# The Dark Side of the Ivory Tower: Cyberbullying of University Faculty and Teaching Personnel

## Wanda Cassidy[1], Chantal Faucher[2], Margaret Jackson[1]

[1] Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada; [2] Simon Fraser University, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada

*This paper discusses findings from an exploratory study on the nature, extent, and impact of cyberbullying experienced by 121 faculty members at one Canadian university. We situate cyberbullying in university on a continuum between cyberbullying in K-12 education and cyberbullying in the workplace and also take into account the power dynamics that characterize the post-secondary context. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of online survey data revealed that 17% of respondents had experienced cyberbullying either by students (12%) or by colleagues (9%) in the last 12 months. Gender differences were apparent plus racial minority status also appeared to render faculty members more vulnerable to cyberbullying. These findings suggest a rights-based lens could be used to analyze and respond to the vulnerabilities of women and other marginalized faculty in cyberbullying situations. This study contributes to the dearth of research on cyberbullying at the post-secondary level and raises the need to consider factors of difference, such as gender and race, in policy development and practice.*

*Cet article discute des résultats d'une étude exploratoire sur la nature, l'étendue et l'impact de la cyberintimidation qu'ont connu 121 membres du personnel enseignant d'une université canadienne. Nous situons la cyberintimidation à l'université sur un continuum entre la cyberintimidation dans les milieux K-12 et celle dans les milieux de travail, tout en tenant compte de la dynamique des pouvoirs qui caractérise le contexte postsecondaire. Des analyses quantitatives et qualitatives de données découlant d'une enquête en ligne ont révélé que, dans les 12 mois qui venaient de s'écouler, 17% des répondants avaient connu la cyberintimidation, soit de la part d'étudiants (12%), soit de la part de collègues (9%). Des écarts selon le sexe se sont révélés et le statut de minorité raciale semblait rendre les membres du personnel enseignant plus vulnérables à la cyberintimidation. Ces résultats suggèrent que dans les situations de cyberintimidation, on pourrait adopter une perspective reposant sur les droits pour d'abord analyser les vulnérabilités des femmes et d'autres membres du personnel enseignant qui sont marginalisés, et ensuite y réagir. Cette étude participe à combler le vide dans la recherche portant sur la cyberintimidation au niveau postsecondaire et soulève le besoin de tenir compte de facteurs de différenciation, tels le sexe et la race, dans le développement de politiques et la mise en pratique de celles-ci.*

As information and communication technologies (ICT) increasingly occupy an important place in our daily lives inside and outside of academia, it is imperative to question the nature and impact of the changes that are occurring, be they positive or negative. While ICT eases many of

our endeavours, innovations, and interactions, it also facilitates more harmful behaviours such as cyberbullying. The term cyberbullying, a virtually unheard of phenomenon a decade ago, has now become a part of the vernacular. However, cyberbullying research has primarily been aimed at children and youth of middle school and high school age (see Cassidy, Faucher, & Jackson, 2013, for a comprehensive review of this literature). The earlier ostensible consensus definition of cyberbullying suggested it was another form of traditionally defined bullying: "An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008, p. 376). More recently, researchers have provided an increasingly nuanced examination with respect to what exactly intent, repetition, and power imbalance signify in the context of bullying that is carried out online, as well as the added dimensions of anonymity and the potentially limitless audience for the bullying (Dooley, Pyżalski, & Cross, 2009; Grigg, 2010; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012; Menesini, 2012; Nocentini, Calmaestra, Schultze-Krumboltz, Scheithauer, Ortega, & Menesini, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2012; Smith, 2012; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; von Marées & Petermann, 2012). As such, we adopt a broad definition of cyberbullying: the use of language or images to defame, threaten, harass, bully, exclude, discriminate, demean, humiliate, stalk, disclose personal information, or contain offensive, vulgar, or derogatory comments with an intent to harm or hurt the recipient.

Cyberbullying research has just started to expand its scope to include cyberbullying in higher education. Nonetheless, the focus has clearly been on students' experiences of cyberbullying (Beran, Rinaldi, Bickham, & Rich, 2012; Dilmaç, 2009; Finn, 2004; Molluzzo & Lawler, 2012; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Turan, Polat, Karapirli, Uysal, & Turan, 2011; Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011; Wensley & Campbell, 2012; Zhang, Land, & Dick, 2010). Relatively little attention has been paid to the cyberbullying of university faculty members or other teaching personnel. However, there is emerging scholarship on cyberbullying in the workplace (Baruch, 2005; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; McQuade, Colt, & Meyer, 2009; Piotrowski, 2012; Privitera & Campbell, 2009), which relates to the cyberbullying of university personnel. Further, continuities have been noted between the cyberbullying that occurs in the K-12 educational sector, universities, workplaces, and beyond (Bauman, 2011, 2012; Englander, 2008; McKay, Arnold, Fratzl, & Thomas, 2008; McQuade et al., 2009).

It is within this perspective of cyberbullying situated on a continuum throughout the lifespan that we examine cyberbullying being carried out against faculty members and other teaching personnel in universities. The unique locus of universities serves as a bridge between bullying in schools and in the workplace (Cowie, Bauman, Coyne, Myers, Pörhölä, & Almeida, 2013; McKay et al., 2008). The continuities are evidenced in a number of ways, including through the persistence of roles (victim, bully, bully-victim) (Bauman, 2011; Beran et al., 2012) and the types of impacts of cyberbullying reported at both the school and workplace levels (Baruch, 2005; Beran et al., 2012; Cassidy et al., 2013).

Individual factors come into play in cyberbullying behaviours that take place in schools and in workplaces. Likewise, contextual factors specific to each of those sites influence the cyberbullying occurring there (see Jones & Scott, 2012). The context of higher education further lends itself to theoretically framing the issue of cyberbullying in terms of power. Cyberbullying relates to incivility in the classroom and in the workplace. We must also recognize that lower level mistreatments can escalate into more severe forms of harassment and even violence (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langout, 2001; Wildermuth & Davis, 2012). A consideration of

the power imbalances that exist between university students and faculty members or other teaching personnel, as well as between colleagues, is instrumental to our contextual understanding of incivility and harassment in universities as workplaces.

