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# Taking a Stand against Cyberbullying in Higher Education

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## **ABSTRACT**

*As a result of the rapid online expansion of digital learnscapes, resulting in university students regularly engaging in online learning communities, cyberbullying has increasing potential to become a serious issue for higher education institutions. The effectiveness of educating students and staff in higher education on the elements and impacts of cyberbullying has driven this innovative study, which involves the development of an action research-led and student-directed interactive educational website to inform higher education students and staff about the consequences of cyberbullying. In describing the ongoing development and generalisation of the site, this chapter highlights the third cycle of an action research inquiry, and more generally the need for such resources to support higher education so that users understand what constitutes cybersafety and cyberbullying. As such, the research is directed toward understanding, sharing, participation, reflection, and change. Findings are discussed in relation to the information on the site for users in higher education.*

**Keywords:** Interactive Educational Website, University, Cyber Safety, Ecological System Theory, Communication for Social Change, Routines Activity Theory, Participatory Action Research

## INTRODUCTION

Twenty-first century digital communication technologies allow for wider and faster Internet access. These technologies have enabled more people to share and be connected to an extensive range of online material for a variety of purposes. Currently, there are over three billion Internet users internationally, with approximately forty percent of the world's population with an Internet connection (Internet Live Stats, 2015). In a distribution of Internet users worldwide over the age of fifteen, the Asia-Pacific region accounted for forty-four percent with Internet access (Internet Live Stats, 2015). This figure is greater than both North America and Europe combined (Internet Live Stats, 2015). Within this region, social media has seen unprecedented growth, with Australia leading the world in online engagement in applications such as Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and Google+, recording the highest global average for time spent each month using these social media tools of seven hours per month (Nielsen, 2010; Sensis, 2015). While social media and digital tools have huge potential for teaching and learning, particularly in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, the particular qualities of online interactions can also lead to negative interactions online. This rapid growth, and the possibility of bullying online, prompted the authors to apply action research to studying inventive student-centred approaches in higher education to raise awareness of the pervasive and serious issue of cyberbullying, using the case study of a university in North Queensland, Australia.

Traditional values such as respect and appreciation may be eroded in an increasingly networked world. For many, technology has shifted users' understanding of values to such a degree that they are sometimes discounted when interacting with diversity on the Internet. For example, Sally Evans (2014) describes how online communications encourages a 'disinhibition effect', which causes some people to both reveal more about themselves online and to 'separate behaviour from actions', making them "feel less accountable for those actions" (p. 161). These people may struggle connecting decently with others and their ideas within and across diverse online environments.

This research project acknowledges that, as humans are social beings, behaving according to values makes sense when it is a relational process, rather than an individual pursuit, and although variable from one context to another (mostly for religious, socio-cultural and/or geopolitical reasons), strong ethical standards are fundamental to this interpersonal process within a globalised world. This is particularly the case in a higher education context, where diverse students are required to interact ethically (and making decisions based on moral values) with each other online. Indeed, scholars in the area of human-computer interaction call for research that charts how "human values in all their diversity" are supported by technology (Sellen, Rogers, Harper, & Rodden, 2009, p. 63). These values include "personal privacy, health, ownership, fair play and security" (Sellen, Rogers, Harper, & Rodden, 2009, p. 64). As a result, this research project understands cyberbullying within a wider context of online privacy, digital wellness and reputation.

### Digital Footprint, Digital Wellness, and Reputation

The rise in use of digital communications has increased the potential damage that can be done to an individual's reputation, career prospects and sense of self-worth (Pelletier, 2009). The particular 'everywhere, anytime' (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak 2003; Patchin & Hinduja 2006; Tokunaga 2010) qualities of Internet communication make acts of bullying pervasive and often highly visible long after the incident has taken place. Therefore, ethical practice needs to be enacted by all users to ensure a positive digital footprint. A digital footprint is a trail of a person's activities online (Waever & Gahegan, 2016, p. 324). This includes photographs, emails, text messages, webpage content, chats, 'likes', 'shares', and other social networking site pages (Katz, 2012). Encouraging individuals to reflect on what they are about to post online before they do can assist people in considering the impact of what they share online on themselves and others (Woods, 2014). This is of major significance due to the

permanent nature of content that exists online (Mansouri & Mrabet, 2013) and the ease by which information and materials can be saved and shared. Julia Davidson and Elena Martellozzo (2013) observe that everything young people—and by extension older university students—do online is a permanent record of their actions, “a digital footprint that may impact negatively upon career opportunities and relationships” (p. 1472). Evans (2014) concurs, stating that “cyberspace is public” and everything that is uploaded stays there, even though young people may experience it as anonymous (p. 161). Therefore, questions of cyberbullying need to be understood as part of bigger questions about how disrespectful behaviours and communications in online spaces can be permanently damaging to a student beyond their time at university.

In conjunction to meeting the needs of each degree or course, universities are required to ensure work-ready graduates, equipping them with transferable employability knowledge and skills (Kinash et al., 2015). An illustration of such skills and knowledge is being ethically informed in order to recognise professional responsibilities and practices to self and colleagues (Australian Catholic University, 2013; Bond University, 2015; Charles Darwin University, 2015). An example of this standard is employing a clear code of online engagement in a course such as teacher education where pre-service teachers participate in online collaboration through tools such as discussion forums and chat rooms. Teaching pre-service teachers about the advantages and disadvantages afforded by new communication technologies, together with online rights and responsibilities sets the scene for initiating a code of engagement for respectful online engagement. This digital code becomes the standard by which pre-service teachers manage their digital footprint, during their studies and upon graduation in their places of employment. The continuation of this standard, as part of learning activities as a pre-service teacher and through to employment is also aligned to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Limited, 2014). Specifically, Standard 4.5 outlines safe, responsible and ethical use of ICTs as part of the creation and maintenance of safe and supportive learning environments (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Limited, 2014) and is therefore a vital inclusion within teacher preparation courses.

Alongside considerations of a student’s digital footprint, cyberbullying is understood in relation to notions of digital wellness. Digital wellness involves how well a person relates to digital technologies both physically and emotionally within the four levels of the Ecological Model: Individual, Relationship, Community and Societal (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). This may involve elements such as attitudes and behaviours online; skills in self-regulation; device attachment levels; propensity to search online for help and other related materials; screen time; physical posture and; an awareness of one’s privacy, security and digital footprint (McMahon & Aitken, 2015). Practical implications for higher education include enabling and empowering students and staff to make informed choices to ensure Internet safety and develop skills in online reputation management (Acosta & Temple, 2013). These concepts underpinned the development of online resources to prevent cyberbullying.

## **Defining Cyberbullying**

Acknowledging that differing definitions of cyberbullying exist in the literature, the authors have identified cyberbullying as intended aggressive behaviours, carried out by an individual or group, often anonymously, through electronic media. Often repetitive, these online behaviours cause harm and distress to others due to the nature of social media where material is liked, saved, promoted and viewed by many (Calvete, Esther, Orue, Izaskun, Estévez, Ana, Villardón, Lourdes, & Padilla, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, & Tippett, 2006). Cyberbullying can occur in a range of electronic platforms, including social media, such as Facebook, YouTube, online chat rooms and Short Message Systems (SMS or texting) (Carter, Kanakis, van Luyn, M'Balla-Ndi, & McArdle, 2015). Willard (2007) and Chisholm (2014) categorise eleven modalities of cyberbullying across these platforms (Table 1).

*Table 1: Modalities of cyberbullying*

People play different roles in cyberbullying situations (Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse, 2012). Cyberbullies are people who use digital media to harass, intimidate, embarrass or stalk another person (State of Michigan, 2010). Victims are individuals who are exposed to and targeted by the unethical online behaviours of a cyberbully (Olweus, 2013). Bystanders are individuals or groups who witness the act of bullying online (Law et al., 2012). They are reported to have the power to both increase the effects of cyberbullying by sharing or liking material initially posted or intervening and supporting victims by not colluding with the bullies and/or by supporting the victims (Brody & Vangelisti, 2015; Matsunaga, 2011).

The seriousness of cyberbullying cannot be underestimated; the literature reports grave consequences in some cases, including victims experiencing a sense of fear, self-blame, anger, embarrassment and humiliation (Turan, Polat, Karapirli, Uysal, & Turan, 2011). Moreover, when the identity of the cyberbully is unknown, as is often the case in online contexts, the sense of vulnerability and bleakness associated with the bullying event is often escalated.

