<u>**Postscript**</u>

Cross, D., Lester, L., Barnes, A., Cardoso, P. & Hadwen, K. (2015). If it's about me, why do it without me? Genuine student engagement in school cyberbullying education. *International Journal of Emotional Education,* **7 (1), 35-51.**

This study reports on a three-year group randomized controlled trial, the Cyber Friendly Schools Project (CFSP), aimed to reduce cyberbullying among grade 8 students during 2010-2012. In each year, 14-15 year old student 'cyber' leaders acted as catalysts to develop and implement whole-school activities to reduce cyberbullying-related harms. This paper examines students' leadership experiences and the effectiveness of their training and intervention efforts. A mixed methods research design comprising interviews and questionnaires was used to collect data from 225 grade 10 students at the end of their leadership years (2010 & 2011). Four to six cyber leaders were recruited from each of the 19 intervention schools involved in each year of the study. The cyber leaders reported high self-efficacy post-training, felt their intervention efforts made a difference, and experienced a sense of agency, belonging and competence when given opportunities for authentic leadership. They identified key barriers and enablers to achieving desired outcomes. Students greatly valued having their voices heard. Their engagement in the development and delivery of whole-school strategies allowed them to contribute to and enhance efforts to promote their peers' mental health and wellbeing. However, a lack of support from school staff limits students' effectiveness as change-enablers.

Keywords: cyberbullying prevention, secondary schools, student cyber leaders, cyber safety, student voice**.**

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POSTSCRIPT

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The Cyber Friendly Schools Project was an innovative longitudinal study which engaged young people themselves in the process of developing and implementing whole-school strategies to reduce cyberbullying-related harm in Australian schools. This postscript describes how our research has developed since our findings were published in 2015, and reflects the authors' continuing belief in the underutilisation of young people in research aiming to prevent and manage cyberbullying. It concludes by encouraging researchers to use current technologies and interactive multimedia to engage with young people in studies of this nature, and emphasising the importance of flexible, whole-school interventions to address cyberbullying.

Introduction

The Cyber Friendly Schools Project (CFSP) was one of the first longitudinal studies to evaluate a universal intervention, co-developed and co-implemented with young people, to reduce cyberbullying-related harm in Australian schools (Cross, Lester, Barnes, Cardoso, & Hadwen, 2015; Cross et al., 2016). This group randomized controlled trial tested the impact of a whole-school cyberbullying prevention intervention with a cohort of grade 8 students (aged approximately 13 years), followed for three years, from schools located in the Perth metropolitan region (Cross et al., 2016). The intervention had three major components, designed to target and enhance the capacity of (1) the whole-school community including staff, (2) students, and (3) parents, to prevent and manage cyberbullying (Cross et al., 2016).

In addition to improving cyberbullying-related outcomes, a key aim was to achieve the genuine participation of the target audience – young people themselves – to ensure that strategies were informed, relevant and likely to be sustainable (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Shute & Slee, 2015). We aimed to provide opportunities for young people with leadership potential to engage with the issue of cyberbullying and act as positive role models in their schools. It was hoped that their involvement would help school staff recognise the invaluable contribution young people can make to school understandings, policies and practices relating to technology use and online behaviour (Spears & Zeederberg, 2013).

Our efforts to achieve these aims were published in a paper entitled 'If it's about me, why do it without me? Genuine student engagement in school cyberbullying education' in *The International Journal of Emotional Education* (Cross et al., 2015). This paper described the role of student 'cyber leaders' in the development and implementation of whole-school activities to reduce cyberbullying-related harms in Western Australian secondary schools. Four to 6 students in grade 10 (aged approximately 15 years) were recruited from each of 19 intervention schools, after being nominated by school staff for their leadership qualities and skill in technology use. These leaders attended full-day student summits which encouraged them to enhance their knowledge of young people's technology use and work with school staff to customise strategies for reducing cyberbullying-related harms. They were provided with ongoing training and support as they implemented these strategies (Cross et al., 2015).

