Adult-to-Adult Cyberbullying: An Exploration of a Dark Side of the Internet

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Writing a book with so much self-disclosure and opinion is always a risk. However, millions of authors have done so and if they have resonated with just one person with what they wrote then it is a journey worth doing.

Bullying is not about character building. It can teach you a lot, but it can also wound. It can make you resilient but also hurt. It may be a part of growing up, but growing up is also learning to defend yourself not just from others who bullying, but not believing the messages that you are not respected and valued purely based on another’s negative opinion.

The Internet has brought so many benefits to the way we live and communicate. Cyberbullying is one side affect that should not rule our choices to use anything on the Internet. It is a dark place, a behaviour that does affect millions of those that use the Internet.

There are many people I want to thank and being my first book I want to thank some directly and some who have influenced me over the years to pursue my interest of studying human behaviours on the Internet.

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The many brave people and Internet scholars I reference in this book that have stood up to overcome cyberbullying.

And the two participants who shared their stories.

PLEASE BE AWARE THIS BOOK CONTAINS MATURE CONTENT WHICH SOME MAY FIND OFFENSIVE
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Logging into the chat room, for the fifth night he is called names by those he has never met. The persistent, repetitive insults about his weight, his political views, his hobbies and his family continue. The words typed are hurtful, personal, untrue, the language offensive, not like the polite offline world he lives and works in. The people doing this to him are all over the world. It is the Internet. Despite this he continues to log on and participate, but each word cuts deeper into a lowering self-esteem which is affecting his life and his feelings of personal safety. “Turn it off and ignore them” says his wife. But that means leaving behind a world he feels part of – and why should he leave if he never intended offence towards anyone? This is not a school child or a teenager locked in verbal warfare. This man is 58 years old and he is the victim of cyberbullying. – Fictitious Story

The Internet globally connects us to others to interact with. Text, photographs, videos, virtual worlds and communities, chat programs, social media and online video gaming have given us unprecedented access to others’ words and images. One consequence is our unwanted interactions with people who troll, flame and cyberbully using the Internet and mobile (cell) phones. Life behind the screen, even with increased Internet surveillance, affords anonymity and sanctuary for some to bully others.

A cyberbully is a person or group of people committing acts that harm or harass others in a consistent, deliberate and hostile way, specifically using electronic technologies. USLegal.com (2014)¹ defines cyberbullying as being hostile towards others and causing intentional harm. It is also a form of persuasion where people can persuade the victim that they are bad and undesirable people and also persuading others to think negatively and hatefully towards the victim.

Preventing and managing cyberbullying has focused on its effects on children and adolescents. However, adults using the Internet, those over 18 years of age for this book, experience cyberbullying. The misconception is that adults are better able to manage it. Adults can have the same negative results and consequences happen to them as a result of being cyberbullied.

An example of its distress to an adult is provided by Marwick and Miller (2014)² from Fordham University Law School in The United States, describing cyberbullying attacks on online blog writer Lori Stewart:

For seven years, JoeBob left profane, aggressive comments on Stewart’s weekly blog. In response, she disabled comments and instead used a private Facebook account to communicate with readers. JoeBob escalated. He created a fake email address, purporting to be Stewart, and sent emails to her friends and family full of homophobic slurs and anti-Semitic remarks. He signed Stewart up for hundreds of newsletters and commented on other blogs using her name.

People are constantly being cyberbullied like this. Worldwide, governments and law enforcement worldwide are struggling to prevent and manage cyberbullying. In Australia there is criminal code legislation that covers cyberbullying offenses. The Australian
Telecommunications Offences and Other Measures Act Part 10.6 Division 474.17(1)\(^3\) states using a carriage service, that is computer or phone, to menace, harass or cause offense is punishable with fines and incarceration (Australasian Legal Information Institute, 2012). However, the personal cost to the victim of pursuing justice against the cyberbully is expensive and emotionally draining.

There are widespread criticisms of the lenient jail sentences and fines given to cyberbullying offenders. Simon Weinstock reported the comments of Alastair Nicholson, Chair of The National Centre Against Bullying\(^4\), who criticised the Australian judiciary’s management of punishments for those committing cyberbullying crimes (Weinstock, 2013):

> “There is a very strong argument that it should be considered a specific offence… You need to have some firm framework in which people can operate and know what they can and can’t do.”

It is vital adults prevent and manage cyberbullying as more people worldwide use the Internet and cyberbullying cases increase.

We can also be cyberbullies. When not using the Internet we can be caring, kind and considerate, yet online bullying others. The Internet has provided an outlet for the shy, lonely and powerless to interact with each other and be listened to. Yet it has provided a place where our frustrations and anger can be inflicted onto those who never hurt us.

**Adult-to-Adult Cyberbullying: An Overlooked Issue?**

Children and adolescents experience social and emotional pressures in their formative years. It is well-reported the tragic consequences cyberbullying has had on them. Adults, however, can be overlooked and even dismissed in cyberbullying research, and in prevention and management strategies. They are supposed to be able to withstand bullying, yet they can experience the same tragic outcomes as younger people.

Psychologist Judith Kennedy argues adult cyberbullying has been largely ignored in academic research, but bullies will continue to do so using the Internet when they become adults to bully without showing remorse and empathy for victims (news.com.au, 2013). All forms of bullying have been shown to affect behaviours in later life with many longitudinal studies showing links between being bullied and poor quality of life outcomes for victims.

A significant study highlighting the long-term effects of bullying was undertaken by Ryu Takizawa and his colleagues (2014)\(^5\). Takizawa’s study illustrates the long-term damaging effects of bullying. They claim bullying causes:

- Continued psychological distress including low self-esteem and continued unhelpful behaviours
- Little to no amount of close friends and personal relationships and low marriage rates
- Lower socio-economic outcomes and unemployment particularly in males
- Poor health outcomes or faster emergence of health issues
Many researchers report similar findings. Dr Linda Kennedy, for example, states some consequences of short and long-term bullying can be these:

- At higher risk for running away from home or leaving jobs
- Being at greater risk of depression and lower self-esteem later in life
- Likely to experience increased problems with family life and relationships
- Likely to suffer from loss of confidence
- More likely to engage in self-destructive behaviours
- More likely to have problems with alcohol and drug use
- More likely to report migraine headaches

For many the hurtful comments and actions of others over time cause negative behaviours from low self-esteem and self-blame. What happens in childhood to someone carries over into their perceptions of their self-image into their middle and older ages, harming their life chances and opportunities.

Part of a victim’s recovery process is to view bullying as not their problem but the bully’s. There are many anti-bullying stories, including cyberbullying, with books and articles written by those who have been bullied or worked with those who have been bullied. Whilst aimed primarily at children, a random sample of books and websites detailing these authors’ ideas for prevention and management are:

- Nick Vujicic (2014) gives a comprehensive guide to overcoming bullying, including cyberbullying through strategies of self-worth and forgiving those who bully you.
- Leading cyberbullying researchers Dr Sameer Hinduja and Dr Justin Patchin (2014) created a website called the Cyberbullying Research Center which acknowledged adult cyberbullying as ‘real’ and ‘valid’ giving a set of tips that can be used by adults to respond to it.
- Brett Murray (2012), an anti-bullying campaigner, gives similar advice as Nick Vujicic does, bringing awareness in one chapter about a core issue in any type of bullying; how those are bullied become bullies themselves.
- Psychologist Dr Michael Carr-Gregg (2007) suggests parents teach children the Seven-Second Rule when using social media, where they take seven seconds to pause before answering an insult back, then a further seven seconds to judge the message and think even more before sending a reply.
- Julie and Andrew Matthews (2011) tell the tragic story of Melbourne teenager Allem from his parents’ point-of-view, describing the dangers of not paying attention to someone’s mood swings or withdrawn behaviours which can indicate they are being cyberbullied.

We can learn from those who have been bullied by listening to their experiences and how they managed it. Cyberbullies often do not understand that just because they are not face-to-face with someone, words and images still do hurt from behind the screen.
Why Don’t You Just Turn the Computer Off?

Someone may say to you “why don’t you just turn off your computer (or mobile phone)?”. Cyberbullying is done with persistence and constant attacking. These cannot always just be turned off at will. Many can, and do, ignore and avoid those who bully them, but the potential for harm is real. Others are so affected by it they suicide. We have also asked victims what they did to encourage others to cyberbully them.

Psychologist and behavioural researcher Marilyn Campbell (2009) has a view on why children and adolescents hide their cyberbullying:

However, we know from research that most victims of bullying do not tell someone about it, or if they do it is their friends. Why don’t they? Because they are embarrassed and humiliated by the bullying, but mostly because they fear retaliation from the bully when adults are involved.

Adults will also hide that they are being cyberbullied. The shame of reporting it to others and of being told they are old enough to just switch it off can prevent them from discussing it and reporting it to authorities. Yet increasingly we see cyberbullying happening at any age. This is particularly so if they have been bullied by someone they met on a dating site, or have been scammed of money.

Dismissing anyone’s bullying experience regardless of their age blames the victim. Not every bully intends for someone to take their own life. However, some form of harm is desired by the person doing the bullying. People have the right to be on the Internet; for many it cannot be just turned off as their online world is as important to them as their offline one.

Where Cyberbullying Takes Place

Internet sites, particularly social media, are places for venting emotions, prejudices, judgements and abuse. They were created for the sharing of information and interacting with others, with the assumption users would be civil to each other. Despite rules governing the content posted on those sites, and explicitly warning of consequences of bullying on them, people still participate in bullying behaviour.

There are twelve sites on the Internet, including those used only on mobile phones, where cyberbullying takes place that are, as at 2015, commonly used by millions of people. These are shown in Table 1:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet Site</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>A blog is a personal website written like a diary where the user posts opinions about any subject. Wordpress is the most common used blogging software. The term used to describe the large amounts of blogs that exist online is called the blogosphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat Lines</td>
<td>Client or web-based software where users chat to each other in real time, that is, when they are online at the same time. Examples include Paltalk, Gaydar, Google (Gmail) Chat, Chat City and Skype. Earlier examples were ICQ, Internet Relay Chat (mIRC) and Yahoo Chat Communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Mail (Email)</td>
<td>Client or web-based software where text and photos are sent between users with Carbon Copy (CC) and Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) features, meaning the email can be sent to many people at the same time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>A social networking site where people friend each other and like pages, sharing photographs, comments and links, and is at present world’s most used social networking site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>This is an online mobile photo and video-sharing service which allows editing of photos and uploading to social network sites quickly, including features to digitally alter images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Computer Video Games and Virtual Reality Sites</td>
<td>These are networked games, mostly involving warfare themes or violence such as Counter Strike and World of Warcraft, while Second Life is a virtual reality simulation of social situations in the physical world. Less sophisticated, text-based ones were Multi-User Domains (MUD) and Multi-User Domain Object Orientated (MOO) existed in the earlier period of the Internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Applications (Apps)</td>
<td>These are software applications designed specifically to run on mobile devices such as smart phones and computer tablets, which are used for many reasons from communication to business, information finding, entertainment and social networking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Message Service (SMS)</td>
<td>These are text messages and images sent from a mobile phone to another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>Tumblr is a popular micro blogging platform but accepts more word characters and larger format photos than Twitter. It often does not censor or remove content relying on others to report objectionable or copyright violating content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>This is a popular micro blogging software platform where messages are limited to 140 character spaces and photos can be posted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Communities</td>
<td>Also called Internet forums or electronic bulletin boards, these are message boards where users post messages to each other usually about a specific area of interest, for example, cars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>This is a video sharing site where users upload videos and post comments which are often filled with hateful comments directed at one person, a particular group of people or the person who uploaded the video.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trolling, flaming and cyberbullying that is occurring now are the result of greater access worldwide to the Internet. It was during the early electronic bulletin board period of the early nineties that cyberbullying became recognised. During this time the long-standing debate over what online bullying is and if it should tolerate it or not arose. The calls to stop this behaviour are louder now because of over two decades of seeing the tragic outcomes cyberbullying does to people.

**What Cyberbullying Looks Like**

Cyberbullying is done in many ways primarily using text, photos and videos to cause harm. These nine examples describe what it can look like.

**Abuse, Threats and Name Calling**

The most common form of cyberbullying is abuse and name calling, particularly attacking someone’s physical appearance and weight, their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture or beliefs. Threatening statements are considered cyberbullying especially if they are repeated. Celebrities and high-profile people, such as politicians, are particularly bullied.

Two examples of cyberbullying are illustrated here. Example one is a case where a person posted on Facebook against his at the time wife and his co-workers (Valenti, 2014):

> There's one way to love you but a thousand ways to kill you. I'm not going to rest until your body is a mess, soaked in blood and dying from all the little cuts. Hurry up and die, bitch, so I can bust this nut all over your corpse from atop your shallow grave.

This is also termed cyberstalking because those being bullied are specifically worried about their personal safety due to the threatening nature of the text.
The next example is considered cyberbullying because it is an abusive and inflammatory message. It also assumes something about a person that may not be true. In this example, a well-known Olympic swimmer, now retired, is bullied with a comment linking disease with his sexuality (Di Stefano, 2014):

I am not letting my children swim in the same pool as Ian Thorpe because I don’t want them getting HIV or AIDS!

Even if this is intended as humorous, it is still considered bullying as it spreads information about a person that, unless that person discloses, is untrue. It could be argued that such postings are harmless and be viewed as someone just having fun. However, if someone is hurt in anyway by such comments it is cyberbullying.

**Altering Photos**

Altering someone’s photo and posting them online is a form of cyberbullying. In particular, a common practice is to use Photoshop or other photo editing software to exaggerate someone’s physical features. This can be hurtful to those who are struggling with body images issues particularly those who are overweight or obese.

**Creating Fake, Unauthorised or Hurtful Profiles**

Creating profiles that misrepresent a person’s moral character is a form of cyberbullying. Harrison (2013) states cyberbullying is when three criteria are present: intention, repetition and a power imbalance. Fake, unauthorised and hurtful profiles do these well. They are also a form of libel or defamation and, if a person can afford it, results in successful prosecution in courts of law even if the site is hosted in another country.

For example, a falling out between school friends escalated when they were both adults. Grant Raphael made continued fake Facebook profiles for 16 days against Mathew Firsht. The legal case was heard in the High Court in The United Kingdom in 2008. These extracts from a British Broadcasting Corporation online news site show the extent of the cyber bullying (BBC News, 2008):

Mr Raphael said that “strangers” who attended an impromptu party at his house in Hampstead in north London sneaked off to a spare bedroom and created the profiles on his PC.

The judge heard that the private information concerned Mr Firsht's whereabouts, activities, birthday and relationship status. It falsely indicated his sexual orientation and political views.

The court heard that Mr Raphael created a false personal profile for Mr Firsht, and a company profile called “Has Mathew Firsht lied to you?”.

The defendant would have accepted an apology but chose to take the offender to court. As the article states it is expensive to take people to court to get justice and compensation, yet this is becoming more common as cyberbullying laws strengthen in many countries.
Hurtful profiles can also exclude people and are considered bullying if they seek to denigrate someone and present the victim as someone who is to be hated. This example is adapted from Jena Ponsford’s (2007) thesis showing a profile created to exclude someone by setting up an online club to bully the victim:

![Fictitious fake profile example](image)

**Figure 1.** A fictitious fake profile example

A profile such as this is a bullying act of aggression because it denigrates the victim and attempts to convince others of often unfounded and untrue rumours (Ponsford, 2007).

**Disclosure of Personal Information**

Disclosing personal information such as someone's private home address, work address, phone numbers, email and real names is a form of cyberbullying. Doing this can also result in criminal acts such as physical assault or other harmful acts offline to someone and damage to one’s reputation.

**Flaming**

Flaming is a form of cyberbullying although it can be viewed as people just having an argument with each other or others. However, it may lead to cyberbullying if the victim is repeatedly attacked by the bully or the transcripts of what the victim says are placed on the Internet with that person’s personal identifying information possibly included.

Flaming is common on social media sites. It does need to come across as an effort to isolate, humiliate and intimidate a victim (Kaufer, 2000). However, it can be harmful if the person is consistently attacked. In this example by Ashen (2010) in a video called ‘Westboro Baptist Church Debate at Wilson High School’, the video maker argues with a fundamentalist Christian at a rally. The comments from other members flame each other as pro and anti homosexual comments appear as this exchange between two YouTube members’ illustrates:

Because 'anal-ripping faggots' are not human beings? Yeah, right, troll. It's this kind of attitude that makes the world what? it is today. Go back to your cave to worship your so-called All-Loving and Omni-benevolent Lord, you prejudiced c***.

no one in their right mind claims God is "all loving" except faggots, jews, and their defenders
yer? scum, get ready to fry
If these persist and get personal then they are considered cyberbullying. That the bully may not personally know or even met the victim is irrelevant.

**Hacking and Desecrating of Memorial Websites**

A distressing form of cyberbullying is when computer hackers access websites and social media memorial sites of those who have passed away. They are also called a troll or cyber-vandal. What is disturbing about this, aside from the disrespect to those who knew the person, is how this form of bullying is now common and is often organised by groups of site users. One person may set up the fake page but others will join in once they are notified of the website.

The motivation to do this is for enjoyment and is a form of sadism, where glee is felt at causing distress to others (Buckels, Trapnell & Paulhus, 2014). Whitney Phillips (2011) describes the shift cyberbullies and trolls have done from individual attacks to organised group attacks on one person, which is why this is taken seriously by law enforcement and the judiciary in many countries:

> Although Facebook had long been regarded as an all–you–can–eat trolling buffet, early raids were typically directed at individuals whom the troll(s) knew in real life, or whose log–in information was made public. In other words, these tended to be one–time, uncoordinated attacks. At the time I didn’t know why, I just knew that trolls had started to organize.

Such postings are harmful and hurtful to the grief process, prolonging it and making the victims experience more traumas.

A high profile trolling case in The United Kingdom in 2011 was that of Sean Duffy. He targeted two young women who had recently passed away with these posted on the website (Camber & Neville, 2011):

> Natasha wasn’t bullied – She was just a whore

> It must be boring there on earth not having someone to have incest with, love you sis

> Help me mummy it’s hot in hell

In another case, Hannah Smith, a young girl who committed suicide over bullying, had several people comment on her Facebook tribute page like this (Alfonso, 2013):

> Can everybody please keep posting pictures of Hannah onto the page? Thanks:

> Yeah she looks pretty slutty

> Yes please post more pictures so I can masturbate at them. I enjoy masturbating at ugly bitches

> I’m sure she’ll sleep very tightly while Satan is molesting her
In Australia in 2010 Daniel Morcombe’s memorial Facebook page (news.com, 2010) attracted cyberbullies who posted pornography and taunts on his page. Even the statement “If one million people join, I’ll give Daniel Morcombe back”, was distressing for Daniel’s parents and friends, especially as this was repeated with more comments and offensive photos posted on the page.

**Impersonating Someone**

This is a form of deception that causes harm to people. The practice is common on dating sites and in chat rooms where people can be emotionally vulnerable. Cyberbullies can also pretend to be the victim and post messages and emails to others to undermine the victim’s relationships they have with other people.

**Posting Gossip and Rumours**

Rumours and gossip are common strategies cyberbullies use to persuade others about someone’s character that is often without fact or truth. Gossip is usually verbal but the Internet has become a major channel for its fast transmission. It passes from person-to-person even if not factual (Wittek & Wielers, 1998) and functions as an evaluation of one’s character (Eder & Enke, 1991).

For example, in The United States town of Mountain Grove, Ontario, an online community forum set up for the townspeople became the centre of controversies as gossip was posted in one the forum. An example of online gossip reported by The New York Times (Sulzberger, 2011) illustrates how it can become bullying, as Jennifer’s husband discovered when he read this in the forum:

> His wife, Jennifer, had been the target in a post titled “freak,” he said, which described the mother of two as, among other things, “a methed-out, doped-out whore with AIDS.” Not a word was true, Mr. and Ms. James said, but the consequences were real enough.

Rumours are false statements, that may turn out to be true, that have private meanings known to those who spread them but quickly evolve into beliefs about someone’s behaviour (Donovan, 2007; Rosnow & Foster, 2005; Schmidt, 2004). These have the power to convince people as to the validity of statements about someone as they are transmitted across the Internet. People can be bullied based only on untrue rumours especially if these are sexual scandals or accusations of infidelity or paedophilia. However, even celebrities can be bullied about their private lives as can public figures such as politicians.

An example of a rumour was posted about Raymond Malinay-Lopez, a 27 year old man from the Philippines, that he was spreading the HIV virus (Tulad, 2012):

> This is to inform the public that Raymond J. Malinay-Lopez, is an HIV+ carrier. We have evidence to believe he has intentionally been spreading the HIV virus by promiscuous sexual acts. Many innocent male sexual partners of Raymond J. Malinay-Lopez have been victimized.

In another example, an extract from Facebook is reproduced here from a site called Lamebook.

> Here a young woman in is photographed looking at two men holding a bicycle.
The woman was a former partner of the author of this Facebook post. Although the details are masked on Lamebook, this posting shows how gossip and rumour are used to ridicule the young woman they are talking about and convince others she is a bad person worthy of ridicule and scorn (Lamebook. 2011):

Friend 1: Who is in the yellow?

Main Author: My slut ex gf (girlfriend)

Friend 2: I still can’t believe you actually brought this in my house (the bicycle)

Friend 1: I wouldn’t be surprised if he rode it around the house

Main Author: Are you talking about the bike or the whore?

Friend 1: Both

As Besag (2006) and Ponsford (2007) state, people spend much time and energy talking about their problems, fears and secrets to friends. These self-revelations become ‘weapons’ of immense psychological damage when gossip and rumours are posted online to a worldwide audience. The tendency is for people, particularly when anonymous, to participate in spreading gossip and rumours further, making this a damaging form of cyberbullying from which some people have actually suicided over.

**Sexting**

Sexting is where messages and photos are of a sexual nature that is unauthorised and unwanted. They are primarily sent by mobile phones. This is cyberbullying when the sending of them to others is not consensual. If people send nude photos and explicit texts to each other and they consent to do so, that is not bullying. It is not just taking photos of someone that can result in experiencing bullying. It is also if someone takes a ‘selfie’ or photo of one’s self and it is obtained by a bully. Additionally, if someone sends you unwanted photos of naked people or people engaged in sexual acts it is a form of cyberbullying if you did not want to see them.

**Cyberbullying and Free Speech**

A criticism of legislating against cyberbullying, particularly in The United States of America, is the fear that anti-cyberbullying laws will prevent free speech. The Internet, despite censorship of it in many countries and increased surveillance of user activity, is still viewed as one place where people to say what they want. Free speech should be without consequence, it is thought, and it would not exist if we continually censor Internet content.

It is difficult to formally regulate Internet sites and can be financially and operationally prohibitive to punish people, especially if the bullies live in other countries. Yet the pressure placed on many websites and social media, especially Twitter and Facebook, to support government legislation to prevent and manage cyberbullying is now very strong. Suzor (2010) recognises what is still a growing problem; that such laws are interference and that all sites must be self-regulated.
I recognise the importance of maintaining free speech on the Internet but also agree that protection for those being cyberbullied is necessary. For example, I agreed with the Australian Federal Government in 2013 that an e-Safety Commissioner who is able to liaise with the major social media sites to remove harmful content was a good idea (Nycyk, 2013). I do also agree with Berg’s (2014) view that it is adding a layer of red tape that Australians do not need. However, it is at least an attempt to try to control cyberbullying behaviours by removing harmful content. Often the victims can be powerless to have content about them removed from websites.

Free speech and cyberbullying are not compatible; free speech comes with the responsibility to be civil. The size of the Internet is also irrelevant and the idea of civility may be unrealistic and unmanageable, but saying cyberbullying is a desirable form of free speech is also not realistic.

**Cyberbullying Cases**

Consequences of cyberbullying are regularly reported in the media. A high profile case was that of former fashion model and television presenter Charlotte Dawson. After her suicide, it was reported she had depression. Her interactions with those who cyberbullied her, especially on Twitter, were widely reported and discussed.

Her case is not unusual as these types of behaviour victims are subjected to can lead to suicide. Some may argue that being an adult she could have just ignored the bullying. But the lure of social media, the connections you make and feeling your being heard by others, is a powerful motivator to continue using it.

In the New Zealand Herald (2012) the type of, and extent of, the public cyberbullying messages she received were published:

“neck yourself you filthy s***” and "please put your face in a toaster”.

“How the f*** did you become a model.”

“It's a very good thing that you cannot breed,”

“please go hang yourself.”

These types of bullying comments ranged from personal, to childish to offensive. They come from bullies who have no empathy for what a person may be emotionally going through.

Yet there is scepticism that adult cyberbullying such as this is serious enough to cause suicide. Rosemary McLeod (2014) commented in The Sydney Morning Herald that perhaps Charlotte may have misjudged her ability to solve the issue of her cyberbully and that managing it was a realistic way to avoid the consequences:

Charlotte Dawson should have known that you can't challenge bullies and succeed; that's a myth. Bullies are like shooting range targets at fun fairs: You think you've shot them down, but they bounce right back up again. You can't change their nature, or your own, so self-protection is the best course.
McLeod points out the consequences of trying to manage cyberbullying and states that there are two issues to consider. First, should we really tolerate this type of behaviour? We may not be able to stop it, but does that mean it is right and acceptable to be bullied by others. Second, people do not just ‘get over’ certain things in their lives. We cannot force people to have empathy for our issues, but we can become resilient enough to not believe cyberbullying comments. However, self-protection is important as McLeod states, but to what degree you do that is your choice.

**This Book’s Exploration of Adult-to-Adult Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying research explores its effects and prevention strategies, seeking to find out its extent and long-term effects on people, mostly adolescents and school children. This study specifically explores adult cyberbullying from a research perspective. The study was done like any research project; however, rather than carry out a mass survey or interview type study, I chose two people to tell their cyberbullying stories and also my own.

