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Social Media: Impact on Adolescents

Mary Breen
California State University, Monterey Bay

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Increasing High School Students' Awareness of the Impact of Social Media

Mary Breen

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

Introduction

Many adolescents are unaware of the impact social media can have on both themselves and their acquaintances. Social media can impact adolescents such as lowering self-esteem and reducing overall well-being. To bring awareness to the impact social media has on adolescents, I created a two-session curriculum for AVID junior students at San Benito High School in Hollister, CA.

Needs Statement

It is likely that adolescents are not aware of the impact of social media on their self-esteem and overall well-being. Adolescents, between the ages of 12 and 17, increase their usage of social media (Cookingham & Ryan, 2015). Adolescents indicate that social media is important to maintain constant contact with their friends and peers. However, social media can have both positive and negative impacts on adolescents' mood and other mental health outcomes (Wood, Bukowski & Lis, 2016).

Positive impacts of social media for adolescents include increased social and emotional contact, communication, and independence. Social media profiles are reflections of whom adolescents believe they are and who they want to be, and using social media can help them with their sense of individualism, an important task of adolescence (Cookingham & Ryan, 2015). Social media allows adolescents to meet new people, this form of socializing is important for an adolescents need to socialize and be entertained (Lopez, Hartmann & Apaolaza, 2017). Adolescents go through different emotions, like loneliness, and social media can help them connect with others providing them with a support system that may help reduce loneliness

(Lopez et al. 2017). Positive peer relationships can help an adolescent with emotional support and help with other stressors in life (Kenny, Sullivan, Callaghan, Molcho & Kelly, 2018).

In contrast, there are also some negative outcomes to social media use on adolescents. Adolescents may engage in risky behaviors such as sexting and cyberbullying, which may have detrimental effects for adolescents. A study has shown that cyberbullying can lead to poor self-esteem for the individual being victimized, as well as increased anxiety, depression and severe isolation (Cookingham & Ryan, 2015). Among adolescents studies have shown that appearance related cyberbullying is associated with depression and lower body self esteem which may lead to suicide (Kenny et al., 2018).

Adolescents may have a negative view of their bodies because of the images they see on social media, affecting how they feel about themselves. Negative body image is prevalent among adolescents because social media posts often show unrealistic body images adding additional risk (Salomon & Spears Brown, 2018). Studies have shown that there is a prevalence toward negative body image among adolescents which may increase their negative body image into adulthood (Kenny et al., 2018). Since adolescents are vulnerable to doctored social media posts putting pressure on them to look a certain way, it may be useful to raise their awareness of the issue and instill techniques to combat this pressure.

It is likely that adolescents are not aware of the positive and negative impacts of social media. In order to increase awareness and identify prosocial ways to use social media, I intend to provide a two-session curriculum on social media impacts for AVID students at San Benito High School.

Theory and Consideration of Diversity

Erikson, in his theory of Psychosocial Development, believed that adolescents go through different stages of life and those experiences through social interactions and relationships play a role in their development of growth (Cherry, 2019). During adolescence, Erikson believed that individuals undergo the Identity versus Role Confusion stage. In this stage, adolescents develop a sense of self through exploration of their independence (Cherry, 2019). Adolescents compare themselves to their peers as they try to equate their identities with what they see from their peers. Rageline (2016, p.98) noted that “identity provides a sense of continuity within the self,” and, when interacting with others, identity can also provide a frame through which individuals can differentiate between ourselves and others, allowing us to function separately from others (Rageline, 2016). Adolescents learn from others what are acceptable behaviors, and their interactions are reflections of this action (Steinberg, 2018).

The focus of my project is on responsible social media use among adolescents. Social media is highly used by adolescents and is particularly attractive to them because according to Erickson's theory, adolescents' most important developmental task is to solve identity versus role confusion and while navigating this stage, be able to find their own identity while creating relationships with others (Rageline, 2016). The content that I created fits Erickson's theory because the student's are in the stage of identity versus role confusion and they are influenced by peers. Social communication and relationship building is important in trying to figure out who they are.

