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If it's about me, why do it without me? Genuine student engagement in school cyberbullying education

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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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Introduction

Today's adolescents have grown up immersed in information and communication technologies (ICT), with ready access to mobile devices, the Internet, and various forms of social media. Over 95% of Australian children aged 8-17 years report accessing the Internet (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2013), comparable to 93% of American young people aged 12-17 years (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013). Ninety percent of Australians aged 14-17 years own a mobile phone (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2013), somewhat higher than Americans of the same age (83%) (Madden et al., 2013). These technologies provide many potential benefits, including increased opportunities for social interaction and pathways to enormous amounts of information.

Nevertheless, new technologies and social media can be used to harm others, and anti-social behaviours mediated via this technology, such as cyberbullying, are particularly concerning. Cyberbullying is a psychologically damaging form of relational aggression used to inflict harm on others through electronic and digital media. A recent Australian study found that approximately 7% of students aged 8-14 years reported being frequently cyber bullied (every few weeks or more often), and 3.5% of students reported cyberbullying others frequently (Cross, Shaw, Dooley, Epstein, Hearn & Monks, 2012).

Cyberbullying can seriously affect students' social and psychological wellbeing and their academic achievement. Students who are frequently bullied, as well as those who frequently bully others, are more vulnerable to emotional problems, including depression (Perren, Dooley, Shaw & Cross, 2010); suicidal thoughts and behaviour (LeBlanc, 2012); social isolation and loneliness (Şahin, 2012); poorer academic performance and absenteeism (Sinclair, Bauman, Poteat, Koenig & Russell, 2012); poorer physical health and psychosomatic symptoms (Sourander et al., 2010); and other problematic behaviours, such as substance abuse and violence (Sinclair et al., 2012).

Cyberbullying is particularly harmful because it can be witnessed by a much wider audience than would be the case with non-cyberbullying, as a message can be viewed by a whole peer group, or beyond, within seconds. Also, unlike other forms of bullying, cyberbullying does not necessarily end when the person being bullied arrives home, leading to longer-term psychological consequences (Ybarra, 2004). Additionally, the aggressor(s) can hide behind the anonymity of fictitious screen names which can be regularly altered. Cyberbullying therefore presents a high effect-to-danger ratio, as it contributes to the greatest harm, or effect, to the student being bullied, whilst minimising the risk that the student who is bullying will be caught or put in danger (Bjorkqvist, 1994). Thus, cyberbullying is both harmful and a difficult problem to address.

Teachers', parents' and other adults' general lack of understanding of how and why adolescents use ICT has limited the development of strategies to prevent and respond to cyberbullying, as a poor understanding of young people's experiences is likely to reduce the relevance and effectiveness of efforts to support them. Fewer than 10% of secondary school staff report feeling very skilled to deal with cyberbullying (Barnes, Cross, Lester, Hearn, Epstein & Monks, 2012). Further, teachers are less likely to recognize instances of cyberbullying, and more uncertain about how to address cyberbullying, compared with other forms of bullying (Cross, Shaw, Hearn, Epstein, Monks, Lester & Thomas, 2009). Well-intentioned blanket school policies based on zero-tolerance, or individual parent efforts to set online filters and monitor children's

technology use, have had limited outcomes, and in some cases have exacerbated the problem (Chisholm, 2006). This approach tends to blame 'technology' for behaviour that is rooted in wider social problems and the psychological issues that characterise adolescence. As a consequence, many young people report a reluctance to seek help from adults, as they believe their concerns about bullying will be ignored, or acted upon in ways that are ineffective and even distressing (Cross et al., 2009).

While a number of educational resources aim to address cyberbullying, most lack the authentic engagement of young people in their design, development and delivery. Models for enhancing participant engagement emphasise the need to involve the target audience in the process of developing, testing and implementing intervention strategies, policies and practices (Shier, 2001). This engagement enhances the likelihood that the perspectives of all stakeholders are considered, and that the strategies developed are relevant and engaging for those targeted. This approach also ensures that young people's knowledge, needs and concerns are considered when producing resources. This is crucial for an issue like cyberbullying, where young people themselves are often the most knowledgeable about these behaviours.

