

# New Forms of School Bullying and Violence

Cyberbullying, Happy Slapping  
and Other New Trends

International Online Conference  
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## Conference Report



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## Introduction

School bullying and violence is a phenomenon that is in the focus of public attention in most Western societies. Since the nineties there has been a growing awareness on the problem of SBV followed by an increasing number of studies, the development of programs and in recent years also the establishment of a growing number of web resources (cp. Minton & O'Moore, 2004,).

For many years research focused on rather "traditional" forms of school bullying and violence that met certain criteria. According to one widespread definition (Olweus, 1993, 1999) a person is 'being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students'. It also involves an imbalance of power, where the victim has difficulty defending him/herself.

School bullying and violence can occur in various forms and can be both direct and indirect: While direct bullying can be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking or pushing) or verbal (e.g. name calling, threatening or rumor spreading) in its nature, indirect bullying (e.g. social isolation, intentional exclusion) is rather subtle and is usually more difficult to detect.

In recent years new forms of school bullying and violence emerged such as *cyberbullying* or *happy slapping*. The specific of these new forms of SBV, that do not necessarily meet the traditional criteria of bullying, is that they make use of electronic devices such as websites, e-mails, instant messaging, text messages, blogs or mobile phones.

Apart from these new forms of SBV that are related to new information and communication technologies there are also forms of bullying – like e.g. homophobic bullying, racist bullying or dating violence - that are not new in the proper meaning of the word. In spite of that by the public they are perceived as rather new phenomena as they only recently came focus of the media.

The online conference "New Forms of School Bullying and Violence" aimed at bringing together experts and practitioners dealing or affected by new forms of SBV in order to make them exchange experiences. In this report we give an overview about the conference's main objectives, its structure, its participants and of course its main outcomes.

## **VISIONARIES-NET: the project behind the online conferences**

The online conference “New Forms of School Bullying and Violence” is one of five online conferences that is held as part of the VISIONARIES-NET project funded by the European Commission within the Socrates Minerva program. Before we present some selected outcomes of this conference we first would like to outline some basic ideas of our project, its background, objectives and the partners that cooperate in this project.

### **Background and starting point of the project**

School and juvenile violence have been rising constantly over the past decade and have wide-ranging implications on our societies. The growing number of national and International conferences on violence in school points out the importance of meetings and networks. Nevertheless, it is obvious that only a very limited number of experts and practitioners get the chance to participate in conferences and exchange their experiences with others, especially on an International level.

The Internet offers new possibilities: One of the benefits of online-discussions or conferences is that they have the potential of bringing together users with different background - e.g. in terms of culture, education, experiences or citizenship – who would hardly meet in real life. The overall idea behind this project, the VISIONARIES-NET project, is that in spite of all differences in terms of culture, educational or professional background, age and target group (pupils, parents, researchers etc.) we assume that there is much people from different countries who face similar problems can learn from each other.

In the VISIONARIES-NET project we invite people affected by and dealing with school bullying and violence to online conferences in order to facilitate discussions, to analyse the situation in a selected field within the broad topic of school bullying and violence and to work out common, sometimes innovative solutions.

### **The VISIONARIES-NET project, its partners and sponsors**

The VISIONARIES-NET<sup>1</sup> project is a European cooperative project from institutes and organisation from four European countries - Germany, France, Spain and Romania. The partners are:

- Centre for Educational Research, University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany (co-ordination)
- Department of Education, Faculty of Sciences of Education, Universidad de Córdoba, Spain
- European Forum for Urban Safety, Paris, France
- CONCEPT Foundation, Bucharest, Romania

The project that started in October 2004 and ends at 2006 was supported by the Socrates/Minerva program of the European Commission.

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<sup>1</sup>VISIONARIES-NET is an acronym for ‘violence in school - initiative on the net archiving resources for European states: net of experts’.

The VISIONARIES-NET project builds on the VISIONARY project (2000-2003) – also funded by Socrates/Minerva program of the European Commission - that focused on implementing a European Internet portal on school bullying and violence that aimed at providing information and facilitating communication on school bullying and violence ([www.bullying-in-school.info](http://www.bullying-in-school.info)). The portal that includes background information, link collections, news section and much more was created by partners from Germany, Denmark, Finland, Portugal and the UK.

As a part of the VISIONARIES-NET project this portal was completely updated and extended by additional sections such as blogs, best practice sections and online polls. Apart from this the portal is available in three further languages now: French, Spanish and Romanian.

### Objectives of the project

As mentioned above one of the main ideas behind the VISIONARIES-NET project is that in spite of differences in terms of countries, cultures or educational background there is much people can learn from one another.

The VISIONARIES-NET project mainly addresses persons engaged in different kind of activities related to violence prevention in school. Its main objective is to bring these persons together in online conferences that unite selected groups of experts and practitioners.

Apart from networking the participants of the online conferences themselves another goal of the project is not only to inform a broader public about the conferences' outcomes but to include them in the discussion process. This will be realized by means of web logs that aim at publishing selected outcomes of the conferences' discussions and that encourage users of the VISIONARY portal to continue the discussion.

### The Online Conference “New Forms of School Bullying and Violence”

The online conference “New Forms of School Bullying and Violence” was the third from five online conferences of the VISIONARIES-NET project. An overview about the other four online conferences can be found at: <http://www.bullying-in-school.info/en/content/forum-conferences/online-conferences.html>

### Objectives of the conference

The objective of this online conference was to find out more about new forms of SBV such as cyberbullying or happy slapping. The conference aimed at making its participants discuss about their experiences, concepts and strategies. Furthermore it aimed at bringing together and networking people who share similar interests and deal with new forms of SBV from different perspectives such as the perspective of researchers, parents, teachers or pupils.