This paper examines data from a survey of 121 university faculty members and other teaching personnel (including teaching assistants, tutor-markers, instructors, lecturers, and student advisors) from one Western Canadian university. The purpose of the survey was to determine the nature, extent, and impacts of cyberbullying experienced by faculty members as well as their opinions about the problem and possible solutions.

## Literature Review

### Cyberbullying Correlates

Several areas of scholarship inform and assist in theoretically framing this study. The view of cyberbullying in higher education as part of a behavioural continuum suggests that knowledge regarding cyberbullying in other realms (K-12; workplace) may offer general insights. However, the specific context of higher education, with the nature of interpersonal relationships and interactions that exists between faculty and students as well as between colleagues, imposes the consideration of power imbalances that are at play and how these may manifest in the form of cyberbullying.

While much of the existing literature on cyberbullying correlates concerns youth, the continuities of cyberbullying throughout the lifespan (Bauman, 2012; McKay et al., 2008; McQuade et al., 2009) suggest that an awareness of known correlates may assist us in our examination of cyberbullying against university faculty members. Research on youth has suggested that heavy ICT usage may increase risk of exposure to cyberbullying (Smith, 2012; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; von Marées & Petermann, 2012; Yilmaz, 2011).

Another correlate of cyberbullying is gender. Research suggests that females are more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than of traditional face-to-face bullying (Dooley et al., 2009; Jackson, Cassidy, & Brown, 2009; Kowalski, Morgan, & Limber, 2012; Li, 2005). Further, sexual and gender harassment have taken on new forms within the online context, such as *sexting, morphing, virtual rape*, and *revenge porn*, to which women are particularly vulnerable (Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012; CCSO Cybercrime Working Group, 2013; Halder & Jaishankar, 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2012; Shariff & Gouin, 2006). In fact, according to Halder and Jaishankar (2009), women are the second most vulnerable group online, after children.

Bullying is understood to stem from a power and control imbalance between the bully and the victim (Olweus, 1993) and the same may be said of cyberbullying. However, in the latter case, the power differential may be derived from different sources in an online exchange as opposed to a face-to-face exchange; for example facility with technology, number of viewers, ability of the perpetrator to remain anonymous, and 24/7 access to the victim online (Dooley et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Shariff & Gouin, 2006; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; von Marées & Petermann, 2012). The hierarchical nature of universities may suggest one straightforward interpretation of power imbalances between senior and junior colleagues and between professors and students. However, in the context of higher education, a number of variables such as status, position, role, authority, gender, ethnicity, and age enter into play in determining the relative and perceived power of individuals, whether in faculty-student relationships or in relationships between colleagues. The importance of these power

differentials has led some researchers, such as Faucher, Jackson, and Cassidy (2014) to situate their analysis of cyberbullying within the Power and Control model (Pence & Paymar, 1993), where the abuser uses such tactics as intimidation, threats, harmful language, social standing, exclusion, harassment, and technology to exert control over the victim.

## Cyberbullying in the Context of Higher Education

As noted above, very little research has examined cyberbullying experienced by faculty members. We have encountered only three studies specifically documenting cyberbullying against faculty (Blizard, 2014; Minor, Smith, & Brashen, 2013; Vance, 2010), two of which were restricted to online learning environments. We also found some research on online misbehaviour, which touches on cyberbullying experienced by faculty members but within the context of online incivility (Clark, Werth, & Ahten, 2012; Jones & Scott, 2012; Wildermuth & Davis, 2012). Email appears to be an important form of contact through which cyberbullying can occur in universities (Martin & Olson, 2011; McKay et al., 2008). However, scholarship on workplace bullying suggests that "bullying on the e-mail system appears to be at the same level as other communication modes used to conduct bullying and negative outcomes of bullying exist irrespectively to the media of communication" (Baruch, 2005, p. 366). Websites such as Rate My Professor, YouTube, Facebook, gossip and confession websites, and defamatory online profiles have also been examined as venues for online bullying of professors (cf., Binns, 2007; Daniloff, 2009; Martin & Olson, 2011).

Blizard (2014) conducted surveys (n=36) and interviews (n=4) with instructors at a Canadian university and found faculty members were most often targeted through email or faculty polling sites. Many of the targeted faculty members in the study experienced a wide range of ill effects, some of which were severe and long lasting.

Minor, Smith, and Brashen (2013) reported findings from a survey of 68 online instructors at a large online university in the United States. They reported that 33.8% of respondents claimed they had been cyberbullied by students. About two thirds of these respondents had attempted to handle the situation themselves and about one third had it handled by their direct supervisor. Over 60% did not know what resources were available or felt that there were no resources available to help them if they should encounter cyberbullying from students. The concerns that were raised by these respondents regarding reporting instances of cyberbullying included fear of impacting further teaching opportunities, fear of decreasing student retention rates, embarrassment, fear of not being supported by supervisor, and time requirements for adequately addressing the issue.

Vance (2010) reported on surveys of 225 students and 56 faculty respondents engaged in online learning environments. Twelve percent of students and 39% of faculty respondents claimed they had been cyber-harassed (the term he uses) in online learning at least once, and 2% of students and 16% of faculty reported being cyber-harassed more than once. The rates were higher among those over 35 years of age, both for faculty and students, and among those who had been involved in more than 20 online courses (primarily faculty members). Email and flaming (online verbal abuse) were the most common types of cyber-harassment experienced. Fewer than one-half of the respondents who had been cyber-harassed reported the incident(s). Those who did not report the incidents cited reasons such as: doubt that authorities could help, not thinking it was an offence, not knowing where to report, and fear of retaliation.

