CYBER SCENE

PROJECT
EVALUATION
REPORT

Overcoming victim blaming and bystander

effects through social theatre

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TABLE OF
CONTENTS

Please reference this report in the following way:

INTRODUCTION

OVERCOMING VICTIM BLAMING AND BYSTANDER EFFECTS THROUGH SOCIAL THEATRE

This short report evaluates the Cyberscene project which set out to tackle issues around cyberbullying by directly engaging London teenagers in the production of an original theatre play around the topic. This resulted in 12 workshops, the script writing and staging of a full theatre play (Cookies), a long film recording of the play by the Theatre Royal Haymarket Masterclass Trust (Masterclass), as well as the production of 5 short films by the LSE. This short report evaluates the project and builds on four sources of data: qualitative data gathered through participant observation during the workshops, survey data collected in three waves, the Cookies script and the short films produced by LSE. The Cookies Play/ Cyberscene project won the Outstanding Drama Education Resources at the 2020 Music and Drama Education Awards.

The report is organised around five central themes specified in advance in the agreed evaluation framework: Attitudes, Perceptions and General Online Behaviour; Awareness, Knowledge and Risk perception; Literacy, Skills and Resilience; Social Context and Support Structures; and Turning Points. For all of these questions were posed that this report answers by exploring the different data sources and by looking at how these translated into the play.

Quotes from ensemble members in Masterclass' internal report on the Cyberscene project are also used and anonymised for this publication.

While the broader goal of the project related to creating awareness around cyberbullying, a more immediate and important aspect of Cyberscene was to give young people a way of trying out theatre, expressing themselves and having their voices heard in an area that is dominated by adult opinion. This report, therefore, starts by giving the young people who participated a chance to say, in their own words, what they gained from being part of Cyberscene and the play Cookies beyond learning about cyberbullying[1].

I met new people and I have learned new acting skills

I improved my English skills, I made a lot of friends

I enjoy being part of Cookies. The Cookies is in my heart

Being able to multitask and think/act quickly on the spot

[1] Most quotes in the report come from the open ended questions in the surveys that were used to evaluate the project but some are derived from the internal evaluation report from Masterclass.

METHODOLOGY

Cyberscene was evaluated through participant observation in the workshops and a survey that was conducted in three waves. Participants were asked to fill out the first one during the first round of workshops, the second one at the end of the workshops and the third after the play had been staged. The participants were given a link to fill the survey out anonymously. They were asked for their names so that we could track who had and had not completed the survey and connect the different waves of the survey. Seven individuals participated in both the second and third wave survey and for these a separate analysis of change in opinions and knowledge will be done whenever the results are interesting.

TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS SURVEY PARTICIPANTS IN THE THREE WAVES

	Wave I	Wave II	Wave III
N (completes)	42 (38)	24(18)	13 (9)
Average age without teachers (youngest-oldest)	18 (17-38)	18 (17-32)	19 (17-23)
% men/women	36/64	50/50	67/33

Table 1 shows a slight difference in the gender composition of the participants in the survey for the different waves. This should be taken into consideration when looking at the results. Whenever there is the suspicion that the gender difference might explain the differences in the answers between waves this will be noted. At no point were identifiable survey data made available to anyone except Ellen Helsper (LSE researcher) and files were kept securely to protect the young people's privacy and confidentiality of their answers.

The survey data were used alongside the notes taken during four out of the 12 workshops that Ellen Helsper attended. She also attended 2 rehearsals for the play during which notes were taken.

STORYLINE 1 (VIOLENCE)

SOSA is a North London Black lesbian, her thirteen year old sister was killed and it is clear that she lives in a violent neighbourhood. She is a big fan of MakDown (MD), a female London rapper (not staged in the play). On her way to a birthday party she meets MD in an off license. They connect over music and shared live histories. Then MD gets attacked on the street and SOSA stands helpless. Passers-by film it and videos start circulating online accompanied by announcements of MD's death and homophobic abuse. SOSA can't stop neither the fake news nor the online hate. MD dies with SOSA there, leaving her with the lyrics to Cookies.

STORYLINE 2 (GROOMING)

SALENA is a Muslim teenager, who experiences discrimination on and offline on a daily basis because of her faith and ethnicity. She starts an online interaction with RAYAH who convinces her that she should do what she did: come to Syria to marry a handsome Mujahedeen and support the fight for Islamic State (IS). Partly driven by online islamophobia, SALENA turns away from her friends and goes as far as to pack her bags. She is told to "go back to where you came from" on a bus. Then SOSA sits next to her, shares her earphones and they find that they both like MD's music. This kind act in combination with news of a mass solidarity rally after an attack on a Muslim makes SOSA change her mind. She reconnects with friends and turns her back on RAYAH and IS.

STORYLINE 3 (HARASSMENT)

SIMON, JC and ANDY are friends living in London. SIMON was dating EVA but they fall out at a party. He hears from JC (who heard this from ANDY who heard it from SALENA) that EVA had been with someone else that same night. In a moment of anger he forwards nude pictures that EVA sent of herself, to JC and ANDY. These pictures end up on Facebook. EVA, who is trying to establish herself as a dancer on YouTube, starts being harassed by strangers online and through messages on her mobile. The police find out that SIMON was the original source of the photos and show up at his house to tell him that he is guilty of distributing child pornography. EVA tries to kill herself, survives and moves to a different school where she becomes friends with SOSA who brings her back to hip hop and dancing.
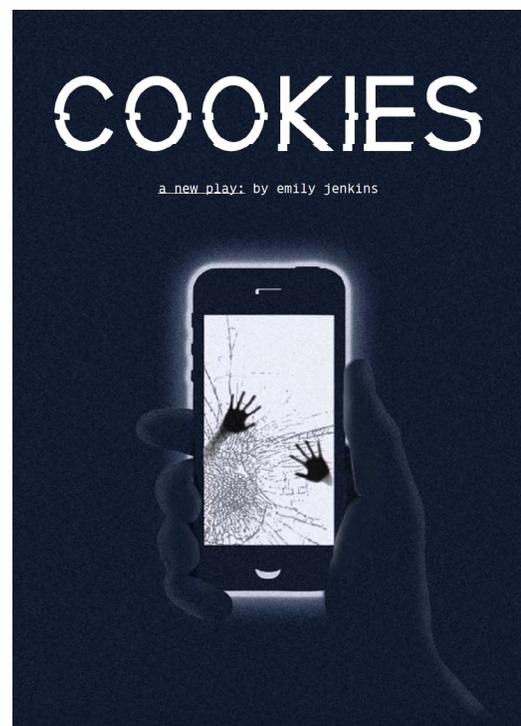
ATTITUDES,

PERCEPTION, AND GENERAL ONINE BEHAVIOUR[2]

Cyberbullying does not exist in a vacuum; it takes place on devices and platforms on which young people undertake many other activities. Of course their own experiences influence in what they think Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are good or bad for. However, their friends, parents, teachers and the media also shape the attitudes and the perceptions that they have which influence how they look at cyberbullying. Therefore, this report starts by answering the following question:

> What do we think about ICTs in general, what are the benefits, what are the risks, how does our social environment see ICTs or influences us in interaction on and with them in a certain way?

GENERAL ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATIONS

While this project focusses on the more negative aspects of online interactions and behaviours, it is important to not lose track of the wider context in which these are embedded. ICTs are here to stay, and there is a reason why they are popular, there are many benefits to be had. As in the world we lived in before the Internet came along, there are opportunities and risks to living in a digital world. Recommendations in relation to cyberbullying and participating in this world can therefore not be to completely disconnect. They offer opportunities for learning and connecting with others that are unprecedented, and disengaging from this completely has negative consequences leaving young people isolated and with less future prospects.

Thus, any discussion needs to balance out these two sides, understand that there are both positive and negative aspects of the digital world and that young people recognise the benefits as well as the risks, struggling to find a way to make the overall experience a wholesome one.

This is very well illustrated by what one of the ensemble members said:

> So many big experiences in my life come from the internet. I know quite a number of my closest friends through social media.

> If someone had told me 10 years ago that my best friend would be someone I only know because of social media, I'd have thought they were crazy.

> But as much as I owe to the internet, it also has a bad side. I have cried so many times because of things said on Twitter.

In the survey, we asked participants what their attitudes towards ICTs were in relation to a series of statements that tackled both individual motivations to use them as well as more general abstract attitudes towards ICTs. Figure 1 shows that overall attitudes are positive with high levels of agreement with statements such as "technologies make life easier" and "there are a lot of good things online". The doubts about whether or not online interactions are an overall good thing can be seen in average levels of agreement with the constant danger of harassment and bullying, fears about how what we do now influences our future opportunities and the fear of being left behind if we do not catch up.

