

Box 7.1 Technology-Facilitated Peer Harassment

It will likely come as no surprise to our readers that research suggests that almost all teens (95%) have an “online presence” (Lenhart et al., 2011; Lenhart et al., 2015). Although most teens do not meet their romantic partners online, social media and cell phone texting (also known as “sexting”) is the primary means they use to flirt with and show interest in a potential romantic partner. Lenhart and colleagues (2015), for example, found that 63 percent of dating teens, aged 13–17, reported that they have sent flirtatious messages to someone they were interested in romantically, and 23 percent said they had sent sexy or “flirty” pictures or videos. Most teens (63% total; 71% of girls and 57% of boys) also use social media to express support of their friends’ romantic relationships, although many (69%) feel that social media posts give others too much information about their private romantic lives (Lenhart et al., 2015).

The majority of teens using social media (69%) say that their peers are mostly kind to one another on these sites, but 88 percent nevertheless reported having witnessed peers being mean or cruel, and 15 percent said they themselves had been the target of negative, harassing, or cruel messages and posts (Lenhart et al., 2011). Such behavior is referred to as **technology-facilitated peer harassment**. Not surprisingly, these experiences are gendered. Just as young women are more likely than

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