

The Role of New Media Technologies in the Lives of Bermuda's Youth



A Study Conducted in
Bermuda's Secondary Schools

By Katie Davis, Ed.D.

Acknowledgement

There are many people working in Bermuda's schools who made it possible for me to survey over 80% of all secondary students on the Island. Thank you to Former Minister of Education, the Hon. Elvin James JP MP, and Commissioner of Education, Mrs. Wendy McDonell, for granting me access to Bermuda's public senior schools.

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Study Description

This report summarizes key findings from a 2010 study involving Bermuda's secondary school students. Katie Davis, a Bermudian and former teacher on the Island, designed and conducted the study for her doctoral thesis at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. The research was conducted in two phases between March and June 2010. Participating schools included The Berkeley Institute, CedarBridge Academy, Bermuda Institute, Warwick Academy, Mount Saint Agnes Academy, The Bermuda High School for Girls, and Saltus Grammar School.

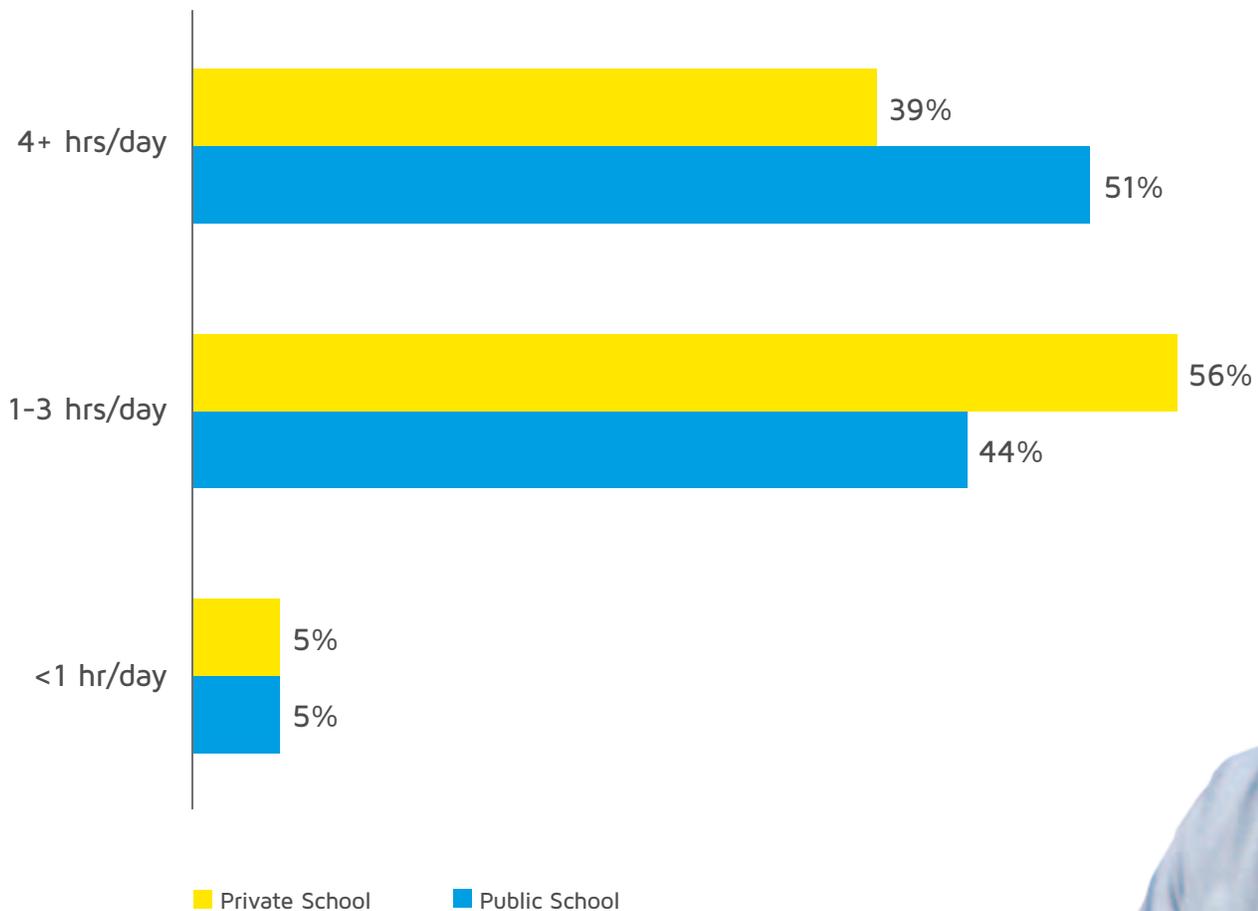
In the first phase, 2,079 secondary students completed an anonymous online survey that included questions about their digital media use, peer and parent relationships, and school experiences.

