

NCVS Pretesting Activities on the Proposed Internet Predation Questions: Focus Group Results

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Executive Summary

The Bureau of Justice Statistics has proposed the addition of Internet predation questions to the National Crime Victimization Survey. These questions would be asked of all children between the ages of 12 and 17 years old in the sampled household. These questions collect information about contacts with online strangers. In October of 2006 staff at the U.S. Census Bureau conducted cognitive interviews to pretest these proposed questions (Beck & DeMaio, 2007). The pretesting revealed that these questions were problematic and required additional revisions and pretesting. To gather more information on how to revise these questions, we conducted two focus groups: one all-boys group and one all-girls group. This report details the findings from those focus groups. With these focus groups, we gathered a great deal of useful information that helped us further refine the questions. Our main findings include:

- ◆ “Social networking sites” is a more appropriate reference term than “online communities” for sites like MySpace, Facebook, and Xanga.

The pretested questionnaire referenced these sites as “online communities,” which led to misinterpretations and some response errors. Our focus groups participants felt that “social networking sites” is a more straightforward term and is consistent with the function of these sites.

- ◆ Focus group participants did not express the same reticence at reporting online stranger contacts as participants in the cognitive interviews.

The focus group participants indicated that they would report any unwanted contact with online strangers.

- ◆ Survey respondents may not report in-scope contacts when a perceived relationship exists with the online stranger, or the relationship progresses into “off-line” communication.

If the respondent has some degree of trust and is complicit in developing the relationship, he or she may not report these contacts.

NCVS Pretesting Activities on the Proposed Internet Predation Question: Focus Group Results and Recommendations for Question Revisions

In September of 2006, the Bureau of Justice Statistics developed plans to add questions on Internet Predation to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). These questions would be asked of all NCVS respondents between the ages of 12 and 17 years old. In October of 2006 staff in the Statistical Research Division of the U.S. Census Bureau conducted cognitive interviews to pretest these proposed questions (see Appendix A for a copy of the pretested questions). The pretesting revealed that these questions were quite problematic, and we recommended additional pretesting activities to further refine these questions. In March and April of 2007 we conducted focus groups to collect information on how teens think about their internet activities. We intended to use the information we gathered in the focus group to re-organize the questions and change any problematic terms and concepts. This report summarizes the results of these two focus groups and presents recommendations for modifying the questions.

Method

Participants

We conducted two gender-isolated focus groups: one all-male group and one all-female group. Because of the sensitive nature of the topics we would be discussing, we were concerned that participants might feel uncomfortable discussing these topics among peers of the opposite sex.

We did not collect detailed demographic characteristics on our participants. We collected information on their level in school (a rough estimate of age), where they attended school (urban or more rural locations), and race. We conducted the first focus group with three male participants at a 4H Facility in Montgomery County, MD. We conducted our second focus group with five female participants in a private meeting room at a public library in Northwest Washington, D.C. Table 1 summarizes this basic information.

Table 1: Characteristics of the focus group participants.

School Level	Race	School Location
Focus Group 1		
7 th Grader	White	Junior High in Montgomery Co, MD
8 th Grader	White	High School in Montgomery Co, MD
11 th Grader	White	High School in Montgomery Co, MD
Focus Group 2		
10 th Grader	African American	High School, Washington, DC
10 th Grader	African American	High School, Washington, DC
10 th Grader	African American	High School, Washington, DC
10 th Grader	African American	High School, Washington, DC
11 th Grader	African American	High School, Washington, DC

Internet Experience

To get a sense of our participants' internet experience and familiarity with the internet, at the start the focus group, we asked both groups of participants to disclose how often they "go online." All of our participants indicated that they went online "everyday" or "almost everyday." The boys indicated that they tended to use the internet intermittently, meaning they would be on and offline over a period of approximately an hour. With the exception of one female participant, the girls indicated that they spent longer periods accessing the internet, several consecutive hours each day, than did the boys. However, both groups of participants reported engaging in similar activities while online. These activities included:

- Browsing websites and doing searches (for research or for leisure)
- Downloading music
- Gaming
- Checking e-mail
- Instant messaging with friends
- Visiting and communicating through social networking sites

Internet access

For gaining access to the internet, most of the participants either had a computer in their bedrooms or had a laptop that they could take to their room. Two participants indicated that they did not have computers in their room, but instead they shared a computer that was located in a common area of the house. The participants primarily accessed the internet at home, and in their bedrooms, if possible.

