Victim, Rival, Bully: Influencers' Narrative Cultures Around Cyberbullying

Crystal Abidin

Abstract Influencers are among the most conspicuous, crucial, and contentious stakeholders pertaining to cyberbullying. As opinion leaders for young internet users, Influencers communicate with followers through their effective digital strategies applied across a variety of potentially-integrated digital platforms. This vernacular knowledge of digital environments sits at the intersection of relatability politics, attention gaming economies, and self-branding cultures. Unlike anonymous internet trolls, Influencers are nonymous self-branded personae, deeply invested in their reputation metrics. They are also unlike everyday users on the internet, being more conditioned to cope with negativity and social aggression, or even appropriating such negativity for revenge or to further promote their brand. Consequently, Influencers practice a variety of discursive strategies around cyberbullying, including positioning the self as victim, rival, and bully. This paper discusses how Influencers develop and perform four positional narratives around cyberbullying, including: cyberbullying experienced pre-celebrity, in which they speak of digital tools as platforms for recovery and self-care; cyberbullying experienced with microcelebrity, in which they use their platforms to share coping strategies, steer and direct conversation among peers and followers, and advocate for internet safety campaigns; cyberbullying directed towards fellow Influencers, in which transient leadership on healthy internet culture and group policing emerges; and cyberbullying everyday users, in which notorious Influencers become perceived as anti-examples in local communities and new discursive spaces around internet visibility, voice, and responsibility open up in tandem with media virality. The data presented in this paper are developed from in-depth content analysis of the digital estates of a group of young Influencers in Singapore, and supported by ethnographically-informed interpretations from long-term traditional anthropological participant observation.

C. Abidin (✉)
Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: crystalabidin@gmail.com

C. Abidin
Jönköping University, Jönköping, Sweden

C. Abidin
Perth, Australia

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1 Introduction

Many young people are pursuing celebrity on the internet as a vocation, with commercial benefits, cross-platform visibility and established marketable personas that function as highly relatable Influencers. Influencers generally begin as ordinary social media users who, through publishing highly curated content and updates about their personal lifestyles, come to accumulate followers whose viewership can be monetised for advertorials (Abidin, 2015). While the lifestyles they depict on the internet may seem glamorous (Abidin, 2014), this career is not without hardship and labour (Abidin, 2013). Now proliferate across several social media platforms, Influencers are becoming known for their innovative attention-grabbing strategies, utilizing digital formats such as selfies (Abidin, 2016) or playing with notions of shame and the taboo (Abidin, 2017b) to disseminate messages to followers.

Since their early beginnings as commercial bloggers or camgirls in the mid-2000s, Influencers have grown to populate several content genres. While popular content categories are often focused on a key topic such as fashion, food, or parenting, Influencers of the highly feminised "lifestyle" genre rely on developments in their personal lives to cultivate relatability with followers and establish their self-branding. In the absence of a commercial objective or specialisation as buffer between them and their audience, the criticisms that such feminine Influencers receive often pertain to their bodies, internet personae, and imagined private lives. Yet, considering the body positivity of these Influencers, their intentional publicness, and the flair they show for baiting attention, it may be that many people believe that such Influencers deserve the hate they get for being 'attention whores'. Given this, Influencers are particularly vulnerable to being targets and victims of cyberbullying, and they receive relatively little public sympathy for this. However, in order to preserve their public image and reassert their agency and leadership among followers who look up to them as role models, Influencers often adopt compensatory strategies to redeem themselves: soliciting public pity and support; proactively engaging in anti-bullying or healthy internet campaigns; or, retorting by cyberbullying others in the guise of call-out culture. At the confluence of relatability politics, attention gaming economies, and self-branding cultures, Influencers thus demonstrate rich and intriguing narrative cultures around cyberbullying that warrant inspection.

This case study of 6 Influencers is located in the island nation-state of Singapore, with a 2017 population of 5.6 million, including about 4 million citizens and permanent residents. It focuses on Singaporean Influencers who are all likely to know each other. The context of the socio-cultural setting operates something like a hothouse for adopting and cultivating practices, trends and rivalries. At the same time, the local microcosm serves as an exemplar for the global situation, operating as a case study with relevance to the perpetration and experience of cyberbullying elsewhere. The pervasive culture of cyberbullying among Influencers in Singapore is all the more intriguing considering the national history of intrusive state surveillance on all forms of content, including the digital.