In the second phase, 32 students took part in individual interviews, each lasting approximately 45 minutes. Questions mirrored those on the survey; because they were open-ended, participants were able to discuss in their own words how they use digital media technologies and what they mean to them.

Time Spent Online

Whether attending public or private school, 95% of Bermuda's teens spend more than an hour online in a typical day.

Hours Per Day Spent Online



Online Activities

Bermuda’s teens use a variety of digital media technologies. Facebook, instant messaging, and YouTube are particularly popular.

| Online Activity | Survey Respondents (n=2,079) | Interview Respondents (n=32) |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Facebook | 90% | 91% |
| Instant messaging (e.g. MSN, AIM, Skype) | 87% | 78% |
| Email | 82% | 94% |
| YouTube | 96% | 94% |
| Shop online | 56% | 41% |
| Play games on game console | 59% | 78% |
| Play single-player online/ cell phone games | 50% | 50% |
| Play multiplayer online games/ virtual worlds | 30% | 16% |

Teens Use Digital Platforms in Different Ways



Interview participants like 17 year-old Jenni (all student names are pseudonyms) explained that their conversations differ according to the digital platform they're using:

"Facebook is more like light and airy conversational stuff... MSN would be something that I would have more serious conversations with... Email I use for like work and stuff...and my mom will send me emails, like for school because they send parents a lot of emails."

With 90% usage among survey respondents, Facebook is the favoured online communication platform for Bermuda's teens.

"I really like communicating with my away friends [via Facebook], and I like to see the new things that they are doing, and all that stuff, and I can see their pictures."