In 1992, UNICEF recognised the need for adults to maximise young people's participation in the projects or organisations which concerned them, with the publication of Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' model (Hart, 1992). This model was designed to encourage adults to consider the extent to which young people were enabled and supported to contribute to the decisions affecting them. The ladder comprises eight indicators signifying types of child participation in decision-making and suggests that adults need to help young people understand that their participation is encouraged, and to support them in reaching the desired level (Hart, 1992). This process not only protects the rights of young people to contribute to initiatives that affect them, but also helps to ensure that these will be appropriate, relevant, effective, and sustainable.

Young people's proficiency with technology means that new methodologies are needed to engage their expertise and experience, positioning them as co-researchers in any efforts to address the negative uses of technology and associated mental health harms among children and adolescents. Hence the development and implementation of cyber policies, procedures, curriculum, professional development and parent education needs to be user-led, driven by young people, and authentically contextualised in the cyber environments relevant to them (Spears & Zeederberg, 2012). Moreover, fostering student ownership of school policies and practices increases the likelihood they will advocate for and comply with these procedures (Mitra, 2004).

In addition, having authentic opportunities to contribute to school decision-making enhances young people's confidence, academic motivation, school attachment, and sense of ownership over school actions (Mitra, 2004). Mitra's qualitative investigation of student voice in a United States secondary school supported the notion of three key 'assets' are enhanced when young people are involved in school decision-making. Students' sense of agency was enhanced when they could express their opinions, perceive themselves as change makers, and develop leadership skills. Their sense of belonging to the school community was fostered by the development of caring relationships with adults, more positive interactions with teachers, and increasing attachment to their schools. Finally, feelings of competence resulted from being allowed to assess their school environment, and enhance their problem-solving, public speaking and social skills (Mitra, 2004).

This framework suggests that engaging young people in the development of cyberbullying prevention programs would benefit both students and the school community as a whole.

This paper describes the processes by which 225 grade 10 (14-15 years old) Australian students were engaged in the development, planning and implementation of targeted school cyber leadership and advocacy activities. It aims to answer the following research questions, to inform future student-led initiatives in cyberbullying prevention:

- How did the targeted student cyber leader training increase the leaders' sense of agency, belonging and competence to build the social and emotional skills of other students and help to prevent cyberbullying in their school?
- What factors enabled and inhibited their cyber leadership involvement and effectiveness?
- What could be enhanced in future programs to engage and empower student cyber leaders?

These insights can be used to inform research methodologies that better promote the mental health and wellbeing of young people by engaging students as co-researchers in intervention development and implementation.

Method

The Cyber Friendly Schools Project (CFSP) was a three-year, group randomised controlled trial conducted from 2010 to 2012. The CFSP tested the impact of an innovative online and student-led whole-school cyberbullying prevention intervention with the grade 8 cohort (Cross et al., 2015). The project actively engaged Year 10 (14-15 year old) students, in each project year, in the formative development of the intervention (Cross & Barnes, 2014; Cross & Barnes, in press). The same students were engaged at a school-level as cyber leaders in 2010 and 2011, to tailor the CFSP whole-school intervention to meet the needs of the school community, with help from pastoral care staff.

With ethics approval from Edith Cowan University Human Research Ethics Committee, and at each study school and the non-government school sectors (Western Australian Catholic Education office and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia), 35 non-government Perth metropolitan secondary schools were randomly selected and then recruited into the CFSP. These schools were randomly assigned to intervention (n=19) or control schools (n=16).

For each study year, project coordinator in each intervention school recruited four to six grade 10 students to undertake a 'cyber leader' role. Staff were asked to select students who were interested in technology and positive social leaders in their school. All parents of the nominated leaders provided active, informed consent for their child to participate; none refused consent. Eighty-seven grade 10 students agreed to be cyber leaders in 2010 and 138 grade 10 students in 2011. Most intervention schools were co-educational, with four girls-only and two boys-only schools. About half of the cyber leaders were girls (53%), and analysis of the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) indicated that three quarters (75%) lived in higher than average economically advantaged suburbs, with only 14% living in single parent families.