Acts of online bullying have prompted an international legislative response against cyberbullying; however, these laws do not function to protect all Internet users. For students who are engaged in cyberbullying behaviours in Canada and the United Kingdom, consequences range from expulsion and fines to jail time (uKnow Kids, 2014). Australia introduced the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act in 2015. However, as the title suggests the Act only protects children who are victims of digital bullying (Davis, 2015), thereby excluding protection for adults within higher education settings. There are options for adults to use criminal codes of law and civil or workplace courts to prosecute those engaged in online bullying (Wu, 2014). In New Zealand, The Harmful Digital Communities Bill was also introduced in 2015, and provides legislation protection for both children and adults from acts of cyberbullying. In Asia, Singapore's Ministry of Law recently introduced a law into parliament, which introduces penalties for those committing cyberbullying. This Bill supports children and adults in an area with one of the highest reported cases of cyberbullying internationally, second to the United States (NoBullying.com, 2015).

There are also individual responses from social media sites, such as Facebook, Google+ and Twitter that include links to ways an individual may report a cyberbullying situation. Evidence suggests that more education programs are being developed from these groups; however, these programs essentially target primary and secondary school students (Smith & Yoon, 2013). Smith and Yoon (2013) state that law makers and school administrators are addressing the issues of cyberbullying, and so too should higher education. Additionally Pearce, Cross, Monks, Waters, and Falconer (2011), identified a list of strategies that can guide schools in targeting cyberbullying behaviours (see Table 2). While these strategies are designed for implementation at a whole-school level, they have application to universities.

*Table 2: Programs and resources with Potential Application to Higher Education*

## **Cyberbullying and Higher Education**

As demonstrated, while there has been action taken targeting cyberbullying prevention, further work is needed in universities, because of the rapid online expansion of digital learnscapes, which mean students and teaching academics are heavily engaged in online learning communities. With this increased online engagement come legal and ethical challenges of teaching and learning in online environments, including exposure to cyberbullying events (Faucher, Jackson, & Cassidy, 2014; Jones & Scott, 2012; Zacchilli & Valerio, 2011; Zhang et al., 2010). In Australia, student access to the Internet is ambiguous. It

is estimated that around fifty percent of the Australian population use social media sites such as Facebook (Queensland Government, 2014), with students representing ninety percent of this population (Mansouri & Mrabet, 2013). Cervini (2015), reporting on a study conducted by Professor Selwin, states that in Australian universities, one hundred percent of students surveyed (1658 students across two universities) have access to a mobile phone, with ninety-three percent of these being a smart phone.

This rapid uptake and advancement of the Internet has resulted in the international flow of knowledge. From humble beginnings (Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen, 2011), advances in communications technologies have changed the way people work, learn and interact socially. For higher education institutions, this has resulted in the speedy development of software to support different kinds of learning in the current digital age (Putz & Arnold, 2001).

As a direct result of the connectivity, flexibility and accessibility provided by the Internet, universities have been offering teaching and learning in multiple modes, such as distance, blended, flexible or fully online (Park, 2009). This has resulted in increasing numbers of students engaging with one another and with course materials online. Tools such as blogs, email, online courses, databases and social media provide an accessible and flexible space for teaching and learning. These tools are reported in the literature as conducive to productive learning communities (Moore et al., 2011; Richardson & Swan, 2003). These tools can be accessed anywhere and any time, using a variety of devices, such as computers, mobile phones, tablets and personal digital assistants (Zhang, Land, & Dick, 2010). These modes of engagement are beneficial for many students as they provide the opportunity for studying off-campus and access to tertiary qualifications irrespective of physical locality (Henrie, Bodily, & Manwaring, 2015; Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Baki, 2013). Aligned with these advantages are potential disadvantages including exposure to unethical behaviours, such as cyberbullying (Jones & Scott, 2012; Li, 2007; Zhang et al., 2010).

A correlation has been reported in some literature between the increased time students are spending online using discussions boards, emails and social media as part of their university studies, and demonstrable cyberbullying behaviours (Jones & Scott, 2012; Zhang et al., 2010). Other studies suggest the ease with which cyberbullying can occur is afforded by the different portable devices that students use on a daily basis (Walker, Sockman, & Stevens, 2011), which have the capacity to mask user's identities (David-Ferdon & Hertz, 2007; Turan, Polat, Karapirli, Uysal, & Turan, 2011). Therefore, Smith and Yoon (2013) report that it is the combination of universities' adoption of technology for teaching and learning, as well as the mobile devices belonging to the students that creates an environment where cyberbullying can occur. Cyberbullying is not just limited to online bullying between students. Research (Carter et al., 2015; Dickerson, 2005; Faucher et al., 2014; Minor, Smith, & Brashen, 2013; Smith & Yoon, 2013) confirms that cyberbullying occurs between students, and between students and staff. When cyberbullying occurs in universities, it is through various platforms and Web 2.0 tools, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube; as well as use of email, discussion forums and within online classrooms (Smith, Grimm, Lombard, & Wolfe, 2012). Students who engage in cyberbullying behaviours towards academic staff use online tools such as sites where they can anonymously review staff to post derogatory and threatening comments (Minor et al., 2013).

Cyberbullying has a significant impact on victims. The Faucher et al. (2014) survey questioned 1925 students from four Canadian Universities and reported over one third of participants had been cyberbullied. These respondents described cyberbullying limiting "their ability to do their assignments; it affected their relationships outside of the university; they experienced mental health issues; and/or they felt that their emotional security or their physical safety was threatened" (p. 5). Respondents categorising themselves as victims, named interpersonal complications, physical appearance, differences of opinion, or jest, as factors contributing to online victimisation. Females named gender, compared with ethnicity by males, as the primary motivation for being victimised online. Being upset by or being bullied by the victim were motivating factors for cyberbullying another student. Furthermore, females flagged disliking the person as a reason for cyberbullying, compared with males

stating online bullying as pleasurable (p. 5). While most respondents had been unsuccessful in stopping the bullying, female, more than male respondents (60% compared with 42%), were more likely to have told friends, partners, and/or family members. Few respondents talked with teaching academics, administrative staff, or support service personnel at their higher education institution. Thirty-two percent of females, compared with 47% of males, acknowledged cyberbullying as the norm in online engagement; 58% of males and 43% of females proclaiming freedom of expression allows them to say what they want, when, how and to whom they want online without censorship.

There have been a number of calls for action against cyberbullying in a higher education context. Zalaquett and Chatters (2014) report that university students advocate for more education in fostering safer online learning and social environments as their time is increasingly spent engaging in cyber spaces. Smith, Grimm, Lombard, and Wolfe (2012) suggest different measures that universities might enact for cyberbullying prevention, including education; promotional messages; peer group learning and support; and informative websites that include contextually relevant, interactive information with the capacity to reach large target audiences. In a recent study conducted by Minor et al., (2013) three hundred and forty-six teaching academics from undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programs were surveyed to determine the existence of cyberbullying between students and teachers. From this study, a list of approaches was developed with ways to assist in the mitigation of cyberbullying within universities.

*Table 3: Approaches to assist with the mitigation of cyberbullying within universities*

## **Higher Education Policies**

The matrix (see Table 4) below was compiled by searching the policy index from a sample of fifteen of the forty universities in Australia. Each university's website contains a search engine function where relevant information pertaining to that particular university can be found. From this search engine, a policy index was established by using the key words of 'policies' and 'policy index.' To locate the relevant policies within the index, such as cyberbullying, safe working and learning spaces, appropriate ICT use and social media policies, key words were used including: cyberbullying, cyber safety, welfare, safety and harass, were used. Once the key words were identified and the policies read for relevancy, they were recorded in the matrix.

*Table 4: Matrix of Australian Higher Education Policies*

As noted in Table 4, there are examples of university policies with explicit inclusion of cyberbullying in their student conduct policies (La Trobe University, 2015; The University of Western Australia, 2014; University of South Australia, 2007). Although not explicitly focussed on cyberbullying, most documents provided by universities guiding student learning and engagement focus on student safety and welfare as a precondition to positive and beneficial learning experiences within higher education (RMIT University, 2015; Universities Australia, 2011). The Student Conduct Policy at the authors' institution (James Cook University Australia, 2015) outlines the principles expected of students in both traditional and digital classrooms. At the core of the Policy is the principle that students must refrain from engaging in any conduct that impairs the reasonable freedom of other persons to pursue their studies, research, duties or lawful activities in the university or to participate in the life of the university. Since applying this principle to the digital world is complex, the authors collaborated with students in the development of a website promoting the 'what' of equitable engagement online.

