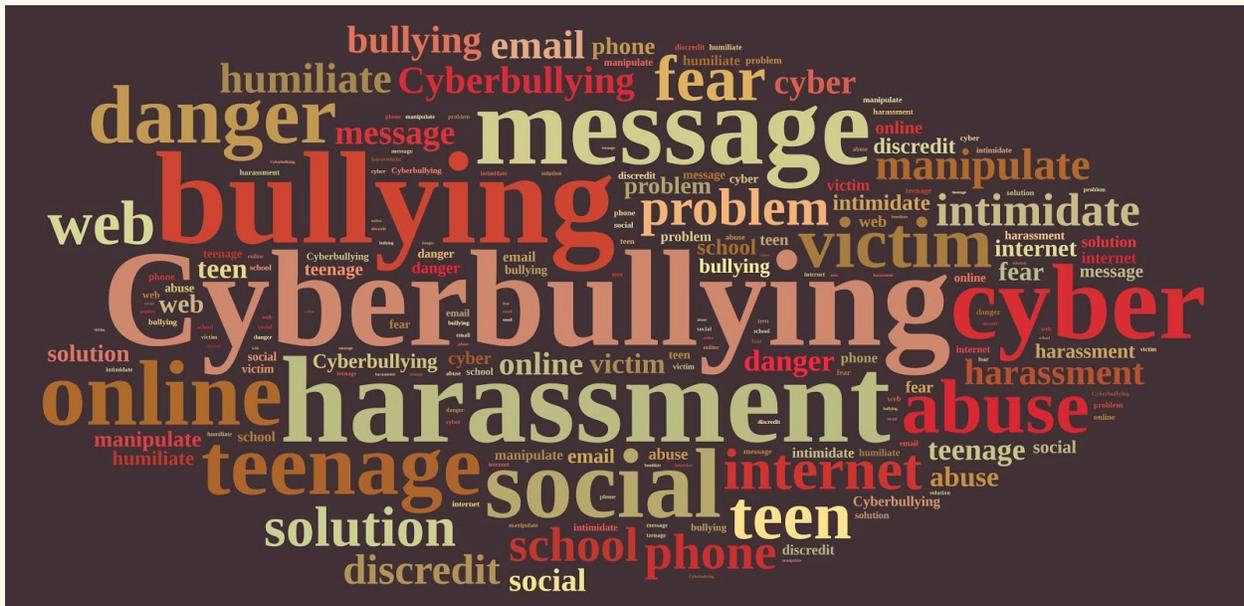


ROUND 3

CYBERBULLYING

BIRMINGHAM COVINGTON SCHOOL



DEFINITION

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.

Why Cyberbullying is Different

Kids who are being cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, kids who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behavior.

- Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach a kid even when he or she is alone. It can happen any time of the day or night.

- Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source.
- Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts, and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

Effects of Cyberbullying

Cell phones and computers themselves are not to blame for cyberbullying. Social media sites can be used for positive activities, like connecting kids with friends and family, helping students with school, and for entertainment. But these tools can also be used to hurt other people. Whether done in person or through technology, the effects of bullying are similar.

Kids who are cyberbullied are more likely to:

- Use alcohol and drugs
- Skip school
- Experience in-person bullying
- Be unwilling to attend school
- Receive poor grades
- Have lower self-esteem
- Have more health problems

Frequency of Cyberbullying

- The 2010-2011 [School Crime Supplement](#) (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics) indicates that 9% of students in grades 6–12 experienced cyberbullying.
- The 2013 [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey](#) finds that 15% of high school students (grades 9-12) were electronically bullied in the past year.
- Research on cyberbullying is growing. However, because kids' technology use changes rapidly, it is difficult to design surveys that accurately capture trends.

Preventing Cyberbullying

Parents and kids can prevent cyberbullying. Together, they can explore safe ways to use technology.

- Be Aware of What Your Kids are Doing Online
 - Know the sites your kids visit and their online activities. Ask where they're going, what they're doing, and who they're doing it with.
- Establish Rules about Technology Use
 - Establish rules about appropriate use of computers, cell phones, and other technology. For example, be clear about what sites they can visit and what they are permitted to do when they're online. Show them how to be safe online.
- Understand School Rules
 - Some schools have developed [policies](#) on uses of technology that may affect the child's online behavior in and out of the classroom. Ask the school if they have developed a policy.