For the first two years of the project, the cyber leaders and project coordinator participated in 6-12 hours of training. This training was conducted during school hours by two researcher/teachers and a specialised Rising Generations youth leadership trainer. The training provided information about the leadership role and expectations; strategies to help engage in peer leadership; the activities they would be asked to tailor or develop for their school; and discussed tactics to address factors that may enhance or inhibit the successful implementation of their proposed strategies. In their school groups the leaders used a purpose-built website (designed by similarly aged students during the earlier formative stages of this project (2008-2009)) to work as a team to tailor and implement at least three whole-school CFSP activities (approximately one every three months), which aimed to enable students' positive use of technology and deal with anti-social online behaviours (Cross, Epstein, Hearn, & Waters, 2011). Student leaders were also given opportunities to build networks with cyber leaders from the other study schools.

The leaders typically suggested or adapted suggested whole-school activities (e.g. school assembly presentations, newsletter items) to help their school review and renew policies; increase staff and parents' knowledge about technologies used by students; increase students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities online; encourage bystanders to discourage anti-social online behaviour and support targets of negative behaviour, and/or provide cyberbullying prevention education training for students and parents.

The cyber leaders and staff who attended the workshop completed an online pre- and post- training quantitative questionnaire measuring their internet use, frequency of being cyberbullied, commitment to leadership, and self-efficacy and skills to discuss and prevent cyberbullying.

Qualitative data were also collected prospectively from at least one grade 10 cyber leader in each school at the beginning and end of each study year (n=19). This comprised in-depth interviews with cyber leaders in the first year of the study (n=12 interviews in 2010; n=30 interviews in 2011) to collect information about the activities they implemented in the school and the factors affecting their progress. Data were also collected to understand the students' sense of self-efficacy to be a cyber leader following the CFSP workshop; factors that inhibited and enabled success in their leadership role, including what other information and support they needed; and the extent to which school staff gave them agency to participate as authentic cyber leaders in the school. With each respondent's permission, the interview was audio-taped and then transcribed.

Qualitative Coding and Analysis

All qualitative data collected were transcribed for subsequent thematic analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Coding of data involved open, axial and selective processes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A thorough first-read of all responses identified key concepts and themes. Axial coding enabled links to be made between categories and sub-categories and core understandings were recognised using selective coding. A staged approach to data saturation was also employed (2010): initial open and axial coding of the interviews were analysed for the emergence of words, themes and causal chains; data saturation was reached after analysis of two further interviews ensured no new themes emerged. Two members of the research team independently coded the data to verify that the content analysis (summative text data) was robust and reliable, and achieved

the recommended 80% agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Finally the construction of summary tables of themes was established.

Quantitative Analysis

Cyberbullying victimization and perpetration behaviours were measured using two scales, based on research conducted by Olweus (1996) and Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, & Tippett (2006). The victimization scale comprised eleven items measuring the different forms of cyberbullying preceded by a definition of cyberbullying (based on one developed by Smith and Slonje (2010). A definition and a series of images relating to cyberbullying were provided to students to increase their understanding of this term, prior to them completing these scales. The items assessed how often in the previous term students had been bullied by: being sent nasty or threatening text or email messages or had these messages posted to their social networking sites; had pictures/videos clips posted to embarrass or upset them; been ignored or left out of things online; nasty comments, lies and/or false rumours about them were sent to others mobile phones or social networking sites; and had their screen name or password used without their knowledge. Students were asked how often they were bullied and rated each item on a 5-point scale (1=ever, 2=once or twice, 3=every few weeks, 4=about once a week, 5=most days). Higher mean scores represented more cyberbullying experiences (cyber victimization: alpha = .86; cyber perpetration alpha = .91).

Peer support was measured using the peer support at school scale (adapted from Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996) comprising eleven items (How often would students: Choose you on their team; Tell you you're good at things; Explain something if you didn't understand; Invite you to do things with them; Help you if you are hurt; Miss you if you weren't at school; Help you if something is bothering you; Ask to work with you; Help you if other students treat you badly; Ask you to join in when alone; and Share things with you?) measured on a three point scale (1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=lots of times). A peer support score was calculated for each student by averaging all items, higher scores reflecting greater feelings of peer support (alpha=0.819).

