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# Creating a Digital Community in Colleges Through an Interactive Theater Intervention: Guidelines for Cyberbullying Prevention During Freshmen Orientation Week

Benjamin Hindell

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Creating a Digital Community in Colleges Through an Interactive Theater Intervention:  
Guidelines for Cyberbullying Prevention During Freshmen Orientation Week.

A DOCTORAL PAPER  
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY  
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

BY  
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June 24, 2015

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## **Introduction**

The substantial upsurge in the use of the Internet during the last decade has created a digital age where a significant proportion of communication and recreation primarily occur online (Barlett et al, 2014). Some researchers argue that the rapid expansion of technology has diminished face-to-face and telephone communication; they are less frequent than texting and instant messaging (Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J.W, 2009). For young people today, social media is interconnected with their daily life and integral in how they keep in touch with friends, make social plans and express their opinions (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Young people consume social media and participate in it by posting comments, videos and blogs. Those born before the advent of the internet likely view their lives in a binary manner; virtual and real. Youth consider the internet as intertwined with their lives (Collier, 2012).

Because the technology gulf between generations is growing, it is important that parents, guardians, and educators understand the potentially hazardous experiences young people may have while online. One of the negative outcomes of online communication is cyberbullying. It is defined as the “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J.W, 2009, p.5). Cyberbullying often includes spreading rumors and socially sabotaging peers by inflicting fear, helplessness, and humiliation (Pelfrey Jr. & Weber, 2013).

Researchers have found that victims of cyberbullying often experience feelings of humiliation, anger, vengeance, self-pity, and depression with possible negative long-term effects on self-esteem and the quality of interpersonal relationships (Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J.W, 2009). Other investigators have found that both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying are more likely to participate in school violence and substance abuse than peers not involved in online harassment (Pelfrey Jr. & Weber, 2013). There have also been highly publicized suicides due to cyberbullying. Tyler Clementi, a Rutgers

University freshmen committed suicide after his roommate videotaped his intimacy with a man and posted the video online. Phoebe Prince and Megan Meier were high school students who received media attention after they committed suicide because of physical attacks and cyberbullying (Freiburger et al., 2014).

Cyberbullying has created a demand for trainings and workshops that propose “digital citizenship” in schools. These trainings focus on respect for one’s self, peers, and community on and offline (Collier, 2012). Most research in the area has been on junior-high and high-school-age students. However, studies have shown that college-age youth also experience cyberbullying. Freshmen may begin college with the psychological trauma of bullying and/or cyberbullying experienced in junior high and high school. They may be perpetrators, victims or both.

I propose an interactive cyberbullying prevention program designed for incoming college freshmen that addresses the dynamics of traditional and cyberbullying, stresses the importance of bystander involvement and empowers students to create a harassment free community online and off.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Cyberbullying Definition**

Cyberbullying, a negative consequence of online communication is defined by Hinduja and Patchin in their book “Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard” as a “willfull and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J.W, 2009). Other researchers discuss the complexity of creating a true definition of cyberbullying because of its many potential outcomes. For instance, Hinduja and Patchin argue that the behavior is *willful*, meaning “the behavior has to be deliberate, not accidental.” (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009, p. 5). Some theorists emphasize that cyberbullying is not always intentional. Technology presents the potential for much misinterpretations and miscommunication that can result in unintentional cyberbullying. A benign message or a comment may be interpreted as a threat (Baldasare et al, 2012).

Hinduja and Patchin also propose that cyberbullying must be *repeated experience*, meaning it “reflects a pattern of behavior, not just one isolated incident” (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009, p. 5). However, with the use of technology a single instance may be viewed by multiple witnesses and can easily be forwarded, copied, and posted elsewhere (Rafferty & Vander Ven, 2014). An isolated message of cyberbullying can readily become a retraumatizing event. Traditional bullying fails to encompass the nature and many possible outcomes of cyberbullying.

### **Cyberbullying and Traditional Bullying**

Traditional bullying can take many forms. It can involve direct physical violence such as hitting, kicking, pushing as well as verbal abuse such as name calling. It can also mean indirect relational aggressive such as spreading rumors and excluding others (Marini, Dane, & Bosacki, 2006). It is similar to cyberbullying in that it involves traits of intention, aggression, repetition, and a power differential (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009). However, cyberbullying can be more insidious because access to technology has made it possible for bullies to harass their victims at all hours without the need for face-to-face interaction (Rafferty & Vander Ven, 2014). Social networks such as Facebook enable young people to stay in touch with each other anytime.

The absence of nonverbal signals such as vocal tone and inflection can contribute to potential misunderstandings. One method for reducing misinterpretation is the use of acronyms (e.g., LOL defined as laughing out loud) which may help identify irony or sarcasm. However, the large audience on social media websites can invite a variety of misinterpretations and create conflict (Baldasare et al., 2012).

In a 2007 study Li outlined seven different aspects of the phenomenon of cyberbullying. These include *flaming*, *online harassment*, *cyberstalking*, *denigration*, *masquerading*, *outing*, and *exclusion*. Flaming refers to electronic transmission of indignant, offensive, and vulgar messages while online harassment is the repeated sending of such messages. Cyberstalking denotes threats of harm or intimidation; denigration involves sending cruel, possibly untrue information about a person to others.

Masquerading represents pretending to be someone else and sharing information to damage a person's reputation; outing refers to sending sensitive or private information about a person to others. Exclusion involves maliciously leaving someone out of a group online (Li, 2007).

Researchers have found the duration, frequency and co-occurrence of other forms of harassment greatly impact a person's reaction to both traditional and cyberbullying. However, comparing both forms of bullying, studies reveal variations in outcomes. For instance, threats and insults are found to be more injurious in person than on-line. Interpersonal intimidation is more toxic than internet bullying. However, when images or video are used on-line to cause a victim harm, the risk for personal injury has been found to be greater than in traditional bullying. There is also a greater potential for an audience to view the photo/video which increases the trauma inflicted (Maguad et al., 2013).