Report Cyberbullying

- Steps to Take Immediately
 - Don't respond to and don't forward cyberbullying messages.
 - Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying has occurred. Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages. Use this evidence to report cyberbullying to web and cell phone service providers.
 - Block the person who is cyberbullying.
- Report Cyberbullying to Online Service Providers
- Report Cyberbullying to Law Enforcement
- Report Cyberbullying to Schools

All above is from stopbullying.gov

In the News

1. “Certain anti-bullying laws may lower rates of bullying, cyberbullying” (Medicalnewstoday.com 10/6/2015)

A new study published in *JAMA Pediatrics* suggests students who live in states with at least one anti-bullying law recommended by the US Department of Education are at a lower risk for bullying and cyberbullying.

According to the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), around 20% of high school youths report being bullied on school property within the past year, while data from Cyberbullying Research Center reveals around 26% of middle and high school students are victims of cyberbullying.

Numerous studies have linked bullying and cyberbullying with poor psychological outcomes. Earlier this year, for example, *Medical News Today* reported on a study claiming children who are regularly bullied are more likely to be depressed at the age of 18.

In 2010, the US Department of Education (DOE) recommended a number of antibullying policies with the aim of reducing rates of bullying and cyberbullying.

To date, 49 states have implemented antibullying laws, some of which are DOE-recommended. However, study author Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, PhD, of the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health in New York, NY, notes that there has been very little assessment of how effective such policies are.

Hatzenbuehler and colleagues set out to address this gap by using population-based data of youths in 25 states to analyze the link between antibullying policies and bullying incidence.

Antibullying laws a 'comprehensive strategy for bullying prevention'

The team drew antibullying policy data from a 2011 DOE report that assessed the extent to which antibullying laws in US states adhered to antibullying policies recommended by the DOE.

Data on bullying incidence was taken from the 2013 YRBSS and included 59,472 9th-12th-grade students from public and private schools.

The researchers found that US states that adhered to at least one antibullying policy recommended by the DOE had a 24% lower rate of reported bullying and a 20% lower rate of reported cyberbullying, compared with states that did not adhere to such policies.

What is more, the team identified three specific DOE-recommended policies - statement of scope, description of prohibited behaviors, and requirements for school districts to develop and implement local policies - that were consistently associated with lower rates of reported bullying and cyberbullying.

While the researchers admit that their study is only observational and cannot prove a causal link between implementation of DOE-recommended antibullying policies and reduced risk for bullying and cyberbullying, they believe the findings indicate certain antibullying policies can help tackle bullying behaviors.

The authors write:

"Bullying is a multifaceted phenomenon that requires a multipronged approach. Although antibullying policies by themselves cannot completely eradicate bullying, these data suggest that such policies represent an important part of a comprehensive strategy for preventing bullying among youth."

2. “The Top Six Unforgettable Cyberbullying Cases Ever” (Nobullying.com)

The Ryan Halligan Case (1989 – 2003)

The Cyberbullying Story:the website operated by Ryan’s parents, John and Kelly Halligan, early concerns about Ryan’s speech, language and motor skills development led to him receiving special education services from pre-school through the fourth grade. Ryan’s academic and physical struggles made him the regular target of a particular bully at school between the fifth and seventh grade. In February 2003, a fight between Ryan and the bully not only ended the harassment at school, but led to a supposed friendship.

However, after Ryan shared an embarrassing personal story, the newly found friend returned to being a bully and used the information to start a rumour that Ryan was gay. The taunting continued into the summer of 2003, although Ryan thought that he had struck a friendship with a pretty, popular girl through AOL Instant Messenger (AIM). Instead, he later learned that the girl and her friends thought it would be funny

to make Ryan think the girl liked him and use it to have him share more personally embarrassing material—which was copied and pasted into AIM exchanges with her friends. On October 7, 2003, Ryan hanged himself in the family bathroom. After his son’s death, John discovered a folder filled with IM exchanges throughout that summer that made him realize “that technology was being utilized as weapons far more effective and reaching [than] the simple ones we had as kids.”

Aftermath: There were no criminal charges filed following Ryan’s death because no criminal law applied to the circumstances. Seven months after Ryan’s death, *Vermont’s Bully Prevention Law (ACT 117)* was signed into law by Governor Jim Douglas. John Halligan also authored *Vermont’s Suicide Prevention Law (ACT 114)*, which passed unchanged in April 2006.