Against the backdrop of stiff censorship laws that impact the print media, the internet in Singapore is often positioned as a more liberal space. This has been the case from the inception of the country's technological infrastructural planning, first laid out in the Intelligent Island Masterplan in 1991 (Telecoms Infotech Forum, 2007; Lim, 2001). Even now, the Singapore authorities continue to assert that the state practices a "light touch" (Koh, 2015) approach towards regulating the internet. As such, digital spaces have opened new frontiers of connectivity and dialogue between otherwise separated users that would not have been possible within the closely monitored broadcasting stations and broadsheets of the Singapore mass media. Although the internet, like other mainstream media, is not free from state policing and censorship, it is afforded freedom for more contentious expression and opinion, so long as nothing is said or done that can be prosecuted under the Sedition Act. Singaporeans are increasingly consuming alternative journalism news sites, websites belonging to opposition parties, and political blogs. These user-run avenues have also come under state control under recent licensing schemes (Reporters Without Borders, 2013). The international non-profit non-government organisation, Reporters Without Borders, promotes the freedom of the press and works to protect persecuted journalists. They report that defamation suits, prisonable sedition acts, and state censorship of traditional and digital media content is common in Singapore (Reporters Without Borders, 2017), giving the country a low ranking, at 151 out of 180, in its 2017 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2014). Political bloggers have been subjected to investigations, lawsuits, and imprisonment for their social media posts (Amnesty International, 2017) and have also received libel writs personally from the Prime Minister (Reporters Without Borders, 2014). Given this general climate of state surveillance, there is considerable self-censorship on the internet in Singapore. However, the peer surveillance and peer pressures that result in patterns of cyberbullying among Influencers on social media has not warranted state attention, despite their arguably pervasive and far reaching effects on young people's wellbeing. This paper will explore how social media Influencers and their young followers react to and promote reform around practices of cyberbullying.

2 Methodology

The data presented in this chapter is developed from in-depth content analysis of the digital estates of a group of young Influencers in Singapore, and is supported by ethnographically-informed interpretations from long-term traditional anthropological participant observation among Influencers, their management, and their followers. The case studies were chosen from a broader investigation into the activities of Influencers in Singapore (Abidin, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017b) on account of their specific relevance to the issue of cyberbullying. The ethnographic data is supported by content analysis of media reports about the state of young people's internet cultures and cyberbullying in Singapore between 2014 and 2017. More specifically, the data from Influencers' posts, response posts from their followers, newspaper

coverage around Influencers' cyberbullying controversies, and news reports on the national law pertaining to cyberbullying, were inductively coded via a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In the first instance, open coding was used to sort textual data into general categories and linked together to form broad concepts based on their content. Examples of prominent open codes include 'lawsuits', 'campaigns', and 'community'. In the second instance, axial coding was used to disaggregate the general categories and broad concepts into more finely sorted subcategories and subthemes. Examples of prominent axial codes include: For 'lawsuits', 'reputation', 'protection', and 'harm'; for 'campaigns', 'self-brand', 'renarrativising', and 'reflections'; and for 'community', 'pity', 'support', and 'leadership'. In the final stage of selective coding, subcategories and sub-themes were ranked in a hierarchy until a core category emerged to bind all the relating subcategories together. It was at this stage where Influencers' personal narratives, whether in their social media posts or sponsored campaigns, emerged as an axial code organised around the roles of 'victim', 'rival', and 'bully', enabling identification of a linearity concerning (i) how Influencers framed cyberbullying 'pre-internet celebrity' and 'post-internet celebrity', and (ii) a demography as to how Influencers may engage in or reject cyberbullying 'towards fellows' or other Influencers, and 'towards followers'.

Unless referring to public news reports regarding prolific Influencer controversies, in which the Influencers are already known and named, in other instances pseudonyms are assigned to Influencers and the text of their posts is paraphrased to prevent traceability to their sources. Although Influencers are deliberately self-curated as public figures, and although the social media posts analysed in this post are publicly accessible on the internet, pseudonyms have been used to protect Influencers from any potential re-traumatisation or re-shaming.

