

## **RESOURCES FOR LEARNING ABOUT ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES**

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The goal of this review is to position misuse of electronic communication devices in a deeper context of digital communication and youth. This list of resources focuses primarily on students and their use, rather than misuse, of electronic communication devices (ECDs). Also included are reports on the most talked about misuse: cheating, cyberbullying, accessing sexual/problematic/illegal content, and solicitation. The list of established research centers and summaries of nationwide studies below are resources for exploring these topics in greater depth.

These reports were primarily gathered from centers and organizations that have an interest in shaping the conversation and establishing social policy around youth and social media (see List of Centers and Resources below). Center-based reports concentrate the academic research of various disciplines by providing extensive literature reviews and publishing socially relevant findings. Additionally, reports from research centers are accessible to a wide audience. Such reports are often the subject of news stories and set the stage for public response to the issues surrounding digital communication and social media. To portray a complete and balanced picture of youth and digital communication, this literature review takes into account the methodologies and social context in which the reports are produced.

Following the list of centers and resources below, the first section describes key resources by center and in terms of trends and practices. Three subcategories of particular interest are mobile/smart phones, social network sites (SNS), and technologies specifically built for the classroom. The second section sets forth summaries of relevant literature on ECDs.

### **List of Centers and Resources:**

Berkman Center for Internet and Society - <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu>

Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use - <http://csriu.org>

Common Sense Media - <http://www.common Sense Media.org>

Crimes Against Children Research Center - <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc>

Cyberbullying Research Center - <http://www.cyberbullying.us>

Digital Media and Learning Central (MacArthur Foundation and the UC Humanities Research Institute) - [dmlcentral.net](http://dmlcentral.net)

Education Week - <http://www.edweek.org>

FutureLab - <http://www.futurelab.org.uk>

International Association for K-12 Online Learning - <http://www.inacol.org>

International Society for Technology in Education & ISTE Conference  
(previously known as National Education Computing Conference) - <http://www.iste.org>

Joan Ganz Cooney Center - <http://www.joanganzcooneycenter.org>

Kaiser Family Foundation - <http://www.kff.org>

New Media Consortium - <http://www.nmc.org>

Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning - <http://www.p21.org>

Pew Research Center - <http://www.pewinternet.org>

Project Tomorrow - <http://www.tomorrow.org>

Resources for Online Safety Curriculum:

CyberSmart (now a part of Common Sense Media) - <http://www.netsmartz.org>

iKeepSafe - <http://www.ikeepsafe.org>

NetSmartz - <http://www.netsmartz.org>

Web Wise Kids - <http://www.webwisekids.org>

## **Descriptions of Key Resources**

### *Key Resources by Center*

Pew Internet and American Life Project <http://www.pewinternet.org/>

Pew has published quality demographic reports on issues of teens and technology including cyberbullying, video games, creative writing, social media, parents, strangers, and social networks. Pew continues to publish articles keeping up with rapid technological and data changes, including “Teens and Mobile Phones” (2010) and “Teens and Sexting” (2009).

Berkman Center for Internet and Society <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/>

The Berkman Center at Harvard University studies the complexities of cyberspace and works to address the legal and policy implications. The publication “Working Towards a Deeper Understanding of Digital Safety for Children and Young People in Developing Nations” (2010) contains an exploratory literature review of issues and the state of research in developing nations. One of the research objectives is to inform and possibly connect digital safety efforts in developing nations with those in industrialized countries.

Cyberbullying Research Center <http://www.cyberbullying.us>

The Cyberbullying Research Center provides up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents. A resource for

parents, educators, law enforcement officers, counselors, and others who work with youth, the website also includes numerous resources to help prevent and respond to cyberbullying incidents. Center directors, Drs. Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin, have co-authored multiple articles. Their second book, "Cyberbullying Prevention and Response: Expert Perspectives" (2011), provides research-based guidance in dealings with cyberbullying issues.