Researchers have found an overlap in traditional and cyberbullying. As reported in a study led by P.K. Smith in 2008 many perpetrators and victims are involved in both traditional and cyberbullying (Smith et al., 2008). Hinduja and Patchin found that individuals who perpetrated or became victims of cyberbullying were 2.5 times more likely to have the same roles in face-to-face bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008) The high correlation between cyberbullying and traditional bullying likely reflects a perpetration of the same roles in both scenarios; it demonstrates the culture of aggression that certain young people embrace.

### **Anonymity and Cyberbullying**

Most traditional bullying develops in adolescence and occurs away from adults and authority figures. Research has shown it mostly occurs in hallways, cafeterias, on school grounds and on school busses. Bullying episodes are typically brief but can have lasting emotional consequences (Olweus, 1993).

Cyberbullying shares a clandestine nature with traditional bullying. However, unlike in traditional bullying, cyberbullying offers the potential for the perpetrator to be

completely anonymous. The aggressor may not be identifiable and may not even have a relationship with the victim. The aggressor's perceived anonymity may stimulate bullying behaviors (Barlett et al, 2014). Research has illuminated how anonymity can influence antisocial behavior online. A study in which anonymous and identified participants posted comments on an online comment board showed that 53% of those who post were considered disrespectful when anonymous while 29% comments were considered rude when the sender's name was identified (Santana, 2014). Many perpetrators believe their anonymity will protect them from possible negative repercussions and this may encourage bullying online. In their cyberbullying model, Barlett and Gentile (2012) state that anonymity may eliminate power differentials in relationships such as physical size, strength, and popularity. It encourages the development of positive attitudes toward cyberbullying when those who feel oppressed can lash out without fear of consequences (Barlett & Gentile, 2012). This can result in an online self separate from a person's moral cognitive self that guides every day life (Barlett, Genitle, & Chew, 2014). Perhaps some young people who have felt victimized can feel empowered through their online identity.

Some researchers have proposed that anonymity breeds a lack of empathy. A cyberbully is unable to see their victim's facial reaction; perpetrators do not have to deal with the immediate emotional, psychological, or physical impact of their aggression. Unlike traditional bullying the offense may take time to be discovered. Perpetrators are not seeing the immediate visceral emotional reaction of their action which might modify their cruelty (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009). The anonymous nature of cyberbullying may exacerbate to the emotional and psychological damage (Campbell, 2005). A victim who receives an anonymous threat may ruminate over the identity of the bully (Bauman, 2011).

Recent studies show that in the majority of cyberbullying cases individuals know their perpetrator. In a study in 2007 by Ybarra et al, fewer than thirteen percent of youths who were victims of cyberbullying were unaware of who their harasser was

(Ybarra et al, 2007). Emotions of the victim and perpetrators can often be amplified because of the potential for public humiliation, especially when photos, videos and post are to be circulated. The need for retaliation often creates an overlap between perpetrator and victim in cyberbullying and many individuals are considered victim-bullies. (Hinduja and Patchin, 2012) A study by Kowalski and Limber in 2007 found that 30 percent of youth involved in cyberbullying were both victims and bullies (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). This dynamic is intensified because technology allows immediate response via internet messaging (Kowalski et al., 2014).

### **The Psychological Development of Bullying and Cyberbullying**

Studies have explored the psychological development of individuals who become bullies and victims. Early childhood trauma and adversity are likely factors which may contribute to poor impulse control and low self-esteem. Jennings et al. (2010) found that children who came from families with poor parental monitoring and a weak commitment to school were vulnerable to become both bullies and victims (Jennings et al., 2010).

Bullying results from individual and systemic factors. The central component of bullying is the act of an aggressor who intends to inflict harm on a victim. A 2006 study by Perren and Alsaker found that individuals who bully often display aggressive behavior at an early age; they are less cooperative and less prosocial. Bullies usually have more friends than victims (Perren & Alsaker, 2006). However, such friendships may be based more on fear and self-protection than on a sense of emotional availability to others (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005). Victims tend to follow rather than initiate, are frequently introverted and passive; they are often the focus of jokes and pranks (Smith, Twemlow, & Hoover, 1999). Victims worry, have low self-esteem, experience depression, and avoid school (Boyton-Jarret et al., 2008). A big factor in victimization behavior is the victim's sense of being disconnected to the school community. Victims have a negative perception of relationships with classmates. As a result they garner less social support (Burton, Florell, and Wygant, 2013).

The combination bully-victim, is an individual who tends to have high levels of aggression, peer isolation, poor social skills. He is disliked by peers and he experiences emotional and behavioral problems that interfere with attachment to others (Burton, Florell, and Wygant, 2013). Bully-victims cope with exclusion by aggression which further promotes social repudiation (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006).

Face-to-face bullying is often systemic and involves community factors. There are *reinforcers* who act as assistants to a bully or promote aggressive behavior. There are also *defenders* who advocate for the victim. *Outsiders* tend to withdraw by pretending to be unaware of the bullying (Salmivalli, 2010). Each group of the bullying continuum (bullies, victims, and bully-victims) gravitate toward peers with similar experiences (Rusby et al., 2005). This likely further demarcates the division between bullies, victims, and bully-victims while encouraging continued aggressive behaviors.

A 2013 study by Burton et al., found that cyberbullies, cyberbully-victims, and cybervictims experienced higher rates of traditional bullying than those not involved in cyberbullying. Students who were bullies or victims in one context (online or face to face) were likely to have the same role in the alternate context. Researchers believe these findings indicate that the commonality between traditional and cyberbullying is due to normative beliefs about aggression toward peers (Burton, Florell, and Wygant, 2013). It appears that traditional bullying provides a gateway to cyberbullying within a culture that permits violence. Investigators believe that such findings suggest preventative programs should address and challenge normative beliefs about aggression.

### **Power of the Group**

As already noted traditional bullying and cyberbullying are not always a “dyadic interaction” between bully and victim, but involve the community (Jones, Manstead, & Livingstone, 2009). A 1998 study from Atlas and Pepler found that peers participated in 85% of bullying acts that occurred in school yards (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Each child’s role within the group is of great significance. According to Tajfel and Turner’s social

identity theory. Developed in 1979, a person's self-concept derives from the place in the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Group membership develops by adopting opinions and behaviors that are representative of that group (Turner, 1999). The intensity of such identification reflects positive association within the group and negative reaction to outside groups (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004).