The available literature and relevant institutional documentation provide limited attention to principle-centred standards of online behaviour at the higher education level.

Interestingly, a review of the literature indicates there are limited measures promoted in the public space within higher education, as opposed to robust examples within Australian Government schools, such as the Safe Schools Hub, the Cybersmart Program and the Easy Guide to Socialising Online (Australian Government, 2015).

The lack of specific cyberbullying policies in higher education could also partially be explained by inconsistencies in how legislations have been dealing with issues of cyberbullying in the wider community. For example, the introduction of the Brodie's Law in Victoria makes cyberbullying a criminal offence and provides for a maximum sentence of 10-years jail in the event of any sort of bullying, including cyberbullying (See Little 2013). However, other states record mainly civil actions in cases of bullying. Therefore, an obvious lack of consistency in punishing cyberbullying and of clarity in policies identifying what cyberbullying is exactly not only in higher education but also in the wider community could play a role in the development of efficient principle-centred standards of online behaviour at the higher education level. Thus, there is also a need to work with students at universities to create educational resources that can navigate the complexity of policies and legislation in a meaningful and practical manner (See Carter, van Luyn, & M'Balla-Ndi, 2016).

### **Theoretical Lens: The Ecological Model**

The Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) acknowledges the multidimensional nature of protective and risk factors operating within and across different environmental systems, including: the *individual, relationships, community* and *society* (Aboujaoude & Starcevic, 2015; Dahlberg & Krug, 2002) (see Figure 1). Through examining cyberbullying within these intersecting systems, preventative measures can be situated and enacted and their effectiveness monitored and evaluated.

#### *Figure 1. The Ecological Model*

Expanding on the Ecological Model (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002), Routines Activity Theory (RAT) (Cohen & Felson, 1979) assists with explaining the motivations for cyberbullying, roles and responsibilities of persons involved, its repercussions and responses to ethical online behaviours within and across environmental systems. This theory states that there are three key elements that, when combined, create space for inappropriate social behaviours, such as cyberbullying, to occur: a suitable target, a motivated offender, and the lack of a capable guardian (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Marcum, 2009) (see Figure 2). Applying this theory to cyberbullying within higher education contexts, a suitable target can be any member of the university community. A perpetrator can be a cyberbully and/or a bystander. A capable guardian can be provided by a university through several means, including the explicit provision of educational resources, codes of conduct, policies, and relevant supports (for example, counselling services) should these guidelines be eroded. The use of the term 'guardian' does not imply the university is a paternal figure; rather, the term applied here acknowledges students' agency as adults to make informed decisions about their behaviour online, and that student voices should be drivers in the creation of educational resources.

A key feature of RAT is that socially inappropriate behaviours are the result of regular activities and/or patterns of behaviour in a particular time and space (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2002). In the university context, elements including the following, if left unguarded, have the potential to contribute to cyberbullying events: (1) teaching and learning materials are increasingly becoming available online; (2) online interactions are included in subject learning outcomes; (3) students and teaching academics are equipped with the available skills to access mobile and other technological devices; (4) assumed ethical online behaviours within online teaching and learning communities.



*Figure 2. Routines Activities Theory and Higher Education*

## **Creating an Online Educational Resource For University Students**

This review highlights the gap in the literature of inventive student-centered approaches in raising awareness in higher education of the persuasive and serious issue of cyberbullying. It is this gap that has driven this action research project: the development of an interactive website to inform higher education users about cybersafety and the impact of cyberbullying on people's lives. The authors suggest that encouraging responsible and reflective engagement in the use of online resources offers the opportunity to enhance the use of critical thinking, which is a crucial skill users need to gain in order to be able to assess any socio-cultural issues of importance making their appearance in the cyber world.

In this study, the students involved in the creation of multimedia material were Journalism and Media Writing students. Recent developments such as the increasing notion of digitalisation in journalism create new relationships between journalists and their audiences, and increase the level of interconnectivity as well as interactivity journalists need to keep up with (See Garrison 1997; Kanuka & Anderson 1999) especially when it comes to sensitive issues. For these reasons, a website was one of the best platforms for sharing online resources about cyberbullying, cybersafety and student's digital footprint. Furthermore, to evolve in an era of "networked societies and fourth estate" (Little 2013), journalists, writers and storytellers will benefit from what researchers such as Siemens (2005) have proposed as a new pedagogical approach based on the principle that, in a networked society (Castells, 1996), connections that exist between people and digital artefacts must be addressed through a connectivist pedagogy.

Furthermore, this online medium maximises opportunities for all users to be educated on issues of cybersafety and ethical online behaviour through accessible, interactive and engaging content (Shank, 2014). The principles of adult learning - value-relevant content, active engagement, self-direction, and variety (Gravani, 2012) - are mirrored in the design, layout and content of the site. Informed by a comprehensive review of the literature, evidence-based practices from organisations including the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, examination of cybersafety websites, and previous research conducted on a different campus with students of the same university (Carter, 2013), elements, including the following, were identified as content for the site: definition of cyberbullying; tips for staying safe online; online rights and responsibilities charter; and, helpful contacts (community and university).

The website layout features a homepage with a highly visible video defining cyberbullying, an interactive quiz about the content of the site, and text introducing the purpose of the site. Users can scroll down to watch videos created by students featuring fictional scenarios of cyberbullying based on research as well as videos of stakeholders such as recruitment agencies, student welfare staff, and experts in digital law and education. The bottom of the homepage features highly visible links to support services. Users can then navigate the site via links peppering the homepage, and via a drop down tab at the top of the site, which links to resources on university policy, online rights and responsibilities, digital safety and conduct, digital wellbeing and digital footprint. The website, still undergoing a process of development, can be viewed here: <http://www.preventcyberbullyingjcu.com.au/>

## **METHODOLOGY**

The action research cycle discussed in this chapter is part of a three-year systematic process of inquiry involving key stakeholders in the higher education sector including students, policy makers, academic and professional staff. These stakeholders were invited to contribute content on ethical online engagement to the site, one component of the larger project conducted at a multi-campus, regional university located in the tropics of northern Queensland, Australia. The project was directed at improving online ethical practice in higher

education. Project leaders worked alongside students and professional staff to make sense of the cyberbullying literature and to respond to the literature in ways that supported cyber safety and the digital reputation of users in higher education.

The action research project has incorporated several cycles of continuous learning enabling the project team “to engage in thoughtful, conscious, decision making to create, implement, reflect on, and modify” (Stringer, 2008, p. 168) their plan. For the project team, these cycles have been transformative in nature, encompassing new knowledge and understandings about cyberbullying in higher education.

In the initial cycle of action research, the principal investigator engaged in professional conversations with students to ascertain their experiences with cyberbullying. Next, the project leader conducted a comprehensive literature review in conjunction with facilitating an online survey with 254 undergraduate students to ascertain their perspectives of protecting themselves from cyberbullying on social media sites (Carter, 2013). The second action research cycle involved the production of student-created three or four minute videos of fictional cyberbullying scenarios designed to educate fellow students about ethical online communication (see Carter, van Luyn, M’Balla-Ndi, 2016). Conversant with evidence informed literature on cyber bullying in adulthood, the scenarios afforded students an opening to think about their digital footprint in combination with educating users about the potential impact of cyberbullying in adult lives. Moreover, it offered valuable insight into what adults in higher education considered significant in influencing a cultural change in digital communication.

The methodological approach for this third action research cycle was a mixed methods design involving quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative data was collected using an online survey while qualitative results were acquired with a focus group. This approach was selected since it enables the integration and the triangulation of the data in order to answer the research questions. The results of this cycle allowed the authors to further develop the site, but more generally gave insights into the qualities of a successful online resource to prevent cyberbullying for university students.

## Research Questions

The current action research cycle sets out to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are James Cook University’s students’ and staff’s perceptions of the site?
- (2) What do future users suggest may add relevance and value to the site?

## Procedure

Before the project commenced, ethics approval was obtained from the relevant university authority. A project officer sent an email to prospective participants inviting their anonymous and confidential participation in the project and including the website link for the survey. Since this email invitation resulted in a low uptake, the email invitation was then posted on the Facebook site of three undergraduate subjects, including a media-editing subject, where students were also invited to participate in a focus group. Prospective participants were advised that if they chose not to join in the research, their grades or relationship with the project team would not be affected. Consent to participate was implied by the voluntary completion of the online survey. The survey remained active for three weeks, and was conducted during the first study period of the academic year in 2015.