Jones and Scott (2012) used a case study of cyberbullying between students to examine

factors related to the socio-cultural context of the university classroom that may be conducive to incivility and cyberbullying. Although the cyberbullying in this case did not target a faculty member, it offers a number of relevant factors. Factors that can contribute to the willingness to engage in cyberbullying include perceived power imbalances, perceived lack of consequences to cyberbullying, frustration and dissatisfaction, and motivations such as higher grades. The case study involved group work where a number of these factors came into play. Clark et al. (2012) also identified group work as particularly conducive to incivility and often frustrating for students in the online learning environment.

Wildermuth and Davis (2012) review the literature around uncivil electronic discourse by students aimed at faculty members. They argue that there has been an increase in student incivility due to the inherent features of online interactions (such as perceived anonymity, asynchronicity, lack of non-verbal cues, greater potential for misinterpretations), broader trends in declining civility and changing definitions of politeness, and the informal nature of higher education coupled with students' sense of entitlement and consumerist attitudes toward their education. Student incivility can lead to faculty stress, decreased morale, cynicism, disengagement, lower standards, and violence.

## Academic Entitlement, Incivility, and Harassment in Higher Education

In order to understand the issue of cyberbullying targeting faculty members in higher education, we can also consider the literature on academic entitlement, classroom incivility, and harassment. Academic entitlement refers to "expectations of high rewards for modest effort, expectations of special consideration and accommodation by teachers when it comes to grades, and impatience and anger when their expectations and perceived needs are not met" (Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farruggia, 2008, p. 1194). There is a body of work documenting an increase in academic entitlement among higher education students in recent years (Boswell, 2012; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008; Greenberger et al., 2008; Kopp & Finney, 2013). Academic entitlement has also been linked to student incivility (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Kopp & Finney, 2013). Morrissette (2001, np) has defined incivility as:

> the intentional behaviour of students to disrupt and interfere with the teaching and learning process of others. This behaviour can range from students who dominate and foster tension in the classroom to students who attend classes unprepared, are passively rude, or unwilling to participate in the learning process.

Student incivility toward faculty members is a form of contrapower harassment, which occurs when a person with ostensibly lesser power bullies a person with greater power (DeSouza, 2011; Lampman, 2012). This incivility can occur in the classroom, outside of the classroom, as well as online (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2011; Boice, 1996; De Souza, 2011; Meyers, Bender, Hill, & Thomas, 2006). Young, female, low-status, and minority faculty members have been shown to be most at risk as targets of incivility both in terms of frequency and severity of the behaviours (DeSouza, 2011; Knepp, 2012; Lampman, 2012; Rowland, 2009; Twale & De Luca, 2008).

The literature on academic entitlement and incivility in higher education has suggested that beyond individual personality of perpetrators there may be factors to consider within the

education system, which encourage and perpetuate such behaviours. The advent of email has provided university students with the unprecedented expectation of 24/7 access to their professors as well as engendering a decrease in the formality of exchanges between students and faculty due to the informal nature of online discourse (Greenberger et al., 2008; Wildermuth & Davis, 2012). More generally, the (perceived) anonymity of online communication, the feeling of being removed from negative repercussions of what we say, the absence of paralinguistic cues found in face-to-face communication, and the disconnect created by asynchronous exchanges all contribute to uncivil online exchanges and cyberbullying (DeSouza, 2011; Kowalski et al., 2012; Smith & Slonje, 2010; Tokunaga, 2010; Topcu & Erdur-Baker, 2012; Wildermuth & Davis, 2012). Further, certain features of the university classroom, such as the large lecture-based class (as opposed to the small seminar where the instructor is acquainted with each individual student) may also contribute to the feeling of anonymity and the behaviours that flow from it (Jones & Scott, 2012; Knepp, 2012). On a broader scale, consumerist attitudes toward education may lead students to believe they are entitled to good grades in exchange for paying tuition. Such beliefs then may feed the academic entitlement attitudes linked to student incivility (Knepp, 2012; Morrissette, 2001; Rowland, 2009). Academic entitlement and consumerist attitudes may disrupt the perceived power imbalance between students and the faculty members who are seen as exerting control over their grades (see Blizard, 2014).

While the foregoing discussion has been focused on student incivility and cyberbullying toward faculty members, little has been said about the misbehaviour of faculty members toward students or toward each other. Although faculty cyberbullying of students was not a focus of our study, cyberbullying by colleagues was and we found no literature directly related to this topic. However, adopting the same frame of reference as above, we noted some work on faculty incivility and workplace bullying, which assisted our understanding of bullying in the faculty context. For instance, Twale and De Luca (2008) documented many examples of faculty incivility, which they attributed to the way universities are organized, the governance structures, committees, hierarchy, and bureaucracy. They also argued that the changing face of academe (entry of previously excluded groups such as women and minorities) and the growing corporate culture are precipitating factors of the academic bully culture.

The notion of civility, whether online or offline, and the problematic behaviours of cyberbullying and incivility may be seen as educational as well as societal challenges. However, in addition, incivility and bullying in the workplace seriously impact the victim as well as the university culture as a whole. Researchers have reported wide-ranging effects, which have been categorized as: trauma; distress; psychosomatic symptoms; student and/or faculty disengagement; unwarranted negative faculty evaluations and increased fear over job security; lowering of standards, including unwarranted grade inflation; low morale; high stress; cynicism; decreased motivation; and in rare instances the culmination into physical violence, homicide, or suicidal thoughts (Blizard, 2014; Boice, 1996; Ciani et al., 2008; DeSouza, 2011; Lampman, 2012; Wildermuth & Davis, 2012).

## Methods

This paper reports on findings from parts of a broader study of cyberbullying at the university level. The larger study includes a policy scan, student and faculty surveys, student focus groups, faculty interviews, and policymaker interviews at four Canadian universities. We are reporting here on findings from the faculty surveys from one participating university. This initial paper

examining a first wave of data is intended as an exploratory study serving to inform future analysis and research.