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[2] LSE short film for Cyberscene on Attitudes and Perceptions
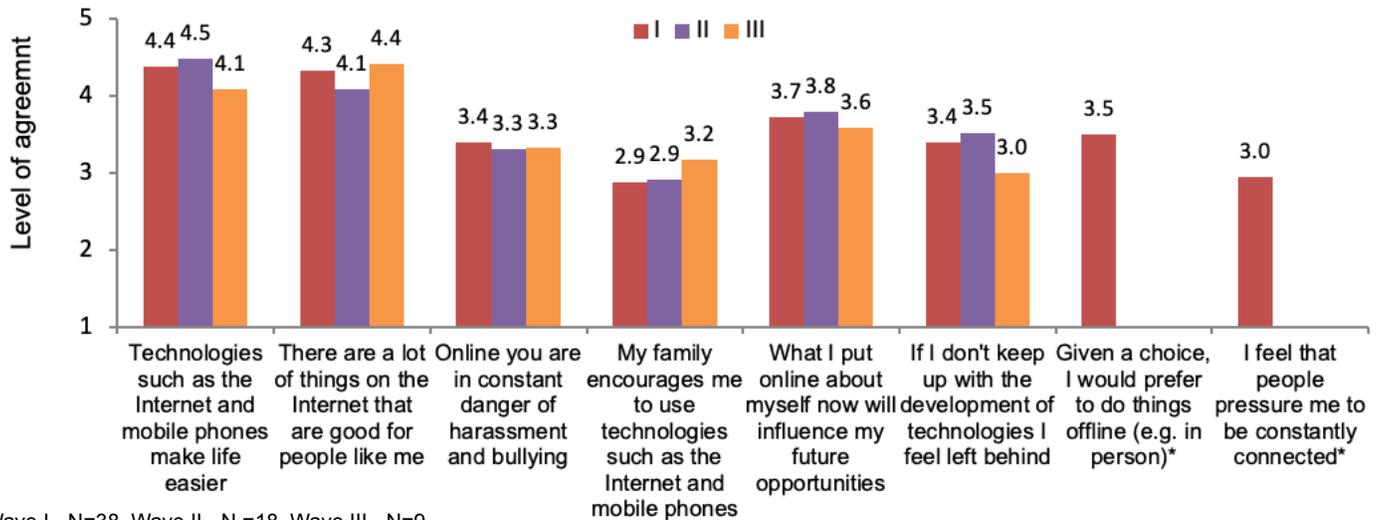
Wave I - N=38, Wave II - N =18, Wave III - N=9
* These questions were not asked in waves II and III

The participants who made it through to the end of the project and answered the third wave of the survey seem to have come from a social environment that was more supportive in terms of ICT use and its benefits, evidenced by more encouragement from family members and thinking that there were a lot of good things online.

GENERAL ONLINE BEHAVIOUR: PLEASURES AND DISLIKES

When asked which things young people most enjoyed online, the potential for connection and maintaining relationships in informal relaxed environments clearly dominated. However, these were not seen as isolated activities and were often intimately linked with entertainment and learning or keeping up to date.

There was more diversity in the types of things that were considered negative. Ranging from fraud, hacking, creation of fake accounts, bullying, privacy invasion, trolling, undesirable violent or sexual content, pressures to present yourself in certain ways, addiction but also practical aspects like technology failing or batteries running out.

There was sometimes a fine line between bullying and social pressures to conform to certain ideal types, reflecting the difficulty in managing online interactions. They offer the best and the worst that ICTs have to offer to these young people and there are blurred lines between a free environment in which to establish and maintain strong relationships and bonds, presenting the best image of yourself, conforming to social pressures and bullying of those who do not conform.

In the words of the participants:

> I think that people my age mostly enjoy the possibility of communicating with others no matter where they are, being up to date with celebrity news or events. Also, being able to share their passions/talents, for instance photography, drawing.

> I think most people like the feeling of being noticed or having the ability to connect with the outside world much more than we were able to in the past.

> [They are] being judged by their selfie so [they] put a lot of make up to try hide imperfections or even just filter and lighting. [They are afraid of] being exposed or talked about in a bad way, hate comments and not getting the recognition they want from someone

> How easy it is for people who would usually be outcasts to turn on that and use it to create hate. Trolls on twitter can be so damaging, and they can be persistent to an extreme point.

In the workshops, there was a clear difference between the first and the second round of workshops and the rehearsals and activities around the play where a more nuanced idea emerged of online social interactions and what is appropriate and who is responsible for how we behave online. The perceptions went from seeing social interaction as driven by the technology and inevitable, to understanding that the social space was constructed by the users and their environment as much as by objective features of the technology.

This aspect, emphasising how users and design of technology together act to create toxic or positive environments, came out in all storylines in the play. For example, Salena goes online to check on the news of an attack on a Muslim and she cannot but avoid seeing the hate reactions that are posted underneath, with hashtags that connect this message to other messages. The racism exists offline but the technology spreads it like wildfire. A similar thing occurs with the death of MakDown and the RIP message posted on social media afterwards. No matter that Sosa knows they are untrue and posts things to rectify, what has already been posted takes prominence because of the reactions it gets and becomes an undeletable fact.

South v North London hostilities exist and can play out further over the net because of the ease of spreading messages and connecting people who are in different parts of the city or country. And of course, there's the effortlessness with which Simon, JC, ANDY and others can send, save and forward the nude pictures. Social media being on devices we have with us all the time, which we share with our closest friends and family, allows existing sexual harassment and sexism to reach epic proportions and for it to be unescapable in Eva's storyline.

In the survey we asked about the types of social and cultural activities participants undertook online and outcomes related to these experiences.

Figure 2 shows that most frequent interactions were with others who were known in everyday life and that discussions focus on social issues that are of direct interest to the participants. In the workshops, social media were seen as important for interactions with friends and family, that is, people already known to the participants. Those who participated in the play and filled out the third round of surveys were more active online especially when it came to social learning experiences that might be outside the person's comfort zone and to explore relationships with people or talk about topics that were less familiar to them.

The workshops showed that these interactions were enjoyable though not always without hitches. Participants told stories about gaffs made through the autocomplete functions, and sending things to the wrong person and misinterpretations of emoticons. All of these were more problematic when the others were less familiar or when there was no regular face to face interaction with the others involved in the discussions.
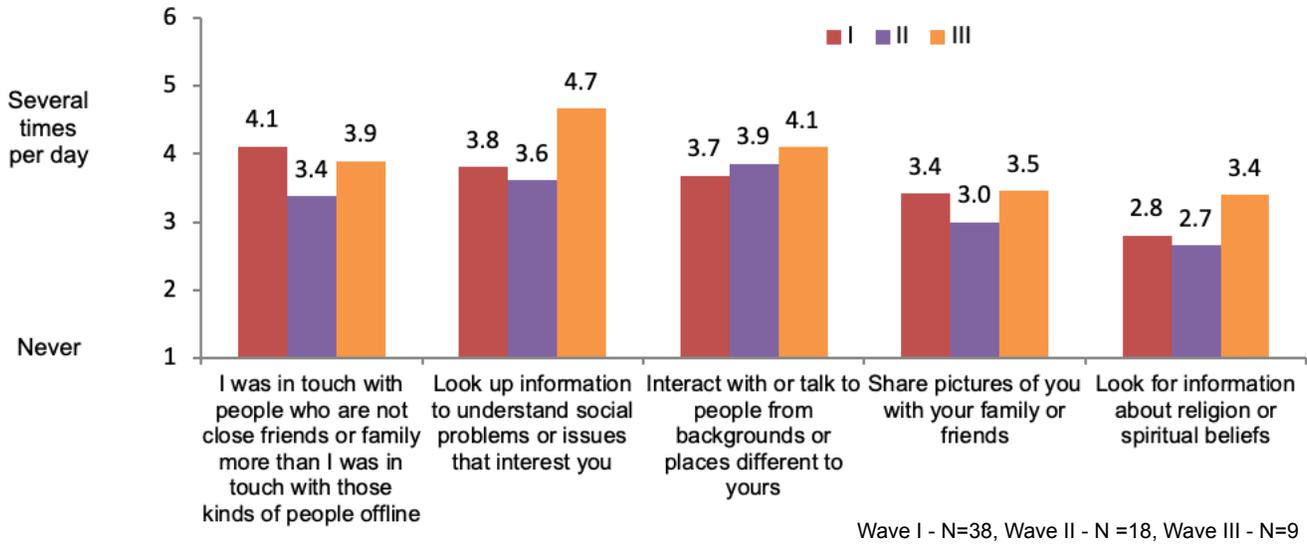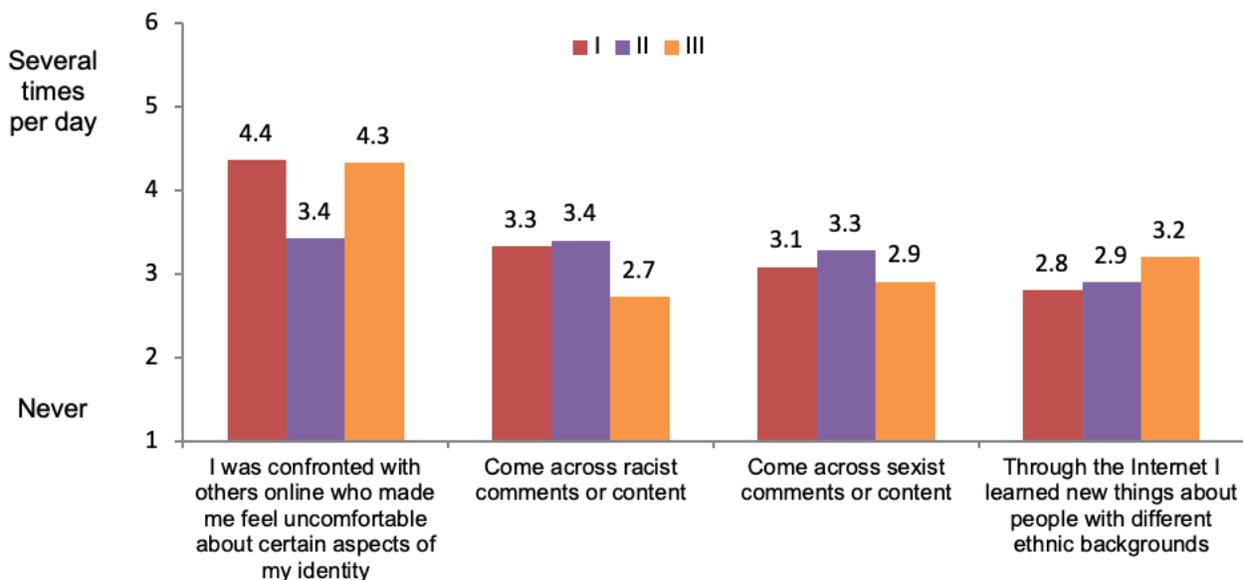
Wave I - N=38, Wave II - N =18, Wave III - N=9

Figure 3 confirms that online interaction brings risks with it such as being confronted with others that make one uncomfortable, though they indicated less exposure to the more extreme types of negative content. In the workshops, when participants were asked to reflect on the good and the bad of online interactions, everyday annoyances took prominence over more severe cases of cyberbullying and harassment and were seen as an inevitable part of being online, especially during the first round of workshops.