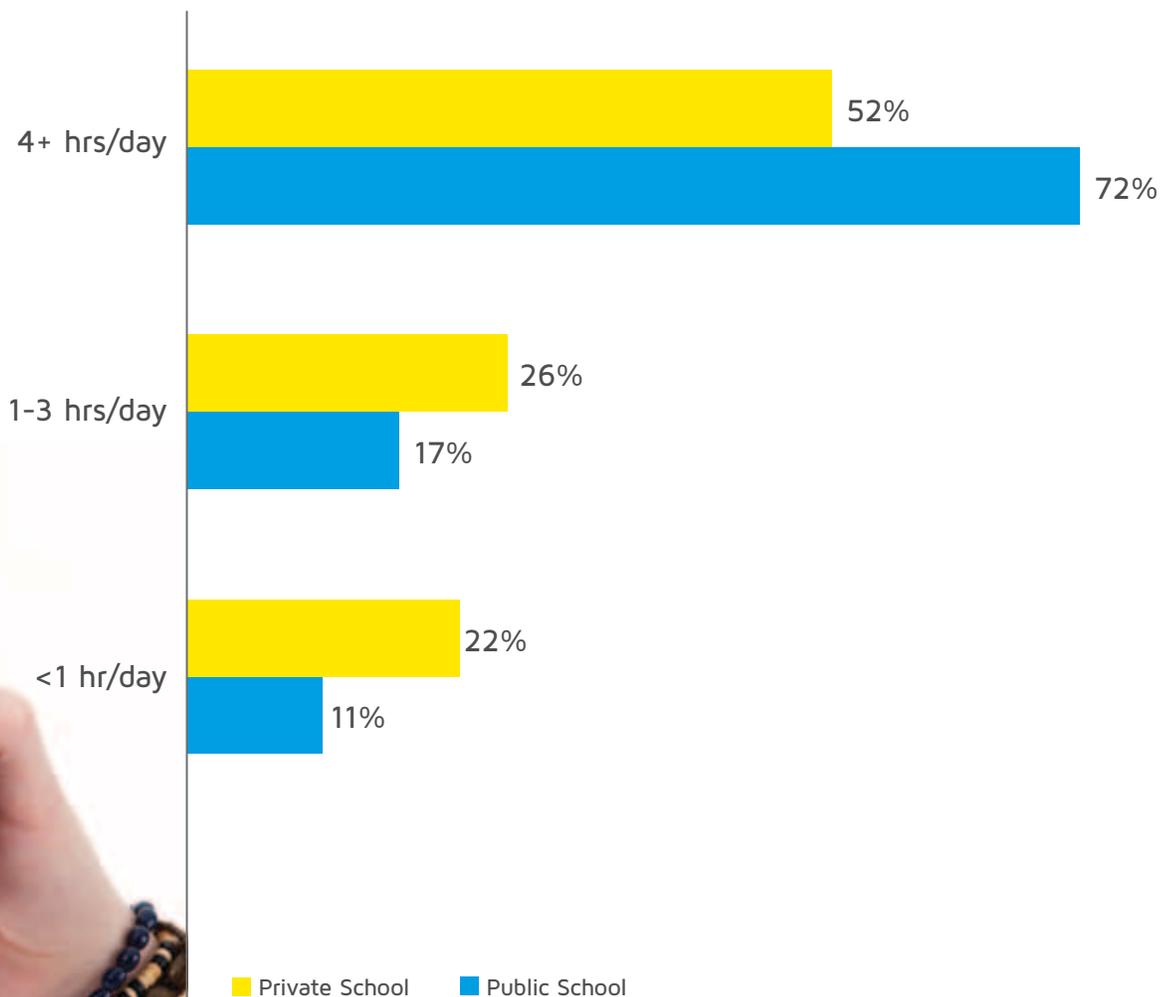
– Madeline, age 13

"[Facebook is] just like an addiction, I guess, like it's hard, like if I don't go on, I feel like I am missing something, like someone has written on my wall, and I can't see what they are saying." – Keisha, age 17

Teens and their Cell Phones

Cell phones have become a central part of Bermudian teens' lives. The majority of survey respondents reported spending over four hours per day using their phones.

Hours Per Day on Cell Phone



Cell Phones Have Become a Central Part of Teens' Lives



Interview participants most frequently named their cell phone as the one device they would miss the most if they had no access to technology.

"[Without my cell phone], I wouldn't be able to talk to everybody, and then I pretty much am doing nothing...I would probably be a little more isolated."

– Connor, age 13

"I use it every single day, and then, like if it is randomly gone, I don't know what I would do. That sounds pretty bad." – Christina, age 15