Ethical considerations were adhered to in this study. Real names are not used, places and events are masked or removed in the stories and the interview transcripts are securely protected. The two participants were also given the opportunity to review their stories and remove details or elect not to have their interview published. In this book all sources are referenced like a research report. In some data examples from published sources and websites, some of the names and nicknames are removed, though many reports such as news stories do show the names of people involved. These, however, are in the public domain and are referenced as such.

**Chapter Contents**

This chapter was a general introduction to the topic of adult-to-adult cyberbullying, emphasising that it is a legitimate and important area to discuss, and explained the exploratory study approach to this book.

Chapter Two is a research review section that has a theme of how cyberbullying has become more prevalent. This increase was caused by the shift from the static and text-based Web 1.0 to the participatory culture of Web 2.0 where, with greater access to the Internet worldwide and more people using it, combined easier to use software, cyberbullying has visibly increased. I include examples of cyberbullying and an in-depth discussion of those sites where the bullying behaviour occurs.

Chapters Three and Four are two accounts of cyberbullying from two participants who agreed to tell their stories. The point of including them is to highlight how they experienced and managed cyberbullying from the view of being an adult.

Chapter Five is a story of my cyberbullying experiences and discovery of the Internet, briefly discussing my decision to become an Internet researcher.

Chapter Six explores deeper some cyberbullying issues. First, I discuss some issues about the problems of researching adult cyberbullying, discussing how the Internet has become a powerful world for people to inhabit. I then present a thematic analysis of the two interviews I conducted to show the types of issues the experience of cyberbullying had for both of them.
and what themes arose from the analysis that can inform us how an adult experiences, manages and prevents cyberbullying.

Chapter Seven reviews ways to prevent and manage adult-to-adult cyberbullying.

Chapter Eight briefly gives my conclusions and closing thoughts on adult-to-adult cyberbullying from writing this book.

**Potentially Offensive Material in Book Alert**

Be advised that there is explicit language used in this book and descriptions of situations and events that may cause offence or distress. These included use of racist, sexist, homophobic, religious and culturally insensitive words and other types of offensive statements cyberbullies use. I urge anyone who reads this book and is distressed from being cyberbullied to seek advice from any source or person you feel comfortable with. Do not be convinced it is your fault.
Notes

1 Extra information on the definition of cyberbullying from United States website http://definitions.uslegal.com/c/cyber-bullying/

2 Marwick and Miller’s extensive 2014 study of the state of the legal landscape in The United States of online harassment is an excellent attempt to make people aware of the law and its penalties, using court case examples of successful prosecutions of cyberbullies

3 Legislation currently reads as this at time of writing this book.

4 Website is at http://ncab.org.au/

5 Substantive longitudinal study titled ‘Adult Health Outcomes of Childhood Bullying Victimization: Evidence From a Five-Decade Longitudinal British Birth Cohort’ published in the American Journal of Psychiatry in 2014 claiming the effects of any type of bullying impact on physical health, economic opportunity and mental health in middle age. It urges constant intervention in childhood and adolescence to prevent or minimise self-esteem and other issues in later life.

6 Dr Linda Kennedy was reported on the website overcomebullying.com as reporting these consequences of bullying, including cyberbullying.

7 A full list fact sheet of advice from the Cyberbullying Research Center responding to adult cyberbullying can be found at http://cyberbullying.us/Responding_to_cyberbullying_top_ten_tips_for_adults.pdf

8 Lamebook (http://www.lamebook.com) is a humorous website where users send in excerpts from people’s Facebook pages, with the names and most other details masked, and people comment on them. Usually these posts involve sexual, relationship, conflict and self-revealing behaviours.

9 Note that the grammar and presentation of this Lamebook reference is corrected for ease of reading but is still reflective of the actual text used in the Facebook extract, although Lamebook does shows these two authors’ first names on its site.

10 Chris Berg, Policy Director of the Institute of Public Affairs, wrote this article criticising the 2014 Australian Coalition Government’s decision to set up a watchdog type organisation that aims to protect children and teenagers from cyberbullying and forces social media and websites to remove any material reported to it. At the time of writing this has not been fully set up.
CHAPTER TWO
ADULT-TO-ADULT CYBERBULLYING RESEARCH

Two reasons given for the severity of impact are the wider audience in which public humiliation or embarrassment can occur, and the increased level of invasiveness that is possible, in particular the ability to penetrate a victim’s home and/or bedroom. – Megan Price and John Dalgleish Youth Studies Australia

This chapter is an exploration of the history and type of cyberbullying that takes place on the Internet. It uses academic studies, media reports, reproduced and fictional examples of Internet bullying and peoples’ stories to illustrate it. The invention of sophisticated web technologies that now exist has increased cyberbullying scope and reach. Punitive measures and legal recourses against cyberbullies are growing but cannot keep up with the volume of complaints. Exploring why cyberbullying occurs, in what forms and its effects, alerts us to its seriousness.

Reasons for Cyberbullying

Bullies have a need to dominate others and may have personal knowledge about someone to be able to post information which can potentially maximise harm to the victim (Ponsford, 2007). Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) suggest a reason is that there are poor emotional bonds in childhood between parents and their children who bully. How one is treated in childhood does impact on many types of future relationships. There is also often a difference between who you are online and who you are offline. The person online may not be anything like who they are in daily life. They may be charming, caring and thoughtful; you would not know they are cyberbullying others.

Internet psychologists, who specialise in explaining Internet behaviours, have given reasons why people may cyberbully. John Suler’s explanation of negative Internet behaviours, The Online Disinhibition Effect effectively explains why people act differently on the Internet than they otherwise do offline. Table 2 contains his technical terms and examples of behaviours which illustrate the conditions under which cyberbullying occurs (Suler, 2004):

---

1 Ybarra and Mitchell (2004)
Table 2

*Suler’s six disinhibition categories of online behaviours*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour Name</th>
<th>Suler’s Explanations for Online Behaviours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissociative Anonymity</td>
<td>The actions one’s does cannot be attributed to my person (self)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisibility</td>
<td>Nobody sees what I look like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronicity</td>
<td>My actions are not happening in real-time or the now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solipsistic Introjection</td>
<td>I can’t see these people I have to guess who they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissociative Imagination</td>
<td>This is not a real world, these are not real people (which even if they know the victim can still be a reality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimising Authority</td>
<td>I can act freely as there is nobody in authority (even on websites with rules such as being banned from using the site)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Suler is explaining is disembodiment; if someone is not there you can do what you want to them. There is also a lack of appreciation of consequences. I do believe lacking empathy for consequences is a core reason why people bully.

For example, if we post material about others and, even if the people who see it do not know the person, the public humiliation contributes to the pain and suffering endured by the victim (Bauman, 2010). Victims can also have their future lives, credibility, chances of employment and personal and professional relationships damaged. Peluchette and Karl (2010) agree with this view and state Internet users do not appreciate the consequences of posting negative material to websites about themselves and others.

Graham Jones, another Internet psychology scholar, supports Suler’s ideas adding that Internet users often do not control their behaviour in a place where physical people do not exist and they do things they would not usually do (Martin, 2013):

“...there is a feature of the online world that makes such negative behaviour more likely than in the real world,” he says. “In the real world people subconsciously monitor the behaviour of others around them and adapt their own behaviour accordingly... Online we do not have such feedback mechanisms.”

A lack of empathy for others’ feelings is a key finding in cyberbullying research that explains why people commit it. Empathy is the ability or skill to understand another’s emotional state, feelings or the situation and context they live in (Campbell, Slee, Spears, Butler & Kift, 2013; Cohen & Strayer, 1996) as well as someone’s motives in a situation for the way they act (The Free Dictionary, 2014). It is a sign of caring and consideration, as well as an understanding of consequences should that be broken. As stated in Chapter One, it is likely that some of those on Twitter who bullied Charlotte Dawson did not have empathy for someone who was reported as having mental health issues.
Yet not every comment, photo or video is considered cyberbullying. Apperley (2010) describes the deliberate abuse, insults and threats as ‘smack-talk’ or ‘smack-play’, also called ‘behave-smack’. This often occurs in networked and online gaming such as Counter Strike. Those who use these gaming sites would likely have knowledge bullying will happen in these aggressive environments.

Another example of consensual abuse occurs in the online chat community program Paltalk (http://www.paltalk.com) which have insult rooms were people bully each other. In them it is acceptable to do so and agreed upon by the members in that room to do this. In my research (Nycyk, 2012) on flaming and bullying behaviours on YouTube, I concluded that even offensive words such as ‘nigger’ and ‘faggot’ did not always have a bullying or insulting effect because that is what some people say to each other and they do not take offense to it. This is consensual; it is the individual’s decision if it is cyberbullying.

Studying cyberbullying behaviours helps to understand motivations, victim’s experiences and prevention strategies. It also helps us understand what causes cyberbullying and provides empirical evidence needed to inform the public, the law and others what will be effective intervention programs to manage this (Harrison, 2013) without taking away free speech. Can you imagine a time when holographs and other more realistic digital media will be available? They will be used for cyberbullying, so research will play a part in managing these future technologies as they come to fruition.

Web 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0: The Evolution of Sophisticated Ways to Cyberbully

The ability to post higher quality photos and videos onto the Internet has been a cause of increased reporting of cyberbullying. The World Wide Web, a part of the Internet where we mainly interact, has been where it has primarily taken place. There are three versions of the World Wide Web, with a fourth in the planning stage at the time of writing, known as Web 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0.

In this section I define and describe these versions of the World Wide Web to show the evolution of the web and how cyberbullying has become sophisticated, widespread and organised. Much cyberbullying took place in closed private arenas such as IRC and email programs such as Hotmail. Yahoo had a public chat program which was eventually shut down due to the complaints of cyberbullying, trolling and predatory behaviours. The key indicator of increased cyberbullying was the ability to post photographs and videos. The definitions of the World Wide Web in this section were assisted by the websites Witty Cookie (2012), How Stuff Works (Strickland, n.d.) and Flat Business World (2014).

Web 1.0

This first version of the web was characterised by static websites with only text on them, although as it developed photos could be uploaded onto them. It is referred to as the readable phase of the World Wide Web. The first characteristic that set them apart from current websites was that the information on them did not always change or change quickly. You could interact only basically with the website sending emails through links or filling out online forms that were automatically mailed to the site’s owner.
**Web 2.0**

The main characteristic separating Web 1.0 from Web 2.0 is interactivity; people have become co-creators of Internet and World Wide Web content. People collaborate between each other and share information. There is no need for knowing web programming, HTML mark-up languages or designing the sites yourself. This version of the web has become associated with social media sites Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Commenting on social media’s function in society, Rubin (2011, p. 587) highlights the role of social media in current society as it operates in Web 2.0 environments and how we deal with those in our lives we only know online and do not meet:

> The Internet is an example of a perfect means for today’s interaction: it offers easy forums for social dealings. Our Facebook friends are both near and far at the same time. The unseen partner is concurrently both the true and the fictive ‘other’, who may be perfectly hidden behind his/her personal avatar – exactly the same way I can hide myself from him/her – and whose presence and possible threat can be put aside merely with a press of a key button.

Web 2.0 revolutionised interactions between people who use the Internet because it went beyond the text/photo static website to a place where participation is possible and your opinions can be heard. This has had the effect of being a fertile breeding ground for cyberbullying and trolling.

**Web 3.0**

This version of the Web, which is coming into existence in 2015, is called ‘executable’ because of its ability to interpret information in similar ways to human thinking. We see it in the way we type information into search engines like Google where it completes search terms for us or accurately guesses the correct spelling of the terms in the information we seek. The issue related to cyberbully is that it makes finding people more accurate. Even names like Smith are becoming easier to find because search engines piece together even obscure information to produce a result. The term coined for this version is ‘The Intelligent Web’ which it is claimed gives the user of websites a productive and an intuitive experience. However, it will further erode privacy and may give cyberbullies the opportunity to find information about you more easily.

Having explained the evolution of the World Wide Web, it is obvious that avenues for cyberbullying may expand, though at the time of writing this is only slowly coming to fruition. I now discuss how cyberbullying operates in some versions of the World Wide Web to show what it looked like and what problems preventing and managing it have challenged governments, those who use the Internet, the law and the changing landscape from 1.0 to 2.0 where anonymity of Internet users is not always the issue that it was.
Cyberbullying in Web 1.0 Environments

A Rape in Cyberspace: An Early Example of Cyberbullying

An essay that vividly describes the problem of preventing and managing cyberbullying was written by Julian Dibbell, an Internet scholar and social commentator, called A Rape in Cyberspace (or TINYSOCIETY and How to Make One) (Dibbell 1998; Dibbell 1993). It is an early account of the dilemma of how to govern an Internet site to prevent cyberbullying and trolling, challenging the idea that bulling words are just on the screen, proving that civility and consideration for others’ feelings online is desired by those who interact on an Internet site.

Dibbell’s story tells of his involvement in a text-based virtual reality role-playing database system called a Multi-User Domain (MUD). This software is part of a Multi-User Domain Object Orientated (MOO). These lacked the sophistication of graphic virtual reality programs such as Second Life, but were considered by many as a place to interact online with others and even socialise offline with its members. Even though it was purely text, the words typed on the screen could be interpreted as hurtful and hostile. Figure 2 is a fictional example of what a MOO looks like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brisbane Adventure Room</th>
<th>Number of Participants: 39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Brisbane
>connected Port 1.5L
>connected

Welcome to Brisbane Adventure Room
Copyright (c) 1993, 1994 Muds Inc. All Rights Reserved
Version 3 / Serial Number 84953H84GF

Menu (type in letter of suburb where you want to go, not case sensitive)

B - Balmoral
H - Hendra
J - Jindalee
N - North
S - South Brisbane

::: Welcome to Hendra Room::: 

You have chosen Hendra

********Welcome to Hendra Room********

Hendra Room welcomes Dibs89

You are standing in the Wreck Bar. Make your choice by typing in letters

- To order drinks - OD
- To order food - OF
- To talk to members - TM
- To talk to bar staff (moderators) - TS

::: Welcome to Hendra Room:::
There are 12 members in this room as at 18:25 PM 5 May 1998
Jill I4, blade walker, Jupiter_90, crossxxx9, sody9, max_the_one
Lcd89, Australianpet, scribblerT, jenn_i_ferx, ramsman, terror_78

>TM
> You have chosen to talk to members

>*Dibs89 has entered chat!
>Australianpet: hi Dibbsey
>jenn_i_ferx: Dibs so nice 2 c u ;)))))))))))))))
>terror_78: who let him in? Joking, hi dibs
>Dibs89: wow warm welcome hi all
>Jupiter_90: Careful dibs terror’s in a bad mood
>terror_78: am not
>Dibs89: as if i’m worried, but speaking of worry where is Lcd?
>jenn_i_ferx: he’s AFX
>Dibs89: typical
>*sody9 hands Dibs89 a drink:

    x
    x
    xxx
    xxxxxxx
    xxxxxxxxx
    xxxxxxxxxx
    xxxxxxxxxx

>Dibs89: thanks sody I owe you
>Sody9: Pleasure. BTW missed you online last Tuesday.
>Dibs89: yeah was at gym; got to get the gut down
>Sody9: So you won’t be requiring that drink after all!
>Dibs89: HANDS OFF!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! ;)))))))))))))))))) LOL

Figure 2: A text-based MUD or MOO

The MOO Dibbell joined was a variant of a MOO called LambdaMOO. They are regarded as a fantasy place where people can be less inhibited, hence why cyberbullying and trolling happens. Your Dictionary (2004) provides this description of a LambdaMOO:

LambdaMOO was a type of database giving users the rather realistic feeling that they were moving through space. When users dialled into LambdaMOO, the program immediately presented users with a short text description of one of the database’s fictional rooms in a fictional mansion. The rooms, the things in them, and the characters were able to interact according to rules imitating laws in the real world. In general, LambdaMOOers were allowed the positive freedom “to create.” They could describe their characters in any way, decorate rooms, and build new objects.

People who use online communities take them very seriously in terms of how people should behave towards each other. Many societal rules to keep civility and order are reproduced online. Although online gaming and others communities have a ‘behave smack’ approach of
consensual abuse and insulting, the LambdaMOO Dibbell used was assumed to be a safe peaceful place for people to interact in.

Dibbell described his relationship to the LambdaMOO and how it was enticing to him. Consider his opening paragraph. In Chapter One I emphasised how people cannot always just turn off the computer and walk away from the Internet sites they use. The way Dibbell describes confirms this:

I found myself tripping now and then down the well-travelled information lane that leads to LambdaMOO, a very large and very busy rustic mansion built entirely of words. On the occasional free evening I’d sit down in my New York City apartment and type the commands that called those words onto my computer screen, dropping me with what seemed a warm electric thud inside the house’s darkened coat closet, where I checked my quotidian identity, stepped into the persona and appearance of a minor character from a long- gone television sitcom, and stepped out into the glaring chatter of the crowded living room.

It is unsurprising because of the amount of emotional investment people make in spending time online in gaming, chat or social media that it becomes a consuming experience. Dibbell describes well what we now take for granted; these programs mimic the real world (Dibbell, 1998) yet are every bit as real as if someone is physically standing next to you. The rules of civility and consideration operate online as they do in the particular cultures the participants come from. In Dibbell’s story he describes the characters that inhabit the LambdaMOO in rich detail, even describing clothing, such as what exu, a participant, wore, as ‘wearing an expensive pearl grey suit, top hat and glasses’ (Dibbell, 1998).

The problem for the LambdaMOO’s participants began by an unprovoked written attack by a trolled named Mr. Bungle. This character was described by Dibbell in this way, evoking our view of bullies and trolls as villains (Dibbell, 1993):

And there was cruelty enough lurking in the appearance Mr. Bungle presented to the virtual world — he was at the time a fat, oleaginous, Bisquick-faced clown dressed in cum-stained harlequin garb and girdled with a mistletoe-and-hemlock belt whose buckle bore the quaint inscription KISS ME UNDER THIS, BITCH!

Dibbell describes the text Mr. Bungle typed as rape, which although virtual text, was considered by those using the LambdaMOO a form of sexual violence. Rape uses force and is labelled, in legal terms, as when there is no consent, which in many countries is now equally applied to women and men who are victims (The Association of State Uniform Crime Reporting Programs, 2013; Eileraas, 2011). It is reasonable to ask why this text should be so offensive if it was just words, but it offended the users who considered it both bullying and a form of sexual violence against other users.

How Dibbell describes these attacks is similar to those who bully others on Twitter, where they will sustain continued attacks by creating other accounts or personas. In this extract Dibbell creates an unpleasant imagery in the reader’s mind of the acts committed by Mr Bungle., keeping in perspective that in Web 1.0 at that time the type of data was only text unlike what is now viewed on the Internet in the form of photos(Dibbell, 1993) which can be unpleasant to view:
That exu heaped vicious imprecations on him all the while and that he was soon ejected bodily from the room. That he hid himself away then in his private chambers somewhere on the mansion grounds and continued the attacks without interruption, since the voodoo doll worked just as well at a distance as in proximity. That he turned his attentions now to Moondreamer, a rather pointedly nondescript female character, tall, stout, and brown-haired, forcing her into unwanted liaisons with other individuals present in the room, among them exu, Kropotkin (the well-known radical), and Snugberry (the squirrel). That his actions grew progressively violent. That he made exu eat his/her own pubic hair. That he caused Moondreamer to violate herself with a piece of kitchen cutlery.

This upset and shocked the victims and bystanders watching the text. Bystanders can play a role in the prevention of cyberbullying. In Dibbell’s account, pressure was placed upon the owners and moderators (called wizards or controllers) to get rid of Mr Bungle. and put policies in place to prevent cyber rape. The act of expelling someone from a website or social media is called banning but in Dibbell’s account he calls it toading, which means getting rid of someone and attempting to make sure they never return to do the same bullying.

The next issue in Dibbell’s account highlights the dilemma facing website owners to regulate cyberbullying. With regulating content on large worldwide web sites and social media sites like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, it is difficult to ban everyone who bullies. Yet it was easier on earlier sites such as the one Dibbell used. The issue is that not everyone sees banning as a positive measure. Dibbell (1998) in this passage effectively describes the type of dilemma facing those that want the Internet to remain free from those who want to regulate it:

Faced with the task of inventing its own self-governance from scratch, the LambdaMOO population had so far done what any other loose, amorphous agglomeration of individuals would have done: they'd let it slide. But now the task took on new urgency. Since getting the wizards to toad Mr. Bungle (or to toad the likes of him in the future) required a convincing case that the cry for his head came from the community at large, then the community itself would have to be defined; and if the community was to be convincingly defined, then some form of social organization, no matter how rudimentary, would have to be settled on. And thus, as if against its will, the question of what to do about Mr. Bungle began to shape itself into a sort of referendum on the political future of the MOO. Arguments broke out on *social and elsewhere that had only superficially to do with Bungle (since everyone agreed he was a cad) and everything to do with where the participants stood on LambdaMOO's crazy-quilty political map. Parliamentarian legalist types argued that unfortunately Bungle could not legitimately be toaded at all, since there were no explicit MOO rules against rape, or against just about anything else -- and the sooner such rules were established, they added, and maybe even a full-blown judiciary system complete with elected officials and prisons to enforce those rules, the better. Others, with a royalist streak in them, seemed to feel that Bungle's as-yet-unpunished outrage only proved this New Direction silliness had gone on long enough, and that it was high time the wizardocracy returned to the position of swift and decisive leadership...

This description of the conflict lies at the core of stopping cyberbullying behaviour. People often will not agree with being censored, but some rules of appropriate behaviours need to be applied depending on the nature of the site. Analysing Dibbell’s story, Huff, Johnson and
Miller (2003) commented that the Mr Bungle affair highlighted three important points about Internet bullying and trolling behaviour:

- The behaviour of people online can result in negative psychological and physical consequences; that is, although not a physical context, the virtual world and those that use it have responsibilities to be aware of consequences that can harm others.

- Rules for online behaviour are necessary because the nature of virtual interactions make it difficult to anticipate consequences of one’s behaviour on others; therefore, rules are needed to regulate them.

- Rules need to be made explicit if justice and recourse are a goal of feeling safe online when using the Internet.

That we are judged by our online persona even if we are anonymous is also important to consider when bullying someone. An unknown author critiquing Dibbell’s work wrote a fundamental and important point about why such acts of bullying and trolling do matter (“The case of Mr. Bungle and the “Cyber-rape”...”, n.d.):

Ultimately, I wish to suggest, this is precisely why the "rape" in cyberspace matters. Whatever else it might say about online communities or the relationship between virtual reality and real life, Mr. Bungle's "attack" on legba and Starsinger mattered not only because it sparked important discussion about community norms and related issues but also because the online self created in LambdaMOO is fundamentally the same kind of intellectual self as our conventional "offline" self: a self that is not defined by the physical but by the intellectual and the verbal.

Dibbell’s story is worth considering as a descriptive account of the harm cyberbullying and trolling can do and the dilemma of, and debates around, trying to remedy this. His experience describes what continues to occur on the Internet today.

**Other Web 1.0 Bullying Examples**

The types of topics frequently used to cyberbullying involve highlighting many types of differences about people and asserting forms of superiority over another person or group. This list, whilst not exhaustive, is what bullies will use to exclude, degrade, intimidate and harass people:

- Physical appearance, especially if overweight.

- Gender, with women generally being subjected to more sexist comments about appearance than men and those who are transgender.

- Racism and the reproduction of stereotypical behaviours, for example, the Irish as being ‘dumb’ and ‘stupid’, attacks on African-Americans as ‘niggers’.

- Cultures and their practices, for example, Indians from Asia wearing turbans are not trustworthy and are ‘dirty people’ as in their perceived lack of hygiene.
- Sexual behaviours, either as rumour and gossip or proven behaviours, with bestiality, rape and paedophilia accusations bullies use to denigrate others, but also accusations of infidelity and using the services of prostitutes.

- Beliefs such as feminism, religious or political ideologies.

- Academic performance, especially school students, where getting good grades is seen as a fault.

- Someone’s age with older people often bullied due to perceived stereotypes about ageing.

- Sexual orientation with the word ‘faggot’ frequently used to denigrate anyone who may be thought of as a male homosexual, but also lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons are cyberbullied through words and images.

- Decisions people make about their lives that affect others and the broadcasting of these online, such as relationship break-ups where people obsess about another person or friendships that also breakup, especially in groups, as occurs with primary and secondary school students, and with adults who may enjoy taking sides and spreading rumours and gossip about others.

- Bullying within groups for many reasons. For example gay men of different ages may bully bisexual men, HIV positive men or lesbians or people bullying those that are monetarily poorer than they are, or between sub-groups such as people who follow one music group will bully other people who like another music group.

It is unsurprising that research consistently reaches similar conclusions that cyberbullying is increasing. Two studies, one of gender and one of sexuality, of school student experiences illustrate this. Rivers and Noret (2010) found over a period of five years that socially isolated girls were bullied online and then further ostracised and bullied at their school. Being popular and accepted is important although generally to young girls and adult women more than men. A study by Schneider, O’Donnell, Stueve and Coulter (2012) showed that hostile cyberbullying, which transferred to the school environment, was done to those who identified as homosexual, or where thought to be homosexual. Web 1.0 Internet sites, such as mIRC and email groups, were frequent places for attacking people for their sexuality, which continues in Web 2.0 despite many countries having anti-discrimination laws to prevent this.