Adolescents value harmonious relationships with peers because they are directly and positively related to identity development, according to Erikson. Adolescents have not fully committed to their identity and are searching for where they feel they will fit in. They may experience confusion about who they are and who they want to be. Friends, social interactions, and popular culture become important because they play a role in shaping and forming their identity (Cherry, 2019). Adolescents are still forming their identity and may be highly influenced by social media. The desire to belong, be involved, and participate is important for adolescents in helping them reach their goal of finding their identity. That is why social media is a way that allows adolescents a way they can freely communicate with peers and discuss what and who they would like to be (Rageline, 2016). Adolescents start to form their identity based on social interactions with their peers. Also, within the group of peers that have been formed, because of social media, adolescents are provided with values and norms that they can identify with and in turn helps them to achieve identity more easily (Rageline, 2016). In addition, because they lack life experience, they may not have a full understanding of how social media affects them personally and socially. Therefore, I created a lesson with life experience examples that will help adolescents understand the impact of social media on their identity.

Consideration of Diversity

I will be conducting my project in junior-level AVID classes at San Benito High School in Hollister, California. AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination and is targeted towards students who demonstrate college-attending potential. As of 2018, San Benito High School had an enrollment of 2915 students; 70% Hispanic, 27% White, and 3% percent

Asian (EdData, 2018). There is also a population of more than 300 students in special education, and the gender distribution in the school is 51% percent male and 49% female (EdData, 2018). I would expect my participants to be reflective of the larger population in terms of race/ethnicity, special education services, and gender since I am conducting my lesson at San Benito High School.

In order to participate in my presentation, the participants will need to be English proficient and have access to social media. Participants who are not English proficient, may inadvertently be excluded from participation; however, because the participants are drawn from AVID classes, it is unlikely that non-English proficient students would be in those classes. My content is limited in that participants with limited access or exposure to social media may be excluded from learning as much as others. I could broaden the scope of my program to include students who do not have a current social media account because it is still important for them to know the impact of social media. This modification would make my program more inclusive.

Learning Outcomes

I intend to provide two, 50-minute lessons to students enrolled in AVID classes at San Benito High School.

By the end of the lessons, participants will:

1. Indicate two positive and two negative ways in which social media can affect them.
2. Identify two examples of cyberbullying.
3. Indicate one prosocial way to use social media.

Method

Prior to my presentation, I asked the teacher to have the students activate their weekly screen tracker, which shows how much time they spent on social media and what sites on their phones and to be prepared to discuss when they got back from their winter break.

Day 1

First, I introduced myself and explained to the class why I was there and then I reminded them about the task they were given two weeks ago and asked them to pull up their weekly cell phone usage report. We reviewed the results of the screen challenge by creating a poll in which I tracked hours and most visited sites. I had the students get up and move to the area that represented their weekly time. Once we had the average screen times and what sites were frequently visited, they discussed if they were surprised by the amount of time they spent on social media. After about 10 minutes, I started with my presentation. See Appendix A. Then, I asked them to think about what impact social media may be having on their brain then I showed the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HffWFd_6bJ0. After, I had them take a four-question Kahoot quiz about the video they just watched. See Table 1 for the questions. This led to a 15-minute discussion about the five ways social media changes their brain. Then, I showed the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGGDfciqyvw>. Then, I had them break into groups to discuss how social media impacts them positively and negatively. After 15 minutes, I had each group go up to the whiteboard and add to the list. I directed them to put a star

or a check mark if it was already listed. Finally, they discussed what they had written and why. The day was concluded with quick mention that they would be discussing cyberbullying, since it was listed on the board as a negative impact. See Table 3.

Day 2

For the first five minutes, I held a refresher on the positive and negative impacts of social media. I also presented the winner of the previous day's Kahoot quiz with a Starbucks gift card. I started the lesson by going over cyberbullying scenarios. I had each student rank the scenario from one to five. One representing no bullying and five representing extreme bullying. We discussed their answers and I offered additional explanations as needed, about 15 minutes. Then, I showed the following video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ctd75a7_Yw. After the video, they discussed the differences between bullying and cyberbullying. They also discussed the negative effects of cyberbullying. I had the students come up and write on the whiteboard what they had discussed in their groups. Next, I compared the negative effects I had written on my presentation to what they had come up with and discussed any differences. See Appendix A. Afterwards, I divided the class into six groups and gave them 20 minutes to create a prosocial anti-cyberbullying campaign or meme. See Figure 1. In conclusion, I gave each student chocolate chip cookies as a thank you for participating in my project. I also gave the teacher a thank-you card and a Starbucks gift certificate. At the very end we took a group picture. See Figure 3.