An online survey was disseminated through various faculty and departmental mailing lists at the university to gain maximum exposure. The survey included 111 items including yes/no questions, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. The first section asked for background information about the respondents, basic demographic variables and information about their ICT usage patterns. The second and third sections of the survey asked about whether they had experienced any cyberbullying at the university from students or colleagues. The fourth section asked respondents to rate various solutions to cyberbullying. The fifth section asked respondents to provide their opinion on a list of statements relating to cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying was defined at the outset of the survey as: Cyberbullying uses language that can defame, threaten, harass, bully, exclude, discriminate, demean, humiliate, stalk, disclose personal information, or contain offensive, vulgar or derogatory comments. Cyberbullying is intended to harm or hurt the recipient.

Respondents were then provided with a list of examples of experiences of cyberbullying, which included receiving nasty, mean, rude, vulgar, hurtful, or harassing email or text messages; having terrible, derogatory, sexist, racist or homophobic things written about you online; someone posting an embarrassing photo or video of you online; someone pretending to be you online; and being deliberately excluded from an online group or chat.

From September 2012 to February 2013, 121 online surveys were completed at one Western Canadian university. The surveys were collected using one online software survey tool called Fluid Surveys (fluidsurveys.com). The surveys were anonymous and no identifiers were used. As such, it would have been possible for an individual to complete the survey more than once but the researchers felt this risk was outweighed by the preservation of respondent anonymity, as well as maintained the integrity of research ethics with the university's research ethics board.

Most respondents skipped over parts of the surveys. For instance, if they had not experienced cyberbullying, there was no reason for them to complete the set of questions pertaining to these experiences. Survey fatigue may have resulted in nearly 10% of respondents stopping their involvement before the fourth or fifth sections. The average completion time was 16 minutes.

## Results

### Respondents' Profile

**Background.** The 121 surveys completed by faculty members (18% professors, 6% lecturers, 13% instructors, 41% teaching assistants or tutor-markers, and 21% student advisors). The survey participants provide a range of diversity in their perspectives due to variations in years of teaching experience, in levels of employment security, and in types or contexts of interactions with students and colleagues. They were all included due to their involvement in teaching or teaching-related roles and the power differentials that characterize their positions in relation to students at the university. Such a differentiation also aligns with the Power and Control model. The grouping of this somewhat diverse group of individuals is warranted given that there were no statistically significant quantitative differences between them as far as experiences of cyberbullying by students or by colleagues. Qualitative differences, if any, are beyond the scope of this paper and will be examined in future work.

The faculty members who responded to the survey were drawn from all faculties in the university except one, including representation from at least 22 different departments. Of those who responded, 40.3% were from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 23.5% from the Faculty of Education and 18.5% from the Faculty of Science. The remaining 17.7% came from other faculties including Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology, Faculty of Applied Sciences, and Faculty of Environment.

Survey respondents were predominantly female (73%), Caucasian (80%), identified English as their first language (77%), and were born in Canada (66%). Two-thirds of respondents had been working at the university for five years or less. Only 22% of respondents had tenure or a permanent position.

As the responses came in, it became apparent that gender would be an issue worth examining. The 2012-2013 faculty headcount by gender at this institution reported 35% female faculty, which is much lower than the 73% of female respondents to the survey. The large number of teaching assistants, tutor-markers, and student advisors, whose responses were counted in the faculty survey, may account for part of the discrepancy. Among those respondents who identified themselves as professors, 59% were female, a rate lower than those for teaching assistants and tutor-markers (78%), limited-term or permanent lecturers (75%), and "others" who were predominantly student advisors (84%). It should also be noted that the home faculties of the majority of respondents were: Arts and Social Sciences, which has an above average representation of women faculty members when compared to other faculties, and Education, which is the only faculty in the university to have more women faculty members than men.

Survey respondents were also asked whether they would volunteer to participate in a one-on-one interview on solutions to the problem of cyberbullying. All volunteers were women. It should be noted that the female respondents to the student surveys, reported on elsewhere (Faucher, Jackson, & Cassidy, 2014), outnumbered male respondents three to one. We wonder why women seem to have a greater interest in, or willingness to engage with, this topic than do men.

There were differences in the basic profile between the male and female respondents. More male than female respondents had tenure or a permanent position (33% compared to 18%). The male respondents tended to be older than the female respondents. While 45% of the male respondents had been working at the university between two and five years and 42% of them had been working there for six years or more, 42% of the female respondents had been working at the university for less than two years, and 29% for two to five years.

**ICT usage.** ICT usage is a daily feature of university life for faculty. Virtually all respondents owned at least one computer (99%) and a mobile phone (92%). Of those who owned a mobile phone, 96% used it to send text messages and 75% used it to connect to the Internet. Virtually all respondents spent at least one hour a day online for both professional and personal activities. The majority of respondents (61%) spent upwards of five hours per day online for professional activities, with a further 28% spending between three and four hours per day online for the same purpose. Fifty-one percent spent one to two hours per day online for personal activities, while 29% spent three to four hours, and 15% spent five hours or more online for this purpose. The majority of respondents had a Facebook account (80%), but relatively few had their own blog (20%) or their own website (26%).

The female faculty respondents were somewhat more likely than men to own a mobile phone, but women who owned mobile phones were as likely as men to use them to send text

messages and to connect to the Internet. In terms of the amount of time spent online for professional activities, there were no significant gender differences. But in terms of time spent online for personal activities, the female respondents reported spending more time online than the male respondents. The types of activities engaged in online were generally similar between the male and female respondents. For example, the top three most frequent uses for male and female respondents were email, research work, and news. These were closely followed by teaching work, entertainment, communication other than email, and academic writing. Female respondents were somewhat more likely than male respondents to be on Facebook but somewhat less likely to have their own blog or their own website.