The Megan Meier Case (1992 – 2006)

The Cyberbullying Story: In December 2007, Tina Meier founded the nonprofit Megan Meier Foundation. The non-profit was named in honour of Tina’s 13-year-old daughter who hanged herself in a bedroom closet in October 2006. Megan struggled with attention deficit disorder and depression in addition to issues with her weight. About five weeks before her death, a 16-year-old boy named Josh Evans asked Megan to be friends on the social networking website MySpace. The two began communicating online regularly, although they never met in person or spoke on the phone. “Megan had a lifelong struggle with weight and self-esteem,” Tina said on the Foundation website. “And now she finally had a boy who she thought really thought she was pretty.”

In mid-October, Josh began saying he didn’t want to be friends anymore, and the messages became more cruel on October 16, 2006, when Josh concluded by telling Megan, “The world would be a better place without you.” The cyberbullying escalated when additional classmates and friends on MySpace began writing disturbing messages and bulletins. Tina said on the Foundation website that it was about 20 minutes after Megan went to her room after leaving the computer that the mother found her daughter had hanged herself in her bedroom closet. Megan died the following day, three weeks before what would have been her 14th birthday.

Aftermath: According to the Associated Press, it was later that fall when a neighbor informed Megan’s parents that Josh was not a real person. Instead, the account was created by another neighbor, Lori Drew, her 18-year-old temporary employee Ashley Grills, and Drew’s teenage daughter, who used to be friends with Megan. One year

later, the case began receiving national attention. While the county prosecutor declined to file any criminal charges in the case, federal prosecutors charged her with one count of conspiracy and three violations of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act for accessing protected computers without authorization. A federal grand jury indicted Drew on all four counts in 2008, but U.S. District Judge George Wu acquitted Drew in August 2009 and vacated the conviction.

In addition to the Megan Meier Foundation, Tina also worked closely to help Missouri legislature pass Senate Bill 818, unofficially known as “*Megan’s Law*” in August 2008. In April 2009, U.S. Representative Linda Sánchez of California introduced the “*Megan Meier Cyber bullying Prevention Act.*”, which aimed to end the harassment of a cyberbully seriously – but unfortunately it was not enacted.

Unfortunately, these are only some of the stories that are occurring all around us on a daily basis. These cyber bullying cases demonstrate that there are actions that many members of the community can take to prevent additional harassment. Parents, educators and other school officials need to recognize signs of cyberbullying, and we must all make a more concerted effort to help cyberbully victims.

Although these are very sad cyberbullying stories, they serve as a reminder that bullying and cyberbullying are not to be taken lightly. If you or someone you know are being bullied or cyberbullied speak out now and get some help.

3. “When the Cyberbully is You” (The New York Times 04/29/15)

Why are people so mean on the Internet? It’s a question we have been trying to answer for more than a decade, but the matter seems to be reaching a cultural boiling point.

Listen to episode No. 545 of “This American Life,” entitled “If You Don’t Have Anything Nice to Say, SAY IT IN ALL CAPS,” about the pain people can cause online. Watch Monica Lewinsky’s TED talk, “The Price of Shame,” in which she pleads that “public shaming as a blood sport has to stop.” Read the new book by Jon Ronson, “So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed,” chronicling people whose lives have been obliterated by Twitter mobs. And listen to Louis CK, the comedian who recently quit Twitter, saying, “It didn’t make me feel good.”

Sure, the topic of cyberbullying is not new, but it feels different this time. The debate is happening everywhere: on radio shows, movies, books, talks, TV shows, blogs, book reviews and especially on social media.

“I think this conversation has been going on for awhile, but it’s getting this particular kind of attention now because it’s coming to the fore that anyone can be a victim of that kind of shaming,” said Jacqui Shine, a writer in Chicago who has written about online shaming and minorities. “Women of color online, especially on Twitter, have dealt with harassment and bullying for years.”

Women, Ms. Shine said, are often ridiculed on social media in ways that most men do not experience, sometimes being threatened with rape, having their addresses and Social Security numbers posted publicly, being sent death threats, having intimate photos uploaded and being called ghastly names.

One notorious incident that alludes to this, and one of the main through lines of Mr. Ronson’s book, is the now well-known story of Justine Sacco, a former public relations executive who has become a poster child for public shaming. (Ms. Sacco tweeted a racist joke about a trip to Africa that resulted in a cataclysmic mob of hundreds of thousands of people demanding her head.)

“I wanted to write a nonfiction horror movie, where you’re feeling the dread as if you’re the one being torn apart by people like us,” Mr. Ronson said in a phone interview. “The only way to give this subject service is to feel what it’s like to be torn apart like Justine Sacco. On the Internet we forget that people are dimensional.”

The main obstacle is the lack of empathy. Psychologists say that empathy is learned two ways. The first is by seeing, hearing or even smelling how your action has hurt someone else — something that is not available to those behind a screen and keyboard. The second is to experience something painful yourself.