Protocol

Two staff members from the Statistical Research Division moderated both focus groups.¹ We structured the groups around open dialogue and had relatively few structured probes to guide the discussion. We encouraged all of our participants to contribute to the discussion, and singled out respondents who were less vocal so that they could also contribute to the discussion. Our protocol was largely centered around the content of the questions we had previously pretested. We wanted to elicit our participants' impressions of their internet activities, and how they think about these types of activities. More specifically we were looking for threads in our discussion that would help us understand how to rephrase problematic terms and disambiguate internet activities in the original pretested question. Our discussion points included:

- Defining online activities;
- Classifying examples of online contacts as in-scope or out-of-scope; and
- Discussing confidentiality, privacy, and the willingness to report in-scope activities.

Appendix B contains a copy of our focus group guide. In the following sections we detail the results of our discussion and our recommended changes to the questionnaire based on the information we collected in these focus groups.

Defining Online Activities

From the initial round of cognitive testing it became apparent that the terminology in the original questions was problematic for our respondents. These problems primarily arose because the respondents had flexible boundaries between their concepts of internet activities. In the initial cognitive testing these interpretations led respondents to report the same internet activity in multiple response categories. Given this confusion, the primary goal of the focus groups was to get a clearer picture of how teens conceptualize different online activities. This information would then help to determine what changes could be made to the questions that will help solidify the conceptual boundaries between different activities.

Much of the discussion during the two groups concerned these online activities. We presented both sets of focus group participants with a list of the online activities that were the response options in Q3a of the pretested questionnaire (see Appendix A). This question asked respondents to identify the source of reported in-scope contacts (i.e., did someone ask the respondent to send a picture of himself or herself via e-mail). For each of the online activities in the question, we asked the focus group participants to provide their definition of the activity, indicate if they participate in the activity, and describe what the activity entails. We also asked participants to share any contacts they might have had with "online strangers" through any of these activities.

Visiting "online communities," such as MySpace, Facebook, and Xanga

We gathered the most information about these types of sites during our focus group discussions. Most notably from this discussion, we learned that social networking sites seem to pose the greatest source of vulnerability. Because these sites rely on online profiles, unless the user knows the respondents outside of the networking site context, it is not possible to know the true identity of the people with whom they are communicating. A user can easily misrepresent himself or herself. Although these sites do allow the user to block unwanted communications, it is still possible engage in contact with someone who has chosen to misrepresent himself or herself.

¹ Jennifer Beck and Theresa DeMaio

Across both groups, our participants varied in their usage of these sites. Six of our eight focus group participants had at least one personal page on a social networking site. Three participants had a page on more than one site, and one participant had a page on three sites. Two participants did not have a page on any of these sites but were still familiar with social networking sites and had at least a cursory understanding of their capabilities. Overall, our female participants indicated much heavier usage of these types of sites, which accounted for the majority of their internet activity.

These sites allow users to create an autobiographical sketch that includes their name, school, grade or year, zodiac sign, likes and dislikes, a self-description and body type, and ideal mate qualities. Social networking sites also allow users to post pictures and invite other members to look at them, and watch movies, TV shows, and videos. Because of the seemingly endless amount of personal information users can add, one boy indicated that some people use these sites as a dating tool.

Some of the problems we observed in the first round of cognitive interviews resulted from the versatility of these networking sites. These sites have multifunctional capabilities that may have led to our cognitive interview respondents' confusion on exactly how to report the source of in-scope online encounters. For example, it is possible to communicate with other users through posted comments on the user's own page or someone else's page, through public or private messages to other users (an e-mail-like message that only the owner of the page can see). Some sites even have "instant messaging" capabilities that allow you to communicate with other users in "real time." These multiple functions may make it difficult for kids to specify exactly what they were doing online if they had an in-scope encounter.

