WHAT MAKES CYBERBULLYING DIFFERENT FROM BULLYING?

- Takes place over digital devices
  - SMS, apps, social media, forums, gaming
- Includes sharing personal information or false information in a public way in order to embarrass or humiliate
- Bullying can occur persistently offering victim no relief
- Information is more permanently available affecting victim for longer
- Bullying is harder to notice as it occurs outside of class
A 2012 study assessed cyberbullying awareness

- Difficult to gauge actual bullying statistics so instead asked 18,000 adult participants from 24 countries to assess their understanding of cyberbullying

- Worldwide 66% of respondents knew about cyberbullying, 10% reported their child had been a victim, 25% knew a child that had been a victim

- Cyberbullying closely tied to Internet access
  - Countries with higher rates of access have more bullying

- 60% of participants cited social networking sites like Facebook as vehicle for cyberbullying

- Mobile devices and online chat rooms cited by 40% of participants each
CYBERBULLYING BY COUNTRY

- 32% of parents in India reported their children had experienced cyberbullying
- 53% of Indonesians reported knowing a child who had been bullied
- 87% of Australians were aware of cyberbullying
- 82% of Americans were aware of cyberbullying
- Less than 50% of Chinese were aware of cyberbullying
  - Countries with high censorship rates tended to under-report awareness
EFFECTS OF BULLYING (BOTH CYBER AND PHYSICAL)

- Decreased concentration, fear of school, and poor grades
- Self-harm, mental illness such as depression and anxiety, and suicide
- In 2012, more than 12 American teens committed suicide due to cyberbullying
- Half of youth suicides in Britain related to bullying
- Since 2007, youth suicides in Japan have ranged between 300 to 350 a year
  - In part associated with bullying
  - Around 224k reports of school bullying in 2015
CASE STUDY: LORI DREW AND MEGAN MEIER

- In 2006, 13-year old Megan Meier committed suicide after online boyfriend “Josh Evans” told her “the world would be a better place without her”
  - Megan had attempted suicide once before and had made comments about suicide to friends earlier
- Later revealed that “Josh” was a fake MySpace user created by Megan’s former best friend, Sarah Drew, Sarah’s mom, Lori (47), and Lori’s employee, Ashley (18)
  - Used to spy on Megan
- No federal statute against cyberbullying and no violation of state laws in Missouri
- Federal prosecutors filed charges in California under CFAA (Computer Fraud and Abuse Act) against Lori for violation of MySpace’s user agreement
  - Charged with four felony charges in first federally prosecuted cyberbullying case
THE LEGALITY OF EULAS

- MySpace’s user agreement requires registrants to provide factual information and to refrain from soliciting personal information from minors and harassing/harming others
  - By clicking “agree” Drew committed same crime as a hacker
- Ashley Grills received immunity in order to testify as prosecution witness
  - Admitted she set up account, did not read terms of service, and posted final message that triggered Megan’s suicide
- Sarah Drew took stand in place of her mother
OUTCOME?

- Lori Drew cleared of 3 felonies but convicted on 3 misdemeanors
  - Jury deadlocked on remaining felony charge of conspiracy
- Federal judge later acquitted misdemeanors
  - Misdemeanors not considered constitutional as it would require Drew to have obtained unauthorized access
  - MySpace did not provide sufficient notice to hold her responsible
- Drew family left Missouri after receiving harassment locally in town and online
CASE STUDY: TYLER CLEMENTI

In 2010, three weeks after starting his freshman year at Rutgers College, Tyler Clementi committed suicide after posting a brief note on Facebook.

Revealed that, three days earlier, his roommate, Dharun Ravi, obtained a video of Clementi kissing another man.

- Clementi had asked for alone time.
- While out of the room, Ravi set up a webcam with hall mate, Molly Wei.
- When Ravi saw his roommate with a man, he tweeted about it to his followers.
- Two days later, Ravi announced via Twitter he’d live-stream Clementi’s second encounter but Ravi did not.