In a study on how group membership affects bullying behavior, researchers presented a vignette on bullying between two groups of children. The participants were assigned to different groups. The degree to which the participants identified and affiliated within their assigned group affected their emotional and behavioral responses toward a bully or victim within a bullying incident. In some cases, a participant's need to protect their membership in a group appeared more important than their disapproval of the group's behavior (Jones, Manstead, & Livingstone, 2009). Although there are no current studies on group dynamics in cyberbullying, one can hypothesize that the need to conform within a group may be a significant factor.

### **Factors Related to Cyberbullying and Cybervictimization**

An understanding of cyberbullying requires a deep look at its relationship to demographic variables such as gender, race, sexuality, and age.

#### **Gender**

Recent studies regarding gender in cyberbullying vary. Hinduja and Patchin in 2009 found no significant differences in the prevalence of offenders and victims related to gender. However, the nature of the cyberbullying varied. Girls were likely to receive mean or hurtful comments whereas boys were more likely to have an upsetting video posted about them. The investigators hypothesized that this may reflect a culture where boys are more apt to express themselves physically whereas girls resort to more insidious methods such as speaking behind a person's back or sabotaging a friendship (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009).

A study by Boulton et al. in 2012, showed sex differences in attitudes toward cyberbullying. Boys view bullying behaviors as more benign than girls. Boys denied

malicious intent or failed to acknowledge negative consequences. Some boys even blamed the victims. By contrast, girls acknowledged negative consequences and were more empathic toward victims (Boulton et al, 2012). Some individuals believe that bullying is an acceptable and expected rite of passage for males. Western cultural roles also discourage males from expressing emotional vulnerability even when they get victimized.

### **Age**

Although cyberbullying affects people of all ages some research shows that it is most prominent in middle-school youth and decreases slightly in high school (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009). Other researchers report a steady increase from middle school to around 10th grade in high school. Factors such as socio-economic status and sexual orientation may override the effect of age (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009).

### **Sexual Orientation**

Research consistently demonstrates that students who do not identify as heterosexual are at increased risk of victimization. A study by Campbell and Wensley in 2012 examined heterosexual and non-heterosexual university students' involvement in both traditional and cyber forms of bullying. They studied bullies and victims. The researchers took 528 first-year university students and surveyed their sexual orientation; they examined face-to-face bullying experiences over the last twelve months. Non-heterosexuals reported more incidents of traditional bullying both as victims and as perpetrators compared to heterosexual students (Campbell & Wensley, 2012). There are no similar studies of cyberbullying and sexual orientation but it is likely a factor as well.

### **Issues of Measurement in Cyberbullying Research**

The difficulty in agreeing on a precise and universal definition of the term cyberbullying has created complications in research studies. Surveys developed by researchers to measure cyberbullying vary because definitions of cyberbullying include

a variety of items and response options; different behaviors get listed (Baldasare et al, 2012). Time frames are also variable. For instance, one study may ask participants to report lifetime prevalence of cyberbullying while another researcher asks about the last six months or a single school semester. This discrepancy may explain why many studies on cyberbullying have different prevalence rates and relationships among measured variables (Kowalski et al., 2014).

The different methods of measuring on cyberbullying have created reliability and validity issues. Some investigators have used single item surveys which are less complex and faster to administer. Others have utilized a multi-item checklist which tends to be more reliable and can capture more factors and complex constructs more fully. To date published surveys and checklists have been unable to measure every possible cyberbullying behavior or the degree of its severity (Kowalski et al., 2014).

Attitudes may also be difficult to assess. For instance, some participants may be less willing to label themselves as a bully or a victim, but may indicate that they have experienced several specific cyberbullying behaviors (Menesini, Modena, & Tani, 2009). Another obstacle to accurately measuring cyberbullying is the “ever-changing media world, cyberbullying techniques, behaviors, and platforms which make developing new or using already published measures difficult.” (Barlett, Chew, & Chew, 2014, p. 8).

To resolve some of these problems in researching cyberbullying, Kowalski et. al, proposes that future researchers of cyberbullying need to decide on the main components of cyberbullying, thereby creating a uniform multi-item behavioral checklist. This would allow different researchers to share the same response scale and reporting time frame (Kowalski et al., 2014). Some researchers have chosen to use qualitative research methods such as individual interviews or focus groups. These which may reveal more of the complexities of being a victim or instigator of cyberbullying (Baldasare et al, 2012).

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM : CREATING HEALTHY DIGITAL CULTURE IN THE COLLEGE POPULATION**

## **Cyberbullying in College Populations**

Cyberbullying has been studied primarily in middle school and high school populations. Researchers have found that bullying decreases in high school and into adulthood. A study by Chapell, et al. in 2004 explored traditional bullying among college students and found that in a sample of 1025 undergraduates that 24.6% had been bullied while in college (Chapell et al, 2004).

The few studies available to date show a variety of prevalence rates of cyberbullying among college populations with a range from 8.6% (Smith & Yoon, 2013) to 28.7% (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). A study by Walker, Sockman, and Koehn in 2011 found that 11% of college students surveyed experienced cyberbullying with more than 40% aware of someone who was a victim; 29% of the victims reported that they were cyberbullied four to ten times (Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011). Another study conducted by Chapell, et al, in 2006 found that 21% of a college sample were confirmed being cyberbullied. A 2012 study by Schenk and Fremouw revealed that of 799 college students, 8.6% were victims of cyberbullying. The researchers found that victims suffered from depression, anxiety, phobic anxiety, and paranoia as a result. Victims were also found to have a higher rate of suicidal ideation, suicide planning and attempts than non-victims (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012).

Investigators have proposed that cyberbullying may exist in college because “in the stressful environment of a university, students may feel they must dominate to succeed. The relative ability to feel control of a situation as the dominant bully may allow the cyberbully to justify their actions” (Zalaquett & Chatters, 2014, p. 37).

These researchers found that although 30% of students reported they experienced incidents of undesirable and obsessive communication they did not categorize themselves as cyberbully victims. Researchers postulate that this may reflect a general

acceptance of harassment online (Zalaquett & Chatters, 2014). There may even be a growing tolerance for hostile online communication.

