![PEW/INTERNET — PEW INTERNET & AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT]

DATA MEMO

BY: Amanda Lenhart, Senior Research Specialist
RE: Cyberbullying and Online Teens
DATE: June 27, 2007

One in three online teens have experienced online harassment
Girls are more likely to be victims
But most teens say that they are more likely to be bullied offline than online

About one third (32%) of all teenagers who use the internet say they have been targets of a range of annoying and potentially menacing online activities – such as receiving threatening messages; having their private emails or text messages forwarded without consent; having an embarrassing picture posted without permission; or having rumors about them spread online.

Making Private Information Public Is the Most Common Form of Cyberbullying *Have you, personally, ever experienced any of the following things online?*		
	Yes	No
Someone taking a private email, IM, or text message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it	15%	85%
Someone spreading a rumor about you online	13%	87%
Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, IM, or text message	13%	87%
Someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission	6%	94%
Answered "yes" to any of the four previous questions	32%	68%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct- Nov. 2006. Based on online teens [n=886]. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%.

Depending on the circumstances, these harassing or "cyberbullying" behaviors may be truly threatening, merely annoying or relatively benign. But several patterns are clear: girls are more likely than boys to be targets; and teens who share their identities and thoughts online are more likely to be targets than are those who lead less active online lives.

Of all the online harassment asked about, the greatest number of teens told us that they had had a private communication forwarded or publicly posted without their permission. One in 6 teens (15%) told us someone had forwarded or posted communication they assumed was private. About 13% of teens told us that someone had spread a rumor about them online, and another 13% said that someone had sent them a threatening or aggressive email, IM or text message. Some 6% of online teens told us that someone had posted an embarrassing picture of them without their permission.

Yet when asked where they thought bullying happened most often to teens their age, the majority of teens, 67%, said that bullying and harassment happens more *offline* than online. Less than one in three teens (29%) said that they thought that bullying was more likely to happen online, and three percent said they thought it happened both online and offline equally.

These results come from a nationally-representative phone survey of 935 teenagers by the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

In focus groups conducted by the Project about the issue, one 16-year-old girl casually described how she and her classmates bullied a fellow student: "There's one MySpace from my school this year. There's this boy in my anatomy class who everybody hates. He's like the smart kid in class. Everybody's jealous. They all want to be smart. He always wants to work in our group and I hate it. And we started this thing, some girl in my class started this I Hate [Name] MySpace thing. So everybody in school goes on it to comment bad things about this boy."

The gender gap
Girls are more likely than boys to say that they have ever experienced cyberbullying – 38% of online girls report being bullied, compared with 26% of online boys. Older girls in particular are more likely to report being bullied than any other age and gender group, with 41% of online girls ages 15 to 17 reporting these experiences. Teens who use social network sites like MySpace and Facebook and teens who use the internet daily are also more likely to say that they have been cyberbullied. Nearly 4 in 10 social network users (39%) have been cyberbullied in someway, compared with 22% of online teens who do not use social networks.

Older Girls Are the Group Most Likely to Report Experiencing Some Form of Cyberbullying	
Girls 15-17 [n=252]	41%*
Boys 15-17 [n=237]	29%
Girls 12-14 [n=195]	34%
Boys 12-14 [n=202]	22%

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct-Nov. 2006. Based on online teens [n=886]. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%. * indicates statistically significant difference.*

Fewer communications are private anymore
The most commonly experienced bullying is having someone take a private email, IM or text message and forwarding it on to someone else or posting the communication publicly. Nearly 1 in 6 (15%) of online teens said they had experienced unwanted forwarding of private

communication. Older teens (ages 15-17) say they are more likely to have had someone forward or publicly post private messages – 18% of older teens have experienced this, compared with 11% of younger teens.

The rumor mill speeds up
A bit more than one in eight or 13% of teens said that someone had spread a rumor about them online. A girl in middle school told us: "I know a lot of times online someone will say something about one person and it'll spread and then the next day in school, I know there's like one of my friends, something happened online and people started saying she said something that she never said, and the next day we came into school and no one would talk to her and everyone's ignoring her. And she had no idea what was going on. Then someone sent her the whole conversation between these two people."

Girls are more likely to report someone spreading rumors about them than boys, with 16% of girls reporting rumor-spreading compared with 9% of boys. Social network users are more likely than those who do not use social networks to report that someone had spread a rumor about them (16% vs. 8%).