Web 1.0 was notable for its ability to promote opinion and information-sharing through the creation of electronic newsgroups. These continue today on Google groups. Mitra (1996) studied cyberbullying in newsgroups, called Usenet, where people posted bullying comments which were often not moderated or censored. The group he studied, soc.cult.indian, posted repeated racial discriminatory, hurtful and harassing comments against each other with mostly Indian people posting such comments to those from Pakistan. Tension between the two groups became cyberbullying. Although Vrooman (2001) viewed Usenet as flaming, not cyberbullying, such texts were perceived as acceptable behaviour by some users, but these behaviours did hurt and harass other users.
The Appearance of Cyberbullying in Web 1.0

Figures 3 to 5 are fictitious reproductions of the types of Web 1.0 Internet sites where cyberbullying occurred. These are reproductions of text in chat rooms, email and newsgroups, which were commonly used before Web 2.0 and social media was invented. The first example is a chat room.

Welcome to Brisbane Social Room********Please observe our rules at [http://bc.n.net/rules](http://bc.n.net/rules) and have a good time!

Cyill has entered the room

Alwaystrollingx: yeah ima sick of wot da crap he says in here ruins it with its whining and crap

Alwaystrollingx: oh right look he’s here now, why don’ you kill yaself Cy

Smithxx8: Yeah look at dat ugly thing

Cyill: I had a bad day leave me alone

Alwaystrollingx: *gives finger* as if we care you be dead if we had our way

Lady_Jaw90_: Hey, just got back from mall, ahh CY you dumb piece of crap, Always, you shoot this bitch ok

Smithxx8: Hey jaws, I took a photo of CY he a fag for sure

Alwaystrollingx: hate fags like Cy

Cyill: I dun’ wanna fight

Lady_Jaw90_: Too late creep, we saw you, l0lz.

_bigmeathead_ has entered the room

Alwaystrollingx: yo, meathead got ya in here to kill this fat fag

_bigmeathead_: my fist is ready to break that sonofabitch...let me at him, he won’t see another day

*Figure 3. Bullying of one person in a chat room by a gang of other users*
From: <anonget@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, 14 March 1999
To: <jill_lonsdale34@ozmail.com.au>
Subject: Fat bitch ya gonna get yours

Bitch, you need jenny craig now, but you want me so bad, i know where you live; you got that nice new cat right? Now what if something happen? You ain’t got no friends cos you’re fat. Fat ass.

From: <anonget@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, 14 March 1999
To: <jill_lonsdale34@ozmail.com.au>
Subject: Hey Bitch

You still think you can get away with what you did. Your sister hates you I know, she told me you hang out with old men. Yo bitch its time....

From: <jill_lonsdale34@ozmail.com.au>
Sent: Thursday, 14 March 1999
To: <anonget@hotmail.com>
Subject: FINAL WARNING

Final warning creep, I’m going to get the cops onto, I’m not interested, OK got it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

From: <anonget@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, 14 March 1999
To: <jill_lonsdale34@ozmail.com.au>
Subject: .......

You think i’m scared bittch?????????? Think again, you don’t want your dog to end up skinned you whore, be wit me now

From: <anonget@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, 14 March 1999
To: <jill_lonsdale34@ozmail.com.au>
Subject: Hate You

I hate you, you ruined my life, you walk roud’ wit short skirts when you are fat as. Fry bitch. You got no friends they all think you are a dumb ass bitch, fat slut slag, prepare to die bitch it’s a cummin and yo daddy can’t protect your fat ass which will be hangin’ in the town square. Whore.

Figure 4. Email bullying
Sorepoint 54:

We in France know better, you seem very uncivilised in Britain, we know how to cook with the finest ingredients unlike you brit fags, I know 4 sure you must be a fag you would go down on someone who is dirty as mud, so fuck off...

You idiot, you have harassed me enough I have a right to be here and you have over the past 2 months told me off for everything, go away

Creep........

Sick of you,...

Figure 5: A newsgroup message

All these examples are cyberbullying because acts are being committed using electronic technologies that harm or harass others in a hostile way.

Cyberbullying in Web 2.0 Environments

The difference between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 is the ability Web 2.0 has as a software platform to allow users to create content, whereas Web 1.0 was an information gathering only type of software platform (Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008). The developments of Web 2.0 were significant for increasing opportunities for cyberbullying.

Social media, a major innovation of Web 2.0 which allowed more interactivity between those using the Internet, are sites for much cyberbullying. These sites include, but are not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, MySpace and YouTube. In The United States of America 73% of adults use some form of social networking, 42% use multiple networks and the majority of the adult population sampled in their survey (6010 adults) used Facebook as their main social networking site (Pew Research Center, 2013). Similar figures are likely to be found across other cultures and countries.

The created content Web 2.0 allows is not just text, but also photos, videos and document files such as Portable Document Files (PDF) or Microsoft Office documents. Governments and law enforcement agencies have not been able to regulate the Internet and many web and social media sites have struggled to enforce policies to control cyberbullying, trolling, flaming and hate speech. This is a leftover from Web 1.0 where an attitude of ‘I can say what I like without consequences’ developed. Even in this increased era of better Internet surveillance, such as Internet Service Provider (ISP) tracking, harsher penalties for offenders and new ways to manage cybercrime, people escape prosecution and continue to cyberbully.
There is a view that the interactivity of Web 2.0 is a form of democracy. Yet a counter-argument is it allows uncivil behaviour and abuse to become the norm standard of behaviour in many societies. It is subjective if this behaviour translates to daily offline life, but there are suggestions societies have become ruder and less caring. A book that discusses this is called *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam. Although about communities in The United States, it illustrates the fracturing of communities which the Internet has played a role.

Putnam in the book discusses the breakdown of a civil society where politeness and empathy have disappeared due to the erosion of community and civic groups where people had met face-to-face (Putnam, 2000), claiming that television and computer technologies driving a wedge between people (Putnam, 1995). These have been blamed for the removal of privacy and desensitisation of people to suffering. This argument has continued with commentators blaming the Internet for these occurring.

Like Suler’s disinhibition effect, not being physically present correlates with being uncivil on the Internet, hence more cyberbullying takes place. A description of this by Bargh and McKenna (2004, p.6), quoting an early study by Sproull and Kiesler (1986), describes technology’s disembodiment from real life. The self-centredness they describe, combined with the lack of empathy, results in feeling more anonymous and therefore, more likely to bully others and feel they can go unpunished for doing so:

...CMC (computer mediated communication) limits the ‘bandwidth’ of social communication, compared to traditional face-to-face communication settings (or to telephone interaction, which at least occurs in real time and includes important nonverbal features of speech). Sproull and Kiesler (1986) considered CMC to be an impoverished communication experience, with the reduction of available social cues resulting in a greater sense or feeling of anonymity. This in turn is said to have a deindividuating effect on the individuals involved, producing behavior that is more self-centered and less socially regulated than usual. This reduced-information model of Internet communication assumes further that the reduction of social cues, compared to richer face-to-face situations, must necessarily have negative effects on social interaction (i.e., a weaker, relatively impoverished social interaction).

Web 2.0 generally encouraged cyberbullying more than Web 1.0 by providing greater opportunities for it. It is the combination of technology and attitudes of people that make this happen. Much of this occurred in previous years on the site MySpace, but this site is now used less for bullying because Facebook became the social media platform of choice. At the time of writing there are many Internet sites where bullying can occur, but for illustrative purposes I will concentrate on some mentioned in Chapter One.

**Example 1: Facebook**

Facebook is a social media platform with real names and photos often visible, although fake Facebook accounts can be set up. Some may view the exchange of arguments between Facebook users as merely amusement, gossip, or rumour spreading. A view about Facebook stated by Hampton, Goulet, Marlow and Rainie (2012), which Mackey and Jacobson (2014) share, is that social media has changed the nature and inhibition of sharing information through social media. The profound affect Facebook has had on human society is immense
with it changing the way we define our relationships with each other. We know intimate and personal things about others who are on Facebook, yet may not see those people at all, nor interact with them in any way in an offline relationship.

It has also changed the nature of the word ‘friend’, where people claim they are friends with each other when they actually only share a virtual, less intimate, type of friendship. According to Dictionary.com (n.d), a dimension of the definition of friend is “a person who is on good terms with another; a person who is not hostile”. Friends on Facebook can become hostile towards each other for many reasons. Hampton et al., (2012) suggest there is a hierarchical relationship of people on Facebook with people ranking friends in often discriminatory ways. Mackey and Jacobson (2014) state that a friend, in the context of Facebook, is no longer a traditional close personal relationship but rather a collection of work colleagues, acquaintances and casual links with anyone, even celebrities.

This is relevant to cyberbullying, especially on Facebook, because as some of the examples discussed in this section, suggests relationships, even with those ‘friends’ in another country, can become strained and fracture. These cyberbullying examples show what may be viewed as bickering rather than bullying but move to potentially serious and tragic outcomes. Alex Lickerman (2013) states that no one should ask you to put a friendship before one’s principles; that is, do not compromise who you are to please others. When you take a stand against bullying you can lose friends because you will not tolerate the abuse they post about you.

In these Facebook examples were obtained from Lamebook, published openly on the World Wide Web, where ‘friends’, family members and partners harass and hurt each other over various issues. In this example two friends of the original author bully each other over alleged infidelity which moves from name calling to threats of physical violence:

Author 1  Me and brandon r just chillIn hit us up
Author 2  Shit I tried but u won’t answer :/
Author 3  Good, he knos better.
Author 2  Fuck u he’s been hitting me up...Shit I jus stayed wit him Sunday...
Author 3  Haha !! u feel like a big girl now, Maury slut??
Author 2  Lmao u dirty man looking trifling ass whore ill fuckin mollywop that lil nappy ass head of urs...stop takin shit or step up bitch
Author 3  Wow, i hope you feel grown now lil girl, grow up an act CLASSY, ur a fuckin femal..an i believe i told you where i lived ONCE already.
Author 1  Ok stop now u2...
Author 3  Ohh, im deff done, she don’t mean shit ot me an she DEFFINATLY dont phase me w her *MOLLYWOPIN* shit lmao ! ive done told her were i lived & its on her frm now. she don’t want any just to warn ya, an U kno this ! Act CLASSY not TRASHY fuckin slut. An chris...have fun w her since she stayed w ya n all. .. NIIIIICCE!!!!

Author 2  Yepp he was ll up in this so i hope u liked the taste of my pussy bitch. And shirt u r FAR from classy u dirty whore get on somewhere wit ur nasty self. And I WILL mollywop ur ass, shit ill geT outa jail before u get outa the hospital! Haha so keep steppin c**t or come get simple

*note, Author 1 is the original person who posted the Facebook first entry, Authors 2 and 3 bully each other. Sourced from http://www.lamebook.com/one-night-at-the-trailer-park/

This exchange seems consensual until Author 1, assumed from the details to be a male, tries to intervene and stop the two women arguing. The use of swearing is not the main problem, as distasteful as it is to read, but rather the threatening tone they use with each other. However, the messages are intimidating, repeated and threatening in nature and can be viewed as being cyberbullying.

People do not have to directly address each other to cyberbully, as this example above shows, but can post cyberbullying comments against those who they may not have met. For example, an Australian teenager created a Facebook page naming local police officers where he lived and posting that they were corrupt. This resulted in being his being charged with harassment and offensive use of the Internet (Lawstuff, 2013; FindLaw, 2012); therefore, it was regarded as cyberbullying. Another example of using Facebook for cyberbullying was in 2011 where the Facebook page ‘Benders Root Rate’ encouraged the posting of information about who had sex with whom (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2012). What was particularly offensive was the score rating given to people about their sexual performance with their full names and other details published (Lawstuff, 2013).

A consequence of cyberbullying using Facebook is when people suicide, self-harm or commit criminal acts such as assaulting someone. One example is Canadian teenager Amanda Todd in 2012 documented on Wikipedia (n.d) 4. Her suicide at age 15 was shown to be directly attributed to her cyberbullying experience. The bully had persuaded her to show her breasts to them on the Internet, then threatening if she did not continue to do this they would expose the images of them to others. Later, a fake Facebook page was temporarily created showing her partially naked photos, which caused her to attempt suicide. The students at the school she attended found out about the Facebook page and posted abusive messages for over six months on it. After her hospitalisation for mental health issues related to the stress of the cyberbullying experience, the students at her school called her ‘psycho’ for her language-based disability issue. The ramifications after her suicide were traumatic for all concerned.

These Facebook cyberbullying examples illustrate how the private domains of those who bully and are bullied can become public knowledge resulting in harsh judgements of victims (Harrison, 2013). Much private domain material, as the Amanda Todd example shows, can end up on the Internet and be seen by an unlimited audience; hence the humiliation can negatively impact on the individual. The main sign that attitudes have changed towards privacy is the openness of Facebook compared to Web 1.0 and to other sites were anonymity
was more prevalent. Bullies do create anonymous Facebook pages, but the bullying on Facebook often shows real names and photos of people, hence these postings become evidence to pursue legal recourse against cyberbullies. Even anonymous cyberbullies have been identified by Facebook, tracked down and prosecuted for cyberbullying offences.

**Example 2: Twitter**

Twitter, as a micro-blogging social media platform, has gained notoriety as a place of cyberbullying. The main reason for this is the ease in which people set up anonymous accounts and use them for bullying purposes, often without getting caught. Not everyone views abuse on Twitter as bullying, especially politicians and celebrities; however, an example of someone allegedly bullying a politician on Twitter is a fake account parodying the Premier of Queensland Campbell Newman (as at 2014)\(^5\).

The first example is of Adria Richards\(^6\) who works as a developer at a technology company in The United States, who posted a photo on her Twitter feed of two men seated near here at a conference. They had made a sexually explicit joke about ‘big dongles’ and ‘forking repo’s’, obvious references to male genitals and sexual intercourse. A dongle is a device to plug into a laptop to receive Internet connection but has become a slang term for penis. After she tweeted the photos and comments, one of the males involved was fired, as was Richards, because she publicly shamed the men.

André Brock from the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Iowa analysed the case in 2013 in a draft paper. These tweets he reproduced captured not only bullying but how power and discrimination operate in online environments to threaten and intimidate others. Although presumable adults are involved, much of this bullying reflects what occurs in school playgrounds particularly not to ‘snitch’ or tell others about others’ bad behaviours. The tweets represent a sample of the cyberbullying she experienced (Brock, 2013):

@adriarichards You are an asshole. Snitching on those guys on twitter. Mind your own damn buisness and leave those guys alone.

@adriarichards karma is a bitch. Don't make a public example out of someone you barely know if you don't want others to do the same.

@adriarichards Publically shaming 2 men and getting one of them fired from his job for a dick joke? Suck my dongle you fucking feminazi.

The bullies were supported in tweets condemning Richards for her public disclosure of the men’s jokes. Brock states it was a form of ‘snitching’ on others that made her a bullying target (Brock, 2013):

@adriarichards Your fuss over PyCon embarrasses me and infuriates me as a woman entering the Engineering field. Makes me ashamed of my sex..

@adriarichards I'm all for freedom of harmless speech. A dick joke harms none. Public shaming and slander costs people their reputations.
@adriarichards Seriously, if a girl made a joke like that, would it have offended you so? Might you have responded more appropriately?

@adriarichards I can name ten girls in my immediate social circle, several in STEM fields, who would have found it amusing. I would have...

Although we may view Richards as an outspoken person and her targeting was justified because of her disclosing who made the jokes, it was still a vicious form of bullying.

A second Twitter cyberbullying example similar to Richard’s experience was journalist Caroline Criado-Perez’s experience in The United Kingdom. She was bullied was because she wanted to add a non-royal family woman to the Bank of England’s currency designs in 2017. Successfully having author Jane Austen as a future addition caused people to tweet bullying messages and threats of physical harm (No Bullying.com, 2014).

The hostility and threats against Criado-Perez illustrate the serious nature of cyberbullying at its worst. Perhaps bullying on Twitter occurs because someone famous makes a particular statement that incites it. However, in Criado-Perez’s case, Twitter was shut down for 24 hours as a result of protest against her treatment. Persaud and Bruggen (2014) commented about her Twitter bullying suggesting that many who did this were envious of Criado-Perez’s achievement to change the banknote:

Envy is evoked when a person lacks another's superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it, or wishes that the other lacked it. We suggest that Caroline Criado-Perez and her achievement evoked these feelings in a large number of the habitually resentful.

Criado-Perez was interviewed giving an example of the depth of the cyberbullying (Hattenstone, 2013):

Then there were the death threats. "One was from a really bright guy who said: 'I've just got released from prison.'" She shows me her phone: "I'd do a lot worse than rape you. I've just got out of prison and would happily do more time to see you berried [sic]. #10feetunder." The tweet is signed Ayekayesa. There is another one, equally chilling. "I will find you, and you don't want to know what I will do when I do. You're pathetic. Kill yourself. Before I do. #Godie."

Yet pursuing recourse was difficult for her. Twitter failed to respond stating it did not monitor or censor content (Stark, 2013). Some of those who made the threats and cyberbullying were tracked and prosecuted under laws in The United Kingdom for this behaviour. It was viewed that perhaps she was encouraging interaction with the bullies. A lawyer who defended one of the cyberbullies commented on the case (The Guardian, 2014):

Paul Kennedy, representing Nimmo, described him as a “somewhat sad individual” who is “effectively a social recluse”.

Kennedy said that, when Nimmo's original tweet was responded to and retweeted, it encouraged him to send more messages as he saw it as an “indication of popularity”.

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He said that if that had not happened then he would not have pursued this course of action.

He believed at that time that there was a conversation and he was engaging in that conversation.

This example highlights the need to be vigilant about what you post on social media and to block and report cyberbullies. Social media sites have become poorly run and the owners need to be forced by law to remove bullying material.

**Example 3: Tumblr**

Tumblr is a social media platform more suited to posting photographs. Despite slowly declining in use due to rivals Flickr, Pinterest and Instagram, the sharing of photographs makes it easier to cyberbully through these social media sites. Tumblr is also noted for its liberal attitudes towards most forms of pornography being on their site and for allowing many other types of offensive material to be published.

This example here is taken from Erik Rhodes Tumblr account (Rhodes, n.d.), who was a male pornographic actor. He had consistently posted negative comments about his life and his declining health due to his reported HIV status and steroid use, resulting in a consistent backlash against him by other Tumblr members. In Figure 6 Rhodes is bullied consistently by messages from anonymous bullies, as this example illustrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anonymous asked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are a twat. All you do is pollute the internet with your narcissism and hatefulness. Go to church. Read self-help books. Get fat and become a lesbian. Go to community college. Stop making so much gross and lame porn. Get a life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love how you called it “gross and lame” porn. That was a good laugh. Thank you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*example reproduced from http://erikrhodes.tumblr.com/

**Figure 6: Cyberbullying on Tumblr**

Another example is Jamie Kapp’s experience, a 19 year old artist who posted a webcomic (a comic only available on the World Wide Web) about institutionalised racism and the privilege she saw as being ‘white’ (Calvin, 2014). Her assumption was that Tumblr is a place dedicated to social justice and equality. When she drew the comics she made comments such as ‘White Privilege is the Privilege to be ignorant of the world around us’. This made her a target for cyberbullying. Similar to Criado-Perez’s Twitter case, rape and death threats followed making her decide to suspend her Tumblr account.
Example 4: 4Chan

The web community site 4chan (http://www.4chan.org/) is where photos and comments are posted and people comment on them. It is similar to the alt newsgroups that existed in Web 1.0 and is a bulletin board model were many topics for discussion. It has gained a reputation due to its uncensored and not moderated content as a site of bullying, as well as containing large amounts of violent and pornographic images. It is also where bullying is organised and computer hacking takes place against people and other websites.

The bullying can be organised with the site being a channel for communications between the bullying groups. In 2010 Parry Aftab, a lawyer specialising in cyberbullying cases, was targeted by members of 4chan. Chen (2010) documented the organised cyberbullying that occurred:

For the last two days, 4chan's anarchic /b/ messageboard has been in an uproar over Good Morning America's coverage of the Jessi Slaughter saga that 4chan helped launch. After GMA's resident cyberbullying expert, lawyer Parry Aftab, appeared on the show to discuss the case, 4chan users targeted her for a harassment campaign similar to the one they've waged against Gawker. They shut down Aftab's websites—wiredsafety.org and aftab.com—prank called her, vandalized her Wikipedia entry and Google-bombed “Parry Aftab Arrested for Child Molestation.”

There were arrests and prosecutions of 4chan cyberbullies, including a 20 year old man in New Jersey who sent a photo of a 13 year old boy’s penis to officials at his school. O’Brien (2011) described the case which illustrates the type of cyberbullying the offender and 4chan will do to victims:

Bean was among a group on /b/ that attempted to identify the boy, and use the photo of his genitalia to embarrass him. Some -- although supposedly not Bean -- openly expressed their hopes that the humiliation would drive the boy to suicide. (As you can see, 4Chan is populated by only the finest of Earth's citizens.) The school sent Bean's e-mail to the FBI, who eventually identified and arrested the /b/ member. Bean was remorseful at his sentencing, but it's hard for us to have even a shred of sympathy for a person who finds it amusing to e-mail a photo of a 13-year old's penis to his principle.

All these examples discussed in this section highlight the scope, nature and breadth of cyberbullying.
Cyberbullying Management and Internet Governance

Trying to prevent and manage cyberbullying is fraught with difficulties in all countries. With millions of people using the Internet for bullying every day it is difficult to eliminate it. Yet the calls to stop cyberbullying are worldwide and growing. In this section I discuss some of the ways the major social media and other sites try to control it. The problem of managing and preventing cyberbullying is highly contentious and debated. Internet governance is the evolving policies and mechanisms under which the Internet community’s many stakeholders make decisions about the development and use of the Internet (Number Resource Organisation, n.d.). But due to the size and nature of the Internet they are usually not effective in stopping cyberbullying and can only advise on ways countries legal systems can manage it.

Usually, many virtual communities and other websites will have policies on bullying and trolling. Enforcing these is a major problem because they are global sites with millions of members using the sites. It is important to understand the types of policies they try to implement to manage bullying, trolling and flaming behaviours. The three major social media sites, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, are used as examples to illustrate the problems of controlling and eliminating cyberbullying.

Facebook

Facebook has an easy to understand community standards page, setting out the types of practices it will not tolerate and are reportable with possibilities for expulsion from Facebook or legal consequences. It is located at https://m.facebook.com/communitystandards.

The specific policy on cyberbullying is written as (Facebook, 2014):

Bullying and Harassment

Facebook does not tolerate bullying or harassment. We allow users to speak freely on matters and people of public interest, but take action on all reports of abusive behavior directed at private individuals. Repeatedly targeting other users with unwanted friend requests or messages is a form of harassment.

Facebook has been under pressure to stop cyberbullying. To do this it offers privacy settings to control content, blocking people and a help centre with step-by-step ways to report profiles, messages, images, groups and other content\(^8\).
**YouTube**

YouTube is a video sharing social media community where most members on the site who post videos and comments usually remain anonymous. The site was purchased by Google in 2006, but it was a few years before the requirement to have any email account to use YouTube to upload videos and make comments became compulsory.

The specific policy on cyberbullying, found at (Google, 2014) is:

> YouTube users share their opinions on all sorts of topics - from politics to religion, social media to celebrities, and much more. These conversations can sometimes become passionate, so it's important to be tolerant and allow for debate to flourish while avoiding malicious personal attacks.

> It comes down to respect. If you're not sure whether a video or comment you've made crosses the line, follow a simple rule of thumb: if you wouldn't say it to someone's face, don't say it on YouTube.

> We take this issue seriously and will remove comments, videos or posts where the main aim is to maliciously harass or attack another user. However, at YouTube we understand the value of free expression, so please understand that not all negative or mean videos and comments will be removed.

*Taken from  https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2801920?hl=en

There is a report abuse webpage\(^9\) which you must log into with your email account.

YouTube tends not to remove comments, relying on members to report them. Flaming, that is causing arguments that lead to cyberbullying, still occurs despite the stricter rules placed on users to cease that behaviour. In my research (Nycyk, 2012) I examined the nature of flaming and the fine line between it and cyberbullying. Even though it is unlikely those on YouTube know each other, the flaming and cyberbullying becomes very personal and hurtful. The comments are often distasteful. A person’s race, sexuality, gender and body shape are frequent targets for cyberbullies.

Two examples illustrate this point. These are not just arguments, but move into being cyber bullying by using offensive language and making accusation that are inflammatory. The first is atypical of insulting someone’s race whilst the second is an argument over religious beliefs; both become very personal and hurtful and include threats (note these comments are copied word for word)\(^{10}\):

Example 1:

> shut the fuck up you dirty sock smellin. I fuck my sister meth headed, trailor park dwelling piece of shit. Who gives a fuck fuck with U say ur a retarded dirty ass white boy who’s a internet tough guy when u might be in a wheel chair. You say we use nigger as a term of endearment? then instead of? Sayin it on the computer say in front of us see don’t you get fucked up faggot. GO BACK TO AFRICA im an american stupid bitch. Hope i don’t see u ill stomp a hole in ur head pussy. NIGGER.
Example 2:

Because ‘anal-ripping faggots’ are not human beings? Yeah. right. Troll. It’s this kind of attitude that makes the world what? it is today. Go back to your cave to worship your so-called All-Loving and Omni-benevolent Lord. you prejudiced c***.

Reply to this member’s comment:

no one in their right mind claims God is “all loving” except faggots, jews, and their defenders
yer? scum, get ready to fry

These types of comments are commonly posted on YouTube. The type of video generally will influence the cyberbullying. For example, you may not see this type of abuse on cute cat videos, yet even if such comments are from strangers it is still cyberbullying if it is offending, hurting or harassing you.

**Twitter**

Twitter, like Facebook, faces constant criticism for its ineffective action towards cyberbullies and trolls. Even its policy is vague, although there is a form where you can report cyberbullying behaviours. The specific policy on cyberbullying is written as (Twitter, 2014):

We’ve all seen something on the Internet we disagree with or have received unwanted communication. Such behavior does not necessarily constitute online abuse. If you see or receive an @reply you don’t like, unfollow and end any communication with that user.

If the behavior continues, it is recommended that you block the user. Blocking will prevent that person from following you or seeing your profile picture on their profile page or in their timeline; additionally, their @replies or mentions will not show in your mentions tab (although these Tweets may still appear in search).