The latter may explain why this issue is coming to the fore, as more and more people have felt what it’s like to be on the receiving end of a caustic mob.

Take Sam Biddle, the writer for Gawker who had originally discovered Ms. Sacco’s tweet. For a while he felt vindicated in Ms. Sacco’s demise, describing it as “delicious” in an email to Mr. Ronson.

But a few months later, when Mr. Biddle was on the receiving end of his own riled-up mob, after he sarcastically tweeted “Bring Back Bullying” in response to a debate about sexism in video game culture, he learned firsthand how it felt to be the one who was vilified.

In a beautifully compassionate mea culpa on the anniversary of Ms. Sacco's demise, Mr. Biddle wrote how easy it is for things to spiral out of control on social media. "Jokes are complicated, context is hard," he wrote. "Rage is easy."

I know how he feels. In the early days of Twitter, I jumped into the fray a few times myself. But since then, having been on the receiving end of several Internet mobs, I think twice before piling on.

Some people I know who were once attacked by a mob now reach out to whomever is the Internet's piñata of the week, telling them to hang tough, to look the other way and that this, too, shall pass.

And I've come to the realization that most people do not join these online mobs with the intention of being mean.

Whether it's an online army of one or millions, people often believe they are doing the right thing by joining the mob.

"You show your proof of membership in a community by criticizing the most erratically," said Anil Dash, a tech entrepreneur and blogger who has been on the receiving end of racially charged Twitter mobs. "There's a social dynamic that says 'Let me show that I belong.' And there is a reward structure for being even more inflammatory."

Mr. Dash noted that online mobs can sometimes serve a public good, as in cases when the powerless are given a voice to hold the ruling class accountable.

But the next time we want to provide justice from behind a keyboard, we should remember that there is a nuanced human being on the other side of that screen.

And while we're not intending to be mean online, there's a chance that in our quest for justice, we are performing an even worse injustice.

As the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said more than a century ago, "Be careful when you fight the monsters, lest you become one."

4. “Half of Teens Admit to Cyber Bullying, Other Abusive Social Media Behavior” (Birmingham Patch 4/13/15)

About half of middle- and high school students say they’ve abused social media, whether by bullying their classmates, spreading rumors, stalking their partners, or pressuring others to send sexually suggestive texts or pictures, according to a new study by Wayne State University.

Poco Kernsmith, an associate professor of social work at Wayne State University, told the Detroit Free Press the study reveals that what begins with normal teen jealousy that can, left unchecked, lead to violence in relationships.

And most of teens’ social media activity is unchecked, according to the study results, which showed just 37 percent of parents monitored their children’s online behavior.

More monitoring might improve online behavior, said one of the students interviewed for the study.

“I have a filthy mouth, and I write filthy things, so I would just monitor my mouth more, ‘cause I know my mom would be all over me like hotcakes,” she said.

Kensmith said it’s important for parents to monitor teenagers’ social media networks, and talk with them about their concerns. Teenagers’ brains aren’t fully formed and they have always done “stupid things,” she said, but now have a buffet of electronic tools at their fingertips.

“Their executive functioning doesn’t really completely develop until they’re about 25,” Kensmith told the Free Press. “They have so many hormones flooding through their bodies that making decisions under pressure is really difficult.”

The study was based on the responses of 1,236 students in sixth through ninth grades in six high-, moderate- and low-risk schools in the Detroit metro area, as measured by crime and poverty statistics.

The study showed that social media misuse was higher in wealthier districts in low-risk areas (54 percent), likely due to more students having cell phones and other technology devices, than in high-risk schools (46 percent). Other findings included:

- 78 percent texted at least once a day, and 56 percent texted 10 or more times a day;
- 37 percent checked up on a partner using technology;
- 16.3 percent shared private or embarrassing pictures with the intention to hurt someone;
- 12.5 percent had repeatedly sent out unwanted messages to someone.

What My School Does

OK2SAY

A program designed to empower Michigan students, parents, school personnel, community mental health service programs and law enforcement to share and respond to student safety threats. The goal of OK2SAY is to stop harmful behavior before it occurs by encouraging students to report threatening behavior to caring adult authorities who can help. Featuring a comprehensive communication system that facilitates tip submissions through telephone, text, website, email and multimedia technologies, OK2SAY enables Michigan residents to confidentially report student safety threats to trained program operators, who forward tips on to local law enforcement agencies, school officials, or community mental health service programs for a timely response.