Results

Learning outcome one was that participants would indicate two positive and two negative ways in which social media can affect them. I believe this learning outcome was met. From the discussion about the impacts of social media, the participants were able to identify both negative and positive examples of social media impact on them. The participants were able to identify 14 different positive impacts and 20 negative impacts of social media. The participants put a star or a checkmark next to the answers that were already on the board. See Table 1. The participants were surprised by the screen poll that was taken before the lesson began. They were surprised at the time spent on social media because they were on Winter break and kept busy with work, sports, and family vacations. They felt they actually spent more time than was reflected on the poll. After the participants watched a video on how the brain changes with social media and the participants took a Kahoot quiz to check their understanding. The participants had to answer four questions: 1. Social media sites are used by $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population of the entire world; 2. Of the people who spend time on social media sites, what percentage are unable to control the amount of time online?; 3. Individuals who show a psychological addiction to online behaviors show a decrease in white brain matter that controls?; 4. One advantage of achieving proficiency in heavy media use is the ability to multitask effectively. Questions 3 and 4 had the highest percentage of understanding, because the participants partially understood the questions.

Learning outcome two was that the participants would identify two examples of cyberbullying. I felt this outcome was not fully met. The participants had a hard time thinking about the scenarios that were not obvious cyberbullying to them. They wanted more information

on the scenarios. Majority of the class rated the non-obvious cyberbullying scenarios a one or two which means that they felt it was cyberbullying. See Table 4. After my discussion with them about the scenarios and how they are all examples of cyberbullying, I feel that this learning outcome was partially met. They could not effectively identify the non-obvious scenarios as being cyberbullying.

Learning outcome three was that participants would indicate one prosocial way to use social media. After the presentation, we went over the difference between cyberbullying and bullying. The participants had a good understanding, and they listed the differences on the whiteboard. The participants effectively were able to also create a list of how cyberbullying negatively impacts other adolescents after the presentation. I feel this outcome was met. Of the 30 participants 25 were able to effectively create a meme or an anti-cyberbullying campaign. A few of the participants did not create a meme or anti-cyberbullying campaign that was not on target for the message that was given. Figure 1 includes examples of some anti-bullying messages that were appropriate to the content and provide evidence of meeting the learning outcome. Figure 2 depicts an example of a message that was not appropriate to the content and demonstrated the outcome not being met.

Discussion

I believe this project was successful. The participants were engaged, interacted well, and learned from the topic. The participants are in Erikson's stage of identity versus role confusion, and because of this I think the lessons helped the participants clarify any questions they had about who they are and what they want to believe in. I think the discussion on identifying two

positive and two negative ways social media can impact adolescents made the largest impact because, as adolescents, they are still trying to figure out who and what they want to be. When we discussed cyberbullying, even though the participants understood that cyberbullying was bad, many of them had a hard time identifying scenarios that were not obvious examples of cyberbullying. Because of this, I noticed that not all of the participants realized how different ways an individual can be cyberbullied and they wanted more information. When I had the participants create a prosocial way to use social media, I could see that they understood because they were able to create anti-bullying campaigns and anti-bullying memes.

In terms of diversity, I think that my project included everyone. I did assume that everyone had a smartphone with unlimited data and were on it all the time. It is possible that some of the participants did not have smartphones or phones at all and potentially had time restrictions or pay as you go options. It is possible that some of the participants felt that what we discussed did not apply to them because they felt secure in their identity or felt they were too cool to participate in the project.

If I had to do this over again, I would have created a questionnaire to provide at the beginning and at the end of the session so that I could compare what they knew about the topics prior and how much more they learned after the presentation. I think that in the discussion on cyberbullying, the non-obvious scenarios, the participants could not think beyond what they were reading. The participants wanted more information than what was given, and they felt that could not adequately quantify the scenario as cyberbullying. Besides that, I feel like the participants

learned about the topic and are much more aware of how social media can impact them, both positively and negatively.