School-connectedness was measured through a connectedness to school scale (adapted from McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Resnick et al., 1997) and comprised four items (I feel close to people at school, I feel like I am part of this school, I am happy to be at school, The teachers treat students fairly) measured on a five point scale (1=unsure, 2=never , 3=sometimes, 4=usually, 5=always). For each student an average school-connectedness score was calculated, with a higher score reflecting greater feelings of connectedness (alpha=0.656).

Post-training, students were asked about the usefulness of the training (1=unsure, 2=not useful, 3=somewhat useful, 4=useful, 5=very useful), their commitment to being a cyber leader (1=don't know how committed, 2=not at all committed, 3=committed, 4=strongly committed), and how confident they felt in asking staff at their school for help with leadership-related tasks (1=not confident, 2=unsure, 3=somewhat confident, 4=very confident).

Self-efficacy was measured according to whether the student perceived they could: discuss ways to prevent cyberbullying with students; discuss safe and appropriate technology use with students; discuss ways

to prevent cyberbullying with parents; discuss ways to prevent cyberbullying with teachers; support whole school activities to reduce bullying/cyberbullying; encourage students to help someone who is being bullied/cyber bullied; overcome challenges when planning and conducting activities; plan and conduct activities to reduce bulling/cyberbullying; get support when planning activities; and work with my Cyber Leader team to plan and conduct activities. Items were rated on a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). For each student an average self-efficacy score was calculated; higher scores reflecting greater feelings of self-efficacy (alpha=0.900). Quantitative data were collected via Survey Monkey and analysed using SPSS Version 22.

Results

Of the 225 student cyber leaders recruited 157 from 19 schools aged 14 (61%) and 15 (39%) completed a pre-training questionnaire. It is not known if there were any differences between those students who completed a pre-training questionnaire and those who did not. Forty-percent of the leaders were male. The majority of cyber leaders indicated their academic standing was better than (58%) or about the same as (39%) most students in their year. On average, the cyber leaders had high levels of peer support (mean=2.6, sd=0.31) and connectedness to school (mean=3.6, sd=0.37). Using a Mann-Whitney non-parametric test, females reported significantly higher peer support than males ($z=-3.70$, $p<.001$).

Experiences of cyberbullying

Most of the cyber leaders had not experienced any cyberbullying in the past term (Table I). For those who did, the most common experiences were being sent nasty or threatening messages while chatting on the Internet (18%), having nasty comments, lies and/or false rumours posted on a website (13%), being deliberately ignored or left out of things over the Internet (12%), being sent nasty or threatening text messages or receiving nasty or prank calls on a mobile phone (12%), and having nasty comments, lies and/or false rumours sent to others' mobile phones (11%).

Almost all cyber leaders completed a post-training survey (n=154, 98%). Most reported the training was useful (88%), they were committed to being a cyber leader in their school (94%), felt supported in their leadership role by the school (93%) and felt confident to ask staff at their school for help with leadership tasks (93%).

After completing the training, most students felt they had the skills to: discuss ways to prevent cyberbullying with students (94%), parents (89%) and teachers (86%); discuss safe and appropriate technology use with students (94%); support whole school activities to reduce bullying/cyberbullying (88%); encourage students to help someone who is being bullied/cyber bullied (95%); overcome challenges when planning and conducting activities (91%); plan and conduct activities to reduce bullying/cyberbullying (91%); get support when planning activities (88%); and work with their cyber leader team to plan and conduct activities at their school (94%) (Table II).

Table I. Frequency of being cyber bullied

Last term at school how often were you:	This did not happen to me		Once or twice		Every few weeks or more	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sent nasty or threatening text messages or received nasty or prank calls on my mobile phone?	138	88.5	14	9.0	4	2.6
Nasty pictures/photos or video clips were sent to my mobile phone to hurt or upset me?	151	96.8	4	2.6	1	.6
Sent nasty or threatening emails?	146	93.6	8	5.1	2	1.3
Sent nasty or threatening messages while chatting on the Internet?	128	82.1	25	16.0	3	1.9
Deliberately ignored or left out of things over the internet to hurt me?	138	88.5	14	9.0	4	2.6
Had my screen name or password used by someone who pretended to be me online, to hurt me?	142	91.0	13	8.3	1	.6
Nasty or threatening comments or messages were posted on my social networking site?	141	90.4	12	7.7	3	1.9
Nasty comments, lies and/or false rumours about me were posted on a website?	136	87.2	17	10.9	3	1.9
Pictures/video clips about me were posted on websites?	145	93.5	8	5.2	2	1.3
Nasty comments, lies and/or false rumours about me were sent to others mobile phones?	139	89.1	14	9.0	3	1.9
Pictures/videos clips about me were sent to others mobile phones to embarrass, hurt or upset me?	148	94.9	7	4.5	1	.6