Later workshops showed less acceptance of these micro-aggressions and brought out more extreme forms of cyberbullying. This might be because those who had experienced it themselves were more likely to stick with the workshops and become part of the ensemble casts than those who had just an interest in theatre or the topic more in general.

FIGURE 3: EXPERIENCES RELATED TO SOCIAL CULTURAL
ONLINE ACTIVITIES IN WAVES I, II, AND III

Wave I - N=38, Wave II - N =18, Wave III - N=9

AWARENESS,

KNOWLEDGE, AND RISK PERCEPTION[3]

This section will try to answer the question around the participants' awareness of and understandings of cyberbullying on its own and in relation to other behaviours.

> What do we know about cyberbullying, where does it take place, what is its likelihood and what is the severity of its consequences, who is most likely to suffer from it, who is most likely to be the bully?

In rounds two and three of the survey, when participants were asked to give a definition of cyberbullying, different types of perspectives could be defined. There were some very basic descriptions that showed a quite narrow understanding (i.e. for example only sending messages) or a lack of ability to put a finger on what it really was, other than bad. These basic definitions continued to exist in the third wave with the young people who had participated in the play.

There was however, some development in thinking about who the bullies were and what the consequences might be. In the early workshops, the notion existed that cyberbullying was separate from other types of bullying, a separation of the offline and online was also present. This idea perpetuated the myth of cyberbullying being purely online, even amongst this young age group whose online and offline lives were intermingled. They seemed to be talking about this topic as outside observers echoing public discourses in the media and politics rather than something that was happening in their lives to people they knew.

Some made the link between the offline and the online, emphasising that one of the problems with cyberbullying was that this was done amongst friends. In the workshops, it appeared that this awareness was not there during the earlier workshops when there was still a discourse that emphasised individual, isolated bullies and victims.

Cyber bullying is an unnecessary thing that is used to destroy people in a very deep way.

Cyber bullying is when a particular person or group are affected in many ways by other people or groups that have hurt, humiliated and tend to carry on through using technology.

Cyber bullying is bullying someone online, for example via social media.

Verbally bullying people using technology

Cyber bullying is when someone you may know from the college or work place would come online and insults by putting negative comments and putting people down.

There was an understanding that the persistence of this behaviour, the accumulation of smaller acts of harassment over time, could have severe consequences. In the workshops, this perception shifted from one illustrated by extreme cases as presented in the media to understanding that it was often smaller things that composed cyberbullying and that the consequences could be less extreme but nonetheless no less damaging.

> It's mentally and emotionally abusing someone through the use of internet that could lead to suicidal or physical abuse if failed to prevent it.

> Continuous, repeated and targeted bullying of an individual by one or more, via online devices such as mobile phones and social media sites.

The emphasis on the effects on the individual victim over the characteristics of the bully reflects a larger problem with our understanding of cyberbullying, something that came out in the workshops as well. This misunderstanding is the idea that the cyberbully or cyberbullying is always intentionally and consciously evil: a sort of boogie man.

> Cyberbullying is the act of tormenting and abusing someone online with the intention of hurting them.

> Hiding behind electronic devices to insult and bully someone who is emotionally vulnerable

This boogie man image made it hard for the participants to understand that cyberbullying often starts out as a attempts to be popular, based in a lack of confidence and struggles over power within the peer group.
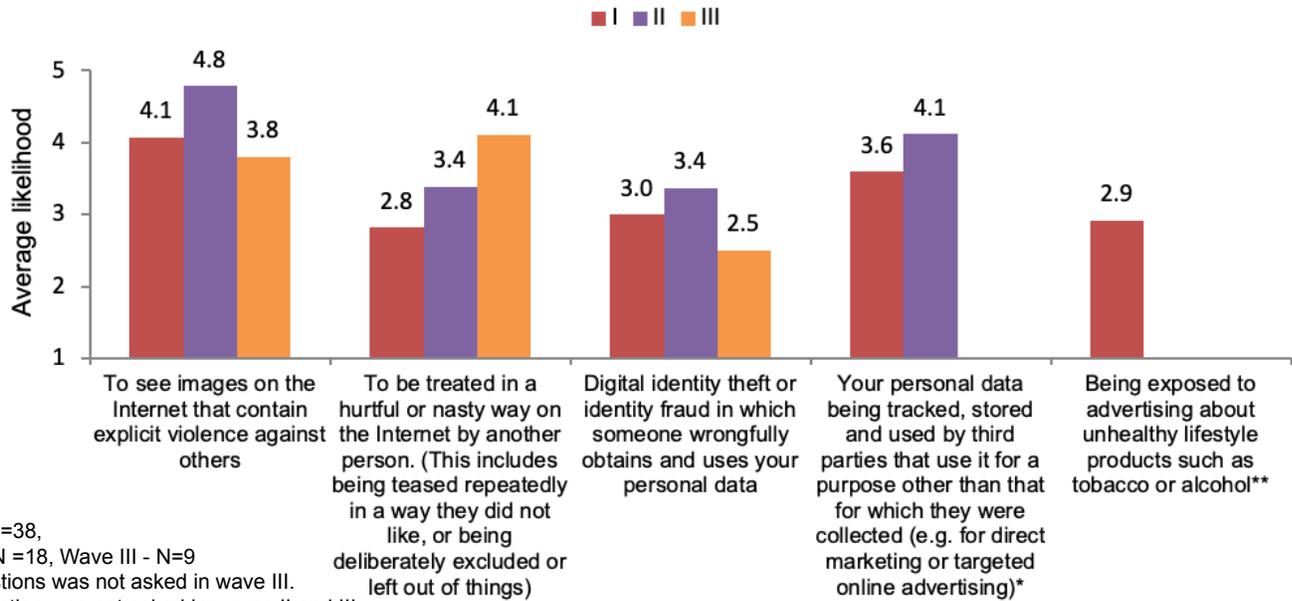
It also makes it hard for them to realise that they might be involved in cyberbullying themselves. Because of this participants had a hard time understanding, especially at the beginning that cyberbullying is also caused by others condoning bullying as just harmless fun or facilitate and encourage it through the forwarding of messages. After the third wave, that is after the play had been staged, awareness had increased in that to understand and define bullying one needed to look at the intentions and characteristics of the bully as much as those who were on the receiving end of persistent negative behaviour. A realisation emerged that everyone was capable of being mean under the 'right' circumstances.

Participants questioned what the point was of cyberbullying. In response, some argued that it was done because there were no negative consequences, no punishment and that some people were just evil. Again few realised that some of their actions or inactions might have constituted cyberbullying. There was push back towards trying to understand the causes of bullying in the workshops with participants wanting to emphasize the consequences; feeling like the biggest problem is that there is a lack of understanding of those at the receiving end of smaller acts of bullying.

The focus on extremer cases of cyberbullying as presented in the media and as present in the concerns of policy makers and parents pushed us to include a question around how likely cyberbullying is in comparison to other risks one might run online and how severe the consequences might be when this happened to someone.

> It can make someone feel like nothing, like the have no value on this earth.

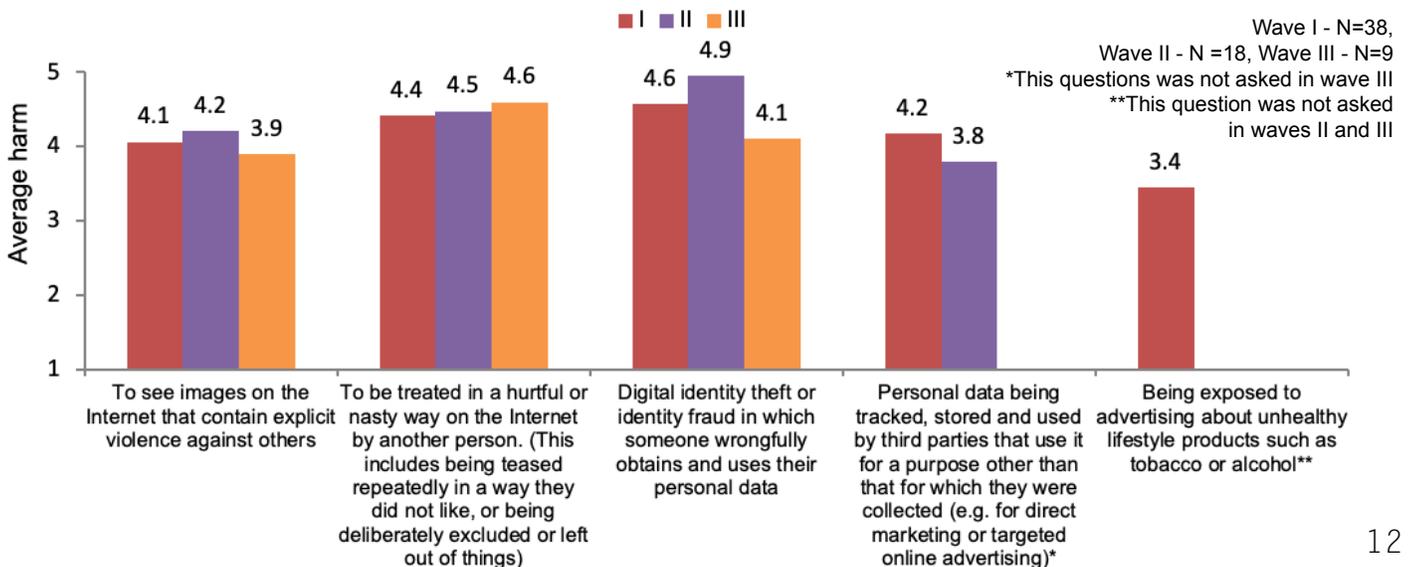■ I ■ II ■ III

Wave I - N=38,
Wave II - N =18, Wave III - N=9
*This questions was not asked in wave III.
**This question was not asked in waves II and III.