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Table 1

List of responses from participants in identifying positive and negative impacts of social media.

Positives:





Find new interests- 3 responses
Connect with others/make friends - 7 responses
Helps with homework/Memo- 2 responses
Motivational Videos/ Quotes- 4 responses
Appealing Images - 2 responses
Information/Quick- 5 responses
Memes
Distract from “bad” times- 2 responses
Platform for art
Job Opportunities
Facilitates life
Passing time
Sharing
Playing games
Always someone to talk to

Negatives:

Sleeping is affected - 2 responses
Cyberbullying/Bullying- 6 responses
Addiction to social media- 2 responses
Catfishing/ Ghosting - 5 responses
Blue light damage
Brain damage
Unrealistic body images- 3 responses
Predators/Stalkers - 4 responses
Hacking- 2 responses
Invasion of Privacy
Not Interactive/non face to face
Distraction/Wasting Time- 4 responses
Creates Insecurities- 2 responses
Depression - 2 responses

Hate speech

Table 2

Questions (4)		Show answers
1 - Quiz Social media sites are used by 3/4 of the population of the entire world		
2 - Quiz Of the people who spend time on social media sites, what percentage are unable to control the amount of time online?		
3 - Quiz Individuals who show a psychological addiction to online behaviors show a decrease in white brain matter that controls:		
4 - Quiz One advantage of achieving proficiency in heavy media use is the ability to multi-task effectively.		

*Table 3**Percentage correct for each Kahoot question*

	<i>Percent correct</i>
<i>Question 1</i>	<i>30.77%</i>
<i>Question 2</i>	<i>53.85%</i>
<i>Question 3</i>	<i>88.46%</i>
<i>Question 4</i>	<i>76.92%</i>

Table 4

	# of responses not at all	# of responses sort of	# of responses probably	# of responses definitely	# of responses extreme cyberbullying
Scenario 1: After Sarah broke up with Dave, he started texting her constantly at all times of the day and night.	10	6	7		
Scenario 2: Marisol and Isabel have been friends for a long time and have followed each other's social media accounts. One day, Marisol unfollowed Isabel	10	14	2		
Scenario 3: Myra sends Karina a friend request. Myra then sends Karina messages asking lots of personal questions which she later shares on social media			2	15	2
Scenario 4: Someone you know in class sends you a message asking you to send a picture of your answers to the test because they have the same class for 6th block.	15	5	1		
Scenario 5: Pictures of Damian, a tall, skinny teenager, were taken while changing for P.E. The unflattering photos were shared on social media with prompts to rate him on his "hotness"				9	15

not all the students voted when asked to rank. They had to hold up their hands in order to vote**