Table II. Student cyber leader self-efficacy

I feel I have the skills to:	Strongly agree/agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Strongly disagree/disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Discuss ways to prevent cyberbullying with students	144	93.5	10	6.5	0	0.0
Discuss safe and appropriate technology use with students	145	94.2	9	5.8	0	0.0
Discuss ways to prevent cyberbullying with parents	137	89.0	16	10.4	1	.6
Discuss ways to prevent cyberbullying with teachers	131	85.6	21	13.7	1	.7
Support whole school activities to reduce bullying/cyberbullying	133	87.5	15	9.9	4	2.6
Encourage students to help someone who is being bullied/cyber bullied	146	94.8	7	4.5	1	.6
Overcome challenges when planning and conducting activities	140	90.9	12	7.8	2	1.3
Plan and conduct activities to reduce bulling/cyberbullying	139	91.4	10	6.6	3	2.0
Get support when planning activities	136	88.3	17	11.0	1	.6
Work with my Cyber Leader team to plan and conduct activities	144	93.5	9	5.8	1	.6

Via the qualitative data collection process, cyber leaders reported their leadership experiences, the effectiveness of their training, and the advantages and disadvantages of student-led initiatives in cyberbullying. Themes including the impact of attending the workshop; the enabling and inhibiting factors of effective cyber leadership; and the extent to which their school supported their leadership, emerged from the data and are discussed below.

Cyber leader self-efficacy

"It taught us how to build a relationship with others and the skills for building activities and leadership" (2010 – 15 years of age, female).

The positive impact of the training and associated activities on the leaders' sense of self-efficacy and confidence emerged strongly in interviews. A number of the leaders reported they felt more confident talking to other students about the positive uses of technology and cyber safety, and some indicated their public speaking skills had improved. The cyber leaders also reported they believed the information they were providing would be perceived by other students as more credible or relevant, than from adults.

> They (teachers) were supportive of us, but we actually drove the ideas. Yeah 'cause what we find is, like in anything, teenagers and kids they'd rather hear these things from someone their own age or just like a year of two older rather than adults. (2011 – 15 years of age, male)

In fact, several cyber leaders remarked that, after engaging in their chosen activities, other students had proactively sought them out to talk about cyber issues with which they or their friends were dealing.

"People would come up to me and say, you know I'm struggling with this, do you have any advice, [or] do you have any statistics so I can help someone else out there" (2011– 15 years of age, female).

"Just the fact that they [younger students] trusted us, me or even any of the other cyber leaders, after they would say 'I'm really struggling', and that's something I found really amazing and powerful" (2011 – 15 years of age, female).

Factors inhibiting and enabling effective cyber leadership

Students reported the supports they perceived to be necessary for their role as well as the barriers they experienced to being an effective cyber leader (Table III). The factors perceived to enhance their effectiveness included having formal acknowledgement of their role by the school; receiving respect and consistent support from their peers, other students, staff and parents; increasing confidence in their role and leadership skills; having a cohesive and cooperative group of cyber leaders; and having sufficient time in school to work together as a leadership team.

"Well I would probably have to say yeah help from the teachers. Like I said we weren't really expecting much and they really sort of came through for us" (2010– 15 years of age, male).

Table III. Perceived supports and barriers to being a Cyber Leader

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

Some leaders also identified factors that inhibited their effectiveness, including not having staff and parent support; students not using the CFSP online classroom resources giving them a limited understanding

of cyber safety issues; a lack of interest in the project by other school students and some negative peer pressure; limited school ICT support; and a general lack of communication between different parties within the school.

"All we need now is staff support with our ideas as we know what appeals to other students and ways to interest them" (2010 – 15 years of age, male).

