Negative: Cyber Bullying

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

***Resolved: The United States federal government substantially reform the use of Artificial Intelligence technology***

Case Summary: The AFF plan expands the use of AI to detect and prevent Cyberbullying online. Biggest problem: AI can only “detect,” it cannot stop cyberbullying. That would take some kind of active intervention after the AI has detected it, which is extra-topical, since it’s not a use of AI.

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Negative: Cyber Bullying

EXTRA-TOPICALITY

1. Detection is topical, Solution is not

Link: AI by definition can only detect when cyber bullying is occurring

We’ll read more evidence on that later in this speech, but it’s obvious simply from the nature of computer programming and the nature of AI and the terms used in the Affirmative’s own evidence and their mandates. AI is software that scans the internet and social media to find out whether cyber bullying is happening.

Violation: Any steps to stop, prevent or prosecute cyber bullying are extra-topical

Conducting investigations, arresting people, shutting down web sites, censoring them, counseling victims, regulating social media, or whatever else it takes to actually prevent or stop bullying are not “uses of AI.” Those all happen after the AI has done its job of detecting the bullying. But the resolution limits Affirmative plans only to reforming the use of AI, and does not authorize them to reform other things like internet censorship, law enforcement, or victim counseling.

Impact: No solvency

AI can only detect cyber bullying, it cannot solve it. And the Affirmative can only use AI, so they also cannot solve it. All mandates in the plan that are extra-topical should be dropped from the round because it’s abusive to make a Negative team debate policy changes that are outside the Resolution. The impact of that is: limited only to doing the Resolution, the best they can hope for is greater detection of cyber bullying, but there will be no reduction of it.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. “Bullying” statistics are exaggerated

“Bullying” incident statistics are inflated because they lump together major offenses with small stupid stuff

Nick Gillespie 2012. (editor in chief, Reason magazine) 31 Mar 2012 “Stop Panicking Over Bullies” 31 Mar 2012 <https://reason.com/2012/04/04/is-there-a-bullying-epidemic/> (accessed 18 Mar 2022) (ellipses in original)

I have no interest in defending the bullies who dominate sandboxes, extort lunch money and use Twitter to taunt their classmates. But there is no growing crisis. Childhood and adolescence in America have never been less brutal. Even as the country's overprotective parents whip themselves up into a moral panic about kid-on-kid cruelty, the numbers don't point to any explosion of abuse. As for the rising wave of laws and regulations designed to combat meanness among students, they are likely to lump together minor slights with major offenses. The antibullying movement is already conflating serious cases of gay-bashing and vicious harassment with things like…a kid named Cheese having a tough time in grade school.

2. Cyber-bullying is not creating “new victims”

“Victims” of cyber bullying are the same victims as physical bullying, and cyber bullies are the same people doing physical bullying

Dr. Dan Olweus 2012. (Swedish-Norwegian psychologist. Research professor of psychology at the University of Bergen, Norway) Cyberbullying: An overrated phenomenon? EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254222937_Cyberbullying_An_overrated_phenomenon/link/58527d8508aef7d030a4e9dc/download> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

A third common claim made by the media and some researchers alike is that the new form of cyberbullying has created many new victims and perpetrators of bullying.[**END QUOTE**] This claim is based on an assumption and maybe some empirical data to suggest that children and youth who are involved in cyberbullying are to a considerable degree different to those engaged in traditional bullying. To check on this claim, we recoded all the eight different forms of being traditionally bullied into dichotomous 1/0 variables of being bullied (‘‘2 or 3 times a month’’ or more vs. not being bullied or ‘‘only once or twice’’) and created a summary variable with a value range between 0 and 8. This summary variable, recoded into a being traditionally bullied (1) variable versus not being traditionally bullied (0), was then cross-classified with the dichotomized being cyberbullied variable (1 vs. 0). This cross-classification thus informs us about the degree of overlap between any form of being bullied traditionally and being cyberbullied. The same procedure was applied to the eight questions about bullying other students traditionally and questions about the cyberbullying others (1/0). **[HE GOES ON LATER IN THE CONTEXT TO CONCLUDE QUOTE:]** These analyses were performed on the US sample from 2007 with some 65,000 participants and on the 2008 data set for the Oslo schools with approximately 9,000 participants. Results documented a very high degree of overlap: Of students who had been exposed to cyberbullying in the US sample, 88% had been bullied in at least one traditional way. Also, for cyberbullying others the overlap was 88%. The results for the Oslo schools were similar, with degree of overlap being 93% and 91%, respectively.   
Brief comments   
In these analyses, there was only a very small percentage, about 10%, of the participants, who had only been cyberbullied or had only cyberbullied others. These results suggest that the new electronic media have actually created few ‘‘new’’ victims and bullies.