We used a five-point scale from extremely concerned to not concerned at all to gauge respondents' level of concern about cyberbullying at the university level. Overall, the majority of respondents were extremely concerned (23%) or somewhat concerned (52%) by the issue of cyberbullying at the university. In terms of gender differences, 82% of female respondents indicated that they were extremely concerned or somewhat concerned about the problem compared to 57% of male faculty respondents.

Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of preventing cyberbullying and encouraging and teaching respectful online communications among the various competing priorities at the university. The majority of respondents found the prevention of cyberbullying to be extremely important (33%) or somewhat important (43%) as well as encouraging and teaching respectful online communications (56% extremely important; 36% somewhat important). However, here again, the gendered perspectives were in evidence as 81% of female respondents felt it was extremely or somewhat important to prevent cyberbullying compared to 63% of male respondents, and 96% of female respondents felt it was extremely or somewhat important to encourage and teach respectful online communications compared to 85% of male respondents. Levels of concern over these issues may also account for the gender discrepancies in response rates noted above.

## Faculty Members' Experiences with Cyberbullying

On the faculty survey, we inserted the definition of cyberbullying for the faculty respondents in the way noted in the introduction of this article and provided the list of examples in the survey introduction and at the start of the survey sections pertaining to cyberbullying experiences. Table 1 provides rates of cyberbullying victimization categorized by gender (respondents include professors, instructors, teaching assistants, tutor-markers, and student advisors).

Overall, just over 17% of faculty respondents had experienced cyberbullying either from students or from colleagues in the last 12 months. Two respondents had experienced both but the remainder of respondents had experienced one or the other. In both instances, the

Table 1

*Prevalence of Faculty Cyberbullying Victimization by Gender*

| Victims of Cyberbullying | Males (%) | Females (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall (in last 12 months) | 6 | 22 | 17 |
|     By students at the university | 6 | 14 | 12 |
|     By a colleague | 0 | 13 | 9 |

prevalence rate was higher among female respondents. The respondents who reported cyberbullying either from students or from colleagues were asked for further details about their experience(s). These are reported in Table 2 and discussed below.

**Cyberbullying by students.** When asked directly if they had experienced cyberbullying by students at the university in the last 12 months, 12% of respondents answered yes. Email was the most common format through which the cyberbullying occurred (86%), with several respondents also indicating course-related sites, blogs, forums, or chats (57%), or a professor-rating website (29%). No cyberbullying by students was reported through photos sent to mobile phone, Twitter, other blogs, forums, or chats (non-course-related), student pretending to be them online, or other.

The most common explanations cited by victims for why they were cyberbullied were: Teaching-related reasons for 85% of respondents (the grade they assigned a student, their teaching style, something they said to a student or in class, their course content, organization, deadlines, schedule, assignments) and their position or role at the university for 54%. Female respondents also identified their gender (46% of all respondents who had been victims) and their age (31%) as reasons for which the cyberbullying occurred. Students known to the targeted faculty members conducted the vast majority (79%) of the reported cyberbullying.

When asked about what they perceived as the intent of the cyberbullying against them, the most frequently cited descriptors were: demanding (71% [all female/no male respondents]), insulting (50%), harassing (43% [all female]), demeaning, belittling, derogatory (43% [all female]), and rude or vulgar (43% [all female]). Sixty-four percent (64%) of faculty respondents

Table 2

*Percentage of Respondents with Different Background Variables Who Have Been Cyberbullied*

| Respondents | Cyberbullied by students (%) | Cyberbullied by colleagues (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Overall (in last 12 months) | 12 | 9 |
| …who have tenure/a permanent position | 11 | 19 |
| …who do not have tenure/a permanent position | 12 | 7 |
| …who are Teaching assistants or Tutor-Markers | 18 | 6 |
| …who are Sessional instructors | 6 | 19 |
| …who are professors | 14 | 14 |
| …for whom English is not 1st language | 14 | 10 |
| …who are on Facebook | 14 | 10 |
| …who identify as Caucasian | 8 | 10 |
| …who identify as part of a visible minority group | 24 | 9 |
| …who have their own blog | 13 | 9 |
| …who have their own website | 7 | 10 |
| …who spend 6+ hours online/day for professional activity | 17 | 8 |
| …who spend 3+ hours online/day for personal activity | 26 | 9 |
| …who spend 6+ hours online/day for personal activity | 40 | 11 |

who were cyberbullied by students told someone about it. All of these respondents were women. They mostly told colleagues, partners, and/or friends.

In terms of impacts, those reported with the greatest frequency were: that it affected: their relationships with students and/or university colleagues (85%); their ability to do their work, including productivity, loss of confidence, and concentration problems (69%); mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and emotional outbursts (38%); feeling their emotional security or physical safety was threatened (23%); they felt like quitting their job at the university (23%); and physical health issues, including headaches, stomach problems, nausea, heart palpitations or chest pain, and sweating (23%). The majority (77%) did something to try to stop the cyberbullying but only one-half of them felt that it had worked. In most cases, faculty respondents knew the student or students who carried out the cyberbullying.

We compared the victims of cyberbullying by students to non-victims on several variables as noted in the first column of numbers in Table 2. While only 22% of respondents had tenure or a permanent position, this factor did not appear to have a bearing on experiences of cyberbullying from students. Eleven percent (11%) of those who had tenure had been cyberbullied by students and 12% of those who did not have tenure had been cyberbullied by students. Similarly, 18% of teaching assistants and tutor-markers compared to 17% of professors had been cyberbullied by students. Faculty members for whom English was not their first language were somewhat more vulnerable to cyberbullying by students (14% versus 11%) but non-Caucasian faculty members were significantly more vulnerable with 24% experiencing cyberbullying from students compared to 8% of Caucasian faculty members.