3 Cyberbullying in Singapore

According to various white papers and studies from wellness agencies, Singapore reports one of the highest rates of cyberbullying in the world among child and youth internet users (familyandlife.sg, 2015; Mak 2014; Teng, 2015), in some instances resulting in self-harm (Teng, 2015; Sin, 2016) and suicide (familyandlife.sg, 2014). A 2014 survey of 3,000 secondary students (aged 13–17) and 1,900 primary school students (aged 7–12) in Singapore also found that 1 in 4 secondary school students has bullied a peer online in the past year, and 1 in 3 secondary school students and 1 in 5 primary school students have been cyberbullied (Tai, 2014). Part of this rise in online social aggression is attributed to the 'naming and shaming' culture proliferating on the digital journalism portal *STOMP,* which is managed by Singapore Press Holdings, in which citizens are encouraged—and at times rewarded via monetary incentives—to contribute to human interest stories via email, WhatsApp, and mobile phone (STOMP, 2016). Newspaper reports highlight the blurring boundaries

between "civic duty" and "cyberbullying", where public humiliation is provoked by internet users' "sense of justice" (Loke, 2015).

Despite national curricula for internet safety and wellbeing, these social trends are a reflection of how young people in Singapore are failing to perform "cyber wellness" (Ministry of Education, 2014), and "integrity" and "resilience" (Media Literacy Council, 2016), as stipulated by the pedagogical imperative of the state. Over the past five years, Singapore as a comparatively coherent island-state city has become a site for the early adoption of internet celebrity Influencers, with different audience segments increasingly catered for by specific content-providers. At the same time, the nation is particularly predisposed to enacting legislation to address social ills, and this also includes ills such as cyberbullying. These two features: early adoption of Influencers on the one hand, and a swift recourse to law on the other, make Singapore a virtual hothouse for disputes, disagreements and debates that can illuminate the same processes evident elsewhere on the internet.

In the sections that follow, brief case studies have been provided to allow consideration of two of the most prominent Influencers in the women's lifestyle genre in Singapore. These particular cases have been chosen because each Influencer had a comparable experience of cyberbullying at around the same period, but responded in distinctly different ways during the height of the controversies. In both examples Natalie and Rosslyn, who were in their late-teens, created and circulated personal narratives of their experiences with publicity and internet hate, pre- and post-celebrity as Influencers, and addressed their fellow Influencers (whether to solicit support or to chide them for being bystanders) and their followers (including fans and haters). These case studies are followed by a discussion of the use of the legal system by Influencers and notes the recent criminalisation of particular forms of online social aggression. The exemplars conclude with a consideration of the different roles that agents choose to play, and identify with, in the online performance of cyberbullying.

4 Natalie's Persuasion as a Renarrativising Device

As one of the most prolific under-21 Influencers in her cohort, Natalie is no stranger to cyberbullying having experienced it several times since she first debuted in 2011. In one particular incident in 2014, however, followers called Natalie out for (poorly) editing her photographs posted on social media. Astute users pointed out that Natalie had falsified her figure to appear slimmer in her bikini photographs, directing attention to the wavy lines and disproportionate backgrounds that were tell-tale signs for doctored images. Although the editing of photographs to enhance one's image is not uncommon among Influencers, and even everyday social media users, what began as a crowdsourced quest to interrogate all of Natalie's past images for hints of photoshopping quickly culminated in a witch-hunt against the Influencer. Threats ranged from calls to boycott her and her platforms for deceit, to calls that she should end her life for being vain.

While Natalie's immediate strategy seemed to be to ignore the comments from haters on her Instagram posts as she selectively deleted particularly hurtful comments and blocked malicious haters, in the two months that followed she published a string of posts on her blog, Facebook, and Instagram to reflect on yet another incident of being cyberbullied. In a blogpost, she sentimentally reflects on how much her life has changed since she entered the public eye as an Influencer, noting the consequent change in the social pressure and scrutiny that she experiences on a daily basis. Using a tone of deep reflexivity, she acknowledges the public hate directed towards her while asserting that she tries to only take notice of constructive comments, and then from the people who are important to her. Without directly mentioning the extent of the internet hate she was receiving from throngs of people who only know her as her Influencer persona, Natalie alludes to the fact that she filters out public commentary about her life and choices. In response, Natalie surrounds herself with friends and family who know and understand her as a person, quite apart from her Influencer persona.