A comprehensive literature search could not find a survey measure containing all items of interest under investigation. Consequently, conversant with the literature on responsible behaviour online, cyberbullying, website design, and the principles of adult learning, a 28-item survey instrument was framed (Appendix A). The instrument comprised Likert-type scales with demographic questions (n=9), and five point Likert-type scale questions (n=19) structured around the information on the site. Open-ended questions (n=6)

were included in the survey to generate participants extended commentary. Building on from the survey, the focus group was designed to ascertain James Cook University users' opinions of the site and the redesign of the site. Focus group participants were Journalism and Writing students enrolled in the same media-editing subject as part of their undergraduate degree.

Two members of the project team, the subject coordinator and lecturer for this student cohort, discussed the research with the students. In this discussion, students from the class were invited to view the site and complete the online survey; time was set aside in the class for this to happen. Students were also invited to participate in the focus group, scheduled the following week during the same media-editing subject. Prior to commencing the focus group, written information about the research and the purpose of the focus group was provided and consent was attained in writing. The same members of the project team facilitated the 30-minute focus group, conducted in English. After a professional transcription company transcribed the recording, data was coded and analysed by the researchers. To help maintain the trustworthiness of the data, the researchers independently reviewed the transcript to verify, and contribute additional commentary if appropriate.

The focus group began with a discussion of the website, including the target audience and literature pertaining to cyberbullying in higher education. Participants, all of who had previously view the site, were asked to comment on their learning's and experiences with navigating and engaging with the site, and give ideas for adding value to the website. Participants heard one another's opinions in the focus group prior to working individually on the media editing subject assessment task of producing a script and a 3-minute video illustrating issues of cyberbullying.

## Analysis

The collected survey data was entered into SPSS version 22 and analysed using descriptive statistics and *t*-tests. Quotes were used to illustrate the perceptions of respondents, thus providing the reader with thick descriptions of their impressions of the site. The coded responses in the survey and the focus group underwent a comparative analysis to generate themes. Braun and Clarke's (2006) systematic thematic analysis framework was employed to code and categorise themes. An audit trail was maintained to help safeguard the analysis process, ensuring it was methodologically and theoretically sound. A thematic map was produced through this process, with relevant quotes extracted from the data to support the progression of the thematic interpretation. Individual responses are identified as follows: Student surveys: Student S Participant; Staff surveys: Staff S Participant; Focus Group: FG Participant.

## Participants

A total of 77 participants participated in this cycle of the action research project, with 57 participants completing the survey (15 staff, 42 student) and 20 students joining in the focus group. Fifteen of the survey participants were male (13 student, 2 staff) and 42 were female (29 student, 13 staff). The majority of staff survey participants were aged above 50 ( $n=9$ ), compared with the majority of student survey participants aged between 18-23 ( $n=26$ ). One student participant was in the 50-years-and-above age bracket. The number of participants aged 40-49 years was the same for student and staff participants ( $n=2$ ). Six student participants were aged between 30-39 years, compared with three staff participants. Five student participants were aged between 24-29 years compared with one staff participant in this age bracket. Thirty-four student participants identified English as their native language compared with 13 staff. There were two student participants identifying Malaysian compared with 1 staff participant. The 'other' native language category comprised 1 staff and 4 student participants. Chinese ( $n=1$ ) and Indian ( $n=1$ ) language was also reported by student participants.

Thirteen females and 7 males volunteered to participate in the focus group, representing age ranges as follows: 19 years or younger (n=6), 20-24 (n=12), 25-29 (n=1), 30-34 (n=1). The majority of the participants' native language was English (n=17), with 3 participants reporting Norwegian (n=1), Swedish (n=1) and German (n=1) as their native language. The focus group participants were Journalism and Writing students enrolled in a media editing subject as part of their undergraduate degree. This subject introduces students to editing for print, broadcast and online platforms.

These media editing students were asked, as part of the assessment for the subject, to individually produce a script and a 3-minute video illustrating issues of cyberbullying. Selected works were produced as a short video uploaded on the site, publically available across the higher education institutional community. Students' videos were published on the site under a creative commons attribution non-commercial no-derivatives license.

The project team felt that including voices and perspectives from the site's target audience, higher education students, was important for the success of the project. In this task, students were expected to think analytically, reflecting and evaluating evidence-informed practices of social responsibility online, educating higher education student (and staff) about staying safe when online; communicating effectively with different audiences about cybersafety and cyberbullying; and employing diverse media and methods to synthesise, systematize and display information. The student's fictional stories presented in the videos were a means of metaphorically showing cyberbullying taking place, and the social conventions that allow this to happen, concurrently challenging the event by characterising the lived experience of participants, as target, bystander or tormenter. Fictional storylines were used in order to avoid showing actual victims, bystanders and bullies.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings from this action research cycle suggest a number of benefits for the sites' continuation, including the range and depth of information for users in higher education about different nuances and interpretations of social boundaries, socially responsible online behaviour, and the potential impact of cyberbullying on people's lives and digital reputation. Prior knowledge was extended and new knowledge generated with the majority of participants viewing themselves and the complex social phenomena of cyberbullying differently as a result of their conceptualised life-worlds. Conversely, a minority of focus group participants identified themselves as autonomous individuals, having unlimited free choices irrespective of codes of ethical practice. These individuals pay token attention to ethics, preferring to dismiss personal responsibility and accountability for online unprincipled behaviours. Nevertheless, most participants reported the relevance of the material and the application of safe practices online as pertinent to themselves. The suggested improvements, specific to customisation of the content for the target audiences and design changes, have been instrumental in the action research process – collecting data, analysing data, communicating outcomes, and taking action (Stringer, 2008, p. 5). The results of the survey demonstrate some initial insights into how online resources to prevent cyberbullying in higher education contexts can be designed to engage users and generate learning's.

Acknowledging that the site has multiple tiers of information to explain cyberbullying and subsequent repercussions for targets, aggressors, and bystanders, participants appreciated broadening their knowledge of cyberbullying, the guidelines for remaining safe and secure online, rights and responsibilities associated with ethical online behaviour, and contact information for support. Student and staff feedback included the following comments:

*It's well constructed with lots of pertinent information (Student S Participant M)*

*I like the website. I like the idea behind the website (FG Participant B)*

*I like the quiz. I thought the quiz was a really good way to like emphasise some things that people maybe have thought of before, but maybe not, hadn't seen written out (FG Participant A)*

*The student videos are probably the most effective (Staff S Participant H)*

*The most useful to me were the links down the bottom for the different places a person can go for help with cyberbullying (Student S Participant O)*  
*I think it raises awareness of facts about the legal consequences of cyberbullying (Staff S Participant C)*

Most survey participants reported the website useful in raising their awareness, increasing both their knowledge and understanding that “digital tools offer powerful and potentially irreparably damaging ways to respond and communicate with hostility” (Weinstein & Selman, 2014, p. 16). Several participants suggested the site be mandatory viewing and could be integrated into staff and student induction programs. One staff participant reported that they found minimal value from the website as they were not active on social media and could not relate to the information on the site, compared with most participants who highlighted the significance of the site for all involved with online technology.

*I think it's an important tool for education on this topic. Should be made compulsory for uni students to know about this and that there is help if it is happening to you (Student S Participant NNN)*

*Going through this site should be part of Student and Staff induction (Staff Participant W)*

*This is an important issue for all, as the networks developed at university can create a platform for cyberbullying. This will be a great asset to use, to avoid falling into the cyberbullying trap (Student S Participant WX)*

## **Users' Learnings On The Site**

Participants noted their learning from engaging with the site, primarily awareness of cyberbullying behaviours, the role of the bystander, legal aspects of cyberbullying, and career implications, all functioning within levels within the Ecological Model. Furthermore, participants noted the content on the site provided them with new perspectives, educating them in minimising online aggression, alerting them to help seeking behaviours and the impact of their digital footprint present-day and in the future. Having “*real world information from recruiters about the impacts of your digital footprint*” (ST) was acknowledged as a strength of the site.

