Cyberbullying
through the new media

Findings from an international network

Edited by Peter K Smith and Georges Steffgen

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Cyberbullying is one of the darker and more troubling aspects to the growing accessibility of new media technologies. Children in developed countries engage with cyberspace at younger and younger ages, and the use of the internet as a means to bully and harass has been greeted with alarm by educationalists, parents, the media, and governments.

This important new book is the result of a four-year international collaboration, funded by the EU, to better understand how we can cope and confront cyberbullying, and how new media technologies can be used to actually support the victims of such abuse. The chapters in this book initially define the historical and theoretical context to cyberbullying, before examining key issues involved in managing this pervasive phenomenon. Coverage includes:

- The definition and measurement of cyberbullying.
- The legal challenges in tackling cyberbullying across a number of international contexts.
- The role of mobile phone companies and internet service providers in monitoring and prevention.
- How the media frame and present the issue, and how that influences our understanding.
- How victims can cope with the effects of cyberbullying, and the guidelines and advice provided in different countries.
- How cyberbullying can continue from school into further education, and the strategies that can be used to prevent it.
- The ways in which accessing 'youth voice', or maximizing the contribution of young people themselves to the research process, can enhance our understanding.

This book will be an invaluable resource for researchers, students, policy makers and administrators with an interest in how children and young people are rendered vulnerable to bullying and harassment through a variety of online channels.

Peter K. Smith is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the Unit for School and Family Studies at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He chaired COST Action IS0801 on Cyberbullying (2008--2012), and is currently PI of a European–Indian Network project on bullying, cyberbullying, and school safety and wellbeing (2012–2015). His research interests are in social development, school bullying, play and grandparenting.

Georges Steffgen is a professor at the University of Luxembourg. He directs a research group on aggression – especially violence – in school and cyberbullying, as well as approaches to health promotion. He has been project manager of national and international scientific projects on violence in school and anger. He has authored and co-authored more than 40 papers in international journals and books, and he is editor or co-editor of 14 books. He co-chaired COST Action IS0801 on Cyberbullying.

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Preface

Amongst a number of recent books on cyberbullying, this book presents an unusual perspective. It is based on a four-year networking collaboration involving 28 European countries, plus Australia, in a sustained program of research, and training activities. This was financed by a COST Action, and altogether six Working Groups of researchers collaborated across a range of activities within the action theme 'Cyberbullying: Coping with negative and enhancing positive uses of new technologies, in relationships in educational settings'.

The action produced a considerable range of academic and practical outcomes, and this book brings them together in a way which we hope will be interesting for all those researching in, or actively concerned about cyberbullying, and how Information and Communications Technology (ICT) can be abused, but also used positively, in schools.

In the introductory section, Peter K. Smith and colleagues give a brief overview of the topic, and then describe what a COST Action is and how this program of networking was organized.

The second section deals with definitions and measurement issues. In Chapter 2, Ersilia Menesini and colleagues discuss how cyberbullying has been defined. Surveying two empirical studies and recent literature on the topic, the chapter presents a thorough comparison of different approaches and criteria, and proposes an integrated definition. In Chapter 3, Ann Frisén and colleagues describe the results of a systematic review of 44 instruments used to assess cyberbullying, emphasising structural and psychometric properties, such as validity and reliability, as well as the conceptual and definitional basis. An important aim is to provide criteria for readers to evaluate and choose instruments according to their own aims.

The third section is on regulation, and the media. In Chapter 4, Marilyn Campbell and Ales Zavrsnik explore whether cyberbullying should be criminalized, by examining the purposes of the law and its application to cyberbullying. The role of the law in reflecting social norms and legal influences on anti-bullying policies in educational settings is also reviewed. Current legal applications in different countries are considered and challenges to updating the law provided. In Chapter 5, Iain Coyne and Vasiliki

Gountsidou consider the role of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Mobile Phone Companies (MPCs) in the cyberbullying process. It debates the notion of industry self-regulation and outlines the EU Safer Social Networking Principles as a guide to evaluating the effectiveness of industry action. In Chapter 6, Heidi Vandebosch and colleagues point out that the amount of attention that media pay to cyberbullying, and the way they frame the issue, influence the general public and policymakers. They report the findings of a content analysis of national, daily newspapers in eight countries; these indicate that cyberbullying has become an important news issue, with the tone of the majority of articles often being alarmist.