The cyber leaders indicated they were most successful when they had confidence in their role (agency); felt supported by staff (belonging) and had the skills and experience to fulfil the leadership role (competency).

> I feel like I am closer to everyone and their technology. I feel like I can give advice or talk to people if they are in a bad space, but I feel like we have all built initiative to overcome issues" (2011– 15 years of age, female).

Level of authentic student cyber leadership supported by schools

Cyber leaders described the extent to which they felt supported to be authentic leaders according to Hart's ladder (Hart, 1992). Most indicated their contribution would be categorised as Level 7 on the ladder, as they initiated and directed their own ideas and strategies, with adults involved only in a supportive or advisory role.

"We did, like, all the planning for it and all the creating for it, we just went to them and said is this appropriate and stuff like that" (2011– 15 years of age, female).

Many of the cyber leaders indicated they were happy with this level of involvement, as it provided them with independence and the opportunity to shape their school's efforts to address cyberbullying.

"All the adults wanted our opinion and help. I was really happy to find out how useful we were and that we had actually made a difference" (2010).

Information and support missing

Cyber leaders reported that to be more successful they needed more information about ways to prevent and stop bullying; how to respond to students who perpetrate cyberbullying; strategies to support targeted friends; true stories about the experiences of young people involved in bullying situations; who they can access for support if they are cyberbullied; how to support others as a bystander to cyberbullying; and how to use privacy settings correctly.

When asked if they would be willing to help prepare and support the next group of grade 10 cyber leaders, many students strongly indicated they would like to either remain in their role for another year (as grade 11s) or would be willing to support/ mentor the new leaders.

"Um it would probably be good to stay on and then. Yeah, yeah. They can give us new ideas that we probably haven't thought of. So just keep us and then get another couple of new people" (2010 – 15 years of age, male).

Student leaders were interested in networking further with the cyber leaders from other study schools to share ideas directly or through an online platform.

"I think it would be good to discuss with other students in our situation, try to plan ideas and to know what works at other schools and what didn't, and just keep that regular contact" (2011– 15 years of age, female).

Discussion

Listening to and learning from young people is essential to enhance our understanding of their use of online environments. Young people can provide expert insight given what they observe, perceive, and the activities they engage in while spending time online. Authentically engaging and encouraging their participation to drive change benefits student leaders themselves, as well as other students and the school as a whole.

The quantitative and qualitative data in this study indicate several positive outcomes for the cyber leaders. While most leaders reported they had personally not been cyberbullied and most had high levels of peer support and feelings of connectedness to their school, they also reported feeling committed and well-prepared to be a cyber-leader, and to collectively take action to encourage pro-social online behaviours. They also reported factors that enabled and inhibited their involvement and effectiveness as cyber leaders, outlining the actions needed to improve future cyber leaders' effectiveness. These actions generally included enhancing school staff capacity to engage more fully with student leaders; ensuring the classroom cyber education program is implemented effectively to complement the cyber leader activities; and working to ensure the school's students support the cyber leaders.

Similar to the findings of Mitra (2004), this mixed methods research suggests that the CFSP training and ongoing support for the cyber leaders contributed positively to their growing sense of agency, belonging and competence.

Confidence in their role (Agency)

The CFSP aimed to engage young people as co-researchers to help other adolescents use technology more positively and to reduce harm from negative online experiences, particularly cyberbullying. The cyber leaders described in this paper acted as co-implementers while other students (approximately 70) in non-study schools co-designed in the two years prior to this study, via extensive formative research, the intervention content and online delivery. Similar to research conducted by Spears, Slee, Campbell and Cross (2011), young people involved in the CFSP contributed to the development of whole-school activities including classroom and family resources provided to schools. The cyber leaders reported they were empowered and invited to work with their school's staff to tailor the CFSP program's activities, and their dissemination and implementation, to suit the needs of the school. An important part of this empowerment process was ensuring the cyber leaders felt meaningfully involved and had the self-efficacy to deliver what was asked of them. This was evident in both the qualitative and quantitative data, especially with many wanting to remain in the role or to mentor others.