The discussions intended to find out more about the following topics:

- What new forms of SBV are we currently confronted with and are they really new?
- What are differences and similarities between the countries of the participants?
- What can we do to tackle these new forms of SBV and how can we implement prevention strategies?

- What can we learn from other countries that have more experiences with these new forms of SBV?

Furthermore the conference aimed at giving the participants the opportunity ...

- to meet others who also offer web resources on school bullying and violence
- to find out more about approaches and ideas from other parts of the world
- to learn and profit from others who deal with the same problems and challenges
- to network with experts from other countries and cultures

## Concept, Methodology and Duration

### The conference: an asynchronous forum that is open for four weeks

The online conference was not an online conference in the traditional sense that includes multimedia online presentation and is limited to a 2-3 days period.

The “heart” of the conference was a virtual meeting room in form of a so called *asynchronous forum* that was open 24 hours a day to our participants. The form of an asynchronous forum was chosen because there were participants from different countries and time zones and because none of the participants should have been excluded by the time discussions take place or the techniques that were used. In an asynchronous forum, postings from other participants can be read and commented whenever the participants want, so that the participation can easily be integrated in the participants` time schedule.

The forum was open for *four weeks*. As all participants were supposed to be involved in several other activities a timeframe was chosen that is long enough to accommodate the participants` professional and other responsibilities and give both – the participants and the moderators - enough flexibility to participate at the online conference. Experiences show that it takes some time to establish good discussions, especially when crossing time zones and when the discussions include intercultural exchange.

### The topics: the participants help precisising the topics

The **topics** that were discussed in this conference highly **depended on the interests** of the participants. The participants were considered to be the experts for the potential, the challenges and the limits of Internet resources and therefore would like to come back to your expertise when defining the topics to be discussed at this conference.

In order to make sure that the experiences, interests and expectations of all participants can be considered for the selection of the topics of the week and the single discussion threads a method was applied that resembled the so called **Delphi approach**. According to a definition of Linston and Turoff (2002) the Delphi method “may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem.” One significant element of a Delphi study is that in a multi-level process a series of questionnaires is applied to a group of pre-selected experts. This series of questionings aims at structuring a field of research that is widely unstructured and which has not been subject of research yet. Within the VISIONARIES-NET project a modified Delphi approach was be applied. Questionings of all participants preceded the conference. All participants were asked to answer 4 short questions

related to the overall topic of the conference. The participants' answers were categorised and served as a starting point for the conference's discussions.

### **The structure and framework of the conference**

As mentioned above the conference's forum was open for a time span of four weeks. According to our original plan it was foreseen to open a new topic of the week with the beginning of the week. For each **topic of the week** it was intended to focus on 2-4 selected topics in separate threads. In order not to have too many discussion threads open at the same time all open threads related to the former topic of the week were intended to be closed once the new threads related to the new topic of the week was opened. In practice this original plan was handled rather flexible in order not to interrupt good and productive discussions and to give participants more time to contribute to the discussions. In consequence the topics of the week partly overlapped so that more than 3-4 topics were open at the same time.

In a four-weeks-conference with several parallel discussions and numerous postings, that is open for 24 hours a day for most participants it's hardly possible to follow all discussions. Therefore the main points of the discussions were summarised in form of short **interim and final summaries** for all threads in the topic of the week section. The interim summaries made it possible to keep track of the discussions even if the respective person was not able to participate actively at the discussions on a daily basis. Apart from this a **daily newsletter** was sent to all participants of the conference in order to inform them about new threads, new interim and final summaries or interesting topics that came up in the discussions.

The first discussions revealed that there was a need to discuss topics that were not directly related to the overall topic of the conference "coping with SBV using the Internet". For this purpose an **off-topic section** was introduced that gave room for discussions about e.g. how to encounter victims and bullies in general, terms used for bullying and violence in different countries, presentations of some of the participants' sites or projects and several others more.

### **The conference blog: continuing the discussions with a broader audience**

It is one of the conference's purposes not to restrict it to a limited group of experts but to include a broader audience of Internet users. For this purpose selected outcomes of the conference were published in a weblog at the VISIONARY portal in order to inform the users of the blog about the conference's outcomes and above all in order to continue the discussions with a broader public. The conference blog is available at <http://blog.bullying-in-school.info>

## Participants and moderators of the conference

### Moderators

Thomas Jäger (Germany) (main moderation week 1 and 2)  
Joaquín Mora-Merchan (Spain) (main moderation week 3 and 4)  
Urban Lissmann (Germany, co-moderation)  
Julia Riebel (Germany, co-moderation)  
Maria José (Spain) (co-moderation)

### Participants

Paul Horton (Denmark)	Can Gezgör (Turkey)
Kevin Perry (Denmark)	Kazim Alat (Turkey)
Catherine Blaya (France)	Peter Smith (UK)
Werner Ebner (Germany)	Andy Hickson (UK)
Tamara Ebner (Germany)	Claire Monks (UK)
Catarina Katzer (Germany)	Colin Moorhouse (UK)
Ulrich Krämer (Germany)	Rob Osborn (UK)
Marcus Lüpke (Germany)	Sue Sanders (UK)
Stephen Minton (Ireland)	Robert Slonje (UK)
Mona O`Moore (Ireland)	Aramis Lopes (Brazil)
Oliviero Facchinetti (Italy)	Marisol Moreira (Uruguay)
Beatrice Roselletti (Italy)	Colleen Taylor (Canada)
Rinus Rodenberg (Netherlands)	Elisabeth Englander (USA)
Jörgen Stoute (Netherlands)	Paul Guerino (USA)
Helga Johannessen (Norway)	Angi Littlejohn (USA)
Juan Calmaestra Villén (Spain)	Tom Letson (USA)
Fuensanta Cerezo (Spain)	Sandra Peters (USA)
María José Mohedano García (Spain)	Andy Tomko (USA)
Juan Manuel Munoz Gonzalez (Spain)	Nancy Willard (USA)
Antonio Jesús Rodríguez Hildalgo (Spain)	Loreine Wynne (USA)
Victoria Trianes Torres (Spain)	Marilyn Campbell (Australia)
Bo Munthe (Sweden)	John Fenaughty (New Zealand)
Serdar Degirmencioglu (Turkey)	Imelda Kemeza (Uganda)

## Outcomes of the conference

### The Delphi questioning

As mentioned previously a Delphi-questioning preceded the conference's discussions in order to include the participants in the process of precisising the topics of this week's threads. Below there is a short overview about the overall questions given in the Delphi-questionnaire together with a summary of the main outcomes of our categorisation.

