

Aggressors and Victims in the Shadows of Cyberspace: Exploring the Sources of Online Bullying

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The Shadows of Cyberspace: Premonitions

"The reality - utterly unanticipated by the idealists who set up the net was monstrous: a hybrid world in which every potential virtue became its own dark double; in which freedom became the freedom to abuse and torment; anonymity, the anonymity of the obscene phone call; and liberation from the physical body, just an invitation to torture someone else's virtual one... Free to offend others without consequence or shame, cyberspace travelers began to do just that with a passion."

Mark Slouka, 1995, *War of the Worlds: Cyberspace and the High-Tech Assault on Reality*

Fast Forward to the Social Web



- [Paper\the social network-clip.mov](#)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HbrQMgOUFw>

CMC: The Postmodernist Perspective

- CMC main features: disembodied, anonymous, text-based, instantaneous, always-on
- Introduce new possibilities for playing with identities
- De-gender communication by removing gender clues
- Destabilize existing hierarchies in relationships and re-hierarchize communication according to criteria previously irrelevant
- Disperse the subject, dislocating it temporally and spatially

Mark Poster (1990) *The Mode of Information*

The Flip Side: Cyber-Shadows Creeping In

- Lack of civility - flame wars, personal vendettas
- Deception - the case of the electronic lover: a male psychiatrist - Alex - pretending to be a disabled woman (Joan) and gaining the hearts of many women on CompuServe chat lines in the early 80s.
- Cruelty - virtual rape; virtual murder

The Social-Psychological Perspective: CMC Features

- Reduced social cues
- Difficulties of coordination and feedback
- De-individuation - loss of identity, a condition of anonymity, weakening of social norms and constraints associated with the submergence in a group or crowd.
- Depersonalization of partners
- Group polarization

The Social-Psychological Perspective: CMC Effects

- Liberation Effects
 - equalization of participation
 - status equalization
- Disinhibition Effects
 - uninhibited/deregulated/antinormative behaviour
 - flaming - insults, swearing and hostile language
 - expression of extreme/polar attitudes and opinions
 - group polarization - the tendency for the attitudes and decisions of individuals to become more extreme in the direction of already preferred pole of a given scale , as a result of discussion within the group

Committee on Social Science Research in Computing at Carnegie Mellon University, Kiesler, Siegel, McGuire (1984)

Response to the Two perspectives

- Widely critiqued and challenged
- Largely disproven by following developments
- Yet key to the understanding of the current state of affairs
- Self and interaction in cyberspace – business as usual?

Social Media Stage: Everyday Life On/Offline

- F2F and online interactions represent important sides of everyday life
- F2F and online relationships are intertwined
- People are present online more often with their names: from Anonymous to Nonymous
- Daily interactions with others travel across offline and online contexts
- People routinely use CMC to sustain their offline relationships
- People form relationships with strangers online

Self and Interaction in Social Media

- Identity constructed across platforms –
 - scattered, fragmented and yet anchored in the body
- Multimedia identity performance and constant feedback
- Playful identity construction – absurdity, farce, charade, trend-following
- Relationships monitored reflexively – visible social networks
- Relationships publically displayed
- Relationship play
- Explicit valuation systems - Status measurement and display
- NEW HIERARCHIES – NEW POWER GAMES
- Constant comparison – Difference – Competition – Inequality
- Close ties with codes and discourses of commercial popular culture; the spectacle of humiliation
- CELEBRITY and POPULARITY
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLsM1z8IX_A&feature=related

Self and Interaction in Social Media: Major Consequences

- Objectification of Self
- Subjectification of Self
- Power of the audience/group
- Alienation
- Public-private blurring
- Loss of contextual integrity
- Erosion of nuanced relationships – intimate, close, in-group
- Magnification of conflict
- Peer-pressure and conformism
- Weakening of adolescence moratorium

Cyberbullying:

