Cyberbullying at Canadian Universities: Linking Research, Policy and Practice

Wednesday, March 12th, 2014
Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, Simon Fraser University
Our Goals

1. engage academic staff and administrators in better understanding an emerging issue that we will need to be able to respond to more comprehensively in the future;

2. develop a process based on research and dialogue that can be replicated on other important issues of a similar type we may be facing;

3. highlight and model best practices in university collaboration; and,

4. increase the profile of key applied research taking place at SFU and in other institutions.
Cyberbullying among university students: Gendered experiences, impacts, and perspectives

Presenter: Chantal Faucher, PhD
Postdoctoral fellow, Centre for Education, Law & Society, SFU

© Chantal Faucher, 2014. All rights reserved. No part of this presentation may be used without the express written permission of the author. cfaucher@sfu.ca
Cyber-bullying at University: Students’ and Faculty Members’ Experiences and Solutions

- 4 Canadian universities directly involved

- Primary research questions:
  1. Extent, nature, form and impact of cyber-bullying at the university level
  2. Solutions students propose and link to ethic of care
  3. Current policies in place to address cyber-bullying at universities and how these might be improved

- Methods used: policy scan, surveys, interviews, focus groups

- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Standard Research Grant ID #401-2011-1800.

© Chantal Faucher, 2014. All rights reserved.
Definition of cyberbullying

- Cyber-bullying uses language that can defame, threaten, harass, bully, exclude, discriminate, demean, humiliate, stalk, disclose personal information, or contain offensive, vulgar or derogatory comments. Cyber-bullying is intended to harm or hurt the recipient.

- Examples:
  - Email
  - Text message
  - Postings online (words, photos, videos)
  - Impersonation
  - Exclusion
Survey methods

- **Online survey**
  - Distributed through networks
  - Advertised in student message boards
  - Circulated through distribution list-serves

- **Survey sections:**
  - Background (demographics & ICT usage)
  - Experiences (victims)
  - Participation (perpetrators)
  - Solutions
  - Opinions
A gendered issue...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>n=</th>
<th>% female resp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>1055</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University B</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University D (preliminary)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey findings

**Background**

- No major differences between male and female respondents in terms of:
  - Demographic profile
  - Academic profile

**ICT usage**

- Time online for university work
  - Majority 1-2 hours or less/day
- Time online during free time
  - Majority 3+ hours/day
  - ~10%: 6+ hours/day
- Most common online activities
  - Email
  - School work
  - Entertainment, news, FB
## Findings – prevalence of cyberbullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victims of CB</th>
<th>U-A M</th>
<th>U-A F</th>
<th>U-B M</th>
<th>U-B F</th>
<th>U-C M</th>
<th>U-C F</th>
<th>U-D M</th>
<th>U-D F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By a friend or acquaintance at the univ.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By someone they did not know</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By a faculty member</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Chantal Faucher, 2014. All rights reserved.
Findings – experiences and impacts

- Primary formats
- Same gender CB and CB by supposed friends most common among female students
- Reasons & intents

- Impacts (reported by > 1/3)
  - Affect ability to do assignments
  - Affect relationships
  - Mental health issues
  - Fear for safety

- Female students more likely to report impacts
- Female students more likely to have told someone about the CB
Examples of CB experiences & impacts

- “It made me feel embarrassed because it was publicized for everyone to see (mutual friends etc.) It also made me feel insecure about myself with all the untrue and negative comments. Not commenting made it stressful because I was unable to defend myself and ruined my reputation.”

- “The tutor-marker for our class was repeatedly rude in her comments to students in the online class [...] several felt unsupported and as though they should not ask for help or clarification when they needed it because they were afraid of how she would respond or how she might judge them/grade their work differently.”

- “Over Facebook I was sent a personal message from a bully. Disclosed within this message was a death threat. They threatened that if I didn’t stop coming to school and being who I was that they were going to kill me. It was the scariest time of my entire life.”
Gender differences – explanations

- Gendered ICT usage patterns
- Relational aggression
- Affective and cognitive empathy deficits
- Power and Control model
Student perspectives on solutions

- Provide counselling/support services for cyberbullied victims
- Establish anonymous phone-in line for reporting cyberbullying
- Engage the university community in developing a strong anti-CB policy
- Develop a more respectful university culture where kind behaviour is modelled by all
- Suspend or expel students who participate in CB
The Dark Side of the Ivory Tower: Cyberbullying of University Faculty and Teaching Personnel

Presenter: Wanda Cassidy, PhD
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education
Director, Centre for Education, Law and Society, SFU

© Wanda Cassidy, 2014. All rights reserved. No part of this presentation may be used without the express written permission of the author. cassidy@sfu.ca
## Selected Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Uni A</th>
<th>Uni B</th>
<th>Uni C</th>
<th>Uni D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#Respondents</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TM/TM/A/Sess/LT</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 1st Lang</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned CB</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prevalence of cyberbullying experienced by university faculty members in last 12 months

