percent of respondents in the Young Canadians in a Wired World Survey (Wing, 2005) reported that they "had pretended to be someone else so 'I can act mean to people and not get into trouble.'" In addition, 59% of the respondents admitted to pretending to be someone that they weren't online. Of these, 52% pretended to be a different age, 26% assumed different personality characteristics, 24% pretended to have abilities they didn't have, and 23% claimed an appearance that was different from their actual appearance. Eighteen percent of the respondents to the NCMEC/COX Communications Survey ("Teen Online," 2009) indicated that they had posted a fake age on a public blog or a social networking site. Over 60% of the respondents to the NCMEC/COX Communications Survey ("Take charge," 2006) indicated that they had friends who had lied about their age over the Internet; another third stated that they had friends who had discovered that the person with whom they were communicating online was a different gender or age than they had originally claimed.

Opportunities for self-affirmation and self-expression provided by the Internet can quickly become vehicles for denigration and cyberbullying. For example, as noted earlier one site, doyoulookgood.com, allows users to

set up personal accounts whereby they post pictures of and personal information about themselves. Site visitors can then pull up a person's profile and vote on the individual's attractiveness as well as send messages to the person. Ironically, although billed as a "social dating community" for individuals age 18 to 34 on its Web site, doyoulookgood.com was rated as the most popular site among Canadian girls in grades 8 to 11 (Wing, 2005), At the time of writing, 115,205 new photos had been posted this week and just under two million messages had been sent today. Of the almost 1,000 members currently online, 60% were men and 40% were women. Although the individual who receives positive ratings has the potential to have his or her self-esteem raised, the opposite scenario is probably more likely – negative ratings or negative comments that serve to denigrate the individual whose photo is posted on the Web site. Such negative postings represent only the tip of the iceberg of cyberbullying.

Perhaps not surprisingly, some evidence suggests that increased Internet use is associated with adverse psychological effects. In one of the first large-scale studies examining the psychological effects of Internet use, Kraut et al. (1998) found higher levels of Internet use to be associated with higher levels of depression and loneliness (see also Moody, 2001; Sum, Matthews, Hughes, & Campbell, 2008). Indeed, some experts are increasingly talking about the need for youth to "disconnect" or take digital sabbaticals. They are encouraging parents to look at helping the "always on" generation find opportunities to disconnect, reflect, and meditate. Other researchers suggest, however, that the Internet increases social and communication skills and can actually decrease loneliness by providing quality online relationships (Ong, Chang, & Wang, 2011).

In a nationwide survey of more than 63,000 children in 5th through 8th grade conducted by i-SAFE America, 30% said they had said mean or hurtful things to another person online, with 3% saying they did so often. Conversely, from a pool of approximately 20,700 students, 37% of the respondents said that someone had said mean hurtful things to them online. Four percent reported that it happened quite often. Nine percent had felt worried or threatened in the past year because someone was bothering or harassing them online (i-SAFE, 2006–2007). Thirty-four percent of the respondents in the Young Canadians in a Wired World survey reported having been bullied, with 74% of these being bullied at school and 27% being bullied over the Internet (Wing, 2005). Another 12% reported having been sexually harassed, with 70% of these being sexually harassed over the Internet.

How prevalent has cyberbullying become? Pretty prevalent. It used to be that kids could go off to summer camp to make new friends, gain some independence, learn new skills, and quite simply have an enjoyable way to spend part of their summer.[2] Long before the days of cellular phones, palm pilots, and laptops, campers might take a camera with them so that they could remember some of the cool things they saw at camp and so that they could have pictures of their new friends. Now, however, summer camp is a bit of a different experience. Kids might walk around camp listening to their iPod or talking on their Droid or Blackberry. Back at the lodge, they might be found tied to a computer, IMing their friends or posting information on their own or another person's Facebook site – until recently, anyway. Cyberbullying has become so worrisome for some adults that some summer camps have decided to ban digital cameras from the camp premises (Belluck, 2006). The fear? That not-so-well-meaning campers will take inappropriate pictures of other campers or doctor "normal" pictures and then post these images on the Web, such as on social networking sites, like Facebook or MySpace (Belluck, 2006). In some instances, camps are trademarking their names and logos so that they have legal recourse if such images are posted (Belluck, 2006).