Further research may suggest a significant progression from being a bully in elementary, high school, and into university (Chapell et al, 2006). A 2014 study by Zalaquett and Chatters reported that 19% of the undergraduates they studied were victims of cyberbullying in college and 31.3% were also victims during high school. This finding suggests a continuity of the bully and victim role from adolescence into adulthood. Although the incidence of cyberbullying may decrease from middle to high school and beyond, it continues as a problem for college students. College students are increasingly adept with technology and this may contribute to undesirable behaviors online.

### **Dating Relationships and Cyberstalking**

There is no substantial research on cyberbullying among dating partners. A study by Bennett et al. in 2011 studied a college population and found that within the context of an abusive romantic relationship, cybertools (texting, emailing, social media) may make it easier to maintain power and control. Technology enables romantic partners to defame, stalk, threaten, and initiate aspects of intimate partner violence. An abuser can post lies, upload embarrassing or harassing photos, track a person's location through GPS monitoring and send texts or instant messages to a victim at anytime (Alvarez, 2012). A domineering partner can use technology to correspond excessively; a victim becomes fearful of checks emails and text messages repeatedly (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011).

A study of college-age students who experience electronic victimization by a dating partner revealed that abusers utilize four specific methods: direct hostility, intrusiveness, public humiliation, and exclusion. Females reported victimization more often than males. Those who had more exposure to victimization became numb to the

experience. They often felt helpless, unable to prevent the cybertools from controlling them (Bennett et al., 2011). The researchers postulated that many victims feel isolated in their distress. Without bystander intervention, having friends thwart or discourage in bullying incident, victims are less likely to report their harassment (Alvarez, 2012).

Cybertools can enable a bully to gain power and control in an abusive relationship. There is a need for trainings that empower and educate young people to manage technology and to seek help when a relationship becomes abusive.

### **Prevention Strategies**

Although researchers have acknowledged the many negative outcomes of cyberbullying there is still a paucity of research on how to intervene (Cross et al., 2011). The majority of anti-bullying programs arose during the upsurge of school violence in the 1990's. One example is the mass shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Investigators have found that most attackers were victims of bullying and this played a role in their attacks (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Most of the early anti-bullying programs focussed on face-to-face bullying and were administered to middle and high school student. They stressed setting clear rules and consequences, social skills training, parental involvement and intervention services for bullies and victims (Kraft & Wang, 2009). One author describes these anti-bullying programs as achieving modest success, on an average reducing bullying incidents by 15% (Smith, et al., 2004). The effectiveness was mainly reliant on bystanders intervening. Bullying will stop within ten seconds fifty-seven percent of the time when a bystander intervenes (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001).

Once cyberbullying was recognized as a problem in the early 2000's, personnel were reluctant to take action against students who were sending offensive posts outside of school (Fanek, 2006). Students felt unaccountable for harassing others online. Some

schools chose to deal with cyberbullying by contacting parents. However, parents were not always able to monitor their children's online activities (Ybarra et al, 2007a).

Currently the "Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act" in 2008 specifies that schools need to teach students about online behavior including cyberbullying awareness and appropriate response. Schools have implemented internet safety education as a strategy for reducing online harassment. However, there is no research to show that these interventions decreased young people's engagement in risky online behaviors (Chibnall et al., 2006). The anonymous nature of cyberbullying, lack of authority in cyberspace, ready access to technology, and rapid technological changes provide new means to cyberbully. It is increasingly difficult to measure outcomes for such preventative measures (Cross et al, 2011).

Investigators propose effective bullying prevention programs that stress altering the culture within a school. This can address students on an individual basis and the system within the school (Nansel et al, 2001). Cross et al. (2011) argued that multidisciplinary whole school interventions are the most effective means of preventing and managing school bullying. The targets include policy, classroom and school climate. There are efforts to provide peer support and school yard improvements. Attention gets paid on the classroom level (curriculum), the home level (engaging and involving parents) and the individual level (working with higher risk students). Tools researchers found successful in engaging the community were videos, disciplinary methods, parent training/meetings, teacher training, improved playground supervision, disciplinary methods, cooperative group work between professionals, school assemblies, information for parents, classroom rules and management and whole-school anti-bullying policy (Cross et al., 2011).

A study by Wang and Kraft in 2009 examined teenagers' perspectives on the effectiveness of a variety of cyberbullying prevention strategies. Teens believe the most effective programs supply an ongoing prevention program that sets clear rules with enforced penalties. Such punishments include revoking access to social networking

sites for offenders. Other strategies they believed to be effective include parents taking away the offender's cell phone and home computer. The offender could be compelled to do 20 hours of community service (Wang & Kraft, 2009).

Moessner in a 2007 study suggests that cyberbullying prevention programs fails when adults merely tell youngsters not to bully. Adolescents feel adults can not relate to their experiences. Successful strategies have empowered students to participate in cyberbullying prevention (Moessner, 2007).

### **Intervention with College Students: Interactive Theater**

Theater has been found by social science researchers to be an engaging and entertaining method in conveying health messages (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Interactive theater is a modality where a group of actors perform a short sketch concerning an interpersonal conflict. A facilitator engages the audience in conversation. Each theater sketch involves a crisis where something important is at stake. Actors perform the sketches twice. The initial sketch ends in the worst possible outcome. A facilitator then engages the audience while the actors remain in character. After the analysis, alternatives are proposed. The sketch is enacted a second time with an alternative ending. The facilitator then encourages the audience to discuss what they have learned from the experience (Harlap, 2013).

Interactive theater has become widespread in colleges and universities over past few decades (McMahon, et al., 2014). Peer-led interactive theater can be powerful and persuasive because the presenters are a similar age to the audience which makes them a more "credible" source of information (Cox et al, 2010, White et al, 2009). Research shows that students are more likely to be more attentive and at ease when processing important issues that are taught by peers than by adults (Kress et al., 2006, White et al., 2009).

The objective of interactive theater is to create a real world experience. Participants can prepare and practice empowering strategies when facing an oppressor or a situation that has detrimental outcomes such as cyberbullying. When multiple

solutions are dramatized participants gain a repertoire of actions to choose from. Because of the nature of theater, there is the potential for many situations to be explored. Theater creates a realistic situation on a visceral level for the audience (Harlap, 2013).

