Episode 116 - Dr. Janet Joiner: Cyberbullying and Cyber Social Work

[00:00:08] Welcome to in social work. The podcast series of the University of Buffalo School of Social Work at www.insocialwork.org. We're glad you could join us today. The purpose of in social work is to engage practitioners and researchers and lifelong learning and to promote research to practice and practice to research. We're so sure. Hello I'm Charles Syms. One of the host of in social work. I'd like to take a moment to address you our listeners thanks for downloading. More than 400000 of our podcast. We'd like to know what you think of them. Please take a couple of minutes to tell us what you like or don't like about the podcast. If you're an educator and you're using our podcast and your courses how are you using them in your teaching. If you're a professional practitioner how have the podcasts influenced your work. We would also like to know what you'd like to see us do next go to our Web site at www.insocialwork.org and click on the contact us tab. We look forward to hearing from you again. Thanks for listening. Hi everyone. I'd like to be the first to announce that the University at Buffalo is podcast series in social work has been awarded a Peabody Award for outstanding achievement for material distributed via the worldwide web. I'd also like to wish all of our listeners a Happy April Fools Day. I am Peter Sobota the Internet and social media have created all kinds of new opportunities for communication relationships learning to name but a few.

[00:01:57] The technology has also created opportunities for the misuse of these media across generations of students both adults and children. In this episode our guest Dr. Janet Joiner begins her conversation by discussing the phenomenon of cyber bullying behavior and later addresses the question of how modern technology can be integrated into social work practice and education. Dr. Joiner begins by defining cyberbullying the role of humiliation in this activity and why social work education and educators should see this as an important concern for our practice. She makes practical suggestions on how institutions of higher learning as well as K through 12 can educate students about cyber bullying and specifically how schools of social work can play a role in educational opportunities and intervention with this problem. Dr. Joiner concludes by discussing some of the current research into the use of social media technology in social work education practice and offers practical advice for students regarding their digital footprint and the implications for their professional practice. And as a way to prevent being exploited by social media tools. Janet Joiner Ph.D. is assistant dean for student affairs at the Wayne State University School of Social Work. She is interested in the areas of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise and the infusion of contemporary technology direct social work practice and higher education. Dr. Joiner was interviewed by her own Tony Guzman the director of online programs here at the School of Social Hello my name is Tony Guzman and I'm the director of online programs at the University of Buffalo School Social Work here today to talk with me is Dr. Janet Joiner. She recently presented at the CSWE APM 2012 conference on the topic of cyber bullying.

[00:03:58] Dr. Joiner thanks for joining us today to discuss these topics. Thank you so much Tony I appreciate the invitation. Let's go ahead and start first with a if you would a definition of what is cyber bullying. There is no standard definition for cyber bullying but I like to use or actually paste together a definition that was developed many many years ago by the person that we consider the father of the cyber bullying prevention movement which is Bill Belsey, Mr. Belsey provided a definition that really focuses on the use of communication technologies such as cell phones texting pictures messaging tablets ipads laptops desktops and even social media using those tools specifically for the purpose of targeting someone else for the purpose of humiliation. Why is it important that higher education institutions recognize cyber bullying and in particular for schools of social work to learn more about it. This is an area that is virtually new it's only been in place for maybe 10 years or less and the use of social media is now fully embedded within our society as well

as others across the world. So it's really important that as educators we begin teaching our students responsible use of these tools and really viewing cyber bullying as a teachable moment as we know there is no shortage of examples involving cyber bullying on college campuses as well as K through 12 and really in my experience as I've even found students and others are oftentimes not even aware that their online behavior constitutes cyber bullying.

[00:05:37] Given the prevalence of online rating systems and opportunities to share opinions and open online forums so really as a result of that I think it's important that we begin encouraging discussions within the college classroom as well as external about the use of technology as well as cyber bullying prevention. I think it presents a wonderful opportunity for schools of social work as we continue to train students on issues impacting really diverse populations. Cyber bullying is something that only occurs within an online classroom environment. No not at all in fact cyber bullying is much more broader. Cyber Bullying of course can occur in online courses through blogging experiences. Discussion boards what I did also most likely to occur and Facebook Twitter and even with the e-mails that are shared. Well no not just within online for clues that much broader you may have mentioned this referred to slightly. Are there are two web sites where cyberbullying is if you will propagated. Unfortunately yes. And I say that with a heavy heart because they are growing every day. There are sites like rate my professor dot com rate my caseworker dot com their student dude there is believe it or not even a company called Masters of revanche that allows people to pay a fee and once they pay that fee they can specifically decide if they want to harass them one by text or FMF by email. Greeting cards or even nuisance calls. So there are many sites out there that support this kind of behavior. So sad to hear. So then the question is Should faculty avoid social media tools. Former technology because of the potential of cyber bullying. No I would not. I would say the opposite.