***Relationship between victimization by students and ICT usage.*** Table 2 shows that some of the ICT usage variables bore a relationship to cyberbullying. Faculty members who spent more time online for professional activities were somewhat more likely to experience cyberbullying by students. The prevalence rate among those who spent six or more hours online per day for professional activities was slightly higher than the overall prevalence (17% versus 12%). Forty-five percent (45%) of faculty respondents spent three or more hours online per day for personal activities and this group accounted for 71% of those cyberbullied by students, meaning that 26% of those who spent three or more hours online daily had been cyberbullied by students. Further, among those who spent more than six hours online daily for personal activities, that rate was even higher at 40%.

Eighty percent (80%) of faculty respondents had a Facebook page. Of the 20% who did not have a Facebook page, none had experienced cyberbullying by students. As such, faculty members with a Facebook page were slightly more likely to be cyberbullied by students (which does not imply that the cyberbullying happened on Facebook). Having their own blog did not appear to be correlated with cyberbullying by students but having their own website appeared to have an inverse relationship with cyberbullying by students. That is, those faculty who did have their own website were less likely to report having been cyberbullied by students than those who did not have their own website (7% versus 13%).

***Relationship between cyberbullying victimization by students and gender.*** When overall prevalence numbers were broken down by gender, we found 14% of female faculty respondents and 6% of male respondents answered yes. While none of the male respondents answered that the cyberbullying occurred because of their gender, six of the female respondents answered in the affirmative. Among those respondents who identified the reasons for which they were cyberbullied, gender ranked third after the two most common explanations cited above, that is, teaching-related reasons and position or role at the university.

**Cyberbullying by colleagues.** The findings regarding cyberbullying by colleagues is reported first by gender and then by ICT usage.

***Cyberbullying by colleagues and gender.*** When asked if they had experienced cyberbullying from a colleague, 9% of all respondents said they had and all of these respondents were women. Thus, 13% of female and 0% of male respondents said yes. The most frequently cited reasons for which faculty respondents believed they were cyberbullied by colleagues were: work-related reasons, including a professional difference of opinion, competition between university colleagues, professional jealousy, their professional status, and an attempt to establish power and control (64%); gender (27%); age (27%); position or role at university (27%); and other (27%). In all cases, faculty respondents knew the colleague(s) who carried out the cyberbullying. These instances of cyberbullying were mainly carried out through email (90%), with Facebook, MySpace, and Friendster a distant second (22%).

It was difficult to determine the impact of tenure on cyberbullying by colleagues because the number of tenured faculty participants were very small (single digits). Similar to the findings of the faculty responses to cyberbullying by students, the percentages suggested that tenured faculty were as vulnerable or more vulnerable than non-tenured faculty to cyberbullying by colleagues. Faculty members for whom English was not their first language and those who identified as non-Caucasian did not appear to be any more vulnerable to cyberbullying by colleagues than other faculty members.

Female respondents described the cyberbullying they experienced from colleagues as: demeaning, belittling, derogatory (64%); insulting (55%); demanding (45%); harassing (45%); and meant to exclude them (36%). Many of them felt that it affected their ability to do their work (64%) and that it affected their relationships with students and/or university colleagues (45%). For some, it also affected their relationships outside of the university (36%), made them feel like quitting their jobs (36%), and caused them to experience mental health problems (36%). One-half of those who said they tried to do something to stop the cyberbullying felt that it had not worked.

More than one-half of respondents who experienced cyberbullying by colleagues at university told someone, mostly friends, partners, family members, or colleagues. Few reported the incidents to their superiors or to others who might have assisted them in an official capacity (for example, university administration, union/faculty association, human rights office).

***Cyberbullying by colleagues and ICT usage.*** While a number of correlations between cyberbullying by students and ICT usage were found, none could be determined for cyberbullying by colleagues. Time spent online for professional or personal activities did not appear to be correlated to cyberbullying by colleagues, nor did having a Facebook page or their own blog or website. The crosstab between cyberbullying by students and cyberbullying by colleagues suggested a relationship. However, only two respondents reported experiencing both, therefore it was difficult to rely on this statistic.

## Opinions About Cyberbullying at University and its Solutions

**General opinions.** On the survey, we provided a list of statements to the respondents and asked them to rate their agreement with each of them on a scale consisting of: strongly disagree, disagree somewhat, neutral (neither agree nor disagree), agree somewhat, strongly agree, or don't know. For the purposes of simplifying the analysis, the two "agree" responses were collapsed into a single category, as were the two "disagree" responses.

Overall, faculty respondents generally disagreed with the following statements: cyber-bullying is a normal part of the online world, it can't be stopped (68%); cyber-bullying can't hurt you, it is just words in virtual space (95%); solutions to cyber-bullying lie with youth as they are more techno-savvy (59%); and I have the right to say anything I want online because of freedom of expression (87%).

Overall, faculty respondents generally agreed with the following statements: it is the university's responsibility to stop or prevent online bullying (53%); I would like to help create a more kind and respectful online world (57%); and I would report cyber-bullying if I could do it anonymously (61%).

There were several statements, however, which elicited more ambivalence and uncertainty from the respondents. These included, among others, a series of statements from which respondents gauge opinions about: university policies pertaining to student conduct; harassment and bullying; asking about awareness of said policies; clarity; enforcement; and effectiveness. Table 3 illustrates the lack of consensus among faculty respondents on these points.