A 2011 study by Gourd and Gourd used interactive theater as a tool to reduce face-to-face bullying and improve the social climate with a group of 8th graders. The researchers hoped the interactive theater experience would “develop democratic dispositions and skills and connect issues of inequalities with the students’ immediate social community” (Gourd & Gourd, 2011, p. 404). This was done by utilizing children’s creativity to script bullying scenarios that were relatable to their experiences. The investigators hoped to promote a deeper understanding of social issues such as power and privilege. At the same time they were helping to identify alternative actions that foster fairness. Students were also able to recognize strategies that helped resolve bullying and others that increased tension and oppression (Gourd & Gourd, 2011).

In educating students about bullying issues, the researchers in the Gourd paper chose to avoid labeling the participants as bullies and victims. They wanted to present a continuum of behaviors for young people involved in bullying, such as bully/victims. The authors wanted to avoid blaming bullying on character flaws or an individual’s disposition; nor did they want to undermine the opportunities for students to make positive changes to themselves and their community. They put emphasis on social inequalities such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation in bullying as these factors are key to social change commitment (Gourd & Gourd, 2011).

A 2014 study by McMahon et al, studied how the SCREAM Theater Project (Students Challenging Realities and Educating Against Myths), a student-run theater troupe, could possibly influenced student’s attitudes on sexual assault and bystander behavior at a public university in the Northeast. Approximately twenty to thirty undergraduate students were recruited to be trained on sexual assault and other forms of interpersonal violence and to perform improvisational theater following the interactive

theater protocol. The troupe developed scenarios based on real-life situations that had occurred on campus and enacted differing bystander reactions such as blame, support, or disregard. At the conclusion of sketches, the actors remained in character while students were encouraged to inquire about what they observed and brainstorm alternatives to dysfunctional behaviors. The presentation concluded with the student actors introducing themselves, the purpose of their characters, and why they chose to join the SCREAM Theater Project. The researchers administered surveys measuring bystander attitudes directly before and three months after the SCREAM Theater presentation. McMahon et al. found a significant change in the student's bystander attitudes based on changes in responses to survey questions (McMahon et al., 2014). It appears that interactive theater can be an engaging and effective way to increase empathy and challenge normative beliefs about bullying behavior among young adults (White, Park, Israel, & Cordero, 2009).

## **PURPOSE OF PROJECT**

Although research has indicated a decline in cyberbullying from middle school to college, research clearly identifies that cyberbullying and internet harassment continue to be a problem among college students. Consequences can include a variety of mental health concerns and risks (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012). Research shows that the bully and victim role can continue through life span both on and off line (Burton, Florell, and Wygant, 2013) The competitive nature within a university setting can magnify a college student's need to intimidate competitors through online harassment (Zalaquett & Chatters, 2014). Perceived anonymity can further encourage cyberbullying behaviors amongst students (Barlett et al, 2014). It is clear that an intervention that challenges normative beliefs about aggression toward peers is needed to enhance a healthy online culture and sense of community.

There are few interventions for incoming college freshmen in on cyberbullying prevention at colleges and universities despite it's potentially serious consequences. A study by Crosslin and Goldman in 2014 conducted focus groups with college students

on the topic of cyberbullying. Participants suggested awareness of this issue could be raised in first-year orientations and ongoing workshops conducted by resident hall administrators. Students also felt that alerting students to the potential consequences of cyberbullying could be an effective means to thwart its occurrences (Crosslin & Golman, 2014).

Engaging this audience may be challenging as this is a population that may have already experienced some form of anti-bullying and online safety training in middle and high school. Interactive theater offers a novel and developmentally appropriate for college freshmen who are in the process of being introduced to a new level of independence.

Research shows that peer education theater can be an innovative intervention for college student to enhance bystander involvement and challenge normative beliefs towards bullying and harassment (McMahon et al., 2014). Having peers guide such an intervention has been found to create a more relatable learning environment where the focus is on interactive discussion rather than lecture (White et al., 2009). An anti-cyberbullying outreach for incoming freshmen utilizing interactive theater has the potential to engender a sense of community and the understanding that what hurts the individual, ultimately harms a community. This is possible when community members begin to make decisions that benefit the democracy within their community (Banyard, Plante & Moynihan, 2004; McMahon, Postmus & Koenick, 2011). This paper will outline a step by step outreach, utilizing interactive theater as a means to engage incoming freshmen at colleges and universities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants**

The intervention is for the cohort of incoming freshmen in a small liberal arts college. The presentation has a facilitator who is a licensed therapist, and four volunteer actors (potentially three women and one male) who would be recruited from the college who will form an acting troupe. The actors will be trained to understand the dynamics of

traditional and cyberbullying and develop scripts that reflect young people struggling with a variety of differing points of view on the subject. These scripts will later be the source of the educational message on cyberbullying (McMahon et al., 2014).

### **Interventions: Icebreaker.**

Because today's college students may have already had anti-cyberbullying training it is important to engage them in creative ways. Some may be cynical trainings led by adult that they experienced as either patronizing or simplistic. Presenting an icebreaker, a skit performed by student actors utilizing humor, may be an effective way to dramatize many of the concepts of cyberbullying.

I propose an icebreaker where one actor acts as a game show host who welcomes the audience to an experiment on real life versus online experiences. The host will compare announce, "A typical interaction in real life." Two female actors will meet and one ask the other about her boyfriend. They will have a friendly interaction and both exit. Then the host will say, "lets see that interaction online." The two actors will reappear, one on her laptop while the other will be texting on her cell phone. One will speak as she types, inquiring about the other's significant other. The other will take offense and interpret it as someone who wants to date her partner. She then beckons a friend for advice. They converse and the bystander aggravates the conflict, agreeing that this is a threat to her relationship. They will then conspire and decide to make a post on Facebook about the friend who commented online. The skit ends when the sender reads what her friend has written about her. She expresses shock and confusion.

The host then stops the action and ask the students what was the difference between both interactions were? Themes of anonymity, misinterpretation, and bystander roles can be explored.