Abusive users often lose interest once they realize that you will not respond. If the user in question is a friend, try addressing the issue offline. If you have had a misunderstanding, it may be possible to clear the matter up face to face or with the help of a trusted individual.

If you continue receiving unwanted, targeted and continuous @replies on Twitter, and feel it constitutes online abuse, consider reporting the behavior to Twitter here.

Twitter users post millions of tweets a day, so trying to ban every cyberbully is difficult. Twitter has also been reluctant to interfere in many cases of cyberbullying; hence why the Criado-Perez Twitter bullying case resulted in its shutdown for 24 hours as a protest over Twitter’s back of action on cyberbullying and trolling. The site’s owners know it has a responsibility to monitor cyberbullying but argues it is merely the platform for users and is
not always responsible for user behaviour. While reasonable, it still does not excuse cyberbullying behaviour on it and pressure needs to be maintained on Twitter to manage its cyberbullying more responsibly.

**Chapter Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter explored the history and types of cyberbullying arising from the improvements the World Wide Web have brought. Cyberbullying does not differ regardless if you are bullied by a stranger or someone you know. It can have severe impacts on one’s emotional well-being. It is still also viewed as something you can just turn off. The depth and type of issues and cases in this chapter suggest it is not. Adults act as irresponsible as children and adolescents. It matters to people that we have a civil online society.

The Mr Bungle story proved how seriously it is taken and how people want offenders to be punished by the law for cyberbullying. We can also view the Twitter stories of Criado-Perez and Richards, who endured abuse for their gender with threats of rape, as perhaps something they attracted. I do not agree. We pay a price when we use the Internet and we are fully public to those that view us. These women, and others discussed in this chapter, did not deserve to be cyberbullied. We may not be realistic in wanting a totally civil and safe Internet; however, we have the right to be safe and continue our interactions online without being cyberbullied.
Notes


2 Two versions of Dibble’s story appear the main one published in 1998 and a previous version first published in 1993. There are only some slight differences in both stories.

3 For basic definitions and explanations of MUD’s and MOO’s see http://www.techopedia.com/definition/24990/multi-user-domain-object-oriented-moo

4 Most of Amanda’s story is well written on Wikipedia.

5 As at time of writing, the Twitter account Not Campbell Newman, which was first created in 2010, is located at https://twitter.com/Can_do_Campbell. I do not state that the owner of that account is a cyberbully, but rather show for illustrative purposes the type of Twitter messages and accounts that can become bullying. The person operating the account posts much material involving the activities of the Queensland Government. Premier Campbell Newman was the former Lord Mayor of Brisbane and his reputation as a conservative, pro-development leader, as well as his political party’s reputation, makes him a target of cyberbullying. However, it was reported in 2011 on the 612 Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s radio station (http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/04/07/3185126.htm) that the creator of the account complies with Twitter’s terms of service and at the time the Premier’s office was quoted in the same story that they have not been concerned with shutting down the fake Twitter account. As at the time of writing this book in 2014 this account still exists.

6 Adria Richards’ Twitter account is still active and online at the time of writing as she chose not to close it down. As at the time of writing this book it is at https://twitter.com/adriarichards

7 Google bombing is a practice computer hackers and skilled cyberbullies do to artificially elevate someone’s website in the Google web search results. It is done by links which are embedded into web pages which the Google search engine will pick up in a search and return the results in the list in a higher place; that is, you may see it first, second or third rather than it being the 15,000 result, which means you do not have to scroll to other pages. It is a cyberbullying device in some way especially if linked words are put onto the page that are offensive or defame someone. As in this case the words child and molester were placed on Aftab’s website by those involved in 4chan.

8 Currently, the Facebook help centre is located at https://www.facebook.com/help/181495968648557/

9 Currently, the YouTube report abuse web page is at https://www.youtube.com/reportabuse
10 These flaming and cyberbullying comments, still on YouTube at the time of writing, are found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_1Tix20u9Q&feature=fvsr titled KKK Snowman With Noose and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSKb3yYCeVk titled Westboro Baptist Church Debate at Wilson High School.

11 Currently, the Twitter help centre is located at https://support.twitter.com/forms/abusiveuser
CHAPTER THREE
SAM’S CYBERBULLYING EXPERIENCE

If you’re keeping the information close with you, if you’re not talking to people, if you’re keeping it down towards you, it will demoralise you. It will make you more introverted. You need to speak it up; you need to speak up against the crime which the people have committed it’s not your mistake. – Sam’s Advice on How to Handle Cyberbullying

The first cyberbullying experience story is from Sam, a 24 year old Indian man, who at the time of the interview was studying and working in Australia. He was enthusiastic to tell his story and was cheerful throughout our discussion. Despite a positive outcome for his cyberbullying experience, what happened to him when he was 18 profoundly affected his life course and the way he viewed the world of technology. As a consequence he was very passionate about being an advocate for preventing cyberbullying.

First, I will describe his background and his use of the Internet. I will then discuss his use of the Internet, his cyberbullying, the affects and consequences of it on him and his view of preventing it. A brief analysis, including my thoughts on his experience, will follow.

Sam’s Cyberbullying Experience

Sam’s Background

Sam is from India and has moved to Australia temporarily to study. At the time of the interview he stated that although he had only been in Australia a few months, he indicated he was going to stay for some time. He was not sure if he would relocate here, but stated how much he found Australia to be a friendly welcoming place. He comes from a middle class medium sized family with siblings who he remains close to. At the time of the interview Sam was studying at a university and working at various causal jobs to supplement his expenses. He was unsure of his future plans with his career but did intend to return to India in the near future to visit his family and friends.

Sam’s Use of the Internet

Sam’s use of the Internet began fairly late compared to those living in Western countries, with him beginning to use it at high school, then more when he turned 18. He used newsgroups and an early social networking site before creating a Facebook page. Socially, he uses the Internet for Facebook and YouTube, keeping in contact with his friends and family in India. He also uses a smart phone to look at the Internet and his email daily. He called himself a former geek in the sense of being a person who likes technology and uses it daily for many social and professional reasons.

He has been using the Internet, especially social media, for professional reasons, contacting and networking with those in his chosen field as possible future employers. Sam also uses email and various websites for his study. The reliance on the Internet if a person from one country lives in another is naturally higher to keep in contact with those at home, but his use of social media for professional contacts is also high. Having two profiles, one for social and
one for professional reasons as he does, is also common. Therefore, he is a high user of the Internet and his smart phone, meaning he may likely encounter cyberbullying. The difference with him now compared to when he had his first cyberbullying experience is he knows how to manage it better than when he first experienced it.

**Sam’s Cyberbullying By a Group**

Sam’s voice tone changed when I started asking him about cyberbullying and what he understood by the term. This is how he described his experience:

According to my personal experience which happened to me it was a case of harassment. It was a case where I was totally devastated; I was feeling very low because of certain acts by my friends which totally made me unaware, it was devastating. They were using a tool, like Internet as a medium to create a(*type of online profile*) which was not me in that critical times; it was a harsh experience, so that for me was the cyberbullying.

The creation of fake profiles is a form of cyberbullying used as a way of denigrating another, and as Ponsford (2007) found, is often what ‘friends’ do when they dislike something about another person.

Sam continued discussing the now closed video sharing website where the cyberbullying act happened:

Basically, I was very geek kind of student in my high school days, I have totally transformed from that instance later on, so basically I was very geek and (website) was the first medium which was I initially started on those days and people would share pictures, so, I came to know about (website) through a friend, I created my own profile and I was very geeky, very nerdy kind of funny boy and I was liking a girl in my classroom and I was thinking about how to tell my feelings to her but I was very shy and very hesitant on the initial part. A group of friends encouraged me to make a proposal and I went down with a rose and a bouquet, I was on my knees and proposing her and the friends took a video. The next morning I wake up and I was, there was a video of me posted on (website) and people were posting various kinds of comments, and the girl who I proposed to, she was totally shocked. That was a big, big, big...like my friends ditched me at the last moment, they degraded me.

What upset Sam was how the comments contained rumours and gossip about him. Sam described himself as a geek preferring technology and school to socialising. The comments suggested he was now a different person based on forcing himself onto girls. He chose to remain friends with those that made these comments, but with one female friend after the incident he did not contact her for six months because of feelings of embarrassment. These feelings were so strong he refused to go to his college for a month. His family confronted him over the issue wondering why he was not going to college. He felt very down to face anyone at the college and isolated himself.

Despondent, Sam choose to see a psychologist to manage the feelings of embarrassment and humiliation which were, as cyberbullying acts do, interfering in his daily life and ability just to go out in the world and do everyday things:
I was feeling very down to go to the college to face the people, my friends, so I went for a psychological session with a psychologist and, luckily for me, I came back strongly. I started using Facebook as a medium. There were various things going on in my mind, take revenge on my friends, to do all that sort of stuff but no way. I went down a positive way, I did the psychology sessions, I went to a different college, I completed entry examinations and I moved into a different place and made new friends, approaching life in a positive manner, and later I started being active on social media.

Although having made positive changes, my impression was that the cyberbullying incident had shaken his confidence. Certainly there was anger directed at the friends for their comments. This did happen when he was an adult, being 18 in his country, but he was still at a young age. However, having done the psychology sessions, his attitude towards cyberbullying became a resolve to bring cyberbullying to the attention of others:

I made a page on Facebook social media against cyberbullying; I created a group of them online for the people who had been cyberbullied to share their experiences and this was the reason I got through.

Sam continued running this online page and doing his studies, developing a new attitude towards what happened and developing new friendships. Once that phase of studies was over it was time to return home. Although he did not ignore the friends totally who had cyberbullied him, he did remain cautious. Unlike other victims who cyberbullies never make amends to, Sam decided not to rule out seeing those that did the act to him.

**The Return of the ‘Friends’ and the Desire to Help the Bullied**

Sam had frequently talked to his psychologist which he said helped him manage his negative feelings towards his friends who cyberbullied him. He was not always clear during our talk if he had totally forgiven them, but he indicated that although the relationships may have been damaged, his determination not to let it affect him was the best path for him to take.

When returned to his hometown he started seeing those friends again. This is what occurred:

Once I moved away from the city I was studying in back to my own city, the friends who committed this mistake, the friends who made my video, for six months they apologised to me, they came to me personally, they said Sam it was done as a mistake, we did not know this would cause such a big issue in your life, we were doing it just for fun.

Sam indicated he was forgiving of their uploading the video and the comments. He was also pleased they apologised to the woman who was also in the video. That he, indicated, was also important to do as she was just as much a victim as he was:

They apologised to the girl also. The girl messaged me, and then we were friends again.

However, Sam felt still humiliated by the cyberbullying experience. He was not going to pursue any legal avenues or take any revenge. With the setting up of the anti cyberbullying
Facebook page he was determined to express to those that did it the effect these behaviours can have on someone:

The main issue was, with the cyberbullying experiences I had been through, I told my friends and they were really sorry about it. They joined my (Facebook) page, cyberbullying, and they told, yes they did this personally and we should not do this. So we ran that forum for a few days and we got many experiences of it.

From this experience and the Facebook page he decided to take things further when he started at another college:

Later on when I joined I was a part of a team. Now it (the Internet) was a new medium for the country (India), it’s not the case over here in Australia, but when you go back to India there is a big difference between senior and junior even in college. If I am a grade higher than my junior I can bully them anytime. Cyber media was used as a big medium for bullying, so we started running firm against it. My doctor was very helpful and got involved in the sessions (at the college meetings were held about this), he told me Internet was the next big thing. You can’t run away from it.

These sessions Sam had with his doctor affirmed his commitment to raising awareness of cyberbullying at his college. He detailed how his experience influenced this decision to get involved in managing and preventing cyberbullying. As well as this, he had the confidence to start his own personal Facebook page having learnt from the cyberbullying experience that the Internet was not a bad place:

You need to make it (Internet) as a friend. He (his doctor) was very friendly he was very helpful in nature. And then I started creating my own profile in Facebook, I started socialising with the people and luckily everything is good and then down the line I got an opportunity to move to Australia which is fantastic, it is very different. The new amount of confidence to face people which was not the case six years ago.

Then he returned to discussing his distress on how the video and its comments damaged his friendships and his confidence. His voice tone rose suggesting some anger underneath, but he returned to being rational and gave a perspective on the whole experience. He became socially disconnected and isolated as he explained including stopping his use of the Internet:

I just stopped communicating with the guys but I did not remove them from my friend’s list. Actually, I stopped using Internet! So once I saw the video I did not log in for a month, I was not in connection with Internet for a period of time, I stopped talking to people, I stopped talking with my friends and I was not able to share with anyone.

The catalyst for his disclosing how he felt came when his brother noticed Sam was not communicating with his friends and seemed withdrawn. Being withdrawn and aloof can be a sign someone feels negative emotions over cyberbullying:

Later my brother came to me and confronted me, and I did not go to college for a month I was mostly back at home. My brother asked why I am not going to
college. Because I was totally shocked and if I go to college people will start making comments against me, people will start doing nasty things against me.

**Affects and Consequences of Sam’s Cyberbullying Experience**

A difficult question to ask someone who has been cyberbullied is if and how they were physically or emotionally harmed by the experience. Generally, the harm is emotional because it has lead to the victim feeling some form of an emotional flaw in their character. Trust was betrayed, they were convinced they are totally at fault so their self-confidence erodes. In Sam’s case, his confidence eroded and he was apprehensive about what others would think about him. He spoke of the emotional affects and consequences here:

> It was emotionally. No physical harm was done to me. But I guess that emotional harm is more dangerous and more devastating than physical harm. Physical harm may heal in time but emotional harm has a need for longer time.

Sam was not putting down those that experience physical harm, but did make the point that underlies cyberbullying effects on victims. Emotional harm is real, devastating as he describes it, and it takes time to for many to deal with these feelings. I further explored this issue with him about what was the worst thing about his cyberbullying experience:

> The worst experience, the first thing was being betrayed by friends who I used to feel very close with, the second was using a medium which is very dangerous and spreads like wildfire. Even if they did the same thing in a group of people I would give a damn, like even if six or seven friends of mine saying it was ok (to bullying him offline he means here) but they did it on the medium for different people can see, people different can look into it. My family came to know what went on, it was a harrowing experience and this was most devastating.

I was afraid of facing people at the time, I was horrified at taking the questions they would ask me, did you propose to the girl, and basically I was just sitting at my home, I was thinking all about the things, what should I do, what should I answer, how should I go about things, what about my professors, what about my teachers, what would they think about me, because being in India proposing a girl at that year of age is not common. In India boys and girls as it is in Australia it’s not the same scenario over there it’s a bit different. I stopped interacting with people. I was just with myself and I was I did not want to meet people.

Sam stated the underlying problem was what others’ thought especially his family. Often people will hide cyberbullying from family and friends because of the sense of shame or embarrassment at having been bullied on the Internet. Sam explained his emotion of fear because of the cyberbullying:

> Fear, a feeling of fear was that what would my family be thinking about this incident because this was very new. Social media was very new. This was the first or second incident, but nowadays it is done commonly. Later on when my brother confronted me, my brother spoke with my friends who did the post, but the fear was there about the family what would they be thinking?
Although Sam’s bullies were his friends, he was angered by the planned group behaviour of his friends in encouraging him to go and propose to the girl in question. He did not report the behaviour to the law or any other authorities, just his family. Again, it was the help of his psychologist that got him through the experience, supplemented by the mostly remorseful and apologetic friends. This, he felt, was a turning point in overcoming the experience as he recounts:

The reason they told me was it was for fun and in the initial days they were posting on the video comments and getting likes it inspired them, and as I told I was very nerdy, very geeky, very studious, I would barely talk with girls and they could say oh he is acting as a studious guy, he is acting as a geek guy but he still has feelings about a girl. It was planned, they said you should go and speak to this girl, you should say about your feelings and you should do it this way and that way, it was planned, they posted the video. After I did a psychological session with my doctor, I decided they were my friends and I didn’t report it to the police, but when I started the (online) forum I am the first person to say we should report everything to the police even if they are friends so next time they won’t do it.

Both his psychologist and his brother helped him move past the cyberbullying experience. When I asked him what specifically he did that helped him move past the humiliation, he repeatedly expressed gratitude for the help he received:

No it did help me out. My brother said this is not the end, this is not you, you need to learn from this experience. The psychological sessions with the doctor transformed me completely. He (the psychologist) told me to make friends with the Internet, make the Internet your friend. Being a Masters Student I am doing all the stuff on Internet socialising and everything. Start making people aware of the incident that you went through, so it did help immensely.

Sam’s View of Cyberbullying

I then asked Sam’s views of what he thought about cyberbullying. Much research suggests, as Harrison (2013) argues in her thesis, that a large majority do not tell others about their cyberbullying experiences. Embarrassment is a large emotion to deal with because it implies failure and lack of judgement, as well as the concern that people will ridicule you for it. He gave substantial and positive answers suggesting he had found a way to overcome what had happened to him:

According to me, and the cyberbullying forum I ran, there are three categories of those who cyberbully. The first category which I feel are those that are just doing it for fun. They are not sadist about it, they are just doing it for fun so that people will start praising them, but they doing on to some other’s advantage so they are doing it for fun. The second kind of people that cyberbully they post an image. I’m not happy with you so I will take it personally and start cyberbullying you. The third kind of people which I found were doing cyberbully were from the college groups. They argue they like a particular sports team. If there is a competition between two teams they start cyberbullying. So these are the three categories.

His identification of the three categories of cyberbullies was insightful. It was at this point that he jogged my memory about a reference I had discussed in the previous chapters;
Ananda Mitra’s (1996)\textsuperscript{1} study of Indian and Pakistan Internet users’ cyberbullying each other in the newsgroup soc.cult.indian. I wanted to ask him if racial cyberbullying was still a problem in India. His response was interesting:

Me: I’ll give you an example. One of the (cyberbullying) studies by Mitra in the 1990’s was newsgroups, which, they’re still around just not in the same way, there was a lot of bullying between the Indian and Pakistan users...

Sam: Yes it’s still going on!

Me: It’s still going on?

Sam: It’s still going on, even if there are any political views going on in Pakistan or is there is a cricket match going on in Pakistan. So there are groups, you can check it in the Facebook, there are groups of people from India and Pakistan, and as soon as the match is going to start people from both the communities start abusing each other. You can see it straight away. And there are thousands of people, like ten thousand people or twenty thousand people, ten thousand people from India, ten thousand from Pakistan and the comments are just abusing, abusing, abusing, abusing. It’s still going on right now.

The discussion then turned to more of his views on cyberbullying. I was interested to find out from people how they respond to the idea that cyberbullying is just something you can turn off. Sam became vocal on this issue giving a forthright opinion about how it is difficult to just turn off cyberbullying:

We should, we should be angry we should come out of it and we should not stop using the Internet because of that particular incident. This is not the mistake of the Internet; it’s a mistake of the people who committed the crime. Instead of stopping use of Internet, instead of stopping going to a particular part of it you should punish the guys who did that and you should make Internet as a friend, use the Internet to reach out to people to tell them your story. And that was the reason why I was very interested in chatting this particular incident with you, I have made various things in the past few years against cyberbullying. So I was very keen to tell you the story.

He then gave an opinion about how he saw the role of governments and others in preventing and managing cyberbullying:

I think there should be a group or community, either the government or some other organisation, especially in colleges, they should be running (anti-cyberbullying) programs where people who have been cyberbullied are asked to share their experiences and have a friend or a guide to help them come out of it. The most important reason why I think people commit suicide is they feel very low, they feel very shy, they won’t even talk to anyone.

He gave a thoughtful scenario example of how to assist those who are cyberbullied:

Suppose I had a friend, in my case it was my brother and my doctor who helped me get past this. So suppose if a person gets a person who he can share with the
things, so that I can get rid of all my frustrations, I can completely shed what I’ve
gone through, that will make me happy that someone is there for me. I completely
transformed in a positive way but there are people if you don’t help them at a
particular moment in time they will be feeling devastated. It could turn out to be a
bad situation.

He also gave an opinion what should be adequate punishments for those who cyberbully:

As I told you there are three categories of cyberbullies, I think there should be
different types of punishments for all three. Suppose they are doing it for fun, we
should make a video of them apologising and post the video on the same site so
the same number of people see that video. Shaming, so they are apologising for
the behaviour and it is also reaching for the same number of people, if they are
doing it for fun. If they are doing it for personal reasons the government should
set a course of action. Remember, cyberbullying is a crime. And the third group
who are doing it as part of a group, the government should look into it.

**Sam’s Lessons from his Experience of Cyberbullying**

I asked Sam about how he now approaches using the Internet and some of the lessons he
leant from his cyberbullying experiences. He kept referencing back to treating the Internet as
a ‘friend’. He was passionate that people should still be able to use it without fear of
cyberbullying:

I’m definitely more careful these days. Like I am completely into socialising and
as a professional I use Facebook as a medium, but I stopped making comments or
liking a post of a different person when I think it’s very personal. I still see many
people abusing, I still see many people cyberbullying even when they should not.
I am very cautious about sharing private data due to hackers. There was an
instance with a close friend of mine a picture had been morphed with a different
funnier face and it was a difficult experience. If the privacy has been used wrong
there should be action against the sites. If the privacy breaks down it’s their
responsibility. People should step back and stop using that medium. People need
to take action.

Sam was well aware of the social media issues of cyberbullying and cautioned against its use.
He also stated he does not ignore any bullying comments against him and will take action:

I don’t ignore it nowadays I do take action, I first of all give them a warning, hey
mate this is wrong stop this, I give them an example of cyberbullying, I refer
them to my cyberbullying page, if it continues I can direct them to the police. I
am making sure people are getting knowledge and this and I get to tell people
cyberbullying is a crime and we should stop it not encourage it.

It is interesting that Sam now has a strategy to stop cyberbullying happening to him.
Many may not desire to make such a commitment. For Sam the experience changed
him from a geek, nerd guy to someone confident. He expressed something many may
not do; he was grateful for the experience:
He emphasised that people should share their cyberbullying experiences even anonymously. Also, he was aware of the importance of adults seeking out information about cyberbullying. Blogs and forums that discuss the devastating effects of cyberbullying will, he claims, increases resilience and gives options for adults to address the issue. Overall, Sam viewed cyberbullying as a crime that needs government support to overall and, as Harrison (2013) supports, he feels the fear of reporting a cyberbully must be removed and those that do it should be punished for it.

Closing Comments

The overall impression from Sam is that he had conquered a very difficult adult cyberbullying experience. His interview proved that one incident alone can cause embarrassment and humiliation. This is all it can take to make someone take drastic and long-term damaging action. Sam was at a point in his life at that time where he was unsure about himself especially with talking to someone of the opposite gender. When private things are made public by cyberbullies many outsiders who see the cyberbullying may not care but it only takes one comment to devastate someone’s self-esteem and without help and support spiral into something worse.

I felt that Sam understated the devastation he felt over the video’s posting. Yet this was offset with the knowledge that he proactively, with the encouragement of his brother and psychologist, managed the situation well to get his life back to feeling confident to interact socially with others again.

Sam made a contribution to help him and others to prevent cyberbullying. That is noble because it gives credibility to the argument that cyberbullying is devastating to adults as much as it is to children and adolescents. As more take up the Internet worldwide, even a small awareness of bullying and how to prevent and manage it is an important skill to have as we interact with more strangers who cyberbully us.
Notes

CHAPTER FOUR
TANYA’S CYBERBULLYING EXPERIENCE

I think they’re weak; probably more so gutless because they don’t have the guts to sort of come to you and speak to you face-to-face, they’ve got to do it through another device. And I think they obviously have been bullied themselves at some point. – Tanya’s View of Cyberbullying

The second story of cyberbullying is from Tanya, a woman in her 20’s, who works as a barista in a cafe while raising children. She uses Facebook constantly and daily, and her story exemplifies the issues of the right to use social media without fear of cyberbullying. It also shows that the Internet is now so deeply embedded in everyday use for communicating and getting information, it is truly a part of our existence.

The unfortunate part of her story is at the time of writing the bullying has reduced but still occurs. In Tanya’s case, it is one specific but significant person that is doing this. That did not mean she did not learn from the experience; rather, it has meant unnecessary stress is still occurring because of the actions of one person. She disclosed that she has taken steps to prevent it reoccurring and stated as at the time we talked it is not happening as much, it seems to just often happen ‘out of blue’ when that person is going through their issues.

This story is again presented as a narrative as her experience as with Sam’s story. I will again also briefly discuss her background, and her use of the Internet. The cyberbullying she experienced will then be discussed and her opinions of cyberbullying. A brief analysis, including my thoughts on her experience, will follow.

Tanya’s Cyberbullying Experience

Tanya’s Background and Understanding of Cyberbullying

Tanya lives in Australia but had lived in New Zealand for 14 years before deciding to return. She works in a cafe close to where she lives doing barista work including serving lots of customers daily, which can be stressful for her, but is a reasonable job she states for this period of her life.

I began by asking her when she first started using the Internet and what she uses it for:

Tanya: Probably I started when I was in high school, but as for like social media that would have been about six years ago.

Me: And what do you use the Internet for, what kind of things?

Tanya: Social media, if I’m looking for work or houses. Emails, banking, all that sort of stuff.

Me: How often per week would you use it?

Tanya: Every day.
Tanya also uses the Internet on her smartphone. I then asked more detail about her Internet use and her level of involvement with using social media:

Tanya: I’m pretty much attached to my phone it’s ridiculous, so I’m on it all the time not so much for work reasons, its more social media.

Me: So you’d be on Facebook several times a day?

Tanya: Yes. And I get on Gumtree\(^1\) a lot as well.

I then asked Tanya what she understood by the term cyberbullying:

From what I believe it is using obviously technology whether it be a phone, computer, anything, and it’s just verbally putting someone down, making them feel like they don’t want to be a part of the world, running their family down and just being downright nasty.

