

Alleged Secret Broadcast of Sexual Encounter Leads to Suicide

By Thomas J. Carr

An 18-year-old Rutgers University student jumped off the George Washington Bridge in an apparent suicide last month after his roommate secretly filmed him having a sexual encounter with another male and streamed it live on the Internet.

The 18-year-old roommate, also a Rutgers student, allegedly used his webcam to stream the encounter, and has been charged with two counts of invasion of privacy stemming from the incident and two additional counts for allegedly trying to stream live video of his roommate a second time. Another 18-year-old student has been charged with two counts of invasion of privacy for allegedly participating in the broadcast that made it onto the Internet.

Read the full story here: [Invasion of privacy](#)

This terribly unfortunate situation has some crying out for greater regulation of cyber-bullying, and has others calling for manslaughter charges against the students involved. With respect to manslaughter charges, there is dispute over whether the students could have reasonably foreseen the end result, and it is uncertain how the criminal process will proceed.

From a civil perspective the grieving family may be wondering how it can hold the students responsible for their conduct, aside from the public shaming that seems to have already begun. Had the incident occurred in New York, the conduct may have risen to the level of outrageousness to warrant an "Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress" claim. While such claims are generally difficult to establish, the conduct here may fit the bill.

While, of late, there have been several news stories involving tragic ends to cyber-bullying, similar bullying has gone on since long before the Internet. The problem with cyber-bullying is that, with speed at which information is processed and can be disseminated to countless numbers of people, it seems that the moment of clarity, that second when one pauses and asks, "should I really do this?" is losing ground. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers, but one can only hope that the increase in the publicity of these cases will make more people pause before taking the step that ultimately crosses the line and, as we have seen, can end in tragedy.

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