Prototypes of Cyberbullying

In recent years, countless examples of cyberbullying have been reported in the media, a few of which will be briefly recounted here as prototypes of cyberbullying. As will become apparent, cyberbullying includes a range of experiences, some legal, some illegal. Many of these examples highlight some of the worst examples of cyberbullying. Yet, they help illustrate how issues such as the speed of distribution, anonymity, 24/7 accessibility, and permanence come into play with cyberbullying, issues that we will return to later in the book.

In perhaps one of the first and best-known illustrations of cyberbullying, Ghyslain Raza created a video of himself on November 4, 2002, acting out a scene from the movie *Star Wars*, using a golf-ball retriever as his light saber. Unfortunately, classmates then posted the video online without his permission or knowledge, where it was seen by millions. Eventually, in 2004, a Web site was created that contained original and modified clips from the video, along with special effects, and music from the *Star Wars* movie. The site received over 76 million hits (Lampert, 2006). In addition,

other Web sites contained clips from the video spliced into action movies. Some speculated that Ghyslain's image was the most downloaded image of 2004. Labeled the "Star Wars Kid," Ghyslain was forced to change schools and received psychiatric help. On April 7, 2006, Raza's parents, who had filed a lawsuit against the classmates who had placed the video on the Internet, settled out of court with the families of these students. Ghyslain is currently a law student at McGill University and the President of a non-profit organization designed to preserve the cultural heritage of town called Trois-Rivères (Axon, 2010).

A young man, angry over the fact that his girlfriend broke up with him, used photo-editing tools to paste her head onto a pornographic picture and sent it to everyone in his e-mail address book (Paulson, 2003).

In March, 2011, a group of high school students in Westchester, New York created a list known as the SMUT List. About 100 girls were rank-ordered on the list based on their sexual activity. The list first circulated via text messaging, but was later posted on a Facebook group page. Within 24 hours, over 7000 people had "liked" the page (Stamoulis, 2011).

Taylor Wynn and McKenzie Baker, 15- and 16-year-old teenagers in Florida, created a fake profile of a classmate. On the profile, they superimposed her head on the nude body of someone else. Additionally, they juxtaposed a doctored photo of the classmate with her mouth agape next to an erect penis. After being forced to remove the first profile, the girls created a second. After being arrested and charged with aggravated cyberstalking, the girls expressed no remorse, saying that it was "all in good fun" and that "no one liked" the classmate (Kenny, 2011; Mandell, 2011).

15-year-old Jodi Plumb discovered a Web site devoted entirely to insulting her. Included on the Web site were comments about her weight as well as a date for her death. She discovered the Web site when a classmate used a digital camera to take a picture of Jodi for the Web site. Jodi said "I was really hurt because I did not know who'd done it" ("Cyber bullies target girl," 2006).

Phoebe Pluckrose-Oliver, 10 years old, received abusive text messages and phone calls from girls at her school. According to Phoebe, "They started phoning me and saying that I was in the cow club and that I should phone the loser line and stuff" ("Girl tormented by phone bullies," 2001).

Kylie Kenney was a victim of cyberbullying though multiple modalities. First, a Web site was created calling for her to die, the "Kill Kylie Incorporated" Web site. This was accompanied by countless harassing e-mails and phone calls. Furthermore, rumors spread that Kylie was a lesbian, and messages

were sent ostensibly from her own instant messaging account asking other girls out on a date. In a news conference on cyberbullying, Kylie described how she was forced to change schools twice and how she had to be home-schooled for one semester because the cyberbullying was so bad. In the news conference, Kylie said "I was scared, hurt, and confused. I didn't know why it was happening to me. I had nowhere to turn except to my Mom" (Gehrke, 2006).

A 15-year-old female from Rhode Island was charged with cyberstalking for creating a fake profile of a 9th grade student. Included on the profile, in addition to the freshman's name and birth date, was a picture of a "severed bloody foot," an attempt to poke fun at the fact that the student had been born missing part of one of her feet. The title of the facebook profile: Halfafoot (Mulvaney, 2011).

A 14-year-old girl who had survived cancer and the loss of a limb when she was 10 years old was cyberbullied via text messaging for several months. Although the perpetrator's identity remained unknown for some time, it turned out to be the victim's best friend. The perpetrator would talk to the target on Skype while she was sending cyberbullying text messages so that she could witness the target's reactions to the bullying (Kennedy, 2011).