*I learnt that an inappropriate action could be reported and the quiz also gave me further knowledge. It made me realise that when I shared these funny clip I'm just encouraging cyberbullying (Student S Participant R)*

*How something that might have been meant by some as a joke can turn out to be something quite harmful (Staff S Participant Y)*

*That small innocuous comments in person can become quite life changing and exacerbated online (Student S Participant NN)*

*How many people it actually affects and how many different ways it can affect someone (Student S Participant QQ)*

Participants noted the important role of the bystander in halting or accelerating the cyberbullying events simply by their response to the event, including forwarding or sharing the comment/image to a wider audience or reporting the bullying; being passive and remaining silent; or highlighting support contacts for the victim to access. Being empathetic and taking responsibility for online behaviours was recognised by some participants as the core of online engagement.

*It has given me a different perspective on cyberbullying, in that everyone is involved, whether you are the offender, victim or bystander ... The website has shown me that there is more I can do to help to eliminate the problem of cyberbullying, as a bystander (Student S Participant B)*

*Be careful what to post and think about how it can affect you and others (Student S Participant QI)*

*It can be stopped and there needs to be more awareness about the help available (Student S Participant GT)*

*I learned that privacy setting is one of the most important things you have to consider when joining social media (Student S Participant RR)*

As mentioned earlier, a person's online identity, or digital footprint, is the trail of data created while engaging in online spaces. Responses by many participants were oblivious that this data can form part of a person's digital reputation.

*Loved the video on how it affects your career, I really wasn't aware of the things that they spoke about (Student S Participant X)*

*It made me more aware of the repercussion of my potential actions on my life, my career prospects, and others (Student S Participant D)*

With the majority identifying noteworthy learning's, a marginal number of participants remarked they did not learn anything new from the site. They did however emphasise the usefulness of the content on the site for persons unaware of the potential impact of cyberbullying.

*I learnt that I am a troll.... who knew? I share funny pics of others often. I also found out that its cool to just report pics if I think its a little much (Student S Participant RI)*

*Not a lot more than I didn't already know honestly, being a 22-year-old male who has grown up in the social media generation, having seen, witnessed and probably even unknowingly been part of the problem (Student S Participant WM)*

### Third Space

A point of distinction was the 'third space' that the site was developed in – students, teaching academics, and professional staff contributing to the content and navigation of the site. A search of the literature on principled online engagement highlights this as one of the inventive aspects of this site.

*It is designed for students by students. I like the authenticity and the JCU 'flavour' for example our DVCA, our careers counsellors etc (Staff S Participant G)*

### Recommend Or Not To Recommend

Survey participants reported they would confidently recommend the site to others. Participants were in agreement they would use this site, and would promote it when approached for advice on cyberbullying, as the information was applicable to daily living in the higher education space. Saying this, they also recommended concepts for improving the site including: modifying the introductory video and broadening the audience beyond early adulthood to middle and later adulthood.

*I think it is important for students to see all areas of cyberbullying - the victim, offender and bystander. The website is useful to all three classes of people so I think that it is extremely beneficial to all (Student S Participant APX)*

*It is packed with information and help, I would definitely recommend to a friend in need or fellow student (Student S Participant ZUN)*

*I loved the student videos!!!! so much (Student S Participant TRE)*

*Good contacts and information I had never considered before (Student S Participant C)*

Participants recounted that the 'Asking for Help' video, detailing the support process for persons involved in cyberbullying events with the 'Get Help' contact details as relevant and valuable content. Some participants recommended ways of promoting the site within the higher education institution including:

*Maybe create an app for phones, for quick access (Student S Participant RVT)*

*I think possibly if you linked a Facebook page to it ... So something like that could really be helpful and lead people to the website (FG Participant B)*

### Missing the Mark

While participants were in agreement that they liked the site, some focus group participants could not see a point of difference for this site compared with other sites on cybersafety. Furthermore, certain participants considered the website content was directed more at an adolescent rather than an adult level. While one participant noted the website was valuable from an academic rather than a practical perspective, another proposed an added focus on the consequences of cyberbullying.

*You're trying to address in that adult bullying style world, especially within the workplace and perhaps university, you're still targeting, and it's still coming across, as a teenage level (FG Participant B) I think the big thing that stood out to me when I went through it is there's not really a point of difference there that says "This website is directed at students and is going to help the student who is suffering from cyberbullying" ... It doesn't really offer anything new (FG Participant H)*

*It's not actually being informative of how bullying can re-wire your brain and re-wire the thinking of the victim (FG Participant B)*

These responses from the focus group participants challenged the researchers to rethink the customisation and content of the site to the institutional higher education context. Consequently, the university's student charter and student conduct policies were included and modified as interactive checklists for students. The university's student equity and wellbeing, including student welfare service process, was included so students could see the process to follow to seek counselling support in the institution. Furthermore, the project team included an additional video, from the student association of the university, advocating for ethical engagement online and describing that role in supporting students occupied with cyberbullying events. Further work is needed to develop educational resources pitched at an appropriate level for student users.

## One Step Better

While some survey participants suggested no changes to the site; others recommended changes so that users would be more motivated to engage with the material. These recommendations concerned graphic design, structure and content.

*In its current form I don't think the website could engage with enough people" (Student S Participant MMM).*

*Having an interactive quiz that determines your cyberbullying tendencies (Student S Participant VY)*

*Examples of what can be classified as cyberbullying as people may be doing it and not aware (Student S Participant XR)*

*Have better quality of the videos. They are a good starting point, but could be expanded on (Student S Participant MK)*

*Maybe some engaging text in fancy graphics that flash up some stats or statements that are punchy to grab attention. the online charter and smart moves information could be more visible (Staff S Participant X)*

Focus group participants were more critical in their appraisal of the site, since they were asked to identify what was restrictive, ineffective and useful on the site, and what could be done to add relevance and value to the site. Initially many of the focus group participants commented on the aesthetics and design of the site, while suggesting ways to improve it. Suggestions involved varying the layout, increasing interactivity, adapting the text, improving the videos and providing answers and accompanying explanations for the quiz questions.

*The most useful element of the website I believe would be the smart moves for cybersafety information however the link is a bit difficult to find (Student S Participant E)*

*I kind of go to the site and get lost in the amount of text and kind of like the headings are relatively quite small. So there's not really anything that kind of grabs me and keeps me there (FG Participant A)*

*All these videos are like next to each other. Like maybe you could like split them up a bit (FG Participant H)*

*Maybe bit of a look at the quiz and maybe a revamp (FG Participant G)*

In response to this constructive feedback, the site was modified, concentrating on improving the navigation and appeal of the site. While several participants found the site easy to navigate, other participants had a different opinion. These participants described how the navigation could be developed as some content was not noticeable when they viewed the website. Solutions offered included a navigation bar to different pages in the website. Others noted that due to design faults, significant content could be ignored.

*Easy, and quietly impressed. Very good layout!!! (Student S Participant G)*

*The site was very easy to navigate and flowed well. Love the formatting and the creativity that went into it (Student S Participant LL)*

*How to address an issue in the workforce, and how to support someone without fear you will be on the receiving end as well (Student S Participant RWQ)*

*'Get Help' should be higher priority and stand out. 'Helpful Resources' get lost and should be paired with the get help and what can I do, not separated by a row of videos (Student S Participant F)*

*To encourage discussion in the forums, topics should possibly be set up with some simple FAQs (Student S Participant LIO)*

## Imagining Ways Forward

While most video stories were considered informative, modification and changes were considered necessary to guarantee the user understands the significant message of each video and the messages could be generalised across higher education and the world beyond. Currently, the videos have a by-line to capture the essence of the message, resulting in superficial rather than deep learning. Additional information accompanying each video is required, to enable the user to probe further to understand cyberbullying behaviour. Having a written synopsis expanding on the content of each video provides further details for users interested to learn more.

*Perhaps the reasons why people choose to cyberbullying could prove useful information (Student S Participant WAQ)*

*I think the videos that are there are good. Like I think that they could be a lot better like fleshed out a bit and done a bit more, I guess, for lack of a better word, professionally ... So somebody can say, "Okay, I'll watch the 'Impact Legally'. Oh yeah. Gives me a pretty good explanation." But then I could read through, give a lot more information (FG Participant H)*

Participants were constructive in design suggestions, what to adapt and what to add to make the website more user friendly. This was expected as the media editing students were tasked with independently producing a script and a 3-minute video demonstrating issues of cyberbullying in higher education spaces and places. For example, participants commented:

*Banners and pictures could be very useful (FG Participant F)*

*Have the video at the top of the page and then underneath just have a blurb or a paragraph about the information and link ... Then have local links to other things and other videos (FG Participant H)*

*I think a little bit more colour on your page would be nice (FG Participant E)*

*Having all the information ... like legal implications from a victim's point of view; from, you know, a bystander's point of view; what not to do; what to do (under one tab) (FG Participant B)*

For many engaged in cyberbullying, the intention of the bullies is to embarrass, hurt, humiliate, offend, get revenge, have fun, and/or exert power over others (Berger, 2007; King, Walpole, & Lamon, 2007; Calvete et al., 2010). With this understanding, participants identified the need for clear identification of support services, both at the university and in the wider community. Additionally, some participants recommended the inclusion of insights from helping professionals in the local community who specialise in mental wellbeing.



