



# The CYBERHARRASSMENT Case Studies



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## 1. Introduction

Welcome to this instructor guide for exploring the impact of cyberharassment, where we have all our advice and suggestions as to how to deliver lectures on this topic. Our key belief in developing this content is that you know how best to deliver the important information; we can supply the content to you, but you will find the best way to teach it, in a manner than suits your teaching style. And because of that, we have designed the content to be as flexible as possible, with multiple documents that can be put together in multiple ways, depending on what suits you.

This document presents two fictionalized case studies, that focus on both deliberate and accidental harassment. The case studies are designed to serve as a way to improve computer science students' ability at consequence scanning – a way to consider the potential consequences - intended and unintended – of harassment.

These case studies have been developed specifically as teaching tools; each is based on a synthesis of several real cases, and are designed to generate detailed and diverse discussions by student groups about the ethics of these scenarios. To highlight the fictitious nature of the case studies, fictional placenames and company names are very often used to underscore the fact that these case studies are fictional.

## 2. Case Study Delivery

The two case studies can be delivered individually and work well as good lessons, but when used together they provide an interesting contrast, as the first one focuses on deliberate harassment by an ex-boyfriend, whereas the second case study explores a small programming error can cause a lot of harassment for a family, and its impact on them. Our hope is that when the students see the stresses that technology can cause on people deliberate or accidental.

Each of the two case study comprises a detailed narrative with set of questions, or "Talking Points", that you can ask the students to explore. We also have a general checklist that can be used by students to evaluate scenarios involving the development of new digital products and services. The checklist has a range of prompts in it, and we would encourage you to remove, add, or change any of those prompts to suit your own students.

The two case studies are best delivered as *take-home activities* where the students have time to read and reflect on the case studies, and think about the questions, and have time to frame their answers. They can also be delivered as part of a tutorial where the students can discuss the key points in groups, which can be exciting for them.

### 3. Case Study 1: Lucy's Bad Breakup

#### 3.1. Case Study 1 Summary

- Ishmaelia is a developing country in East Africa where social media, search engines, or subscription television services have recently become very popular.
- These services are being provided mainly by a consortium of international companies, predominantly founded and based in the United States of America.
- The consortium is providing a lot of the technological infrastructure, as well as working with national agencies to digitise a lot of important cultural artefacts. They are also harvesting all of the data that is being generated by the people of Ishmaelia when they interact with these services (with is worth billions of dollars).
- The government of Ishmaelia have been unsuccessfully trying to encourage the development of indigenous technology companies by providing taxation breaks and small state grants.
- The Ishmaelian Digital Rights Activitsm Group (IDRAG) are a group who are concerned with these developments, and are trying to highlight these injustices, and they have been working with the few successful indigenous technology companies to develop alternative services using Open Source Software as foundation for development.
- The Consortium is creating a suite of educational services that they will make freely available to primary and secondary schools, including a rich collection of free educational content (including free textbooks) that is localised to national needs.

### 3.2. Case Study 1 Lecturer Notes

1. Please note that this case study have been developed specifically as teaching tool; it is based on a synthesis of several real cases, and is designed to generate detailed and diverse discussions by student groups about the ethics of this scenarios.
2. Lucy Honeychurch, George Emerson, and Freddy (Lucy's brother) are all characters from E. M. Forster's 1908 novel, "A Room with a View". D.I. Sam Tyler is from the UK television series "Life on Mars" (2006-2007).
3. Although this specific situation is fictionalized, there have been many examples of this type of cyberharassment, it would be a good idea to get the students to explore some real-world examples.
4. And there are a number of sites that can help, including:
  - <https://www.cybersmile.org/>
  - <https://www.thecyberhelpline.com/>
  - <https://www.unicef.org/end-violence/how-to-stop-cyberbullying>
  - <https://www.europol.europa.eu/about-europol/european-cybercrime-centre-ec3>
5. Ultimately the goal of this discussion is to allow the students to reflect on their general ethical position, i.e.;
  - a. Deontology: This means that a student believes there are general principles that distinguish right and wrong.
  - b. Virtue Ethics: This means that a student believes that the actions are not as important as the morality of the people performing them.
  - c. Utilitarianism: This means that a student believes that the outcomes of an action are the most important thing ("*the ends justify the means*").
  - d. A combination of any of the above.

### 3.3. Case Study 1 Talking Points

1. Should the police have more powers in terms of being able to intervene in cyberharassment situations, including the ability to seize devices that are suspected of being used in these cases? Why?
2. Should the government pass laws that would result in bigger sentences for people who engage in cyberharassment, as a deterrent? Why?
3. Do you think that social media companies have a great obligation to protect their users, for example, should they allow users to block specific IP address or phone numbers? Why?
4. Should people who engage in cyberharassment be banned from certain types of jobs, for example, law enforcement or the civil service? Why?
5. Should people who engage in cyberharassment be banned from some social media sites? Why?