**Question 1: Are there any new forms or trends related to school bullying and violence that you currently witness in your country? If yes, please try to name them and give examples.**

In the first thread of the discussion in the first week, for which the outcomes of this questionings were used, the participants differentiated between two types of new forms and trends: First, there are those forms and trends of SBV which happen via new media and new technologies and are therefore new in the sense that they have not been existing for a long time. Cyberbullying as well as all those new forms that rely on the use of mobile phones, like e.g. the fast spreading new phenomenon "happy slapping" would fall into this category. Second there are other forms of SBV – like for example homophobic bullying and violence against females – which have been happening for a long time, but which are only lately brought to public attention by the media.

New trends belonging to the first category that were mentioned by the participants are:

- Cyberbullying: With 10 participants naming cyberbullying as a new form of SBV, this phenomenon was the one most mentioned in the questionnaire.  
*Example: "cyber bullying by email, msn messaging, texting by mobile phone, degoratory websites, flaming"*
- Use of mobile phones: The use of mobile phones as a means of bullying was mentioned five times. In this context there was also mentioned (thrice) the combination of cell phones and the internet.  
*Example: "Pupils take pictures on cell-phone when other pupils during gymnastic are naked when changing. Picture is placed on the internet and can follow the person even in grown up age."*
- Happy Slapping: Four participants named happy slapping as a new means of bullying. Interestingly, it was mainly the Europeans who reported about happy slapping in their countries, so – at least at the time of the conference – the phenomenon didn't seem to have spread over the ocean yet.  
*Example: "Lately it is happening the trend of "happy slapping". As you must know a group of children bully another kid laughing at him/her while they make him or her do silly things or spite on him/her or even hit him or her and make photos or videos of it with their mobil phones."*

The following types belonging to the second category (types of SBV that are not really new, but currently in the attention of the media) were mentioned by the participants:

- Offences against special needs children: Bullying against special needs children was mentioned by two participators. One of them pointed out, that this type of bullying occurs as early as in third grade.  
*Example: "I have witnessed first hand, that with inclusion for special needs children, comes to these children being bullied, often only verbally, but it is bullying."*

- Homophobia, stalking and violence against females: Homophobia, stalking and violence against females were mentioned each by one participant.  
*Example: "Homophobia has doubled in our schooos since 1984 see the www.schools-out.org.uk site"*

**Question 2: Why (or why not) in your opinion are those new forms of school bullying and violence in the public agenda in your country now?**

There were only seven answers to that particular question, as obviously some of the participants misunderstood the question and mixed it up with question 3 (stimulating factors). Those answers were analysed together with those to question 3.

While one person said, that yes, the new forms of SBV were on the public agenda, all the others reported a different situation in their countries: two of them said no and four of them said, that the new forms are only partly brought to public interest yet.

Several reasons were given for that matter:

- Interest: The experts agreed (three namings) that bullying only gets on the public agenda when there is currently an increased interest in the matter for one reason or another. So in two countries, new forms of SBV *are* on the public agenda, because there obviously is an (at least temporary) interest in the matter, in one country it is not, apparently due to a lack of such an interest. Reasons for an increased interest in bullying can be (as the experts mentioned) an interest to understand and tackle youth violence or an interested in providing safety and welfare for children and adolescents).  
*Example: While many Canadian schools claim to have a zero tolerance for bullying, many won't listen to those who are victims of the bullies, this issue is not at the top of any one's agenda at the moment*
- Not enough information and awareness: Two experts complain about the fact that society as a whole and especially public leaders do not seem to be aware (enough) of the problems with SBV.  
*Example: "We believe, that more comprehensive research needs to be conducted to accurately inform policymakers oh how to address such issues, and in turn, how school officials, administrators, faculty, parents and law enforcement will cope with this type of bullying."*

Other reasons mentioned (especially in the context of homophobic bullying) are for instance that there are concepts for dealing with the problems, but they have not been implemented in the school curricula and social and religious issues.

**Question 3: Which factors – in your opinion – are stimulating these new forms and technologies?**

The participants named a several stimulating factors. Interestingly there was a high agreement among them, as many of them gave basically the same answers.

- Easy access / dependence on new technologies: As many as eight experts agreed on the theory that the increase of new forms of SBV was due to the further spreading of new technologies, so that in countries like the USA, Australia and New Zealand as well as central Europe most of the schoolchildren have internet access. In addition more and more of them depend on those new technologies as they have become a very important part of their lives.

*Example: “Young people are using technology to bully others; it is a new technologically adapted form of bullying because young people use these methods of communication for their social life.”*

- Lack of consequences: Six of the participants named the fact, that e.g. cyberbullies do not have to fear any consequences as one of the most important reasons for the popularity of those phenomena. This, of course, is highly related to the factor of anonymity (see below), because a bully who can not be identified can – naturally – not be punished.