New Jersey charged Ravi and Wei with 15 counts involving invasion of privacy, bias intimidation, tampering with evidence, witness tampering, etc.
Charges against Wei were dropped in order to gain her testimony against Ravi.

Both Wei and Ravi withdrew from Rutgers.

Ravi convicted on 15 counts in 2012.

In 2015, the state Supreme Court ruled the laws under which Ravi was convicted where unconstitutional.

In 2016, appeals court threw out all convictions.

Ravi served 20 days in jail, paid a $10k fine, and did community service.

Clementi’s family created a foundation to help prevent bullying of LGBT youth.
CASE STUDY: MICHELLE CARTER

- In 2014, Carter (17) convinced her boyfriend, Conrad Roy III (18) to kill himself
  - Repeatedly texted Roy, goading him toward suicide
  - During suicide, Roy left truck to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, but Carter ordered him to get back in leading to his death
- Carter and Roy began dating in 2012, but relationship was mostly through texting and telephone calls
- First discussed committing double suicide, then Carter urged Roy to seek psychological counseling before finally encouraging him to kill himself
- Carter charged with involuntary manslaughter in a juvenile court
OUTCOME?

- Carter found guilty
  - Ordered to spend at least 15 months of a 2.5 year sentence incarcerated
- Sentence stayed in 2018 by judge, allowing Carter to be free pending appeals in Massachusetts
  - Involuntary manslaughter conviction upheld in 2019 starting her sentence
- First involuntary manslaughter conviction based on words alone
  - Potential implications for free speech and liability in remote communication
- Carter harassed by online bloggers and commentators
ANTI-BULLYING POLICIES AND MEASURES

- Philippines has Anti-Bullying Act requires elementary and secondary schools to have strategies for prevention and management of bullying behaviors

- In the UK, all schools are required to have anti-bullying policies, but no national law against cyberbullying
  - Laws for harassment and stalking used in this context

- In the US, victims can sue cyberbullies for defamation or harassment, or prosecute for stalking
  - Certain states have anti-cyberbullying laws

- In all cases, it can be difficult to locate, and therefore enforce, cyberbullying laws
STOPPING CYBERBULLYING . . .

- Why do people cyberbully?
- Why is legislation failing to prevent cyberbullying?
- Why did none of the above defendants consider themselves cyberbullies?
- What are the legal risks of prosecuting cyberbullying?
- What is needed to end cyberbullying?
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BULLYING

- Previous wisdom stated bullies suffer from low self-esteem and often were victims themselves of bullying.

- More recent studies suggest bullies view themselves positively, are untroubled by anxiety but lack prosocial behaviors.
  - Good at social navigating but use it entirely for their personal benefit.
  - Often popular but rarely liked.

- Harshly punitive home environments can encourage bullying.
  - Bullies often have strained relationships with parents and peers.

- Adult bullies more likely to sexually harass and exhibit dating aggression.

- Preventing bullying requires building greater empathy in both potential bullies and children who are “bystanders.”
SOCIETAL NORMS AND DEHUMANIZATION

- Dehumanization can emerge from a desire to maintain societal norms
  - Hate groups often do not believe they can co-exist with “the other”
  - Acknowledging “the other” as fully human is a threat to them as individuals
- Bullies use societal fears to their advantage
  - Specifically target those who are already marginalized
  - Easier for bystanders to normalize the bully’s behavior
  - Reinforces social status and structures that already exist
CASE STUDY: GAMERGATE

“It’s about ethics in game journalism”
BRIEF DETOUR: ETHICS IN GAME JOURNALISM

- There is actually an issue with ethics in game journalism!
  - Reviews by journalists and playthroughs by streamers are bought by major publishers to promote their games
  - Little transparency in exchange of gifts or monetary compensation for these promotions
- ...
- But GamerGate has about 0% to do with ethics in game journalism and if anything, it shut down any meaningful conversation there could have been
- Why?
HOW GAMERGATE STARTED

