

Teens, Online Stranger Contact & Cyberbullying

What the research is telling us...

Amanda Lenhart

Cyberethics, Cybersafety & Cybersecurity Conference

University of Maryland

October 2, 2008

College Park, MD

Methodology

- Interviewed 700 parent-child pairs in November 2007 and 935 parent – child pairs in Oct-Nov 2006
- Teens ages 12-17
- Nationally representative sample
- Focus groups conducted in 2004, 2006 & 2007
- UNH Crimes Against Children Research Center data (Wolak, Finkelhor et al)
- Internet Solutions for Kids (Ybarra)



Teen internet use basics

- 93% of teens 12-17 go online
- 89% of online teens go online from home, and most of them go online from home most often
- 77% of teen go online at school
- 71% go online from friends or relatives house
- 60% go online from a library
- 66% of households with teens go online via broadband, 22% via dial up, and 10% do not have access at home.
- 63% of online teens go online daily



What are teens doing online?

- 94% go online to do research for school assignments; 48% do so on a typical day.
- 81% go to websites about movies, TV shows, music groups, or sports stars
- 77% go online to get news
- 64% of online teens have created some kind of content online
- 57% have watched a video on a video-sharing site like YouTube or GoogleVideo
- 55% go online to get information about a college, university or other school that they are thinking about attending.
- 38% have bought something online like books, clothes or music
- 28% have looked online for health, dieting or physical fitness information



Social Networking Sites

- 58% of online teens have a profile online
- Girls, particularly older girls, more likely to use SNS than boys (86% of girls 15-17 have profile online, compared to 69% of boys 15-17)
- Age is major factor
 - 12 -14 year-olds; 38% have an online profile
 - 15 -17 year-olds; 77% have an online profile
- Other demographic factors not significant
 - Income
 - Race/ethnicity

Concerns in Online Safety Sphere

- Inappropriate contact (wanted/unwanted)
 - Strangers
 - Bullies
- Inappropriate content
 - Accidental Exposure
 - Deliberate Exposure



Contact - Strangers

- Definition of “complete stranger:”
“...[someone] who has no connection at all to you or any of your friends.”
- 32% of online teens have been contacted online by a complete stranger.
- Of teens who have been contacted, 23% say they were made scared or uncomfortable by the stranger contact.
- Overall, 7% of online teens experienced disturbing stranger contact.

Contact – Strangers (2)

- Factors that predict a greater likelihood of online contact (% reporting stranger contact in each group)
 - Posting photos (49%)
 - Having a profile online (44%)
 - Female (39%)
 - Flirting via social networks (53%)
- Factors that predict a greater likelihood of scary or uncomfortable online contact
 - Female (11% vs. 4% of males)



Contact -- Strangers (3)

- No association between stranger contact and any other content posted to online profiles
- Social network users more likely to have been contacted by strangers, but not more likely to find that contact scary or uncomfortable
- Having internet monitoring software (but not filters) is correlated with lower reported levels of contact by someone unknown to the teen or his/her friends.

Contact – Strangers (4)

How did teens respond to stranger contact?

- Of teens who were contacted by a stranger:
 - 65% just ignored it or deleted it
 - 21% responded so they could find out more about the person
 - 8% responded and asked to be left alone
 - 3% told an adult or someone in authority

Contact – Bullies

- 32% of online teens have experienced one of the following forms of online harassment, also called “cyberbullying”
 - 15% of teens reported having private material (IM, txt, email) forwarded without permission
 - 13% had received threatening messages
 - 13% said someone had spread a rumor about them online
 - 6% had someone post an embarrassing picture of them online without permission



Contact – Bullies (2)

- Girls, particularly older girls, report more online bullying; 38% of all online girls reported experiencing some type of online bullying
- Social network users are also more likely to report online bullying – 39% of SNS users have experience it.
- But most teens (67%) think bullying happens more OFFLINE



Contact – Harassment (3)

- The prevalence rate of Internet harassment appears to be stable.
- **School is by far the most common place** youth report being bullied (31%) versus elsewhere (e.g., 13% online)
- The majority (59%) of Internet harassment comes from other minors
- Youth who report being harassed online report a myriad of concurrent psychosocial problems offline, too

Source: Michele Ybarra's work on the 2005 Youth Internet Safety Survey fielded by UNH CCRC

All the world is not a stage...

- 66% of all teens with profiles online have in some way restricted access to it – includes hiding it completely, taking it down, or making it private
- 77% of profile-owning teens have a currently visible online profile
 - Of those with a visible profile, 59% say only their friends can see their profile.
 - 40% say anyone can see profile
- 56% of teens with profiles say they have posted at least some fake information to their profile

“I use a pseudonym, who is 24. Because I regard myself as an intellectual, it’s easier to be taken seriously if people don’t know they’re talking to a 16 year old.”

- Boy, Late High School

Exposure

- 24% of parents of online teens say that their child has been exposed to inappropriate language or sexual or violent content online (2007 Cable in Classroom/Commonsense Media/Harris Interactive)
- 23% of parents say inappropriate media content is one of their “top” concerns as a parent, 51% say it’s a “big” concern, but not top. (Kaiser Family Foundation, *Parents Children & Media*, 2007)
- 70% of 15-17 year olds have accidentally stumbled onto pornographic sites; 23% “very” or “somewhat often.” (KFF, *Generation Rx*, 2001)
- Of teens who looked for health information online, 46% were blocked from non-pornographic sites by filtering technology. (KFF, *Generation Rx*, 2001)

Parents & control of internet access and use

- 74% of families have their **computers in a public location**
- 65% of parents say they **check up on their teens** after they go online
- 53% of families **filter**
- 45% of families have **monitoring software** on the computer that their child uses
- Kids aware of monitoring & filtering
- Parents more likely to report rules around content viewed rather than time spent with media
- Internet is most regulated media in the home
- Only 7% of parents have no rules about media use at all

Final Thoughts

- Only a very small number of teens report uncomfortable online contact; most ably handle the contact by deleting or ignoring it
- Very little association between contact and information posted online
- Bullying is reported by same % of teens as stranger contact; and yet happens more offline
- Parents more likely to use non-technical methods of protection; rulemaking around content
- Video Gaming?

Thank You!

Amanda Lenhart

Pew Internet & American Life Project

alenhart@pewinternet.org

<http://www.pewinternet.org>