Figure 1

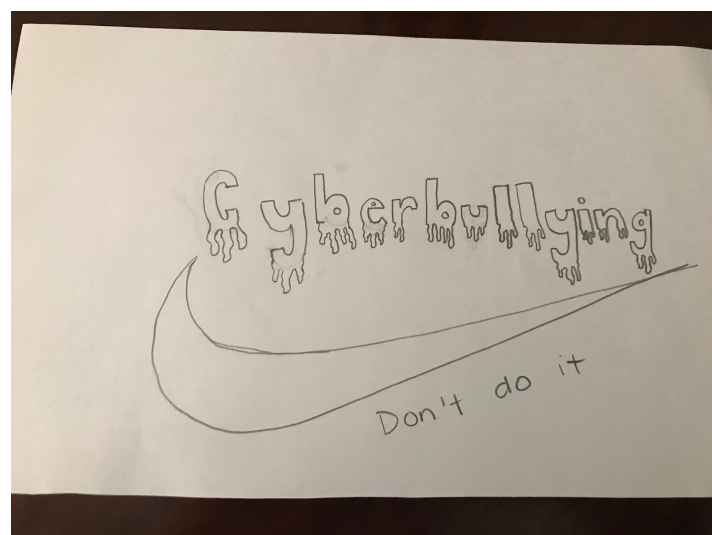
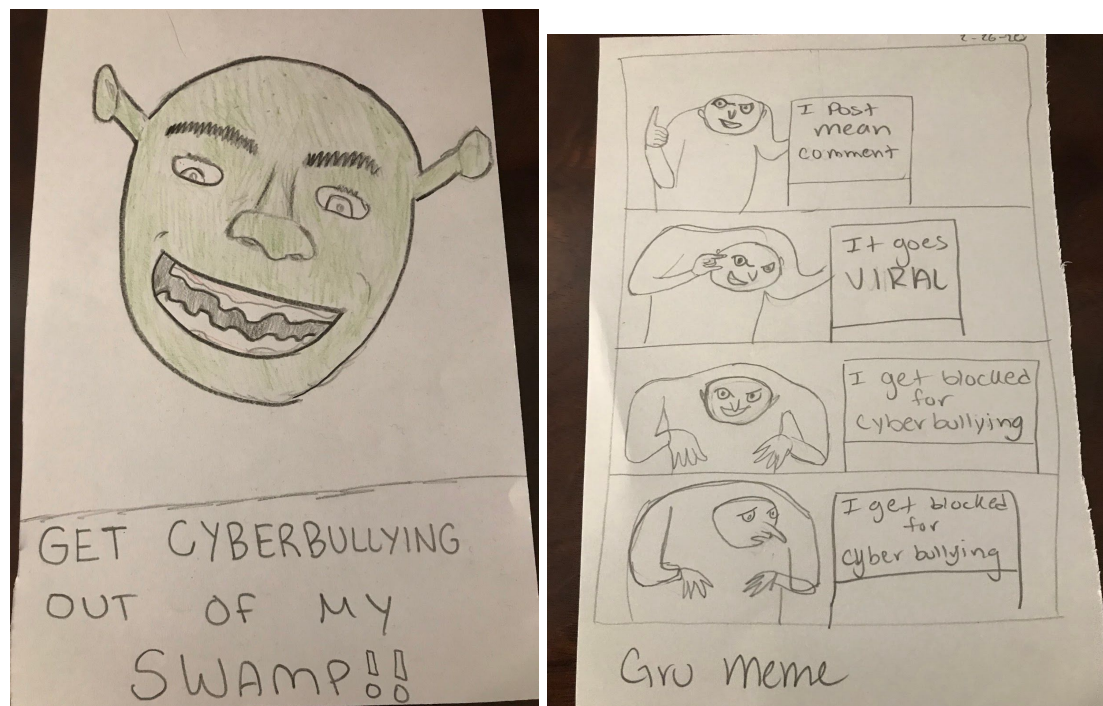