Digital Media and Learning Central <http://dmlcentral.net/>

Digital Media and Learning Central is the online face of the University of California Humanities Research Institute, supported by the MacArthur Foundation. The site supports and disseminates current information about the emergent field of digital media and learning. Articles about electronic communication devices include NPR broadcast "Closing the Digital Divide" (2011), a new take on the shift from accessing technology to the application of technology and participation. "For At-Risk Youth is Learning Digital Media a Luxury?" (2011), another NPR story discussing the redefined digital divide, touches on budgetary issues and the defense of mobile technologies in the classroom.

Kaiser Family Foundation <http://www.kff.org>

In a large national study, the Kaiser Family Foundation evaluated the role of the media in the lives of 3rd to 12th graders. The study positions online and digital communication in the larger context of all media experiences rather than evaluating the internet, movies, magazines, music, TV, and video games independently. A sister study addresses electronic media in the lives of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Project Tomorrow <http://www.tomorrow.org/>

Project Tomorrow publishes the findings of the national Speak Up Project, an online survey that collects the views of over 1.5 million K-12 students, educators, and parents. Project Tomorrow released "Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (2010) in partnership with Blackboard Inc. to explore educators' integration of "classic" technologies (laptop and desktop computers) with "emergent" technological devices (smartphones, e-readers and smartbooks), in order to create an infrastructure for student learning. The 2010 Speak Up Survey data gathered from over 379,000 respondents also illustrates the online learning shift in schools nationwide.

### *Key Resources by Topic*

#### Mobile and Smart Phones

The Pew Internet and American Life Project report "Teens and Mobile Phones Over the Past Five Years" (2009) presents the current demographics of ownership and use from a nationally representative study. It also positions the data on mobile phone use in relationship to other mobile and communication devices

With seven out of ten teens owning mobile phones, there has been much discussion about the potential for mobile phone use in education. The executive summary from the Joan Ganz Cooney Center's "Pockets of Potential" and the book *Toys to Tools* provide sound reasons to use mobile phones in learning environments and offer practical suggestions for implementation.

Despite arguments for their use, mobile phones are routinely banned from most

classrooms. Besides the distractions the personal devices cause, cheating with mobile phones in class has become a major concern of educators. Common Sense Media commissioned a study on the use of mobile phones and the internet to cheat on tests and plagiarize in “Hi-Tech Cheating: Cell Phones and Cheating in Schools” (2009).

#### Social Network Sites, Networked Publics, & Gaming and Multi-player Environments

Exploring the nuances of public spaces online can illuminate why certain sites have become popular, which activities attract youth, and how safety and privacy concerns of users are addressed. Facebook and MySpace are two common social network sites, and their user practices have often been the subject of sensational news stories. However, the history and technology of such sites have been given much less attention.

“Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship” (2007) is a comprehensive paper on the subject from the *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*.

Additionally, the work on social network sites by the Pew Internet and American Life Project provides demographic information on the usage patterns of teens online. Finally, the report “Living and Learning with New Media” opens up the discussion that is usually focused on MySpace and Facebook to other frequented “networked publics” such as other social network sites, gaming communities, and virtual worlds.

Sexual solicitation and cyberbullying are among the most commonly discussed online risks to youth. These topics are discussed in “Enhancing Child Safety and Online Technologies” and the often-cited “Online Victimization of Youth” (2001) and “Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later” (2006). Among the key findings of these reports are: Victimization online is less than it is offline; minor-to-minor solicitation occurs more frequently than solicitation by adult predators; bullying is more common than sexual solicitation; and the risk factors of youth themselves (psychosocial make-up and family dynamics) are better predictors of risk than specific technologies or media. Curriculum resources on online safety for educators and parents can be found through CyberSmart, NetSmartz, Web Wise Kids and iKeepSafe.

#### Technologies for the Classroom

Specific examples and implementations of technology trends such as 1:1 computing, virtual schools, and mobile learning can be explored in the archives of the National Education Computing Conference (now called the ISTE Conference) and *Edweek's* Digital Directions magazine.

### Literature Summaries

1. “Cyberbullying Prevention and Response: Expert Perspectives” (2011)

The book is rooted in research-based guidance and accessible to adults contenting with or preparing for an intervention with cyberbullying. Each of the book’s chapters is authored by experts who have dealt with, and who are versed in the language and skill to deal with, identifying, preventing and responding to cyberbullying.

Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. (2011) “Cyberbullying Prevention and Response: Expert Perspectives” New York: Routledge.

2. “Cell Phones in the Classroom: Are we Dialing up Disaster?” (2011)

Using the “Teens and Mobile Phones” (2010) report and others as a springboard for researching the feasibility of mobile phone applications in the classroom, this article explores the possibilities and implications of cell phone use in a pre-calculus high school classroom. The authors’ intent is to inspire discussion around the topic by making successful pilot programs available for other practitioners to review and consider.

Within the study, cell phones were used in three primary ways: Audience response, research, and to record work through photos and video documentation. For audience response, questions were asked and students texted in the answer. The polling tool was also used to check on student comprehension. Student responses were anonymous, inviting a new dynamic into the classroom. Research and recorded work included definition searches, peer review, and reflections of the class and the experience. The study closes with recommendations for practitioners considering the implementation of a similar program.

Engel, G., Green, T. (2011). “Cell Phones in the Classroom: Are we Dialing up Disaster?”  
Retrieved from: <http://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/y2406q1nm44320r8/>.

### 3. “Teens and Mobile Phones” (2010)

The report represents a thorough analysis of how mobile phones are utilized and how they fit into the lives of parents and teens. Data from 800 respondents to a Parent-Teen survey conducted in 2009 yielded the following information about teen mobile phone use.

Approximately 75 percent of all 12-17 year-olds own cellular phones. Text messaging is now the most common form of interaction among all teens, surpassing even face-to-face interaction. Using the call function of the phone is still considered important, with teens making or receiving about five calls per day. The survey also measured how often additional mobile phone functions were used, including a camera, gaming, social networking and shopping features.

Misuse of mobile phones is still present in the classroom. Although phones are banned in many classrooms and on campus entirely, 65 percent of teens report that they still bring their phone to school every day. More than half of teens who bring their phones (58 percent) have sent a text message during class.

Both parents and teens cite mobile phones as a “mixed blessing,” creating convenience and conflict at the same time. Parents and teens agree safety is a factor cell phones provide, but 26 percent of teens also report receiving bullying or harassing text messages or phone calls. Additionally four percent of teens reported sending a sexually suggestive image via text message, and 15 percent reported receiving a text of that nature.

Lenhart, A., Ling, R., Campbell, S., Purcell, K. (2010). Teens and Mobile Phones: Text messaging explodes as teens embrace it as the centerpiece of their communication strategies with friends.  
Retrieved from: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Teens-and-Mobile-Phones/Summary-of-findings.aspx>.

### 4. “Sexting: Youth Practices and Legal Implications” (2010)

Beginning with a definition of sexting, the document is aimed to help provide background for discussions and interventions dealing with the activity. Sexting resources also include overviews of research and media content, legal ramifications, and legislation-current and pending.

Sacco, D., Argudin, R., Maguire, J., Tallon, K. (2010). “Sexting: Youth Practices and Legal Implications.”

Retrieved from: [http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2010/Sexting\\_Youth\\_Practices\\_Legal\\_Implications](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2010/Sexting_Youth_Practices_Legal_Implications).

5. “Always Connected: The New Digital Media Habits of Young Children” (2010)

Drawing upon seven previous research studies and adding to the existing collection of literature surrounding youth and digital media, this report aims to improve understanding of the evolving patterns of young children’s media use. The report also indicates that tracking media usage now may lead to a preview of what lies ahead.

Findings revealed that children have more access to digital media and are spending more time with them than ever before. Children still spend the most time with television at ages eight and under. Economic barriers still hold strong, as some children do not have access to newer digital technologies, even as the cost of digital devices are lowered. A final note in the report: “Kids like to use their media on the go.”

Gutnick, A. L., Robb, M., Takeuchi, L., & Kotler, J. (2010). Always Connected: The New Digital Media Habits of Young Children. New York: The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop.