Natalie's blog comments contrast significantly from the narrative presented in her Facebook and Instagram posts. These two platforms both attract much more viewer traffic, and rely more on visual images than does her text-heavy blog. On Instagram and Facebook, Natalie specifically names the internet hate that she has received as cyberbullying. She states that while her emotive responses may seem to be merely defending herself or calling out haters, the phenomenon of the spread of internet hatred demonstrates a significant shift in local internet culture among young people. She argues that they are, in fact, practising cyberbullying on a larger scale. Natalie recounts casually going through the social media posts of her predominantly young female followers, only to see extensive criticisms of their bodies as being too fat, ugly, or skinny. Through these posts, Natalie shifted from the self-reflexive and self-protective tone on her own blog to exhibiting leadership for her young followers (and haters). She encouraged them to become more resilient by exhorting them to consider the feelings of others before engaging in cyberbullying, and to learn to be kind to each other and look at themselves positively, particularly in the face of criticism.

It seems that Natalie hoped that this would change the conversation. When the internet hate towards the Influencer continued, subsiding more slowly than she would have liked over the weeks, Natalie adopted a different narrative strategy in a newer string of social media posts. This time, Natalie's words were cloaked in anger and frustration. She quotes phrases from internet haters to publicly shame them, while protecting their anonymity. She deems them merely "keyboard warriors", who are unlikely to be this brazen towards her 'in real life', and calls them out for their hurtful remarks and mean behaviour. This new approach marks a third shift in discursive strategy from: the inner self-reflexivity on her blog, where her priority had been to experience personal healing; to a call to arms for her followers on Facebook and Instagram, to be nice to each other and to themselves; to this third wave of posts, where Natalie is unabashed about the anger she feels. Her display of raw emotion, whether or not it was cathartic for her, provoked shock and perhaps served as a rude awakening for those who had been cyberbullying her. The hateful comments died down very quickly after this third set of posts. This resolution and swift dissipation of

the cyberbullies' tactics is also likely to reflect the by-then prolonged popular media coverage of the controversy around Natalie's engagement with the online bullies. The last few media reports on the situation culminated in celebrating and valorising her boldness in standing up to haters.

Following this set of experiences, and Natalie's subsequent brushes with more instances of cyberbullying, the Influencer was engaged as an advocate and spokesperson for a handful of national campaigns around internet wellness. The discursive trajectory of her narrative strategies, and her corresponding disclosures of her personal struggles and recoveries from nasty cyberbullying experiences, successfully steered and directed fruitful conversation among her peers and followers towards positive ways through which to deal with social aggression online. In other words, despite experiencing cyberbullying herself by virtue of being an Influencer, Natalie chose to renarrativise her experience. She used the very same platforms that were garnering her hate to disseminate personal anecdotes and lessons to combat poor internet behaviour in others, changing the conversation to model the building of resilience, self-protection and a more supportive social media culture.

5 Rosslyn's Retreat as a Reparation Device

Although Influencers may give the impression that the entirety of their personal lives are commodities to be mined for attention, publicity and viewership, the truth is that each Influencer is only comfortable with selectively putting their lifestyle on display. What followers may perceive as the complete divulging of an Influencer's self and lifestyle is in reality a carefully measured degree of self-disclosure, in which Influencers selectively commodify their privacy in exchange for viewership and the development of trust among their followers (Abidin, 2014). In fact, Influencers can exhibit the illusion of private disclosure so skillfully that authenticity becomes a graduated performance rather than a static fact, enacted through practices of calibrated amateurism (Abidin, 2017a). But when the facets of life that Influencers wish to guard closely become forcefully relinquished as a result of exposés, call outs or 'doxing' (Marwick & Lewis, 2017, p. 9), the privacy of Influencers is violently revoked and this can be experienced as cyberbullying.