Figure 2

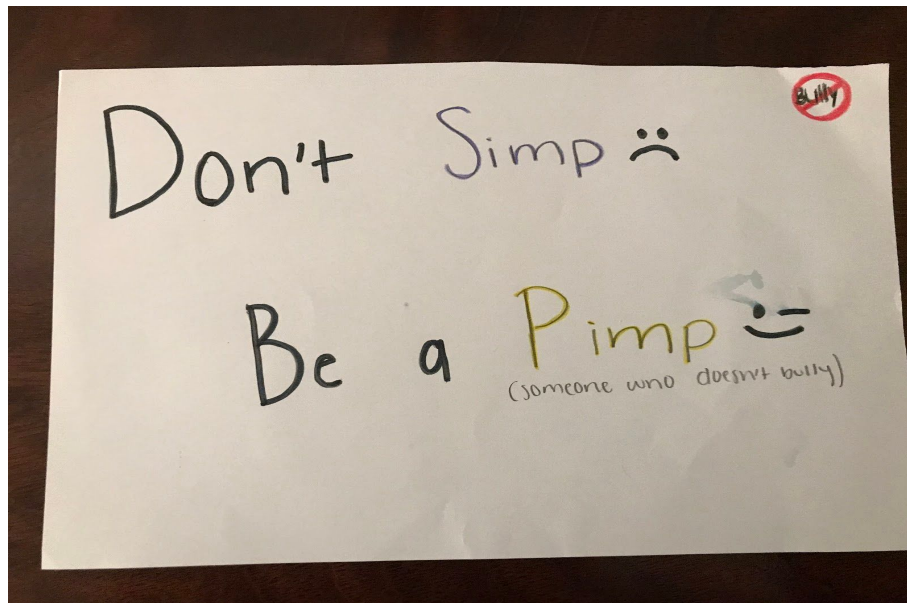
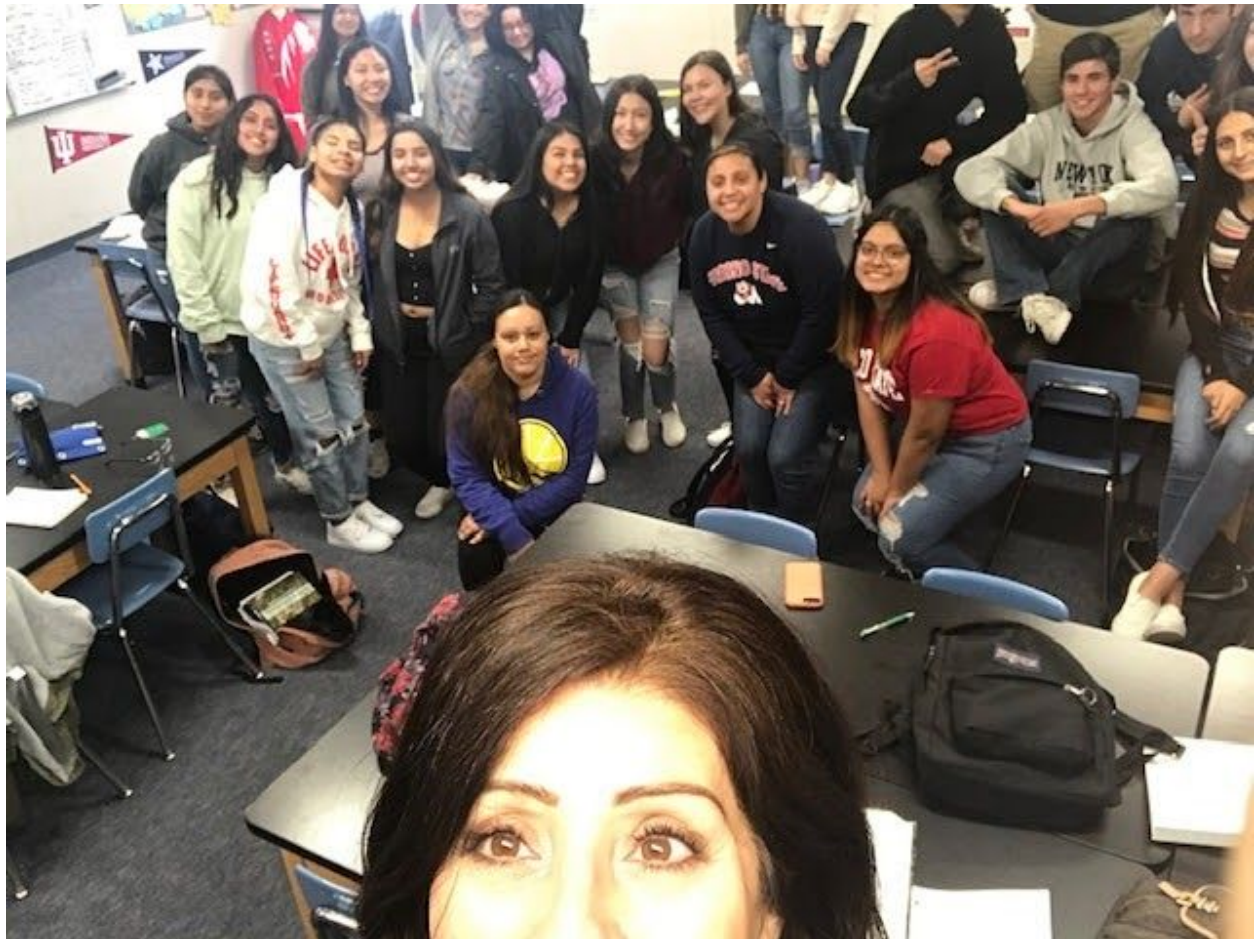
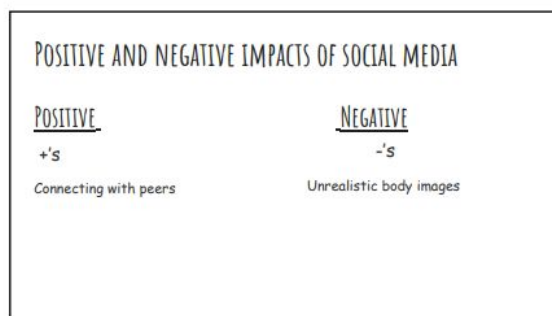
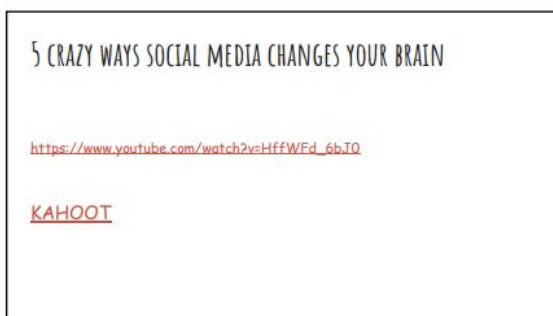
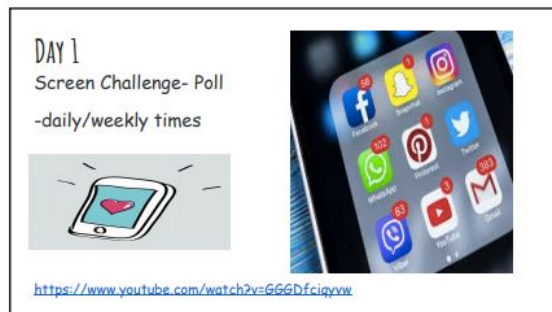
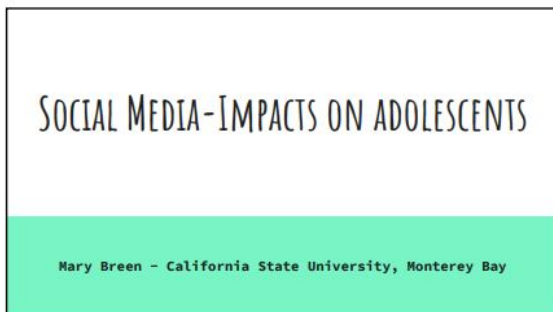


