

Adolescents and the Social Media: The Coming Storm

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Editorial Comment

In her book *Failure to Connect: How computers affect our Children's Minds*, sounded the alarm to the educational community that computers would not impact the intellectual growth of children in the ways that had been anticipated by the Clinton Administration when they started the push to have the world-wide web integrated into American classrooms by passing the Classroom 2000 education initiative [1]. In a speech in April of 2013 [2], Clinton would follow-up by saying that the modern internet has forced a change in what we consider to be forms of good citizenship. The future will redefine how we should act and interact.

Unfortunately, while there have been definite gains in the ease of accessing information from a variety of sources using the internet, it now appears that the internet might also be having a seriously negative effect on students [3]. It is now becoming evident that the internet has redefined and expanded the meaning of bullying. The

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when standing by and watching and not intervening (which suggests passive agreement with the bully) [10]. Because over 80 percent of reported bullying episodes occur with peers present, bullying can be called a social behavior that craves an audience [11]. Social media is providing the audience that bullying craves.

It is noted that technology combined with a sense of entitlement in the recent generation has led to a situation that is considerably "toxic" within American society. This problem is compounded when parents, teachers and administrators are less sophisticated in technology than their children or students [12,13]. The question is asked "How could parents of Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris not know what they are up to?" The answer is relatively simple: They probably did not know what Dylan and Eric were doing on their computers and probably didn't feel it needed to be monitored [14]. They did not realize they were using their computers and a program called Doom to practice killing classmates for a full year before the attack. While it is easy to find fault with that specific situation, the truth is that thousands of households are like that [15]. This is why Garbarino has pointed out that parents and educators need to adopt a new approach of being more actively involved in the lives of young adults, because that is currently waning in this country [12]. Social media, unfortunately, appears to be distancing adolescents from adults even further. This mechanism is something in need of further research.

Gender in Social Media

Historically, bullying has been such a male-dominated activity that the mention of female bullies was scarcely necessary [15]. According to [16], males dominate 95 percent of all direct forms of aggression (e.g., fighting, murder, assault). However, when bullying is extended to include indirect forms of bullying (e.g., phones, internet, anonymous letters) the frequency of female involvement matches the frequency of males. Whereas males tend to act out physically when impulsive or angered, females are more likely to resort to what [17] called the three C's (calling, cutting, & Cliques). According to Elkind, females use phones (i.e., calling) to disrespect each other, ignoring and avoidance (i.e., cutting) and tight knit exclusive groups (i.e., cliques). A 2010 Nielson report suggests that females use cell phones 20 percent more often than males, and they text 30 percent more often than males. This suggests a ready adoption of these technologies. In his book, See Jane Hit: Why Girls are Growing more Violent [18], suggests that technology tends to enhance the emotions that young females are feeling. While they shun direct confrontation, young women are quick to use on-line sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) and gossip to attempt to get even. Because younger women regulate their self-esteem more on social appraisal than do males, biting anonymous comments can have a devastating impact [19]. According to [20], 55 percent of teens and young adults admit to giving no forethought to what they are posting or its consequences. Ivester's concern is validated by a recent high profile case of a young woman costing her dad an \$80,000 settlement in a lawsuit by publically telling the sued corporation to "Suck It" on Facebook shortly after the court order was made [21]. Her comments violated the confidentiality clause in the agreement and led to the withdrawal of the award (Stucker).

Fifty percent of high school and college students say they have been the target of cyber-bullying [7]. Although similar to other forms of bullying in many ways, there does appear to be an evolving quality to web-based bullying that makes it hard to understand, anticipate and regulate. The number of hours that teenagers (age 16-18) engage in media technology is staggering (3 to 6 hours each day) [22], and the

majority of that time they are engaged in conversation. Conversation flows both positive and negative, however, in recent years bullying has crept into the everyday activity of the internet and these interactions are generally not monitored by parents or high school or college officials.

Cyber-bullying is accomplished through multiple mediums, such as text messages, internet chat rooms, Blogs, and social networks such as Facebook and Juicy Campus. On the surface, these appear to be a good idea because they allow the opportunity for large numbers of people to communicate, process information, problem solve and make contact with long distant friends [23].

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JuicyCampus, appears to have realized this when he killed his site and