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Using a mixed methods research design, including interviews and questionnaires, we collected data from 225 student leaders at the end of each intervention year (2010 and 2011). As described in the 2015 publication, cyber leaders provided positive feedback about their involvement in the study (Cross et al., 2015). High levels of self-efficacy were reported after training, and students reported an enhanced sense of agency, belonging and competence. Many felt they had made a positive impact on their school community and helped peers or younger students with cyber-related issues. The cyber leaders also identified key barriers and enablers to achieving what they targeted in their school, as shown in Table I.

Table I: Perceived supports and barriers to being a cyber leader (Cross et al., 2015)

Supports	Barriers
Being listened to, respected to and trusted by peers	Lack of interest from peers
Having a connection with teachers	School ICT staff not helping or supporting
Having recognition and authority from school	Failure of communication between different parties in the school
Support from staff and parents	Not having support from staff and parents
Having confidence and leadership skills	Lack of confidence
Having a cohesive group of cyber leaders	Peer pressure from students
Having times in school when everybody comes together e.g. assemblies	Lack of time

The paper therefore identified the need to enhance the capacity of school staff to support and enable young people to develop agency and confidence in contributing to their own and other students' learning (Cross et al., 2015). Indeed, school staff capacity emerged as a crucial issue for improvement for the project as a whole (Cross et al., 2016). While the CFSP's overall impact was significant, the effects were small, most likely due to poor implementation by teachers, as only a third of the learning activities were implemented with fidelity. Teachers cited time constraints and lack of confidence in teaching the material as key reasons for poor implementation fidelity (Cross et al., 2016).

Building on the study

Since the conclusion of the CFSP, our research team has built upon its findings to enhance school capacity and student engagement in the prevention and management of cyberbullying through several projects. For example, an online resource called *Cyber Strong Schools* was developed and pilot-tested to enhance school staff ability to manage their own online behaviour, as well as to teach and encourage students' positive online behaviours (friendlyschools.com.au/cyberstrong). This online resource was found to be particularly valuable for staff in rural and remote areas that had difficulty accessing professional development.

A major follow-up formative study called *Cyber Savvy* was conducted in 2014-2016, to extend the CFSP research to focus on digital image-sharing and how it is involved in young people's cyberbullying behaviour (Barnes et al., in submission). Research suggests image-based bullying may have a greater negative impact on young people than other forms of cyberbullying (Cuadrado-Gordillo & Fernández-Antelo, 2016; Slonje & Smith, 2008). Thus, the project, involving students, staff and parents in 12 non-government Perth metropolitan schools, aimed to help young people make more positive decisions about images/videos they share online and to reduce the likelihood of these being used to harm themselves or others. Cyber Savvy drew upon the methodologies developed in the CFSP by engaging with student leaders as co-researchers and co-designers of the intervention resources. Student summits, focus groups and questionnaires were again utilised to gather information about students' online behaviour and needs. Curriculum resources for teachers, Year 8 students and parents were developed, as well as an app called "Image Up". This app was pilot-tested by the student leaders and aimed to help them to make safer decisions in-the-moment when sharing images or videos. Process evaluations indicated that teachers, parents and students reported both positive use of and satisfaction with the *Cyber Savvy* intervention. The project yielded much formative and process data, currently under analysis, describing the cyber-leaders' experiences of digital image-sharing, cyberbullying, and online behaviour more broadly. These data will be used to ensure future interventions are more closely aligned with young people's online behaviours, values, needs and perspectives.

Most recently, the *Cyber Leader Project* was conducted to engage with students from 20 secondary schools in regional Western Australia to help build their leadership skills and knowledge about safe online behaviour. Our team worked with students to co-design a website providing resources and support for student leaders to promote positive change among their peers and families in relation to cyber behaviour. A school staff handbook was also developed, to help schools support the involvement of student leaders in school efforts to manage and prevent harmful online behaviour. Online interactive resources were developed to enhance the capacity of student cyber leaders and school staff to grow and support these student leaders.