A second problem we observed in the cognitive interviews was confusion resulting from the term "online communities" (Beck & DeMaio, 2007). This term was overly general, and could have been easily confused with sites like Yahoo or Google. We asked our first focus group participants to tell us their definition of the term "online community," and what other term they might use to describe these sites. The boys defined an "online community" as "people getting together and talking – like in a chat room on IM." After further discussion, the boys also revealed that they believed that this type of back-and-forth talking with more than one person over an Instant Messaging program would be both a "chat room" and an "online community." This concept of online community also might lead respondents to confuse chat rooms and "online communities." Completely stripped of a question context in the focus groups, the term online community seemed even more problematic, conveying the wrong conceptual meaning.

We asked the boys to give a term they thought would best describe these types of sites. Although they had difficulty expressing the right term, they were clear that "online communities" was not appropriate. The boys suggested "biographical sites," which they thought was too generic, and "communicating sites," which they also thought was insufficiently descriptive.

Because it was important to come up with the right term for these types of sites, we did some research to find some colloquial references for these types of sites before we conducted the second focus group. We were looking for a term that would be more familiar to respondents and would cue them to the correct interpretation. Previous research on teen internet activities has referred to these types of sites as "social networking sites" (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). We asked the girls in our second focus group if they thought this was a good term, and they agreed that it was much more informative than "online community." "Social networking sites" seems consistent with the activities our participants said they engaged in while visiting these sites, such as "keeping up with friends."

We also noticed that the various media (such as television, newspapers, and radio) also have adopted this term when referring to these types of sites.

Given the versatility and anonymity of social networking sites, as part of our discussion of these types of sites we wanted to find out if any of our participants had experienced any unwanted contact from online strangers. Although none of our participants had experienced any in-scope contacts through these sites, they had experienced contact attempts from online strangers. The girls said they periodically get “friend” requests, requests to be able to view and communicate with someone through his or her page, on these sites from people they don’t know, either because the requester has mistaken her for someone else, is a classmate she doesn’t know, or is a friend of a friend. The girls said they sometimes will deny these requests for friendship from people that they don’t know after visiting the requester’s page and verifying that person’s identity. For one of the girls, this request came from a man in his thirties who lived in another state. She denied this person’s request. One of the boys reported a similar experience. In general these teens knew to be cautious of such requests.

However, our discussion of these social networking sites also revealed new potential problems. One focus group participant indicated that a friend has been having a relationship with a man she met through her MySpace page. She has never met this person face-to-face, but the relationship has evolved into phone contact. This person has asked the girl to come visit him out-of-state. According to the focus group participant, both her friend and this “online stranger” were 17 at the time they started communicating. They now communicate over the phone. However, since neither this participant nor the friend have met this young man in person, it is not possible to confirm his true identity and age. The focus group participant indicated that her friend trusts this person, and therefore, would not consider this contact to be in-scope. This issue of trust or a perceived relationship with online strangers also came up during the cognitive interviews. One respondent said her willingness to report these types of contact would be dependent upon “how much I like [the person].”

Secondary to the issue of complicity in the perceived relationship is the issue of contacts that escalate beyond online communication. As in the example of the focus group participant’s friend, respondents also may fail to report in-scope contacts because the relationship has progressed beyond online communication. In other words the strict reference to reporting contact with people known *only* online might exclude relationships that began through social networking sites or e-mail and progressed to phone and in-person contacts. Because respondents now know the “online stranger” outside of an online context, there is the potential for them to classify these types of contacts incorrectly.

Differentiating social networking sites

In addition to finding the appropriate reference term for these types of sites, an additional goal was to be able to differentiate these types of sites from other types of online activities. We asked participants about other online activities in the original Q3a response options. In particular, we wanted to clarify if personal web pages and multifunctional search engines like Yahoo and Google would be potential competitors and interfere with correct classification. One respondent in our cognitive interviews classified Yahoo as an “online community.”