SOLVENCY

1. Detection is not solution.

No studies yet prove that AI "fast detection" of cyber bullying brings any positive impacts once it’s detected

Jacopo De Angelis, Giulia Perasso 2020 (DeAngelis - PhD Candidate at University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy). MSc in experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Perasso - PhD Candidate in Psychology, Neuroscience and Data Science at University of Pavia, Italy; MSc in Psychology ) International Journal of Management and Humanities (IJMH) Cyberbullying Detection Through Machine Learning: Can Technology Help to Prevent Internet Bullying? Volume-4 Issue-11, July 2020 https://www.ijmh.org/wp-content/uploads/papers/v4i11/K10560741120.pdf (brackets added) (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

Methodological issues primarily relate to the external validity problem. External validity is the degree to which the results of a study have an actual impact outside the context of that study. Although ML [Machine Learning] algorithms enable fast detection of bullying in cyberspace, no evidence has assessed the secondary impact of these systems on users' psychosocial outcomes yet (e.g., mood, anxiety, etc.). Even though many of the selected reviews outlined the link between fast-automatic detection and activation of supportive intervention strategies, it is not clear whether and how these interventions may occur. This problem highlights the necessity of integration between technical and social intervention strategies.

2. No effective interventions. Even if we detect it, we can’t solve it

Comprehensive study finds no effective evidence-based cyber bullying intervention programs exist

Morgan Lancaster 2018. (Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy, Converse Univ. ) 16 Oct 2018 “A Systematic Research Synthesis on Cyberbullying Interventions in the United States” [Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking](https://www.liebertpub.com/journal/cyber)[Vol. 21, No. 10](https://www.liebertpub.com/toc/cyber/21/10) <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/cyber.2018.0307> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

A systematic search using variations of cyberbullying intervention program search terms was narrowed down to a final sample size of 11 articles fitting the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Results suggested that programs addressing cyberbullying have only been implemented in schools or online, and most have not been evaluated for their effect on actual cyberbullying behaviors, but rather on attitudes and intentions about cyberbullying. Despite the significant concern about cyberbullying and its potential problematic outcomes, there seems to be a glaring lack of effective evidence-based programs that have been implemented in the United States.

No evidence that cyber interventions have actual effectiveness at solving bullying

Jacopo De Angelis, Giulia Perasso 2020 (DeAngelis - PhD Candidate at University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy). MSc in experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Perasso - PhD Candidate in Psychology, Neuroscience and Data Science at University of Pavia, Italy; MSc in Psychology ) International Journal of Management and Humanities (IJMH) Cyberbullying Detection Through Machine Learning: Can Technology Help to Prevent Internet Bullying? Volume-4 Issue-11, July 2020 https://www.ijmh.org/wp-content/uploads/papers/v4i11/K10560741120.pdf (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

Additionally, the impact of these systems on users’ real-life should rely on objective and rigorous protocols of assessment. Nocentini and colleagues reported that many Information Communication Technology (ICT) interventions against cyberbullying (e.g., MISAAC) do not provide sufficient information related to statistical effectiveness of the intervention, by only relying on descriptive information such as user’s degree of satisfaction.

Scholars tried but… they couldn’t find any anti-bullying programs that actually work

Seokjin Jeong1 and Byung Hyun Lee 2013. (**Prof. Seokjin Jeong, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, Univ. of Texas-Arlington. Lee – PhD candidate in criminology at** Michigan State University) A Multilevel Examination of Peer Victimization and Bullying Preventions in Schools , Journal of Criminology Volume 2013 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258397692_A_Multilevel_Examination_of_Peer_Victimization_and_Bullying_Preventions_in_Schools/link/618d77993068c54fa5d33184/download> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

Based on meta-analysis, Ferguson and colleagues (2007) reported that school antibullying programs show little discernible effect on violence and victimization of children in school settings. Payne and colleagues (2003) conducted a study of the effects of communal school organizations (i.e., supportive and collaborative relations among administrators, teachers, and students) on school victimization. Of the 254 public secondary schools studied, they found that communal school organizations had no significant effect on reducing student victimization.