*Example: “The anonymity and instantaneous nature of cyber crime, in particular, allow kids access to the victim and oftentimes protect the perpetrator from punishment. “*

- Society as a whole / role models: Another six of the experts said, that society as whole was to blame for the recent developments. They complained about the absence of educating values in society, that violent behaviour has become sort of a social norm. They also mentioned the problem of model aggression from parents and siblings as well as peer pressure.

*Example: “Model behaviour of older students; parents; society as a whole. Many see violence as acceptable behaviour.”*

- Lack of control by parents: The aspect of lacking control by parents was mentioned four times. The problem seems to be, that parents either don't want or don't have the time to spend time with their children and check what they are doing or that many of them have a far smaller understanding of new technologies than their sons and daughters and therefore might be willing to, but unable to control and put a stop on violent behaviour. Especially those parents, who have little if any knowledge about modern technologies might not even know that they can be used for bullying.

*Example: “Parents do not spent enough time with their children. Families do not watch television together and comment about what they are watching.”*

- Anonymity / lack of tangible feedback: Closely related to the factor “lack of consequences” is the anonymity the internet provides. Therefore the perpetrator neither has to fear any consequences (see above) nor does he have to see his victim suffer – so that the bully doesn't see when he has gone too far. The problem of anonymity was mentioned three times in the questionnaire.

*Example: “Cyberbullying allows the perpetrator instant access to his victim while protecting his identity. The anonymous nature of the contact, i.e. user names, anonymous posting to message boards, insulates the offender from punishment and may in turn embolden him, leading to an escalation in the bullying.”*

- Violence in the media: Three experts also pointed out the role of the media: Children see a lot of violence in the media and might be motivated to imitate the violent behaviour their role models show in films, television shows and video games. (There even is a video game called “bully” where the player plays the role of the school bully in a school called “Bullworth Academy”- Screenshots can be found [here](#)).

*Example: “The media and the glorifying of violence and verbal abuse.”*

The following further reasons were mentioned only once or twice:

- Lack of education (especially concerning bullying of special needs children)
- The fact that teachers are not trained enough and/or do not have the power to intervene.
- Belittlement of the problem
- Blunting (closely related to the point “violence in the media” – the more violence children see, the more they consider it as something ordinary)
- Lack of consciousness by politicians
- Fear that raising the issues could bring a backlash from the right wing and religious right (when it comes to phenomena like homophobic bullying)
- Immigration
- Children growing up in an environment lacking intimate emotional communication

- Speed of modern technologies.

**Question 4: What can be done to deal with those new forms of school bullying and violence?**

- Public discourse / Raising awareness: Seven experts shared the opinion that, as a first step, the problems have to be brought to public attention to stimulate a discourse on the matter. It seems to be mostly teachers and pupils who are aware of the bullying, but many adults – often not even the parents of victims and bullies – are completely in the dark.  
*Example: “Schools need to take on more responsibility to help parents become aware of the dangers of the internet.”*
- Training: The aspect of training – for several target groups – was mentioned rather often (by six experts) in the questionnaires. Most of them agreed upon the teachers needing training to successfully intervene, but there was also the claim for training children as well as parents.  
*Examples: Teachers: “Up to date training for all school staff in developing both proactive and retroactive strategies to address all forms of bullying.”*  
*Pupils: “I heard that some private school are working with their students about the good use of the internet.”*
- Teaching of moral values: 5 Participants claimed the teaching of moral values for youngsters. According to the experts they should especially be trained to respect each other, to feel empathy and to accept all forms of diversity so that they learn to tolerate and accept e.g. children with disabilities.  
*Example: ALL schools need to teach tolerance and acceptance of children(people)with disabilities empathy education, emphasis on productive relationships by all members of our society*

The following other intervention strategies were offered, but only once or twice:

- Mobilizing the bystanders not to close their eyes
- More support for the victims
- Independent inspectors to work with the schools
- Community involvement
- Peer mediation
- Harsh consequences for bullies
- More research to identify characteristics of bullies, victims and bystanders

## Topic 1: New forms, developments and trends related to SBV

In this first week of the conference the discussions focused on the two overall questions which new forms and developments related to SBV there are and what their difference is to the rather “traditional” forms of bullying. Questions that were intended to be discussed were e.g. what new forms and trends related to SBV do witness in their countries, are they really new or is there “only” and increased public awareness for them, are some of them maybe an ‘artefact’ produced by media reports or are there forms or trends that maybe only spread because of media reports?

The topics that were chosen for this first week of the conference were inspired by the outcomes of the initial Delphi questioning of all participants as well as the first postings of the participants in the introduction round.

### Thread: New forms, developments and trends related to SBV

The discussions in this first thread focused on ‘new forms and trends related to school bullying and violence’ (SBV).

The discussions suggest that one should **differ between forms of SBV that are really new** and that to some extent seem to differ from the ‘traditional’ face-to-face school bullying – like the various types of cyberbullying – and **forms of SBV that are currently in the focus of the public attention**, amongst others because the media get aware of them, e.g. because of recent incidents in a country.

Our discussions revealed that **cyberbullying** includes various forms that can be defined and categorised in different ways, e.g. by the medium or by the type of action. Categorised by the *type of medium*, cyberbullying includes the use of the Internet (e-mail, blogging, social networking sites) and mobile phones (SMS, taking pictures with cameras, exchange of violent films). Categorised by the *type of action* cyberbullying, as Nancy Willard suggested, includes ‘flaming’, ‘harassment’, ‘denigration’, ‘impersonation’, ‘outing and trickery’, ‘exclusion’, and ‘cyberstalking’.

**Forms of SBV that are currently in the focus of the public attention** – or in other words: trends and recent developments – include e.g. homophobic bullying, racist bullying, discussions on the relation between SBV and integration of foreigners, group violence, anti-school-violence, violence by girls, involvement of primary aged children in cyberbullying.