The Social Construction of a Concept

- Bullying – aggression that is intentionally carried out by one or more individuals and repeatedly targeted toward a person who cannot easily defend him/herself (Olweus, 1993)
 - Research and prevention programs since 1970s
- Cyberbullying – an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him/herself. (Smith et al., 2008)

Cyber/Bullying Characteristics and Forms

- **Defining characteristics**
 - Aggressive
 - Intentional
 - Repetitive
 - Power imbalance (social, psychological, technical, positional, physical, other)
- **Forms**
 - Physical
 - Verbal
 - Relational
 - Direct
 - Indirect
 - Reactive - Proactive
- **Modalities of CB**
 - Phone, cell, text-messaging, e-mail, picture/video, IM, website, chat room
 - Social media sites

Specifics of Cyberbullying

- Technology is vehicle
- Persistence of content (repeatability by default)
- Distributability of content/ unlimited audience
- Anonymous or disnomymous
- Speed
- Easy
- Multimodal and multi-device
- Invasive

Forces Producing the Phenomenon

- Social and economic – neoliberalism, individualism, insecurity, deepening of social divisions (the 1% vs. the 99%)
- Technological
- Cultural – the cultural industries and their products play central role in socialization
- Historical – war, terrorism
- Psychological
- Affective
- Various configurations in different local contexts
- The fundamental importance of POWER; power games; jostling for power

Prevalence Studies Prevail

- Wide range of numbers reported
 - E.g.: between 9% and 33% of youth ages 10-18. (Wolak et al, 2007, Ybarra et al, 2007)
- Lack of consensus on definitions, indicators and measurement
 - deductive
 - inductive
- Lack of clear distinction from other concepts and behaviours:
 - aggression
 - harassment, aggressive behavior, “harm doing,” insults, denigration, impersonation, exclusion, outing, activities associated with hacking – stealing information, breaking into accounts, damaging websites, profiles etc. (Willard, 2006)
 - being mean

US National Crime Victimization Survey 2009

Table 1.1 Number and percentage distribution of students ages 12 through 18 who reported being bullied at school and cyber-bullied anywhere, by type of bullying or cyber-bullying: School year 2008–09

Type of bullying	Number of students	Percent of students
Total bullied or not bullied	25,217,000	100.0
Bullied	7,066,000	28.0
Made fun of, called names, or insulted	4,735,000	18.8
Subject of rumors	4,149,000	16.5
Threatened with harm	1,442,000	5.7
Pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on	2,266,000	9.0
Tried to make do things they did not want to do	916,000	3.6
Excluded from activities on purpose	1,190,000	4.7
Property destroyed on purpose	832,000	3.3
Not bullied	18,151,000	72.0
Total cyber-bullied or not cyber-bullied	25,162,000	100.0
Cyber-bullied	1,521,000	6.0
Hurtful information on Internet	502,000	2.0
Unwanted contact via e-mail	335,000	1.3
Unwanted contact via instant messaging	448,000	1.8
Unwanted contact via text messaging	753,000	3.0
Unwanted contact via online gaming	193,000	0.8
Purposeful exclusion from an online community	224,000	0.9
Not cyber-bullied	23,642,000	94.0

NOTE: For bullying, "at school" includes the school building, school property, school bus, or going to and from school. Bullying and cyber-bullying types sum to more than totals because students could have experienced more than one type of bullying or cyber bullying. Detail does not sum to total population of students because of rounding and missing data. The population size for all students ages 12–18 is 25,383,000.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), 2009.

PEW Cyberbullying and Online Teens Survey 2006

Making Private Information Public Is the Most Common Form of Cyberbullying

Have you, personally, ever experienced any of the following things online?

	Yes	No
Someone taking a private email, IM, or text message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it	15%	85%
Someone spreading a rumor about you online	13%	87%
Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, IM, or text message	13%	87%
Someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission	6%	94%
Answered "yes" to any of the four previous questions	32%	68%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct- Nov. 2006. Based on online teens [n=886]. Margin of error for the overall sample is $\pm 4\%$.