*Reaching out to other psychologists, businesses within Townsville and even the psychology community to talk to a few people that actually specialise in ... the effects of bullying on a workplace level (FG Participant B)*

## **Project Team Reflections On Video Production**

In the weeks following the focus group, the students were asked in class if they could provide; a simple, but not simplistic, definition of cyberbullying; examples of cyberbullying events involving bullies, victims and bystanders; and an explanation of the difference between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. Most students came up with suitable definitions of the phenomenon of cyberbullying when compared to the available literature, examples of cyberbullying events from personal experience and/or the experience of a friend or a relative, and broad ideas of how their videos would convey the importance of issues of cyberbullying events to the higher education audience. However, one observation made during these discussions was while most students easily provided examples of events of bullying on an electronic platform, other less obvious acts of cyberbullying came to the students as a surprise. For example, while it was clear to the majority of students that constant online harassment and denigration of a person are acts of cyberbullying, it came almost as a surprise to some students that “outing or trickery”, the act of “convincing someone into declaring confidences, and circulating online” (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2), is also an act of cyberbullying. Particular students admitted witnessing such activities, with some indicating they actively engaged in them, increasing the rumour circulation by sharing the event on their online networks. Irrespective of the literature on cyberbullying these students were familiarising themselves with, they stated that most of the time the onward circulation was ‘just for fun’, or ‘just a joke’. At no time did they see it as an act of cyberbullying or that they were a bystander to cyberbullying events.

This led to discussions about their responsibility and obligations as users of the cyberworld and more in-depth discussion of the role and responsibility of the ‘bystanders’. Students discussed that through their videos, they would like to ensure insights into bystander perspectives and the culture of ethical engagement online are communicated. Key themes these students identified for inclusion in their videos included the following:

Anyone witnessing cyberbullying should take a stand against it

- Closing your eyes on issues of cyberbullying because they do not involve you is in a way perpetuating the act of cyberbullying
- Bystanders need to be provided with some tools: how do I recognise cyberbullying? How do I stand against it? Where do I go to denounce it? Who do I talk to? How do I help the victim of cyberbullying?
- Everyone could be a victim of cyberbullying, there is no discrimination and then no assumption should be made
- Cyberbullying is everywhere
- Cyberbullying is a silent burden for the victim

The outcome of this activity was that these concepts were incorporated into the development of the videos, and student videos of high quality were posted on the cyberbullying website. The videos were evaluated on their visual quality and attractiveness, and on the way students incorporated research into cyberbullying in an engaging manner. The students were also asked to write fictional scripts. The videos they produced were fiction for a number of reasons, including the repercussions of representing real life victims and perpetrators. This was a major challenge for students, who mentioned that more research needs to be done about the connection between acts of cyberbullying and their consequences. Many students choose to produce stories based on a personal experience, for example, as they knew how the victim felt, how the story ended for this victim, and what were the various developments in this specific case of cyberbullying. In addition, many students expressed that they felt let down by the lack of available literature on cyberbullying, which they believed would have improved the videos by making them universal rather than personal. However, by

drawing on personal experience, students were able to see the links between the often dry academic literature and their own life experiences.

## DISCUSSION

This action research project continues to provide opportunities to create mainly student-driven (for students by students) digital safety educational online content, which addresses an audience of adults in higher education. Moreover it has provided a repository of student-produced online content on cybersafety that could contribute to a culture of digital accountability across the university. The data provide insight from staff and student about what they believe makes successful online education resources. The rise in use of digital communications has increased the potential damage that can be done to an individual's reputation, career prospects and sense of self-worth (Pelletier, 2009). Therefore, ethical practice and behaviours need to be practiced by all users to ensure a positive digital footprint. Encouraging individuals to reflect on what they are about to post online before they do can assist people to consider how what they share online can impact themselves and others (Woods, 2014). This is of major significance over future employability as more and more recruitment agencies are screening candidates' online behaviours (Mansouri & Mrabet, 2013). This is to minimise future incidents of unprofessional cyber-behaviours as employers need to be cognisant of their potential liability of any occurrences of cyberbullying from their employees to others or between employees (Pelletier, 2009).

Furthermore, research indicates that once users reflect on cyberbullying and the implications for persons of this aggressive behaviour they become more informed about minimising cyberbullying behaviours (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2011). Informed by the Ecological Model, RAT provides a possible framework to support the content on the site with users reflecting on their roles and responsibilities when communicating online.

Participants appreciated the information on the definition and modes of cyberbullying, and the role of victim, bully and bystander in cyberbullying events. Including material on bystander involvement counteracting the 'diffusion of responsibility' self talk that 'someone else will help' or 'it's not my business' is one mechanism to educate users on the bystander effect in cyberbullying events. These measures have relevance for observers hesitant to become involved and those wanting to stop the cyberbullying, but who are oblivious to what intervention is appropriate or what supports are available.

The consensus among the focus group participants evaluating and/or discussing the website in this third action research cycle was that 'it is missing something' (Participant B), and, while some of the website content is very informative, this information, or content, is not clearly communicated in a visual way (in other words, in the videos available in the website and the site's design). The revised site contains a wealth of information on staying safe when online, including the need to set strict privacy settings, control access to online personal profiles, and limit the disclosure of personal information online, as recommended by Aricak et al. (2008). The literature confirms that persons practicing these tactics have a sense of personal control over their online engagement. Reflective exercises enable users to self-reflect on their digital identity and categorise their behaviours as constructive or deconstructive.

An articulation of clear regulations, including legal implications surrounding cyberbullying within educational institutions, demands a stronger presence in policies, practice, and protocol (Campbell, Butler, & Kift, 2008; Butler, Kift, & Campbell, 2010; Slee & Ford, 1999). The universities' responsibility in the eyes of the law is not widely understood, which represents a further obstacle for universities to clearly comprehend measures associated with cyberbullying in their in-house policies. The video on 'legal implications of cyberbullying' contributes to this communication. Viewing this video together with information on the site pertaining to online rights and responsibilities, acceptable use of information communication technology, digital conduct and digital reputation, highlights the sense of accountability for self regulatory behaviour expected of students (and staff) in higher education institutions.

Recommendations, including the following, were proposed by participants and were acted on to different degrees in the taking action phase of this research cycle: (1) integrate a 'brand' or 'logo' for the website to increase visibility; (2) refine the definition to include a description of the modes of cyberbullying (3) include information on the potential long term impacts of cyberbullying; (4) provide contact details where support is available; (5) share real life examples of cyberbullying; (6) broaden the focus of videos beyond early adulthood; (7) include new videos; and (8) add more text and pictures throughout the website. The definition of cyberbullying has been modified to include a succinct explanation of the modes. Student videos have been replaced and a video representing the voice of the student association has been uploaded. Interactive material has been added specific to digital citizenship, digital footprint, digital conduct, and digital wellness. The university's student equity and wellbeing, including student welfare service process, has been included alongside interactive checklists for users to reflect on and complete to ascertain their knowledge of the student charter and student conduct policies. This feedback from students and staff on the early stages of the development of the site demonstrates that useful online resources to prevent cyberbullying in universities are appropriately targeted to adults, interactive, student-led, research-informed and linked to the broader community beyond the university. These insights are useful for the development of digital safety websites in other institutions and beyond. However, they represent only the initial stages of the project, and further research is required, alongside the development and generalisation of the site across the higher education sector.

## LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While socially desirable response bias in surveying is regarded as a potential limitation of this research, including open-ended question in the survey and conducting the focus group ensured participants were challenged to think critically about their assumptions on cyberbullying and their role in cyberbullying events, not prejudiced by the researchers' preconceived notions of the social phenomena under consideration. However, it is important to acknowledge that the success of focus groups is largely dependent on "how participants express their thoughts and feelings in public and how they interact and discuss with each other ... (they) rely on participants' verbal social interaction, not only between researchers and participants but also among participants" (Lee & Lee, 2009, p. 18).