I found this an insightful view because of the comment ‘making them feel like they don’t want to be a part of the world’. This is a fairly accurate statement that is often counter-acted by those who say ‘no one can make you feel anything’. Cyberbullying can make one feel emotions that are negative and hurtful. Tanya summed that up well.

**Tanya’s Experience of Cyberbullying**

I then asked Tanya to discuss her cyberbullying experiences. This is how she described what had happened to her and what she was still experiencing:

Mine was with Facebook more so and, this is one incident, and I was just constantly threatened, put down, told to go kill myself, that I was worthless, that my family wanted nothing to do with me. Another instance has been where my daughter’s father will send me messages either to my phone or on Facebook as well, very similar sort of thing, the threats, the harassment, just very continuous. It gets very draining.

The cyberbullying took place on a combination of devices, mostly computer and phone as Tanya stated, but it was also its frequency that was very concerning:

It’s kind of slowed down now, but in a couple of months it will probably start up again. It seems to be every couple of months he will have a good run, he’ll particularly have a good run for that.

She made it clear that she does not meet him offline now. Fortunately, Tanya’s private details, such as address, phone number and email were not published online by the person doing the cyberbullying.
The Effects Experienced by Tanya

The physical and emotional effects are serious and shape the interactions with the world and decisions to socialise with others. This was what Tanya experienced. Although there was no physical harm offline, the experience was difficult as she explains:

Not physically *(harmed)*, more emotionally because I suffer anxiety as it is, so it sort of just triggers it off so it makes it a lot worse. I think the worst experience out of all of it is the fact that I am the one who cops it all, but I am the one who has to pick up the pieces for my daughter. She doesn’t see what happens but she knows what her father’s like.

I then asked Tanya how this affected her day-to-day living. In Tanya’s view, the anticipatory worry about what may happen next has a large impact on her interactions with the world:

It just makes me think am I going to go home and find more of this, am I going to have to deal with more of it and I then I sort of wait anxiously for it to sort of comeback which, it does, it gets very draining.

Also common is the time of year this happens. Tanya confirmed that the cyberbully’s behaviour got worse over Christmas with more frequent abusive messages. The fear, anxiety and discomfort she feels is there all the time but intensifies when she goes home and has to use the computer for social and professional activities:

If I go home and I see I’ve got a message on Facebook and I think, oh my god who is this from now, like I don’t want to open it as I don’t want to see who it could possibly be from because I don’t want to have to deal with it, particularly if I’ve had a real full-on day at work. So that *(work)* keeps my mind preoccupied, it distracts me from a lot of things.

The stress of anticipation has this effect and shapes her view of the cyberbully as well as hindering her participation on the Internet. Just because the cyberbully may not post every day, does not remove the consistent distress they cause. This was evident when I asked Tanya to explain more about how she felt about that person’s behaviour:

I think it stems possible from something in their childhood. If they’ve been bullied then I believe that they sort of carry it on. I know that his upbringing wasn’t that great, I know his father was an alcoholic, they used to cop beatings and I think that is something he’s just followed as much as he obviously tried not to, that’s just his way of making him feel better is to run other people down.

Tanya did not excuse his behaviour, but did provide an insight common in cyberbullying behaviour. Bullying is repeated; not every person who is bullied in childhood or any time in their life bullies others; however, what Tanya describes is a typical perpetuation of cyberbullying behaviours.
When I asked if he verbally attacked Tanya’s Facebook friends in posts she replied ‘no one wants to be friends with him’. I then asked Tanya further about the seriousness of the cyberbully’s behaviour and if it had to go further, such as reporting it to the police. She explained how this was done but did not resolve the situation:

The police have been informed of it before. And they say, just keep track of it. Just, and there is this thing where they will say send them a message saying I wish to received no further communication from you otherwise I have reason to lay harassment charges; but they never do anything about it, it just gets brushed off.

Despite the dissatisfaction with the police response, Tanya complied and kept copies of all cyberbullying incidents. Nevertheless, Tanya shows frustration at this lack of action:

It just makes it difficult. Like I had an incident with him years ago when my daughter was younger where he had threatened some pretty nasty stuff on my daughter, and it went to court so I could get a DVO, but it got thrown out as they had told me that he hadn’t acted upon his threats. So I went before the judge and said you know what you can shove the law, you are telling me something has to happen to my daughter before you actually do something about it.

She did receive some general support from family and friends who knew what was going on:

I’ve spoken to my mum and dad about it. Some friends do know about the situation. My doctor not so much. I try to keep that sort of stuff away because I’ve got my anxiety that I have to deal with as well, so I try not to bring too much into it.

However, she did not feel always satisfied by the responses by others in supporting her during this. She indicated that she did feel negatively judged by discussing it with others, who felt it should be something she should not worry about:

No I sort of feel like they only listen so that I can just pretty much speak. They don’t take it in or offer any advice; oh you will be right you’ll get over it, things will blow over you’ll be fine.

I wanted to explore this a bit more as I wanted to clarify the text or images Tanya was getting and to what degree they were offensive or harassing. She was clear on the nature of the cyberbullying that was causing the stress and anxiety, but also how to manage it so others did not get involved, such as her Facebook friends, if the cyberbully attempted to post on Tanya’s public Facebook wall:

It’s probably more a combination of stuff more than anything really. It’s normally through private messages so at least it’s sort of, you can’t really block all that all the time. He’s not all that tech-savvy thank goodness but for the last four years at least he has.
I then returned to asking about any support that she was getting from family or friends:

One of the girls I work with only because I’m really good friends with her. She seems to be the only person that really does support me.

My impression was that despite the deep distress and episodic occurrences of the cyberbullying, she had ways to manage it and someone who she could talk to that supported her. This is important as Tanya is still dealing with anxiety issues related to past and present incidents, but seems to be a lot more knowledgeable on how to manage cyberbullying.

**Tanya’s Lessons from her Cyberbullying Experience**

The next part of the interview focused on Tanya discussing general issues about cyberbullying, referencing her own experience. Again, as part of this project, I emphasised the questions as relating to the idea that cyberbullying in adults is something that can just be turned off at will. Tanya was very forthright in her views regarding this and the lessons that her experience brought her to these conclusions that it is a major problem for adults.

I asked first what does she think of those that cyberbully others. Her first comment was forthright and convincing:

I think they’re weak; probably more so gutless because they don’t have the guts to sort of come to you and speak to you face-to-face, they’ve got to do it through another device. And I think they obviously have been bullied themselves at some point because it’s the only way they make themselves feel better is by bullying someone else.

This was followed by my asking Tanya to reflect on her cyberbullying experience:

It’s made my anxiety a lot worse. Some of the things that have been said, I try not to go out too much, I don’t like to socialise too much. I have this thing where I can’t stay at, unfortunately I can’t stay at somebody else’s house, I have to go home, I’ve got to be at home in my own bed, more I think it’s a safety thing. It’s very draining, you’re constantly thinking all the time.

This suggested that although Tanya had made some progress in preventing and managing future cyberbullying, the experience was profound and left a sense of apprehension. It was not going to necessarily stop Tanya from socialising in the future, but made her think twice about going out to places even though the chances of that person doing the cyberbullying may not likely to be there.

I asked her opinion about how she felt about how adult cyberbullying was not always taken seriously by others. She stated with conviction her view that showed an understanding that society at this point in time still understates the problem of cyberbullying and its effects on people:

You can’t. And anyone who thinks that you can obviously has issues themselves as far as I’m concerned because it’s not. It’s just as bad as going up to someone and verbally abusing them face-to face. It’s emotionally scarring. If you’re like myself and already have anxiety it does not help one little bit. I guess yeah it
comes back down to the face they are very gutless people. For kids and adolescents to be cyberbullied is one thing, but just because adults, that it happens to adults it shouldn’t be looked at seriously.

She also overcame a lot of the anxiety to again start socialising, but there is still some hesitancy to go out because the bullying comments are still remembered and thought about. But she commented that going to work she felt helped her to overcome some of the hesitancy to going out:

No I’m not too worried about going to work, work’s fine, I don’t understand why I can go to work and be fine. I try and figure that one out myself.

I then asked her view on having stricter laws for adult-to-adult cyberbullying:

I think they should have something and there should be some sort of consequence, if you’ve got the proof to prove that someone has been bullying you then they should have to pay the consequences and you shouldn’t have to be the one who pays for it.

However, she wants to keep using the Internet as it is an important part of her life:

No I still get on there. Why should I have to switch off my life because someone else feels like crap and they have to run someone down?

The final question reflecting the lessons Tanya learnt to recover from cyberbullying in that she feels somewhat confident to see the signs of someone else doing this and knows how to prevent it:

It’s hard to say because everyone’s different I suppose, everyone approaches things differently. But obviously if there were many common signs then yes I definitely would but yeah it just depends on, I mean every individual is different, you can have someone is your best friend and suddenly they turn or they do it so subtly you don’t even know what is going on to start with.

Tanya ended the interview quite happy to have discussed this and I did sense that she has an understanding for the future to manage cyberbullying.

Closing Comments

The impression from this interview is that Tanya has come from a difficult situation, learnt to manage it and has knowledge of adult cyberbullying. There is no doubt that, although I chose not to delve deeply into the specific cyberbullying comments the bully had written to her, she experienced a profound, serious and devastating form of harassment. However, despite the obstacles with anxiety she has faced, Tanya has been able to develop an understanding as to why people bully. That the bully was once her partner has left hesitancy and anxiety in her behaviours and interactions with society is clear. What is also clear is the experience has made her forthright in her view that adult-to-adult cyberbullying is as serious as that experienced by children and adolescents.
The anticipation of potential bullying messages from Facebook she did receive, and may in the future, raises the question of should she permanently block the bully from contact. To me this is not the issue. Using the Internet with safety is a fundamental right. It should be using it without threats or harassment. Tanya was empathic towards the bully briefly describing that person’s background, but underneath she knew this was not an excuse for their bullying particularly when it involved potential harm to other family members.

This harm was also alarming when the judicial and law enforcement institutions refused to do anything unless that person actually did harm. With cyberbullying, in many countries this is changing. Tanya was made aware by my comments of the potential laws overseas that are broadening the scope of cyberbullying offences making it easier to prosecute bullies and prevent further bullying. She did state strong views about the cowardice of cyberbullies suggesting to me that she was highly aware of the problem which, in my view, made her wiser to potential future conflicts online.

Tanya’s experience does not matter if she knew the bully offline or not, or if it had been friends or strangers. She had the right not to experience the anxiety and issues cyberbullying causes. The main point of this dark period in her life she emerged from is she now has knowledge to protect herself, family and friends even though the institutions that should have protected her from it further did not take what happened to her seriously.
Notes

1 Gumtree is a classified advertisement website http://www.gumtree.com.au/
CHAPTER FIVE
MY EXPERIENCE

People don’t stop being bullies when they grow up. They just dress differently to fool you. – Patti Digh, Author, Life is a Verb

In this chapter I tell of my cyberbullying experiences and my interactions with the Internet that lead me to research and study it. With reporting these stories I have, in the interest of fairness as it is telling only my side of the story, disguised names, websites and other details to protect all involved.

Discovering the Internet

At an Internet cafe in Paddington Brisbane in 1996, I saw the World Wide Web for the first time. With a friend we explored our favourite topic, airplane photos. Before I started full-time university I brought my first home computer with a dial-up connection to the Internet. Thus my journey on Web 1.0 began; so did my encounters with cyberbullies.

In 1998 on a Friday evening I was browsing the popular search engines at that time, Alta Vista, the early Yahoo.com and Metacrawler when I came across a chat site. This site was for meeting people, but I viewed it as a place to chat and meet friends for social outings only. There I set up my first profile and my photo and wandered into the chat room.

During this time I had also discovered Internet Relay Chat (IRC) chat, the text-based chat. One evening I logged on and found the Brisbane IRC channel. After choosing a nickname I was comfortable with, I logged on and tried to chat. No one responded. I typed a complaint and got a swift response. It was, of course, being told to get out of the room with some colourful language used. But I was hurt by the comment, perhaps too sensitive, but at the time I did not understand this was a part of the Internet.

I had enrolled in 1999 in a course at university called Virtual Cultures. It was the course textbook, ‘Communities in Cyberspace’ edited by Marc Smith and Peter Kollock (1999) that inspired me to look more at the issues in virtual communities and the Internet. To me the Internet is a place to share stories and experiences, find company and to be heard by someone who what you say will matter to. All natural human wants. The expectation that it always will be welcoming and accepting is thwarted once you get your first insults.

Paltalk and the First G Chat Line

One night in 1998 while I was studying at university I discovered this icon on a website. I call this chat room ‘G1’ for this book, as the second chat line I will discuss later also started with the letter G, which will be named ‘G2’. Clicking on the link I found a web-based client program, which was simply a pop up window when you click on it, and an online registration form.

The site was divided into geographic regions and specific topics. When I saw there were various Australian cities I started exploring those rooms meeting a variety of people from them. You could also put up a photo which was cumbersome at the time compared to the ease
at which you can upload photos now. The choice of a nickname was difficult so I used a variant on my first name. This chat room, G1, reopened on the Internet in 2014 after not being available to be used since 2009. By then people had transferred to using G2.

In 1999 I also discovered Paltalk, a text-based chat program still in existence, though it now shows Cams (cameras attached to your computer), video and music. You did not have to type but could use your voice if you had a microphone connected to your computer. Paltalk has many rooms covering many subjects. These ranged from Arts, Politics, Computers, Music and Games, as Figure 7 shows.

![Figure 7. Paltalk interface as at 2015](image)

There are also insult rooms where members openly insult one another and gang up on particular members. In all rooms moderators or room owners have control over who can stay in the room. They also decide who will remain in the room and will bounce someone for bad behaviours depending on what is tolerated in the room. Another option is to stop them by talking and typing text by the use of a red dot. The owners of the room appoint other people as ‘admins’ who can also red dot and bounce people.

Frequently, people would verbally insult each other and create bizarre situations such as falling in love and breaking up only online. The problem is, even though these people were in love they had never met face-to-face. The admins and owners would also in some rooms be on a power trip and take a dislike to a person and bounce or ban them. Some banned
members from their rooms permanently. The rooms are mostly used by those from The United States with also a large amount of people from The United Kingdom. Some rooms are made private so people need a code to log into them.

However, there were useful rooms such as the Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and suicide prevention rooms which genuinely helped those needing help. There are rooms for different types of music, trivia rooms and rooms for all ages for dating and meeting people online socially, including rooms for people over 50 and 60 years of age. Spiritual and religious rooms are popular as well though some of these, as I will describe later, do have personality clashes and cyberbullying going on in them.

Both G1 and Paltalk were places where I would go to chat despite having at the time friendships and a heavy university workload. They were places where I could talk about the day’s events and, in the case of G1, arrange offline social meetings with others. They later became nightmarish places of cyberbullying.

**G1’s Peanut Incident 1998 to 1999**

It was not uncommon for people from other countries to visit the Australian chat rooms on G1. One room was dominated by a guy named Josh who lived in the same city as me. He made himself an unofficial moderator of the room, greeting people and building relationships with other chatters. Josh, not his real name but his screen name, adopted the look of a Hell’s Angel’s bike member; when I later met him in person in 1999 he looked nothing like his photos that were posted in the room.

In November 1998 the room became divided when a person, claiming to be an American college student living with his mother, father and younger brother in Las Vegas, started chatting in the room. His real name, he said was Peter, but his younger brother was learning to talk and called him Peanut, hence his screen name. Peanut had a static face picture of him standing along the Las Vegas skyline with casinos in the background. Back then you could not use Google Images to check for fake photos. However, someone accused him in the room of using Photoshop, a program that can alter photos, to which he got very upset and convinced other chatters to back him up that that was false and his photo was real.

The photo was of a blonde, muscular young man with no shirt on. Among his other claims were: he was Type-1 insulin dependent diabetic, he was studying in college for diplomatic work in the future, loved sports and had lots of friends. Although living with his parents, he frequently resided in the college dorms at Las Vegas University. He characterised a lot of his text with the word ‘neat’. He claimed he was 23 years of age. Becoming popular with the other chatters in the room was not surprising and he did admit later he was gay, or claimed to be.

Around this time a new chatter joined G1 named Mitch. He claimed to be a footballer before starting his new job. His typing was of a man impatient with people, slightly bullying, but took a liking to Peanut. Living in the same city as me, he seemed to know Brisbane so I did not doubt he was from there. For a few weeks he disappeared off chat, then one day reappeared claiming he was in hospital undergoing chemotherapy.

I got Peanuts attention because I was making a few jokes in the chat room. This upset some people but not him. He sent me a message saying he had ‘fallen for me’ but I made it clear
that I was on there for friends not relationships. Enter at that point just before Christmas a man from Sydney called Duck. He was a gothic guy with black hair who did not type much except ‘quack’ in the room most of the time. Peanut private me one day (opened another window in chat so he could talk to me without the others seeing) and told me he and Duck were falling in love.

All this seemed harmonious except for Mitch’s sporadic aggression and behind the scenes game playing, including pretending to organise a party once he was out of hospital. Then one day Peanut came into the room saying his American friend Evan had been assaulted in Australia and was flying back to The United States. But the next day he claimed Evan succumbed to his injuries. I asked why he had been let on the plane home; Peanut said not to question it.

Then three days later someone came into the chat room with the profile name ‘Evan’ and typed “It’s me Evan, back from the dead and ready to party”. This upset Peanut and he did not log on for three days. Yet after those three days he refused to discuss it.

The problem began for me when I had told some in the room about the troll that had pretended to be Evan. I was called a ‘spineless bastard’ for not protecting Peanut. I explained that it happened quickly, but it was felt that I had not done enough. Constant insults in the room and rude emails appeared. Peanut began abusing me. Yet, like many do, I continued to log on hoping that things would get better. Josh and Mitch refused to communicate with me, with Mitch telling others about a party he was planning, that did not take place, and that I was not invited. I was upset, but it also did not occur to me that Peanut was refusing to send me more photos of himself which he said he would. I thought, that is what online friends do.

I got an email from his claiming his mother was in a fatal car accident. He said he wanted to be with his family so he did not come in the room, deleted his profile and his email. However, two months later Duck was in the Sydney room on G1 and admitted to us he went to Los Angeles to meet Peanut and that Peanut was a real person. It did not work out and he felt foolish. But he refused to answer the question if Peanut was coming back to chat.

What the mistake made was how I allowed the cyberbullying to continue. Being ostracised in particular was hurtful, but did it really matter? Also I was taking it too seriously, although it did not affect my university study. People want friends and use the Internet to find them. Those people may be interstate or overseas, but I question are they really friends? If you offended them online they take it very seriously. Although we now know what goes on the Internet in the 1990's it was a novelty to meet so many people. But human nature did not change; bullying and its associated consequences were going beyond simply being hurt or offended into a new realm of incivility and chaos as the sophistication of the Internet grew.

The unfortunate part was how Peanut’s online behaviour affected the relationships between the locally based chatters to the point where they refused to meet each other for social outings. Destroying the group may not have been part of Peanut’s plan, but after a few months Josh typed about meeting any men or women from chat sites as “I won’t meet any of those backstabbing bastards who knife me behind my back”. When I said to him but it’s only the Internet he said that he never wanted to see me again and we were not friends. I thought, but we were not friends in the first place. I then ceased using G1 for a long time.
G1’s Auntie and the Feud 2007 to 2009

I left G1 for a few years and one day was checking my passwords when I found my old user name and password for G1. When I logged on none of the familiar names were there, Mitch and Josh were long gone. I met a man who lived in my city by the nickname of Cowboy. Two others over the weeks I also got to know two other chatters, Arrow and Brad. I was about to find out how cyberbullying can get personal, vindictive and create grudges which do not go away even years later.

Cowboy was friends with a man who because he was in the caring professions was nicknamed Auntie, which was his screen name. In person he was not particularly effeminate, but he did enjoy being part of a bitchy group social scene with all its negative behaviours. He craved attention and would to most, regardless of gender, type ‘hugs’ at them; if he did not do it you then you knew you had in some way offended him. In person he was charming and affable, pretending to be caring and constantly calling everyone ‘friend’. What happened over time was far from the image he was portraying.

When he started chatting we also had a troll come into the room. Although we did block the troll, that person still came in. The troll was exactly like Dibbell’s Mr Bungle. Although the bullying was aimed at everyone, the troll took on Cowboy, Arrow and I. The intention was to disrupt and shock the room. When banned the troll returned as Super Tammy and then started making profiles with our names on it. Of note was Tammy’s photo of a man who had been beaten up with the title ‘Arrow is a Sissy’. Cowboy was called a gremlin after the creatures in the movie Gremlins and I was called fatty. Tammy returned from time-to-time calling Cowboy and Auntie ‘peds’ as in paedophiles, ‘fugly’ as in fat and ugly and accusing all of doing sodomy to each other. The troll disrupted the room many times and became a problem when the room changed its software and got rid of the block and ignore function.

Two other characters joined the chat room. One was Brad who was a pilot and Wacc who was a retired school teacher. Brad was very aggressive most times, but as we had discussions over time I learnt of his abuse issues. However, he began bullying many and admitted online he drank alcohol heavily. Wacc was an older man who was quite cynical and judgemental, but sincere in forming friendships. Both were on bullied over time by Auntie for various reasons causing bitter divisions that have lasted until today. Brad, who much later took his own life, did not meet people, but Wacc, Cowboy, Auntie and I did, along with other chatters, meet each other and spend time together.

Both Cowboy and Auntie I found gave abuse to others but did not like comments made at them as jokes. I had made a joke about the chatters and I got a very abusive email from Cowboy. ‘You go on and on about the chatters’ he claimed with stern warnings that I was in the wrong for making jokes. I met him and Auntie at a dinner before New Year’s Eve, and at Auntie’s New Year’s Eve party and all seemed fine. Until March 2008.

I had just obtained a new job and my mother had gotten ill. Another chatter called Maybe joined the room and we started a friendship. He became abusive to me on and off line as well as Cowboy. But I still wanted mates like ‘ordinary’ Australian men had. I was struggling with work and looking after family when on one Sunday I was so fed up with Auntie’s text in the room I called him ‘annoying’. Immediately, he took me off his friends list, a feature of the chat line, and used his friend to convey messages to me to post an online apology.
That should have been the end of the matter. But he started telling people online and later in person to those who lived in Brisbane not to invite me to parties or talk to me. I blocked him on the networks and emailed him (foolishly) to ask him to stop the harassment. Eventually, we came to a truce one night at a function, but he continued making snide remarks online. Finally I snapped one night calling him annoying again. He again started his behaviours and continued to post personal things about me. Naturally, others tended to believe him, but they also believed me, which became very awkward.

It was about this time that G1 had a software and interface upgrade. This made it more difficult to use and they also foolishly disabled the ability to black and ignore trolls. Tammy took advantage of this typing abusive more comments about everyone. I was amused by this comment one night which is not accurate, but gives you an idea of how vicious the text was:

I am Super Tammy. You can’t defeat me. I will get rid of all you, you are all pedos. I know you are all gremlins. It is Super Tammy, and I am here to haunt you forever.

The same troll, or another troll, created profiles of many of the chatters, Auntie had a profile created of him called Auntie Social (Anti-Social) which annoyed him. Tammy was reported to G1’s moderators but could not be stopped as they could not block continued profile creations. All this abuse caused many of the chatters creating profiles in another chat program, G2, and in mid-2008 I created a new profile on G2. Unfortunately, Auntie already had a profile over there, so not much changed.

G2’s Slop, Merit and the Cyber Gangs 2008 to 2013

G2 was not different to G1 in that you had the same features such as a chat room, the ability to upload photos, private people for conversations and over 100 rooms to enter and chat in. In 2008 Auntie changed his name which someone joked about rhymed with Sloppy; so he became that. We had a meeting at a café in March 2009 to discuss the misunderstandings, but he typed in the room we chatted in details of the meeting including private things I had previously told him. He claimed the meeting had no resolution, but I had agreed to not argue in the room with him.

At the time I started using not just the Brisbane room, but also the Melbourne room. This brought new people to argue with as it was, at that time, considered wrong to be someone from Brisbane chatting in the Melbourne room. I had wanted to return to Melbourne, and did so in late 2010, but the chatters from Melbourne felt it was their ‘turf’.

In 2009 a guy created a profile calling himself Nigel came into the room and began spreading rumours and gossiping about other chatters, making snide put down remarks. Nigel initially sent me photos I did not want to see and, combined with his view that I was typing too much text in the room, began to get aggressive. Also at this time a man in Melbourne who used his real name Neville in the room began chatting in both the Brisbane and Melbourne rooms. Nev had moved from Adelaide to Melbourne moving in with a chatter named Wren who would become an important person in the forthcoming online war. In the Brisbane room, two chatters, Jordan and Sbear also began arguing in the room. All these characters, and others, became involved in a three year online cyberbullying war on G2.
It was the arrival of Mert, who had lived in Melbourne and knew some of the Melbourne room’s chatters that caused a cyberbullying nightmare. He and I exchanged phone numbers one night when he was not happy with Slops’s behaviours in the room. What he also planned was to ‘take down’ Slops in the room. Slops liked certain types of music that Mert sent up in the room mercilessly. Slops had a suicide in his family which Mert would also discuss. As I was angry with Slops over the defamation he had written about me, I laughed at some of Mert’s comments towards Slops which was an ill-advised thing to do.

As this was going on, Mert attacked Nev and Wren in the Melbourne chat room, alleging they were in a gay relationship and were HIV positive. Nev and Wren typed night after night abuse back but Mert kept writing personal things about them he claimed only he knew. He would attack other people and challenge them. We met offline for drinks and he told me I was his friend but I did not feel good about where the cyberbullying was going. He was also abusive to me offline with frequent put downs. I was in a state at the time where I was going through a lot of issues, so I clung to anyone being a friend. He would also say things like I know so much about you and I defended you against people. This was the case when Nigel made a fake profile about me and continued abuse against me online.