(Lenhart, 2007)

Social Networks and Cyberbullying

Do Social Networks Facilitate Cyber-Bullying?		
<i>Have you, personally, ever experienced any of the following things online?</i>	<i>Social Network User</i>	<i>Non-Social Network User</i>
Someone taking a private email, IM, or text message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it	17%	12%
Someone spreading a rumor about you online	16%*	8%
Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, IM, or text message	16%*	8%
Someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission	9%*	2%
At least one of the forms of cyber bullying listed above	39%*	23%

*Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct- Nov. 2006. Based on social network users [n=493] and non-social network users (n=393). Margin of error is between $\pm 3\%$ and $\pm 5\%$. * indicates statistically significant difference.*

University of Toronto Cyberbullying Survey 2008

- Questionnaire involved a series of questions: Have you experienced or perpetrated any of the following in the last 3 months...
 - Calling someone names
 - Spreading rumors
 - Pretending to be someone else
 - Threatening
 - Receiving or sending unwanted sexual text or photos
 - Sending private picture without consent
 - Being asked to do something sexual
 - Bullied others and were bullied (explicit question)
- Across the bullying behaviours half of the students: **49.5%** indicated that they had been bullied online.
- Over one third **33.7%** indicated that they had bullied others online.

(Mishna et al. 2010, Based on 2,000 respondents in education boards in Toronto)

Indicators of Cyberbullying

Being called names	27%
Rumors spread about participant	22%
Someone pretended to be the participant	18%
Being threatened	11%
Receiving unwanted sexual text or photos	10%
Being asked to do something sexual	9%
Having private picture of themselves distributed without consent	7%
Bullied others and was bullied (explicit question)	6.4%

- Perpetrated by:
 - Someone they knew – 89%
 - Friends – 36%
 - Student at school – 22%
 - Stranger – 13%

(Mishna et al. 2010, Based on 2,000 respondents, grades 6,7, 10 and 11, in Toronto)

Canadian Statistics: 2009 General Social Survey on Victimization

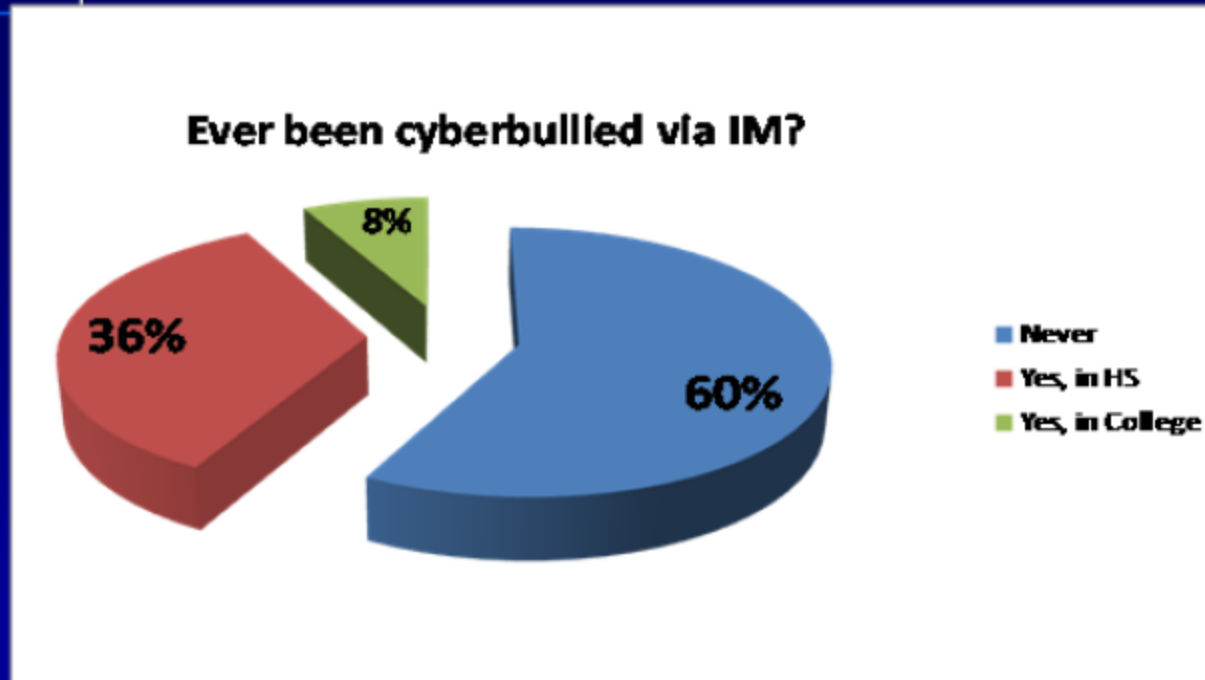
- Cyber-bullying defined: Had ever previously received threatening or aggressive messages; been the target of hate comments spread through e-mails, instant messages or postings on Internet sites; or threatening e-mails sent using the victim's identity