We continue to learn from and build upon our cyber-related work with students and staff. Research increasingly indicates that even very young children are accessing the internet and are at risk of harms including cyberbullying and loss of privacy (Chaudron et al., 2015; Kabali et al., 2015; Palaiologou, 2016). Despite this, little research has been conducted to determine their needs or effective ways to enable their parents or teachers to guide their digital behaviour. We are therefore seeking to adapt and deliver the CFSP secondary school project to Western Australian primary schools, with a focus on enhancing the competence and self-efficacy of parents and teachers to monitor and guide their children's online behaviour. As in previous research, we plan to work extensively with children to examine their unique perspectives on online environments and ensure that any strategies developed are both appropriate and engaging. Promoting safe and appropriate online behaviour among young children who are beginning to use technology may help to protect children from harm as they enter adolescence and begin to use advanced digital technologies more often and with less supervision (Barnes et al., In submission).

Reflections on the research

As will be apparent from this discussion, the perspectives and recommendations provided in the previously published paper are still central to our research. We feel strongly that children and adolescents are an underutilised resource in bullying research, and that engaging them in efforts to prevent cyberbullying will enhance their capacity for and ownership over more positive online behaviours. Student leaders engaged with our projects continue to express the desire to contribute positively to their own online wellbeing and that of their peers. They assert they know more about online environments than do their parents, teachers or other adults, and believe they should be consulted when interventions are developed or implemented to address these issues (Cross et al., 2015). Our theoretical and methodological emphasis on engaging with students, as well as their parents and teachers, therefore continues to be a key tenet of our work.

One way in which this research pipeline is developed methodologically is in our emphasis on using current technologies and online environments to engage with young people. Where possible, data are collected via online questionnaires, most resources are provided online via interactive websites, in-person training makes extensive use of technology and multimedia, and we have developed a mobile app. In this way, we aim to engage with young people using platforms that are relevant, accessible, familiar and appealing to them, which is particularly appropriate when addressing the issue of cyberbullying and online behaviour.

It must also be emphasised, however, that engaging with student leaders is unlikely to lead to significant change unless it is embedded in a more comprehensive whole-school approach to address cyberbullying. Single-component interventions have been shown to be less effective than multi-level whole-school interventions in the management of bullying (Cross et al., 2011; Cross et al., 2012; Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Even so, the effectiveness of whole-school interventions in secondary schools tends to be poor (Yeager, Fong, Lee, & Espelage, 2015). A greater emphasis on student involvement in the design and implementation of such interventions may improve effectiveness and sustainability, but not to the exclusion of addressing other factors at the school, family and community level that contribute to negative online behaviours.

Interventions must be flexible enough to allow for adaptation according to individual school contexts and needs (Cross & Barnes, 2014). In the CFSP, we brought together groups of student leaders with members of their school's staff, encouraging them to work together to select and develop strategies that would be appropriate and beneficial to their school communities. We have continued to build a degree of customisability into our research. For example, the Friendly Schools Plus, a whole-school program to bullying, includes the 'Map-the-Gap' tool, which helps school leadership teams systematically assess and evaluate their current whole-school actions to prevent bullying, and identify the most important areas for further action (Cross et al., 2012). Given the findings on the benefits of engaging students in bullying prevention efforts, the tool included the engagement of students in the development and implementation of policies and practices to prevent bullying as a key area for action.

The continuing relationship between students and research team has provided valuable opportunities for student input and feedback on resources and materials, and reports on the emergence of new trends in technology usage and platforms.

Conclusion

Our paper on the importance of engaging student voice in cyberbullying prevention interventions recommended the following avenues for further research: the identification of ways to encourage and help schools support student leaders as agents of change; and the development of strategies and resources to enhance students' leadership skills and capacity building of staff to support the leaders' school-based efforts. The projects building on this study, described above, have continued to work towards these recommendations. Areas where work is still needed include the examination of cyber leadership in more diverse school situations, including rural and remote schools, schools with high levels of cultural diversity, boarding schools, and schools in areas with low socio-economic status. These school contexts may require adaptation of our current methodologies, or the inclusion of more supports, resources and the engagement of broader communities. We have also suggested in our previous paper the possibility of building networks or communities of practice of cyber leaders across schools to communicate and share ideas, perhaps using online social networks. Finally, we hope that other research teams, within Australia and elsewhere, will build on and extend this line of research on bullying prevention, providing further information about the benefits and challenges of engaging directly with young people in efforts to prevent and manage cyberbullying-related harms, and ways to optimise this process.

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