The fourth section looks at coping with cyberbullying and guidelines. In Chapter 7, Conor McGuckin and colleagues explore current knowledge on coping with cyberbullying, providing a systematic review of the literature in the area. The issues regarding the research agenda in this area are explored, and attention is directed towards what is known and what those interested in the area should focus on for current and future research. In Chapter 8, Mona O'Moore and colleagues review nationally published guidelines already in place in various countries. Criteria for assessing best practice were determined to assess the two most prominent national guidelines in each of 27 countries, according to school ethos, policies and programs, skills and collaborative partnerships, and as they targeted parents, young people, schools, and teachers. For each target group, they review the research evidence, present key findings from their content analysis, and make recommendations of practical importance.

The fifth section is on research challenges. In Chapter 9, Helen Cowie and colleagues examine research on cyberbullying among university students. Although prevalence rates are lower for university students than for school pupils, the effects of being bullied at school can persist into young adulthood. They present both qualitative and quantitative data from four countries, explore the nature and incidence of cyberbullying, discuss continuities and discontinuities and identify some possible interventions to alleviate the problem. In Chapter 10, Barbara Spears and colleagues point out that electronic and virtual environments have become increasingly important in the social lives of adolescents. They describe the impact of ICT use on cognitive skill, academic development, social development and relationships; and discuss the range of positive uses that these new technologies can have. In Chapter 11, Barbara Spears and Jette Kofoed point out that traditionally, bullying research has focused on survey methodologies and what has been largely missing is the voice of young people and methodologies to allow for carefully listening to youth voices. The insights into youth life and social media that can be gained through qualitative methods can add valuable and important knowledge to what we already know from surveys and quantitative studies, including the subtleties of youth life mediated by technologies and the variability of it. In Chapter 12, Donna Cross and colleagues, who formed the Australian representation in COST IS0801, describe four major

cyberbullying research initiatives conducted and the outputs generated from each in Australia during the COST Action. They consider the implications for policy and practice for Australian education systems and for schools, their staff, students and their parents. In Chapter 13, Vera Boronenko and colleagues review the opportunities for networking, and training of early career researchers, provided by COST IS0801. The first part of the chapter reviews the use of Short Term Scientific Missions, with six case study examples. The second part provides an overview of the organization, and the outcomes of two Training Schools; one in Australia, and one in Finland.

Finally, we invited three sets of commentators to reflect on the work of COST IS0801, and on the field of cyberbullying. All had attended at least one of our events, but none were on the Management Committee of the Action. Justin Patchin and Sameer Hinduja provide a commentary from the perspective of leading researchers in the USA, looking at the work primarily done in Europe, and Australia. Anders Eklund and Susan Flocken, from ETUCE, provide a practitioner commentary, from the perspective of potential users of the knowledge gained through the research such as described in the book. Keith Sullivan provides some thoughts on bridging research and practice. This seems particularly appropriate in an area where much of the research is inspired by the aim of improving the well-being, and happiness of young people in schools.

We would like to thank our many academic colleagues who have contributed to this book; but we also wish to thank the Science and Administrative Officers in the COST Office in Brussels, who worked with us over the four years. For much of this period Dr Julia Stamm was our Science Officer, and a special thanks must go to her for her advice and help for our First Training School in Melbourne. We also wish to thank Ms Felicitas Ambrosius, Ms Geny Piotti, Ms Solène Droy, Ms Anja van der Snickt, and Dr Andreas Obermaier; their support has always been helpful. A special thanks also to Ms Marie Abel for her systematic and helpful format checking of the manuscript of this book.

Peter K. Smith, London
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