

# Online Bystanders: Are They the Key to Preventing Cyberbullying

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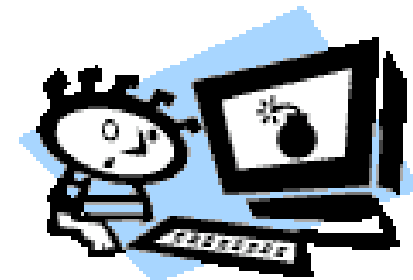
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# Prevalence of Cyberbullying

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- Recent estimates of cyberbullying in the United States ranged from 21-42%
- In a July 2006 poll 1/3 of teenagers and 1/6 of children were victims of cyberbullying (Opinion Research, 2006)
- Cyberbullying is increasing, twice as many 10-17 year olds had been victims and perpetrators of online harassment in 2005 compared with 1999-2000 (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2007)



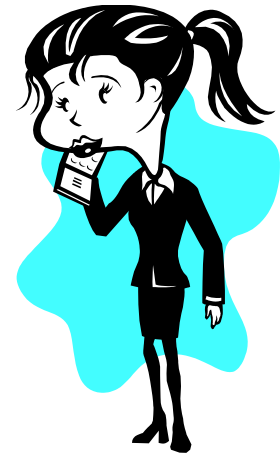
# Examples of Cyberbullying

- Sending threatening or offensive e-mails, instant messages, or cell phone messages directly to the victim
- Mass cruel or embarrassing e-mail or text messages can be sent to peers about the victim by mobile phone or e-mail
- Taking pictures of a victim naked in locker rooms or bathrooms and posting the pictures on the web or sending them to others via e-mail or cell phone



# Examples of Cyberbullying

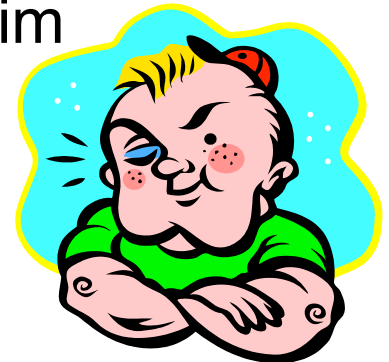
- Dedicating a website to degrading the victim
- Filming a violent attack such as a beating using a third generation mobile phone and posting the clip on the web is the newest cyberbullying trend called “Happy Slapping” (Saunders, 2006)



# How is Cyberbullying Similar to Traditional Bullying?

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- Power imbalance that favors the perpetrator over the victim
- Perpetrators are supported by a group of peers – bystanders who encourage the bullying or others that watch but do nothing to help the victim
- Perpetrators action are deliberate, repeated, and often relentless
- Perpetrator's behavior is unwanted by victim



# How is Cyberbullying Similar to Traditional Bullying?

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- Targeted students draw negative attention of their peers and are rejected by peer group and isolated (Burkowski & Sippola, 2001; Crick et al, 2002; Schuster, 2001)
- Exclusion and isolation from the peer group increase the power of the perpetrator

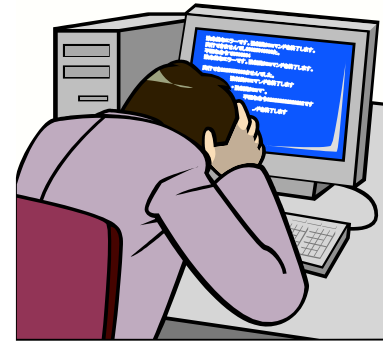


# How is Cyberbullying Different From Traditional Bullying

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## ■ 24/7 Harassment

- Victim could be safe at home with traditional bullying



## ■ Worldwide audience

- Traditional bullying audience limited to school or local community
- Website postings can be viewed worldwide



# How is Cyberbullying Different from Traditional Bullying

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- **Technology allows information to reach a large number of people in a short period of time (EPACT, 2005)**
  - Spread rumors and humiliating pictures faster
  - Large scale rumors and pranks can significantly disrupt the school day
  
- **Anonymous Nature of Internet**
  - Lowers inhibitions
  - People say things they never would say in person





# How is Cyberbullying Different from Traditional Bullying

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- Parents Just Don't Understand
  - Adults use the Internet for work whereas kids use it for socializing
  - Parents are unaware of do not realize how serious cyberbullying is

# Role of Bystanders

- Bystanders are an important part of the bullying experience as they provide an audience for the bullying.
- Some may encourage the perpetrator to carry out their own cruel impulses (Imperio, 2001).
- Others feel empathy towards the victim, making them reluctant to stand up to the instigators because they want to avoid involvement in the encounter (Imperio, 2001).