In describing the feedback on the site, this study highlights the need for further resources to support students and staff working in higher education to understand implications of cyberbullying on persons lives, staying safe online, help seeking behaviours, digital reputation and digital wellness. The project team plan to continue their action research, add institutional content developed for distinctive disciplines and for staff across the institution. Additionally, the team plans to develop 'codes of online engagement' modules based on RAT, including explicit behaviours expected when engaging online in blended, flexible, external and face-to-face modes of learning. Furthermore they plan to expand the dissemination of the site to include students and staff from other campuses and universities across the Asia Pacific. It is anticipate these plans will form the focus of the look (assessing information), think (planning) and act (decreeing action) elements of the next phase of action research (Stringer, 2008, p. 147).

Further research into the nature and effectiveness of the site will provide information about the relevance and value of the site for the wider higher education audience. Studying the diverse cultural values and practices of users will be necessary as some social behaviour characteristics may be promoted in certain cultural context (for example, assertion), yet frowned upon in other settings (for example, silent participation). It would be beneficial to ascertain which programs or combination of programs could be included on the site designed for user self-determination associated with ethical online identity-and recovery based practices advocating that persons "are the agents of their own recovery" (Carpenter, 2002, p. 91). Since all persons have the capacity to grow, develop and change, studies investigating

these practices in relation to efficacy would be beneficial pathways for ongoing action research. Furthermore, scrutinising the development of an institution-wide critical consciousness as a social response to cyberbullying is worthy of investigation.

The project team hope to continue engaging with research inquiry, linked with a social justice agenda, studying the alignment of individual and organisational values to ensure the site remains authentic in terms of institutional insiders 'walking the talk' of principle centred digital conduct. This investigation will determine if the website fits the institutional standards of moral connectivity and the end users needs. Becoming an authentic site means everyone within the one institution is involved in the conversation, not merely the 77 participants mentioned in this chapter.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The participatory research described in this chapter provides valuable findings about the impact and usefulness of listening to, collaborating with and including participants' voices in research. Findings highlight the general value of participants' contributions informing the research process. Participants recounted the practicality of the site in raising their awareness of cyberbullying events on lives, past, present and future. Further iterations of the site will continue, with user analytics informing modifications and additions to the site.

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Table 1  
*Modalities of cyberbullying*

Flaming	Electronic messages with fuming and discourteous language (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).
Harassment	Continually sending offensive and rude messages online (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).
Denigration	Spreading rumours online to harm reputations or relationships (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).
Impersonation	Masquerading as someone else and breaking into someone's account; impersonating a person and posting inflammatory material as that person to damage their status or relationships (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).
Outing/ Trickery	Convincing someone into declaring confidences, and circulating online (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).
Exclusion	Maliciously excluding someone online (Willard (2007, pp. 1-2).
Cyberstalking	Habitual online harassment and defamation (Willard, 2007, pp. 1-2).
Ratting	Remote controlling computer/webcam without person's knowledge or consent and controlling the operations of their computer (Chisholm, 2014, p. 79).
Catfishing	Deceiving people into emotional relationships by devising fictitious online identities (Chisholm, 2014, p. 79).
Malicious Sexting	Distributing humiliating and/or sexually suggestive pictures online without consent (Chisholm, 2014, p. 79) Albury and Crawford (2012, p. 464) suggest that the concept of consent is important to take into account when considering young people's agency.
Shock trolling	Spiteful and aggressive messages intended to aggravate or degrade someone in order to incite a reaction (Chisholm, 2014, p. 79).

(Chisholm, 2014; Willard, 2007)

Table 2  
*Programs and resources with Potential Application to Higher Education*

<b>Indicator One: Building Capacity for Action</b>	<b>Key action areas:</b>
Schools that assess and improve capacity support for implementation of strategies to prevent and manage bullying behaviours will help to ensure school action is effective, sustainable and system-wide. To optimise the impact of school action, sufficient leadership, resources, organisational support and compatibility with school needs and context are crucial (Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Bosworth, Gingiss, Potthoff, & Roberts-Gray, 1999; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Rigby & Slee, 2008; Roberts-Gray et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2003; Stevens et al., 2001; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valuing committed leadership</li> <li>• Planning for system support</li> <li>• Mobilising resources</li> <li>• Compatibility with school community needs</li> </ul>
<b>Indicator Two: Supportive School Culture</b>	<b>Key action areas:</b>
A positive school climate or culture that is created and maintained, provides safety, encourages open communication, supports a sense of connectedness to the school, and protects students from the risks of bullying. The quality of relationships between and among staff, students and families is vital in fostering a safe, supportive and engaging learning school environment (Bacchini et al., 2009; Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Glew et al., 2005; Luiselli et al., 2005; Smith, Boulton, & Cowie, 1993; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive school ethos</li> <li>• Classroom practice and environment</li> <li>• Peer group influence</li> </ul>
<b>Indicator Three: Proactive Policies, Procedures and Practices</b>	<b>Key action areas:</b>
Schools with clear and consistent policy, procedures and practices send a strong message to the whole-school community about the school's beliefs and actions to provide a safe and supportive school environment. It provides the school with a framework to guide school expectations and reporting for the prevention, early response and case management of bullying behaviours. School policies should be promoted to the whole-school community particularly at times of higher risk such as orientation and transition. Positive behaviour should be encouraged and rewarded at the whole-school level among students (Cross et al., 2009; Luiselli et al.,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy development and implementation</li> <li>• Behaviour expectation approaches</li> <li>• Orientation and transition</li> <li>• Targeted student and family support</li> </ul>

2005; Rigby, 1997; Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).	
<b>Indicator Four: School Community Key Understandings and Competencies</b>	<b>Key action areas:</b>
Schools that provide mechanisms to improve staff, student and family understandings and competencies are more likely to effectively prevent, identify and respond to bullying incidents. Key understandings about bullying include the nature, prevalence and types of bullying, as well as information about bystander roles. These understandings are supported with competencies needed to prevent, identify and deal with bullying incidents effectively and consistently (Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff professional learning</li> <li>• Student learning through the curriculum</li> <li>• Key understandings and skills for families</li> </ul>
<b>Indicator Five: Protective School Environment</b>	<b>Key action areas:</b>
A well-designed, maintained and supervised school environment will help to promote learning and positive social interactions among students and staff. The building design, location, provision of space, facilities and activities for recreation and learning (including through technology) can positively influence student behaviours (Gould League, 2010; Learning Through Landscapes, 2003; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical school attributes</li> <li>• Supervision</li> <li>• Supportive facilities and activities</li> </ul>
<b>Indicator Six: School–Family–Community Partnerships</b>	<b>Key action areas:</b>
Schools that build partnerships between the school and students’ families and key local organisations, through consultation and participation, foster vital support to reduce bullying behaviours recognising that it is the responsibility of the whole-school and wider community. Linkages should be made with local health, educational and community agencies that provide services to students and their families (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Cairns & Cairns, 1991; Duncan, 1999a, 1999b; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Farrington, 1993; Hemphill, Toumbourou, & Catalano, 2005; Olweus, 1999; Olweus & Limber, 2010; Roland, 2000).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging families</li> <li>• Working with the wider community and service providers</li> </ul>

(Pearce, et al., 2011, p. 7)

Table 3

*Approaches to assist with the mitigation of cyberbullying within universities*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a zero tolerance policy and ensure that it is communicated to faculty and students alike. Cyberbullying is a behavior that is identified as a code-of-conduct violation. This is outlined in both the student and faculty handbooks. Further, there should be consequences for students that demonstrate cyberbullying behaviors.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and communicate a clear process for faculty to follow should they encounter cyberbullying by a student.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve faculty in a discussion of what cyberbullying is and how to recognize and respond to it.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training for faculty on identify, and address cyberbullying behaviour.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training to students to raise their awareness of online behaviours. This training would identify appropriate and inappropriate online behavior.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train supervisors of faculty on how to address student cyberbullying of instructors.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handle legitimate student complaints according to university policies.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in further studies to identify trends related to cyberbullying in higher education.</li> </ul>

(Minor, et al., 2013, p. 25)