GSSV 2009 Results

- **Adult Internet users who were cyberbullied - 7%**
- **Higher risk categories:**
 - those aged 18 to 24 years - 17% (versus 5% of older adults)
 - those who were single -15%
 - those who accessed chat sites - 14%
 - those who accessed social networking sites - 11%
- **1 in 10 adults (9%) reported cyberbullying against at least one child in their household**
- Individuals who self-reported being **homosexual or bisexual** were also more likely to report having been cyber-bullied, at two to three times their heterosexual counterparts (24% and 18% vs. 7%)
- People with an **activity limitation** were more likely to report having been cyberbullied, especially in the age group between 18 and 34 - more than 1 in 5 (22%) of those with an activity limitation in this age group were cyberbullied, compared to 10% of those with no limitation.

Cyberbullying Goes to College

Frequencies: MARC research data (Spring 2008)



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(Source: Englander, 2009 - sample 283 undergraduates in Massachusetts)

Cyberbullying Experience of College Students

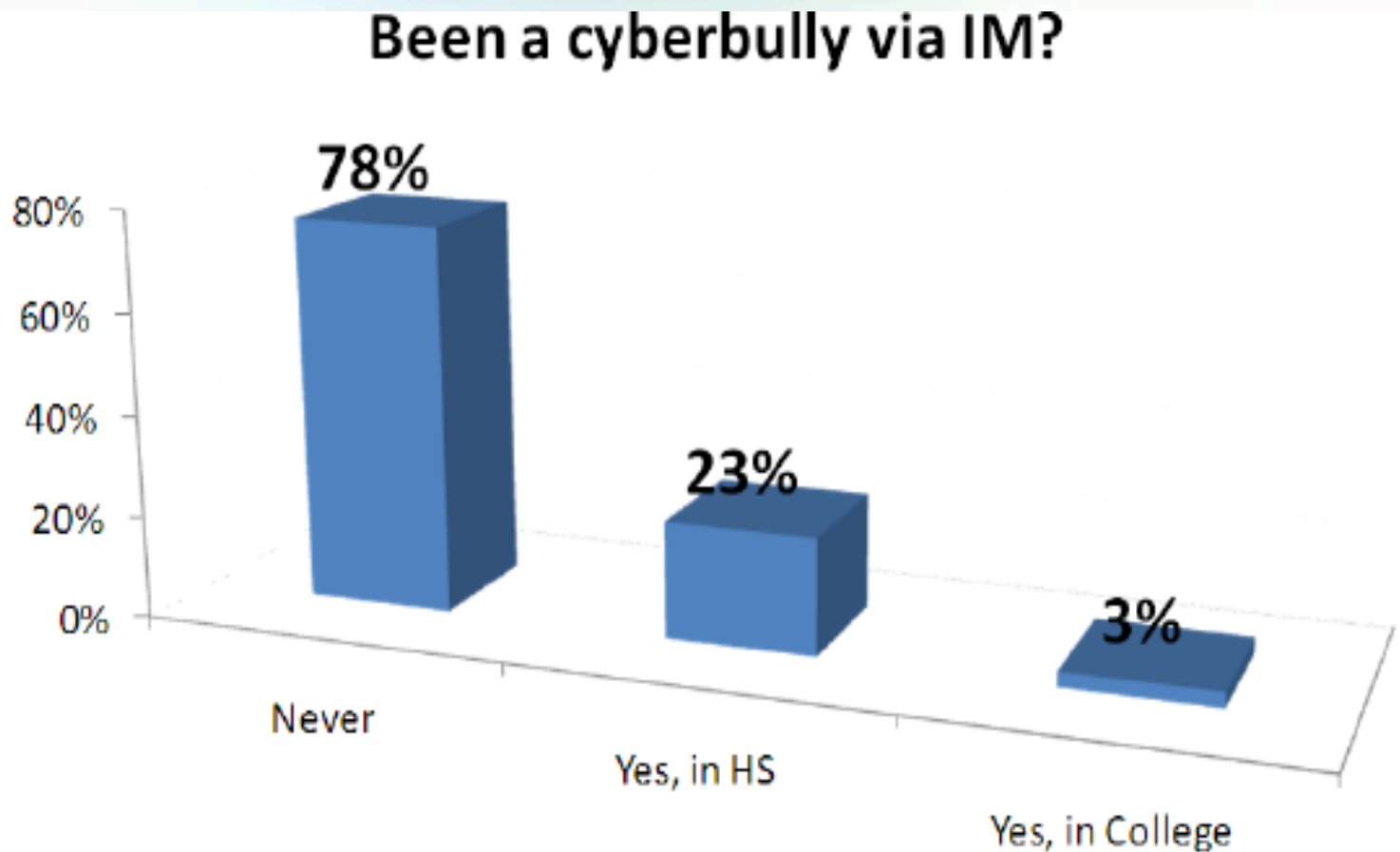