## 4. Case Study 2: Harris House of Horrors

### 4.1. Case Study 2 Summary

- Qumran is a developing country in the Middle East, that was historically part of the British Empire, and was a British protectorate until the late 1970s. As a consequence of these historical ties, most of the population have some proficiency in the English language.
- Qumran has seen an explosion in the use of smartphones in the past seven years. The country hasn't got a significant landline infrastructure, but with the advent of affordable Wifi and smartphones, internet usage is growing rapidly.
- These services are very popular with the younger adults, but everyone in Qumran agrees that having access to the internet means people can keep in touch with others.
- The younger adults appreciate the educational benefits of Internet usage, as well as for online shopping, to access government services, and social media.
- The older adults also like having internet access, but are concerned that it is responsible for the erosion of the Qumrani culture, where younger people are eschewing traditional dress, customs and values. They are also worried about the data being collected by these services.
- Most adults believe that the Internet will be crucial for the future growth of the Qumrani economy, and because of this, the government have decided to develop a comprehensive Computer Growth Policy, which includes the development of online government services.

## 4.2. Case Study 2 Lecturer Notes

1. Please note that this case study have been developed specifically as teaching tool; it is based on a synthesis of several real cases, and is designed to generate detailed and diverse discussions by student groups about the ethics of this scenarios.
2. Hildy Johnson, Walter Burns, Earl Williams, and Sheriff Hartman are from Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's 1928 play "The Front Page". Henry Dorsett Case is a hacker from William Gibson's 1984 novel "Neuromancer". John Reid is George W. Trendle's The Lone Ranger.
3. Although this case study is fictionalised, it does bear some similarities to the real world case of "James and Theresa Arnold v MaxMind, Inc."<sup>1</sup> as well as "Jose Aguilar v Wells Fargo"<sup>2</sup>
4. "The Consortium" is based on the sort of mega-corporations you see in the work of science fiction writer Philip K .Dick, and on the movies based on his work such as "Blade Runner" and "Total Recall"
5. Ultimately the goal of this discussion is to allow the students to reflect on their general ethical position, i.e.;
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  - c. Utilitarianism: This means that a student believes that the outcomes of an action are the most important thing ("*the ends justify the means*").
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lexisnexis.com/legalnewsroom/litigation/b/litigation-blog/posts/farm-livin-on-the-digital-highway>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.consumeraffairs.com/news/wells-fargo-offers-25k-to-man-whose-home-was-wrongly-foreclosed-120618.html>

### 4.3. Case Study 2 Talking Points

1. Do the programmers who wrote the software that set the default IP address to 0.0.0.0 bear responsibility to what happened to the Harris family? Why?
2. Does the TendreMaps Mapping Company bear responsibility to what happened to the Harris family? Why?
3. When the Harris family got internet access in their house they signed a contract with Terms & Conditions that clearly state that there is no liability for any problems caused by errors in software, even if such agreements are legal, are they ethical? Why?
4. Hildy suggests that computer companies pay their computer programmers poorly, but at the same time spend millions on legal teams to defend themselves. Is this a good business model? Why?
5. Some people have suggested that Harry worked with Henry Dorsett Case to redirect the mapping from the Harris House to the TendreMaps headquarters, if so, do you think it was justified? Why?

## 5. Teaching and Assessment Approaches

### 5.1. Take-Home Activity

As we suggested above, we think the best way to deliver this content is as a *Take-Home Activity*, where the students have time to reflect upon the content, however, there are many other ways to use this content.

### 5.2. Newspaper Article/e-mails

Another possible activity you could do with this content, is to ask the students to write a newspaper article about the first case study. Additionally you could ask the students to write a series of e-mails about the second case study.

### 5.3. Debating

If you have a nice group of students, a debate can be a lot of fun. You could divide the class in half and work together to develop arguments for and against the proposition that social media companies need to take more responsibility. When creating debates, it's important to set a clear topic for debate and assign contrasting viewpoints to individuals or groups, and make sure you give the students one or two weeks to research the topic from their assigned viewpoints in preparation for the debate. As a follow up, you could ask the students to write a short essay based on the debate.

### 5.4. Mindmaps

A nice, simple activity could be to get the students to create a MindMap (or Spider Diagram) that represents the key points of the case study for them. The great thing about doing this is that you can then get the students in pairs or small groups to share their diagrams with each other, and to look at how different people view the same issues.

### 5.5. Posters

This activity applies to both case studies, it might be fun to get the students to create a poster (or infographic) that advertises the services of a cyberharassment support service for both case studies.