Then the ice breaker ends and the group of actors begin a new activity where they explore what it viscerally feels like to be communicating online. An actor gets blindfolded indicating the inability to see reactions of the person with whom they are interacting. Other actors speak to the blindfolded actor in an electronic, monotone voice

which will illustrate the inability to hear inflection or emotion. Lastly, the actors place a large cardboard box around the actor to signify that one can get wrapped up in his own world while online and become isolated. The host ends the icebreaker with a short discussion with the audience on their experiences with the differences between the real world and online communications. The objective of icebreaker will be to dramatize how the lack of nonverbal signals can potentially lead to potential misunderstandings and how misinterpretations can create conflict (Baldasare et al., 2012).

### **Video Intervention:**

The second part of the intervention involves a short video showing a variety of bullies in recent popular films. This allows for an opportunity for students to specifically explore a wide variety of bullying behaviors. The facilitator asks the audience to help define what bullying is. Traditional face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying will be defined and explored. The video illuminates the individual and systemic aspects of bullying. The facilitator then discusses the roles of the bully, victim, bully-victim, reinforcer, defender, and outsider which can lead to a conversation on social pressures to fit in and the need to protect one's membership to a group and adhere to bullying behavior beliefs (Jones, Manstead, & Livingstone, 2009).

The facilitator then addresses the audience by asking, "What was your high school experience like in terms of bullying and cyberbullying? Did you feel there was a sense of community? Was bullying permitted?" This line of inquiry enables the facilitator to present the purpose of the training which is to present empirical evidence that cyberbullying is a problem on college campuses; it is important for the audience to develop "digital citizenship" within their cohort.

### **Interactive Theater Intervention: Cyberbullying**

The intervention begins when one actor enters the stage and presents a monologue how she was enraged at a comment another female student made in their sociology class. She speaks her thoughts as she types on a lap top.

*“To the girl in sociology class who talked about how upset she gets when the guys at the gym ‘eye raped’ her. I can’t believe you think like this! Screw your self righteousness and the idea that you think you are anywhere close to the level of a rape victim. You think you can tell me you understand what I experienced because someone at they gym looked at you too long. Screw you for minimizing a horrible thing. You deserve to have your stupidity posted on Confessions. See how violated you feel then!”*

The receiver of the email walks onto the stage and says that she received the news of the post on Confessions from a few of her friends in the class.

*“Ok, so I was just doing some homework when my friend texted me that someone was bashing me on Confessions. I checked it out and some girl is attacking me for what I said in class. Who does that? What a coward! Why don’t you say something to my face if you feel so strongly. If you had a problem with me you don’t have to embarrass me online. I mean people in that class know that I said it but you get to be all safe and secretive by posting this online. And I don’t feel bad about what I said. Seriously, as a woman, I don’t feel comfortable when guys are so blatantly looking at me at the gym. I’m not apologizing for that! But what do I do tomorrow in class? How do I focus on the class when I know someone is there secretly hating me? How many people in the class have read that post? Can I actually participate in class discussion when I get this crap? I never thought I’d feel this way about being here at school. It used to be a safe place. Now I don’t know what to feel.”*

Two bystanders (a man and a woman) enter the stage and engage in a discussion about the victim and the person who posted. The two have differing perspectives on the event and their roles as bystanders.

Man: *Wow, did you see what someone wrote on Confessions about what Lexi said in class?*

Woman: *Yeah, that Kate is something. That was crazy.*

Man: *So how did you know it was Kate?*

Woman: *Well, she talked to me after class and said she was so pissed at what Lexi said so I assume it was her.*

Man: *I mean, I think Lexi deserved it. I hate when girls are so overly sensitive about guys checking them out at the gym. I'm sorry but the term 'eye rape' is a bit extreme. I mean, consider it a compliment and get over it.*

Woman: *I don't know if you can say that. You're a guy. You don't have to deal with that.*

Man: *What do you mean? Look at me, I get people checking me out.*

Woman: *Shut up. You seriously don't know what a girl goes through. It can be creepy.*

Man: *Well, if you feel that way, why didn't you defend Lexi? Why didn't you tell Kate that she was has a point?*

Woman: *I don't know, I can see where they're both coming from. I just, well, I didn't want to start drama.*

Man: *Yeah. I guess you're right. Better not to get involved.*

Woman: *Yeah.*

This is an opportunity for the facilitator to step in and process what has happened on an individual level as well as on a community level. The facilitator gets the audience's initial reactions by asking, "What just happened? How did it affect each individual and the community as a whole?" This can lead to discussing how accepting cyberbullying can lead to a community that permits antagonism and intimidation.

The facilitator asks, “Is there a right and wrong party in this scenario?” This leads to a discussion on how both parties need to be understood. It is important that the facilitator create a sense that not one person is the villain but both have a reason to react in the way they did. Then the facilitator invites the audience to ask questions to the characters (Kate, Lexi, and the bystanders). The actors will respond in character. The discussion may lead to how the characters could handle the situation differently in order to feel a sense of digital citizenship.

The second part of the interactive theater incorporates changes. The bystanders offer support to the victim (Lexi) and encourage the perpetrator (Kate) to approach Lexi and discuss her reaction. They engage in a discussion about the power of language and understanding their differing points of view. The interaction allows both to express their frustration while also acknowledging each other’s experiences.

The bystander (Woman) approaches Kate after their sociology class and encourages her to speak directly to Lexi to express her frustrations.

*Woman: Hey Kate. Wait up a minute. Look, I’ve been thinking about what you said about Lexi’s comment yesterday.*

*Kate: Yeah?*

*Woman: Look, I know you’re mad and you have a right to be. But I think how you handled it wasn’t helpful?*

*Kate: In what way?*

*Woman: Didn’t you think class seemed tense and weird today? No one wanted to speak.*

*Kate: Yeah.*

*Woman: I think it was because of what you wrote on Confessions yesterday.*

*Kate: So...you read that.*

*Woman: I think a lot of people did and then it kinda went viral at school, you know.*

Kate: *Yeah. Well, what do you think I should do?*

Woman: *What do you think?*

Kate: *Well, I could talk to Lexi.*

Woman: *I think that would help.*

The follow scene involves the other bystander (Male) who approaches Lexi and offer support while also exploring how her use of language.