Figure 3. Frequency of cyberbullying

Source: Englander, 2009

Cyberbullying Motivation

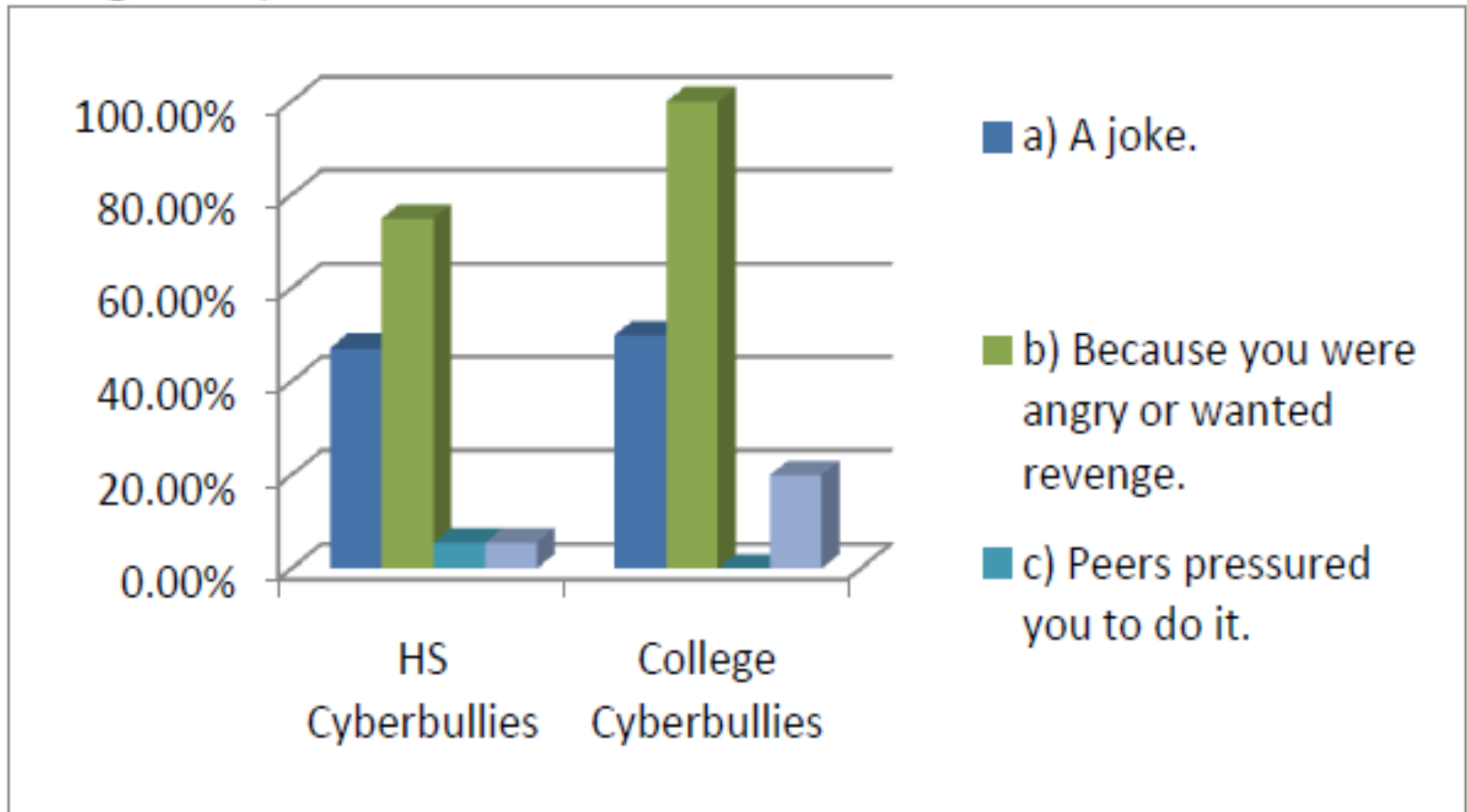


Figure 10. Reasons for cyberbullying, by cyberbully status.

Source: Englander, 2009

More College Cyberbullying McDonald & Roberts Pitman (2010)

- Definition: “sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices”
- “Given this definition, since you’ve been in college, have you ever: (a) known someone who was cyberbullied, (b) been cyberbullied, and (c) cyberbullied someone else?”
- Sample of 439 university students in Indiana

Results: McDonald & Roberts Pitman (2010)

- 38 % knew someone cyberbullied
- 21.9% had been cyberbullied
- 8.6% cyberbullied someone else
- 25% harassed or threatened through a SNS
- 21% received a harassing or threatening text message
- 16% received a harassing or threatening e-mail
- 13.2 IM
- 9.9% embarrassing things written in a chat room
- 6.6% negative info or image posted on a website

New Practices of Power

- Gossip sites: juicycampus.com; campusgossip.com, <http://www.collegewallofshame.com/>
- Canada: Room 110:
“a website modelled after the television series *Gossip Girl*, officially launched last week, describing itself as ‘Canada's first ‘reality blog.’ ” Offering a voyeuristic look into the private lives of people on campuses across Canada, the site features photos, opinions, rumours and speculation about students from 19 schools, including the University of British Columbia, Dalhousie University and York University.
All the content is anonymously submitted by the site’s users and posted after being approved by student representatives at each campus.
- In a statement today, Derek Paul, a media relations rep. for Room110.com said, *“Our website is the next evolution of how students can interact with one another and find out about the latest happenings in their community. Everyone talks about everyone, and now it can finally be done out in the open, in a fun, free environment.”*

The Syrup Trap

Whether justified or not, Canada and Canadians have a reputation for their pleasant, kind demeanour. Syrup Trap, a recently launched website that aims to cover "news, gossip, sex, and scandal" at some of Canada's top universities, will test whether the gossip blog format popular on some American campuses can thrive in this climate of congeniality.