I grew tired of this and messaged Mert saying I wanted no more part of this. The message I got back was ‘you will regret this’. Logging back into G2 I began to get several chatters type abuse comments at my. They were about my weight and alleged mental health state. Mert typed things in the room accusing me of saying and doing things I did not. The nickname they gave me was Greenpiece after the organisation, though spelt differently, to suggest I was a ‘fat whale’. I also got threats saying not to go to a certain few places in my hometown and that I would also be assaulted in Melbourne when I visited there. One said they would wait for me at a suburban Melbourne Rail Station with a baseball bat. It did not happen when I arrived there.

However, others in both the Melbourne and Queensland rooms were not enjoying the abuse Slop and Mert were saying at me and other chatters. One morning I checked my email, I had given my email address to both of them, and saw an email from Slop saying “you’re going DOWN buddy”. I had to take out a cease and desist order against him. I blocked both of them across my social media, email and chat, but I still got information from other chatters about the abuse they both typed in the room. I was not confident going out to the places where I normally went. In Melbourne several of the chatters when I caught up with them filled me in about the stories of Mert and how he used to treat people in Melbourne before he moved to Brisbane. I knew I had made the wrong choice becoming his friend as I told him personal things which he twisted and reported back to others.

During this time a friend of Mert’s, named Don, had started cyberbullying another chatter called Mega. Nigel had told Mert he was not going to have a profile and left G2. Don took over. He and Mert attended a local karaoke bar almost every week where other males and females who were on G2 would attend. One night Mega was filmed singing a song which was then posted on YouTube. Slop, who was also ‘friends’ with Mega, also saw the video. The room made fun of him and chatters typed for weeks denigrating comments about him. When I spoke to Don about this he sought my advice and we got advice on how to remove it. Once that was over, Don refused to talk to me on or offline.
The final player in this cyberbullying on G2 was the arrival in late 2010 of a young man from Malaysia named Boo. He admitted upfront, unlike Peanut on G1, where he was from and that he was looking for an escape out of Malaysia. He did, however, attend cooking school, and during the three months he was online he had a serious car accident that he recovered from fairly quickly. He latched onto both Slops and Mert attempting to get them to financially sponsor him to live in Sydney, not Brisbane. Both of them derided him and others made many racist and later homophobic comments towards him, although he never explicitly mentioned his sexuality.

However, Boo also played off chatters in the Brisbane and Melbourne G2 rooms against each other. Some sent him food, books and money but he continued asking for more help. Regardless of his responsibility for staying on chat, the cyberbullying he received and his requests for help were continuously made fun of. One particular accusation he was subjected to was he was a ‘gold-digging Asian’. He made complaints about the room, but G2 could not help him so he eventually left.

There were others who became nasty over time, and continue today, that supported Mert before he decided to leave G2. Sandy Claws and Ricky, as well as Don who were all supporters of Mert, continuously cyberbullied myself and other chatters. We did use the block and ignore features, but other chatters enjoyed cutting and pasting the text and sending it to us. Mert, much more than Slops did, told others on and offline not to talk to me and others. I lost two friendships because the two ‘friends’ believed some lies about me.

I reiterate that I did block and ignore these chatters and continued to chat to others. However, the cyberbullying was relentless and affected many of the chatters some of whom deleted their profiles. The type of cyberbullying comments were stereotypical of what we expect to see in name-calling. Common strategies to offend are to type defamatory statements which are racist, sexist and homophobic. However, making fun of someone’s weight and alleged mental health status is a common form of cyberbullying. These are adults; some of the chatters involved were over 50 years of age as the G2 chat room does show people’s ages. In the end, however, I did not come to any physical harm but the group of people I knew five years ago and I cut ties. That helped recover from this situation and although I kept my profile, I use G2 sparingly.

**No Pals on Pal Talk 2012 to 2014**

In 2012 I returned to Pal Talk as I still wanted to chat but needed an alternative to G2. I was rarely cyberbullied on Pal. However, I want to discuss an observation of cyberbullying that I saw. Most of the cyberbullying on Pal occurs in political rooms, adult rooms and some social rooms. As there are more females on Pal than on G2, I had assumed a higher level of civility and courtesy. I joined a spirituality room to discuss self-improvement and other types of issues. There were several rooms and the administrators (admins), or owners, of the rooms all seemed very charismatic and caring.

What I found out over time was that there was inter-room rivalry and that the admins had technical means of banning chatters out of rooms if you trolled the room with bad language, disagreed with their ideas or engaged in challenging their beliefs. Atheists particularly were often banned for questioning those in the room. While debating was ok, the atheists often they would engaged in arguments. The difference between G1 and G2 and Pal Talk was that you could use a microphone to talk in the rooms, so you would hear as well as see the
cyberbullying. Rooms on Pal are also rated as G General, A Adult and R Restricted. Often if people used or said undesirable words in rooms they were bounced from the room meaning they could not return for a specified time, or banned.

One incident is worth discussing as it illustrates the level to which cyberbullying can make people leave a room. The room was run by Rae, a man in The United States who claimed to be a Native American. The room discussed UFO’s, aliens, out-of-body experiences, chakras, God and other new age topics. Rae’s room became popular with some days up to 70 chatters in the room. In mid-2012 the politics in the room became cyberbullying.

Rae appointed me and ten other chatters as admins, which meant we had the ability to bounce and ban people to keep the room G rated. Two other admins became involved: Merm and Alive. A chatter, also from The United States, logged into the room. His name, which was Kan, was Hawaiian, and although he claimed to be spiritual, he typed and spoke in the room mostly to the women chatters, later private messaging them with propositions. Another female chatter from New Zealand, Kiwi, also came in the room cyberbullying others. Both Kan and Kiwi made their own rooms and began to poach other chatters by making up rumours about Rae, especially an alleged affair he had with Merm. Trolls would make up nick names such as ‘Merm_sucks_Rae_Cock’ and ‘Rae Paedophile’.

Alive moved from Rae’s room to Kan’s but felt increasingly uncomfortable about Kan’s cyberbullying. These, she stated, included him discussing sexually explicit suggestions of what he would like to do to her when they meet. Alive left his room to form an invite only room where you needed a pass code to log on. I was given this and in the room heard from several chatters banned from Rae and Kan’s rooms for no reason other than disagreeing with both. Alive, however, did point out something about Merm which was disturbing. Merm’s profile photo looked like an altered black and white faded photo of actress Drew Barrymore.

During this time the Pal Talk rooms were getting more aggressive with room admins banning people who disagreed with their rules and denigrating other admins. The rooms would be taken up with voice and text of inter-room fighting. This fighting would be reported in Alive’s room as gossip, but also served as warnings about who not to offend on Paltalk. In retrospect, it was absurd and I in no way blame Alive for her choices to gossip, it was my choice to log into her room and read and listen to her. However, I do regret the choice I made to laugh at other chatters’ behaviours. What I learnt from this is, even though I was not cyberbullying them directly, it still felt like a group picking on others who were just defending their online territory. It also taught me to be more careful in the future about taking sides in online arguments.

What Internet Studies Taught Me about Cyberbullying and Other Online Behaviours

An interesting choice I made was during this time of chatting in these rooms was I decided to study an online degree in the Department of Internet Studies at Curtin University of Technology in Perth. The courses I studied were more about the ‘social’ side of the Internet; that is, the behaviours of those that used it. In one of the units I was introduced to the concepts of web presence and web or digital footprints. According to Webopedia (2015):
On the Internet a digital footprint is the word used to describe the trail, traces or ‘footprints’ that people leave online. This is information transmitted online, such as forum registration, e-mails and attachments, uploading videos or digital images and any other form of transmission of information - all of which leaves traces of personal information about yourself available to others online.

At the end of studying my first unit I came to appreciate this concept. One well-known example of cyberbullying discussed in my unit was the Star Wars Kid⁴, which is still as at 2015 on YouTube. The video was privately made in 2002 about a 15 year old named Ghyslain Raza, who lived in Québec. It showed him using a golf ball retriever like Darth Maul from the Star Wars film The Phantom Menace, which was supposed to be private but was posted onto the Internet (Wikipedia, 2015). The cyberbullying and ridicule was so intense and persistent he had to be admitted into a psychiatric ward. In 2013 he commented on Yahoo News (Pfeiffer, 2013):

The bullying became so bad that Raza was diagnosed with depression and ended up dropping out of school and being sent to a children's psychiatric ward. “In the common room, students climbed onto tabletops to insult me,” he told Trudel. “No matter how hard I tried to ignore people telling me to commit suicide, I couldn’t help but feel worthless, like my life wasn’t worth living”.

This reminded me of what happened to Mega when his karaoke performance was put onto YouTube. He said he was traumatised by it, but it was the sense of unfairness at being singled out that bothered him at the time. Certainly that, and the Star Wars Kid, examples made me begin to think about being more careful posting online especially when my real name is used.

As I progressed with my studies, I became fascinated with the interactions between people, particularly on Facebook and Twitter, and had been reminded of a few forums that I had once been an anonymous member of where much cyberbullying took place. The Big Day Out, an Australian music festival, had forums which, from 1999 to 2008, were online places of anonymous cyberbullying. The problem with this herd mentality is its singling out of people and shaming them, as well as dragging up a person’s past errors, that the Internet has been effective at fostering.

Later in the course I decided to take some research units as I became more interested in the actions of those who cyberbully. Netiquette, the act of acting ethically towards others online, was consistently written about in the 1990’s. It was a means of keeping order, civility and politeness on the Internet. Clearly, as Julian Dibbell’s article I discussed previously at length illustrates, netiquette has largely been discarded. Hamelink (2006, p. 119) gives an excellent description of the idealism netiquette as a mechanism online communities and website owners tried to maintain so that outside governments and authorities would not censor free speech on the Internet:

Increasingly, Internet communities set their own norms and standards and define their own specific rules and duties. Early on in the development of electronic networks, discussions arose on forms of self-regulation. In order to avoid external interference, network users have tried to develop norms for acceptable usage of digital technologies. Attempts at self-regulation dealt with the limits to the commercial use of academic networks, or on the distribution of pornographic materials and hate speech.
Generally, the self-regulations Hamelink talks about were at first adhered to but increasingly as the Internet grew, and it had more ability to host and download bigger files, combined with ever increasing numbers of users, this is ignored. The difference now is that many people who do not adhere to community standards often use their real names, as seen in the comments on Facebook. Although anonymity still exists, the lessening of inhibitions and not being as concerned with privacy is resulting in increased open cyberbullying and other negative online behaviours.

At the later stage of the degree I wrote one paper and one dissertation about these negative behaviours. The first was previously mentioned in an earlier chapter which was called *Tensions in Enforcing YouTube Community Guidelines: The Challenge of Regulating Users’ Flaming Comments* (Nycyk, 2012). I explored in this thesis flaming on YouTube and the failure of YouTube to control hate speech as well as the lack of self-regulation of members who comment on videos to contain flame comments. Even videos such as kitten videos can be subject to flame comments which are offensive, interrupt flows of conversations and are often intentionally written to provoke reactions. They can develop into cyberbullying, although this may be subjective, but members of YouTube have left the site and refuse to comment when flames are persistently aimed at them. It is a choice to discontinue, but it is a right to comment on that site if you are a member without getting insulted or harassed by other members.

My other project, resulting in the publication of a paper in 2015 in the journal *The Qualitative Report*, was called *The Power Gossip and Rumour Have in Shaping Online Identity and Reputation: A Critical Discourse Analysis* (Nycyk, 2015). This paper was important because the students were debating in my courses the ethical issue of your employer, or future employer, looking at your Internet presence and social media and making decisions to fire or hire you based PURELY on what you write. My finding was that words written on social media are a form of gossip or rumour that shapes a person’s identity or reputation (Nycyk, 2015). Simply, we do make decisions about people even if we do not know them personally, and they do not have to be well-known for us to judge, shame and bully them.

However, there needs to be some responsibility taken by the person who posts comments. While I am not advocating punishments, what is typed and posted, visually and textually, about you online have consequences. Yet there is evidence that many do not seem concerned with what they type. In one study by On Device Research (2014) people between the ages of 16 to 34 across seven countries were surveyed about social media and possible effects on their future employment prospects. The numbers of those unconcerned about what they posted on Facebook was alarming. In The United Kingdom 71%, The United States 70% and China 63% were not at all concerned.

In summary, Internet Studies helped me become aware of carefully shaping one’s web presence and footprint. We can be found easily, especially if like me you have a rarer last name. People do judge, shame and cyberbully based upon what they see and read on the Internet. There are consequences, and we have a larger audience to see comments and photos. Privacy is being eroded as your life is put on the Internet and, even if it is removed, can be saved and used elsewhere. You can state that it will not matter as this happens every day. However, many lawsuits, ruined reputations and careers, as well as the growth of companies such as reputation.com, who you may need to pay to remove negative information, are evidence that this is not the case. Internet Studies is a growing academic discipline, but what
is important to debate is the role cyberbullying plays in ruining reputations through gossip and rumour and what can be done about this as the Internet continues to grow worldwide and connect many who will give their opinion and join in a herd mentality to shame and bully others.

**Lessons from Cyberbullying**

Being a participant and observer of cyberbullying, combined with studying my degree, has brought me knowledge on how to act appropriately online. I do not believe we should stop using the Internet; we have a right to do so in safety. Rather, thinking before reacting to cyberbullying, getting help even though that may be difficult or expensive and removing self-blame are useful things to consider when preventing and managing cyberbullying.

There are questions needing to be asked which I addressed in previous chapters, the main one being why you do not turn the computer off and remove yourself from the Internet. The online communities and social media are participatory. They have become new ways to communicate with others. They are like the pen pals of the past, just more instant online than sending a letter. If you abuse someone in a letter, you had time to stop and think before you sent it, unlike an email or social media post.

We maintain connection with people because of social media; we do not have to, but we chose out of convenience and habit to do so. In my case I should have deleted my chat room accounts but was lured by the promise of making ‘friends’. My privacy was invaded and I was hurt by the comments, but I also know by remaining in these sites I risked these things happening until I changed my strategies for dealing with it.

The contradiction to want to remain private against using the Internet for anything is of concern. People do use the Internet as a toy. There is also a key difference, aside from the volume of users of the Internet as at 2015, which is interesting. In the Web 1.0 environment being anonymous was prized by those using it. In Web 2.0, as Facebook and Twitter show, people use their real names and photos even when cyberbullying. An expert on privacy who researches these issues is Daniel Solove. He summed up this problem as (Solove, 2007 p. 198):

> Part of the problem is that the Internet makes it hard to visualize the breadth of our exposure. Placing information on a website and writing blog posts and comments feels more akin to chatting with friends, writing a diary, or talking on the telephone than like broadcasting live on television, publishing a novel, or addressing a crowded auditorium. This difficulty is compounded by the often ambivalent desire we have for concealment and exposure.

Even if we do not use the Internet there is that possibility someday we will be on the Internet in some form. If we cyberbully, the ethical question is, do we deserve to pay a consequence if our names are found out if we did that to others?

The main lessons I learnt from my cyberbullying experience were: favourites and hierarchies exist online, having someone banned is a triumph for some and that there are offline consequences even if we live far away from the person who cyberbullies us. This experience
did not make me stop using the Internet; I became more diligent about posting material and more careful about whom I interacted with. If I had this knowledge before we started using the Internet, I could have avoided the stress these situations caused.
Notes

1 Quote by Patti Digh author of the book Life is a Verb sourced from Goodreads.

2 Image is free to use for this book under copyright license on this site see http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paltalk-chatrooms.JPG

3 Department of Internet Studies Home Page at Curtin University of Technology, Perth as at 2015.

4 Full YouTube video of the Star Wars Kid is, at 2015, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPPj6vlBmU

5 The company reputation.com is one example of a service that provides for a fee to restore a person or company’s reputation from negative text and photos on the Internet, and is a growing service with other companies opening worldwide to offer this.
CHAPTER SIX
A DEEPER EXPLORATION OF ADULT-TO-ADULT CYBERBULLYING

I don’t think that there is a way to truly stop it. Unless everybody, and I mean everybody, in the whole world decides that there is no reason for this and they want to stop it, I don’t think it will ever end … It’s not a curable disease, it’s a treatable disease. – Alfred Olson (2011) on cyberbullying from ThreeSixty Journalism

I called this book an exploration of a dark side of the Internet and designed the study to describe and explore the experiences of those who were cyberbullied. What I hope up to this point the reader has gotten out of this are: it affects anyone at any age and the scepticism that it is not serious for adults needs to be dispelled.

The two aims of this chapter are to analyse the interviews and draw out the important and common themes from both of my interviewees, and second to explore further some ideas on how the fantasy world of the Internet can be a fertile ground for cyberbullying.

I also argue strongly two points-of-view that have arisen from the process of researching and writing this book.

1. I strongly argue that cyberbullying is not a myth and although from an academic and practitioner view we still need more empirical evidence on its effects, it is something we, as Internet users, need to take responsibility for. As part of this I will consider that although, in my view, it is reasonable to use the word victim to describe those that are cyberbullied, sometimes we may ourselves intentionally or not cyberbully each other.

2. I also want to consider the reasons why cyberbullying and other negative behaviours are linked to the use of the Internet as a place where one possesses powers and abilities that one does not have in the ‘real’ world. There are many who are moderately or very anti-technology and blame the Internet for the rise in the lack of civility in many societies. In this chapter I consider these points-of-view and also discuss some examples that illustrate the allure of the Internet as a fantasy world of power.

People are victims of cyberbullying and, while it is up to the individual on how to manage it, it must continue to be taken seriously and support must exist to manage and prevent it. There is a large body of evidence to suggest negative effects on adults. I mentioned, for example, in Chapter One the long-term study by Takizawa et al (2014) that provided strong evidence of the long-term negative effects of bullying. However, even those witnessing cyberbullying, or any type of bullying, have been shown to reap negative effects and mental health issues including post-traumatic stress from it (Wachs, 2014; Rivers, Poteat, Noret & Ashurst, 2009; Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike & Afen-Akpai, 2008). This suggests the prevention and management of cyberbullying is a concern for all as the infiltration of the Internet and social media continue to change society in a way that is not always beneficial.
I also clarify before I present the thematic analysis of the two interviews that I followed a research protocol of design, ethical considerations and analysis that is part of any research project. However, for space considerations the research methodology and procedures are briefly described in the notes 2, 3, 4, 5. Doing it this way also gave me the flexibility to explore the cyberbullying experiences and see what arose in terms of themes, but while adhering to a framework.

To begin I reflect on the ideas of the myth of the myth of cyberbullying, some disagreements in the research on cyberbullying and its management, and look at some examples of the power of the fantasy world of the Internet that cause issues not seen before in society and are in some way forms of cyberbullying that present ethical and moral problems we must face.

**The Myth of the Myth of Cyberbullying**

In Chapter One I discussed Chris Berg’s (2014) view in The Age newspaper debating the view that there is no such thing as cyberbullying. A myth is the disapproval of a commonly believed but false idea (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2015). Berg suggests the technology is irrelevant; it is more that bullying is a general term and computers are just the vehicle for it. Many disagree blaming the Internet and its technologies for the decline in civility and empathy in society. This difference of opinion between what Berg states and others is worth considering in the context of cyberbullying because it asks are we the perpetrators as bullying is in the human behaviour spectrum or is it the availability of accessing and using technology is at fault? If it is the former, than cyberbullying is a myth.

To clarify this point, Rosen (2012) and Laura, Marchant and Smith (2008) all argue that technology is clearly to blame like it has seduced people into a world that offered limitless possibilities to be something and be heard, yet has lulled people into a falsehood that the online world is the ‘real’ world. That what is online is reality. Kelly (2010, p. 209) believes technologies are living organic things that while not alive are treated as such and that the entire capitalist system encourages civilisation to become dependent on it:

Anticivilizationists would argue that we embrace more because we are brainwashed by the system itself and we have no choice but to say yes to more. We can’t, say, resist more than a few individual technologies, so we are imprisoned in thus elaborate artificial lie.

Why this is concerning is not always our use of them, but rather the amount of time we spend using technologies and interacting on the Internet with others. Cyberbullying can come from the lack of empathy may acquire towards others. Konrath, O’Brien and Hsing (2011, p. 207) equate this lack of empathy and civility, which may impact on the decision to cyberbully, to what technology is supposed to offer; that is, ease and speed to obtain results quicker:

Alternatively, the ease and speed of such technology may lead people to become more readily frustrated or bored when things do not go as planned resulting in less empathic interactions.

Furthermore, people simply might not have time to reach out to others and express empathy in a world filled with rampant technology revolving around personal needs and self-expression.
The argument here is that technology affords the opportunity to cyberbully because of our feeling powerful online. We do not need empathy and manners in all situations and may feel these are of no consequence in an artificial environment such as the Internet. People do bully offline; in schools, workplaces, the roads and in communities. However, to state that cyberbullying is a myth to me is false. We are talking to people with feelings, fears and worries that we can exert power over. The difference is that the Internet is mediated by a keyboard and screen, but is just as powerful to cause harm as a teacher, a family member, a playground bully or a co-worker can.

Many commentators and Internet scholars view the Internet as a place that fosters negative behaviours. A key scholar, Sherry Turkle, has studied for three decades the effect of the Internet on society. Her comment here is representative of her views that have dramatically changed over the 30 years she has studied the effects of computer technologies. Like Suler (2004), mentioned in Chapter Two, she is a believer in the lack of inhibition causing deterioration in civility and empathy, leading to undesirable behaviours (Npr.org, 2012):

It all stems from the same thing - which is that when we are face to face - and this is what I think is so ironic about Facebook being called Facebook, because we are not face to face on Facebook ... when we are face to face, we are inhibited by the presence of the other. We are inhibited from aggression by the presence of another face, another person. We're aware that we're with a human being. On the Internet, we are disinhibited from taking into full account that we are in the presence of another human being.

Bullies will further use this lack of inhibition to become what Bandura (1999) argues is the term ‘morally disengaged’ from their victims. This means they have the ability to harm others without having a bad conscience about doing so, a common link between disengagement and bullying being prevalent and provable (Wachs, 2014; Bandura, 1999). To illustrate this Melody Fletcher, a blogger who specialises in discussing the concept of the Law of Attraction, a method by attracting more of what a person wants by focusing on something, states someone who is powerless in their life gains power through using the Internet to bully and be morally disengaged. Yet, they themselves may be doing this from an idea of a ‘payback’ for what they experienced:

When those who are powerless get some power, they often do the only thing they know how to do – turn the table and dominate someone the way they have been dominated. They feel relief in this domination – they have some measure of control, often for the first time in their lives. But this need to control still comes from a place of powerlessness. If you address this underlying lack of power, the whole need to victimize (or be a victim) drops away. And there are a ton of people demonstrating that every day.

Certainly studies like a previously mentioned one by Buckels et al. (2014) demonstrate that people enjoy the anonymous (mostly) space of the Internet to bully because they were bullied previously. The myth of cyberbullying as being technologically-mediated, as Berg argues, has merit because people are the ones using technology to bully others. However, other authors believe it is the seductive capabilities of technology that cause it. Regardless, Berg does not blame the machines but that does not mean they do not play a large role in encouraging cyberbullying. As Duran Duran write in their 2010 song *Blame The Machines*
about the reliance on, and seduction of, technology:

I'm flying blind
I'm speeding through
I hate to think
I've been fooled by you
an interactive nightmare show
Which never ends
It just goes on and on and on
And now there's no way home
This love affair is ended
I should have known
When I bought into the dream
So like your sonic soul
To leave me lost and stranded
I blame myself
And I blame the machines

I do not agree cyberbullying is a myth; it is as valid an instrument of hatred and destruction like a bully’s fist.

Disagreements on Cyberbullying Research and Managing Cyberbullying

Researchers argue about the management of cyberbullying and disagree over its effects and its management. Olweus (2012) suggests cyberbullying is an overrated phenomenon and lacks empirical scientific support to back claims it is a widespread problem. His main claim is that the new electronic mediums created fewer new victims and bullies; therefore, people who bully online are likely to bully offline (Olweus, 2012). His study is of a large sample of one Norwegian and one United States’ set of students over a period of four or five years. The problem is not his view that we must not give resources to helping those who are cyberbullied, but rather the view that cyberbullying will take over from ‘traditional’ bullying as a focus of media attention (Olweus, 2012 p. 16):

...such a picture is likely to result in an unfortunate shift in the focus of anti-bullying work if digital bullying is seen as the key bullying problem in the schools. This would probably also result in funnelling a lot of resources in a “wrong” direction while traditional bullying - which is clearly the most prevalent and most serious problem - would be correspondingly downgraded.

This view brings into question is cyberbullying just a trendy phenomenon to study? I do not agree that discussing cyberbullying and how to prevent it takes away the necessity to educate on other types of bullying. I do agree more empirical studies are needed, particularly on adult cyberbullying, to support the idea that cyberbullying has more severe consequences because it is 24/7 phenomenon. Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler and Kift (2014) highlight this problem of evidence-based strategies needing more work to establish their validity and effectiveness. This does suggest that as at 2015 more work is needed to explore the effects of cyberbullying, but not discount continued research on managing and preventing traditional bullying such as that in the workplace.
Campbell (2009) urges deeper examination of the power struggles between victim and cyberbully to further understand prevention and management of cyberbullying. She feels more work needs to be done in this area. Cyber safety tips seem to, in her view, invalidate the feelings of hurt by using simple blocking devices. But as she states this is not a wise strategy (Campbell, 2009, p. 2):

Why are people telling children to ignore being hurt? Is it because that was the advice given to these people when they were children? “If someone is bullying you, don’t let them see you are afraid, ignore them, don’t fight them.” “Ignore the big boy who is demanding your tuckshop money” - at your peril! Ignore being hurt by the cyberbully? The underlying message here for a victim is, don’t do anything, don’t tell anyone. I know the tip is meaning to say don’t fight back. But if you are really bullied and are scared of the person because of the imbalance of power, hardly anyone fights back.

