The Role of Parental Mediation in Online Behavior of Children and Adolescents

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Background

Parents

• Primary agent of children’s socialization (Cariuana & Vassallo, 2003; Maccoby, 1992)

• A crucial role in children’s interaction with the media (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Lwin et al., 2008).

• Effective strategy to protect children from negative media influence (e.g. Livingstone et al, 2011).
Research Objectives

• Examining the effectiveness of different parental mediation strategies on protection of children & adolescents online

• Refining parental mediation theory in the context of: cyberbullying, cyber addiction, online harassment etc.
Context: Singapore

• A highly technophilic society
• More than one computer per home
• More than 100% mobile penetration
• Findings from my most recent study on child leisure activities
• Generally highly involved parents
Parental mediation research has started to examine how parental mediation influence children’s media use two decades ago.
Parental Mediation in the television age

Three general strategies

• Active mediation
• Restrictive mediation
• Co-viewing

Nathanson; Valkenburg, et al. 1999
Parental Mediation in the television age

Outcomes

- Enhancing children’s understanding of television programs
- Mitigating the negative socialization outcomes:
  - Television-induced aggressive inclination
  - Advertising induced materialistic attitudes
  - Psychological symptoms

Austin, 1993; Cantor & Wilson, 2003; Nathanson, 1999
Parental Mediation in the digital age

Parental mediation research explore the effects of parental mediation on children’s Internet use

Two general strategies
- Active mediation
- Restrictive mediation

Lwin et al, 2007, 2008; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Mesch, 2009
Research on Parental Mediation of social media use examined the influence of parental mediation on children’s social media use.
Summary of Parent Typology Framework

Four Types of Clusters

Active mediation

Restrictive mediation

Study Two
Parental Mediation

- **Restrictive Mediation**
  - parents setting limits for viewing or prohibit the viewing of certain content. (e.g., Atkin et al. 1991; Valkenburg et al. 1999).

- **Active Mediation**
  - aspects of activities are discussed with children, either during or after viewing (e.g., Kaye 1979; Logan and Moody 1979).

### Active-Restrictive Mediation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restrictive Mediation</th>
<th>Active Mediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Selectives (SL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Restrictives (RS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Promotives (PM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Laissez Faire (LF)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two other factors to consider


Sensitivity of Information

Contextual e.g. PIDs

Regulatory Environment

The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)
Safeguards

• COPPA Requirements
  – Myriad of safeguards recommended
  – 40% of the Web sites surveyed only use warnings reminding the children not to register when they are not of the stated age.
  – there were no other screening mechanisms that prevented a child below the age of 13 from registering (Center for Media Education 2001).
Method

• A 2 x 2 x 3 (Active Mediation x Restrictive Mediation x Type of Safeguards) quasi factorial design was used to investigate the influence on disclosure for low and high sensitive conditions.

• Altogether 24 conditions, with 20 – 22 respondents per cell.

• Safeguards manipulated based on assessment of 30 Websites: **Barrier** (Consent), **Warning** (Under 13) and **No** Safeguard Conditions.

• Parental Mediation measured based on child answers.
Parental Mediation Items

- Scale developed based on a pilot sample of 50 children.
- 31 items (see example) reduced to a smaller set of two groups, Active and Restrictive) based on factor analysis.
- To improve comprehension, sentences are kept short, language kept simple and font sizes relatively large.
Data Collection

• Children in grade school (Grade 5)
• Median Age: 10.7 years
• 633 participated, 495 usable responses
• Even split between boys/girls
• Children were given scenarios involving surfing on the Internet and chancing upon an attractive online membership.
Findings

Sensitive Information

Parental Mediation Groups

- Laissez Faire
- Restrictive
- Promotive
- Selective

Disclosure

- No Safeguard
- Warning
- Barrier
Findings

Non-Sensitive Information

Parental Mediation Groups
- Disclosures
  - No Safeguard
  - Warning
  - Barrier

Laissez Faire
- 3.77
- 3.3
- 3.25

Restrictive
- 3.74
- 3.3
- 3.24

Promotive
- 3.74
- 3.4
- 3.36

Selective
- 3.5
- 3.5
- 3.36

Graph showing the comparison of different parental mediation groups (Laissez Faire, Restrictive, Promotive, Selective) with different levels of disclosure (No Safeguard, Warning, Barrier) with numerical values for each category.
Children vs. Adolescents
Ages 7-13 — Ages 14-17

• The importance of parents’ role in the socialization of children **declines** as children grow older (Maccby, 2007).

• Children are more likely to accept parental mediation than adolescents (Lwin, et al, 2008).

Discussion

- Sensitive Info
  - Active Mediation, either alone (Promotives) or in combination with Restrictive Mediation (the Selectives) is most effective in protecting children.
  - These groups clearly responded to barrier safeguards—perhaps Active Mediation leads to greater obedience when it comes to valid threat of barrier.
  - Children with low mediation of both types (Laissez Faires) consistently reported highest disclosure levels under each type of safeguard.
Discussion

• Less Sensitive Info
  – Presence or absence of safeguards has no significant effect on the Promotives or the Selective groups – possibly indicating that Active Mediation educates children to differentiate the types of information.
  – Children with low mediation of both types (Laissez Faires) under the barrier safeguard disclosed significantly more information than other safeguard conditions.
Some thoughts

• Our findings support the implementation of more active barrier safeguards to ensure a basic level of protection.

• Alternate methods to consider: e.g., screening mechanisms that automatically delete data when respondent is not appropriate age.

• Enhance barriers for under 16 and under 12s that are linked to parental approval??
Possible actions?

• Educating parents about how they can guide children (i.e. see items). Guiding parents to be Selectives or at least Promotives as early as possible (at an appropriate age of child).

• Educating parents about what exactly is sensitive data.

• Schools can also play a role in child education (teacher mediation).

• More targeting of different types of parents in cybersafety campaigns.

• Guiding parents to use effective strategies for children at various child ages – potential online cyber education sessions to teach active mediation methods?
# List of Mediation Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Set rules about the sites you visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Set rules regarding the time of day you are allowed to go online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Set rules regarding the kind of activities you can do online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Set rules about the amount of time you can spend online each day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tell you about the kind of information you can disclose online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Allow you to go online only when an adult is present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Set rules about the types of file you can download online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Allow you to go online only when you are at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Restrict the things you want to buy online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Set rules regarding your access to chatrooms, IRC/ICQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Restrict you to meet your online friends face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Allow you to go online only for schoolwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Allow you to only use certain search engines e.g. google etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Install filtering software such as Netnanny in the computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Keep an eye on what you are doing online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Disable cookies on the computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Educate you about the dangers of the Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Remind you not to give out information online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sit down and surf the Internet with you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Keep the computer in a central family location (for e.g. living room, dining area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Check the computer hard disks and floppy disks for types of files you download</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Make an effort to know your online friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Tell you to show them emails you have received and are not comfortable with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Require you to inform them before giving out personal information online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Discuss the contents of an Internet page with you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Teach you to end any experience online when you feel uncomfortable or scared by logging off etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Discuss the difference between educational and entertaining content and show you examples of each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Accompany you in chat rooms until they think you are ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Explain to you that people are not always who they say they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Teach you to block instant/personal messages from people you do not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Regularly check your ICQ/chatroom buddy list to ensure that it has not been altered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank You
Questions & Suggestions