The highest likelihood of risk was perceived to be "seeing explicit images of violence" in wave two of the survey but this was closely followed by "cyberbullying and personal data being tracked" (see Figure 4). There were clear differences between the participants who filled out the first and the third waves of the survey. Those in the third waves rated the likelihood of cyberbullying much higher than those in the first round. Other risks such as identity theft or wrongful use of personal data were perceived as lower in risk. We know that women are more likely to be victims of this sort of psychological bullying and one explanation might be that the third wave had more women in it. The script and ideas generated by young people in the workshops initially had all victims as female all perpetrators as male. This was later rectified so that it was not only male on female bullying but also showed female on female ideological grooming such as in the online relationship between Rayah and Salena and male on male homophobic bullying such as in the scenes where Andy 'teases' JC.

FIGURE 5 PERCEPTION OF LEVEL OF HARM DIFFERENT RISKS ALL PARTICIPANTS

■ I ■ II ■ III

Wave I - N=38,
Wave II - N =18, Wave III - N=9
*This questions was not asked in wave III
**This question was not asked in waves II and III

12

Figure 5 shows a similar pattern for the perception of how harmful cyberbullying might be, though there the differences were less pronounced. The potential for severe harm was the highest for cyberbullying across all rounds with the exception of the perception of harm of digital identity theft in wave one and two.

This is interesting in light of what the workshops showed, especially during the first ones, the harms from low level cyber bullying were often ignored, and the idea that cyberbullying had severe consequences such as suicide was based on the few cases that were extreme examples of cyberbullying as reported on in the media and depicted in the play.

Through the grooming for extremism story line it becomes clear it is often smaller things or wider discourses in society that make a person vulnerable to this kind of negative behaviour and influenced the extent to which they are affected by it. For example, the 'recruitment' of Salena would have been much harder had she not been discriminated and bullied offline for who she was and if the emphasis had not been on finding a 'prince/warrior/who would come and save her.

One of the issues that was discussed in the workshops was that the physicality of offline bullying made it easier to recognise and also perceived as more painful. One conclusion about the difference between traditional and cyberbullying is that there is a greater change of things escalating online, that it could go really quickly from discomfort to depression and even suicide. This same discussion also showed that the exposure to worst case scenarios, such as those presented in the press with very dire circumstances, made it harder to see simple everyday pestering as bullying, in a way there was desensitization towards the more prevalent forms of cyberbullying. These types of everyday pestering do not make good storylines and thus show up less often and were hard to write into the play.

Overall, there was a development towards a more nuanced understanding of what cyberbullying was and who it affected over the course of the workshops. When asked about what they learned by participating in the workshops and the play participants moved from seeing it as an easy to recognise thing that happens only to specific (other, weak) people done only by badly intentioned individuals, towards thinking about cyberbullying in more nuanced and complex ways. Two participants gave a good summary of this learning process:
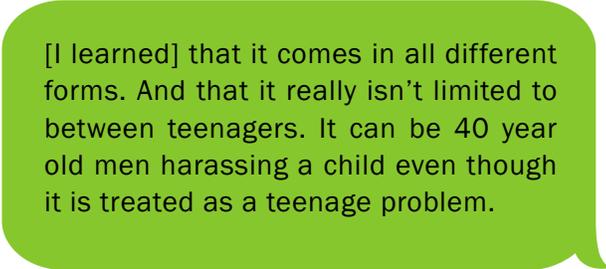
> [I learned] that it comes in all different forms. And that it really isn't limited to between teenagers. It can be 40 year old men harassing a child even though it is treated as a teenage problem.
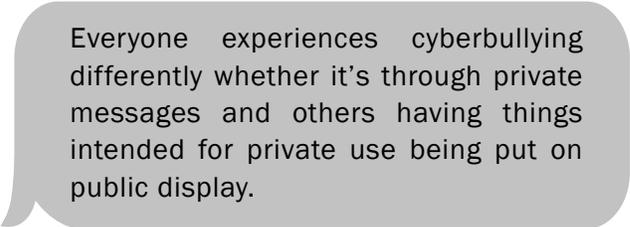
> Everyone experiences cyberbullying differently whether it's through private messages and others having things intended for private use being put on public display.

The play showed that often bullying takes place unintentionally or escalates beyond the original intentions of the individuals that end up in situations that they seemingly cannot escape out of with consequences that go far beyond the initially intended ones. This is illustrated by EVA's lines towards the end of the play

(Eva) I can't go online, I can't check my phone,
I can't go to college,
I'm completely alone.
My dance career has been ruined forever,
And if I can't dance…,

The play suggested that after this escalation has taken place only an intervention from the outside or an external party can turn the situation around (more about this in the turning points section).

LITERACY,

SKILLS AND RESILIENCE[4]

This section addresses questions around digital literacy and how we cope with negative experiences online. In particular it looks at whether we are able to prevent them from occurring, what our skills are in interacting with others to prevent us or others being the subject of or (unwittingly) participating in cyberbullying.

> That is, what are the skills needed to be able to navigate the online world taking up opportunities and avoiding risks that lead to harm from cyberbullying?

As the short films show these types of literacy and skills are hard to separate from awareness and knowledge[4].

It is unlikely that a person can develop skills and resilience in light of cyberbullying if they are not aware of what they are but on the other hand, awareness and knowledge of cyberbullying does not automatically lead to avoiding becoming involved or preventing others from falling victim to cyberbullying. Therefore, awareness and knowledge are discussed separately from literacy, skills and resilience in this report.

GENERAL DIGITAL LITERACY

We had very few measures of literacy in the survey but what the results did show was that overall skills and confidence in using ICTs to interact with others were higher amongst those who had gone through the whole process of the workshops and participation in the play. These differences are neither large nor statistically significant but the trend is there (see figure 6)[5].

FIGURE 6 SKILL LEVELS OF ALL PARTICIPANTS FOR WAVES I, II AND III

Wave I - N=38, Wave II - N =18, Wave III - N=9
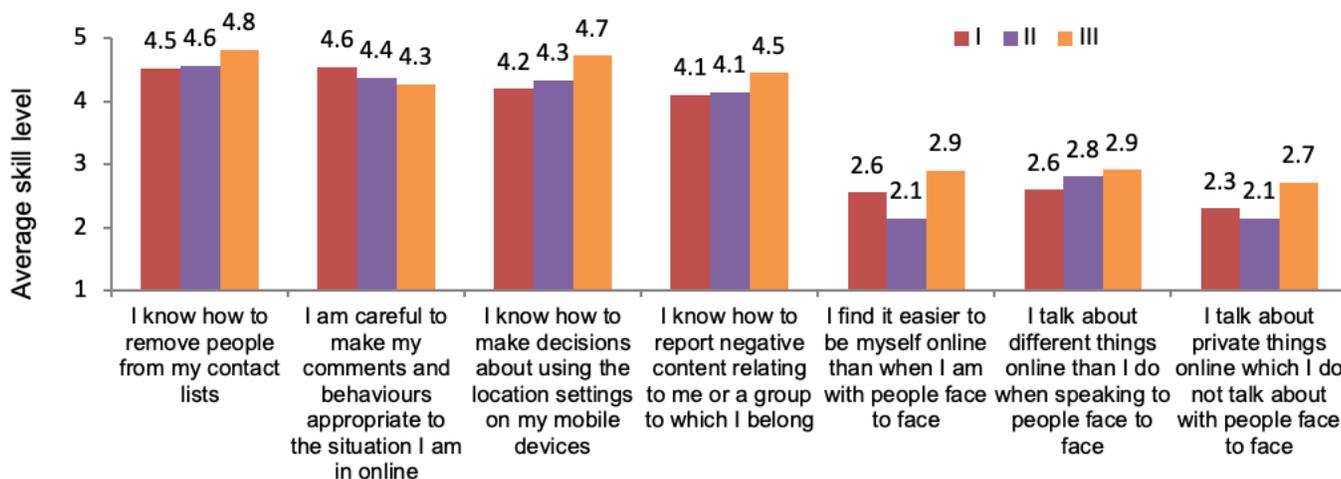
4 LSE short film on Literacy, Skills and Resilience

The only skill that was not higher in the third wave was that related to being careful to make comments and behaviours appropriate to the situation they were in online. We might speculate that this is part of a greater awareness of missteps that have been committed along the way and a realisation by participants that they were less good at this than they might have thought. In other words, with more skill comes greater awareness of fallibility in terms of the softer, less easy to pin down social skills. Interesting is that those who went through to the end also felt more comfortable online in comparison to offline than those who participated in the first and second round of the survey. In addition, they had more separate offline and online lives than those in earlier waves of the survey, though on average all of the participants indicated that the online was no more attractive than the offline (see Figure 1). This breaks the myth that exists about young people not knowing how or not wanting to interact face to face anymore.

When talking about resilience in the workshop there were a number of interesting observations that could be made. The most important one should be understood as 'victim blaming', this was persistent and even towards the end present not only amongst observers of cyberbullying but also among some of those who had experienced sometimes quite severe forms of it themselves. One element of this is that somehow the person being bullied is to blame for another person publishing what was shared with them in private or that they caused bullying because of the way they behaved or looked. Surprising was that there was a certain legitimisation of bullying, that there was fire when there was smoke. That is, that there had to be a certain truth behind the remarks of bullies based on something in the person who was on the receiving end. At a certain point a participant said in relation to this 'The truth hurts'. In the play this is present in the chorus line around Eva's story:

> (Chorus) No one blames the guy for asking
> it's always the girl's fault
> if she's like stupid enough / to send it.

More subtle ways of victim blaming are present in the suggestion that those who suffer from bullying are weak. Comments were made along the lines of: "That's the way the online world works" and "Just gotta stand up, ain't ya". Therefore, solutions (see section on turning points) were often made around empowering the 'victim' and creating awareness around their responsibility rather than creating awareness and literacy amongst those who were the 'perpetrators'.

