Parental mediation of internet use : Evaluating family relationships

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Changes in families and childhood?

- Detraditionalization of institutions, including the family (Giddens, 1991)

- Greater autonomy of children, negotiated childhood, 'democratic' interactions

Concerns

BUT

- Greater risk management (Livingstone, 1997)
- A history of concerns about risks associated with ICTs, now raised in relation to the internet

Constraints on parents

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- 'Bedroom culture', mobile internet access and children's ability to monitor children

- Parent's familiarity with the technology and with what children are doing online

Parental mediation strategies

- Active mediation of use – fits 'negotiated'
- Active mediation of safety - fits 'negotiated'
- Restrictive mediation (rules) - complex
- Monitoring (technologically) - complex
- Technical mediation (e.g. filters) – least negotiated?

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Active mediation

Active mediation

- 70% talk to their (9-16year old) children about what they do online, 66% for 13-16 year olds

Active mediation of Internet safety

- 68% why websites are good or bad
- 63% give safety advice
- 56% appropriate behaviour online
- 52% hoe do deal with something if it bothered them

Restrictive and monitoring

Restrictive mediation

- 85% disclosing personal information
- Other areas, the restrictions are much more on younger children
- E.g. uploading – 71% for 9-12 yrs, 46% for 13-16yrs.
- Same for monitoring – e.g. websites visited 52% for younger, 36% for older

Technical mediation and overview

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- Blocking filtering, 37% for younger, 25% for older

Overall:

- Active mediation is similar for younger and older children

- Generally, there are less of the other forms of mediation, and here there is often a large gap between younger and older children

Children's reactions

- 70% say mediation helps a lot or a little
- On the whole it was not too constraining and only 11% thought it limited them a lot
- 72% would like the level of mediation to stay the same, with little difference between older and younger

Overall, they are generally positive

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Qualification – sensitive topics

- In risk areas quite a few parents thought their child had not had a risk experience when they had had it (sexual images (40%), bullying (56%), sexting (52%), meetings (28%) + there were 'don't knows'

- This may reflect the fact that when they had negative experiences, they preferred to talk to friends more than parents

Conclusions

- The complexities behind mediation were indicated

- The aim here was to see if survey data could cast some light on current parent-children interactions

- In many respects it looks like there is 'negotiation' and less restrictions/checking, especially for older children

Conclusions

- This is supported by the fact that the children a fairly positive about this

- However, good relations do not always translate into transparency in sensitive areas where children prefer to keep some privacy from parents and prefer support from peers