The policy statements generated the highest degree of ambivalence and uncertainty. Approximately 25% of respondents answered that they did not know if these policies were clear. More than one-third (33%) of respondents did not know if the policies were enforced and almost 40% did not know if the policies were effective. Further, many of the respondents chose "neutral" rather than agree or disagree with the statements about the policies. Overall,

Table 3

*Respondents' Levels of Agreement With Opinion Statements About Cyberbullying*

| Opinion Statements | Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree (%) | Don't know (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students are less likely to bully online if they are happy with their university life/course grades | 28 | 27 | 30 | 15 |
| If faculty at university treated students more kindly, students would do the same. | 36 | 25 | 35 | 5 |
| If working conditions at the university were less stressful, cyber-bullying between colleagues would occur less often. | 31 | 28 | 25 | 18 |
| Faculty members are aware of the university policies and procedures on student conduct, harassment and bullying. | 43 | 18 | 21 | 19 |
| University policies and procedures on student conduct, harassment and bullying are clear on prohibited behaviour/sanctions. | 34 | 22 | 19 | 26 |
| Policies and procedures on student conduct, harassment and bullying are enforced at this university. | 22 | 25 | 15 | 38 |
| Policies and procedures on student conduct, harassment and bullying are effective at this university. | 24 | 25 | 10 | 41 |
| Faculty members can access support services if they are victims of cyber-bullying at this university. | 12 | 21 | 26 | 40 |

responses indicated that many were unaware of what the policies were at the institution or what support services were provided. Since most did not report experiences with cyberbullying to an administrator at the university (discussed above), it is unlikely that they had any direct understanding of institutional policies relating to cyberbullying, thus leading to the wide range of responses across the agree/disagree scale.

***Relationship between opinions and victimization experience.*** The "victim group" tended to differ from the overall group in terms of the strength and/or direction of their opinions. Faculty members who had been victims of cyberbullying by students were more likely than non-victims to disagree that "cyberbullying is a normal part of the online world; it can't be stopped" (75% of victims disagreed compared to 68% overall). On the other hand, faculty members who had been victims of cyberbullying by colleagues were more likely than non-victims to agree with the same statement (50% agreed compared to 26% overall). Those who had been cyberbullied by students were also more inclined to disagree that solutions to cyber-bullying lie with youth as they are more techno-savvy (67% disagreed compared to 59% overall). They also strongly disagree with the statement "I have the right to say anything I want online because of freedom of expression" (83% strongly disagreed compared to 67% overall) and agreed with the idea that "if working conditions at the university were less stressful, cyber-bullying between colleagues would occur less often" (41% of victims agreed compared to 25% overall). The majority of respondents indicated that they would report cyberbullying if they could do it anonymously, whereas only 40% of victims felt this way.

There were obvious differences in opinions between victims and non-victims in relation to university policies. Table 4 compares the responses from the full sample with those who were victimized by students and by colleagues.

These findings suggest that those who had been victims of cyberbullying had a far more negative view of the university policies and their capacity to adequately address cyberbullying situations. Faculty members who had been victimized by students were particularly concerned that the university policies were not clear, not effective, and not enforced.

Table 4

*Comparison of disagreement rates on opinion statements based on cyberbullying experience(s)*

| Opinion Statements | Total (% disagree) | Cyberbullied by students (% disagree) | Cyberbullied by colleagues (% disagree) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Faculty members are aware of the university policies and procedures on student conduct, harassment and bullying. | 43 | 50 | 55 |
| University policies and procedures on student conduct, harassment and bullying are clear on prohibited behaviour/sanctions. | 34 | 67 | 55 |
| Policies and procedures on student conduct, harassment and bullying are enforced at this university. | 22 | 66 | 30 |
| Policies and procedures on student conduct, harassment and bullying are effective at this university. | 24 | 75 | 30 |
| Faculty members can access support services if they are victims of cyber-bullying at this university. | 12 | 41 | 40 |

***Relationship between opinions and gender.*** On several survey questions, the male and female respondents' ratings were similarly oriented. For instance, male and female respondents generally agreed that they would like to help create a more kind and respectful online world and that they would report cyberbullying if they could do it anonymously. They overwhelmingly disagreed with these statements: "Cyberbullying can't hurt you; it's just words in virtual space" and "I have the right to say anything I want online because of freedom of expression." There were a few statements however, where males and females differed in their responses. Female faculty (56%) were more likely than males (43%) to agree with the statement, "It is the university's responsibility to stop or prevent online bullying" and to disagree with the statement, "Cyberbullying is a normal part of the online world; it can't be stopped" (72% female; 57% male).

Female faculty were more likely than male faculty to disagree that the policies are clear (38% of females disagreed compared to 20% of males), enforced (26% female compared to 14% male), and effective (28% female compared to 13% male). About 40% of respondents did not know if victims of cyberbullying at the university would be able to access support services and, of those respondents who believed support would not be accessible, 15% were women and 6% men.

**Opinions about solutions to cyberbullying at university.** Respondents were provided with a list of 15 suggested solutions to cyberbullying at the university level and asked to rank their top five choices. The top three choices by faculty respondents were:

1. Engage the university community in developing a strong university anti-cyberbullying policy;

2. Develop a more respectful university culture where kind behaviour is modeled by all; and

3. Provide counselling/support services for cyberbullied victims.

Each of these solutions was ranked among the top five by more than one-half of the respondents. However, male and female faculty members did not uniformly agree upon these rankings. The top two responses for male faculty members were not on this list at all, but rather: "Students should take charge of this problem and work out their own solutions" and "Establish a dispute resolution between the cyberbully and the victim." Neither of these two responses ranked among the top three overall choices because so few female faculty respondents rated these as their best solutions. Female faculty respondents were somewhat more likely than males to support suspending or expelling students who participate in cyberbullying, lodging harassment complaints against cyberbullies, involving police in cases of cyberbullying, and making cyberbullying prevention a top priority in the university. In addition, males supported choice #3, "provide counselling/support to cyberbullied victims, and males were also supportive of providing counselling/support service to the cyberbullies," significantly more than the females.