3. Biggest problem – visual contents – overlooked

Visual contents, rather than text, is the most dangerous threat in cyber bullying, and AI can’t do much about it

Jacopo De Angelis, Giulia Perasso 2020 (DeAngelis - PhD Candidate at University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy). MSc in experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Perasso - PhD Candidate in Psychology, Neuroscience and Data Science at University of Pavia, Italy; MSc in Psychology ) International Journal of Management and Humanities (IJMH) Cyberbullying Detection Through Machine Learning: Can Technology Help to Prevent Internet Bullying? Volume-4 Issue-11, July 2020 https://www.ijmh.org/wp-content/uploads/papers/v4i11/K10560741120.pdf (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

One of the selected reviews underlined that most of the literature has focused on detecting cyberbullying from text data rather than images. This imbalance might be due to a limitation of text data compared to images or videos in the stored data availability. This issue is even more relevant given the evidence on the existence of two distinct patterns of cybervictimization (written and visual). Therefore, special attention has to be paid to how these two distinct forms of cybervictimization are differently conveyed on social media sites. For example, cyberbullying attacks via images and videos might mostly be conveyed on Tik-tok and Instagram, since these sites mainly exhibit visual contents. On the other hand, text cyberbullying may be more common on Twitter and Whatsapp, because the majority of contents of these platforms are written. Given that adolescent internet users perceive visual cyberbullying as more dangerous than textual, ML applications seem not to encounter yet the urgency to investigate image and video cybervictimization.

Cyber bullying threats are from visual content, rather than text, which is what AI is designed for

Jacopo De Angelis, Giulia Perasso 2020 (DeAngelis - PhD Candidate at University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy). MSc in experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Perasso - PhD Candidate in Psychology, Neuroscience and Data Science at University of Pavia, Italy; MSc in Psychology ) International Journal of Management and Humanities (IJMH) Cyberbullying Detection Through Machine Learning: Can Technology Help to Prevent Internet Bullying? Volume-4 Issue-11, July 2020 https://www.ijmh.org/wp-content/uploads/papers/v4i11/K10560741120.pdf (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

The higher proportion of text than images data represents the first limitation of the detection systems. Multimedia contents are the primary type of files shared on social networks (e.g., images with caption, video live streaming, and audios). The lack of these contents depends on the limited availability of datasets containing images data. However, it represents a substantial empirical and theoretical limitation, given the evidence showing that visual cybervictimization is considered more aversive than textual.

4. No standard definition of cyber bullying

Lack of consensus on defining cyber bullying stops AI from being effective at solving it

Jacopo De Angelis, Giulia Perasso 2020 (DeAngelis - PhD Candidate at University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy). MSc in experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Perasso - PhD Candidate in Psychology, Neuroscience and Data Science at University of Pavia, Italy; MSc in Psychology ) International Journal of Management and Humanities (IJMH) Cyberbullying Detection Through Machine Learning: Can Technology Help to Prevent Internet Bullying? Volume-4 Issue-11, July 2020 https://www.ijmh.org/wp-content/uploads/papers/v4i11/K10560741120.pdf (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

The most significant theoretical issue concerns the lack of consensus in defining cyberbullying as stressed by two of the selected sources, which reflects the contemporary need to reconceptualize cyberbullying. In literature, it is not clear yet whether repetitiveness of cyberbullying behaviors is a critical component of cyberbullying or not. Accordingly, algorithms do not detect the cumulative frequency with whom a user performs or is the victim of cyberbullying attacks, which raises the need for algorithms predicting the intensity and the severity of cyberbullying. Moreover, persons do not have the same permeability to adverse events, and the same words have different meanings expressed in different contexts. Sharing a standard definition of cyberbullying might prevent biases related to the subjective and contextual perception of the phenomenon, enabling the selection of relevant features (e.g., harmful words) and developing systems capable of encountering the user’s needs.

5. More study needed

More research needed to make it work: Video analysis, input from technical and legal scholars, psychosocial interventions

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Research should aim at developing, training, and testingML classifiers detecting cyberbullying from images andvideos, as visual forms of cyberbullying are perceived moreharmful than the written ones by users. This goal couldbe reached through the contribution of scholars fromdifferent fields, because of the technical (i.e., difficulty tocreate datasets containing this type of entries) and legal (i.e.,privacy issues) issues raised by sharing multimedia contents.It is also necessary to understand which impact thesedetection systems could have on users' everyday life. Futureworks will be challenged to combine these technologicalsystems with the implementation of psychosocialinterventions. Therefore, a dialogue between social andcomputer sciences is essential to provide users with quick detection/prevention technology-based strategies andeffective targeted interventions.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Distracts from the real problem: Physical bullying

Link: Physical (in-person) bullying is far more prevalent than cyber bullying

Dr. Dan Olweus 2012. (Swedish-Norwegian psychologist. Research professor of psychology at the University of Bergen, Norway) Cyberbullying: An overrated phenomenon? EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254222937_Cyberbullying_An_overrated_phenomenon/link/58527d8508aef7d030a4e9dc/download> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