In 2013, pseudonymous forum users and a blogger accused Rosslyn of having 'stolen' her friend's potential romantic partner. While the narrative accounts of this incident were variously catalogued on several forums, aggregate blogs, and hateful comments on Rosslyn's social media posts, the gist of the messy plotline was that Rosslyn had reportedly broken up with her boyfriend to start a relationship with a second man. He in turn had, up until that point, shown interest in Rosslyn's friend. Upset by the turn of events, Rosslyn's friend also wrote a blogpost detailing her disappointment at what had happened and (unwittingly) instigating throngs of hate mail against the Influencer.

During this period, the intensity of cyberbullying and hate comments accumulating on Rosslyn's social media platforms were so prolific that the Influencer 'went

dark' for a few days. The term 'to go dark' is industry lingo for when an Influencer actively chooses to refrain from any public activity on social media: this is especially likely to occur at the height of a controversy. While this silence may seem natural or trivial to the everyday internet user, in the realm of social media Influencers, who post updates several times a day across various platforms, and whose livelihoods depend on actively engaging with followers, this decision is highly unusual. It introduces risks in relation to maintaining one's reputation and is experienced as a compounded and exaggerated absence by Influencers and followers. A week later, Rosslyn began to resume her social media updates with an attempt at 'business as usual', choosing not to publicly acknowledge the incident apart from a cryptic blogpost that hinted at the controversy without directly addressing any rumours. (That post has since been deleted.) Although hate comments continued to stream in as Rosslyn resumed her activities, her blatant disregard towards the haters (by not acknowledging the controversy any further) and her silent treatment of them (by not responding to any of their comments) eventually lead to the cyberbullying subsiding.

Ten months later, however, Rosslyn finally penned a heartfelt blogpost to address the controversy and the cyberbullying she had experienced. Without directly recounting the event, she implies that those readers who have been following her and keeping up to date with her content will know exactly what she is referring to. She explains that she chose to remain silent at the height of the controversy to protect her loved ones. Rosslyn reflects upon her life before her internet fame and divulges that, despite Influencer commerce having become her career at the time that she was writing, she had actually stumbled into the role. She notes that she had had to learn about the sacrifices entailed with the job description as she went along. In other words, she had not been equipped to manage the extent of the cyberbullying that had overwhelmed her.

In an act of reputation reparation, the Influencer also admits that during the height of the controversy, she had become disproportionately obsessed with her fame and lifestyle, and was only able to retreat and compose herself because her family kept her grounded in reality. Acknowledging the inevitability of cyberbullying that comes with her 'job', Rosslyn comments that because her failures are constantly on display in her lifestyle narratives, she will always be vulnerable to internet hate from enthusiastic commentators. She hints at some disappointment in fellow Influencers for being mere bystanders or, worse still, having helped propagate the internet hate towards her. In closing, Rosslyn reminds readers that no one should be a judge of another person's character since we are unable to comprehend their backstory or personal circumstances. She calls upon followers to choose love over hate and expresses gratitude for having the opportunity to use her blog to voice her thoughts on her experience of cyberbullying.

Not all examples of Influencer cyberbullying end so well, however. Increasingly, people are turning to the Singaporean legal system to address the harm they feel has been done to them as a result of their experiences of social aggression online.

6 From Cyberbullying to Lawsuits

As cyberbullying becomes more pervasive in Singapore, Influencers are paving the way for the law to regulate more stringently the propagation of internet hate. In the three brief case studies to follow, each Influencer's use of new laws around (i) filing for an anti-harassment protection order, (ii) engaging in a defamation suit, and (iii) settling a damages claim, corresponds to their contentious roles as 'victim', 'rival', and 'bully' respectively.

In 2016, socialite and Instagram Influencer Jamie Chua, who boasts over 607,000 followers on Instagram at the time of writing, successfully filed for anti-harassment protection orders against 65 (mostly anonymous) internet users for making "hateful comments" and "personal attacks" against her in Instagram posts. Although she later dropped charges against 7 people, the Protection from Harassment Act disallows these users from posting "threatening, abusive or insulting words" towards Chua, and allowed her to retrieve details of the perpetrators from Instagram if future cyberbullying was to surface (Ng, 2017). The aim of this was to prevent further victimisation.