The CFSP positioned young people as both catalysts and counterparts with teachers and parents to enhance other students' learning. As catalysts the cyber leaders worked with teachers in their schools to plan

and lead activities during each school term to ensure that cyber safety was seen as a priority in the school. The data suggest the leaders increasingly recognised they possessed unique knowledge and skills to present and support the cyber learning of students, and in some cases staff and families.. They also felt they had more credibility than teachers when presenting information about this matter, and as such believed they could achieve more significant change than adults.

The leaders also reported the CFSP provided opportunities for them to develop more positive forms of identification of themselves such as leaders, decision makers and change makers, which may not have previously been available to them.

The cyber leaders' ratings of the degree of agency they experienced when initiating activities suggests that most had valuable opportunities to instigate plans, while sharing their decisions with school staff. It seems reasonable to assume from this finding that many of the school staff who worked with the leaders were attuned to their interests. The outcomes experienced by the cyber leaders seem to meet Heath and McLaughlin's (1993) definition of 'agency in youth development' where students believe in their self-worth, and also believe they are contributing to something positive.

Felt supported by staff (Belonging)

The extent to which adolescents feel they belong at school, feel cared for by the school community and have opportunities to learn from one another is associated with positive behavioural, wellbeing and academic outcomes (Libbey, 2004). Student leaders in this study felt well connected to their school and supported by their peers. This study provided numerous opportunities for the leaders to enhance their relationships with teachers and other students, with many reporting more meaningful relationships with staff as a result. In a similar study conducted in Canada, an increase in student contribution was also associated with an increase in school attachment (Lee & Zimmerman, 1999).

While the data suggest most students were allowed to make important decisions and felt listened to and respected by school staff, those students who didn't connect or receive as much support from school staff reported less effectiveness and growth from this leadership experience. While not evident in this study, other research suggests that when adults do not give students the agency to make and implement their decisions, their roles largely revert to teachers dominating the students' decision making (Mitra, 2004). Students regularly commented they liked the opportunity to be independent and make decisions about actions they could take, but still needed support from staff to help implement these. The nature of the relationship between the leaders and staff, and their availability, influenced both the process of change and the extent to which the leaders benefited personally from the experience. Future research needs to consider how to adequately prepare schools to engage and support student leaders as change agents.

Having sufficient skills and experience to be cyber leaders (Competence)

The CFSP conducted the full day workshop primarily to help students recognise, enhance and practise their leadership skills. In a youth development context, Villarruel and Lerner (1994) suggest that competence comprises the development of new skills and capacity, active problem solving and being appreciated for one's abilities. Key competencies developed by the leaders included identifying what school-level actions needed to be taken, based on their school's needs; cooperating and making decisions as a team; negotiating with adults; and presenting to peers and adults. Student leaders also reported they felt well equipped to discuss ways to prevent cyberbullying and safe and appropriate technology use with the whole school community. Student leaders also reported that their role gave them much satisfaction and purpose, while also giving them practise to prepare for adult responsibilities. These competencies are similar to those developed by students in the Pupil-School Collaborative study (Mitra, 2004), where similarly aged students were actively engaged in initiating school-based initiatives.

Although the findings from this study are encouraging, the study schools were somewhat homogenous, metropolitan, higher SES, larger non-government schools that mostly valued being included in a study investigating ways to enhance young people's online behaviours. Similarly, the cadre of leaders are likely to be different from those students who were not selected to lead cyber safety initiatives. Further research is thus needed to determine the applicability of these findings to other groups of young people from more diverse schools.

Conclusion

Given that school students are usually the targets of change and of research (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009), this project is unique. The research methodology supported and enabled young people to act as co-researchers. The cyber leaders in particular acted as change-partners and as such their insights and perspectives promoted whole-school strategies to promote students' mental health and wellbeing in an online environment. Engaging young people as leaders in cybersafety can create meaningful experiences that help them meet their developmental needs, and ensure that those most knowledgeable about this issue (young people) contribute to the teaching and learning of other young people. The CFSP had the dual effect of building student leaders' feelings of agency, belonging and competence, while enabling them to collaborate with school staff to address cyberbullying as positive and credible co-educators.

Further research is needed to determine how to enhance the capacity of school staff to enable young people to adopt change agent roles. Also, research is needed to identify ways to sustain the cyber leaders' school-based efforts by, for example, building networks of cyber leaders across schools to communicate and share ideas via online social networks.

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