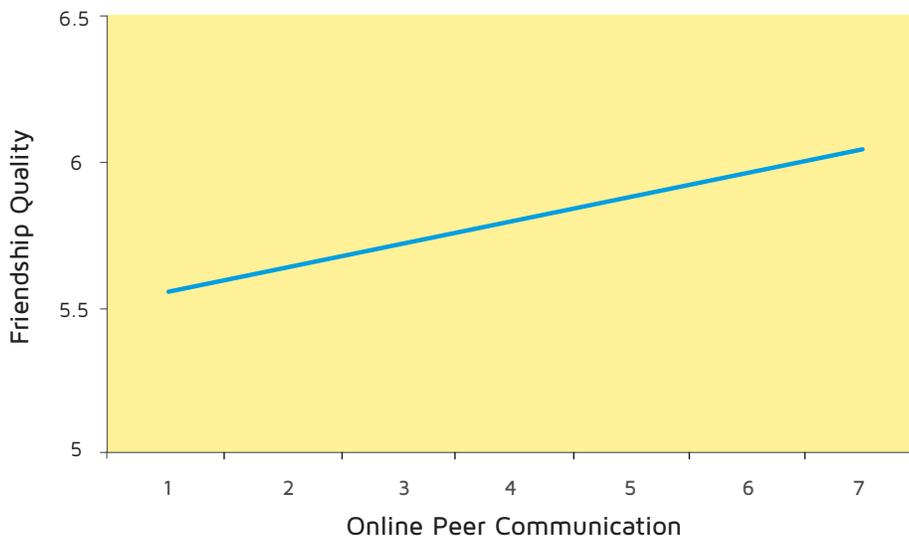
"My phone is everything. It has everything on it."

– Michaela, age 15

Communicating with Friends Online Supports Offline Friendship Quality

On average, teens who enjoy going online to communicate with their existing friends report higher quality friendships than teens who are less enthusiastic about communicating with friends online.

Relationship between Online Peer Communication and Friendship Quality



“I guess I have more time to learn about [my friends], and what they like to do, and stuff... I can text them anytime, like for longer periods of time than I can hang out with them.” – *Eric, age 15*

“I think I have become more confident in myself going on these things...because sometimes [my friends] take a picture of themselves, and picnic it, and change it around, and put stuff like ‘I love you’ and stuff on it, kind of thing, and tag me in the pictures, and it’s like, makes me feel... that I am loved, that I am appreciated.” – *Melissa, age 13*

Offline Conversations Still Valued by Bermuda's Teens



Forty-one percent of the interview participants expressed the sentiment that online conversations sometimes feel less meaningful than face-to-face conversations. When asked to compare face-to-face conversations with the conversations he has with friends through instant messaging, 16 year-old William explained:

“Typically [instant messaging conversations occur] while they are doing something else. People usually, the first thing they are not doing is talking to you. They won’t be actively talking to you. They will be browsing something on the web and every time they have, like, five minutes, they will just quickly write something to you. So, when you are talking to a person face-to-face, because you are having an active exchange of information, it makes what you say more meaningful.”

Not All Online Interactions Are Positive



“Sometimes you can say more stuff [online] because you are not afraid to see what, like how it affects [other people].”