The blog, which posted its first article on February 19, was started by Jamie, a University of British Columbia student who wishes to remain anonymous. While making his decision about which university he would attend, Jamie came across the gossip blog IvyGate, which provided the inspiration and model for Syrup Trap.

"I thought the same sort of concept of the website could work for Canadian universities," he said. "I thought we needed a small dose of snark to lighten things up a bit."

(The McGill Tribune, March 21, 2011)

Public Humiliation

- **The Dirty:**

- <http://thedirty.com/2012/03/dirty-ninja-sloot/>
- <http://thedirty.com/2012/02/nik-what-do-you-think-4/>

Defamation or Free Speech?

- Facebook page entitled "I no longer fear Hell, I took a course with XXX." (2007)
- The group contained comments from at least 10 other students, one of whom compared XX to a shoe. Another comment said that XX "got lazy and gave everybody a 65." Yet another alleged the instructor said that the Magna Carta was signed in 1700 when it was signed in 1215. "Well anyways I think we should all congratulate ourselves for leaving a XX-free legacy for future L.S.W.O. students!"
- The group was not private, Keith said, though "it was not intended to be for the public. The Facebook group's creator, Tom Strangward, said that he did not really think about that aspect of it when he made the group."
- "We just wanted to make sure students in the future aren't afraid to say anything against the university or a professor."

(Macleans OnCampus Posted on June 15, 2010)

Ryerson Student Facing Expulsion 2008

- First-year student Chris Avenir is fighting charges of academic misconduct for helping run an online chemistry study group via Facebook last term, where 146 classmates swapped tips on homework questions that counted for 10 per cent of their mark.
- The computer engineering student has been charged with one count of academic misconduct for helping run the group called Dungeons/Mastering Chemistry Solutions (after the popular Ryerson basement study room engineering students dub The Dungeon) and another 146 counts, one for each classmate who used the site.
- Avenir, 18, faces an expulsion hearing Tuesday before the engineering faculty appeals committee. If he loses that appeal, he can take his case to the university's senate.

(<http://www.thestar.com/news>, March 6, 2008)

The Online Classroom

- Cognitive and interactive dynamics
- Power dynamics
- Only one among many platforms for online interaction
- Norms and regulation
- The specter of cyberbullying
 - The risk of aggression in and outside the online classroom
 - The risk of group think
 - The risk of inappropriately expressed critique
 - The risk of silencing critical expression
- Defense
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - More important than ever to encourage diversity
 - More important than ever to reign in competitiveness

Contextual Integrity

- Ties adequate protection for privacy to norms of specific contexts, demanding that information gathering and dissemination be appropriate to that context and obey the governing norms of distribution within it.
- *Appropriateness*: norms of appropriateness dictate what information about persons is appropriate, or fitting, to reveal in a particular context.
- *Distribution*: a set of norms that govern the flow or distribution of information—movement, or transfer of information from one party to another or others; contextual norms regulate flow or distribution of information

(Nissenbaum, 2004)

Contextual Integrity in the Online Classroom

- Establish explicit norms of information appropriateness and flow
- Discourage spillovers from classroom to other social contexts
- Discourage links and pointers from classroom content to other personal and interpersonal communication contexts

Cyberbullying: The Lessons

- Teaches lessons about power in new media contexts
- Demonstrates the ways in which inequality and domination creeps back into mediated settings
- Guards against idealization of mediated environments and learning communities
- Demands attention and intervention within and outside the classroom
- Raises questions about the relationship between the online classroom and informal online social settings
- Demands reflexive, critical and proactive participation in the shaping of media culture

Culture of Media Bullying?



Local Mom discovers \$5 wrinkle trick to look 10 year younger
(Courtesy to my Facebook page)

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