Thus in terms of literacy and resilience the most important contribution the play and workshops made were to steer the conversation away from this discourse that puts the responsibility with the victim and on towards those who do the bullying. For example, in the play Simon starts to realise that he is to blame for forwarding the nude pictures out of spite when he thinks Eva might have been with another guy. This realisation starts to emerge when he is talking to JC and about the police interview

> (Simon) I didn't put the pictures up.
> "The Facebook profile has nothing to do with me.
> Plus I'm not the one texting her.
> I didn't make it create it or put them up on the net.
> It was just between mates,
> When I was upset."
>
> (Simon as Police Officer) "When you were upset?"
> He jumps at the word.
> "So you intended to hurt her?"

It is not easy to develop the skills to react to and interact with others in digital environments in ways that do not have negative impacts on others. Often individuals are not aware that this is something that has to be learned and does not come naturally. One consequence is that many of us hurt others online without really realising that we are, especially when we cannot see the reaction of the other. Literacy that goes beyond just knowing how to push buttons is important in this case.

For example, everyone knows technically how to post, forward or like a message but very few understand let alone know what to do about the complex situations and power dynamics that often stand at the basis of severer forms of cyberbullying.

RESILIENCE AND EXPERIENCE

We also asked about lived experiences of bullying and what tactics they had had to deal with it. That is, whether they had used tactics that showed resilience so that they might prevent it from happening in the future.

FIGURE 7 EXPERIENCE OF BEING TREATED IN A NASTY OR HURTFUL WAY


Wave I - N=38, Wave II - N =18, Wave III - N=9
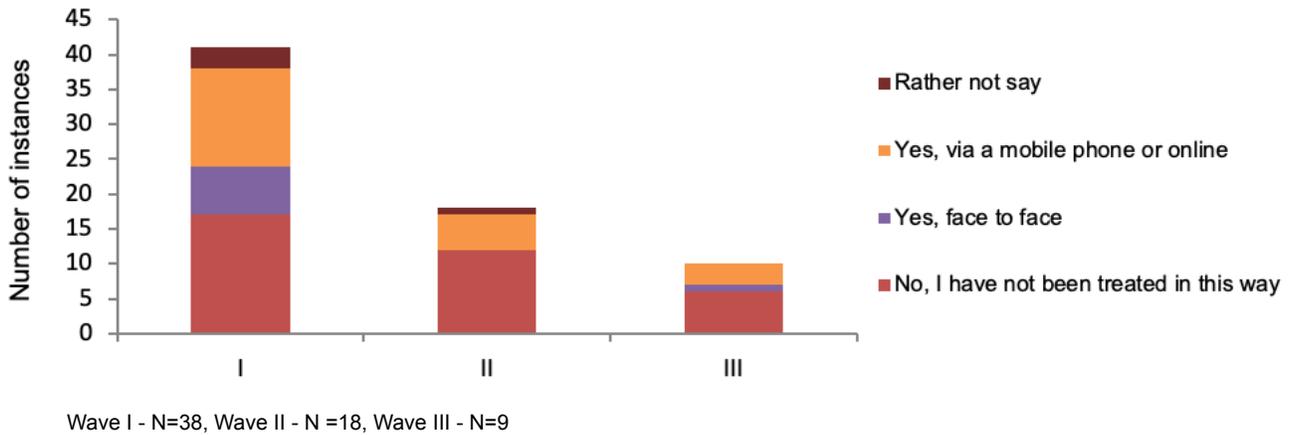
In waves two and three there was about one third who had experienced nasty or hurtful treatment in the last three months, this was slightly over half for the first wave participants. Most of those who had experienced nasty or hurtful treatment by someone else online had experienced this in all three waves but in the first and third wave of the survey there was a considerable proportion that had experienced this offline as well.

When asked how long they had felt upset most indicated that they either got over it straight away or within a few days, suggesting some emotional resilience though this might also indicate that these were not cases of persistent bullying. In wave two there was one participant who had felt upset for over a month suggesting a more serious situation.

FIGURE 8 RESILLIENCE IN LIGHT OF NASTY OR HURTFUL INTERACTIONS ONLINE (ALL THREE WAVES)
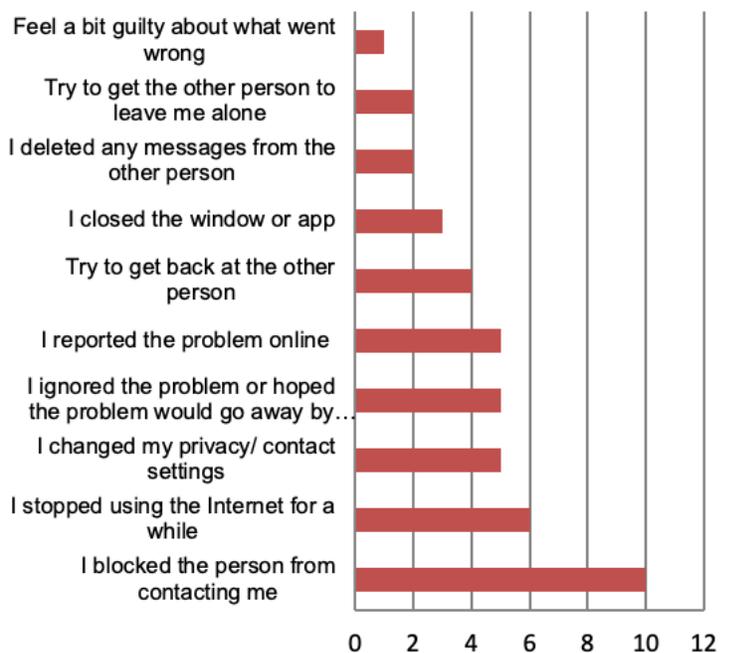
N=22 – participants in the survey who had experienced hurtful or nasty behaviour and had been upset by this[6]

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[6] It should be noted that some of these will be double counts since the same individuals who were treated like this in wave I will also have been the ones indicating this in waves II and III.

Figure 8 shows that the most common action was to block the person from contacting them (about half of the participants who experienced online hurtful treatment). While, this might be an effective strategy for that particular situation it does not prevent others from taking over and does not give the victim control over what the other is saying or posting about them to others. Stopping use of the internet for a while and ignoring the problem are high up the list of actions to be taken, these are reactive tactics that do not deal with the perpetrators, making it likely that they will victimise someone else.

> If you know that someone is abusive towards you then avoid the whole l situation by simply ignoring or blocking that person. Furthermore, avoid social media as a whole as that will eliminate the whole situation from even happening.

This quote by one of the ensemble members illustrates that coping strategies remain very much of the ostrich (ignoring or blocking the bully) or road runner tactic ('just' run away from social media) rather than preventing kind. The problem with these is that ostrich tactics likely lead to the bully trying to find other ways to reach the victim and that bullying might continue to go on without this being visible to the bullied. For example, by spreading gossip and pictures amongst their friends. Or the bully will find another victim, thus moving the problem onto someone else.

The road runner tactic, staying away from social media, is an advice often given by adults and seems reasonable were it not for the fact that our social lives, especially those of young people, are largely managed through these platforms and this is thus likely to lead to (further) isolation. In addition, since the bullies are part of their offline networks they cannot escape.

These lines from the chorus in the play reflect this

(Chorus)
And it's not that simple with blocking them
  because they can always get to you through other people
   you know
    and they're at school with you and friends with you
     and they / know you're online

Resilient strategies are more active and preventative such as reporting the problem and changing privacy settings. These were undertaken by about a quarter of those who had experienced these interactions across the three waves of the survey. About a fifth turned to 'bullying' themselves by trying to get back at the other person. Of course all these strategies, perhaps with the exception of the reporting and (the far less common) trying to get the other person to leave put the onus and responsibility on the person who is on the receiving end of this negative behaviour and leave the victim isolated without an (online) support network.

For real prevention more emphasis needs to be placed on education and awareness of the potential bullies. The comments of the same ensemble member indicated that they developed insight into the social skills needed to interact online in a civilised manner.

> I realised from this project that it is essential that you make sure your texts are appropriate and that they do not hurt the other persons feeling.

In the play this finding translated into resilience being derived from others, trusted others who are able to start a dialogue about what is acceptable and not teach people the skills needed for interaction online or offline. For example, in the scene between Salema and Sosa, Salema finding support helps her get out of what could be a dangerous grooming situation.

How isolated she was is shown by the following lines:

> (Chorus)
> I reached out
>   because I didn't think anyone in my life understood me
>   like like
>   I got talking to this person

Similarly, Eva's lack of a support network and isolation, played out in her father's negative reaction in combination with people who were her friends and fans turning against her, makes it an almost impossible situation to deal with even when an external force (i.e. the police) comes in. The slow realisation amongst Simon, JC, and Andy that they were all partly responsible for the situation that Eva found herself in and Simon reaching out to her is important. Sosa on the other hand deals with the online abuse in a much better way, it seems because she is confident, because she is with a person she trusts to be on her side (MD) and because there is support as well as homophobia online.

SOCIAL CONTEXT
AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES (MEDIATION)[7]

This section addresses what role the social context plays in relation to cyberbullying. The question that should be answered here is:

> What is the role of parents, teachers, employers, media, society in preventing or helping people in relation to negative online interactions?

In the lessons learned from participating in the play, participants showed that there was awareness of the power others have to make things worse or stop it from happening even if they are not directly involved in the cyberbullying.

> Every little thing you say to people matters

> The different effects it has on people and how it can change their life so quickly.