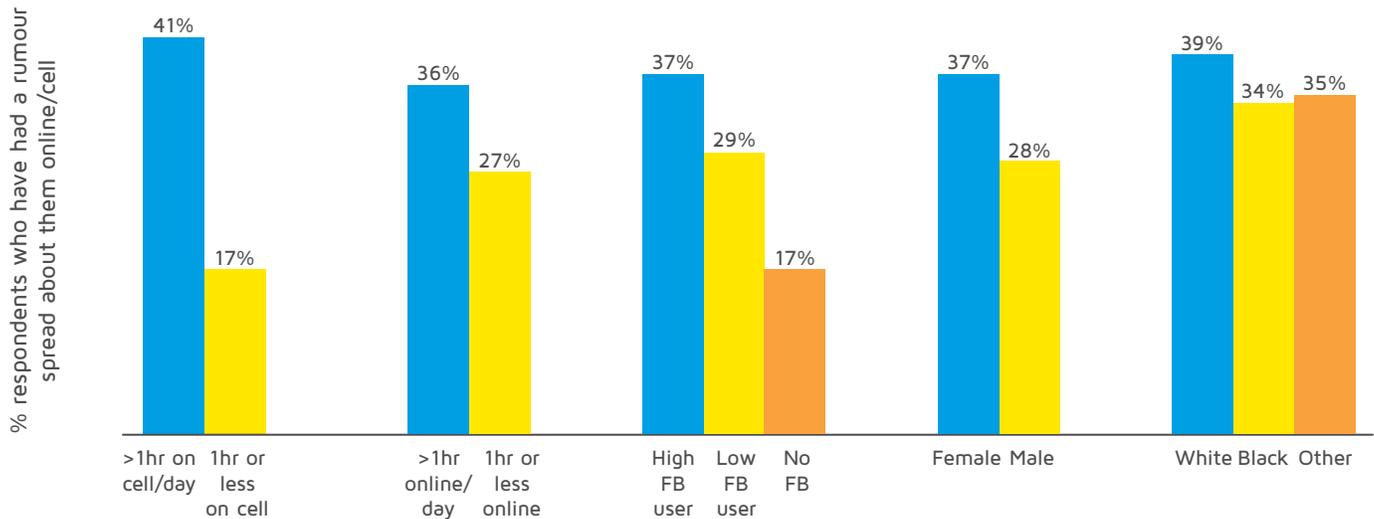
– Ellie, age 14

Teens' Experiences with Cyberbullying

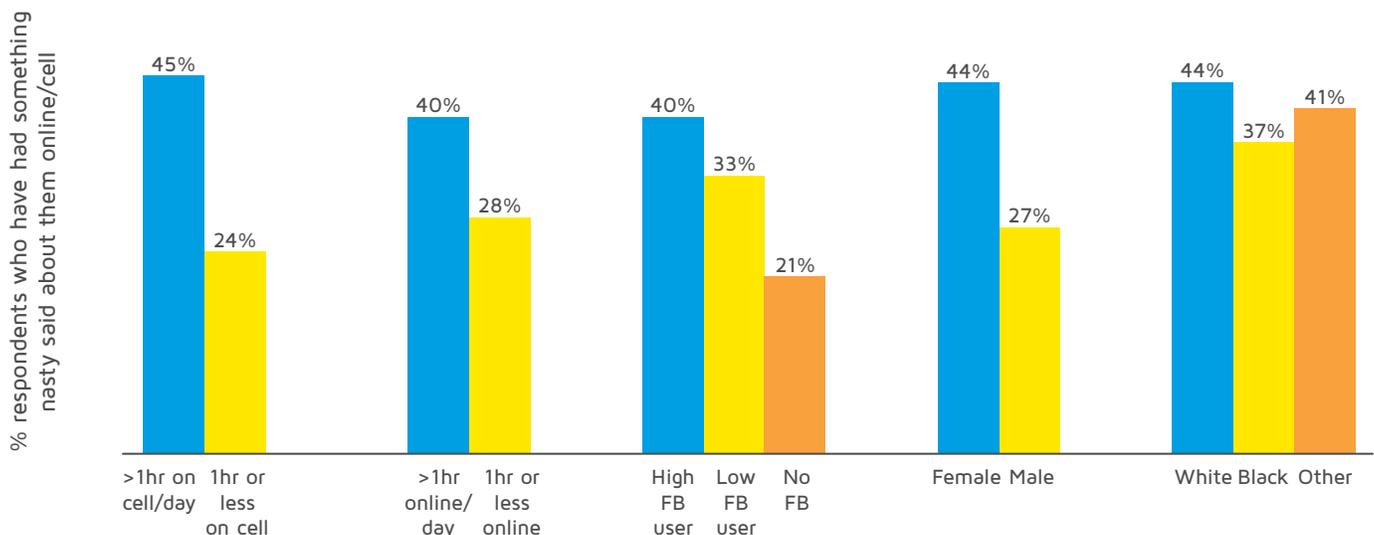
Teens who spend more time online, on their cell phone, and on Facebook are more likely to have experienced some form of cyberbullying than teens who

spend less time. Girls and white teens are also more likely to experience forms of online aggression.

Has someone ever spread a rumour about you online/cell?



Has someone ever said something nasty about you online/cell?