Personal web pages

Our two focus groups had different interpretations of personal web pages. The boys did not feel that a personal web pages was the same as a page on a social networking site. One of the boys said a

personal web page was “basically MySpace but with more security.” The boys believed that a personal web page was more private and secure than a social networking page, but less restricted in terms of structure and content. They also indicated that the personal page is less interactive than MySpace, as it restricts the posting of comments and content to the “page administrator.” However, the girls felt like these two internet activities were the same. They defined a personal web page as “everything that you need to know about yourself – advertising [yourself on a page].”

The intended interpretation of these types of sites is the interpretation the boys adopted: personal pages with limited access that users construct from the bottom-up using computer programming language. However, we suspect that this discrepant interpretation was due to the boys’ familiarity with creating personal web pages. One of the boys had taken a class on how to create a personal webpage, and two of the boys, who were brothers, indicated that their family had a personal web page chronicling all of the happenings of family members. The girls seemed less savvy with web design. They expressed a preference to use something like MySpace because the construction and platform were already in place.

Yahoo and Google

We also attempted to differentiate sites like Yahoo and Google from social networking sites. Both groups of participants felt that social networking sites were qualitatively different from Yahoo or Google. They felt the latter were more like “search engines,” “information sites,” or a “dictionary.” In other words, participants saw these sites as information repositories and not primarily as a place for “social networking.” Changing the reference term to “social networking sites” should help to further differentiate these separate activities.

The discussion of personal web pages and sites like Yahoo and Google helped clarify how we might disentangle these sites. Specifically, “online communities” does not seem to be the most appropriate term to refer to sites like MySpace and Facebook. Also, the discussion of personal web pages suggests that the term “personal web page” is still potentially problematic with some respondents. One recommendation to fix the ambiguity of “online communities” would be to change this reference term to “social networking sites.” Using a more salient term would prevent confusion with other similar sites like Google and Yahoo. However, using a different term will not prevent the conceptual confusion between social networking sites and personal web pages. An additional recommendation to address this potential confusion would be to remove this response option from the larger set of responses in Question 3a and ask it in a separate question.

Instant Messaging and Chat Rooms

The discussion in our focus groups also revealed potential confusion between chat rooms and instant messaging (IMing). At one point during our discussion of “online communities,” the first focus group seemed to categorize instant messaging as synonymous with “being in a chat room.” This perception seemed to be based on the fact that both platforms facilitate back-and-forth communication between people in real time. Given that some IM platforms allow for more than two people at a time and label these multi-person communications as “chat rooms,” the potential for confusion is apparent. However, these boys did acknowledge that IMing could be restricted to only people you know -- other users of the same IM platform. The boys also were able to acknowledge that they knew traditional chat rooms existed. Our second focus group did not seem to have the same conceptualization. In contrast, the girls seemed to view IMing and chat rooms as different entities.

From our discussion it is unclear if the similarities between these two sites will lead to response errors in reports of chat room and IM contacts in an actual survey interview. It is important to note that we presented these activities in list format, without the question context, which could lead to greater confusion. It also is unclear how we might disentangle these concepts for the survey respondents. One recommendation would be to revise the response options to include examples of the platforms: “Instant messaging on AIM, Yahoo, MSN, etc.” However, because some of these platforms label IMing as “chat rooms” when they involve more than two people, this specificity will not prevent double reporting. Another recommendation would be to combine both response options, because participants most likely will not distinguish these two concepts.

Other Internet activities: Emailing, blogging, gaming, and surfing the internet

In addition to asking participants to discuss social networking sites, we also asked both groups of participants to discuss other online activities. These activities included e-mailing, blogging, gaming, and surfing the internet. All of our participants were familiar with these activities.

E-mailing

Because our participants primarily used instant messaging to communicate with friends, they did not use e-mail very frequently. Our respondents also did occasionally receive spam e-mails from people they don’t know, but did not pay any attention to these emails or otherwise think they should report such messages in this kind of survey.