- In 2014, game developer, Zoe Quinn, was accused by her ex-boyfriend of cheating on him with five men, several of whom were game journalists.
- Quinn was accused by gamers of having slept with game journalists to get positive publicity for her recent text-based game, Depression Quest.
- #GamerGate represented in-crowd’s desire to expose corruption of the game industry.
- Quinn’s address and phone number doxxed (revealed publicly).
  - Coordinated death and rape threats forced Quinn to flee her home.
SO WHAT ABOUT ETHICS IN GAME JOURNALISM?

- Kotaku writer, Nathan Grayson, was dating Quinn but he never reviewed Depression Quest
  - Mentioned it once in a half-sentence before his relationship with Quinn started
  - Quinn’s ex-boyfriend later rescinded his accusatory blog posts
- Attacks on Quinn expanded to attacks on/doxxing other women:
  - Feminist critic, Anita Sarkeesian, who created a Youtube series applying feminist critique to games
  - Popular actress and gamer, Felicia Day
  - Game developer, Brianna Wu
- Gamergate mobs petitioned companies such as Intel to pull ads from sites critiquing their movement
GAMERGATE AS BULLYING AND MISOGYNY

- Movement specifically targeted women
- Abuse committed through Facebook, Twitter, etc and coordinated via Discord, Reddit, IRC channels, etc
- Believed that they, as primarily young, white males, were under attack by the media and minorities* who were taking away their safe space of gaming
  - e.g. Gamergaters believed games made by women and/or targeting women was an existential threat to their identity as a “gamer”

* In 2013, women over 18 are 36% of the game-playing population in the US (largest demographic) with women totaling to 48% of game-playing population in the US
EFFECTS ON GAMING COMMUNITY

- The rest of the world looks on GamerGate with horror
  - The term “gamer” becomes more deeply associated with misogyny and violence
- Schism between “main stream” and “diverse” game communities
  - Toxicity of online gaming communities continues to be both unacceptable and largely unavoidable
  - Publishers recognize there is money in “diverse” gaming and therefore target non-white males, which furthers Gamergaters’ victim complex
- Rise of red pill/incel subcultures but if you don’t know what those things are, consider yourself lucky!
- Still no real discussion about corporate influence on game reviews, though...
WIDER EFFECTS

- Gamergaters tried to expand into science fiction/fantasy novels by attempting to take over the 2015 Hugo Awards

- Successfully expanded into politics, evolving into movement known as the “alt-right”

- Alt-right is a hard-to-categorize movement, but, in Breitbart’s own words, basically a bunch of trolls:
  - “The alt-right is a movement born out of the youthful, subversive, underground edges of the internet. 4chan and 8chan are hubs of alt-right activity. For years, members of these forums - political and non-political - have delighted in attention-grabbing, juvenile pranks.”

- Usually varying degrees of white supremacy/misogyny in thinking
WHY DID GAMERGATE HAPPEN?

My personal theory:

- Gaming culture has always had issues with promoting insensitivity, exclusivity, and provocativity in its inter-personal interactions.

- As gaming becomes more mainstream, fringe groups and subcultures have lost their perceived home/safe space.

- As gaming becomes more mainstream, fringe groups and subcultures become a “target demographic” and all the power that entails.

- Result is “gamers” who take out aggression/frustration on “safe” target (i.e. marginalized people) rather than addressing internal unhappiness or conflicts arising from growing numbers of “bros and jocks” in gaming circles.

- Toxic masculine culture has made it difficult for young men to understand and express the complexity of their feelings in a meaningful, productive way.
INSTAPOLL: PROMOTING EMPATHY ACROSS DIVIDES?

- List one specific way you feel you can promote empathy in yourself and others. Try to make this as specific as possible and relevant to your personal experience and habits.*

* The personal experience and habits you mention need to be safe for work and not involve illegal activity, thanks!
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