As documented by the reported prevalence percentages and the four figures based on two very solid samples with different designs, cyberbullying is actually a quite low-prevalence phenomenon, representing only some 25 to 35% of the level of traditional bullying by direct verbal means. It is obvious that the ‘‘psychological threshold’’ for endorsing the global items on cyberbullying is much higher than for direct verbal bullying. The two global questions about cyberbullying are actually among the various bullying items/forms with the lowest prevalence rates. And even if one takes into account the possibility that certain forms of cyberbullying such as being exposed to a single episode of a personally embarrassing picture might not be adequately classified as being bullied (‘‘2 or 3 times a month’’ or more; a point to be discussed below), there is no doubt that there are many more children and youth involved in traditional verbal bullying than in cyberbullying.

Link: Cyber bullying almost always starts at school with physical bullying

Dr. Dan Olweus 2012. (Swedish-Norwegian psychologist. Research professor of psychology at the University of Bergen, Norway) Cyberbullying: An overrated phenomenon? EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254222937_Cyberbullying_An_overrated_phenomenon/link/58527d8508aef7d030a4e9dc/download> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

To be cyberbullied or to cyberbully other students seems to a large extent to be part of a general pattern of

bullying where use of the electronic media is only one possible form, and, in addition, a form with a quite low prevalence. These results also suggest that even if most cyberbullying actually occurs outside school hours, as has been documented in several other surveys, many— very likely, most—episodes of cyberbullying originate in the school setting.

Impact: Bullying gets worse. AFF plan diverts attention away from solving the real problem: Physical bullying at school

Dr. Dan Olweus 2012. (Swedish-Norwegian psychologist. Research professor of psychology at the University of Bergen, Norway) Cyberbullying: An overrated phenomenon? EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254222937_Cyberbullying_An_overrated_phenomenon/link/58527d8508aef7d030a4e9dc/download> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

Second, such a picture is likely to result in an unfortunate shift in the focus of anti-bullying work if digital bullying is seen as the key bullying problem in the schools. This would probably also result in funnelling a lot of resources in a ‘‘wrong’’ direction while traditional bullying—which is clearly the most prevalent and most serious problem—would be correspondingly downgraded.

AFF makes it worse: You don’t need cyber bullying programs, because the best way to solve is to reduce physical bullying

Dr. Dan Olweus 2012. (Swedish-Norwegian psychologist. Research professor of psychology at the University of Bergen, Norway) Cyberbullying: An overrated phenomenon? EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254222937_Cyberbullying_An_overrated_phenomenon/link/58527d8508aef7d030a4e9dc/download> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

Given that traditional bullying is much more prevalent than cyberbullying and that the great majority of cyberbullied students are also bullied in traditional ways, it is natural to recommend schools to direct most of their efforts to counteracting traditional bullying, preferably using a programme with documented effects (cf. Ttofi & Farrington, 2009). In some of our own large-scale intervention studies with relatively few measures focusing directly on cyberbullying (Olweus & Limber, 2010), we have observed (unpublished) that levels of cyberbullying have gone down substantially in parallel with reductions in traditional bullying. Such effects have also been convincingly documented in a recent paper from the large-scale Finnish KiVa project (Salmivalli & Po¨ yho¨ nen, 2011). The authors conclude that ‘‘reducing cyberbullying does not necessarily require programs tailored to target especially these specific forms of bullying (p. 68)’’

2. Fuels the fire

Study finds anti-bullying programs actually increase bullying by educating potential bullies on how to do it

Univ. of Texas/Arlington news release **2013 (quoting Prof. Seokjin Jeong, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, Univ. of Texas-Arlington)** Youth more likely to be bullied at schools with anti-bullying programs, UTA researcher finds 12 Sept 2013 <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/691734> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

Anti-bullying initiatives have become standard at schools across the country, but a new UT Arlington study finds that students attending those schools may be more likely to be a victim of bullying than children at schools without such programs. The findings run counter to the common perception that bullying prevention programs can help protect kids from repeated harassment or physical and emotional attacks. "One possible reason for this is that the students who are victimizing their peers have learned the language from these anti-bullying campaigns and programs," said Seokjin Jeong, an assistant professor of criminology and criminal justice at UT Arlington and lead author of the study, which was published in the *Journal of Criminology*. "The schools with interventions say, 'You shouldn't do this,' or 'you shouldn't do that.' But through the programs, the students become highly exposed to what a bully is and they know what to do or say when questioned by parents or teachers," Jeong said.