Despite respondents' concern with the problem of cyberbullying at the post-secondary level, only 4% had developed specific curriculum in their courses on this topic and only 7% mentioned this issue in their syllabus. Less than one-half of respondents said that they did not usually address problems such as cyberbullying in their classes, although 32% said they would discuss the matter with an individual student if the problem arose.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The survey findings on ICT usage demonstrate the pervasiveness of ICT in university life for

faculty both in their professional and personal endeavours. The same is also true for students (Faucher, Jackson, & Cassidy, 2014). This starting point helps us to focus on the importance of the relationships and interactions that occur within this context. Over 17% of faculty respondents to these surveys have been victims of cyberbullying at the university in the past 12 months. Twelve percent (12%) of faculty members were targeted by students and 9% by colleagues. Two respondents experienced cyberbullying from both students and colleagues. These numbers point to the need for universities to make the prevention and curtailment of cyberbullying a priority, just as it is in schools at the primary and secondary levels.

## Gender Differences

The gender differences found throughout the study are the most striking findings to report. Just as was true for student-to-student outcomes in our earlier study of gender differences in cyberbullying at the university level (Faucher, Jackson, & Cassidy, 2014), gender is the factor of import to explore in more depth, to understand the problem, and to develop effective solutions. Female faculty, including those in permanent and non-permanent positions, are more likely to be targeted than male faculty. Both students and colleagues target women faculty more often than they do men.

Female faculty responded to the surveys in far greater numbers than men and only women volunteered to be interviewed. Women faculty appeared more engaged with the problem and expressed greater level of concern for the potential impacts on them personally as well as professionally. The fact that female faculty respondents were more concerned about the issue may partially account for this variation in participation levels. Male respondents tended to have a more hands-off attitude to the problem, as demonstrated by their agreement with statements that cyberbullying is normal, it is not the university's responsibility to stop or prevent it, and that students should take charge of the issue and work out their own solutions. Female faculty members, on the other hand, wanted cyberbullying to become more of a priority issue on campus and wanted administrators to develop more effective policies and deal more harshly with offenders, such as reporting the offender to the police or expelling the offender from school. Female faculty are less confident than male respondents about the efficacy of current university policies related to cyberbullying as well as the availability of support services for victims.

Female faculty targeted by cyberbullies report a greater range of negative impacts on their professional and personal lives than do men. The fact that all of the respondents who reported being cyberbullied by a colleague were women and that the cyberbullying came from someone they knew reflects negatively on the work culture of the university. This finding is not specific to this university, however, as female faculty members have been found to be more vulnerable in other studies as well (DeSouza, 2011; Knepp, 2012; Lampman, 2012; Rowland, 2009; Twale & De Luca, 2008).

Female victims said the messages they received were belittling, demeaning, demanding, harassing, or excluding and that these messages affected their ability to work, their mental health and their relationships outside the university, with one-third wanting to quit. Although women were more likely than men to tell another colleague, friend, or partner that they had been targeted, very few told an administrator at the university. In fact, neither male nor female victims were likely to tell someone in charge. Of those who did try to stop the cyberbullying, one-half said that their efforts were successful.

## Power Imbalances

Many of the findings emerging from the gender differences are consistent with the Power and Control Model mentioned earlier (Pence & Paymar, 1993). The Power and Control Model allows us to describe cyberbullying as a form of abuse whereby one party attempts to exert control over the other. Female faculty members reported that they were most often targeted for work-related reasons, including professional jealously, status, competitiveness, or to establish power and control. Age and gender were also factors, which typically also reflect imbalances of power and control.

There are also indications that a racial minority status might make a faculty member more vulnerable to be bullied. Such factors as described above could be investigated more thoroughly in future studies. The findings here suggest a rights-based or *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* lens could be used to analyze the relationship between the marginality of the faculty member along a number of these dimensions and his or her vulnerability to being cyberbullied.

However, as tenure and rank did not appear to impact the amount of cyberbullying experienced by faculty members and other teaching personnel, it may be that a broader understanding of power is needed. Perceived power in the university context may not be uniquely tied to the academic hierarchy. Academic entitlement and consumerist attitudes to education may also lead to power imbalances in favour of the students. The vast majority of faculty who experienced cyberbullying by students attributed the abuse to teaching-related reasons. Academically-entitled students may believe they are justified in reacting in a demanding, insulting, or harassing manner when they are dissatisfied with the content or outcomes of their education. The literature on cyberbullying in the K-12 sector suggests that anonymity may confer power to cyberbullies and leave targets feeling powerless. The same may be true within the higher education context, however, anonymity may not be the foremost concern at this level. Faculty members knew most of the students and all of the colleagues who targeted them.

In conclusion, this study raises the issue of cyberbullying of faculty at university and the need for university administrators to develop effective and transparent policies that address the problem and to communicate these policies within the university community. The workplace environment is not a healthy one for those at the receiving end of cyberbullying by students and colleagues. Women faculty members are particularly vulnerable. Much of the cyberbullying is taking place under the radar of administrators since faculty are unlikely to communicate their experiences to those in charge, unless they can be assured that appropriate actions will be taken to help the victim and deal effectively with the perpetrator.

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*Wanda Cassidy* is Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Education, Law and Society in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. Her research and writing focuses on legal literacy, human rights education, the ethics of care, marginalized youth, cyberbullying/cyber-civility, and cultivating respectful school cultures. Email is cassidy@sfu.ca. Corresponding author

*Chantal Faucher* is a Post-doctoral Fellow and Coordinator of the Centre for Education, Law and Society, Simon Fraser University, Surrey, BC, Canada. She is currently working on local, national, and international projects related to cyberbullying at the middle school, secondary school, and university levels. She is also interested in media representations and the role of media in shaping public understanding of youth, crime, law, and justice. Email is cfaucher@sfu.ca.

*Margaret Jackson* is Professor Emerita, School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada. She is the Director of FREDA, an SFU centre undertaking research on violence against women and children. Her research interests include policy analysis, violence against women and children, bullying/cyberbullying, judicial attitudes, sentencing behaviour, risk assessment, and socio-cultural factors impacting marginalized girls. Email is margarej@sfu.ca.