[00:07:35] But faculty members should be encouraged to use social media because I think as faculty members as well as staffers not just faculty and staff members also use it. We're much better able to communicate with students and also to direct their behavior. I really believe social media offers a multitude of benefits and opportunities that will allow us to better engage our students as well as our colleagues. And believe it or not I even use that as a tool to inform students with all key academic and social support services within our school of social work. I share financial aid opportunities professional networking opportunities and personally I use that to learn about the world around me. So how and when should we take the opportunity to educate students on cyber bullying by the way. I mean is it something that only a college student in undergrad or graduate level should be aware of. Or are there venues and or time frames that we should be focusing on educating our students. I would have to say the moment a student steps on campus we should begin our cyberbully prevention and responsible use of social media campaign. That information should be readily available when I say that information I'm talking about social media policies that guide students as well as faculty and staff using social media. But I think in terms of when it should occur I believe really when it should occur is through orientation when students are first invited to come on campus as part of orientation. There should be discussions at all responsible use of social media and technology. I'd also say while it may not be possible because I know that classroom content is very key and there's not a lot of time in which to discuss issues that are not textbook driven.

[00:09:20] But if at all possible I would also encourage faculty and integrate discussions about cyber bullying prevention and responsible use of social media directly within classroom lectures especially as we talk about content involving mental health. Would there be opportunities for either social workers or social work students to create this education before the college level let's say at a K through 12 type scenario in terms of cyber bullying prevention. Oh Tony that's a great question and absolutely yes. In fact last year September of 2011 we developed a relationship with the charter school which is just blocks from our campus and what we did was match several of our BSthe W and MSW students on a one to one basis with a high schooler who was also interested in engaging

in cyber bullying prevention and we developed a project called the Cyber Mentor project. So each week every Thursday our cyber mentors go into that charter school and they work one on one with a student around cyber bullying prevention student at the high school develops a community service project as part of their educational requirements and our social work students don't do the project for the students they simply help guide their work so that they understand and fully appreciate what flavor bullying is. So that's one of the things I would say that schools of social work absolutely can do because we have students that are interested in getting involved in the community. And this is one of the ways that we can actually do that effectively. Since I sat through your presentation at CSWE this past month we talked about.

[00:11:01] We've got protocols in place that if there is a fire in the house we've got a plan in place or we're going to meet outside. We know what number to call. Same thing if it were a witness to a crime or to a car accident or vehicle accident we know what to do if you will. What ideas or protocols could be taught to faculty staff and students to help them deal in the event of cyber bullying. You know I'd go right back to the cyber Mentor project that we developed. We actually created a new student organization. We have multiple student org's within our school of social work. But we saw that in terms of society's youth that cyber bullying for engaging in cyber bullying and misusing cyber services that this was a great opportunity to engage students in youth that have again a teachable moment. So one of the ideas that I would encourage any school to develop is to develop a cyber Mentor project where it doesn't have to necessarily focus on cyber bullying prevention but it can focus on responsible use of technology. So we created that project but we also followed up by writing a small grant to the university to purchase tee shirts for the students that participated in the group. And we also have the students develop a Web site in which they could share information on responsible use of technology and cyber bullying prevention. And finally I would say in addition to the cyber Mentor project developing Web site is to develop a policy again that's going to be so critical as we talk about guiding people and their use of technology and social media to give guidelines to give expectations and provide that insight in a place where people can easily access it such as on a Web site.