This certainly supports the assertion that people, not just school children, must report cyberbullying. It must be talked about not just as a report to legal authorities or website owners, but to continue to discuss and debate it in society to remove the power imbalances often through the emotion of shame the victim feels. This is in direct disagreement and opposition to many websites who urge people to just block and ignore. It does depend on the person’s willingness to discuss their issues, or in Charlotte Dawson’s case, went too far on outing the cyberbullies resulting in her suicide, but Campbell is correct in that we must empower and support the victim to overcome their cyberbullying.

The Dependency on the Fantasy World of the Internet

In Chapter One I discussed how cyberbullying may look like. In Chapter Two when I discussed Dibbell’s Mr Bungle, cyberbullying in the MUD Dibbell used, I discussed how that fantasy world, where people usually never meet outside it, is so powerful to belong to. Cyberbullying is subjective but what I want assert here is that people have come to rely on the Internet for gaining power over others and to be what they often cannot in their daily offline lives. In this section I look at some cases of use of the Internet which can become cyberbullying, but also present ethical and moral dilemmas for society which blur boundaries of peoples’ behaviours and present challenges on how to manage them.

Referencing Suler (2004) about the lack of inhibitions online causing people to behave in ways they would not in offline because of a lack of physical presence of another, the disconnect between the cyber and real worlds is a valid problem. People have always fantasised about someone or something, particularly romance, from radio, books, magazines, movies and television. The Internet allows co-creation and participation; therefore, the opportunity to indulge in fantasy especially power plays, are numerous across social media and the Internet. A law scholar, Colette Langos, studied criminal law and cyberbullying harm issues. Here she gives a clear explanation about the dynamics between cyberbully, victim and the role of the technology in it (Langos, 2013, p. 36):

In addition, cyberspace presents a bully with new opportunities to flaunt his or her power over a perceived weaker victim. A perpetrator may feel emboldened to engage in cyberbullying as a result of the spatial distance between the ‘cyber world’ and the ‘real world’; online a perpetrator may communicate with a victim in a manner he or she would not ordinarily in the offline context. The physical
distance between a cyberbully and a victim creates a situation where malicious conduct can be ignored or trivialized and serves as a source of power imbalance between perpetrator and victim.

If these online fantasies are consensual or not taken offence to, they are not going to be an issue, but many have found a boundary is crossed. The issue, however, is that the boundary is subjective and personal if it is cyberbullying or not. People will flirt and insult others online but it may be harmless to all concerned. In the following case examples which demonstrate that fantasy may or may not be harmless, I show that the Internet has blurred boundaries which become a problem in identifying where these have been crossed to cause harm.

**Case 1: The Fantasy of Online Relationships and Offline Fidelity**

Although some couples choose to have open relationships where permission is given to interact sexually with others, including online, without harm to either partner, monogamous couples have been challenged by the proliferation of websites where their partners talk to others. This becomes an issue when one partner begins an affair, which can be a form of cyberbullying if used against their partner. However, the boundary is what if that affair never is consummated offline? Is the fact that the partner only in text and photos shares with another person themselves including sexual non-physical lovemaking a problem?

Turkle (1995) describes two women’s reactions to their partners having online affairs. Both of them are uncomfortable about it, but the second woman especially views it as a form of abuse even though an actual affair did not take place. For example, Turkle (1995, p. 224) writes of Martin who had an affair early in his marriage to Beth, but now only has affairs online, wrote this:

> When Martin discovered MUD he was thrilled. “I really am monogamous. I’m really not interested in something outside my marriage. But being able to have, you know, a Tiny romance is kind of cool.” Martin decided to tell Beth about his MUD sex life and she decided to tell him that she does not mind. Beth has made a conscious decision to consider Martin’s sexual relationships on MUDs as more like his reading an erotic novel than like his having a rendezvous in a motel room. For Martin, his online affairs are a way to fill the gaps of his youth, to broaden his sexual experience without endangering his marriage.

This behaviour occurs in opposite, same-sex, platonic and many other types of human relationships. In this case, Beth the partner, as Turkle suggests, was hurt by a previous offline affair, but does not consider this ‘cheating’ on her. Therefore, she likely did not consider it abusive behaviour. Those that were interacting with Martin were also unlikely to consider it cyberbullying as it would have been welcome consensual behaviour.

Nevertheless, this behaviour illustrates technology being a bridge to a fantasy world that may be harmful. Turkle (1995, p. 225) sums up a problem experienced more than ever now about boundaries. Whilst not judging people for doing this, it does highlight the confusion over the boundaries people do have when using technology for gratifications:

> TinySex poses the question of what is at the heart of sex and fidelity. Is it the physical action? Is it the feeling of emotional intimacy with someone other than one’s primary partner? Is infidelity in the head or in the body? Is it in the desire
or in the action? What constitutes the violation of trust? And to what extent and in what way should it matter who the virtual sexual partner is in the real world? The fact that the physical body has been factored out of the situation makes these issues both subtler and harder to resolve than before.

I agree with Turkle’s view not as a judgement of people using the Internet for fantasy or to cheat on partners with affairs, many do that offline every day, but rather the concept that you are interacting on such an intimate level with people you do not meet. Cyberbullying is not positive interaction, but the individual would need to decide if their boundary is being violated. In Martin and Beth’s case, they do not see it as boundary dissolving but clearly the fantasy element is powerful enough to hook Martin and continue his behaviours. But Turkle (1995, p. 224) also writes about another couple where the outcome was harmful:

Other partners of virtual adulterers do not share Beth’s accepting attitude. Janet, twenty-four, a secretary at a New York law firm, is very upset by her husband Tim’s sex life in cyberspace. After Tim’s first online affair, he confessed his virtual infidelity. When Janet objected, Tim told her that he would stop “seeing” his online mistress.

People see such interactions which are fantasy as a reality and sometimes these become an addiction which can harm a relationship. The mistress is not real in that they are not physically with that person, but even though not real this has the same effect on Janet as if it was. These types of behaviours have been going on before the Internet of course, but that the people are having online affairs, one could argue, is not the same as one offline.

Case 1 serves as an example of cyberbullying behaviour because of the intrusion of the fantasy world into the lives of the person using the Internet and the effect it has on others particularly partners. Of course people do these behaviours online and download pornography daily, which in itself is not the problem. Rather, it is when it becomes obsession and habitual to the point where it interferes in the functioning of the person and the relationships that it is problematic. Unfortunately, as the case with trolls and cyberbullies, it does become addictive to do this behaviour and we are seeing the results of effects daily as more reporting of these behaviours occur.

**Case 2: The Fantasy of Cyberstalking**

When online relationships begin to deteriorate cyberbullies can respond in insidious and devious ways to get back at the person who is not responding to them. Cyberstalking has become a major form of cyberbullying, but is also subjective and sometimes difficult to prove. Nevertheless, it is a crime even if the person being stalked such as a celebrity does not meet that person offline. Sometimes cyberstalkers will refuse to go near that person yet the fantasy of power and abuse over the victim is intense and real, but if confronted by the ‘real’ person they run away. This suggests a high level of fantasy and delusion hence why even if it never is enacted in the offline world to the victim it is still taken seriously by law enforcement.

Cyberstalking is seen as one step beyond cyberbullying as it has the potential to go beyond the virtual world. Gil (2015) defines it in this explanation:
Cyberstalking is a very serious form of online harassment. At one level, cyberstalking is much like cyberbullying, as it involves the sending of repeated annoying and unwelcome messages. But cyberstalking goes far beyond cyberbullying in terms of motivations and tactics. Cyberstalking involves a disturbed obsession with the target, and a perverse desire to control that target in some way, even by attacking the target's family members. Cyberstalkers do not wish to just torment someone for an adolescent power rush... stalkers want to force the target into some kind of submission, and are willing to involve other targets to achieve that disturbed result.

I do not agree with Gil’s assertion that it is an adolescent issue; as the following example adapted from Langos (2013, p. 55) shows. Adults do this behaviour often as adolescents do. Here this scenario shows how cyberstalking operates:

John is 55 years old. John shops at a chain supermarket near where he lives and often gets in the checkout lane where Alison serves customers. John is infatuated with Alison and through a series of charming manipulative conversations with other staff manages to find out Alison’s unusual last name, thus finding her on Facebook. Alison is 19 at the time so tends to use Facebook consistently.

John makes a fake profile using a photo that is digitally manipulated of a younger man so Google Images cannot find it. Alison has 245 friends at the time John makes a Facebook request to her which Alison accepts without little thought as to who it is. As Alison is very open with what she types and where her other social media and chat rooms are, John logs on and finds her in chat rooms using a fake profile. John lurks in the chat rooms but types nothing.

However, Alison begins to notice the fake profile in the chat room and looks at some of the posts John has written on Facebook on her page. She sees a pattern and gets suspicious removing him from Facebook and blocking him there and in the chat room. However, John has also found out other places on the Internet Alison uses and, upset at the blocking, goes to the publically accessible other forums and social media and repeatedly makes threats to physically harm her. He posts to her and others he knows where she works and lives and types ‘I will rape and cut you up bitch’.

Alison fears for her safety and gets the police involved. However, she is still unsure who it is and one day John appears at the checkout to buy groceries, says hello to her, she smiles back and says hello, they make small talk and he collects his groceries and walks off not looking back. Yet at home, he returns to the Internet and continues the unlawful abuse at her.

Although at that stage John has not done any physical harm, he is living out a fantasy of rage and hatred. He has not harmed her but it is possible he may do so. However, just like blackmail or threatening hand-written letters, this is taken seriously by police. In 2012 in The United States, Christopher Chaney was sentenced to ten years jail by a judge for hacking into the accounts of celebrities. It was reported that the judge made these remarks (Bell, 2012):
“It's hard to fathom the mindset of a person who would accomplish all of this,” the judge said. “These types of crimes are as pernicious and serious as physical stalking.”

The problem with the fantasy of cyberbullying is that there is a potential for it to become harmful with serious consequences. One needs to remember the fate of John Lennon even though that was pre-Internet, where Mark Chapman went to many lengths to find Lennon and shoot him. This is why this form of cyberbullying is being taken seriously; the outcomes are not known about how that person will take what action to harm someone.

**Case 3: The Fantasy of Degeneration and Shaming**

Opinions matter to individuals in the illusion that people have been given more of a say in world affairs, politics and society because of using the Internet. The herd mentality that exists in public spaces has always been a part of the Internet. In Web 2.0, especially social media, a key difference is the removal of privacy of those that cyberbully and troll when they indulged in the fantasy of degenerating and shaming others. Shaming and denigrating others openly with name-calling is now an accepted price of being on the Internet.

This is not to state that every person who does this will be punished in some way (job loss, relationship loss for example); however, this has happened and what is posted does shape others’ idea of your identity and reputation (Nycyk, 2015). As an ideal, Lapenta and Jørgensen (2015) state this is what people who use the Internet want:

> Individuals have a right to privacy not only in the private domain but also when acting in the public space, ‘as a kind of private sphere which is inherent in the individual person and which accompanies the person when moving about’. Not least in the context of social media platforms it is important to bear the right to privacy in public spaces in mind. The right to privacy relates to individual control, and not necessarily to a private intimate realm.

However, the reality has been, as evidenced by research, that the private sphere or domain, where you say what you want and are protected, has increasingly become public as the Internet has made this more pronounced and obvious (Raynes-Goldie, 2012; Keen, 2011; Nissenbaum, 2010). You may not want anything at all, not even your surname posted online and when it is you feel violated, yet you still want to post material online.

You can be anonymous, but clearly with increased use of social media as the preferred way of communicating and debating, it is likely your posts on public Facebook pages, for example, will be seen and be indexed by Google and other search engines for ease of finding. Barnes (2006) writes of a ‘privacy paradox’ which is true of all ages not just the adolescents she surveyed; we want to be heard but not to be seen and we want our private space but do not always realise our private postings and photos can be seen by anyone.

In some ways this is a good situation if cyberbullies are caught out. However, cyberbullying victims, especially in a herd denegation and shaming of their present or past mistakes, or if being rated on websites for sexual inadequacies, can be harmed and their privacy violated by bullies. Yet concurrently we approve of sites such as the MAKO/Files (2015)⁸ which list the names, details of sex crimes, addresses and other details of sex offenders. However, the
problem can be, depending on what the person has done, the arguing and shaming is a form of cyberbullying for unintended victims.

To illustrate one example, professional cricketer and founder of a cancer charity, Glenn McGrath, went on a holiday to Zimbabwe in Africa in 2008. There he allegedly shot several types of animals on a hunting trip and was photographed next to their bodies. In 2015 these were published online resulting in a short-lived controversy. McGrath is well-respected in Australian society but was indirectly bullied for his actions. The issue became the arguments supporting and condemning his actions. Where the fantasy of denegation and shaming operates is that people argue with each other perhaps not knowing or understanding that their privacy is compromised by commenting on the Sydney Morning Herald’s Facebook page. Here some comments, removing the names of those who posted even though it is visible online on the Facebook page, are reproduced to show how this operates.⁹

Deeply regrets killing the animals or deeply regrets having a photo taken of said dead animal? I am so disgusted.

Reply: Deeply regrets having the photo published. That is all

I am disgusted over the slaughter of these animals. Men and women all around the world posting with these dead animals and their guns all proud. It is just foul.

I suspect that he regrets the public shaming.

He was grieving over death of his wife so he decided to kill to feel better? What a psycho! What about the grief of the elephants- so well known for their grieving over loosing family members. You could learn so much from them, but you chose to kill instead

Reply: Big-game hunter=small-dicked man

Shame on him and the rest who kill a beautiful animals for fun or sport...Tell me how the can feel good about cold blooded murder... When the poor Animal can't defend itself... Doesn't even know what's coming... Only shows the true meaning of a true Mongrel...

Reply: Yes he must have a small prick ^^^^ he needs to compensate.

What a bunch of retards. Well Done McGrath and fuck em all tom. Country is full of green voting pussys nowadays

So your wife dies and you decide that the best thing to do is go and kill a vulnerable defenceless animal to make yourself feel better? Mate, I think that if that was your outlet then you have some serious psychological issues that run a lot deeper than the tragedy you faced....

This is so disappointing. Apart from the morality of these ‘thrill kills’, what about the tens of thousands of dollars he spent? It's a slap in the face to all those with not much money to spare, who nevertheless found $5 or $ for the McGrath Foundation.
What a wonderful example to his children. Must be proud of himself. I don't care when it was or how he was going through a difficult time. There is NO excuse for this. Bad form Mr McGrath. Bad form. You've lost me

*note this is not a complete chain only a sample of comments and I mark when anyone is replying to another person who posted

Notice the following personal attacks’ subject matter; they attack not just the act he did, but also perceived shortcomings and the personal tragedies he experienced. This is not just trolling, but cyberbullying. Among these insults on the Facebook page include:

- Attacks on genital size, supposed state of his mental health and personal morality
- Attacks on other family members especially his late wife
- Attacking each other with name calling
- Disregard for his previous charity work
- Getting off topic introducing topics such as abortion of foetuses, political preferences and others where people use these to attack rather than debate others

The use of the words and terms such as ‘psycho’ and ‘proud of yourself’ are labelling and admonishment. Each posting was judgemental and lacked debate about the seriousness of hunting endangered animal species. However, McGrath’s position in Australian society is being a high profile sportsperson is valued by the society. One error of judgement makes him suddenly a temporary target, although it is subjective that this will damage his long-term reputation.

The point of this example is to show the world of cyberbullying as in shaming and degrading someone. One idea of this process is shown by the 3B Model by Kaye Laemmle as described by Forster (2011):

1. Bully blames the person for something
2. Bully picks on the best person where it is stated the most common motive for selecting a target is the person is bright intelligent well liked and exhibits positive personality traits. Bullies are often incensed by them and resent the popularity and therefore tries to unscrupulousness destroy and control the victim
3. Bullies have buddies that support them forming a group herd mentality although online the bully does not have to know the person

This is the type of cyberbullying I have seen occurring in chat rooms and on social media. However, celebrities, politicians and those with controversial points-of-view may choose to ignore it, but for anyone it can become an emotionally painful experience. Shaming is normally a group activity and although many who do the shaming move on to other targets, it is possible to damage someone’s reputation, hence why it is of concern.
Summary of Reflections on the Dependency of the Fantasy of the Internet

These case examples illustrate the powerful nature of the Internet in creating worlds where one feels a sense of power over others. Cyberbullying can be called into question here because its formal definition is of repeat behaviours. Yet as I argued in Chapter One and as the Facebook story in case three shows, any hurtful comment even once can be seen as cyberbullying. At an extreme the Internet becomes a weapon against people.

It is always poets or song writers that can capture a situation better than an analyst. Homer Marrs is an American songwriter who wrote two songs that capture the spirit of this fantasy world. They both capture, humorously, the fantasy world of relationships on the Internet, where we are connected but perhaps in reality we are still but strangers, but we playing an odd game of power, control and narcissism that cyberbullying lives in. These are (Reverbnation, 2015):

**Bear 411:**

When we're online
Our relationships all become meaningless
One day I say I'm a hooker
The next I'm monogamous
When someone asks me
To sleep with him and I am just not sure
I reply with an emoticon
And then I just say “Grrrrr”

**The Facebook Song:**

I don't know you
I don't like you
But we can be friends on Facebook

I don't know you
I don't like you
Let's be friends on Facebook
Exploring the Interviews’ Themes

I know turn attention to analysing Sam and Tanya’s interviews. We are exploring their experiences and opinions keeping in perspective although were aged in their 20’s at the time of this research project, they are adults. It is likely their experiences are different to those younger than them.

I present first an overview of the themes and state what was found, defining and explaining the themes. This is followed by examples from the interview that support these themes.

Overview of Results and Definitions of Themes

Despite their differences, Sam experiencing more group cyberbullying and Tanya cyberbullying from one person, both experienced a common set of themes and experiences. Although it may not always be long-lasting and can be stopped, there is a process of cyberbullying that makes the victim experience feelings which can lead to positive or negative outcomes depending on the nature and extent of it. Figure 8 shows diagrammatically the link between process and experience that arose from analysing both interviews.

![Figure 8. Overview thematic diagram and the relationships between global, organising and basic themes](image)

The themes explained are:

Global Theme – Adult Cyberbullying is Process and Experience

This theme summarises the core issue describing adult-to-adult cyberbullying overall as a process and an experience. These are defined as:
1. Process - actions and steps the bully does to harm but also how the victim experiences them

2. Experience - Both what was experienced by the cyberbullying and what also effects, positive and/or negative arose from it

Therefore, the themes show that a process happens to the victim with actions the bully takes and is often sequential and can increase in intensity and severity. These are then described as experiences or stories that are effects on the victim but also the positive and/or negative effects that arose from the experiences the victim tells.

Organising and Basic Themes

The organising themes, represented as the circles attached to the global theme in the diagram, are the processes of cyberbullying experienced as the top circle and the effects of the experience as the bottom circle.

The basic themes, which represent and describe what is occurring around the organising themes, are statements which describe the organising themes. They are written as short sentences which capture the details of what is occurring for the victims experiencing the processes and effects of cyberbullying. These are:

Organising Theme 1 – Cyberbullying Processes Experienced

Basic Themes Describing This:

- Psychologically attached to Internet
- Frequent users of the Internet
- Specific negative cyberbullying behaviours
- Cyberbullying is negative but can be learned from and manage

Organising Theme 2 – Effects of the Experience

Basic Themes Describing This:

- Positive and negative outcomes
- Effects on family, friends and careers
- Support mechanisms

These are descriptions of the technical features of the thematic analysis diagram which show the theme hierarchies. The overview of results is best explained in the next section with examples.

There are two noticeable differences that showed in the analysis between Sam and Tanya’s adult cyberbullying experience:

1. Sam’s cyberbullying was done by a group and was completely resolved

2. Tanya’s cyberbullying was done mostly by one other individual and was mostly resolved
Sam’s experience calls into question if it was just a once off incident with being videoed in that is it still cyberbullying because it was not persistent and repeated? One traditional cyberbullying criteria are persistent bullying which Tanya experienced; however, even a one off cyberbullying incident can have consequences. An adult can be traumatised by a single posting either text or visual, so it is important to validate all cyberbullying acts as potentially damaging to one’s emotional health.

The overall result is that based on the two interviews and the themes, adult-to-adult cyberbullying is a process because actions and steps are taken by the bully to intimate, harass and threaten the victim resulting in experiences and outcomes that can be negative, but as the results will demonstrate, the management of it and reflecting on the experience can actually have positive effects on the victim.

**Cyberbullying Processes Experienced**

1. Psychologically Attached to the Internet

Both Sam and Tanya have an attachment to the Internet which is the first process because the cyberbully has, or did have, access to them at all hours. The primary reason for the attachment for Sam is keeping in contact with his family and friends back in India, while for Tanya it is the same thing but she also needs it for finding new employment. Being attached means being reliant on it for more than just passive communication. With previous mobile phones we would make only calls, but with smart phones we have a new range of applications that allow people access to us.

Tanya stated clearly she uses the Internet on her smart phone daily and constantly, including the mobile Facebook app where much of the cyberbullying took place. Tanya stated:

> I'm pretty much attached to my phone it's ridiculous, so I'm on it all the time not so much for work reasons, its more social media.

The mobile Internet has become widespread; therefore, one process for a cyberbully is that they can use your attachment to it to reach you at any time.

2. Frequent Users of the Internet

The amount of time a person spends on the Internet and the more websites and applications they use, the greater chance of encountering cyberbullying. This is slightly different to being attached to the Internet as some see the Internet as an aid to their lives not as a need to be using it. As a process, the cyberbully can note the frequency of how much the person uses the Internet but in knowing which sites or social media the victim goes to, they can send messages or other bullying tactics to maximalising contact.

For example, Tanya, despite the stress and blocking her cyberbully, frequently was targeted on Facebook because that is where he noted she was frequently spending time:

> It just makes me think am I going to go home and find more of this, am I going to have to deal with more of it and I then I sort of wait anxiously for it to sort of comeback which, it does, it gets very draining.
In both Sam and Tanya’s cases, the bullies knew how often they would use the websites increasing the chances of Sam and Tanya seeing the cyberbullying. Frequent use, combined with an attachment to use the Internet anywhere, is a process that leads to the bully starting and continuing cyberbullying.

3. Specific Negative Cyberbullying Behaviours

Sam and Tanya experienced the types of cyberbullying behaviours discussed throughout this book. Although the key difference is that Sam’s bullies were a group, whereas Tanya’s was an individual, the descriptions of the bullies’ behaviours were naturally negative, harassing and intimidating. Harassment was a specific negative behaviour experienced:

Sam:

According to my personal experience which happened to me it was a case of harassment.

Tanya:

Mine was with Facebook more so and, this is one incident, and I was just constantly threatened, put down, told to go kill myself, that I was worthless, that my family wanted nothing to do with me. Another instance has been where my daughter's father will send me messages either to my phone or on Facebook as well, very similar sort of thing, the threats, the harassment, just very continuous.

Tanya experienced threats as well which involved others which caused her much stress:

Like I had an incident with him years ago when my daughter was younger where he had threatened some pretty nasty stuff on my daughter, and it went to court so I could get a DVO, but it got thrown out as they had told me that he hadn't acted upon his threats. So I went before the judge and said you know what you can shove the law, you are telling me something has to happen to my daughter before you actually do something about it.

In Sam’s case, the cyberbullies acted upon Sam’s quiet nature with behaviours to degrade and ridicule him as Sam explained here:

The reason they told me was it was for fun and in the initial days they were posting on the video comments and getting likes it inspired them, and as I told I was very nerdy, very geeky, very studious, I would barely talk with girls and they could say oh he is acting as a studious guy, he is acting as a geek guy but he still has feelings about a girl. It was planned, they said you should go and speak to this girl, you should say about your feelings and you should do it this way and that way, it was planned, they posted the video.

These cyberbullying behaviours are specific acts done to achieve the goals the cyberbully sets up. Note that if you read stories about children and teenagers being cyberbullied you likely see the same type of behaviours. Cyberbullying takes place at many ages and you could read these negative behaviours as something only younger people will do. This is not the case.
4. Cyberbullying is Negative but can be Learned from and Manage

Part of the cyberbullying process is that despite its negative impacts, it can be learnt from and managed if the victim chooses to do so. In Sam’s case he not only learnt how to manage any future cyberbully, but became involved in helping others in India who was experiencing it.

This process of the cyberbullying experience is not part of the cyberbully’s, but is part of the recovery and knowledge strategy victims have so that they can begin again to use the Internet with more confidence. Sam explained how he managed his experience:

I made a page on Facebook social media against cyberbullying; I created a group of them online for the people who had been cyberbullied to share their experiences and this was the reason I got through.

Sam learnt that tough action was needed to remedy cyberbullying. He advocated a strict policy of reporting cyberbullying to the authorities:

When I started the (online) forum I am the first person to say we should report everything to the police even if they are friends so next time they won't do it.

Tanya learnt that distraction and time away from the Internet helped with much of the stress of the experience. Her management of it was her time at work keeping her mind occupied not to think about the cyberbullying as much as she did when at home:

So that (work) keeps my mind preoccupied, it distracts me from a lot of things.

Therefore, the processes of cyberbullying that are done to them, although negative, can be learnt from and managed. Sam and Tanya had done the best they could to manage the situations and learnt what to do in the future to prevent their experiencing cyberbullying.

Effects of the Experience

The three themes in this section display the two’s experiences of cyberbullying and what effects, positive and negative, arose from it. Although the last theme discussed what they did to manage it, this theme is about the reported personal effects of their cyberbullying experience. Much about this theme is about consequences and highlights the seriousness of adult cyberbullying.

