Resources for Understanding Digital Technology Use Among Young People
Features, Risks, and Opportunities

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blogs.cornell.edu/sharesome / @ShareSoMeCU
The Stats - What apps or sites are popular?

- As of 2015, Facebook still reigns supreme - but other sites and apps have growing numbers of younger users.
- Thanks to smartphones and other mobile devices, 24% of teens say they go online “almost constantly”
- Texting is extremely popular - 90% of teens with phones use texting or other messaging apps


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The Stats - How do young people get online?

- Desktop computers, laptops, smartphones, and tablets are all common ways for young people to access the Internet.
- Many of these newly popular apps are mobile-only - they can’t be used on desktop or laptop computers.


The Stats - Age and Gender

- Girls predominate on apps that prioritize visuals and social connections, while boys are the primary users of video games (both console and mobile). Girls also reported sending and receiving more text messages, and are heavier users of anonymous apps.
- Older teens are more likely to own smartphones and to be frequent texters.

How can we understand online behavior?

Young people are constantly moving from one social media site or app to another – it can be hard to keep track of what they’re using.
How can we understand online behavior?

Young people use each app, website, or other medium in a different way. They have distinctive features that make them useful, fun, or popular - features that draw people to use them.
Facebook

- What’s the draw?
  - Network size and diversity - it’s where everyone else is.
  - Many ways to control who sees what you post.
  - Unifies other platforms - can post to Facebook from Twitter, Instagram, etc.
Kik Messenger

• What’s the draw?
  • Users can send text, photo, video messages to others or groups, can add fun features like emojis and stickers.
  • Doesn’t eat into text message limits or show up on a parent’s phone bill.
• Similar Apps: WhatsApp, GroupMe, Facebook Messenger, Google Hangouts, Skype
What’s the draw?
- Share thoughts, ideas, and stories as 140-character “tweets” - lots of room for chit-chat, quick updates, and creativity
- Access to celebrity users is a big draw for some young people
- Varying levels of anonymity are possible
- Accounts can be private (approved friends) or public (can be followed by anyone)
Instagram

• What’s the draw?
  • Users can easily take, edit, and share photos and videos.
  • Filters and collage features allow for creativity and self-expression
  • “Likes” rule on Instagram - many teen users will delete their posts if others don’t show appreciation.

• Similar apps: Vine, Periscope
Snapchat

• What’s the draw?
  • Photos, videos, and text messages – “Snaps” – sent to other users disappear after being viewed.
  • Direct messages, friends-only updates, or public location- or event-related Snaps offer a variety of ways to share info

• Similar apps: BurnNote
YikYak

• What’s the draw?
  • Common on college campuses, YikYak lets users post anonymous messages that are viewed by others in their geographical area.
  • “Yaks” are often graphic or gossipy, which can make them entertaining but also potentially harmful.

• Similar apps: Whisper, others?
Tinder

• What’s the draw?
  • Dating app lets users “swipe” left or right to indicate interest or disinterest in potential matches, messaging is allowed when mutual interest is established.
  • Location-based - potential partners are local
  • Separate areas for under- and over-18 users
• Similar apps: Grindr, MeetMe, Skout
What are the risks?

What are the benefits?
Parents, educators, and youth-serving professionals often worry about:

- Privacy
- Cyber-bullying, -harassment, -stalking
- Sexual predators, pornography
- Constant (‘addictive’) use of social media, video games, texting, etc.
- Family closeness
Risky Applications?

- No desktop or mobile app is inherently “bad”
- Know how **features** put kids and teens at risk and/or offer opportunities
- **Evaluate** apps according to these features
Public accounts and/or posting

Things a user posts may be read, seen, or accessed by anyone on the web - anyone can “follow”

Risks:

- Lack of privacy
- Strangers can see and interact with public content

Apps with this feature:
Constant Connectedness

- Popularity of smartphones means that users can be reached at any time, or can access or consume content posted at any time
- Mobile apps or mobile versions of social media sites are constantly available

Risks:
- Obsession with “being connected”
- Bully can harass victim 24/7
- Less family time
In what ways are technologies impacting family closeness? ...family conflict?
Could conflict arise due to the discrepancies between parent and child?

Location tracking or Geotagging

- Ability to detail where (geographic location) an individual is posting content online

Risks:

- Lack of privacy - People always know where you are
- Sexual predators can easily meet up or track child/teen

Apps with this feature:
Anonymity

- Ability to post content or contact another person without detailing who you are

RISK:
- Bullies can hide their identities and aggression without repercussion
- Strangers and sexual predators can pretend to be whoever they want to be

Apps with this feature:
Re-Sharing

Ability to repost content from another user’s account

Risks:

- Content that embarasses or makes fun of a person may be shared with a large group of people instantly

Apps with this feature:
ShareSoMe Research: Cyberbullying and Bystander Intervention

- What does repetition of bullying behaviors look like online?
- When are bystanders likely to intervene?

http://blogs.cornell.edu/sharesome/2015/10/20/cyberbystanders/
What are the risks?

What are the benefits?
Benefits & Opportunities of Using Digital Technology for Young People

- Socializing (i.e. developing and maintaining connections, college adjustment, etc.)
- Information access
- Social Support
- Civic Participation (i.e. ALS challenge)
- Creative outlet (i.e. blogging/microblogging, photos)
- ...Many benefits of using digital technologies!
Benefits & Opportunities of Using Digital Technology for Young People and Parents

- Develop closer relationships
- Beneficial in monitoring and keeping lines of communication open (i.e. location, activities, etc.)
- Communicating on same platforms
- Information access
Ephemerality

• Content or posts disappear after a certain amount of time

Benefits:

• Social support
• Constant connectedness
• Socialization

Apps with this feature:
ShareSoMe Research: Ephemerality on Snapchat

- Snapchat’s auto-deletion feature makes users feel more comfortable sharing the type of mundane messages that help build and strengthen relationships.

- People use Snapchat for informal chats and silly photos that they wouldn’t want to post on Facebook or other more public sites.
Network Quality & Quantity

• Sites or apps with public or group options allow users to communicate with diverse networks of other users. These networks can vary greatly in size and quality.

Benefits:

• Social support
• Creative outlet
• Socialization
• Parent-child communication
• Civic participation
Anonymity

• Ability to post content or contact another person without detailing who you are

Benefits:

● Social support
● Increased self-efficacy and self-esteem
● Information access

Apps with this feature:
Constant Connectedness

- Can be reached at any time
- Access or consume content posted at any time
- Relevant to mobile apps or mobile versions of social media apps

Benefits

- Information Access
- Social support - “invisible social support”
- Parent-child connection
Re-Sharing

- Ability to repost content from another user’s account

Benefits:

- Civic Participation (i.e. gofundme, ALS challenge)
- Information circulation
- Connection to larger community
- Intervention

Apps with this feature:
# Weighing Your Options

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<th>constant connectedness</th>
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Thank you!

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