In 2008, veteran Influencers and then-commercial lifestyle bloggers Dawn Yang and Wendy Cheng (better known by her moniker 'Xiaxue') got into an internet spat. The online exchanges resulted in Yang issuing Cheng with a lawyer's letter calling for a "public apology for alleged defamatory remarks", that Cheng had supposedly made on her blog. At that time, Yang and Cheng were respectively registering 30,000 and 50,000 daily views on their blogs. Yang had initially proposed a settlement for damages, but Cheng responded by retracting her blogposts and lawyering up herself (Yong, 2008). Although the fight never eventuated into a lawsuit between them, the trope of rival Influencers resolving internet spats and wars by invoking lawyers' letters and lawsuits remains prevalent today.

In 2015, Wendy Cheng was embroiled in another internet scandal with Grace Tan (better known by her moniker 'Working With Grace'). Both have won several awards for their blogs in various agency-level and industry-level forums. In response to having received "defamatory, libellous, and abusive comments" from Cheng, Tan commented that she had become "more empathetic towards victims of cyberbullying" and attempted to rally a "SayNoToBullying" online campaign to create anti-bullying awareness. She also filed an injunction to process a Protection Order against Cheng's alleged cyberbullying of her (Liang, 2015).

Although the Protection from Harassment Act was only legislated in Singapore in 2014, and it is comparatively new legislation, its existence as a last-resort remedy against cyberbullying has gained prominence through the prolific controversies between Influencers. In a legalistic country that privileges institutional regulation over sociocultural freedoms, the Protection from Harassment Act has been invoked to protect victims of cyberbullying from false accusations, sexual harassment, and stalking. Under the act, these may be deemed to be criminal offences and a successful prosecution can result in such penalties such as fines or imprisonment (Abu Baker, 2015; Husna, 2017). Anonymous perpetrators who engage on any digital platform,

including email and online messaging, may also find themselves being prosecuted since law enforcement can be used to ascertain their identities.

7 Conclusion: Victim, Rival, Bully

The explosion of examples of online hate speech, which has gone hand in hand with the rise of the Influencers, has fuelled public debate about whether these internet celebrities are over-sensitive victims, strategic rivals, or unbridled bullies of manipulation and disinformation. The suggestion is that they may invoke the narrative of cyberbullying to garner controversy and seek support. This discussion has led to public conversations that tease out the grey areas and shifting boundaries of what constitutes internet hate. Citizens responded by using public forums and the media to discuss the blurry line between mere jokes and sexual harassment, identifying both as potential forms of cyberbullying (Husna, 2017). The Law and Home Affairs Minister at the time, K Shanmugam, concurrently used his prolifically followed Facebook platform to denounce the harassment of LGBT communities on the internet (Today, 2017), asserting that all harassment is "criminal" even if commentators feel they are merely agitatedly voicing their own opinions. In response to the increasingly punitive implications of these developments, legal experts have begun issuing user-friendly guides via popular tabloids and news media to teach the public how to identify what the law might consider to be cyberbullying and online harassment, as well as suggesting clear steps that individuals might take at each stage of the process (Premaratne, 2017).

In a softer-sell approach, Influencers have also been mobilised as ambassadors for the Media Literacy Council's Safer Internet Day campaign and a 4-month long Better Internet Campaign. Through "personal stories and experiences of cyberbullying" from Influencers and everyday internet users, through to the "perspective of bully and victim", social media users aged between 15 and 35 have been targeted as an audience for advice around building social awareness (Hio, 2017) and respectful online behaviour.