Male: *Hey Lexi, what up a minute.*

Lexi: *What's up?*

Male: *I just want to say that I'm sorry about how someone in class sort of went off on you on Confessions the other day.*

Lexi: *Thanks.*

Male: *Yeah. I mean, I've been thinking about what you said. As a guy I have no idea what girls, I mean, women go through at the gym.*

Lexi: *Yeah.*

Male: *Yeah, I guess on behalf of the guy species...I'm sorry.*

Lexi: *(Laughs) Apology accepted.*

Male: *But I mean at the same time, I sort of had a reaction to the language you used.*

Lexi: *You mean the using the term 'eye rape'?*

Male: *I don't know. There's a part of me that can understand how the girl in class was offended.*

Lexi: *Well, um, I guess I can see that.*

The following scene involves Kate and Lexi. Kate approaches and engages Lexi in a conversation.

Kate: *Lexi, hey. How are you doing?*

Lexi: *I'm okay. What's up?*

Kate: *Look, I'm not sure how to say this. I feel really bad about it but I wrote the post about you on Confessions the other day.*

Lexi: *Okay. I'm not sure what you want me to say.*

Kate: *It was a messed up way to handle it.*

Lexi: *It was.*

Kate: *Okay. I get that.*

Lexi: *I mean you embarrassed me for something that I'm really sensitive about.*

Kate: *Yeah.*

Lexi: *And you did it a way where I didn't know who wrote it so you can just go off on me and I'm the one who has to deal with it.*

Kate: *Yes, it was messed up. I'm sorry.*

Lexi: *I mean, I would think as a woman, you'd have some sympathy for me.*

Kate: *I do. That term 'eye rape', I was just trying to say that we need to be sensitive about the language we use. I mean, you have no idea what that word means to me. No idea.*

Lexi: *Yeah. I'm...I'm sorry for being inconsiderate about that. I've actually been thinking about it and I guess I owe you an apology as well.*

Kate: *Well, this feels... a lot better than what I did yesterday.*

Lexi: *Yeah, thanks for talking.*

Kate: *Yes, we should do more of this. Less posting.*

Lexi: *Definitely.*

The facilitator then stops the action and asks the audience what they recognize as positive changes from the first interaction. Themes concerning bystander involvement are addressed. The facilitator leads a discussion about the importance of the bystander role in the prevention of bullying. The leader also reports on research that supports this, he cites that research has shown that traditional bullying incidences were

found to stop within ten seconds 57% of the time when a bystander intervenes (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001). The facilitator can make that point that this dynamic can likely apply to cyberbullying scenarios and can ultimately enforce “digital citizenship”.

The facilitator inquires the audience about the quality of online versus face-to-face conversations presented in the sketch. This can further emphasize how verbal and nonverbal cues improve empathy, understanding, and camaraderie and lead to a dialogue on how anonymity can influence antisocial behavior online (Santana, 2014). The facilitator can explore how anonymity can create a sense of protection from possible negative repercussions which may encourage the development of positive attitudes toward cyberbullying (Barlett & Gentile, 2012). The theme of separate on and off line identities people can be explored and how they adhere to differing social mores (Barlett, Genitle, & Chew, 2014). The facilitator has an opportunity to address such themes with the audience.

The facilitator ends the intervention by empowering the audience to create “digital citizenship” and a community that does not tolerate cyber or traditional bullying.

## **Second Intervention: Cyberstalking**

The facilitator discusses how they just explored a scenario where there was an element of anonymity in the cyber communication. He informs the audience that research has revealed that the majority of cyberbullying cases involve people who know each other and are often in a dating relationship. The facilitator discusses how technology gives people the cybertools (texting, emailing, social media) that make it easier to maintain power and control within a dating relationship (Alvarez, 2012).

During the next intervention, the facilitator says that they will be introduced to three people who have experienced this form of cyberbullying or cyberstalking.

A female actress will address the audience:

*Hi, my name is Melissa. Its funny, I've spent my life making good choices. I got good grades and got into this school which is competitive and all. (She looks at her phone) I'm sorry, I'm always checking my phone. I've been dating my boyfriend, Jake, for like two years which is a long time. We've been through a lot of stuff. This is the longest I've ever been with anybody. I just always have to answer the phone when he calls. I mean, if I don't bad stuff happens. Its like he's going to think that I'm out partying even though I'm being good. I just get so frustrated at this. I mean I'm at college and he's not but I'm not able to have a fun time here. I'm always afraid of...Oh, wait, that's Jake, I'm sorry I got to take this. "Hi Jake....no, no, I'm not talking to anyone...."*

Melissa walks off. And Brian enters.

*Hi I'm Brian. I'm a sophomore here. I love it. It's been a great experience until recently. I started dating someone who, well, it was great for while. I mean he was great. It was nice to just be able to be myself for the first time in my life. I come from a place where being who I am wasn't an option. So anyway as the relationship went on, I started to feel like he was way too jealous and well, kind of obsessive. I started to feel a bit overwhelmed with how it was going so I told him, you know, I wanted to move on. Well, apparently he wasn't having it. Anyway, he threatened to out me to my family and people at school if I break up with him. I'm really scared. I don't know who to turn to. I'm just really overwhelmed and I want him out of my life. Right now, I just feel really alone.*

Cindy enters as Brian walks off.

*Hey guys, so my name is Cindy and I'm in my freshmen year. I've made some good friends here and love the classes so far. As for dating, I was never really sure if like guys noticed me during high school. I was, you know, the typical good*

*student and close to my parents. Over the summer I had some not so good dating experiences which kind of messed with my self esteem. Anyway, coming here, everyone was talking about the “hook up culture” and for the first couple of months I figured okay. So I went to parties and kissed some guys. I mean, I liked the attention. But at the same time there was this group who started saying some really means stuff about me. Like I was a slut or whatever. It was mean. But what really hurt me was when some of my girl friends posted a picture of me at some party, obviously drunk and kissing a guy. They put it on Facebook and all and I told them to take it down and they did but like some other people copied it and sent it around. I’m just so upset and I’m going through this alone. I don’t know. I just feel so depressed and anxious. I haven’t been able to concentrate. I’m just not sure what to do.*

The facilitator then intervenes and asks the audience what they observed from the three different stories. The facilitator poses the question, “What cyber tools were used and how were they able to exert power and control over these relationships?” Themes of power and control through texting, calling, posting photos and social media websites are explored. The facilitator encourages the audience to ask questions to the actors concerning their experiences of the victims of cyber stalking and harassment. It is important for the facilitator to explore how research has shown that many victimized people become numb to abuse and may accept it as normal (Bennett et al., 2011).