Blogging

Participants were less familiar with blogging. Although they were able to come up with rudimentary descriptions of this activity, participants in both groups were not very familiar with how to blog. Our respondents were most familiar with blogging in the context of a social networking site. MySpace has a function labeled “blogging” that allows users to post content that would be similar to traditional blog sites. However, despite not having thorough knowledge about traditional blogs and blogging sites, this term does not seem problematic. Having “social networking sites” in a separate question will help to reduce potential confusion between traditional blogging sites and blogs on a social network page.

Gaming

Gaming was also an activity that was familiar to both focus groups. However, as the boys pointed out, gaming is a broad term that implies video games played only on a video console, as well as online gaming. The distinction between these two types of gaming is important because online games and computer games allow for chats and communications with other players. Certain games allow the user to play against other users and communicate in real time using chat rooms. Although the boys seemed to indicate that it was important to distinguish between these two different types of gaming (one type in-scope and one type out-of-scope), we presented these activities without a question context that would clarify the reference to online gaming. We do not anticipate this distinction to be a problem to survey respondents, and, therefore, would not recommend modifying this response option.

Our participants also indicated that during gaming chats, gamers do attempt to “get off topic.” Some participants will try to get to know the other gamers and not restrict their comments to the game and game strategy. None of the participants indicated that they engaged in this off-topic conversation. It is not clear from our discussion if any of the participants would report any contacts that escalated beyond an attempt to take the gaming conversation off topic.

Surfing the internet

Although our participants were familiar with “surfing the internet,” this term also seemed to be too general. The term could imply other online activities. Our participants seemed to view a number of their specific online activities as “surfing the internet.” For example, the boys indicated that they “surf the net” while gaming in order to look up gaming sites.

There is also potential for confusion and misreporting of out-of-scope activities. Our participants also considered looking up information on sites like Google to be “surfing the internet.” Several of our participants related stories involving information searches that produced results with questionable or inappropriate content. Other participants indicated that questionable ads and pop-ups tend to happen when “surfing.” Although the focus group participants indicated that they tended to view these experiences as “accidental” and “actorless” exposure that is random and without an identifiable perpetrator, not all participants may be able to make this necessary distinction. This response option may trigger some survey respondents to report these out-of-scope contacts. Given the over-generality of this term and the potential to cue out-of-scope reports, one recommendation would be to delete this response option from this question.

Sending or Receiving text messages on a cell phone

None of the boys had a cell phone but all of the girls had one. These girls indicated that they cannot receive or send e-mail on their phones, but they could text message. Texting seemed more prevalent than actually talking on the phone. None of the girls had ever received a potentially in-scope text message.

Classifying Online Contacts

Toward the end of our discussions in the focus groups, we attempted to get a sense of how our participants might also view some of the in-scope contacts referenced in the previously tested questions. In the cognitive interviews we observed that some of the response options confused some respondents. We also noted that participants were not familiar with the term “cybersex.” There were two situations that could create response errors: “ask you to talk about having sex” and “ask you for sexual information about yourself.” Both focus groups understood that “sexual information” could include information such as sexual orientation, body type, and other physical descriptors. However, sexual information could also include sexual experience. Talking about sexual experience could also be classified as “talking about having sex.” Although participants seem to be aware that “ask you to talk about sex” means to talk about sexual activities with another person online, they also thought someone asking them if they were sexually active also qualified as “talking about having sex.” The confusion between these two response categories may lead to double reporting. Because respondents are not likely to make the appropriate distinction, one recommendation would be to combine these response options.

We also asked our participants about the term cybersex, which was a potential online contact in Q2 of the pretested questionnaire. We thought this term might be used to clarify “ask you to talk about having sex.” However, like our cognitive interview respondents, our focus group participants were not familiar with the term “cybersex.” “Cybersex” could have been eliminated as a separate response option and substituted in the place of “ask you to talk about having sex.” After defining this term for our focus group participants, they grouped it under the “ask you to talk about having sex” category. Because “cybersex” is not a familiar term to respondents and could be confused with other response options, we would recommend eliminating it as a response option.

Confidentiality

Our final goal of the focus groups was to find out more information on potential respondents' confidentiality concerns. In our cognitive interviews, respondents indicated that kids would be unlikely to report unwanted in-scope contacts with online strangers because it is both embarrassing and could potentially lead to trouble with parents or guardians. Assurances of the confidentiality of the data did not seem to affect this perception. Our focus group participants did not echo this same confidentiality concern. Both groups indicated that as long as their reports would be kept confidential and would not result in trouble, they would be willing to report these types of "unwanted" contacts in a survey. However, as noted earlier in this report, complicit contacts with online strangers might not be considered in-scope and would not be reported in this type of survey. An exception to this underreport might occur if a seemingly normal "online friendship" progressed in a direction that eventually made the person uncomfortable.

Conclusions

Through these two focus groups, we were able to gather information that will be useful when revising the Internet predation questions for additional pretesting. In the course of discussions in these groups, we discovered some key issues that are important to consider when making revisions to the questionnaire. First, the term "online communities" is unfamiliar and ambiguous. "Social networking sites" seems to be a less ambiguous term for sites like MySpace, Facebook, or Xanga. Changing this term will also help reduce the reporting errors we observed in the initial cognitive interviews. We also discovered that participants may not be as reticent to report unwanted online stranger contacts as the cognitive interviews suggested. Our focus group participants expressed a willingness to report unwanted online contacts in this type of survey, with one important exception; based on threads of discussion in the focus groups, we discovered that respondents who have some semblance of "trust" with an online stranger and are complicit in maintaining the online contact or allowing it to evolve into "offline" contact may not report these types of "in-scope" communications.

References

- Beck, J., & DeMaio, T. (2007). First round cognitive pretesting on the proposed Internet predation questions for the National Crime Victimization Survey: Results and recommendations. Study Series (Survey Methodology #2007-20), Statistical Research Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C.
- Lenhart, A., & Madden, M.. (2007). Social networking sites and teens: An overview. (Pew Internet and Family Life Report). Washington, D.C.

Q3a. When you had these kinds of contacts online, were you ...

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Visiting an online community such as MySpace, Facebook, or Xanga? | Yes | No |
| 2. Visiting your personal webpage? | Yes | No |
| 3. Instant messaging? | Yes | No |
| 4. Emailing? | Yes | No |
| 5. Surfing the Internet? | Yes | No |
| 6. Visiting a chat room? | Yes | No |
| 7. Blogging? | Yes | No |
| 8. Sending or receiving text messages on a cell phone? | Yes | No |
| 9. Doing something else? Please specify _____ | Yes | No |

Q3b. When you had these kinds of contacts online, were you ...

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. At home in your bedroom? | Yes | No |
| 2. At home in a family area? | Yes | No |
| 3. At School? | Yes | No |
| 4. At a friend's house? | Yes | No |
| 5. At a recreational center? | Yes | No |
| 6. At a public library? | Yes | No |
| 7. At a coffee shop or other public establishment? | Yes | No |
| 8. Somewhere else? Please specify _____ | Yes | No |

Q4a. Did you tell anyone about any of these contacts?

1. Yes-Ask 4b
2. No - END
3. Don't know - END

Q4b. Did you tell ...

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Your parents? | Yes | No |
| 2. Family members under age 18, such as brothers, sisters, or cousins? | Yes | No |
| 3. Adult family members, such as brothers, sisters, aunts, or uncles? | Yes | No |
| 4. Friends? | Yes | No |
| 5. Police officer? | Yes | No |
| 6. Teacher, coach, or school counselor? | Yes | No |
| 7. Clergy member such as a minister, priest, or rabbi? | Yes | No |
| 8. Someone else? Please specify _____ | Yes | No |

Appendix B: NCVS Internet Predation Questions Focus Group Protocol

Welcome! And thank you for being here and agreeing to participate in this discussion about online activities.

How many of you have ever participated in a focus group or group discussion like this before? I want to tell you a bit about today's session and lay down some ground rules.

Today, I want to find out how kids your age think about their internet activities. I am going to bring up a series of topics about internet activities. These topics will be somewhat general. I want you, as a group, to discuss each topic. Sometimes I may ask some detailed questions. I also might want to follow up on some things that you bring up. I am interested in everyone's opinions and ideas about the topics we discuss. There are no right or wrong answers. I encourage everyone to participate and to be as open and honest as possible.

My role is to "moderate" the discussion. I job is to bring up topics, ask you a few clarification questions, make sure everyone gets a chance to speak, and to help move along the discussion.

There are a few ground rules for participations:

- First, everyone is allowed to participate. Group discussion works best when everyone contributes, not just one person.
- Second, as I mentioned, I am interested in everyone's opinion. Everyone's opinion is important. Please be respectful of others' thoughts and opinions. This is an environment where you should feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and opinions.
- Third, please try not to interrupt when other participants are talking. I will do my best to make sure that everyone gets a chance to chime in.
- Finally, and most importantly, everything we talk about here today is confidential. I ask that you not share what we have talked about with other people outside this group.

Those are the ground rules. Any questions before we begin?

I. "Breaking the ice"

Let's start by me asking... how many of you "go online"?

I want to start off by talking about this term "going online"...

- Can you talk about what that means?
- How often do you go online? Where do you go to get online?
- What do you while you are online? (Get list of activities. Make note of anything not on the list to discuss)

II. Online Activities

(Hand out the list of activities)

Now I want talk more about specific online activities. I'm going to bring up a number of internet activities and I want you to talk about each one. While we are discussing these activities, I want you to keep in mind how these activities are similar and how they are different.

MySpace, Facebook, Xanga sometimes referred to as "online communities":

Points to facilitate discussion:

- What do you know about them? What are they?

- Do you use them?
- Which ones do you use? Which one's do you know about, but maybe don't use (probe anything else participants bring up)?
- What kinds of things can you do?
- What do you personally do on these sites?
- What about things like Yahoo and Google – do you consider these to be “online communities”?

Personal web pages:

Points to facilitate discussion:

- What do you know about these? What are they?
- Do you have one? Can you tell us about it?
- What kinds of information do you find on them?
- Is this like having a MySpace page? How is it the same/different?

“IMing”- Instant Messaging:

Points to facilitate discussion:

- What is this? What do you know about it?
- What types of IM programs/sites do you know about?
- How often do you do this?
- With whom do you IM?

Emailing:

Points to facilitate discussion:

- What is this? What do you know about it?
- What types of programs do you know about?
- How do you check your e-mail (in what ways/with what type of platform)?
- What about cell phones? Blackberry? Do you consider this “e-mailing”?

Visiting a chat room:

Points to facilitate discussion:

- What is this? What does it mean to visit a chat room?
- How many of you do this? Can you tell us about it?
- Where do you access chat rooms?
- What kinds of chat rooms are out there?
- With whom do you talk?

Blogging

Points to facilitate discussion:

- How many of you know what this means?
- Can anyone say what they think this is?
- How many of you do this? Can you tell us about that?
- Where do you find blogs? What type of content?

Gaming:

Points to facilitate discussion:

- What does this mean?

- How many of you do “gaming”? What do you do? Can you tell us about it?
- Where do you go to find these games? With what type of platform?
- Do you interact with other people?

Surfing the Internet:

Points to facilitate discussion:

- What does that mean?
- What do you do when you are “surfing the internet”?
- Do you think any of the activities we have already talked about are part of “surfing the internet”? Which ones? Why/Why not?

Sending or Receiving text messages on a cell phone:

Points to facilitate discussion:

- What does this mean? How do you do it?
- Do any of you have a cell phone?
- How many of you do this? Can you tell us about it?
- Do you think this is something kids your age do very often? Why or why not?
- Do you think of this as surfing the internet?

Are there any other online activities that some of you do that we haven’t talked about yet (probe these other activities)?

III. Discussion of online contacts and how they would report

“Ok, we are going to move on to another topic...”

I want to discuss some experiences you may have had while interacting with people online. Some questions people may find a little sensitive or uncomfortable to talk about. Again, I’d like to reinforce that everything we talk about today is completely confidential.

Online contacts:

- Sometimes kids your age “talk” to people that they only know online – people they have never met in person. How many of you have done this before?
- How often do you do that?
- Who are those people? What do you know about them?
- How do you communicate with them (i.e. via e-mail, IM, etc.)?

Sometimes, while online, these online contacts/people you only know online may ask, do or say things that make you uncomfortable. I next want talk about some of those contacts.

Let’s start by looking at a list of some of the contacts...

(Hand out copy of Internet Predation Question 2 and read through categories)

- How many of you have ever experienced anything like this before? Can you say a little bit about that?
- How did it happen? When? Where were you? Did you know this person? How long had you been talking to this person?

(Follow-up on any discussion of particular experiences)

Vignettes:

Now I want to talk about some of these experiences and what you think about them. We are in the process of developing some survey questions about some of these experiences that kids might have while they are talking to people they know only from online communications.

I am going to read some “hypothetical” situations and I want you to talk about how you might view these experiences if they had actually happened to you. While you are listening to me read these scenarios I want you to keep in mind the different descriptions of online contacts that you have in front of you. I would like us to discuss the following:

- If something like this had actually happened to you would you report it in a survey about these types of online interactions?
- If you would report it, how might you classify it? In what category?

(Present vignettes and ask how they might classify these things)

- Pop-ups:

While checking your e-mail a pop-up ad appears on screen. The ad asks you to click on a link that will take you into an “adult only” chat room. Would you consider this to be one of these online contacts? Why or why not? If yes, how would you classify it?

- Misspelling/ non-misspelling links to x-rated websites:

While searching online for a “cheat code” that will allow you to beat a video game you accidentally misspell a word and a “pop-up” for an x-rated website appears on screen. If this had happened to you, would you consider reporting it with these online contacts? Why or Why not? (If yes, then ask how they would classify it)

What if you were looking for information about a topic for a school project, and you typed in something on “Google” or “Yahoo” that WAS NOT misspelled and you were directed to an x-rated website. Would you report it with these online contacts? Why or Why not? (If yes, then ask how they would classify it)

- A request for a any request for a photo:

While you were IMing someone you just met while on MySpace, they asked you to send them a picture of yourself. Would you consider this to be one of these online contacts? Why or why not? If yes, how would you classify it?

Now I want to talk more about more general types of online contacts like the ones we’ve been discussing. I want to go back to the different online activities we talked about earlier.

- What if someone sent you a link to x-rated pictures while you and some friends were chatting with them on yahoo messenger? How do you classify this? Is it IMing? A personal Webpage? A chat room?
- What about links to videos and chat rooms on MySpace? Clicking on links that take you to other websites? How would you classify that activity?
- Other situations such as downloading/watching videos/music, etc?

IV. The reporting of these contacts.

If any of you have/had experienced these types of situations, do you think you would be willing to report them or talk about them to anyone? Why or why not?

How about in a survey? Why or why not?

What if your responses would be confidential – that not even your parents would be able to know how you answered the questions?

Online Interactions

- Send you email or instant messages containing x-rated material or links to x-rated websites?
- Ask you to take off your clothes in front of a webcam?
- Ask you to meet somewhere for the purpose of having sex?
- Ask you for sexual information about yourself?
- Ask you to talk about having sex?
- Request that you send digital photos of yourself posed in certain ways?
- Encourage you to run away from home to meet them?
- Ask you to engage in cybersex?
- Ask or tell you anything else that made you feel uncomfortable?

Online Activities

- Visiting an online community such as MySpace, Facebook, or Xanga
- Visiting your personal webpage
- Instant messaging
- Emailing
- Visiting a chat room?
- Blogging
- Sending or receiving text messages on a cell phone
- Gaming
- Surfing the Internet