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1

“Welcome to My World”

Technology and Youth

Much like the sensation of the Industrial Revolution, there has been a “revolution” of sorts in the technological world. VHS and tape cassette recorders, as well as analog televisions, are now considered antiquated as new digital advances continue to explode. Ingle (2005) describes our society as being transformed by “cyber-reality,” and claims we are approaching a paperless world. Weis (2004) further defines this as “digital or ICT literacy” as “using digital technology, communication tools, and networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information to function in a knowledge society” (p. 14).

To understand cyber bullying and what it means to be a cyber kid, it is important to understand how technology has blossomed into our daily lives, infusing its growth at all levels. Technology brings tremendous opportunities and the ability to connect the world in a more intimate way with the capacity to send information on a super highway to all ends of the earth. In 2005, it was estimated that 79 percent of Americans spend time online, averaging 13.3 hours a week (www.digitalcenter.org/pdf/Center-for-the-Digital-Future-2005-Highlights.pdf). In a survey conducted by the National Public Radio (NPR), the Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government (National Public Radio & Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000), the “love affair” between Americans and high technology was highlighted. In this study, it was found that almost all Americans under sixty have used a computer and are enthusiastic about technology, and that children were even more enthusiastic and comfortable with computers. One study revealed that Internet use rose from two million youth in 1995 to seventy-seven million in 2005 (www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us/missing/i_safety/i_intro.htm).

CYBER STORY

A group of high school students went on a weekend ski trip to another state. While on the slopes, one of the students fell, seriously injuring himself. Shortly after the fall, the lead chaperone and ski patrol arrived to administer first aid and assess the situation.

People skiing by stopped for a moment and were encouraged to move on by the ski patrol, who were securing the young man in the transportation sled. Several of the students from the school skied by and saw the commotion around their friend. The students began texting each other about their friend’s mishap. One of the kids texted his friend back home, stating that he thought his classmate had broken his neck and was dead. Soon the text made it to the young boy’s mother. Before her son had been brought down to the bottom of the hill, or the chaperone could contact her, she had been “notified” of his death.

The mother quickly called the chaperone to confirm the news that her son was fatally injured. By the time the chaperone received the call, he and the young boy were arriving at the local hospital where the injured teen was receiving treatment for his fractured collarbone. His life was never in danger and the chaperone was directing all of his attention to ensuring that the young man was safely attended to prior to contacting the parents.

Source: Personal communication.

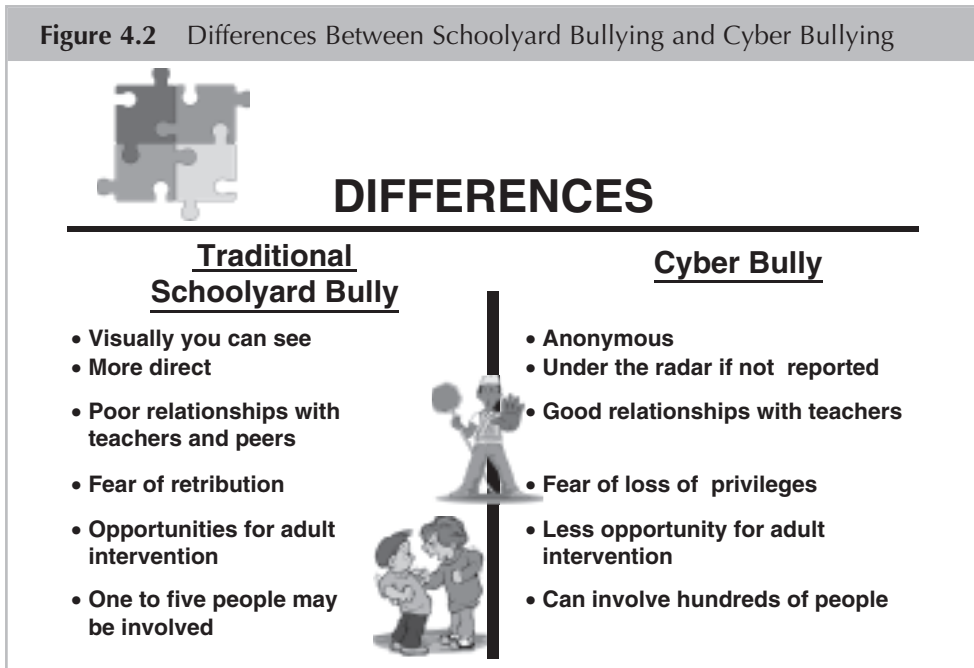
Is it really a surprise, then, when data from Foehr, obtained from the Kaiser Family Foundation’s 2005 study, *Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8–18 Year Olds*, showed 81 percent of these young people spend some of their time media multitasking in a typical week (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006a)? In this report, based on a national survey of 2,032 third through twelfth graders, and further analysis of the data of 1,205 seventh to twelfth graders, it was found that this media multitasking typically occurs when the youth are instant messaging (74 percent), surfing the Internet (74 percent) or playing video games (67 percent). In a related review (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005b), it was found that media use by this age group was approximately forty-four and a half hours a week, with an increase in video game playing and computer use over the past five years. In this same report, it was shared that 68 percent of this population had a TV in their bedrooms, and 49 percent had a video game player there.

CYBER STORY

A mother and her teenage son went out to lunch. The mom was treasuring the time they would have alone together to just “chill.” Before the meal arrived, the son’s cell phone constantly went off, announcing new text messages. He responded to each one. Finally, the mom was forced to pull out her own cell phone, which was rarely used, to place a call to her son. She reminded him that this was their time together and asked him to please turn off his cell phone.

Source: Personal communication.

This is such an important topic that entire books are now being written on cyber etiquette and cyber rules (Gillispie & Gackenbach, 2007). In order to fully understand what cyber bullying is and when it crosses the line, we need to look at the different categories and types that have been established. It also very important to examine the literature, in which some of the perceived differences between schoolyard bullying and cyber bullying are highlighted (see Figure 4.2).



Sources: (at left) www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov (and at right) McKenna & Bargh, 2004; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004.

Keep in mind that, although these term definitions give a picture and category to the different forms of cyber bullying, it is our belief that cyber bullying is basically schoolyard bullying on steroids. Understanding it better provides the ammunition to protect yourself and young people from its strength.

Additional studies have been conducted in which misuse of the computer—specifically age differences associated with cyber bullying—have been examined. Much of the cyber bullying research has suggested that cyber bullying behaviors tend to peak later in middle school (i-safe, 2004–2005; Williams & Guerra, 2007; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007), or in high school (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004, 2008). Patchin and Hinduja (2006), in their study of sixth to eighth graders, found that older youth were more likely to be both perpetrators and victims of cyber bullying, and that seventh grade seemed to be a key transition point.

Use Technology Wisely

Remember that technology is far reaching and changing at a fast pace. Employers use the Internet to surf for information on prospective employees. Youth and adults have lost both job opportunities and scholarships due to postings on blogs and journal sites. Think before you send or post information about yourself.

Stop, Save, and Share

Teach youth that when confronted with an unfamiliar or upsetting situation they should STOP, SAVE, AND SHARE:

- **STOP** what you are doing; do not react. Youth are impulsive and often don't think about the consequences.
- **SAVE** what you are working on; do not delete.
- **SHARE** the information with an adult you can trust, and who can guide you in making a safe decision on how to handle the situation with which you are faced.

It is also essential that youth keep in mind that anything posted by them is fair game for others to positively or negatively use.

The outline in Figure 9.1 is an easy guide to help you remember.

