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# Is There a Digital Divide Between EU Kids in Richer and Poorer Countries?

Findings from *EU Kids Online*, May 2011

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# Does a Digital Divide Still Exist?



- **More nuanced term these days is “digital inequality.”**
- **Much study of digital divides by (van Dijk, Hargittai (2011), DiMaggio Fuchs, Chinn, Suarez, Livingstone and Helsper, etc.)**
- **Work has progressed beyond access and usage**
- **Hargittai tells us that social contexts/environments need to be explored now.**
- **This presentation focuses on**
  - the level of skill,
  - Risky behavior and whether divide issues make a difference
  - and the ability/practice of parents to help in protecting the child

# Recent Research



## ■ Domestic (U.S. and other countries)

- Paulussen et al. (2010) found that rich media environments for teens more important than sociodemographic or SES variables to explain digital inequality
- But those teens also more likely to display risky behavior and lack online privacy awareness.
- Susan C. Losh (2009) in tracking five generations of U.S. survey respondents, found that though recent cohorts are more digitally comfortable than previous generations, occupation, and ethnic divides still exist.
- Eamon (2004) found that lower SES 10-14-year olds were .36 times as likely to own computers as richer kids, but equally likely to use them for both academic and non-academic purposes as those who were more affluent.

## ■ International/Global

- Chinn and Fairlie (2004) found that per capita income was important in explaining the divide in computer and internet use. 53.4% of gap between U.S. and Sub-Saharan African PC use accounted for by income.
- Policy variables (like pricing of telecomm access) also help explain the difference
- Regulatory quality was also important.
- Guillen and Suarez (2006) found that in 118 countries from 1997-2001 economic, regulatory, and sociopolitical characteristics predicted gaps in internet

# Cross-national approach



- **First examine by GNI (World Bank's Atlas method of determining relative economic status in the world.**
  - GNI is total value of goods and services produced within a country (i.e. its Gross Domestic Product), together with its income received from other countries (notably interest and dividends), less similar payments made to other countries.
  - In this study, three groups include:
    - Lowest: Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria (6,000-9,000)
    - Middle: Slovenia, Portugal, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Greece, Estonia, Cyprus, Czech Republic (11,000-30,000)
    - Highest: U.K., Sweden, Spain, Norway, Netherlands, Italy, Ireland, Germany, France, Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Austria (32,000-85,000)
- **Within higher, middle and lower level national wealth status**
  - Examine those determined to be in the lowest SES grouping.
  - SES measured as educational level and occupation.

# EU Kids' Differences By SES/Country Economic Level



Country by SES:	Low Income Country	Middle Income Country	High Income Country
Low SES	39.3%	11.4%	21.2%
Middle SES	40.7	47.2	44.2
High SES	20.0	41.3	34.6

# Parents in Differing Income Countries



- No relation between income level of the country and education of the parent, family type, education of the interviewees, confidence in internet use.
- Positive relation with the “most educated in the household,” ( $r=.12$ ); whether the parent says he/she should be more involved in the child’s internet use (Tau C=.09)
- Whether parent uses the internet (Tau C= -.12)
- No relation for use of technology to control children’s use of Internet (for virus or junk mail; for limiting child’s time on internet; for parental control software)
- No relation between income level and whether they check on child’s internet activity (friends added to SN; Websites visited, IM messages sent/received)
- No relation to mediation efforts of parents (advising child on internet safety, help related to bothering things on internet, etc.)

# What Parents Worry About



- Differences between parents in high, middle and low income countries
- Whether children might be harmed on the roads (Tau C=-.11)
- Whether children might get in trouble with the police (Tau C=-.06)
- Whether children might be a victim of crime (Tau C=-.11)
- Whether they might become sexually active (Tau C=-.09)
- Whether they might be contacted by strangers on the internet (Tau C=-.10)
- Whether they might become users of alcohol or drugs (No difference)
- Whether they might be treated in a hurtful or nasty way (Tau C=.10)
- Whether they might see inappropriate things on the internet (Tau C=-.11)
- How they are doing in school (Tau C=-.13)
- No worries about these things (Tau C=.09)

# Parents in differing SES groups by



- **Internet use: Tau C=.25**
  - Frequency of internet use:  $r=-.12$
  - Number of places parent uses the internet ( $r=-.71$ )
  - Confidence in using the internet ( $r=-.18$ )
- **Highest Level of education in household ( $r=-.71$ )**
- **Active monitoring of internet safety ( $r=-.12$ )**
- **Mediation activities**
  - As reported by child;  $r=-.08$
  - As reported by parent;  $r=-.13$
- **Child's risky online behavior (5)—no relation**
- **Child knows more than parent about internet use  $r=-.14$ )**



# Online Risky Behavior Regressions



	Low Income Beta/sig	Middle Income Beta/sig	High Income Beta/sig
Number Internet Skills	.05	.09***	.01
Number Online Activities	.26***	.19***	.14***
Number activities/wk	.04	.09***	.07***
Number places internet use	.03	.06***	.08***
Time/wk on internet	.11***	.09***	.12***
Parental confidence	-.05*	.01	.02*
# active mediation says parent	-.02	-.06***	.05***
# active monitoring says parent	-.02	-.02	-.08***
Gender	.06*	.05**	.02
Age	.08**	.05**	.02
SES	.01	.03	-.13***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.22	.22	.18
N	3,147	8,858	13,137

I do dangerous things/exciting things made up sensation seeking scale.