6. “Generation M<sup>2</sup>: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-Olds” (2010)

According to this report encompassing more than 2,000 young people across the United States, this group now spends an average of nearly 7.5 hours per day with media. In some instances youth between 8 and 18 sleep less than they stream music, video games, movies, books and websites. The ability to multi-task brings the day’s hourly total to 10 hours and 45 minutes of digital media exposure, seven days a week.

The report shows a marked increase in every form of media with the exception of reading. Newspaper reading time is now half of what it was five years ago, plummeting from a mere six minutes down to three. Books held on with 25 minutes of reading per day, up from the 21 minutes reported 10 years ago.

Twenty percent of the media is consumed on mobile devices, amounting to about 2 hours per day. “Old” content is still consumed at the rate of 56 minutes per day, through new means (television via Hulu or music via iTunes).

Patterns emerged in the data including those among age, gender and race. For example, 11-14 year olds spend more time consuming digital media than other youth. Boys consume more media than girls, with video games filling in the gap. Finally, differences were notable between Black, White and Hispanic youth. Black and Hispanic youth spend 4.5 more hours daily consuming digital media. Additional articles posit this is how minority youth are accessing television shows and other media that may not be present in the home. The only area where racial or ethnic differences in consumption did not appear was in print media.

Roberts, D.F., Foehr, U., and Rideout V. (2010). Generation M<sup>2</sup>: Media in the Lives of 8–18 Year Olds. Kaiser Family Foundation: Menlo Park, CA. Retrieved from: <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/upload/8010.pdf>.

7. Project Tomorrow (2009)

Project Tomorrow publishes the findings of the national Speak Up Project, an online survey that collects the views of over 1.5 million K-12 students, educators, and parents. This study characterizes the nation’s perspective on technology in education. In the “Selected National Findings 2008,” students were characterized as “trendsetters for peers, and increasingly teachers and parents” and as super “communicators and participatory learners.” However,

only one-third of high school students and one-half of principals thought their school is preparing students adequately for the jobs of the future.

The report stated that "students in all grades report using technology for school work in a variety of ways from managing the 'business of attending school' to personalizing their learning." Findings show:

- *About half of middle and high school students communicate with others over schoolwork using email, IM, or text messaging.*
- *More than half of middle school students and high school students report that they collaborate with classmates through a social network site.*

This report characterizes schools as a place where students must "power down" when they enter and resume their digital activity only when school is out. One-third of 3<sup>rd</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> graders reported that this was a significant obstacle in their lives and using their own mobile devices and online accounts during the school day was the number one way their schools could encourage electronic work. If allowed to use their mobile devices, 53% of high school and middle school students would communicate with classmates, 34% would communicate with teachers, 48% would work with classmates on projects, 51% would receive alerts about tests and quizzes and 53% would conduct research.

Parents, teachers, and administrators were also asked about their opinions on mobile learning:

- *Three out of four administrators and one-half of teachers say mobile learning devices are beneficial for increasing student engagement in school and learning.*
- *One-half of administrators and one-third of teachers say that mobile devices can be used to extend learning beyond the school day.*
- *One-half of administrators and one-third of teachers recognize that using mobile devices for instruction would prepare students for the world of work.*

Although there is a perceived benefit to utilizing electronic communication devices, most schools have policies in place to restrict student use. Additionally, teachers encounter significant barriers to mobile learning such as inequitable access for all students and lack of professional development and tech support. While some parents see the value of mobile devices for learning, only 6 percent envision mobile devices in an ideal school or would recommend them as a good school investment.

Project Tomorrow. (2009) "Selected National Findings: Speak Up 2008 Students, Parents, Teachers and Administrators." Retrieved from: <http://www.tomorrow.org>

#### 8. "Hi-Tech Cheating: Cell Phones and Cheating in Schools: A National Poll" (2009)

Common Sense Media commissioned a study on teens and hi-tech cheating. High-tech cheating was defined as using a mobile phone to access or distribute content about tests or quizzes, or using the internet to find answers or plagiarize work. The position of this study characterizes the proliferation of communication technology as an "invasion" in the school space rather than as an opportunity for learning. The findings from the national poll of students and parents state that one in three teens admits to having cheated with mobile phones in school. The report relies on self-report for these data and does not discuss the frequency or the conditions under which the presumed transgressions are committed.