> How people deal with it or how people react to blatant bullying online and in the news and such.
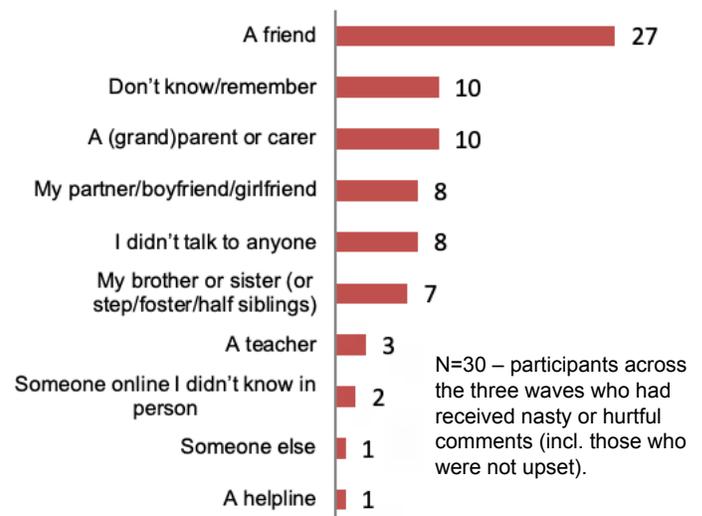
There was also a growing awareness of the importance of support networks amongst the participants in the workshops, most of whom had overall good support from family and friends.

The involvement of young people who had experienced cyberbullying or were still experiencing it and had been or still were relatively isolated, was extremely beneficial for understanding how these offline social (support) networks can help individuals mitigate the negative effects of cyberbullying or find a way to make it stop. For example, one ensemble member reflected on this after the play in the following way:

> I am lucky as I always have my friends around to remind me to take a deep breath and offer reassurance. However, it can be difficult to escape the clutches of the internet once you start to feel trapped.

In the survey, we also asked those who experienced cyberbullying where they had looked for help:

FIGURE 9 USE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS AND INVOLVEMENT OTHERS AFTER EXPERIENCING BULLYING

A friend	27
Don't know/remember	10
A (grand)parent or carer	10
My partner/boyfriend/girlfriend	8
I didn't talk to anyone	8
My brother or sister (or step/foster/half siblings)	7
A teacher	3
Someone online I didn't know in person	2
Someone else	1
A helpline	1

N=30 – participants across the three waves who had received nasty or hurtful comments (incl. those who were not upset).

[7] LSE short film on Social Context and Support

Figure 9 shows that friends were key when it came to coping with a situation in which the person had been cyberbullied. Not so much in terms of intervening in the situation themselves (see figure 8) but in terms of dealing with the aftermath. All those who had experienced something negative had talked to a friend. From this data it is not clear whether these discussions when they took place were instigated by the person or by the friend or family or other with whom the discussion was held. A cautionary note is that these are discussions that took place after the fact and might thus not have dealt with the problem or stopped it from happening again.

More worrying is that many indicated that they were not really sure whether they talked to someone and that 8 participants did not talk to anyone about this happening online. Nevertheless, there is a more positive picture here than when we looked at stopping the behaviour from happening. Close support networks were involved in talking about what happened: parents, carers, partners were all mentioned as well as siblings and teachers. Thus, while these relationships including the adults in their lives, were not used to deal with a bullying problem when it happened they were seen as important to make sense of these behaviours.
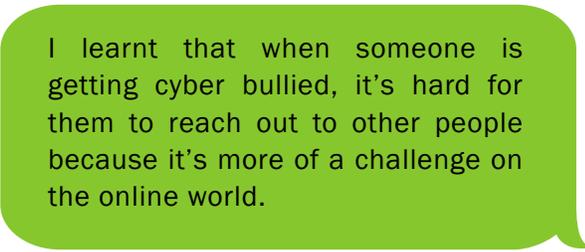
> I learnt that when someone is getting cyber bullied, it's hard for them to reach out to other people because it's more of a challenge on the online world.

In the survey we also asked about bystander situations, that is, where the participants were not directly involved in the hurtful online interactions but were aware of these going on. In the first and second wave, around 40% of the participants (16 and 10 individuals) had known about something happening to someone else; in the third wave only 3 participants or a third of the participants knew of this happening to another person. Perhaps more interesting is to see whether and, if so, how they got involved in this situation.

The bystander phenomenon occurs when someone sees something happening to someone else and does not intervene. Often this happens because no one else is doing anything, which makes it less likely that others will intervene in that situation or similar circumstances. This creates what is called a spiral of silence in which behaviour can escalate and no one dares speak up if they feel like they are going against the norm. This can lead to this negative behaviour being validated, since no one says anything it must be ok. As a consequence those on the receiving end might feel that they must be in the wrong because the behaviour is seen as acceptable and the comments granted veracity by the silence of others.

The victim will then not speak out either. The situation becomes even more complicated when it comes to preventing getting involved in cyberbullying yourself, even if only indirectly. If the tendency is to see cyberbullying by others as harmless fun or not really that impactful, we can expect this tendency to be even stronger when it comes to evaluating our own behaviour.

To understand how this works we asked the participants the difficult question about whether they had conducted themselves towards others in ways that could be considered bullying or at least nasty and hurtful. A number of participants were open and honest about these experiences. In both the first and the second wave, around 3 participants indicated that they had been involved in cyberbullying. Of those who participated in the play and filled out the survey at the end none indicated having participated in this type of behaviour in the last 3 months.

This might mean that they learned from the workshops or that the participants in the third wave were individuals who had been victims themselves or bystanders to bullying inflicted on others but not perpetrators.

A more extreme version of this bystander effect is depicted in the play in the scene where people film the attach on MD preventing ambulances from coming through and, by posting them, creating an online wave of homophobic and north/south London territorial warfare related abuse.

> (Sosa) white lights of mobile phones
> and screens
> and i can't believe my eyes
> they're just standing there
> not helping
> filming her here
> dying and crying on the brixton pavement

Figure 10 shows that the most popular action was to report cyberbullying anonymously online; about a third of the participants who had been witness to this happening across the three waves said they did this. It is not clear where or how this was reported or if it resulted in something being done. The survey did not give enough background to know whether these were general posts that were offensive of specific attacks on someone they knew. Encouraging is that supporting the victim, letting them know that this was not ok, was also high. It was especially high in the second wave which came after the second round of workshops where this topic was addressed.

FIGURE 10 ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN AS BYSTANDER

N= 29 – Across three waves.
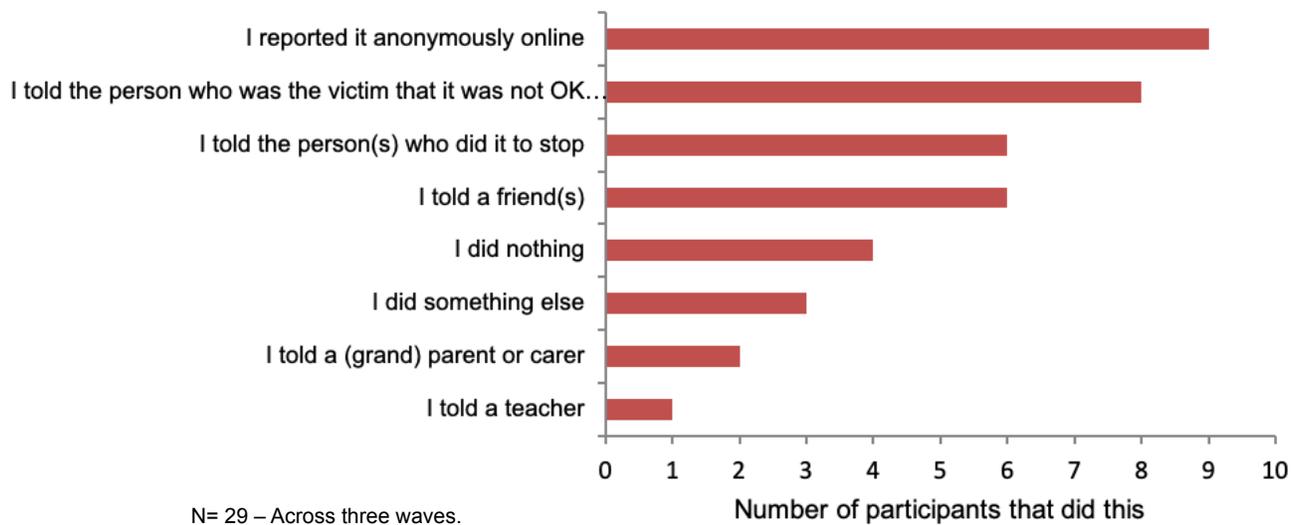
Similarly, explicitly intervening by telling the person to stop was also indicated as important. Even if this was a result of social desirability, in that they had learned that this was the 'right' answer, it is still encouraging to see awareness of the importance of speaking up. Having expressed this as something they (should) have done will make it more likely that they will act that way in the future. Doing nothing or telling a friend are strategies that most likely do not prevent or deal with the issue itself.

More concerning, considering that this was likely to have happened to someone they knew, is that it was very unlikely that they would talk to adults within their (supposedly) trusted network about this. Cyberbullying seems to be something that is solved between peers or relying on the platforms and reporting systems which often do not follow up. The former is more likely to be effective in preventing it from happening again in the future than the latter.

In the play, these strategies were reflected in that the young people find solutions for and between themselves. Even in Eva's online case of sexual harassment where the police got involved, in the end it was Simon and herself who worked things out. It would not be good if the participants and the audience of the play would go away with the idea that this is the best strategy for solution and prevention. Involving adults that are associated with the young people that are bullying and being bullied is more effective for prevention, resilience and creating awareness around acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour at school and in the home.

However, in the workshops, there was little confidence in teachers or parents being able to do something. Parents (of the bullies) were seen as part of the problem because they would defend their child, and teachers were often seen as powerless to deal with what was going on behind the screen even if this was taking place at school. That is to say, involving adults who are close to the situation will not work if the young people involved are not the ones who instigate or are involved in the mediation by these adults nor when the adults become part of the problem by 'picking sides'.

TURNING
POINTS[8]

This last section focusses on what are perceived as effective strategies to turn cyberbullying around or preventing it from happening or escalating in the first place.

> What or who could/has made it possible to change a negative situation? When and how would intervening be most effective?

As indicated before, in the earlier workshops the discussions focussed not on preventing cyberbullying from happening or escalating in the first place but instead often suggested that victims disconnect from the digital world or avoid social media thus becoming invisible to the bullies. 'Just ignore it' was a typical remark made by one of the participants.

