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
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
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 didn’t 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