Two Toledo, Ohio, teenagers, aged 16 and 17, were arrested for posting death threats on MySpace against a 15-year-old classmate. They threatened to slit her throat, bash her head in, and discussed going to jail together if they were caught ("Ohio girls sentenced for MySpace threats," 2006).

A young boy posted sexually explicit pictures of himself online when he was 12 or 13 years old. A few years later, a young man named Matthew Bean became aware of the photos and forwarded them to the victim's school (Dale, 2011). Although Bean posed as a concerned parent, the school discovered his identity and pressed charges against him. An online group including Bean indicated that they wanted to drive the victim to kill himself (Dale, 2011). Bean was convicted and sentenced to time in prison.

An 8th grader in Pennsylvania was charged for posting a depiction of "his algebra teacher's severed head dripping with blood, an animation of her face morphing into Adolph Hitler and a solicitation for $20 contributions 'to help pay for the hitman'" (Poulsen, 2006).

A Facebook page called the "Stonewall Hoes" was created by a 16-year-old girl at Stonewall Jackson High School in Manasssas, Virginia, to highlight who she perceived to be the "hoes" in her class. Included on the page were photos of the girls along with degrading comments about the girls.

The teen has been charged with cyberbullying and faces up to 1 year in prison (Thompson, 2011).

In February 2006, five students at Kirkwood High School posted a "hot or not" list of junior girls on Facebook. Once the site was discovered, each of the five boys was given a 10-day suspension from school (Beder, 2006).

A male student at Oak Park River Forest High School in Chicago created a list of the "Top 50" female students at his school, including his commentary of these women (e.g., racial slurs and notes about their anatomy). In addition to posting the list on Facebook, he distributed copies by hand throughout the school (Sobotka, 2011). The student has been suspended, and faces possible expulsion and criminal charges.

16-year-old Jade Prest became a prisoner in her own home and even contemplated suicide in reaction to the relentless cyberbullying she experienced by peers at school. Beginning as a disagreement over a boy at school, the cyberbullying included "midnight prank phone calls, an internet chatroom whispering campaign, abusive text messages, threats, intimidation and the silent treatment" (Crisp, 2006).

A Facebook page was created with threatening posts directed at an 11-year-old girl from Orlando, Florida, who had appeared in a music video. In spite of multiple attempts to have the page removed, it remained for sometime under the premise that, by appearing in a music video, the girl was now a public figure and, according to Facebook's terms of use, public figures can be criticized on the social networking site. It was only when a *New York Times* reporter contacted Facebook that the site was removed (Helft, 2010).

In New Zealand, a 14-year-old girl's name and cell phone number were posted on Bebo along with offers of sex with no strings attached. The girl was unaware that the message and personal information about her had been posted ("Schools face new cyber bullying menace," 2006).

In the fall of 2005, two students at Oregon City High School were suspended for comments they posted on MySpace about 32 other girls at the school. Included among the comments was the following about one of the students: "Every time you speak all I can think about is where is the closest body of water, so I can tie a brick to your ankle and throw you in. Which would be good exercise because it's hard to pick up fat people" (Pardington, 2005).

Mary Ellen Handy's ordeal started because another student, named Gretchen, liked the same boy as Mary Ellen Handy. Gretchen verbally abused Mary Ellen, and then sent her harassing e-mails. Taking it a step

further, she then communicated using IM as if she were Mary Ellen, sending embarrassing and threatening communications to which, not surprisingly, she received insulting responses back. The result for Mary Ellen – she developed an ulcer from the stress. At least two of her friends who were harassed because of their relationship with Mary Ellen switched schools (Levine, 2006).

Ryan Patrick Halligan died by suicide at the age of 13 as a result of being persistently bullied and humiliated by peers at school. The bullying began at school and continued online. Toward the end of 7th grade, it was rumored at school and in IM conversations that he was gay. His father discovered after Ryan's death IMs saved on his computer demonstrating he was cyberbullied in regard to this rumor. His father also discovered that Ryan approached one of the pretty popular girls in his class online during the summer in between 7th and 8th grade, supposedly as a way of combating the gay rumor. Ryan learned on the first day of the school year that the girl only pretended to like him and that she had forwarded their private conversations to others to humiliate him. Two weeks before his death and only four weeks into the school year, Ryan wrote in an IM to a friend: "Tonight's the night, I think I'm going to do it. You'll read about it in the paper tomorrow." The "friend" replied, "It's about f˙˙ time!" (J. Halligan, personal communication, January 17, 2007)

A female respondent in one of our focus groups described the following: "An ex-boyfriend got kind of crazy once. He started e-mailing me and saying that he was gonna come to my house and kill me and stuff like he was watching [my] sister. I knew he wouldn't do anything but I went ahead and told my mom because he was like a freak. So, it was getting kind of scary. Yeah, he would say stuff to my friends online too so I kind of freaked out."