Several postings in this thread focused on ‘**happy slapping**’, a phenomenon that has started in the UK in late 2004 and that gets increasingly often reported from further countries in Europe. The discussions have not clarified whether ‘happy slapping’ is a mere European phenomenon.

In relation with ‘happy slapping’ there was also a discussion about the **role of the media** that might have contributed to spread such incidents across different countries. According to the discussions the impact of the media on problems such as school bullying and violence should not be underestimated. (For more details about the Role of the Media, see the report about the fourth online conference: *School Bullying and Violence: The Role of the Media*’).

The longest ‘**side-discussion**’ in this thread focused on the question of how to react on

bullying via mobile phones respectively violent films on mobile phones. Most of the participants agreed that prohibiting mobile phones in school in general is certainly not the best solution. Alternative better options include e.g. the teaching of competencies and values.

In this thread several questions related to ways and strategies to tackle cyberbullying were anticipated, that were discussed in detail later in the conference (see Topic 3: Tackling cyberbullying). Amongst others the discussions addressed ‘the role of parents in addressing the problem of cyberbullying’, the question on ‘how to support teachers’ and ‘the responsibilities for bullying outside school’.

### **Thread: Traditional vs. new forms of bullying: Is there a difference?**

This thread – that emerged from a discussion in the “definitions” thread - was open in order to answer the question whether there is a difference between cyberbullying and face-to-face (f2f) bullying and what the differences are.

In our discussion we did not manage to resolve our overall question on whether there is a difference between traditional school bullying and cyberbullying or not. The discussions revealed **two points of view** that – at least at the first sight – seem to contradict:

Some participants pointed out that “**school bullying and cyber bullying are inherently tied together**” (Paul Horton, Denmark). In this context cyberbullying is regarded as ‘just a new tool that kids who bully can use to accomplish their goal of bullying another child at school’ (Tom Letson, USA). According to this position ‘cyberbullying is usually an adjunctive measure to reinforce the existing (or soon to exist) bullying in school’. Tom Letson emphasized that he has ‘never seen it used in isolation - it has always been a part of a bullying situations occurring in school’. This position – at least for cyberbullying in chat rooms - was supported by data from a German study presented by Catarina Katzer that suggests that ‘cyberbullying is a different form of bullying’ because there is ‘a strong correlation between cyberbullying and school bullying’ both for bullies and victims’.

The opposing position was that though 'many aspects are the same **there are ‘significant differences’ between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying** (Marilyn Campbell, Australia). This position was backed by data quoted by Helga Johannessen (Norway) from two Norwegian studies on bullying on cell phones. ‘Both examinations show it is not principally the same bully who bully on cell phone that bully in real’. In this context John Fenaughty (New Zealand) quoted a study on mobile phone text bullying that can be interpreted as another hint on a difference between cyberbullies and face-to-face bullying. Amongst others John Fenaughty mentioned that the outcomes of the study may mean that ‘the imagined dichotomy between bully and victim is sometimes not always accurate’ for cyberbullies using mobile phones. Another way that text bullying in NZ differs to traditional bullying is that the targets are more likely to respond with [txt message] aggression’.

Marilyn Campbell furthermore posted the following list of **differences between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying**:

- There are *no safe places* left when victims are bullied through the medium of technology.
- *24/7 aspect of cyber bullying*: ‘there is no safe time away from the bullying’.
- There is a *wider audience* in being bullied by technology, millions of people can potentially know.

- The *power of the written word* in harming is even greater than that of the spoken word as it can be read and re-read.
- *The bully can be anonymous* which they can't be in face-to-face bullying.
- *Cyber bullying is less detectable by adults* than traditional or f-2-f bullying.

A comparison of the participants' views related to four bullying-criteria that Marilyn Campbell applied to cyberbullying demonstrates that it is **more difficult than it seemed first to precise similarities and differences** between cyberbullying and 'traditional bullying':

- *Intent to hurt*: While according to one participant the 'intent to hurt is still an underlying concept in cyber bullying', another one rather questioned that and pointed out that there 'may be a big difference between the actual intentions and the effects'
- *Imbalance of power*: According to several members this aspect 'becomes somewhat problematic' especially when the bully is anonymous. One participant pointed out that in any case of cyberbullying it's important 'to ensure that you are looking at the whole situation' as the roles seem to be less delimit able. Often 'The cyberbully may be the victim in the overall situation'
- *Repeated occurrence*: One participant stated here that the repetition concept was questionable as well and referred to the example of 'the "Star Wars" kid whose image was posted on the Internet once'. In this context the hypothesis from another member (in the 'definition' thread) 'that the repetition of this kind of bullying would be in the spam of the videos' should be taken into consideration.
- *The victim is unable to defend him/herself*: While one participant stated here that this applies to cyberbullying, too, another one questioned the concept as 'there have been numerous cases where victims have become bullies themselves, or where children have committed violent acts in retaliation'.

## Topic 2: Cyberbullying

In the second week the discussions focused on "cyberbullying", maybe the most important new form of SBV that has got increasingly important in many countries. Questions that were intended to be in the foreground of the discussions were e.g. what forms and types of cyberbullying there are, what sources cyberbullying has and what role the phenomenon of "happy slapping" plays in the context.

### Thread: Types of cyberbullying

This thread aimed deepening one topic that was already discussed in several other threads: the types of cyberbullying. As a starting point the taxonomy of Willard (2006) was used, which had already been mentioned in the first thread "New forms, developments and trends related to SBV". The participants were asked to what extent they agreed to the taxonomy and what other kinds of cyberbullying existed.