Table 4  
*Matrix of Australian Higher Education Policies*

University Name	Policy/Guideline/Code of Conduct Name	Explicit inclusion: terms associated with cyberbullying in policy document	Implicit inclusion: reference to staff and student safety and welfare within policy
Bond University	Social Media Policy		
	Staff Acceptable Use of ICT Facilities Policy		
	Student Acceptable Use of ICT Facilities Policy		
	Student Charter		
Central Queensland University	Code of Conduct		
	Acceptable Use of Information Communications Technology Facilities and Devices Policy and Procedure		
	Student Behavioural Misconduct		
	Student Charter		
Charles Darwin University	Social Media Policy		
	Code of Conduct		
	Information and Communication Technologies Acceptable Use Policy		
Curtin University	Conduct at Curtin		
	Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy Manual		
Edith Cowan University	Code of Conduct		
	Prevention of harassment, Bullying and Discrimination		
	Social Media Policy		
	Information Technology Policy		
Flinders University	No Bullying at Flinders		
	IT Acceptable Use Policy		
	Student Conduct		
Griffith University	Student Charter		
	Code of Conduct		
	Social Media Guidelines		
	University Campus Access and Use Policy		
James Cook University	Student Conduct Policy		
	Information Communication Technology Acceptable Use Policy		
	Student Charter		
	Workplace Harassment/Bullying		
La Trobe University	Bullying Between Students Policy		
	Workplace Behaviours Policy		
	Code of Conduct		
Queensland University of Technology	QUT Student Code of Conduct		
	QUT Staff Code of Conduct		
	Acceptable use of information technology resources		
The University of Adelaide	Code of Conduct		
	Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy		
	IT Acceptable Use and Security Policy		
	Behaviour and Conduct Policy		
The University of Notre Dame Australia	Code of Conduct for Students Enrolled at the University of Notre Dame Australia		
	Policy: Management of Critical Incidents		

The University of Western Australia	Prevention and Resolution of Bullying on Campus		
	University charter of student rights and responsibilities		
	University Policy on: Offensive Materials on UWA IT Systems		
	University Policy on: Social Media		
University of South Australia	Code of Conduct for Students		
	Acceptable use of Information Technology (IT) facilities		
	Social Media Guidelines		
University of the Sunshine Coast	Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying – Managerial Policy		
	Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Harassment – Governing Policy		
	Health, Safety and Wellbeing – Governing Policy		
	Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources – Governing Policy		



## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Blended Learning:** Is a combination of face-to-face and distance learning using both synchronous and asynchronous approaches.

**Bystanders:** Individuals or groups who witness the occurrence of cyberbullying. Bystanders have the capacity to both increase and decrease the amount of cyberbullying depending on their own individual actions.

**Cyberbullying:** Is aggressive, often repetitive and anonymous, behaviours, carried out through digital media, individually or in groups that causes harm and distress.

**Cybersafety:** Is the safe and ethical use of digital media. It involves principled use of information and consideration of own and others' use of information communication technologies.

**Digital Media:** Includes social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and LinkedIn and other tools including emails, discussion boards, websites and other locations where harmful and hurtful material can be uploaded, created, liked and shared.

**Digital Reputation and Footprint:** A digital footprint is created from each individual person's online behaviours. From this footprint, a reputation is created that can be personally or professionally either positive or negative.

**Distance Learning:** Studying externally from the university or school campus.

**Ecological Systems Model:** A model developed by Bronfenbrenner (2005), that identifies four intersecting elements that occur within a context, which assists to better understand aggressive acts and possible strategies for reduction and prevention of such acts.

**Ethical Online Engagement:** Is where Internet users practice behaviours that considers their own and others safety in online environments. It involves writing, sharing and posting information that is not harmful to others.

**Routines Activities Theory:** A criminology framework, proposed by Cohen and Felson (1979), to explain the occurrence of a crime as not a random act and instead the coming together of three intersecting key stakeholders in a particular time and space.

**Victims:** Individuals or groups who are targeted by aggressors online. Victims have minimal capacity to protect themselves and are on a continuum of high conflict – low conflict in regards their repertoire of constructive social problem solving.

## Appendix A

## Cyberbullying Student Survey

<b>1. Native language*Required</b>	<b>10. Introduction to Site video*Required</b>	Not useful
English	Very useful	<b>18. Helpful Resources: Online Rights and Responsibilities Charter*Required</b>
Chinese	Useful	Very Useful
Indian	Undecided	Useful
Malaysian	Somewhat useful	Undecided
Other:	Not useful	Somewhat useful
<b>2. Gender*Required</b>	<b>11. Cyber Bullying written explanation*Required</b>	Not useful
Male	Very useful	<b>19. Helpful Resources: Smart Moves for Online Safety*Required</b>
Female	Useful	Very Useful
<b>3. Age (Years)*Required</b>	Undecided	Useful
18-23	Somewhat useful	Undecided
24-29	Not useful	Somewhat useful
30-39	<b>12. Cyber Safety quiz*Required</b>	Not useful
40-49	Very Useful	<b>20. Discussion Blog*Required</b>
above 50	Useful	Very Useful
<b>4. Campus*Required</b>	Undecided	Useful
Cairns	Somewhat useful	Undecided
Townsville	Not useful	Somewhat useful
Singapore	Useful	Not useful
Other:	Very Useful	<b>21. Need Help Contacts*Required</b>
<b>5. Learner status*Required</b>	Useful	Very Useful
Part Time	Undecided	Useful
Full Time	Somewhat useful	Undecided
<b>6. Field of study*Required</b>	Not useful	Somewhat useful
Journalism	Very Useful	Not useful
Creative Writing	Useful	<b>22. How was the website most useful to you?*Required</b>
Guidance and Counselling	Undecided	<b>23. How did you find the navigation of the website?*Required</b>
Career Development	Somewhat useful	<b>24. What did you learn about cyber safety from the website?*Required</b>
Education	Not useful	<b>25. What are your suggestions for improving the website?*Required</b>
Other:	<b>14. Impact on Career video*Required</b>	<b>26. What additional comments would you like to make?*Required</b>
<b>7. Subject Modes Face-to-Face classes (all content is delivered in face-to-face classes on the campus)</b>	Very Useful	<b>27. Would you recommend this website to other students*Required</b>
Blended (combination of online with face-to-face learning)	Useful	Yes
External (all content is delivered online)	Undecided	No
<b>8. Time spent on social media sites associated with JCU studies*Required</b>	Somewhat useful	<b>28. Why or why not?*Required</b>
1 hour per day	Not useful	
2 hours per day	<b>15. Impact Legally video*Required</b>	
3 hours per day	Very Useful	
Other:	Useful	
<b>9. Time spent on social media sites not associated with JCU studies*Required</b>	Undecided	
1 hour per day	Somewhat useful	
2 hours per day	Not useful	
3 hours per day	<b>16. Mean Behind the Screen video*Required</b>	
Other:	Very Useful	
<b>After reviewing the site please rate the usefulness of the following content areas</b>	Useful	
	Undecided	
	Somewhat useful	

## Cyberbullying Staff Survey

### 1. Campus\*Required

Cairns  
Townsville  
Singapore  
Other:

### 2. Employment status\*Required

Part Time  
Full Time

### 3. Native language\*Required

English  
Chinese  
Indian  
Malaysian  
Other:

### 4. Gender\*Required

Male  
Female

### 5. Age (Years)\*Required

18-23  
24-29  
30-39  
40-49  
above 50

### 6. Description of yourself\*Required

Australian  
Chinese  
Indian  
Malaysian  
European  
Other:

### 7. Time spent on social media sites associated with JCU work\*Required

1 hour per day  
2 hours per day  
3 hours per day  
Other:

### 8. Time spent on social media sites not associated with JCU work\*Required

1 hour per day  
2 hours per day  
3 hours per day  
Other:

### After reviewing the site please rate the usefulness of the following content areas

### 9. Introduction to Site video\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided

Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 10. Cyber Bullying written explanation\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 11. Cyber Safety quiz\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 12. Impact on Victims video\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 13. Impact on Career video\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 14. Impact Legally video\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 15. Mean Behind the Screen video\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 16. What Can I Do video\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 17. Asking for Help video\*Required

Very Useful

Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 18. Helpful Resources: Online Rights and Responsibilities Charter\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 19. Helpful Resources: Smart Moves for Online Safety\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 20. Discussion Blog\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 21. Need Help Contacts\*Required

Very Useful  
Useful  
Undecided  
Somewhat useful  
Not useful

### 22. How was the website most useful to you?\*Required

### 23. How did you find the navigation of the website?\*Required

### 24. What did you learn about cyber safety from the website?\*Required

### 25. What are your suggestions for improving the website?\*Required

### 26. What additional comments would you like to make?\*Required

### 27. Would you recommend this website to students?\*Required

Yes  
No

### 28. Why or why not?\*Required