Figure 3



Appendices A

WELCOME TO DAY 2!

After Sarah broke up with Dave, he started texting her constantly at all times of the day and night.

Marisol and Isabel have been friends for a long time and have followed each other's social media accounts. One day, Marisol unfollowed Isabel.

Myra sends Karina a friend request. Myra then sends Karina messages asking lots of personal questions which she later shares on social media.

Juan Carlos was tagged on a picture that has the following post "Hey check out Danny; he can't hold his beer. Wtf?" Juan Carlos is expected to respond.

Josie watched as Emilia logged on to her account so that she could get Emilia's password. Later, Josie logged on as Emilia and sent a mean message to Emilia's best friend.

Someone you know in class sends you a message asking you to send a picture of your answers to the test because they have the same class for 6th block.

Pictures of Damian, a tall, skinny teenager, were taken of him while changing for P.E. The unflattering photos are shared on social media with prompts to rate him on his "hotness."

CYBERBULLYING

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ctd75a7_Yw



How is cyberbullying different from traditional bullying?

- Cyberbullying can be more dangerous.
- The bully can hide behind a disguise.
- The victim does not always know why he or she is being targeted.
- Cyberbullying can go viral.

Cyberbullying has negative effects:

- Sadness and depression
- Suicidal thoughts and suicide
- Low self-esteem
- Violence
- Problems in school

Can you take a second to think and be kind before you post?