"Cyberbullying is being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social cruelty using the Internet or other digital technologies. Cyberbullying can take different forms, including:

- **Flaming** Online "fights" using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language. *Joe and Alec's online fight got angrier and angrier. Insults were flying. Joe warns Alec to watch his back in school the next day.*

- **Harassment** Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages. *Matt reported to the principal that students were bullying another student. When Matt got home, he had 35 angry messages in her email box. The anonymous cruel messages kept coming—some from total strangers.*
- **Denigration** “Dissing” someone online. Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships. *Middle school students created a web site denigrating Raymond. They posted stories, jokes, and cartoons ridiculing his size and questioning his sexuality.*
- **Impersonation** Breaking into someone’s account, posing as that person and sending messages to make the person look bad, get that person in trouble or danger, or damage that person’s reputation or friendships. *Laura watched closely as Emma logged on to her account and discovered her password. Later, Laura logged on to Emma’s account and sent a scathing message to Emma’s boyfriend, Adam.*
- **Outing and Trickery** Sharing someone’s secrets or embarrassing information or images online. Tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, which is then shared online. *Greg, an obese high school student, was changing in the locker room after gym class. Matt took a covert picture of him with his cell phone camera. Within seconds, the picture was flying around the cell phones at school.*
- **Exclusion** Intentionally excluding someone from an online group, like a “buddy list.” *Millie tries hard to fit in with group of girls at school. She recently got on the “outs” with a leader in this group. Now Millie has been excluded from the IM “buddy” lists of all of the girls.*
- **Cyberstalking** Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating. Engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for her or her safety. *When Annie broke up with Sam, he sent her many angry, threatening, pleading messages. He spread nasty rumors about her to her friends and posted a sexually suggestive picture she had given him in a sex-oriented discussion group, along with her email address and cell phone number.”*

In addition to the categories Nancy suggested, John Fenaughty (New Zealand) and Helga Johannessen (Norway) both mentioned bullying via **cell phone**.

Thomas Jäger (Germany) suggested that **Happy Slapping** might as well be considered a form of Cyberbullying. Like in other threads as well, there are different opinions on that issue. Whereas Rinus Rodenberg (Netherlands) pointed out that Happy Slapping was not invented with the intent to bully anyone, Robert Slonje (UK) and Thomas Jäger shared the opinion that Happy Slapping is a form of cyberbullying.

The fact that the taxonomy presented by Willard was already rather exhaustive might have been the reason why no further forms of appearance of cyberbullying were added by the other participants. Two participants - Marilyn Campbell (Australia) and Robert Slonje (UK) - criticized the taxonomy and pointed out that for example “flaming” cannot be regarded as a form of bullying per definition, as it is “a fight between two equals” and therefore it doesn’t meet the criterion of “power imbalance” between victim and perpetrator as it is specified in Olweus’ definition of bullying.

Thomas Jäger then pointed out, that especially when **addressing an international audience** it is sometimes better **to use rather broad definitions** and listed three options we have if – which is very often case – a country doesn’t have a term for new phenomena like “cyberbullying”, and therefore everybody has a slightly different understanding:

- Introducing the new concept so that everybody knows exactly what it is about

- Using the term as an umbrella for more and more phenomena”.
- Trying to avoid the term at all and focus on the single phenomena that are included”

Robert Slonje finally emphasised that another problem might be in the **different psychological processes underlying the various forms** and that therefore it’s very important to differentiate between those forms.

### **Thread: The sources of cyberbullying: implications for our work**

The focus of this thread was on the various sources or factors that contribute to the development of cyberbullying.

First of all it’s necessary to **distinguish** between factors which are common to **face-to-face** interaction and cyberspace as compared to factors which are specific only for **cyberspace**.

“Power struggles” and “social status positioning” are **common factors** in real world and cyberspace. Nancy Willard ( USA) wrote, that most cyberbullying is connected to real world interactions (...) becomes an extension of the real world power struggles and social status positioning that fuels much of the bullying behaviour. Empirical evidence came from Catarina Katzer (Germany), who reported a high correlation between bullying in school and bullying in chatrooms. Bullies in school are significantly more often bullies in chatrooms, and victims in school are significantly more often victims in chatrooms than others. A second result characterises the bullies by age, sex, relation to parents, absentism of school, attitudes to bullying. Catarina wrote: Chatbullies as schoolbullies are elder and male, have a bad emotional relationship to their parents, are more often absent in class, are more delinquent and have a more positive attitude towards violence than non bullies.

The discussion furthermore focused on the **specific factors** of cyberspace, which are different to face-to-face-interaction. Under the header of the “anonymity of the internet”, these specific qualities can be summarized as following:

- 1) Invisibility
- 2) Dissociation of consequences
- 3) Role playing game
- 4) Power of the written word
- 5) Belittlement of internet

The general factor is the **anonymity of the internet** as compared to face-to-face -interaction. According to Andy Tomko (USA) anonymity is the reason, that “I can say anything I want about you”.

Nancy Willard furthermore distinguished between “You can’t see me” and “I can’t see you”. “If you can’t see me” means that I am not visible to you. If I am **invisible**, the probability of detection will be low. The implication is, that if I hurt you, I have not to fear for punishment or social disapproval. On the other hand “I can’t see you” means that I act, but I receive no feedback. Following Nancy, it is difficult to perceive the consequences of actions. The consequences are dissociated from the actions. And **dissociation of consequences** may encourage bullying. The **role playing** argument was added by Nancy. A cyberbully can say: “It was not me, it was my online persona”. When young people like to explore new identities online, they practice their alter ego or play different social roles. But the easy access and use

of internet may mislead them to feel like actors in a film. Helga suggested that the use of nicknames is the crucial point: A nickname gives you another personality - a role to play. In a sociological sense role playing depends on rules to play. Nowadays the **online social cruelty** seems to be the standard. As Nancy pointed out “Everybody does it”. The online social cruelty also reflects the cruelty that is evident in our society, especially media.

