

Amanda todd's story of cyber bullying.

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



The topic of cyber crimes is most often connected with crimes related to money or identity theft. People jump to the conclusion that cyber crimes have to be monetarily related, or that “ important” cyber crimes are the ones that relate to monetary extortion or identity theft, even identity theft unrelated to financial gain. However, there is another category of cyber crimes that is just as dangerous and life threatening: cyber bullying. Cyber bullying can be anything, from offensive media posted about an individual to sextortion... anything that causes psychological harm to an individual through the use of the Internet. The case I researched is Amanda Todd, a Canadian teenager who committed suicide after vicious online attacks and sextortion. Her case was kept open after her suicide in 2012 and is finally close to being closed due to the January of 2014 arrest of Aydin Coban. The suspect was charged with extortion, Internet luring, and child pornography (The Canadian Press and Postmedia News, 2014). The background of Amanda Todd’s story, her anxiety, major depression, and panic attacks, the bullying she endured throughout her life, and the documented threats that she received are the research topics that I address throughout my paper. Also addressed is how governments’ attitudes toward cyber bullying have changed due to this case, from their idea that they do not owe victims any help to taking allegations of cyber bullying extremely seriously. One last research topic that I address is the efforts of different vigilantes and companies that led to the arrest of the predator.

Enter Amanda Todd, a fifteen-year-old teenager from Canada. The YouTube video that she uploaded documenting via flashcards the sextortion, bullying, and harassment that she suffered went viral after her suicide. According to

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the documentary *the fifth estate* (2014) filmed, Todd's fascination with the Internet started at an early age. She wanted to become famous. A majority of her friendships were formed on the Internet through miscellaneous chatrooms. Unfortunately, during one of those online conversations, she was coerced through flattery to flash her breasts, a mistake that would haunt her through the upcoming years. One of the many persons that saw this contacted her a year later through Facebook and demanded that she send him photos of herself or he would spread the screenshot of her breasts that he took to all her family and friends (Pendergrass & Wright, 2013). She refused and as a result, the picture was circulated. The man started another Facebook profile pretending to be a schoolboy and added friends from Todd's school. After he accumulated a number of friends, he changed his profile picture to the picture of Todd's breasts (estate, 2014). She started self-harming and her anxiety skyrocketed. She transferred schools, but the harassment grew steadily worse, especially after a "friendship" formed with another boy who had malicious intentions. After enduring intense humiliation, she attempted suicide by drinking bleach for the first time. However, this did nothing to ease the pain, in actually increased the torment she received. The torment from those in her real life and from her online stalker did not relent. According to conversations found by Facebook during their investigation, Todd stood up to her stalker in a Facebook conversation (Surbramaniam & Whalen, 2014). However, after multiple suicide attempts and a reliance on drugs to numb the pain, Todd successfully committed suicide.

Different key players, such as Facebook and a group of hackers known to the world as Anonymous, worked to uncover the man behind the social media mask that was tormenting Todd (Izri, 2012). Todd's family asked their local law enforcement for help, but the local law enforcement claimed that they owed the family nothing and that Todd's family was on it's own in trying to end the harassment of their daughter. After Todd uploaded the YouTube video, people became increasingly aware of the dangers that she faced from this online stalker. Facebook did their best to track IP addresses and Facebook was the first to figure out the many Facebook personas that this stalker was using to harass multiple teenage girls online (estate, 2014).

Going back to the law enforcement officials' attitudes about the online cyber bullying, this case is the case that shed light on just how important it is to address cyber bullying. It took the suicide of a teenage girl to make government officials aware of how dangerous this kind of cyber crime can be. Holland's government is to blame for not allowing those who were working Todd's case to access the stalker (estate, 2014). They believed that what he did was none of the government's concern, and though the IP address had been released, did not allow law enforcement to follow up.