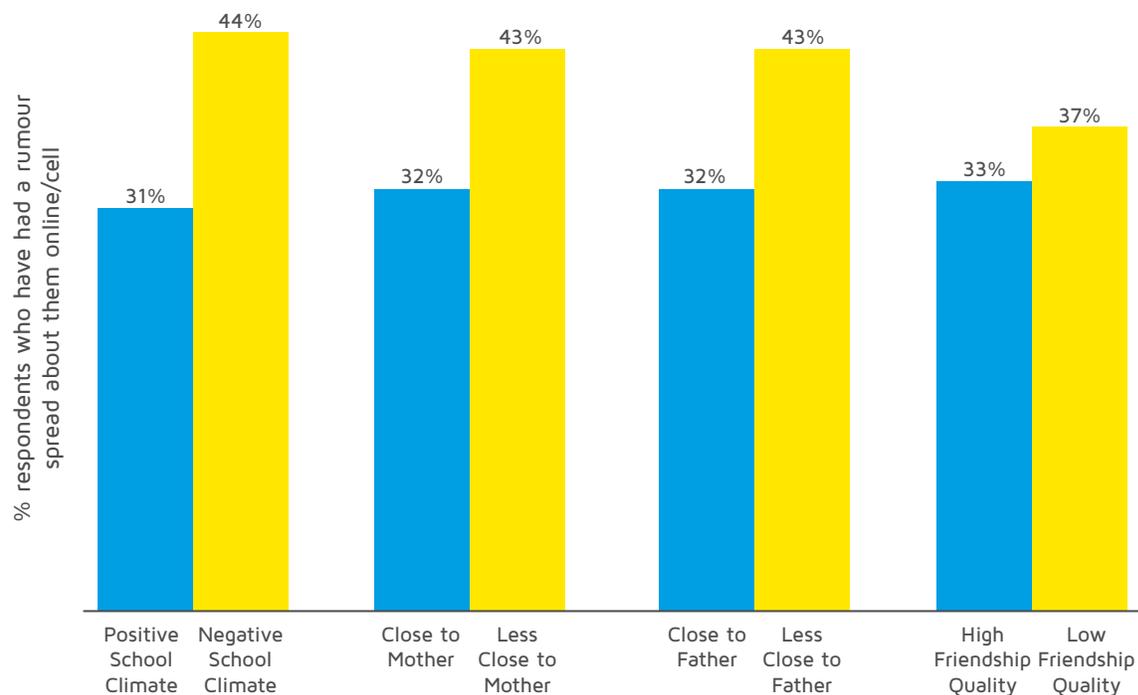


The Protective Role of Schools, Parents, and Friends

Teens who experience school as a positive environment are less likely to encounter negative interactions online. The same is true for teens who are close to their parents and friends.