Furthermore, the way in which the cheating was carried out was discussed (e.g., taking a photo, storing notes), but the testing situation was not described (e.g. a pop quiz, the SAT). Finally, the study also does not compare high-tech cheating with instances of offline cheating.

With this information in mind, the findings of this report are:

- *One-third of teens with cell phones admitted to cheating with them; two-thirds of all teens say that others in their school cheat with cell phones.*
- *Half of teens admitted to some form of cheating involving the internet (e.g., accessing a teacher manual, downloading a paper).*
- *More than a third of students have copied text from websites and turned it in as their own work.*
- *Teens with cell phones send 440 text messages per week on average, 110 per week during class.*
- *Many students do not consider cheating with cells phones to be a serious offense or even consider it cheating at all.*
- *Parents are realistic about kids cheating but have a hard time believing that it is their kids, or that it's happening in their schools.*
- *Nearly two-thirds of students with cell phones use them during school hours regardless of the school policies.*

Common Sense Media. (2009) "High-Tech Cheating: Cell Phones and Cheating in Schools." Retrieved from: <http://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/Hi-Tech%20Cheating%20-%20Summary%20NO%20EMBARGO%20TAGS.pdf>

9. "Teens and Mobile Phones Over the Past Five Years" (2009)

This Pew study documents the changes in mobile phone ownership by teens from 2004-2009. The report finds that 45% of teens had mobile phones in 2004, which rose to 63% in 2006 and 71% in 2008. Ownership does not vary by gender, race or ethnicity; however, teens in families with the highest income levels are slightly more likely to have mobile phones. Additionally, older teens are more likely to own a mobile phone.

The study found teens continue to utilize landline phone regardless of mobile phone ownership. Outside of mobile phone use, a quarter of teens use social network sites and instant messaging to communicate on a daily basis. Only 16% send email every day. One-third of teens also spend face-to-face time outside school with their friends on a daily basis.

Lenhart, A. (2009). Teens and Mobile Phones Over the Past Five Years: Pew Internet Looks Back. Pew Internet & American Life Project. <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/14--Teens-and-Mobile-Phones-Data-Memo.aspx>

10. "Pockets of Potential" (2009)

This executive summary examines over 25 hand-held learning initiatives and presents interviews with experts in mobile technology research, industry, and policy. The report states that children under 12 are one of the fastest growing segments of mobile technology, and that 93% of 6 to 9 year-olds lives in homes with a mobile phone. However, capitalizing

on the potential for learning faces a number of key challenges. The primary disadvantage is “the potential for distraction or unethical behavior; physical or health concerns; and data privacy issues.” Additional challenges encompass cultural norms and attitudes that do not support mobile learning, significant variation in access and technology, and poorly designed devices for young students or for learning goals. Today many of the initiatives that use mobile devices for learning are “fragmented and lack the resources to scale up.”

The report indicates five areas potentially improved by mobile learning: fostering anytime anywhere learning, addressing underserved children, improving social interactions, providing better fitting-learning environments, and personalizing learning experiences.

This summary states “while student safety is paramount, classroom bans are not realistic in the long term.” Schools are called to “modify and gradually eliminate classroom bans” as the benefits of mobile phone learning outweigh the potential disruptions.

Shuler, C. (2009) *Pockets of Potential- Using Mobile Technologies to Promote Children’s Learning*. The Joan Ganz Cooney Center.

11. “Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying” (2009)

This book helps educators understand the consequences of cyberbullying and provides strategies for identification, prevention and response. The discussion focuses on the way technology can magnify this behavior. The book includes real students’ experiences of cyberbullying. In addition, the book includes recent research on cyberbullying, the connection to social networking, and a discussion of the legal issues surrounding the topic.

Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. (2009) “Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying” Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

12. *Toys to Tools* (2008)

This book focuses on the potential benefits of using mobile phones in classrooms and provides solutions for overcoming the institutional and practical challenges that mobile phones present in learning environments. Because adolescent culture has been found to be a key resource in literacy learning in school, the author calls for using “everyday software and hardware students already own (or are free to own or use) and are already motivated to interact with.”

The author explains that there is a lack of appreciation by teachers for the “communication and knowledge-building skills” that mobile phones afford and instead see the devices as “distracting, time consuming, wasteful and even harmful.” However, students use mobile phones many times every day and are incorporating them into their school routines despite discouraging school policies. The author argues the benefits of using free or cheap resources and new digital functionality outweighs the challenges to incorporating the devices into classroom lessons.

The author outlines specific mobile phone functionality and gives detailed examples of how to incorporate different mediums into lesson plans. Some of the creative uses of mobile phone technology include: podcasting, voice mail, conferencing, mobile notetaking, cameras, camcorders, blogging, geotagging, and scheduling and content management tools. The author outlines how to address challenges such as district policies, classroom control, mobile phone etiquette, student access, financial considerations, and security.

Kolb, L. (2008) *Toys to Tools: Connecting Student Cell Phones to Education*. International Society for Technology in Education.

13. "Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of the Findings of the Digital Youth Project" (2008)

This white paper combines twenty qualitative studies of youth focusing on issues of participation, networked publics, peer-based learning, and new media literacy. It states: "Today's youth may be coming of age and struggling for autonomy and identity as did their predecessors but they are doing so amid reconfigured contexts for communication, friendship, play and self expression." In particular, this paper explains some of the practices of youth in network publics, which include social network sites such as Facebook and MySpace.

In these online spaces youth can be "always on" via a computer or mobile device and in contact with others. This online presence requires ongoing maintenance and negotiation through private and public communication. In fact, these activities are often complex and demand efficacy with technology and communication strategies. Youth are creating knowledge and establishing identity and building relationships using social media, even though the traditional school environment might not necessarily value this as important work. The paper states that "youth can benefit from educators being more open to forms of experimentation and social exploration that are generally not characteristic of educational institutions."

Unlike much of the media rhetoric, most youth online are not seeking to build relationships with people they do not know. Instead, participation in networked publics allows individuals to cultivate relationships that already exist in familiar offline contexts such as school, religious organizations, sports, and other activities. The authors characterize these activities as "hanging out" online in order to extend existing friendships.

The paper also looks at the interest-driven practices of youth online. These individuals use the internet and participate in networked publics to find information and to explore specialized activities, such as gaming, fandom and academics. These online groups connect youth with others who share their interests and, in doing so, may connect them with people who differ in age, gender, or location. The paper defines the term "geeking out" as the activities which youth engage in to improve skills or knowledge in these specialized communities. The authors state: "Geeking out often erases the traditional markers of status and authority." While anonymity can be seen as a potential risk, it also can provide opportunities for youth to be judged solely on their skills rather than facing the normal authoritative barriers to speaking out and showcasing expertise.

Ito, M. et al. (2008). *Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Report*. John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

14. "Enhancing Child Safety and Online Technologies" (2008)

This report written for state attorney generals comes from the Internet Safety Technical Task Force centered at The Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. A research advisory board collected and reviewed a number of academic publications on this subject, including the Youth Internet Safety Study, for a complete and balanced look at the online risks to youth.

The report also offers conclusions from a review of technologies for internet safety. The report states that the “youth online safety industry is evolving... A combination of technologies, in concert with parental oversight, education, social services, law enforcement, and sound policies by social networking sites and service providers may assist in addressing specific problems that minors face online.”

The literature review looks at three main risks: harassment, solicitation, and exposure to problematic content. The review provides a critical context to these risks by comparing offline and online incidents.