The facilitator then poses the question, “How can these students manage their victimization and what can they do to not feel so alone?” Responses are recorded and transcribed. Some of these will likely include telling the online offender to cease their contact, ignoring and not replying to communications, and maintaining a record of all communication made. Themes of online safety will include changing passwords, removing personal information from social networking sites, changing settings to

private, and blocking offending parties. Informing friends, family, school officials and the police become necessary essential if the behavior persists or increases in intensity.

The actors reappear and offer empowering messages of recovery from cyber stalking and harassment.

Melissa: *It was hard setting boundaries with Jake because he's been with me so long. Its hard to imagine another person loving me. I talked to my friend I realized that being so controlled wasn't love. It was hard to end things but blocking him and switching my number helped me move on. I really enjoy life a lot more. And I'm no longer am constantly looking at my phone which is nice too.*

Brian: *I think for me getting support really helped. I spoke to a counselor at the counseling center who helped me start to take control. I learned about harassment policies on the college website and the consequences. Once I told my ex about that things calmed down. I mean, it was really easy to block his calls and emails, de-friend him, and just move on. I realized that I'm a lot more confident than I thought.*

Cindy: *You know, I let other people create an identity for me through rumors and by their passing around that photo. I now see that I can rebuild myself and make the choices that are right for me. It felt great to get the support I needed from friends and from an advocate from The Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Program at my school. I realized who my friends were and who I am.*

The fourth actor will act as narrator and make a closing statement.

4th Actor: *Thanks for being here today. I just want to say that the internet is awesome. Where else can you keep in touch with friends, have information at your fingertips,*

*shop, listen to music, watch movies, and express yourself. But you can be disrespected, bullied, manipulated, and controlled online. We're all about to enter a new community. We can author what it's going to be like, what is acceptable and what is not. We have tools to communicate with each other. It's up to us to use them for support, with respect, and to stimulate debate. Let's form the community we want!*

## **Wrap-Up**

During the wrap-up, the facilitator discusses the school's policies on harassment and the different types of offenses are covered including assault, sexual harassment, bullying, and cyberbullying. This also includes anti-hazing policies for fraternities and sororities. The facilitator tells students what they can do to make a harassment report. Resources such as the counseling center, sexual assault advocacy, and other wellness programs are listed to assist students.

## **Implications for Future Research**

The purpose of this paper is to describe a potential outreach program to educate college freshmen on the effects of cyberbullying on individuals and on the community. The method is through interactive theater. The goal is to introduce the concept of digital citizenship, a commitment of the community to unite against online aggression and intimidation. Bystander involvement is key to fortifying these standards (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001).

An important research priority to measure the effectiveness of the proposed program is to do a pre and post test on attitudes towards bullying behavior using a questionnaire administered before and after the outreach. An option to measure bystander attitudes would be The Bystander Attitude Scale, Revised (BAS-R), a modified version of Banyard's Bystander Scale. It is a 16-item, Likert-Scale measure

that assesses different aspects of bystander conduct and how likely they engage or ignore bullying behavior (Banyard, Plane, and Moynihan, 2005; McMahon et al., 2011). It would be beneficial to have students fill out the scale three months after the intervention to assess whether the interactive theater intervention had a lasting change on bystander attitudes towards bullying.

A student satisfaction survey is another way to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The survey can assess what students learned, enjoyed about the presentation, and suggestions for improvement. Colleges can also compare the number of bullying and cyberbullying incidents in past years to the current year the outreach was presented to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. This would assess whether the interactive theater has an effect on behavior changes. Interactive theater intervention has power to help people understand and appreciate others' contrasting perspectives despite differing personal and cultural backgrounds of community members. The hope of interactive theater is to improve unity within a community (Burton, 2010). Assessments will measure how effective the intervention is and how it can be improved.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

Research has shown that while cyberbullying is most prominent in junior high school and high school, it continues into college. It affects roughly 8.6% (Smith & Yoon, 2013) to 28.7% of students (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Many incoming freshmen may be coping with trauma experienced in middle school and high school from traditional and cyberbullying. Bullying prevention programs geared for high school students do not necessarily apply to college students who are experiencing a dramatic increase in independence.

Engaging this population can be a challenge. The students may have previously taken anti-bullying training in middle school or high school. Continued training is vital as some incoming freshmen are vulnerable to depression, anxiety, phobic anxiety, and

paranoia as a result of being cyberbullied. Victims were also found to have a higher rate of suicidal ideation, planning, and attempts than non-victims (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012). Currently colleges and universities implement outreach education around sexual assault and substance abuse prevention during freshmen orientations. However, as technology advances, cyberbullying and cyberstalking is becoming a more urgent concern. Offering a cyberbullying prevention program will assist in creating individual and community safety.

The goal of my proposed project is to create an outreach program on cyberbullying prevention that would interest incoming freshmen and introduce the idea of “digital citizenship.” Previous research literature on cyberbullying training demonstrated that young people respond to trainings that are interactive and involve multimedia (Cross et al., 2011). Research reveals that students are averse to adults lecturing to them about the dangers of the internet (Moessner, 2007).

The program offers both media and interactive theater as a means to engage students. Having the presentation be predominantly peer run and interactive would be in keeping with the research on how to impart information to adolescents. Theater as an intervention offers a visceral experience that enables students to pick up subtleties of human interactions. Theater also offers cognitive and behavioral training. It can readily enact conflicts that end in worst case scenarios. After this unfavorable scene is analyzed an alternative scene is performed where positive outcomes are presented (Harlap, 2013).

The proposed program offers students practical tools on how to handle cyberharassment. It also explores the psychology of bullying, builds empathy, and demonstrates the importance of bystander involvement. Educating students on the importance of “digital citizenship” is a means of empowering individuals and hopefully the community to take proper actions. The presentation also promotes the concept of students discussing conflicts in a forthright way rather than submitting to the urge to attack others on-line.

College freshmen are about to embark on years of education to advance themselves through their studies and through building relationships. It is a vital opportunity to advance interpersonal skills that promote a safe and supportive community both off and online.

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