# Serious Effect of Cyberbullying

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- Suicide

- <http://www.ryanpatrickhalligan.com/index.htm>

- Withdrew from school and required psychiatric hospitalization

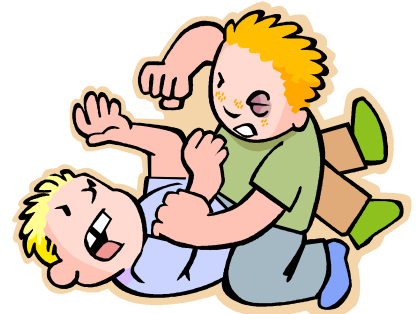
- Star Wars Kid

- <http://vodpod.com/watch/861-star-wars-kid-original>

- As of November 27, 2006 it was estimated by The Viral Factory that the videos had been viewed over 900 million times, making it the most popular "viral video" on the Internet

# Reasons Bystanders Don't Intervene (Craig and Pepler, 1997)-Traditional Bullying

- Children know that adults expect them to support each other, but find it difficult to do so in the reality of the playground environment
- “Diffusion of responsibility” among the crowd
- Concerned for their own safety
- Don't fully understand the process of bullying and don't have the knowledge or skills to intervene effectively, worrying that they will make matters worse
- Will not receive help from teachers or administrators (Besag;1989;Henderson &Hymel 2002; O'Moore and Hillary, 1991; Tarum & Herber 1993)



# Reasons Bystanders Don't Intervene- Cyberbullying

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- Afraid of becoming the next victim
- Victims fear losing their technology privileges and being further victimized
- Do not think that adults will do anything about the situation
- Do not recognize that bullying has occurred



# Reasons Bystanders Don't Intervene (Rigby & Johnson, 2004)-Traditional Bullying

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- School authorities unaware of the problem
- Anti-bullying programs not supported by children
  - Watch in a “curious, but largely disengaged manner”
  - Enjoy watching the incident
  - Small minority object to the incident
- Responsibility is with the victim
- Not my concern

# International Bystander Project 2005

- Students who intervened in traditional bullying incidents
  - Action was to “go get a teacher”
  - Recognized adults strongly disapproved of bullying behavior
  - Successful with intervening in the past
  - Most influenced by their friends who thought they should intervene to support each other



# Tactics for Bystanders for Traditional Bullying (Department of Defense)

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- Name the Behavior
  - Interrupt situation for targeted student to leave
- Ask for help
  - Group response from others shows bullies that actions are not OK
- Use humor
- Tell an Adult
- Swarm the bully
  - Surround the victim and move them away from the bully



# Issues with Bystanders and Cyberbullying

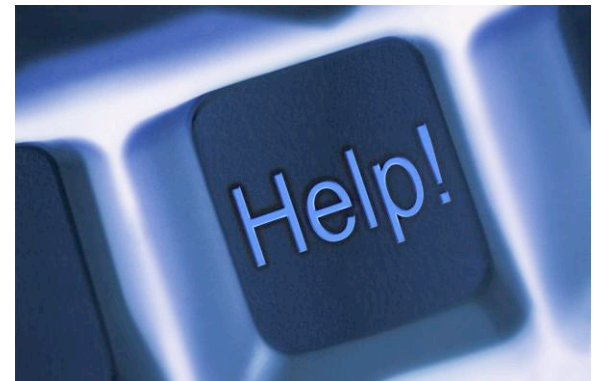
- Most cyberbullying occurs off campus not allowing schools to take action
- Teachers and authority figures are victims of cyberbullying
- Bystanders do not see themselves as actual participants, even though they may watch and may make posts that contribute to the harassment
- Infinite audience of bystanders and perpetrators can extend worldwide as in the case of the Star Wars kid
  - Classmates who engage at school can do so from home and hide behind technology