This Disad. proves more study is needed to find effective interventions, so we don’t make things worse

Univ. of Texas/Arlington news release **2013 (quoting Prof. Seokjin Jeong, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, Univ. of Texas-Arlington)** Youth more likely to be bullied at schools with anti-bullying programs, UTA researcher finds 12 Sept 2013 <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/691734> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

The study suggested that future direction should focus on more sophisticated strategies rather than just implementation of bullying prevention programs along with school security measures such as guards, bag and locker searches or metal detectors. Furthermore, given that bullying is a relationship problem, researchers need to better identify the bully-victim dynamics in order to develop prevention policies accordingly, Jeong said.

3. Victims worse off

Hyping bullying falsely leads victims to feel powerless by making bullying seem more powerful

Nick Gillespie 2012. (editor in chief, Reason magazine) 31 Mar 2012 “Stop Panicking Over Bullies” 31 Mar 2012 <https://reason.com/2012/04/04/is-there-a-bullying-epidemic/> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

In fact, Aaron Cheese, now a sophomore in high school with hopes of becoming a lawyer, provides a model in dealing with the sort of jerks who will always, unfortunately, be a presence in our schools. At the end of "Stop Bullying," he tells younger kids, "Just talk to somebody and I promise to you, it's going to get better." For Aaron, it plainly has: "It has been turned around actually. I am a generally liked guy. My last name has become something that's a little more liked. I have a friend named Mac and so together we are Mac and Cheese. That's cool." Indeed, it is cool. And if we take a deep breath, we will realize that there are many more Aaron Cheeses walking the halls of today's schools than there are bullies. Our problem isn't a world where bullies are allowed to run rampant; it's a world where kids like Aaron are convinced that they are powerless victims.

Distorted portrayal of cyber bullying makes people worse off – feeling powerless and helpless

Dr. Dan Olweus 2012. (Swedish-Norwegian psychologist. Research professor of psychology at the University of Bergen, Norway) Cyberbullying: An overrated phenomenon? EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254222937_Cyberbullying_An_overrated_phenomenon/link/58527d8508aef7d030a4e9dc/download> (accessed 18 Mar 2022)

Getting back to the media picture, I want to briefly touch on two likely unfortunate consequences. First, such a distorted portrayal of reality will probably generate a lot of unnecessary anxiety and tension among parents and maybe teachers and students. It may also create feelings of powerlessness and helplessness in the face of the presumably ‘‘huge’’ and ubiquitous cyberbullying problem.

4. First Amendment violations

Link: Increased “anti-bullying” efforts lead to trashing the First Amendment. Example: New Jersey

J.D. Tuccille 2012. (managing editor, Reason magazine) 3 July 2012 “New Jersey Officials Use Anti-Bullying Law To Suppress Speech” <https://reason.com/2012/07/03/new-jersey-officials-use-anti-bullying-l/> (accessed 18 Mar 2022) (brackets in original)

New Jersey's recently adopted [anti-bullying law](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/AL10/122_.PDF) (summarized [here](http://www.njea.org/njea-media/pdf/Anti-BullyingLaw_Summary.pdf)) had already drawn the ire of free-speech advocates. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education [noted that](http://thefire.org/article/14114.html):  
by prohibiting speech that "has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students" in such a way as to "substantially disrupt[] or interfere[] with the orderly operation of the institution," New Jersey has in effect sanctioned the "heckler's veto." If the College Republicans were to stage a disruptive sit-in because the College Democrats had harshly criticized them for being Republicans, New Jersey's law would subject the Democrats to punishment for the Republicans' disruption. In other words, New Jersey has incentivized overreaction to any perceived insult, since the "victim's" disruption of the orderly operation of the school automatically shifts the blame to the speaker.   
What FIRE didn't say is that the law also incentivizes speech-averse officials to go hunting for the hecklers' veto, by seeking out somebody — anybody — who can claim to be offended.

Impact: Compromising Freedom of Speech is really bad. It’s the foundation of nearly all other human rights

Prof. Stephen J. Wermiel 2018. (professor of practice of constitutional law at American University Washington College of Law) The Ongoing Challenge to Define Free Speech (article is undated but says it was written 227 years after the ratification of the Bill of Rights in 1791) <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/the-ongoing-challenge-to-define-free-speech/the-ongoing-challenge-to-define-free-speech/> (accessed 6 Oct 2021)

Freedom of speech, Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cardozo declared more than 80 years ago, “is the matrix, the indispensable condition of nearly every other form of freedom.” Countless other justices, commentators, philosophers, and more have waxed eloquent for decades over the critically important role that freedom of speech plays in promoting and maintaining democracy.