© Wanda Cassidy, 2014. All rights reserved.
## What? Who? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>By Students</th>
<th>By Colleagues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Means</strong></td>
<td>Email + Prof Rating Sites</td>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Know Perpetrator?</strong></td>
<td>67, 80, 85, 100%</td>
<td>89, 100, 100, 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why?</strong></td>
<td>Teaching-related reasons</td>
<td>Work-related reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Position or role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender: 0, 6, 46%</td>
<td>Gender: 0, 22, 27,40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age: 0, 6, 31%</td>
<td>Age: 11, 17, 20, 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intent</strong></td>
<td>Insulting Demanding</td>
<td>Insulting Demeaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Wanda Cassidy, 2014. All rights reserved.
Examples: CB by Students

- “In a course chat room, a student made comments identifying me as a bitch and marking too hard with high expectations.”

- “Defamation of character on Ratemyprofessor. Insulting and lied about me....I did not really feel good about going to that class knowing that someone was hating me....It was pretty depressing and unmotivating.”

- “Email, text messages making comments that I was incompetent, not accessible, too slow, workload too difficult and the words used were ‘useless’, ‘lousy’, and ‘I am reporting you.’ Student was not open to feedback. I felt attacked, humiliated.”

- “The student didn’t like [my] policies and she continually wrote emails implying I was stupid and put them in capitals sometimes copying the President’s office. I am still unable to stop it.”
Examples: CB by Colleagues

- I was bullied by a fellow instructor who made an error and when I followed up, it angered her. I was extremely upset in the escalation that occurred, which eventually included a few nasty, harassing and insulting emails.”

- A group of faculty did not like a process for doing a particular task, and 4 of them wrote emails indicating I didn’t know what I was doing, yelling in emails, extreme rudeness, saying they would go to the President if I didn’t do what they wanted....Stressful. They eventually gave up and stopped on their own after one year when I did not give in to their rudeness.”

- I was sent lots of text messages from an individual (a colleague) who believed I had been gossiping about her. She was threatening and told me to fix the problem I had caused. She texted me 73 times in one day, and over a week it was about 180 messages. When I didn’t respond it was worse.”
## Gender Issues: Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Bullied by...</th>
<th>Males %</th>
<th>Females %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Wanda Cassidy, 2014. All rights reserved.
## Impact: CB by Students + Colleagues (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-reported</th>
<th>UNI A (S / C)</th>
<th>UNI B (S / C)</th>
<th>UNI C (S / C)</th>
<th>UNI D (S / C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear for safety</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitting</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relat at U</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relat Outside U</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To CB back</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Wanda Cassidy, 2014. All rights reserved.
Top 3 Solutions Posed

- By Students:
  1) Provide counseling/support services for cyber-bullied victims
  2) Establish anonymous phone-in line for reporting C.
  3) Engage the university in developing a strong university anti-bullying policy

- By Faculty:
  1) Engage the university in developing a strong university anti-bullying policy
  2) Develop a more respectful university culture where kind behaviour is modeled by all
  3) Provide counseling/support services for cyber-bullied victims

© Wanda Cassidy, 2014. All rights reserved.
Relevant Theory

- Academic entitlement, classroom incivility and harassment
- Contrapower harassment
- Power and control model
- Gender issues
When on-line exchanges byte: An examination of the policy environment governing cyberbullying at the university level

Presenter: Margaret Jackson, PhD
Professor Emerita, School of Criminology, SFU

© Margaret Jackson, 2014. All rights reserved. No part of this presentation may be used without the express written permission of the author. margarej@sfu.ca
Introduction

- Cyberbullying at university
  - Emerging issue
  - Different conceptualization of problem
  - Different policy intents
  - Different policy lenses
Policy scan

● Rationale
  ● Void in research literature
  ● Policy emerging as key part of solution according to students and faculty members
  ● **Question**: What does it mean for cyberbullying and responses to it at the university level when differing policies with differing policy intents are employed?
  ● Policy analytic theory orients our interpretation
Policy scan, continued

- **Method**
  - Scan of all university policies posted online
    - Full policy lists
    - Search terms: cyber-bullying, bullying, human rights, appropriate conduct, ethical conduct, harassment, intimidation, slander, libel, threat, computer use, code of conduct, hazing, and discrimination.
  - Selection of policies to include
  - Indexing of relevant variables such as definition, types of cyberbullying behaviours; possible penalties/solutions; prevention; complaint procedure to follow; discrimination; hazing, etc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/territory</th>
<th>Number of universities</th>
<th>Number of policies</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Québec</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>465</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Types of relevant policies

- Most common:
  - Codes of student conduct and discipline (32%)
  - Harassment/discrimination (17%) + human rights and ethics (5.4%) = 22.4%
  - Electronic communications (21.5%)

© Margaret Jackson, 2014. All rights reserved.
Key components

- Definition (in 45.4% of policies):
  - Detailed
  - Informative
  - Absent (and/or definition by examples)
Queen's University recognizes that all members of the University Community have the right to be free from harassment and discrimination. This includes sexual harassment, harassment based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, creed and sexual orientation or analogous grounds. Such harassment and discrimination has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's or a group's work or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working, living or academic environment.