It should be emphasised again how understandable but also problematic the bystander effect is. The behaviour of a group the person is part of is often not seen as problematic or is justified as not being really harmful.

> I'm in a group chat with some friends and one of them everyone makes fun of. I don't take part in it and it's just banter among friends. It's not harmful to my knowledge.

This ignoring the hurt to make it stop is an ostrich tactic; individuals know it is going on but put their head in the sand and pretend not to see it. Clearly neither this ostrich tactic nor the 'people need to toughen up' response is effective in preventing or stopping cyberbullying.

When asked an open question about why they participated in cyberbullying, one aspect was jealousy reflecting the attention paid to revenge porn at school, at the workshop and the play. Some participants indicated that their own cyberbullying was a reaction to negative or hurtful behaviour from others. This confirms research which shows that those who are bullied often turn to bullying themselves.

> They started bullying me so I did it back

> I responded back up to the persons who first made a hurtful comment of myself and a friend.

Neither retaliation nor ostrich tactics are likely to turn the situation around. They are instead likely to lead to escalation. Prevention thus starts by preventing those experiences from occurring in the first place, intervening early on, rather than waiting for the bullied to turn bully and bullies to up the ante to achieve the desired reaction from their peers and others.

Not all justified their bullying or that of others based on retaliation or on it being harmless, some realised that what they had done or were doing was bad and sought to remedy it.

> It was face to face I was just being a really bad person at the time.

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8 LSE short film on Turning Points

It was in a joke way, but they misinterpreted it. I apologised after

(Simon) I hate that mum has to be in here with me.

Why couldn't they have spoken to me privately?
I can feel every bit of her disappointment cutting into my skin.
Outside and within.
It's so fucking mortifying,
I think actually dying
right now would be better
than sat with her hurt
and disappointment
boring down into me.

When asked what had made them stop feelings of guilt, retaliation and blocking made these particular instances stop. Thus the most likely to prevent cyberbullying from reoccurring in the future is making people understand that there is a great risk in posting in the spur of an emotional moment (without thinking about how others might receive this) and feelings of remorse based on past behaviour and others reactions to this.

In the play, the power of embarrassment is expressed by Simon upon his mother's reaction to finding out from the police:

Nevertheless, intervention by others was not a reason for bullies to stop which contradicts with what those not involved thought was most likely to help the victims.

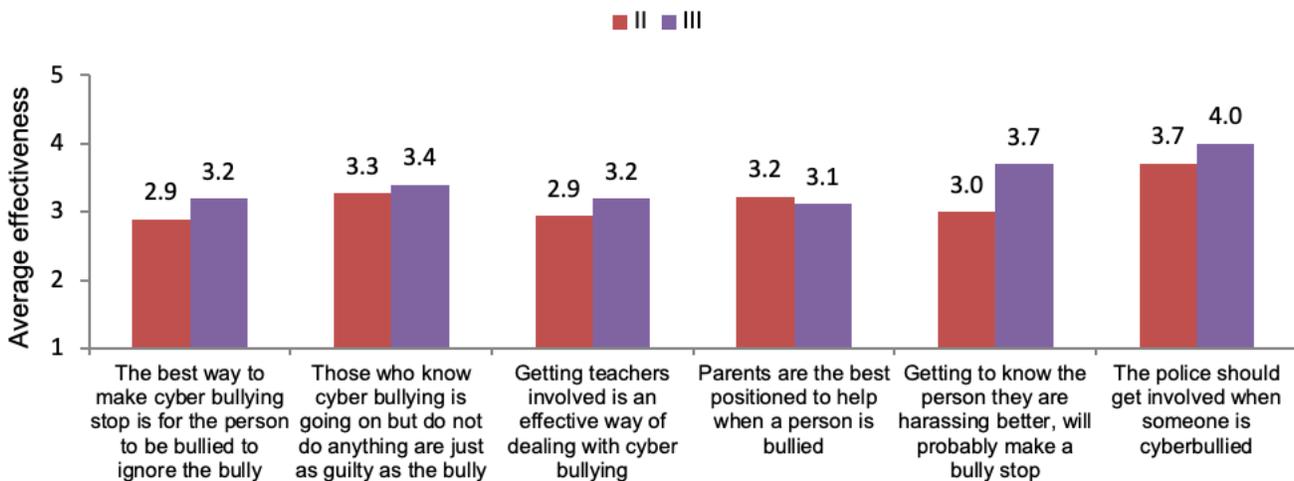FIGURE 11 EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT STRATEGIES TO TURN BULLYING AROUND BY BYSTANDERS

Figure 11 confirms that what participants consider effective is not what bullies indicated made them stop. Police intervention was seen as the most effective, even though it is a heavy handed approach, only appropriate for the most severe of cases and only when things have escalated.

However, it was encouraging that those who participated who answered the survey in the third wave had clearly gotten the message that mediation and making the bully understand the impact of their behaviour would be most effective.

Also encouraging was the increased realisation that bystanders are guilty when they do not intervene and that teachers could offer an independent party for mediation.

Two answers continue to cause concern: parents were considered unlikely to be effective if they intervened and there was still an insistence on the responsibility of the person who is bullied to 'just ignore' what is going on. As mentioned earlier this might work to stop a specific instance of bullying but deals neither with the underlying problem which might take place across a variety of platforms including face to face, nor with the prevention of future behaviours of bullies picking on other victims.

Some of this might be a reflection of what was in the play where police intervention and friendship turning potential victims away from a groomer are offered as solutions, rather than the involvement of teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

In fact, in the play close others who were not friends (e.g. parents and teachers) were relatively absent in the lives of young people with the exception of a very negative reaction by Eva and Simon's parents.

However, when asked to do some blue skies thinking about what could be done more than what is already available to prevent bullying from happening in the future, a different picture emerged. Those who went through all rounds of the workshops were more positive about the whole range of interventions than those who dropped out. More open discussions were the most popular, as well as awareness raising campaigns and involving schools and parents. This corresponds to what we know from research with parents where they also see more involvement from the school and open discussions as the best way forward. Regulation and intervention with platforms were seen as least useful.

FIGURE 12 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO PREVENT CYBERBULLYING

25
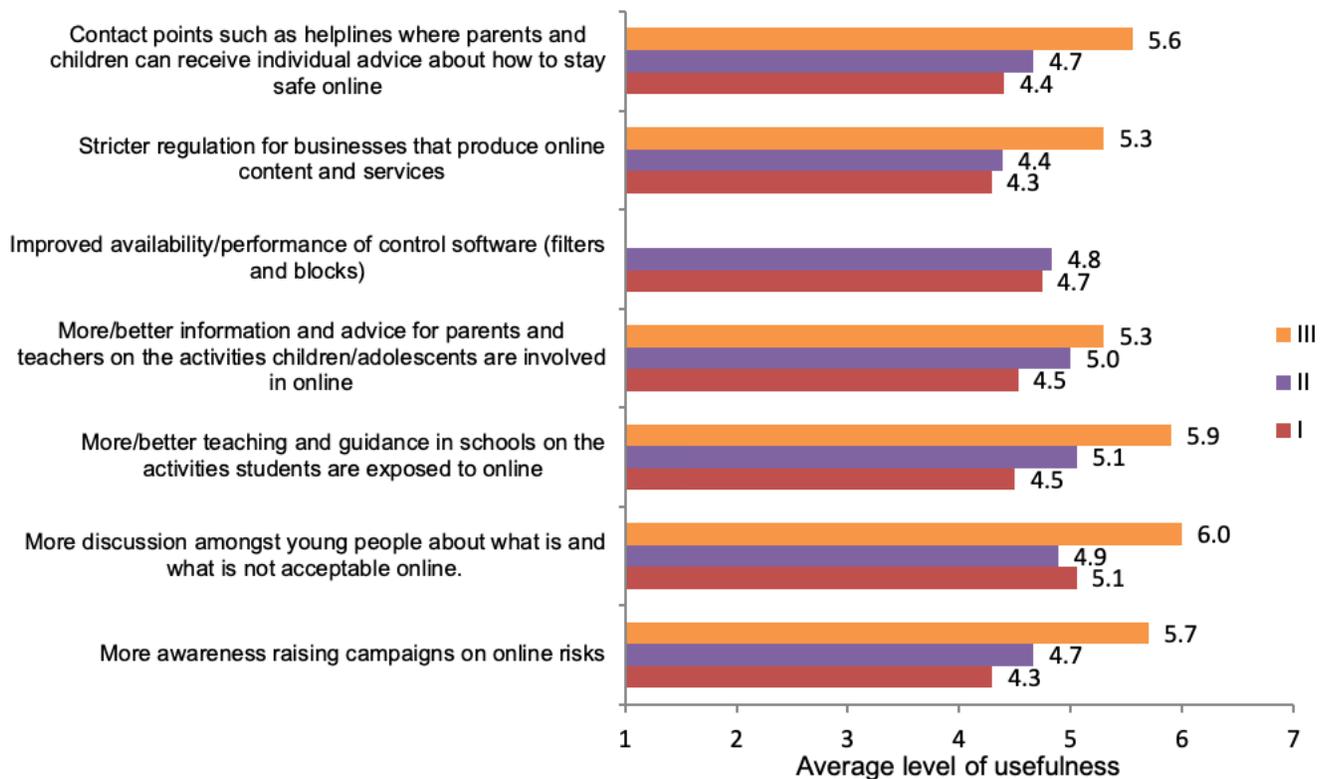
Thus, while practice focusses on passive strategies such as ignoring, or negative active strategies such as bullying back, the ideal world imagined by the young people who participated in the Cyberscene project looks different. A world in which cyberbullying might not happen is one in which adults and young people are engaged in conversations about what is acceptable and what is not and where there is a broader literacy training about the digital world and how to stay safe and behave there.

The challenge for educational programmes and storytelling is to give young people and adults the examples to illustrate and the tools to create this potential future word of dialogue and understanding.