The literature review begins by stating that research in the recent past has often been misunderstood and mischaracterized. One of the most frequently cited statistics about solicitation is that one in five or one in seven minors is sexually solicited online. The characteristics of the victims, perpetrators, and transgression explain the context of such a finding:

- *Internet sex crimes against minors have not overtaken the number of unmediated sex crimes against minors, nor have they contributed to a rise in such crimes.*
- *Overall sexual offenses against children have gone steadily down in the last 18 years.*
- *Sex crimes against youth not involving the Internet outweigh those that do.*
- *Majority of sexual molestations are perpetrated primarily by individuals the victims know offline, mainly by family members or acquaintances. Forty-four percent of Internet sexual offenders known to youth victims were family members.*
- *The majority of the cases sexual solicitation involved adolescents, not prepubescent children.*

Studies of online harassment and cyberbullying suffer from a lack of clear definitions and measures, and thus have inconsistent findings. Studies report that somewhere between 4%-46% of youth report incidents of cyberbullying and internet harassment. The report states that cyberbullying or harassment “may involve direct (such as chat or text messaging), semi-public (such as posting a harassing message on an email list) or public communication (such as creating a website devoted to making fun of the victim).”

- *Cyberbullying is not reported to occur at higher overall rates than offline bullying.*
- *Consistent with offline bullying, online harassers are typically the same age as their victims.*
- *The Bureau of Justice Statistics shows a steep decline in offline bullying from seventh to twelfth grades, while online harassment tends to peak later in eighth grade and declines only slightly.*
- *There can be an overlap between cyberbullying offenders and victims.*
- *Less than half of online harassment is related to school bullying, either through location (occurring at school) or peers (offender or target is a fellow student).*

Some youth might be more at risk online than others. The characteristics of youth who are at risk online are similar to those of youth at risk offline. Youth who are vulnerable in one online context are usually vulnerable in many contexts. Below is information on behaviors or

circumstances thought to be risky:

- Online contact with strangers. *There is no consensus on whether talking to strangers puts youth at risk or if at-risk youth are more likely to talk to strangers.*
- Posting of Personal Information. *A small minority of teens are posting the most sensitive contact information such as phone number on a public profile. A study of MySpace showed that 9% of users posted a full name, .3% a phone number. However, 57% posted a picture and 27.8% included the name of their school. More males were also found to have public profiles and females were more likely to have private profiles.*
- Sharing of password. *Youth who share their passwords run the risk of being impersonated online and having their accounts used in acts of harassment.*
- Depression, Abuse and Substance. *Depression, physical abuse, and substance abuse are all strongly correlated with various risky behaviors that lead to poor choices with respect to online activities.*
- Poor home environment. *A poor home environment full of conflict and poor parent-child relationships is correlated with a host of online risks (higher online sexual victimization and increased online harassment). Positive home environment inoculates youth against a host of dangers.*
- Intensity of Online Participation. *Though there is a correlation between online risk and high levels of participation, online participation does not predict risk.*

Palfrey J. et al. (2008) "Enhancing Child Safety and Online Technologies: Final Report of the Internet Safety Technical Task Force to the Multi-State Working Group on Social Networking of United States Attorneys General" Cambridge, Mass.: Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, pp. 1-278.

## 15. Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship (2007)

The authors of this journal article define social network sites (SNSs) as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and (3) view and traverse their list of these connections and those made by others within the system"

Different SNSs support varied interests and practices but may share similar technological features such as sending private and public messages, photo-sharing, video-sharing, blogging, instant messaging. SNSs approach the issue of visibility and privacy, both of personal profile and of networks, with varied levels of user discretion. However, almost all require confirmation by both individuals when a relationship is established. Academic research on SNSs has focused on personal information management, friendship maintenance, network visualization, online/offline connections and privacy issues.

MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter are the most represented in American media of the hundreds of SNSs available to users. MySpace and Facebook have different developmental histories that characterize the communities and practices in these particular SNSs. MySpace primarily supported musicians and artists whereas Facebook was exclusively a college-only network. While the popularity of such sites extend the participation to individuals outside these groups, the functionality of SNSs reflect the culture they intended to support.

The most striking feature of SNSs is the ability "to articulate and make visible... social networks." While youth have been congregating in unmediated spaces offline throughout

history, often to the dismay of adults, exposing one's friendship network is not a common offline practice.

Boyd, D. and Ellison, N. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 13(1):210–230.