Online Rumors Tend to Target Girls		
Have you, personally, ever experienced any of the following things online?		
	Boys	*Girls*
Someone taking a private email, IM, or text message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it	13%	17%
Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, IM, or text message	10%	15%
Someone spreading a rumor about you online	9%	16%*
Someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission	5%	7%
At least one of the forms of cyber bullying listed above	23%	36%*

*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct- Nov. 2006. Based on online teens [n=886]. Margin of error for the overall sample is ±4%. * indicates statistically significant difference.*

Older girls receive more online threats
One in eight online teens (13%) reported that someone had sent them a threatening or aggressive email, instant message or text message. One fifteen-year-old boy in a focus group admitted, "I played a prank on someone but it wasn't serious …I told them I was going to come take them from their house and kill them and throw them in the woods. It's the best prank because it's like 'oh my god, I'm calling the police' and I was like 'I'm just kidding, I was just messing with you.' She got so scared though."

Older teens, particularly 15- to 17-year-old girls, are more like to report that they have received a threatening email or message. Overall, 9% of online teens ages 12-14 say they have been threatened via email, IM or text, while 16% of online teens ages 15-17 report similar harassment.

Among older girls, 19% have received threatening or aggressive email, IMs or text messages. Social network users are more likely than those who do not use social networks to report that someone had sent them a threatening or aggressive email (16% vs. 8%).

Um, I swear that is not me
Fewer teens, some 6%, reported that someone had posted an embarrassing picture of them online without their permission. Not surprisingly, given the number of photos posted on social networking websites, users of those sites are more likely to report that someone had posted embarrassing pictures of them online without their permission –9% of social network users reported this, compared with just 2% of those who do not use social networking sites. Similarly, teens who post photos themselves are more likely to report that someone has posted an embarrassing photo of them without their permission. One 17-year-old boy explained "I'm not a big fan of MySpace. Well, I got in trouble from one of them at my school… I had one and they [other friends] put a bad picture up there [on her page] and I got in a little trouble at school... Some girl just put up like pictures of us on New Year's Eve and the Dean saw it."

Intense internet users are bullied more
Online teens who have created content for the internet – for instance, by authoring blogs, uploading photos, sharing artwork or helping others build websites – are more likely to report cyberbullying and harassment than their peers. Content creators are also more likely to use social networks – places to create and display and receive feedback on content creations, and social network users are also more likely to be cyberbullied.

Do Social Networks Facilitate Cyber-Bullying?		
Have you, personally, ever experienced any of the following things online?	*Social Network User*	*Non-Social Network User*
Someone taking a private email, IM, or text message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it	17%	12%
Someone spreading a rumor about you online	16%*	8%
Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, IM, or text message	16%*	8%
Someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission	9%*	2%
At least one of the forms of cyber bullying listed above	39%*	23%

*Pew Internet & American Life Project Parents and Teens Survey, Oct- Nov. 2006. Based on social network users [n=493] and non-social network users (n=393). Margin of error is between ±3% and ±5%. * indicates statistically significant difference.*

Bullying happens more often offline
Two-thirds of all teens (67%) said that bullying and harassment happens more *offline* than online. Fewer than one in three teens (29%) said that they thought that bullying was more likely to happen online, and 3% said they thought it happened both online and offline equally.

Girls are a bit more likely than boys to say that bullying happens more online (33% of girls vs. 25% of boys), though overall, both boys and girls say that kids their age are more likely to be harassed offline. White teens are bit more likely than African-American teens to think that bullying is more of a problem online – 32% of white teens said bullying happens more often online, while 18% of African-American teens said the same. Teens who have online profiles are just as likely as those who do not to say that bullying happens more often offline.

Teen who have been cyberbullied are more likely than their peers who have not been bullied to say that they believe bullying happens online more than offline. However, the majority of bullied teens say that bullying is more likely to happen offline than online. More than 7 in 10 (71%) of teens who have not experienced bullying believe it happens more often offline, while 57% of teens who have been cyberbullied themselves say bullying happens more offline.

Why do teens bully online?
In our focus groups, we asked teens about online experiences they had with bullying and harassment. In some cases what we heard was that adolescent cruelty had simply moved from the school yard, the locker room, the bathroom wall and the phone onto the internet. The simplicity of being able to replicate and quickly transmit digital content makes bullying quite easy. "Just copy and paste whatever somebody says," a middle school girl explains as she describes online bullying tactics. "You have to watch what you say…" counsels another middle school girl. "If that person's at their house and if you say something about them and you don't know they're there or if you think that person's your friend and you trust them and you're like, 'Oh, well, she's really being annoying,' she could copy and paste and send it to [anyone]…" Another middle school girl describes how the manipulation of digital materials can be used to hurt someone. "Like I was in a fight with a girl and she printed out our conversation, changed some things that I said, and brought it into school, so I looked like a terrible person."

Some teens suggested that it is the mediated nature of the communication that contributes to bullying, insulating teens from the consequences of their actions. One high school boy responded to the question whether he had heard of cyberbullying: "I've heard of it and experienced it. People think they are a million times stronger because they can hide behind their computer monitor. Also known as 'e-thugs.' Basically I just ignored the person and went along with my own civilized business." A middle school girl described "stuff starting online for no reason."

Intolerance also sparks online bullying incidents, as a middle school girl related in a focus group. "I have this one friend and he's gay and his account got hacked and someone put all these really homophobic stuff on there and posted like a mass bulletin of like some guy with his head smashed open like run over by a car. It was really gruesome and disgusting."

Bullying has entered the digital age. The impulses behind it are the same, but the effect is magnified. In the past, the materials of bullying would have been whispered, shouted or passed around. Now, with a few clicks, a photo, video or a conversation can be shared with hundreds via email or millions through a website, online profile or blog posting.

Methodology
This report draws on two main research project methodologies – a telephone survey of teens and parents, and a series of focus group discussions with teens. The Parents & Teens 2006 Survey sponsored by the Pew Internet and American Life Project obtained telephone interviews with a nationally representative call-back sample of 935 teens age 12 to 17 years-old and their parents living in continental United States telephone households. The telephone sample was pulled from previous Pew Internet Project surveys fielded in 2004, 2005, and 2006. Households with a child age 18 or younger were called back and screened to find 12- to 17-year-olds. The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International. The interviews were done in English by Princeton Data Source, LLC, from October 23 to November 19, 2006. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ±3.7%. The response rate for the full survey is 46% of the previously interviewed households.

A total of 7 focus groups were conducted with youth in June 2006. Three of the groups were conducted in an East Coast city and three were conducted in a Midwestern city. One focus group was conducted online, with high schoolers and a mix of boys and girls. The other six groups were single gender, and interviewed 7th and 8th graders, 9th and 10th graders and 11th and 12th graders, one each of boys and girls for each grade group.

About the Pew Internet & American Life Project
The Pew Internet Project is a non-partisan, non-profit research center that examines the social impact of the internet. It is part of the Pew Research Center and is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Learn more about the Project at our website: http://www.pewinternet.org.

Question language

Parents & Teens 2006 Survey   Final Topline   12/01/06

Data for October 23 – November 19, 2006

Princeton Survey Research Associates International
for the Pew Internet & American Life Project

Sample: *n* = 935 parents of 12-17 year-olds
        935 12-17 year-olds [886 online teens, 49 offline teens]
Interviewing dates: 10.23.06 – 11.19.06
Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on all parents
Margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points for results based on parents of online teens
Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on all teens
Margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points for results based on online teens

Teen Interview

K1a   Do you use the internet, at least occasionally?
K1b   Do you send or receive email, at least occasionally?

	CURRENT		OCT/NOV 2004[1]
%	93	Yes	87
	7	No	13
	0	Don't know/Refused	*

K7   We're interested in the kinds of things you do when you use the internet. Not everyone has done these things. Please just tell me whether you ever do each one, or not. Do you ever...?

Based on online teens

		YES, DO THIS	NO, DO NOT	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
g	Use an online social networking site like MySpace or Facebook			
	Current	55	45	0

[Questions omitted]

---

[1] Trend question prior to 2006 was "Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive email?"

K19 Have you, personally, ever experienced any of the following things online? You can just tell me yes or no.

Based on online teens [N=886]

		YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
a	Someone spreading a rumor about you online	13	87	0
b	Someone posting an embarrassing picture of you online without your permission	6	94	*
c	Someone sending you a threatening or aggressive email, instant message or text message	13	87	0
d	Someone taking a private email, IM or text message you sent them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see it	15	85	*
	Yes to any	32		

PRIV5 Where do you, personally, think someone your age is more likely to be bullied or harassed? Do you think that's more likely to happen ONLINE, or more likely to happen OFFLINE, in your daily life?

Based on online teens [N=886]

	CURRENT	
%	29	Happens more often ONLINE
	67	Happens more often OFFLINE
	3	(VOL) Both equally
	1	Don't know/Refused