SUMMARY

Our relationships are increasingly mediated through digital technologies. This brings with it opportunities of connecting to people that we could not have gotten to know before and to stay in touch with loved ones, solidify bonds even when we are not physically close to them. Unfortunately, not all human interactions are positive and the digital mediation of our relationships is no different. Many of us have experienced hurtful behaviour online either personally or by observing it being directed at someone else. What is less discussed is that many of us have are part of allowing a negative online climate to persist by not intervening in the negative actions of others or by (unwittingly) hurting others or excluding them from relationships. There is still a lot of misunderstanding about what cyberbullying is, who does it, what its impact is and what can be done to prevent it from escalating with terrible consequences in some cases. Therefore, this project and its evaluation focussed on five key questions and the improvements in the understanding of young people and the audience of the play in relation to these. Below there are a few recommendations based on the lessons learned in the project for all five, plus the more general question about the effectiveness of social theatre in this context.

Q0. What are the benefits of using social theatre with co-design?

First a general comment about the benefits of using social theatre with bottom up creation of story lines in relation to cyberbullying in particular. The most important benefit of this approach is that it attracts not only those interested in or with experience with cyberbullying but also those who are interested in theatre and production.

This means that it attracts young people with broad online experiences and not just those who were already convinced that cyberbullying was a real problem. However, the participants of later workshops and the ensemble cast members were more likely to have had experience with more severe forms of cyberbullying. This certainly makes for good theatre but might mean that the experience of the 'average' young person is not reflected amongst that group.

Recommendation

Hold onto and learn from those who participate in the first rounds of the workshops who are likely to have broader experiences and reflect an audience that is not convinced that cyberbullying is a problem (i.e. the people that really should be influenced through the play and educational materials)

Q1. What do we think about ICTs in general, what are the benefits, what are the risks, how does our social environment see ICTs or influences us in interaction on and with them in a certain way?

Many young people participating in the workshops and the play developed more sophisticated discourses on their complicated relationships with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). From repeating what they thought they should be saying in relation to cyberbullying they started seeing how ICTs have become indispensable to everyone's lives and that, because of this, it is not that easy to disconnect from the digital world if something on it was not of your liking.

Interacting online has positive and negative aspects, reflecting everyday lives. ICTs have become indispensable to participation in society. Neither is sufficiently recognised in (adult) public discourse around cyberbullying.

Workshops, educational material, media and storytelling (e.g. theatre) should give space to both the good and the bad of the digital world. The emphasis should not just be on cyberbullying but also on why (young) people are drawn to and can no longer live without the relationships that are mediated through.

Q2. What do we know about cyberbullying, where does it take place, what is its likelihood and what is the severity of its consequences, who is most likely to suffer from it, who is most likely to be the bully?

Cyberbullying is often talked about in relation to its most extreme form, the kinds of cases that lead to suicide or sexual exploitation of minors. In the workshops, one of the biggest gains in awareness was that cyberbullying consists not only of easily recognisable acts of violence or aggression. However, most cyberbullying consists of smaller acts that are perceived as 'just fun' as well as invisible acts of exclusion from shared activities (including gossip). These accumulate over time and undermine the self-confidence of the victim making them believe that it is partly their fault. While there was an increased understanding of this, the definitions of cyberbullying that young people gave continued to be disconnected from their everyday experiences. It was hard for them to make the link between the extreme cases they heard about in the media and what they saw happening around them. It was much easier to give isolated examples than it was to recognise how what they considered relatively innocent 'banter' and joking' might be received as small acts of aggression accumulating overtime and leading to severe consequences.

This led some to conclude that there was no real cyberbullying in their environment.

Another persistent problem in understanding cyberbullying is that it was seen as being perpetrated by a single evil cyberbully who attacks a single victim rather than that of a social process whereby a group of individuals forwards, likes and jokes about the hurtful messages and images related to an individual. The reality of cyberbullying is that there are almost always more people involved and not all with evil intentions. In the play, like in the news, the smaller acts of aggression took a back stage to the more dramatic ones (death threats, posting nudes, grooming for terrorism). This is understandable because micro-aggressions that accumulate over time are of lesser entertainment value and more difficult to stage but is problematic in terms of the educational value.

The definition of cyberbullying by young people is confused, focussing on extreme cases with evil perpetrators and passive victims. A clear message needs to be delivered to rectify this.

Everyday bullying, that is persistent micro-aggressions, should get the bulk of attention in workshops and educational material and media and other story tellers should include these messages alongside the more spectacular, news worthy, and extreme examples of cyberbullying.

Q3. What are the skills needed to be able to navigate the online world taking up opportunities and avoiding risks that lead to harm from cyberbullying?

People see interactions with others online as something that is not subject to training or skills, something that we all just naturally know how to do. In the workshops, participants suggested dealing with cyberbullying in a passive and

post-hoc way rather than actively and preventatively. In addition, many started with victim blaming justifying cyberbullying on the basis that victims ask for it due to their behaviour/style choices. They suggested solutions that relied on ostrich tactics (e.g. ignoring it, developing a thick skin since it is part of online life) and roadrunner tactics (e.g. disconnecting from the internet, blocking the person). Participants were more aware of the harder, technical skills based solutions on the part of the receiver of hurtful interactions (e.g. privacy settings, reporting abuse) than of those based on softer, social skills of the originators of these interactions (e.g. insight into: how messages are interpreted, the inescapability or 24/7 nature of cyberbullying, an inability to delete something once it is posted).

Encouraging is that while in the beginning, the advice to completely disconnect was often suggested, later on this was no longer seen by the majority as the best option because it ignores how important mediated relationships are for belonging and connectedness to the communities we are part of and thus our well-being (see Q1). There was evidence that, in the end, the participants steered away from victim blaming, though this might have been because those who stuck with the project had not taken this position in the first place. Even at the end there was more emphasis on helping the bullied to resist or prevent bullying rather than on teaching awareness and literacy to (potential) bullies.

The play managed to move away from victim blaming and technical solutions while still recognising that these are important in people's understanding of cyberbullying.

Q4. What is the role of parents, teachers, employers, media, society in preventing or helping people in relation to negative online interactions?

Many participants in the workshops felt that young people are on their own and have to rely on friends when it comes to dealing with cyberbullying. Parents and teachers were seen as not aware that this was happening, and, if they were aware, of taking sides or interfering clumsily in ways making things worse. There was very little discussion and understanding of the role of these different adult actors in recognising cyberbullying early on or in preventing things from escalating. Only in extreme cases, with legal implications, such as child pornography (grooming) or suicide attempts was adult intervention seen as inevitable and necessary. Then tough solutions such as cutting off all connectivity (mostly for the victim), grounding or bringing the police in to enforce the law were justified.

The play echoed these impressions by young people, with adults interfering only after things had really gotten out of hand but being invisible otherwise. In many ways, both the participants in the workshops and the play itself echoed sensationalist discourses in the media and moral panic ideas circulating in wider society about the detrimental impact of digitisation on human interaction, ignoring the more subtle ways in which

social reality in combination with technological design creates spaces in which toxic forms of interaction exist alongside constructive communication.

There is a severe lack of understanding and discussion around how adults and wider society can and should be involved in preventing cyberbullying amongst young people. The emphasis is on getting involved when things have passed a point of no return.

Public discourse (e.g. media, theatre etc) and educational materials (workshops, digital skills training) should incorporate discussions about how parents and teachers can be part of preventing and dealing with cyberbullying. This needs to be done in a collaborative way; listening to young people's opinions and experiences and involving adults in situations that range from smaller acts of bullying to more extreme cases.

Q5. What or who could/has made it possible to change a negative situation? When and how would intervening be most effective?

One of the goals of the Cyberscene project was to see if the workshops and play could create awareness of the importance of intervening early on to prevent cyberbullying from happening at all. This requires: an awareness and recognition of what cyberbullying looks like at these early stages (Q2); the digital and social skills to understand how to interact with others online and manage technological features in a way that makes cyberbullying less likely (Q3); understanding that the digital is embedded in the complexity of everyday life (Q1) and that, therefore, the existing relationships and structures need to be part of not only the intervention in but also the prevention of cyberbullying (Q4) .

Getting across the importance of intervening

early on is the hardest thing to do because cyberbullying is often recognised only when it is too late; early opportunities to acknowledge and stop our own or others' micro-aggressions from escalating go unrecognised. Taking responsibility for everyday condoning (i.e. lurking, not interfering) or contributing to bullying by others (i.e. forwarding liking messages) was also key but difficult. Recognising bystander effects was perhaps the most important lesson learned for the participants. Unfortunately, this aspect was not taken up as much in the play itself.

The play depicted extreme versions of the lives of certain young people. Many can probably relate to these but, in terms of cyberbullying, examples such as nudes ending up on porn sites, death threats and grooming for religious extremism are far removed from what many experience and are involved in in their everyday lives. These extreme cases make for great theatre but are less efficient in terms of the lessons that can be learned for most prevalent, everyday bullying. These ignore how complicated it is to recognise and stop cyberbullying when it is taking place amongst your friends, at your school or in any organisation that we are a part of and have a stake in.

There is not enough emphasis on prevention and early intervention in cyberbullying. This needs to be looked more to recognise the long trajectories that lead up to escalating cyberbullying so that people know that these things need to be recognised early on and discussed openly.

Workshops and educational material should focus on early intervention and smaller acts of cyberbullying and the complications of interfering in existing power relationships as individuals with a stake in these. Media and storytelling should include scenarios where the wider life world of young people figures more prominently, so that the contexts within which common forms of cyberbullying flourish become clear.

PROJECT
REFERENCE
MATERIAL

LSE SHORT FILMS

Helsper, E.J. & Rattee, J. in collaboration with Masterclass (2017) Film Shorts Cyberscene project.

Literacy and Resilience.
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MASTERCLASS AND
ROYAL HAYMARKET THEATRE MATERIAL

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CYBERSCENE

PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT