Wired Teens: Living and Learning Online

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Teens & New Media

- Used for communication, interaction, and information
  - Online applications & mobile devices
- Online applications
  - E-mail
  - Instant messaging (*private, one-on-one, text-based conversations in real time*)
  - Social networking sites (*allow users to connect with others via public wall, post images, etc*)
    - *MySpace, Facebook*
  - Online games (*world of warcraft*)
  - Blogs (group blogs like MLIA, *mylifeisaverage.com* & microblogs like *twitter*)
  - Chat rooms

Teens and Mobile Devices

- Heavy users of cell phones and hand-held devices – 80% own a phone and 15% own a smart phone
- Use them to
  - text message, play games, and connect to the Internet
- Important for teen social status
- Texting
  - may be replacing talking
  - without texting, many (54% female and 40%) report that their social life would end or be worsened

Multitasking during media use

- Much of teens' media use occurs while they are multitasking
- Media multitasking occurs when they are using more than one media at a time (computer and television)
- Multitasking also occurs when they have multiple applications open while on the computer
  - E.g., 4 AIM conversations + facebook + Itunes + School work

Learning from Living Online?

- Mostly informal learning, which centers around core adolescent developmental issues
  - Sexuality (adjusting to changing bodies)
  - Identity (developing a coherent sense of self)
  - Intimacy (developing intimate relations with peers and adults)

Learning about health and sexuality

- In teen chat rooms sexual themes featured prominently
- Excerpt of chat conversation
  - Immaculate ros: sex sex sex that all you think about?
  - Snowbunny: people who have sex at 16 r sick
  - Twonky: I agree
  - 00o0CaFfEiNe: no sex until ur happily married. thatz muh rule
  - Twonky: I agree with that too
  - Snowbunny: me too caffine!

Learning about health and sexuality

- 5% all utterances were sexual ones (1 sexual remark per minute)
  - Provide opportunity to have frank discussions

- For gay teens, Internet resources (e.g., websites and chat rooms)
  - help them learn about and deal with their sexuality
  - especially useful for teens who may be a minority within a minority

Learning about health and sexuality

- Teens use Internet forums such as websites and bulletin boards for information about
  - general health & sexuality (e.g., pregnancy/birth control, body image, and personal grooming)
  - more specific concerns (e.g., cancer, eating disorders, cutting, etc.)
- *Helps to learn about*
  - *changing bodies and sexual selves as they adjust to developing sexuality;*
  - *helps to learn about other health related concerns*

Learning about the self

- Establishing a coherent sense of who one is
- Blogs
  - self photos for user pictures
  - Most entries
    - **Peers:** "ah….tonight was so freeking crazy fun :)…jazz band and dairy queen afterwards with THE BOYS (mike randy jeff and tom)…it was soo…interesting lol…guys are just so funny"
    - **Everyday life** " Math - sucks. Teacher didnt do his job all week. Today, he rushed us into learning this difficult topic in minutes and snapped every time someone asks him to explain. Ugh!
- Similarly on social networking sites, teens engage in self-presentation

Learning about the self

- Ethnic minority youth
  - South Asian students use the Internet (YouTube and Discussion forums) to learn more about their home countries/culture

- *Teens learn about themselves and establish sense of self*
  - *self-presentation*
  - *narratives or life stories*
  - *exploration of home culture*

Learning about intimacy

- In chat rooms
  - 11% of all utterances were partner requests (2 partner requests per minute)
- Use social networking sites to learn more about their peers and to check out potential partners (friends and romantic ones)
- Interactions with strangers via instant messaging may help adolescents learn to deal with social rejection
- Learn to engage with their peers and communities and contribute to civic engagement

Learning about intimacy

- Multiple conversations via instant messaging
  - learn to negotiate complex social settings and multitasking environments

- *Online interactions may help them learn*
  - *to initiate and manage complex interactions*
  - *to deal with conflict*
  - *to deal with social exclusion*
  - *to engage with their communities*

Learning from text-based communicating?

- Text-based communication has unique features
  - acronyms (TTYL), all lower case letters (i will do that), shortened words and telegraphic speech (c u ltr)
- Chang (2008) found that greater use of such "textisms" was related to lower writing scores
  - *an example of learning the wrong things?*
  - *informal learning may impact formal learning*

Conclusions and Implications

- Youth are living and interacting online
  - online and offline worlds connected
- Online living may help with informal learning about core developmental issues
- Should be aware of risks
  - easy access to pornographic content
  - teens not very good at searching for health-related information
  - makes potentially problem behaviors like cutting seem normative
  - stranger interactions may pose dangers
  - text-based communication may impact narrative and expository skills

The End

- For more information please visit

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- Thank you