Create an anti-cyberbullying meme:**Create an anti-cyberbullying campaign:****REFERENCES**

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/09/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>

<https://safeteens.org/relationships/cyberbullying/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GGDfcigvww>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Gchd7Re7_Yg

*Appendices B***Social Media: Impact on Adolescents****Mary Breen**

California State University, Monterey Bay

**Need Statement:**

It is likely that adolescents are not aware of the impact of social media on their self-esteem and overall well-being.

Social media has both positive and negative impacts on adolescents.

Constant contact with peers is important.

**Erik Erikson: Psychosocial Development**
Identity Vs. Role Confusion

Important developmental tasks
 Self-identity through independence
 Value harmonious relationships
 Ultimate Goal: Identity



Where: San Benito High School

Who: AVID, Junior students

What: Two day lesson plan



By the end of the presentation adolescents will be able to:

Indicate two positive and two negative ways in which social media can affect them.

Identify two examples of cyberbullying.

Indicate one prosocial way to use social media.

Results

Indicate two positive and two negative ways in which social media can affect them:

Two positive ways-

Connect with family and friends: 7 out of 7 groups agreed

Ability to gather quick information: 5 out of 7 groups agreed

Indicate two positive and two negative ways in which social media can affect them:

Two negative ways-

Cyberbullying : 6 out of 7 groups agreed

Catfishing/Ghosting: 5 out of 7 groups agreed

Learning outcome 1 was met.



Outcome 2: Identify two examples of Cyberbullying:

Four scenarios were given and the participants were asked to rank them on a scale from 1 to 5.

Example of scenario 1: Sara broke up with Dave, he started texting her constantly at all times of the day and night.

Example of scenario 2: Pictures of Damian, a tall skinny teenager, were taken while changing for P.E. The unflattering pictures were shared on social media with the prompt to rate him on his "hotness".

Outcome 2: Identify two examples of Cyberbullying:**Scenario 1:**

16 of 23 students ranked it a level 1 or 2 and did not believe this was cyberbullying (70%).

Scenario 2:

17 of 19 students ranked it a level 4 or 5 for cyberbullying (89%)

LO 2 was partially met.

Outcome 3: Indicate one prosocial way to use social media:

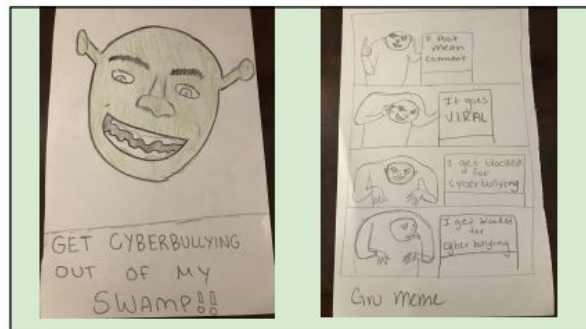
Create a meme

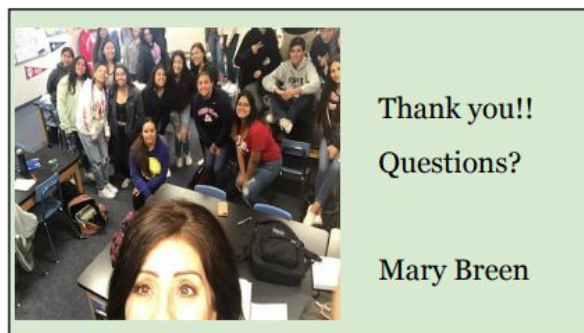
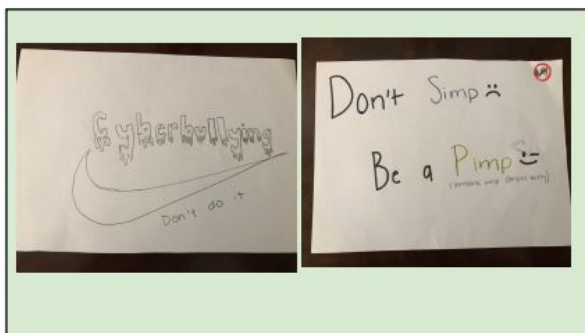
Create an anti-bullying campaign



Out of 30 participants 25 were able to successfully indicate a prosocial way to use social media.

LO 3 was met.





Thank you!!

Questions?

Mary Breen