Cyberbullying in contrast to face-to-face-bullying depends on the **power of written words**. But to communicate by writing texts has two disadvantages. First, with no body language or intonations it’s difficult to recognize the threat and must be taken as real (Andy Tomko, USA). Second, it will be easier to write hurting words than to say them (Helga Johannessen, Norway).

The last factor was labelled “**belittlement of cyberspace**”. Cyber-interaction often looks like gaming. But young people can get the misconception that everything online is a game (Nancy Willard).

### Topic 3: How to tackle the problem of cyberbullying

In the third week of the conference the discussion focused on the proposals of intervention to deal with this problem at the different levels (education, administrations, Internet providers...).

#### Thread: Tackling cyberbullying: the role of internet providers

In this tread we started to discuss about the role of internet providers tackling bullying. This is a complex question as it is conditioned by local and international laws (as Rinus and Nancy mentioned). However we could find some very interesting reflections and contributions.

The first idea is concerning the responsibilities of the Internet providers when bullying appears in one of its services. We can find a high agreement about Internet providers are not responsible for the contents or the way their services are used by users. Even more, sometimes it is also difficult to establish the responsibility of the users due to their free speech right. With this background, it is easy to think Internet could be a nice context for bullies.

However, even though this lack of responsibility, Internet providers uses to implement some measures to increase the liability of their services (i.e., as Nancy mentioned, there are some try to take down harmful material from their web pages). Nevertheless, all these measures seem to be insufficient. As Rinus Said, with the new forms of bullying, as based on technology progresses, we are always one step behind.

Therefore, it is necessary to increase the resources of Internet providers to deal with bullying. Nancy proposed:

- Have clear policies prohibiting harmful speech, while allowing protest speech, and also prohibiting impersonation.
- Provide informational materials for youth, schools, and parents on the web site.
- Make it very easy to file a complaint.
- Establish an effective complaint process.

Other ideas were related to the control access to some services (i.e. software controls, time limits).

As Rinus said, "tackling cyber-bullying is more than trying to prevent it". It is necessary "encourage Internet providers to stand up against these forms of internet abuse".

### **Thread: Tackling cyberbullying: the role of parents**

The second thread it is focused on the **role of parents**, if it is possible to define parents' good practices and levels of control/prevention that parents should keep with younger people.

Within this thread we debated about the role of parents tackling cyber-bullying. The relevance of parents in this sense was clear, both bullying prevention and cyber-victims support. However, we talked about some difficulties related with how to get the parents involvement to deal with cyber-bullying.

Nancy and Marilyn pointed out **some reasons which make it difficult to parents**:

- They are too busy to be effectively engaged in their children's online activities.
- They think filtering software actually works (which clearly does not).
- Associated to the previous reason, kids can easily defeat any filtering system.
- They lack the technological skills to assist their children.
- Children, especially teens, think that what they do online should be private, what hinder the communication with parents when any problem appears.
- Especially with cyber-bullying, parents do not have enough information about how to respond.
- Although there are a good number of websites with helping advices for parents, most of them do not use them until something happens.

The point in the discussion was then **how we could change the parents' dynamic and offer them valuable resources** to deal with cyber-bullying. Marilyn stress out that the best way is through schools, probably joining into the programs already functioning about school violence and face to face bullying. However, as Nancy mentioned, many times the parents who need to receive the messages are the ones who are least likely to participate in this kind of program. **Some strategies to get parent's attention were proposed:**

- Start with parent's association at the school. As Marilyn said:"although they are usually only a few they spread the word".
- Carrying out small surveys to "show" the problem.
- Parent workshops.
- Include information in school newsletters.
- Extensive information in written form sent to parents.
- More extensive information available in the school office and counselor's office and on the school's website.

A last, but not least, question we discussed in this tread was related to the contents that we

should work with parents to deal with cyberbullying. Nancy suggested that with respect to cyberbullying and parents, **we had to address different sides**:

- How helping children to reduce the potential harm for victimization.
- Respond effectively to stop cyberbullying if your child is a victim.
- Making sure your child is not engaging in cyberbullying.
- Empowering your child to speak up or provide help if he/she is a witness to cyberbullying.

### **Thread: Levels of intervention**

This thread has been focused on the different levels of intervention against cyberbullying, or, as Marilyn proposed, the different co-operating components in the fight against cyberbullying.

We started our discussions with a **classification based on four basic components**:

- Parents
- School
- Administration (governmental institutions)
- Internet

However, we quickly realized that we needed to clarify some of these agents, and to extend the classification to other relevant components. First of all, Nancy pointed out that when we talk about Internet we should make a special reference to the Internet providers, as they have the resources to deal with cyberbullying events (in this point, Nancy included to the cell phone companies too). Nancy also mentioned some **good practices** which could be recommended to the Internet providers:

- Readable policies against harmful speech and impersonation.
- Online safety information for users.
- An easy to use complaint form.
- A well-organized process to respond to complaints.
- Well-trained staff.

A double-edged measure which some Internet providers are offering is the possibility to make groups and profiles "private" (restricted to known people). However, sometimes these private spaces turn in places where children are either bullying others or are the victims of bullying under the umbrella of privacy.

This factor led us to a very interesting debate about the role of parents, and the **level of control** that they should practice with their children and the use of Internet. In this discussion we found **two positions**, maybe not opposite, but complementary:

- **Parents should control their children's access to Internet.** In this way, Helga mentioned that "parents must dare to be unpopular in children eyes when necessary". Different ideas support this position: the danger of one misunderstood privacy which make possible the children access to risky places, or, as Tom pointed out, the false sense of security for parents regarding children's Internet use, the incapacity of children to handle all the material and the behaviors that they can find in Internet, and the Internet dangers and the necessity for establishing appropriate limits. All this factors are even more relevant, as Helga mentioned, with the use which some parents do of Internet as a "babysitter".