Many could argue that Todd placed herself in this situation by flashing her breasts on camera, that if she had not done so, the many events of torment and harassment would not have occurred. The routine activities theory claims that social elements have nothing to do with cyber crimes; it states that behavioral patterns of people are what influence crime (Ghazi-Tehrani, 2016). I do not condone what Todd did. I personally think that what she did

was reckless and a poor decision, however, it is not her fault that her stalker and tormentor used that reckless decision to blackmail her for years after. Sextortion begins with a single picture, sent to either someone you trust or a complete stranger. That picture, no matter what the intentions were behind it, can be used for malicious intent. This has nothing to do with social status, race, gender, etc. This has everything to do with the behavioral act of taking the photo. This is about the individual physically acting and taking the photo. The best way to prevent this from occurring is to not take the photo at all (Ghazi-Tehrani, 2016).

The motivations behind Todd's stalker, and those who take part in sextortion, are self-satisfaction and revenge (Ghazi-Tehrani, 2016). The self-satisfaction of having such power over an individual is what keeps these kinds of people going. They have the power to "ruin" someone's life by pressing single button. They have the power to see a person squirm, see a person beg, and see a person go to a number of lengths to not have such photos posted in public areas or shown to those the person cares about. The self-satisfaction about sextortion and online bullying is the finding out that one can hold such power over an individual that they may or may not know in real life. Sextortion and cyber bullying can also have everything to do with revenge. Whether it is an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend, the revenge aspect is that they wish for the person to suffer. The motivations for these kinds of crimes are purely personal and purely individualized. These crimes have nothing to do with financial gain and all to do with psychological warfare, the increased pleasure in causing others' stress and discomfort. The perpetrator gets a boost in self-esteem when committing these kinds of crimes, which

leads him to keep committing the crimes, whether with one specific individual, or many different individuals.

The effects of this case are effects that the world sees today. There was little awareness of just how devastating this kind of cyber crime could be until this case. For example, governments did little to help the victims of these types of crimes. The Holland government knew that the possible suspect in the Todd case was living in Holland, but they did not believe that the case was priority or important to have action taken (estate, 2014). This is one of the main reasons this case was so important. It shed light upon how serious the issues of sextortion and cyber bullying are. Even the Canadian government did not show concern over the issue until Todd committed suicide (estate, 2014). This case just highlighted the increased importance of addressing such issues. This case brought about change in the way even average individuals in the worldview crimes such as these. It helps those average individuals realize that their actions have consequences, such as taking a topless photo circulating between people that were not intended to be receivers of the picture. It just taught the general public to watch what they posted online, not that Todd was not a victim, she was, but she could have avoided this situation by not being shown topless on a video chat room with hundreds of random strangers (estate, 2014).

The prevention of this kind of crime is really simple and has been mentioned before in this paper. The sextortion only takes place because an individual places compromising photographs on the Internet, expecting them not to make their way around a handful of people's phone (Ghazi-Tehrani, 2016).

The cyber bullying is one that is a little trickier to address. The reason being is that the law has not caught up yet with technology. Governments have definitely gotten tougher on cyber bullying, but they have not developed a flawless system as to how to prosecute those offenders, or keep those offenders from offending. Facebook has tried it's best to develop ways for individuals to reach out if they are concerned about an individual's welfare. However, I believe that in order to prevent similar cases from happening, governments and individuals really need to address the consequences that people like this face. There should also be places where individuals who have been subjected to this cruelty can go and talk out their problems. Cyber bullying is going to be a case that many, many years will pass by before anything decent is done about it.

Todd's case helped to expand people's minds on what cyber crime is. One can only hope that Todd's case gets the exposure and media attention that it needs, especially because these kinds of things happen every single day. Different states have even passed different kinds of laws that allow the courts to prosecute those who cyber bully others online (Ghazi-Tehrani, 2016). A reference case as to how terrible the crime of cyber bullying can be in the case of Megan Meier, the girl who hung herself after a fake MySpace account was created to bully her (Ghazi-Tehrani, 2016). Researching this case opened my eyes to just how sinister these crimes can get. It is essential that we learn how to prevent these kinds of crimes from happening, and if they do happen, learn how to properly prosecute the offenders. There were plenty of times that authorities could have stepped in to help handle the Todd case, but they did not (Dean, 2012). All countries have long ways to go

before they truly understand cyber bullying and sextortion and the dangers that come with each.