Harassment and discrimination are exacerbated where:

- submission to or rejection of such conduct is used or threatened to be used as a factor in employment, academic status, grade, accreditation or other decisions affecting that individual or as the basis for any other form of advantage or reprisal.
Mount Allison’s University’s Policy on Workplace Harassment (2011)

- Personal harassment means any objectionable conduct, comment or display that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be offensive to an employee whether it occurs once or on a number of occasions.[...]

- Personal harassment may in some cases be discrimination on the grounds covered under the New Brunswick Human Rights Code, as may be amended from time to time.
4.14 The Electronic Communication System shall not be used to create or distribute:

[...]

e) offensive, obscene or indecent images, data or any material that would violate the law;

f) defamatory material;


g) material that would by intent or otherwise harass the recipient;

h) material that would violate the privacy of others; or

i) messages that are anonymous or deliberately forged or that have deceptive address header information.
Key components, continued

- “Cyber”-behaviour addressed (in 35.7% of policies)

- Context:
  - 90% of students report daily internet use
  - Many students report spending several hours online daily
  - Vast majority of students engaging in online social networking and text messaging
Key components, continued

- Actions to be taken upon breach of policy (in 77.2% of policies)
  - Whom to contact
  - Complaint procedure
  - Conflict resolution
  - Appeals
  - Possible sanctions (73.5%)
Key components, continued

- Prevention (in 21.7% of policies)
  - Priority
  - Role of university in awareness raising; methods needed to sensitize all concerned
Conclusion/Take Away Points

- Awareness of the many differing policies available is needed along with the impacts of those differing policy lenses on decision-making and outcomes.

- Need for transparency and consistency; provide specific steps to be taken for each policy.

- Programs in place to support their application; mediation/RJ/counselling responses for parties.

- Prevention policies are also key to goal of reduction of cyberbullying/harassment; e.g., civility culture.

- Proper policy implementation and evaluation.
Symposium wrap-up

By Terry Waterhouse, Chief Safety Officer, SFU

© Terry Waterhouse & Laura MacDonald, 2014. All rights reserved. No part of this presentation may be used without the express written permission of the authors. twaterho@sfu.ca laura_macdonald@sfu.ca
Themes – Morning

● Blurring the lines
  ● Personal, Online, physical – what is the “campus”?  
  ● Freedom of expression AND harassment – where and how does one impact the other  
  ● Policy and legalities – criminal?  
  ● Perception and reality  
  ● “Relationships” in an era of technology

● Fear & Under-reporting – retribution
  ● Anonymity and instant gratification – challenges for responding

● The “legal” issues
  ● Changing the values that are the underpinnings of policy and law – children: be nice; adults???
Themes – Morning

- Culture – Accountability and Responsibility
  - How to/when to change behaviour – how does that change culture?
  - Entitlement
  - Kindness and leadership – the university family

- Skills and Responses – How do we address as individuals?

- Willingness
  - Will the “university” take up the challenges?
  - Will we involve everyone?
Themes – Morning

● “Policy” issues
  ● Knowledge
  ● Awareness
  ● Willingness

● What does it mean?
  ● Awareness and the role of the “bystander”
  ● Definitions?
  ● Cyber-bullying AND Bullying – Similarities and Differences
Themes - Afternoon

● **Definition**
  ● Develop a definition from dialogue
  ● Focus on behaviour not the medium

● **Policy and Process**
  ● Make the issue more “visible” – like plagiarism
  ● Finding the Balance
  ● Support systems and Roles for Students – Peer to Peer and Mentorship
  ● Vulnerabilities and Risk – Behaviour Intervention Team
  ● Educative vs. Disciplinary
  ● Resources
  ● Empowering “bystanders”
Themes - Afternoon

- **Resources**
  - How to get help
  - Point person for faculty
  - Confidentiality
  - Link with k – 12

- **Education**
  - “digital citizenship”
  - Information and awareness campaigns
Thank You

- All of you....
- Presenters
- Facilitators and Notetakers
- SFU
  - The Centre for Dialogue
  - Faculty of Education
  - CELS
  - VP Academic
  - VP Finance and Administration
  - Safety & Risk Services
- CHANTAL AND LAURA