- On the other hand, the opposite position would be that parents can't control their children's access to internet. As Rinus posted, it is not possible for parents to be present always when children are in Internet. In that case, parents shouldn't base their actions in control, but **educative measures with their children**. In the same direction, Loraine pointed out that is quite easy for children get into places which are not suitable for them, even with software controls, but it is up to parents to approach their own children and teach them the right ways.
- A new point that was necessary to clarify was related to the **school's role against cyberbullying**. We found a high agreement considering that we should include in this context not only teachers, but also other school staff (as Andy posted), and the students who mainly behave like **bystanders** of cyberbullying. Nancy and Marilyn agree in the relevance of these students to stop any type of bullying if they show to the other that they don't approve it. Marilyn also mentioned the significance of reporting bullying events in the school and then offer an appropriate answer (where teachers should eliminate avoiding responses based on they don't understand technology).

In the productive discussion we established in this thread, contributions also mentioned that **we needed to add a new level of intervention: the targeted youth**. As Nancy posted, we have to empower the potential targets of cyberbullying to know how to effectively respond, and to encourage them to report if something happens.

#### Topic 4: Other new forms and trends related to School Bullying and Violence

The last topic of discussion was about '**Other new forms and trends related to School Bullying and Violence**' where we could focus our attention on other types of bullying which have appeared in previous postings (homophobic bullying, dating violence, racist bullying, etc.), and whether it would be possible to use the same strategies that in 'normal' bullying to deal with them.

#### Thread: Other new forms and trends related to School Bullying and Violence

In this final topic, the participants have focused their attention in other types of bullying and violence, such as **homophobic bullying, racist bullying, violence amongst girls, school shootings, etc.**

Sue Sanders started talking about Institutional **heterosexist** in our schools and homophobia. She proposed to do very serious inclusion work in our schools of lesbian, gay, bisexual and 'trans' people. She recommended visiting a website [www.schools-out.org.uk](http://www.schools-out.org.uk).

We could also read a post related to **homophobic** bullying, Julia Riebel told us that **there are much news talking about this type** of bullying and also a lot of campaigns and activities against it.

María José Mohedano García, from Spain wrote a document which was about Bullying and **children with special needs**. It referred to happy slapping and that children with special needs are the perfect blank of unscrupulous youths.

Helga Johannessen, in other post, wondered where the consideration to people with special needs is and she also talked about the role of parents on SBV.

Rinus Rodenburg replied her writing that nobody is being bullied because of disabilities or anything that is not conform the 'standard'.

Helga, replying him, said that as he was talking about power and the use of power toward a weaker person. **Adults, in ordinary life, TV (media), schools and political systems are models for the growing generations.**

The next post written by Nancy Willard was referred to bullying based on gender orientation. She said that simply is the degree to which discrimination is present in all of society.

And finally we can read an interesting document about **Bullying and Social Exclusion in Multi-Ethnic Schools** in England and Spain written by Claire P. Monks, Rosario Ortega and Antonio Jesús Rodríguez.

## Conclusions and Outlook

The online conference “New Forms of School Bullying and Violence” focused on a topic that in some countries has just started to be in the focus of public attention and research. The four-week-conference brought together experts and practitioners from different fields and countries, all dealing or affected by new forms of school bullying and violence in one or the other way.

The clear focus of the discussions was on new forms of SBV in which offenders make use of *new technologies and new media* such as cyberbullying, “happy slapping” or the use of mobile phones for bullying others. Other forms of SBV that are in the focus of the attention of the media in some of the participants’ countries such as homophobic or racist bullying, dating violence or bullying against special needs children played a rather subordinated role in the conference’s discussions.

Within our discussions and the Delphi questionings that preceded the discussions we examined the topic from different perspectives:

The participants analysed different ways of defining and categorising cyberbullying e.g. by the type of medium that is used by the offenders or the type of action that is in the foreground. The discussions revealed that in several of the participants’ countries cyberbullying is not in the focus of public attention. Many countries also lack of an appropriate national term or definition. A discussion on the differences between traditional and new forms of SBV brought up two opposing point of views and raised the question whether the traditional criteria for bullying also apply for cyberbullying. Furthermore the differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying as well as the specifics of cyberbullying were precised and a taxonomy of different forms of cyberbullying was suggested and discussed.

Several discussion threads focused on the different levels of interventions as well as the role of key actors for the process of tackling and preventing cyberbullying and other new forms of SBV, namely parents, Internet providers and school. The roles of parents and Internet providers were deepened in two additional, separate discussion threads.

The conference’s discussions finally examined other forms of bullying that are in the focus of the attention such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, violence amongst girls, school shootings or violence against special needs children.

All in all, the discussions of this conference draw a complex picture of new forms of SBV, (with a clear focus on Cyberbullying), their occurrence and ways they are defined and perceived by the public in different countries. Yet, it is clear that due to the limitations of a merely discussion based, 4-weeks-conference with a limited number of participants, the results are neither representative nor exhaustive. Nevertheless, they give an insight in a field that in many countries has just recently been discovered by research as well as the media.

Many questions that have been scribed in this conference’s - like e.g. where the differences and commonalities between traditional bullying and Cyberbullying are, how Cyberbullying and its different forms can be defined or how it can be tackled – have to be deepened by future research. Recent studies as well as an increasing attention by the media in numerous countries already reflect the growing importance of this topic that – with the fast development of new information and communication devices – will certainly express itself in yet unknown forms and ways in future.

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