1. Positive and Negative Outcomes

There were more negative effects of their cyberbullying experiences than positive, although Sam still showed how he did turn the experience into a more positive one. Tanya did have more negative effects which are common with cyberbullying experiences. In conversation, Tanya explained the physical and psychological stress she experienced:

Not physically (harmed), more emotionally because I suffer anxiety as it is, so it sort of just triggers it off so it makes it a lot worse.
It's made my anxiety a lot worse. Some of the things that have been said, I try not to go out too much, I don't like to socialise too much. I have this thing where I can't stay at, unfortunately I can't stay at somebody else's house, I have to go home, I've got to be at home in my own bed, more I think it's a safety thing. It's very draining, you're constantly thinking all the time.

Sam’s main negative effect was fear of what others’ thought of his online video where he was humiliated. He was especially fearful of his family’s reaction:

Fear, a feeling of fear was that what would my family be thinking about this incident because this was very new. Social media was very new. This was the first or second incident, but nowadays it is done commonly. Later on when my brother confronted me, my brother spoke with my friends who did the post, but the fear was there about the family what would they be thinking?

This added to Sam’s distress as he described how he felt;

It was a case where I was totally devastated; I was feeling very low because of certain acts by my friends which totally made me unaware, it was devastating.

Despite this, Sam’s positive outcome from the experience was helped by support and understanding. Sam was fortunate that the bullies did make amends after his feeling betrayed by their actions. These positive outcomes were stated by Sam:

I was also pleased they apologised to the woman who was also in the video. That was also important to do as she was just as much a victim as I was. They apologised to the girl also. The girl messaged me, and then we were friends again.

The worst experience, the first thing was being betrayed by friends who I used to feel very close with, the second was using a medium which is very dangerous and spreads like wildfire. Even if they did the same thing in a group of people I would give a damn, like even if six or seven friends of mine saying it was ok (to bullying him offline he means here) but they did it on the medium for different people can see, people different can look into it.

After I did a psychological session with my doctor, I decided they were my friends and I didn't report it to the police.

The outcomes for Sam and Tanya were overall fortunate for them both though Tanya still struggles with the long-term outcome, especially when cyberbullying occurs again, while Sam is cautious but has dealt with the cyberbullying. The most promising thing from the interviews is that both will use the Internet more wisely and are aware of the types of cyberbullying that can occur to them.
2. Effects on Family, Friends and Careers

Cyberbullying does affect one’s daily life. Sam and Tanya indicated, mostly indirectly, that the cyberbullying they experienced did have effects on family, friends and careers. The affect on careers, their work and Sam’s study, was mostly reasonable aside from Sam taking time off study which delayed his advancement to higher education.

However, Sam suggested some effects on family and friends and career, as previously reported, but was worried about how anyone would view what happened. There was also the influence of his Indian culture that caused him concern:

I was afraid of facing people at the time, I was horrified at taking the questions they would ask me, did you propose to the girl, and basically I was just sitting at my home, I was thinking all about the things, what should I do, what should I answer, how should I go about things, what about my professors, what about my teachers, what would they think about me, because being in India proposing a girl at that year of age is not common. In India boys and girls as it is in Australia it’s not the same scenario over there it’s a bit different. I stopped interacting with people. I was just with myself and I was I did not want to meet people.

The effect on Sam was to worry about how others would view him. He took action to change his behaviours when using the Internet and now does this online:

I’m definitely more careful these days. Like I am completely into socialising and as a professional I use Facebook as a medium, but I stopped making comments or liking a post of a different person when I think it’s very personal. I still see many people abusing, I still see many people cyberbullying even when they should not. I am very cautious about sharing private data due to hackers.

Therefore, Sam was concerned about the effect on family, friends and his career, but found with support and help, and changing his approach when interacting online, he has not had any negative effects on any of these. This included forgiving the friends that had done the cyberbullying.

By contrast, Tanya had experienced a negative threatening effect on a family member. In this part of the interview she discussed how her daughter is affected by the cyberbullying, although she did not elaborate on what occurred:

I think the worst experience out of all of it is the fact that I am the one who cops it all, but I am the one who has to pick up the pieces for my daughter. She doesn't see what happens but she knows what her father's like.

This is something Tanya is seeking to address so that the cycle of cyberbullying does not affect her daughter.
3. Support Mechanisms

An important recovery strategy from the cyberbullying experience is having support mechanisms, such as people or institutions such as the law or mental health support, or help from web and social media sites, to recover from, and prevent, cyberbullying. Both Sam and Tanya did have these in various forms, but Tanya did not feel her cyberbullying issue was resolved.

Although Sam had support from his brother, he indicated that his psychologist was helpful in giving support that made him put the cyberbullying incident into a better perspective:

I was feeling very down to go to the college to face the people, my friends, so I went for a psychological session with a psychologist and, luckily for me, I came back strongly. I started using Facebook as a medium. There were various things going on in my mind, take revenge on my friends, to do all that sort of stuff but no way. I went down a positive way, I did the psychology sessions, I went to a different college, I completed entry examinations and I moved into a different place and made new friends, approaching life in a positive manner, and later I started being active on social media.

This is important because Sam was active in solving this issue and he made the choice to seek the support so he could manage the cyberbullying. Humiliation is difficult to overcome for the bullied if many people have seen the image or text that a cyberbully wrote about the victim. Summarising the help of Sam’s brother and psychologist, Sam showed a proactive way of managing cyberbullying:

No it did help me out. My brother said this is not the end, this is not you, you need to learn from this experience. The psychological sessions with the doctor transformed me completely. He (the psychologist) told me to make friends with the Internet, make the Internet your friend. Being a Masters Student I am doing all the stuff on Internet socialising and everything. Start making people aware of the incident that you went through, so it did help immensely.

Therefore, Sam is an example of someone who seeks support to minimise the effects of his cyberbullying and as a result does not tie his experience to his self-esteem which can harm victims of cyberbullying long-term.

Tanya, however, overall did not feel supported by many mechanisms or people sympathetic to what she was experiencing. This highlights the difficulty adults can have in convincing people that their cyberbullying is hurtful and humiliating even if laws exists to protect them. As stated in the Specific Negative Cyberbullying Behaviours basic theme in the first organising theme, she had no support from the legal system when a judge did not rule to protect her from her previous partner’s abuse. As she stated overall about the lack of support:
No I sort of feel like they only listen so that I can just pretty much speak. They don't take it in or offer any advice; oh you will be right you'll get over it, things will blow over you'll be fine.

She did receive some general support from family and friends who knew what was going on:

I've spoken to my mum and dad about it. Some friends do know about the situation.

You can't. And anyone who thinks that you can obviously has issues themselves as far as I'm concerned because it's not. It's just as bad as going up to someone and verbally abusing them face-to-face. It's emotionally scarring. If you're like myself and already have anxiety it does not help one little bit. I guess yeah it comes back down to the face they are very gutless people. For kids and adolescents to be cyberbullied is one thing, but just because adults, that it happens to adults it shouldn't be looked at seriously.

Tanya’s experiences need to be made credible by those preventing, researching and managing cyberbullying. The theme of support for both Sam and Tanya suggested there was support there for both of them, but Sam did have more support mechanisms in place to manage his experience of cyberbullying.

**Key Points from Thematic Analysis**

Although this analysis is technical, it does highlight the global theme of the process and experience of adult-to-adult cyberbullying. The overall judgement is that Sam had a better outcome than Tanya, but has these are just snapshots in time of their experiences. We do not know what will happen in the future to change their experience. However, both have learnt from the experience and are aware of the seriousness of adult cyberbullying.

Some key points from the analysis were:

- Sam overall recovered better from the cyberbullying experience than Tanya
- Same sought and received more support than Tanya to recover from, and manage, cyberbullying
- Sam had a group bully him and they were mostly close to him in terms of a friendship relationship, but Tanya knew her bully as her former partner with
whom she shares a child, therefore, the cyberbullying was from someone in her family at the time

- Both of them are psychologically attached to the Internet, atypical of many in society, and frequent users of it; therefore, people must be aware of managing cyberbullying as the bully can target the person if they continue to use the Internet in any form

- Cyberbullying can have an effect on many others close to the bullied person

- But the analysis showed this theme; one can, as both did, learn from the negative experiences they had and manage cyberbullying for the myriad of solutions you can employ to stop it

I now move to the final chapter which discusses ways of managing and eliminating cyberbullying.
Notes

1 Quote obtained from ThreeSixty Journalism, which come from a non-profit program of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of St. Thomas located in Minnesota in The United States of America, which publishes the college’s young students’ writings on many issues. The site is at http://www.threesixtyjournalism.org/, the quote from Alfred Olson’s essay is at http://www.threesixtyjournalism.org/cyberbully.

2 Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) provided the framework that thematic analysis is: ‘identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic.

3 Attride-Sterling (2001, p. 388) provided an excellent and understandable framework for analysing the stories which provided some degree of rigor. A network organises data around a Global Theme or themes which state over what is going on.

Figure 9. Attride-Sterling’s diagram of how thematic analysis works

4 Thomas and Harden (2008) provide an excellent article of both how to do thematic analysis and the problems associated with bias, rigor, subjectivity and problems with finding data. For this analysis I agreed with their assertions about this; however, this was a reasonable systematic.
5 Software used to analyse data was Weft QDA invented by sociologist Alex Fenton. See http://www.pressure.to/works/weft-qda/; however, it has not been maintained by Fenton but can be obtained. It is fairly simple to use.


7 TinySex is the name of the MUD Turkle in her book *Life on the Screen* discusses where virtual sexual and romantic activities take place.

8 MAKO/Files are a website located at http://www.mako.org.au/prelist.html. It is a free public registry of known sex offenders and paedophiles. I use this example of this site not to judge its intent but to illustrate how sometimes we may feel certain private things should be posted on the Internet especially if the motivation is to protect those in the community.

9 This posts come from the Sydney newspaper The Sydney Morning Herald https://www.facebook.com/sydneymorningherald/posts/10153197656341264

10 I am personally against animal hunting and am not supporting the person being bullied for that, but giving an example of how group bullying operates. I also argue that this falls into the category of bullying not trolling as the depth of personal insult those that wrote the material is often harsh.

11 Confirmed with Kaye Laemmle by email who confirmed the 3B Model was her creation, but the reference is from Forster’s book, *Do You Want Bullying with That?* located on page 53.

12 The term ‘Grrrrr’ in the song refers to the sound of a bear, but in this context Marrs writes it as a term to describe a subculture of the gay community called bears, where the men are mostly hairy and larger in body size. The title ‘Bear 411’ refers to an online dating site catering to this group. However, in the context of this book Marrs lyrics to both songs highlight the behaviours of all people online not just one group.
CHAPTER SEVEN
SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGING AND PREVENTING ADULT-TO-ADULT CYBERBULLYING

Just as all people are entitled to enjoy all human rights, they also have responsibilities to respect the rights of others. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights calls on every individual in society to promote respect for human rights and freedoms. This is because bullying is everyone’s problem. Key human rights treaties also note that individuals have duties to one another and to their community, and have a responsibility to strive for the promotion and observance of human rights. – Australian Human Rights Commission (2015)

This chapter draws on all the material in this study as well as taking into account the vast resources available on managing and preventing cyberbullying that exists. It is written as my advice only and you need to decide what you feel comfortable with doing. I also first briefly make some views about doing this research, what it taught me and why I feel adult cyberbullying needs to be taken more seriously than it presently is. Then I will discuss specific strategies regarding the prevention and management of cyberbullying.

Views about Adult-to-Adult Cyberbullying

Writing a book means taking a stance on a subject that can bring disagreement. I still feel after a year of researching and writing this book that adult cyberbullying issues are being overlooked in terms of research as more funding is put into child and adolescent cyberbullying prevention and management.

However, there is now ample and more frequent discussion about the effects on adults of cyberbullying. Unfortunately, tragic stories are still reported in the media, but debates about it are also more frequently reported. As more people of all ages become skilled in Internet use, and are able to access the Internet, the likelihood of needing the skills to recognise and deal with their cyberbullying will grow. Here are some things I would like to see addressed with this issue:

- There needs to be a debate about the formal definition of cyberbullying. I do agree with the repeated part of cyberbullying, but even one comment can hurt someone, so what exactly constitutes cyberbullying needs clarification
- Web communities, websites and social media need to take more seriously complaints even if they are huge in number globally, but also not censor totally everything that is posted
- We need to not be bystanders if we see cyberbullying happening to others
- We also need better ways to punish cyberbullies and not place the onus of burden on the victim
As I discussed in previous chapters, the issue of freedom of speech on the Internet is very important. So is using the Internet safely. I like this quote by MacKinnon and Zuckerman (2012) about this issue:

The danger of increased control of online speech is that we will not guarantee the elimination of flashpoints of violence, but we will almost surely make it a more difficult environment for those who use the Internet to reduce hate and increase understanding. But if the argument for free speech is to be won, we must make more concerted and deliberate efforts to strengthen the world’s immunity against the virus of hate – both on social media and in the mainstream media.

I agree with MacKinnon and Zuckerman, yet my exploration of adult-to-adult cyberbullying has convinced me that we must strive for a balance in this debate. Netiquette was championed as something that would assist with harmonious and civil online communication. That has been ignored in favour of uncivil behaviours. The dilemma facing governments is do they regulate behaviours online without interfering in peoples’ free speech or should laws be so tight and rigorously enforced to protect us? This is something that will continuously need to be debated, but even if resolved we must protect ourselves from cyberbullying behaviours.

As stated previously in this book, Marilyn Campbell has been critical of cyberbullying advice (Campbell, 2009). As a leading Australian researcher in school and adolescent cyberbullying, she has been critical of how to prevent and manage cyberbullying, calling most experts as a form of being an ‘agony aunt’ (Campbell, 2009). I agree with her statement that more research and evaluation is needed to see what is working and why it is. Most programs that prevent and manage cyberbullying are based on practical beliefs not on scientific evidence (Snakenborg, Van Acker & Gable, 2011). What works need to be explored more scientifically; however, in this section I am giving the type of advice that may help you to decide what is the best course of action for you to take to prevent and manage cyberbullying.

**Preventing and Managing Cyberbullying**

*Not Taking It Personally – A Challenge*

You need to make a decision to not take the cyberbullying personally. This can be difficult, especially if those that did the bullying are friends or family. We have a responsibility to ourselves to decide if it is worth responding to cyberbullies. Some text or images can damage our reputations, so underlying the decision to not take it personally is dependent on the type and frequency of cyberbullying. However, cyberbullying is not your fault but of the person who does that to you. This is an important step; you decide how important the cyberbullying is and know no matter how important your Internet use is, you can take steps to manage and prevent it.

An important point here is that you need to ignore any further cyberbullying that may occur. For example, on G2 in my case, you still know abuse is being directed at you by the way the other chatters may talk. They may be defending you or they may message you saying that person is abusing you. Tell those that message you that you do not wish to know what is being said, although if it is a threat to your physical safety keep a copy of that. Stopping the online game playing with the bully does work because as I have found eventually they give up, not all, but most. As soon as you are concerned about someone who you feel may be
bullying block them and remember if you have done nothing to provoke it then it is their issue.

**Talking to Someone about Cyberbullying**

Adults may feel shame because they are thought to be old enough to know better and they should just switch off the computer. Talk to someone you trust or a stranger in an organisation such as Beyond Blue or Lifeline for their advice. Losing your online networks, even if those friendships were strictly online, is difficult but considering other sites you can go to can assist in reconnecting with like-minded people. However, talking to someone can help you make the decisions to either cease interacting with the bully or take further action, as well as alleviate the types of negative feelings you may be experiencing.

**Block and Ignore – The Main Strategies**

If you cannot leave your online community or social media then you need to be aware of the ways in which those that own the site can help you manage cyberbullying. Some sites will make clear the technical procedures for blocking as well who to contact to stop this. For example, the photo sharing app/site Instagram, as shown in Figure 13 (Instagram, 2015), explicitly state this:

![Instagram blocking procedures as at 2015](Figure 10)

Find the policy on blocking and reporting when you join the site. Keep a note of the site’s policies and use them when you are being cyberbullied.

Also you can block messages on your email. Gmail² also has filters where you can type in rules and determine choices to delete email immediately or automatically move it to a folder unread but keeps a copy of it³.
Being Careful Information You Give to Others

Always be careful what information you give to others online, especially those you have not met in person. Many people use the Internet to overcome loneliness using dating sites and social media often sending financial account details, phone numbers, addresses and, alarmingly, naked photos. Being aware of what may happen is vital. People have had their photos put on rating sites where they are posted on a site without permission and are rated with comments from others, which can be hurtful.

Loneliness is a very power motivator to disclose personal information to others. In one study, Al-Saggaf and Nielsen (2014) studied females’ use of Facebook and the choice to self-disclose information to people. They found the following with connected females being those that did not state on their Facebook wall that they were feeling lonely:

1. More lonely people disclosed private information than the connected
2. Less lonely people did not disclose any private information compared to the connected
3. Less lonely people disclosed their Views and their Wall than those connected people
4. More lonely people did not disclose Views and their Wall compared to connected people

Being lonely means being vulnerable, especially if someone wants a partner, which increases the risk of cyberbullying and having your information stolen and used for criminal purposes. This does not mean do not use the Internet for finding friends and partnerships, but be mindful of what information you share.

Keeping Copies of Cyberbullying

Even if the material is distressing, and it is removed from the Internet, keep a copy of what was posted. Keep the email, photo or text, saving them to a drive on your computer and backing it up on an external drive. It may also be needed to be seen by the police or a solicitor.

Police and Legal Action

Choosing to involve the police or take legal action depends on what is being posted about you on the Internet. The key advice from police is that if the cyberbullying threatens your personal safety, report it immediately. One issue is if this cyberbullying is coming from someone in another country. Keep copies of the cyberbullying. The cyberbullying can be investigated by the Australian Federal Police, but this is often not done due to resourcing issues and other country’s not having the same laws as Australia in prosecution.

One unfair aspect is that recourse is difficult. Many people want punishment and have sort legal action. However, defamation, defined as (The Free Dictionary, 2015):
Any intentional false communication, either written or spoken, that harms a person's reputation; decreases the respect, regard, or confidence in which a person is held; or induces disparaging, hostile, or disagreeable opinions or feelings against a person.

However, successful defamation prosecution is expensive and can take a long time to get a ruling. For example, asking a solicitor for advice on defamation can cost over $600 for just a solicitor’s advice. You would need to think carefully before undertaking such legal action and consider taking an online or printed public apology as a retraction. What to consider about the cyberbullying and how it defames your character should be judged on the following as these three things need to be proven in court (The News Manual, 2008):

- That the words were capable of a defamatory meaning as understood by ordinary members of society. Defamatory meaning could be anything which harms the person, in their reputation, their business or in the way other people treat them. The law does not say that the plaintiff must show actual proof of being harmed; it is enough that the false statement could have led to harm.

- That the words identify him (sic) as the person defamed. It is not necessary that he should have been specifically named. If he can show the court that a reasonable person would take the words to refer to him, he will probably have a good case. Groups of people (such as small companies or not for profit associations) can sue for defamation if they can demonstrate that the words identified them as a group.

- That the words or pictures have been published, that is heard or seen by a third person. The first person is the one talking or writing (you), the second person is the person being talked or written about (the plaintiff), the third person is anyone else who may hear or read the offending matter (such as a reader or listener). There is no civil defamation if the words, however bad or untrue, are spoken or written only to the person about whom they are made.

This does not mean that defamation for cyberbullying with monetary payouts is not possible. In one Australian example, a high school teacher in Orange, New South Wales, Australia, had defamatory and false allegation comments made about her on Twitter by a former student. The judge in the full trial ruled in favour of the teacher ordering the student to pay a total of $105,000 in damages to her. How this happened is interesting to note as reported in The Sydney Morning Herald by Whitbourn (2014):

In November 2012, he posted a series of defamatory comments on Twitter and Facebook about Ms Mickle, who took over his father's job on an acting basis after the senior teacher left in 2008 for health reasons.

“For some reason it seems that the defendant bears a grudge against the plaintiff, apparently based on a belief that she had something to do with his father leaving the school,” Judge Elkaim said.

“There is absolutely no evidence to substantiate that belief.”
Judge Elkaim said his impression of Ms Mickle in the witness box was “of a very honest woman who had been terribly hurt both by the comments in general but perhaps more particularly by the suggestion that she may have been responsible for any harm, ill health or effect of any of her actions on the defendant's father.”

This shows what is possible as an outcome for taking legal action in a Court of Law against someone who defames you through cyberbullying. However, this action would have cost the person making the claim against the bully much money to do so, but this example does show what may become commonplace in the future if people can afford the legal expenses to take action against a cyberbully.

**Starting Cyberbullying Awareness**

One suggestion, that may be time-consuming, is to make free online groups or social media pages that give support and advice to those being cyberbullied. Such organised collaborative groups are worthwhile undertakings, though they need more research to prove their effectiveness (Broll, 2014). This is what Sam in this study reported doing. More adults talking about their experiences is important as it shows others there is no shame in cyberbullying, that adults experience the same issues as children and adolescents. A simple free Facebook page may help, though more anonymous websites may be better for those that are not comfortable with revealing their real names, and keeps people same from potential defamation accusations.

**Conclusions on Prevention and Management Strategies**

This chapter only samples the possible range of prevention and management strategies you can use against cyberbullies. There are many resources on the Internet you can consult, but my advice is to find information that is from law enforcement agencies, such as the police, in your area. Legal action is a last resort, yet despite its expense it may be a possible avenue to use.

It is vital in my view to keep records of cyberbullying behaviours towards you. Do not suppress the anger and hurt, but get appropriate help as soon as possible from a doctor or a counselling service. Also, do not feel you can no longer use the Internet, but be more cautious who you interact with. There are degrees of cyberbullying. You may have a stranger call you names in a Facebook post, which whilst rude is not necessarily worth paying attention to. However, persistent, threatening and humiliating posts anywhere on the Internet can be damaging to one’s self-esteem and feelings of safety.

We can argue that the Internet is lawless and we take our chances using it. As adults we are responsible for all that happens there. This is true; however, I argue that we must know and use strategies to prevent and manage it. This chapter gave some suggestions but you must use the ones that are affective for you.
Notes

1  Taken from the Australian Human Rights Commission website specifically about cyberbullying, the web location at time of writing being https://bullying.humanrights.gov.au/cyberbullying-human-rights-and-bystanders-0

2  Gmail, Google’s online email program is found at http://www.gmail.com

3  As at March 2015 you can find how to filter Gmail emails at https://support.google.com/mail/answer/6579?hl=en, however, for Yahoo, Outlook and other email programs there are different ways of filtering emails.
CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSIONS AND CLOSING THOUGHTS ABOUT
THIS EXPLORATION OF A DARK SIDE OF THE
INTERNET

“We would never expect a family to keep their children at home if a predator was
lurking in the park, or for bullied teenagers to quit school for their own good, or
for women to remain indoors as a means to address sexual violence. Yet this is
exactly what is expected of victims when it comes to online abuse.” – Glenn
Canning, Violence in the Digital Age 2013\(^1\)

I have taken you through an exploration of a dark side of the Internet; cyberbullying for
adults is a serious issue that requires more debates, discussion and research about its
effects and how to prevent and manage it. Using research, stories, the media, opinions, authors’
books, academic research and my own and two other stories, we have explored an issue
together that is still, at 2015, perhaps not taken as seriously as it should be.

There may be some readers who are still not convinced that adult-to-adult cyberbullying is
serious enough to warrant debate and investigation. The ‘just turn it off’ idea in our culture is
still prevalent. Yet I would hope that you give some consideration to it being a serious issue
and that many rely on the Internet as a second home where people can be what they want to
be and say what they wish. The loss of the Internet can have a profound effect as our reliance
on it to fulfill us in some way is growing as it ingrains into our daily life. Just like when leave
a job or a city we lose our network. Our virtual networks are important to us and we should
use them safely.

Reflecting on this book and its chapters, although adult-to-adult cyberbullying is overlooked
generally, the media is increasingly report its prevalence. This gives me hope that people will
become educated on how to prevent and manage it. Although at this point-of-time the three
big social media players, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, remain the flashpoints of
cyberbullying, there are more Internet sites to come that may further provide bullies with
more opportunities to bully you.

Cyberbullying does invoke in us feelings that we would not like to admit we as adults have.
The need to belong to something, to interact and to share is very strong. Online we have been
given this opportunity. The Internet has brought unprecedented change because we have
access to information in vast amounts disseminated from every part of the world. Why would
people want to ruin that for us? Anger and frustration, sadism or boredom, feeling
disempowered and unheard are some reasons why this occurs. There are obsessions with
control, with wanting someone to think of us in a certain way or we are hurt by the way they
treated us. All these make us targets of, and perhaps become, cyberbullies.

Consider too how far we have come in terms of using technologies and websites where
cyberbullying may occur. In 2015 Apple released a smart watch. Does this mean the
cyberbully can reach you on something you wear? Also, Facebook is the dominant social
media platform as at 2015, but perhaps something will replace it in the future where
cyberbullies have even more access to victims. We will see in time.
These thoughts and conclusions come from me as being cyberbullied but also from all the evidence I have seen in researching this book. If there was one thing I would like you to take away from this book it is this – if you are being cyberbullied take steps to prevent and manage it and, above all else, remember what is said about you is not accurate but the product of someone else’s version of the reality of you that is false. Continue to enjoy the Internet and all it offers in safety and free of the scourge of cyberbullying.
Notes


“The father of Rehtaeh Parsons says he delivered a statement to the United Nations on Monday, telling the commission on the status of women how his daughter's death after a suicide attempt in 2013 was directly related to cyberbullying.”
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When adults cyberbully each other the consequences can be devastating. Adult-to-adult cyberbullying also does not get the attention it must have to lesson its impact. This book uses research, stories, media reports and personal experience to explore this growing issue.