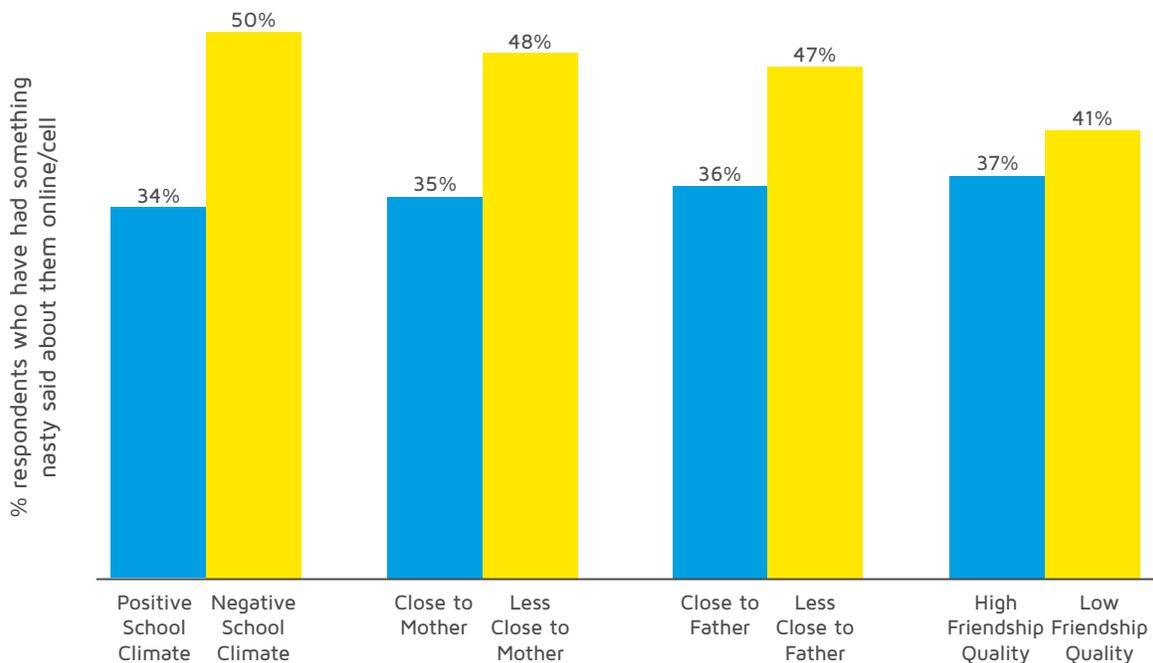
Has someone ever spread a rumour about you online/cell?



The Protective Role of Schools, Parents, and Friends (continued)



Has someone ever said something nasty about you online/cell?



How the Technology Ownership of Bermuda's Teens Compares to U.S. Teens

Bermuda's teens exhibit a higher rate of technology ownership than a nationally representative sample of U.S. teens.

| Device | Bermuda Survey Respondents (12-19 years) 2010 | U.S. Teens (12-17 years) 2009 |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Own desktop or laptop | 83% | 69% |
| Own cell phone | 94% | 75% |
| Own portable media player | 86% | 79% |

* U.S. data from the Pew Internet & American Life Project



Profile of Study Participants

| Characteristic | Survey Respondents (n=2,079) | | Interview Respondents (n=32) | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| | Count | Percentage | Count | Percentage |
| Girls | 1180 | 57% | 15 | 47% |
| Boys | 895 | 43% | 17 | 53% |
| No answer | 4 | 0.002% | - | - |
| Black | 1078 | 52% | 21 | 66% |
| White | 467 | 22% | 10 | 31% |
| Other | 323 | 16% | 1 | 3% |
| No answer | 211 | 10% | - | - |
| Public School | 1001 | 48% | 8 | 25% |
| Private School | 1078 | 52% | 24 | 75% |
| Year 9 (Gr 8) | 252 | 12% | 4 | 13% |
| Year 10 (Gr 9, S1) | 579 | 28% | 8 | 25% |
| Year 11 (Gr 10, S2) | 470 | 23% | 7 | 22% |
| Year 12 (Gr 11, IB1, S3) | 397 | 19% | 7 | 22% |
| Year 13 (Gr 12, IB2, S4) | 381 | 18% | 6 | 19% |

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Photo by Tamell Simons

Katie Davis is a Project Manager at Harvard Project Zero, where she investigates the role of digital media technologies in adolescents' academic, social, and moral lives. Katie also serves as an Advisory Board Member for MTV's digital abuse campaign, A Thin Line.

In addition to publishing and presenting her research in scholarly venues, Katie regularly shares her work with parents, teachers, and school administrators in an effort to build connections between educational research and practice.

In November 2011, Katie graduated from Harvard Graduate School of Education with a doctorate in Human Development and Education. She also holds a master's degree from Harvard in Mind, Brain, and Education and another in Risk and Prevention. Prior to coming to Harvard in 2005, Katie taught second grade in Framingham, MA, and fourth grade in Bermuda, her native country.

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