By using a personal voice that is "engaging and… controversially honest" (Abidin, 2017b, p. 502), Influencers may present themselves as "an authoritative yet approachable identity" (Johnston, 2017, p. 76), treating difficult topics with "intimacy and insight" through their personal disclosures (Abidin, 2017b, p. 504). These narrative strategies, where reactions towards cyberbullying are intricately tied into a "personal journey", in tandem with the cold hard facts of cyberbullying presented in the anti-bullying campaigns they endorse, effectively ride on Influencers' charisma to engage young audiences. By spearheading conversation and action through palatable and relatable personal confessions, Influencers are able to convert cyberbullying "attacks" into "teachable moments" (Johnston, 2017, p. 85). As such, the narrative cultures considered in this chapter exhibit "discursive tactics" or "tactics focused on communication" (Clark, 2016, p. 790) in which the "conflict of provocation can also be productive of a discursive politics" (Shaw, 2016, p. 9). Such an approach offers opportunities for a community to demonstrate their shared values, standing up against

cyberbullying, in contrast to other, lesser responses exhibited by the bystanders of cyberbullying and, ultimately, cyberbullies themselves. The search for a clear and unambiguous assignment of roles and, to some extent, of blame runs the risk of blurring the boundaries between these different discursive positions where negative communicative interactions can result in parties cycling through the different positions of victim, rival and bully.

This study uses an examination of the experiences of young, female Influencers in Singapore to illustrate a variety of ways in which social media audiences and followers act upon their positive or negative judgements of the Influencers' behaviour. In a number of cases, this has resulted in cyberbullying, as judged by both the recipient and the relevant Singapore legal authorities. The primary case study was used to explore a series of different strategies adopted by two separate Influencers to deal with or deflect the online social aggression that they were receiving. These strategies resemble some of the coping strategies that are reported in the literature on cyberbullying amongst young people (Jacobs et al., 2015; Machmutow et al., 2012); such as: withdrawing, (actively) ignoring the bullies and the bullying, using technological tools to delete messages and block aggressors, seeking social support from close friends and family members and from the larger internet community, expressing emotions, reacting assertively towards the bully, retaliating and reporting the cyberbullying to the police. They also reflect the fact that many victims do not just rely on one strategy, but indeed combine (or consecutively use) several (Macháčková et al., 2013). While taking a bold stance towards aggressors (e.g., by publicly shaming or actively ignoring them) appeared to be a successful strategy for Influencers to stop the online aggression, the question raises whether this is also an appropriate response for 'common' young people (without a large fan base) dealing with cyberbullying (that is more likely to be perpetrated by peers they also know in person, and via less public communication means). Preliminary evidence on the efficacy of coping strategies, seems to suggest that especially 'seeking social support' might be beneficial in their case (Raskauskas and Huynh, 2015).

Although these may or may not be equally appropriate as responses to everyday experiences of cyberbullying, these strategies opened up a public debate in Singapore about what constitutes cyberbullying, and what responses to it might work best. This very visible and public Singaporean debate is likely to echo and reflect equivalent discussions in other national and international contexts.

A particular feature of the Singaporean situation, however, is the likelihood that socially negative behaviour will be legislated against: this is exactly what has happened. Since 2014 it has been a crime to break the law as laid down in the Protection from Harassment Act. A resort to law is a final strategy, however, and a legal remedy runs the risk of obscuring the importance of changing the practices of online culture to prevent harm, rather than address its consequences. To apportion legal blame can also work to erase the nuances of the range of different roles that may be played in a classic case of cyberbullying with the personas of perpetrator, victim and bystander sometimes shifting as an exchange develops over time. As part of the nation-state's response to the challenge of online social aggression, Singapore has addressed this nuance through the introduction and promotion of a variety of intervention campaigns

to encourage more pro-social behavior in terms of standing up against cyberbullying: becoming a nation of 'upstanders', rather than bystanders (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2014; DiFranzo, Taylor, Kazerooni, Wherry, & Bazarova, 2018).

Future work might compare Influencers' experiences in other sociocultural contexts with those discussed in this paper. A careful study of the impacts of Singapore's 2017 Campaign for a Better Internet, however, could offer more general benefit. That information could help build the international evidence-base regarding the development of effective strategies for making more social media bystanders into upstanders. Proactive intervention when social media users suspect that they may be witnessing an example of cyberbullying could effectively call-out the behaviour and potentially preventing its escalation. With more of the online community acting as part of the solution, rather than part of the problem, the scourge that is cyberbullying would likely become a rarer feature of online engagement.

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