# What Adolescents say works- Harris Interactive (2007)

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- Blocking people online who bully (71%)
- Refuse to pass along cyberbullying messages (62%)
- Online groups should have moderators who block online message as the most effective (56%)
- Telling a friend who tries to cyberbully to stop (56%)



# What Adolescents Thought Was Less Effective- Harris Interactive (2007)

- All schools should have rules against cyberbullying (37%)
- Schools should educate students in small groups not to cyberbully (33%)
- Teaching adults to help young people not to cyberbully (32%)
- Holding school assemblies to educate students not to cyberbully (25%)



# What to do if Cyberbullied

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- Do not respond
- Tell an adult
- Block the cyberbully
- Print and save the evidence
- Contact site to remove material-Myspace now has a procedure and hotline for educators and law enforcement
- Report to law enforcement

# The Posts in a Nutshell

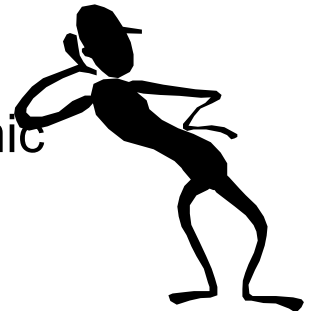
- College students have flocked to the site to
  - Reveal sexual escapades
  - Comment on who is the “biggest slut” or “hottest fraternity member “on campus
  - Discuss who has what STD’s
  - Who uses drugs?
  - What happened at parties
  - Spread nasty rumors
  - Make racist comments
  - Come out of the closet.



# What was JuicyCampus.com?

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- Online gossip site about campus life that started at over 60 and expanded to 500 colleges by fall 2008
- Postings were “always anonymous, always juicy” ([www.JuicyCampus.com](http://www.JuicyCampus.com), 2008)
- Matthew Ivester, a 2005 Duke University graduate started the site with the intention of creating a site about "all the ridiculous things we did and the hilarious stories" (McNiff, 2008).
- Site says its' mission is “enabling online anonymous free speech on college campuses.”
- Site shut down on February 4, 2009 citing the economic downturn for its closure



# Student Reaction to Juicycampus.com

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- Contacted the Attorney General's Office
- Wrote comments expressing dissatisfaction on the site in response to requests by JuicyCampus for feedback
- Replied to posts with additional information or differing opinion
- Wrote editorials in school newspapers speaking out against the site
- Suggested that users make the content interesting and substantial

# Student Reaction to Juicycampus.com

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- Boycotted the site
- Requested college administrators contact the site to have posts removed.
- Complain to advertisers
- Requested that the site be blocked from the campus network
- Spammed the site
- Ignored the site
- Wrote gossip about fictitious people
- Took what's said on the site with a grain of salt



# www.ownwhatyouthink.com

**anonymity** = cowardice

www.ownwhatyouthink.com

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**Own What You Think** seeks to unite people and bring personal accountability back into the ways in which we communicate and interact with each other.

# Conclusions

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- Bystanders could help by
  - Refusing to pass along bullying messages
  - Not participating in bullying on the web
  - Blocking people online who bully
  - Reporting messages to moderators
  - Telling friends to stop bullying
  - Provide support to the victim
  - Showing disapproval by making a simple statement when encountering an online bullying incident to stop rather than engaging further discussion

# Conclusions

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- The dynamics of bystander behavior are different online than for physical bullying
  - Parents need to supervise adolescents more carefully
- Both adolescents and college students do not want to tell authority figures about cyberbullying or online harassment
- Anonymous reporting methods such as a central e-mail address should be considered
- The audience for cyberbullying can be worldwide whereas physical bullying is constrained to the setting making intervention strategies more difficult

# Conclusions

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- Bystanders may not recognize that bullying takes place online
- Online bystanders often become the target of bullying when intervening online
- Consider offline intervention
- College students demonstrated that they can make a difference by targeting website advertisers and expressing discontent on another website such as Facebook.com
  - Showed disapproval within peer group

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