[00:12:46] Social media is you and I this ghost is a relatively young medium still in some ways they're more social media sites. If at all are just getting into the double digits in years of being available some of them are teenagers in terms of age. So how have you seen and how do you see in the future being the social work profession. Well had affecting the social work profession and get into the culture work we're not able to train students on the new medium because again it is so new. And the research is only beginning to trickle out but we don't really understand the impact of the Internet for example on mental health and Musolino with creating or exacerbating mental ill. So I think with it being relatively new it affects the profession and that we can try to stay ahead of the curve which means I wish for social work we take this on and actually integrated into the bricks. And on the possible use of technology and again the impact on our mental health specifically. And Tony if I can say that I've been hearing through the grapevine that the next edition of the DSM the DSM 5 that is I believe scheduled to be available in May of 2013 is going to be carrying a new designation with internet use disorder which is going to capture individuals that are suffering are being challenged by addictions addicted to Facebook or addiction to cell phone use for technology use. It's going to be acknowledged and seen as a viable challenge to people of viable mental illness. And so that begs the question Are there guidelines for social work professionals exist today.

[00:14:31] And if so are they actually still current. Yes there are guidelines. In fact in 2005 the National Association of Social Work and the Association of Social Work boards actually develop a set of standards to help guide our practice of social workers in cyberspace. But with technology being such a quickly evolving phenomenon as you might imagine policies are quickly not in step. For example when our NASW developed their set of standards Twitter and Facebook hadn't even been created yet. They hadn't been developed yet. Twitter and Facebook have only been around

since 2006 2007 and again our policy was developed in 2005 two years before the onset of social media. Answer your question if we're still current it's not current because it happened before the institution of those forms of social media is there research being conducted within the software arena that looks at the use of technology in the field as well as for that matter the effect of technology on society in general. And if there is might that help bold revisions to those policies. Well I'll take your first question. The first part of the question first whether or not there are social workers involved in this field and the answer I'm very pleased to say is yes and in fact Dr. Fay Mishna Dean over at the University of Toronto I believe is actually one of the trailblazers in the area of cyberbully research. And Dr. Frederick Reamer I believe he's at Rhode Island College talks about the ethics of online practice regularly in fact he conducted a workshop that I attended on mine a few months ago that specifically talked about the ethics of online practice.

[00:16:23] And there is a third interview as well that I've been seeing quite a bit in the literature. Christina Reardon she's a clinical social worker freelance writer and she's written quite a bit on this topic of social work in technology. How might that mold future revisions of because guidelines. I am very hopeful. Yes I do believe that will happen. In your presentation you also discussed the different generations and labels for these generations. And so you know for the last couple of decades we are now seeing what are dubbed Generation by generation why would be to describe what those generations stand for who they stand for. Yes. And I'm smiling you can't be this but I'm smiling as he raised the question of Generation Y Generation IY Generation IY is marked by that period of time 1981 to 1995 and Generation IY which is the highest the Internet generation are those born after 1995. And those two generations Generation Y and IY only know life as it exists through technology because they were born into the technology generation for this particular population. Oftentimes they feel very comfortable using technology. They see it as oftentimes an extension of themselves. It's a part of their fabric. It's how they communicate when you put those data into perspective. You're talking to many of the generation Y and IY's will be in future. BSW and MSW programs either starting this company for some of them already today in the classroom which just begs back to the curriculum being updated to include proper use of technology within the field. What other challenges exist with increasing the use of technology in the social work profession.

[00:18:24] Well big challenges exist as I mentioned in schools of social work. We don't have content yet that focuses on the influence of technology and social media and our lives. But we know that society is grappling with many of these challenges. Let me give you an example. Just last year I was watching a local television news show and there was an interview with a local doctor Dr. Howard Belkin who's written extensively and conducted research in the area of technology and the influence on our lives today. And Dr. Belkin mentioned that 20 30 percent of marital infidelity today is instigated by Facebook that the tremendous social workers that were working in marriage and family therapy flatting we need to know that and we need to know how to best approach those kinds of issues and those kinds of challenges. But again we're not talking about those in schools of social work. I wonder if we're going to be properly prepared to deal with those issues like support exo. Well also during your presentation you gave us various examples of cyberbully. But one comment that I saw throughout those examples was the term digital footprint. So could you help define us or give us an idea of what digital footprint is as well as gives advice to social workers and how to best protect that footprint. When I talk to my students I teach in intro course here at the university for non majors and when I talk to students I'm really careful to make sure up very early on that I infuse content related to this specific area with technology being so readily acceptable our cell phones or tablet devices our ipad devices and others.