Overview of the Book

It would be difficult to discuss and understand cyberbullying without a clear understanding of traditional or school-yard bullying. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of traditional bullying – how it is defined, who the victims and perpetrators are, and the effects of traditional bullying on both sources and targets. Chapter 3 will delve into the world of cyberbullying. After defining cyberbullying, we will examine the methods by which people cyberbully, who perpetrates cyberbullying and who is victimized by cyberbullying, and how cyberbullying is similar to and different from traditional

bullying. The chapter will include a discussion of one of the key variables distinguishing electronic and traditional bullying – anonymity and the disinhibition that often results.

Although research on cyberbullying is still in its early developmental stages, Chapter 4 will provide an overview of what extant research says about the topic, including assessments of the prevalence of cyberbullying, methods for studying cyberbullying, and a discussion of gender differences observed with cyberbullying. In particular, we will draw from our own research on cyberbullying with over 3700 middle school children throughout the country, and from focus groups that we held with middle school students. An examination of the psychological effects of cyberbullying will close out the chapter. Chapters 5 and 6 take an applied look at what parents (Chapter 5) and educators and other adults who work with youth (Chapter 6) can do to deal with cyberbullying. Strategies for dealing with cyberbullying once it has already occurred, as well as prevention methods to deter incidents of electronic violence from beginning at all, are discussed. In Chapter 7 legal and public policy concerns related to cyberbullying will be discussed. In the United States, policy-makers and school personnel have been somewhat slower than those in Canada or the United Kingdom to address cyberbullying in statutes and in school policies (Osmond, 2006). In Chapter 8 we will draw some conclusions and provide some suggestions for future research and policy decisions.

A danger in writing a book on cyberbullying is that we will leave the reader with the impression that technological advances are bad and that children and youth would be better off if they did not have access to the Internet, cellular phones, etc. This is not the message we intend to convey. Indeed, technology is a good thing. The Internet provides a window to the world for many children and youth. Not only does it open up sources of knowledge to people (adolescents in particular) that might otherwise be too difficult to access, but technology also affords adolescents and adults an easy means of establishing and maintaining social contacts. For some socially anxious individuals, this may be their social saving grace. And, most children and youth when asked about their experiences with the Internet and related technologies rate their experiences positively. One of our former students getting ready to attend graduate school told us how she had already become friends with two or three individuals who would be in her program. Knowing that she could not have met these people in person, we asked her how she had already become friends with them. Her answer: Facebook (A. Scheck, personal communication, August 2, 2006). We

couldn't help but think at that moment what a "leg up" these students would all have in moving to a new location and starting a new program simply because they had used a social network site to get acquainted with one another beforehand.

The Internet also provides a venue for youth to engage in creative enterprises, such as creating content (e.g., blogging, creating and sharing music), and to mobilize for social change on various political and environmental causes.

Nevertheless, cyberbullying is real, it is occurring with increasing frequency, and the psychological effects may prove to be as devastating, if not more so, than traditional bullying. We also want to emphasize that adults will never be able to completely shelter youth online. So, the solution cannot be just increasing adult supervision. Digital citizenship becomes increasingly important *because* there are fewer adults present. Taking time to focus on digital rights and responsibilities with youth is critical. We need to rely on partnerships (e.g., between parents and children, parents and educators, schools and community leaders) and empowerment of youth to take appropriate action.

Notes

1. Where possible in this book, we have tried to avoid referring to a child as a "bully" or a "victim." We believe that it is critical not to label children as "bullies" or as "victims" or in any way to imply that bullying others or being bullied are indelible traits (which in turn can be quite damaging to children). Instead, we try to refer to "a child who bullies" or "a child who is bullied" and to focus on the bullying behavior of children rather than their status. Where this language becomes unwieldy, we have on occasion used the terms "bully" and "victim." We hope that in these instances, the reader will understand our intent.
2. We do not mean to imply that children have never been bullied while at summer camp. Certainly there are many children who can tell traumatic stories about times when they were mercilessly bullied while away at camp.