[00:20:08] And with that influencing the way that we communicate it's important that we are aware that whatever we communicate is no longer anonymous. Oftentimes people believe that they don't include their email address or their name on an email or communication post that somehow it's

anonymous and that's no longer the case. The example I gave when we conducted the workshop at CSWE is when we walk into a room we usually touch a door knob where we touch the door as we enter the room. When we sit down in a chair we to maybe touch the side of the chair we place our hand print on top of the table and we touch things as we move throughout that room well on the Internet. It's the same philosophy when we open our internet page we're connected automatically through our IP address which is our Internet protocol address that IP address really serves as our digital footprint for digital fingerprints. So wherever we visit if we go to a Web site looking at a school or shopping online or even visiting a friend or a friend on Facebook we're leaving our fingerprints all over the place. It's no longer anonymous. So I'm real careful to share with students when they post information to individuals. Facebook wall and they think they're being anonymous that they're not being anonymous. It's very easy to trace communications back to a computer or to a telephone or cell phone that is through the IP address because every item that runs on data.

[00:21:35] Again cell phones tablet devices laptop devices computers have their own individual IP address which serves as the fingerprint as Warsh was a software start to increase their use of technology within their courses and or their programs. Could you share with us some basic netiquette ideas and even if you will describe what netiquitte in terms of adequate if you will. Yes. In fact the simple way to see net akid is to see it as Internet etiquette. It's the behaviors the values the expectations that we espouse that we use the the Internet and we want to be respectful have we engage others respectful in terms of not posting information that we think will be hurtful or harmful to others. So as we talk about Medicare and the increase of technology within our courses in our schools of social work I think it's important again to provide guidelines. So a couple of years ago in 2010 as a matter of fact our school of social work actually developed our very first social media policy. And almost as soon as we develop that policy was out of date. Because again social media and technology are quickly evolving. But aside from having a policy statement I would really like to see new student orientation as well as new faculty orientation programs actually include content and responsible use of technology and social media because again we oftentimes make assumptions about the awareness level of people thought again with the technology and social media being fairly new. I think it would be helpful as we help guide people and provide them expectations for the use of those tools. And I wanted to give you opportunity they shared with ruthless factory presentation to see to be with regards to your student Isatou for cyber social work. If you could share a little bit about that. Yeah.

[00:23:29] In fact our student institute for cyber social work is brand new. It's only been in operation for a couple of months now but I feel that as a school of social work again I mentioned earlier it's important to help train and expose students as well as faculty and staff to social media and technology tools. So one of the ways we've done that is to develop that student institute for cyber social work. And I'm very pleased to say Tony that as of November 12th we hired our very first virtual intern the virtual intern as a young lady who's working on her doctorate and online university and higher education. She has agreed to work with us a full year 20 hours each week and what she's going to do is help us to operationalize this new cyber Institute. I mentioned before that we have several projects that are running independently but are all technology based. Well we know it's important to bring them under an umbrella so that it's more easier to understand a philosophy and what we're actually trying to teach. Let me give you a couple of examples. Under the student institute for cyber social work we wrote a grant to an organization called the Community telecommunications network and the community telecommunications network is a community based organization and they provide high speed Internet service. That's their reason for existing. They provided us I believe we have now about 55 individual hotspot devices and those hotspot devices are now 4G service that's the fastest service you can get for the Internet. And we now provide both the students and our online BFW program as well as students that are engaged in our cyber Institute.

[00:25:11] The purpose of giving those students those top spy devices is to increase their use of technology on a regular basis in their responsible use of technology. So they take those hotspot devices they use them in their communities. They don't set parameters. They keep them open so that it's an open access. And they also use them within their field internships. If I can share just a little bit more about the Institute for cyber social work we're also training students typically student leaders have expressed an interest in cyber social work. We're training them how to infuse social media and technology and direct practices that social workers and training. We're also teaching them how to market their skills beyond the traditional paper resume. We're teaching them how to create websites so that they can demonstrate their unique skills which will make them much more marketable as they project out to those professional positions in the field. Did that Stroner thank you for talking to us today. Both cyber bullying prevention as well as cyber social work very timely topics as schools are addressing this issue year school year. And as you do so out there with state again thank you for taking the time to love for this recording. It was a pleasure. Thank you so much Tony I enjoyed the opportunity. You've been listening to Dr. Janet Joiner discuss cyber bullying and cyber social work practice and in social. Hi I'm Nancy Smyth professor and dean of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Thanks for listening to our podcast. We look forward to your continued support of the series.

[00:27:01] For more information about who we are as a school our history our programs and what we do we invite you to visit our website at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu.