Adolescent Development in the Digital Age

Digital Natives: Navigating Uncharted Territory

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The Dee Norton Lowcountry Children’s Center (DNLCC):

• National Children’s Alliance accredited Children’s Advocacy Center.
• Total of 1665 children seen in 2015.
• 1459 children received Child and Adolescent Forensic Trauma Assessments (CAFTA).
  • Male = 47% (n=687)
  • Female = 53% (n=772)
• Disclosure of Abuse = 59% (n=867):
  • Neglect = 46% (n=625)
  • Physical Abuse = 34% (n=597)
  • Sexual Abuse = 16% (n=278)
  • Inappropriate/Illegal Sexual Behaviors = 4% (n=63)
Learning Objectives

- Attain knowledge regarding social media applications frequently used by youth.
- Attain knowledge regarding the impact of popular social media on the cognitive and social development of adolescents.
- Understand the impact of sexually explicit media on sexual and physical development of adolescents.
- Increase knowledge base of resources for professional and parental monitoring of adolescents using social media.

Facebook
- More than 1 billion active users
- N = 1,060; 71%
- Options for:
  - Private messaging/Private groups
  - Private photo/video sharing
  - Public/private profile to include text, photos, and videos

Instagram
- N = 1,060; 52%
- Options to link with FB, Twitter, Tumblr, and others
- Photo and video sharing, options for private DM
- #whatsahashtag
  #whatdoesthatpoundsignmean

Snapchat
- N = 1,060; 41%
- Photo and video sharing, DM, video chatting, “My Story”
- Controlled sharing (friends) or public
- Photos and videos disappear within seconds
- Rated 12+
Vine
- N = 1,060; 24%
- Used for recording and sharing short videos
- Can be linked with Twitter and Facebook
- Vine messages, "loops," Popular Now, and Channels
- Rated 17+
  - No age verification “Press OK if you are 17 or older”
  - “Frequent/intense sexual content or nudity”
  - “Infrequent mild/mature suggestive themes”

Twitter
- N = 1,060; 33%
- Share status updates, photos, and videos
- Follow people/Followers
- Protected vs Public Tweets
- Can connect to other apps (i.e. Facebook)

Kik
- Over 100 million users
- Direct Messaging (DM) app
- Options for group chatting with up to 49 other users, photo sharing, instant messaging, video sharing, games, web surfing, and more
- First and last name, username, and profile picture can be but are not always visible in the app
- Users are identified by username option to connect to other users via phonebook
- Rated 12+

Tumblr
- 295 million blogs (up from 181 million when we last presented this)
- Used to create and follow “blogs”
- Very loosely enforced regulations around what users are allowed to blog
- Photos, videos, gifs, text
- Rated 17+

Oovoo
- More than 150M registered users, 100K users added daily
  - 65% of users are under 25 yrs
- Free video chat and messaging app
- Can video chat in groups of up to 12 people
- Relatively safe compared to similar apps
  - Can only chat with those on approved contact lists
  - Frequent ads and easy access can make this app distracting and “addicting”
- Rated 16+

Whatsapp
- Texts, audio, photos, and video messaging
- User agreement clearly outlines agreement to and understanding of the risk of exposure to material that may be considered indecent, explicit, or offensive.
- Rated 16+
• **ASKfm**
  - SNS for discussion in Q&A format
  - Options to post anonymously and/or receive anonymous replies
  - Public space, all posts are visible to the public and searchable in search engines like Google. Users get some control over which posts by others appear on their profiles.
  - Options to connect with Facebook, Twitter, etc. for a broader reach
  - Associated with cases of cyberbullying and teen suicides
  - Rated 12+

• **Whisper**
  - Anonymous "confessional" SNS
  - Users pair text with images to be posted anonymously
  - Content can be dark and/or sexual in nature
  - "Meet Up" feature where users can choose to share identifying information
  - Rated 17+

• **Tinder**
  - Must have or create a Facebook account and use this to sign in
  - DM and photosharing
  - "Swipes" feature to connect with possible matches nearby
  - 17+ (app rating); Tinder Terms of Use state "no one under the age of 13."

• **Skout**
  - Teen Community for 13-18, separated by school grades; Adult Community for 18+
  - Intended to facilitate introductions to new people
  - No requirement to reveal personal information
  - General location vs. specific location

• **YikYak**
  - Users post brief statuses
  - Automatic location sharing to foster a sense of community
  - Posts are shared with the 500 closest YikYak users
  - Rated 17+ and intended for users 18+

• **MeetMe**
  - Intended to connect strangers in communities based on similar interests or hobbies
  - Not intended as a dating or sexual site, but users do engage in this activity
  - Some anecdotal cases of sexually predatory behavior due to the intended purpose of connecting strangers
  - Rated 17+
Several varieties
Functions to keep photos, videos, emails and text messages hidden
Requires a password for entry
  Option to use a decoy password
  Option to create a decoy vault
  Sends “break in” alerts
Some “Vault” apps are camouflaged to look like other apps (i.e. a calculator)
May have the option to share albums with other users
May have the option to post to other apps

The language of Digital Natives
PAP
Bad
Ship
:3
IDEX
IKR
SMH
Dime
GOAT
BAE
Likers get rate
THOT
Netflix and Chill
Savage
AF
TBR
TSM
Peep
Slept
No chill

Impact of Technology on Digital Natives
Who are Digital Natives?
Implications for impact on adolescents spans the globe
Meeting advancements with pitchforks is nothing new
Media intersects with all aspects of adolescent development: cognitive, social, sexual, and physical
Impact on Cognitive Development

• Technology viewed as integral to all aspects of one's life
• Building block for self-esteem and autonomy
• Digital multi-tasking and its impact on concentration
• New opportunities for identity formation but at what cost

Impact on Social Development

• Changes in thought based on new trends in research – As technology changes, so too does it’s impact on communication
• Empathy- rise or fall, and how does gaming fit in
• Risks of online communication are potentially being overstated with potential benefits being undervalued
• Protective factors may be responsible for dissimilar trajectory of use rates vs. prevalence of victimization rates

Impact on Sexual Development

• Early exposure to sexually explicit material is not a new phenomenon
• Exposure to sexually explicit material is ubiquitous
• Playboy vs. X-rated pornography
Sexually Explicit Media’s Impact on Beliefs and Attitudes about Sex

- Values around the use of pornography are changing
- A return to antiquated gender roles
- Rise in flexible attitudes towards how one expresses their sexuality
- Pornography viewed as an educational tool

Sexually Explicit Media’s Impact on Sexual Behaviors

- The Internet may be acting as a quickening agent for initiation in sexual behaviors
- Exposure is linked to engagement in higher risk sexual behaviors
- High volumes of sexually explicit TV linked to teen pregnancy
- A strong relationship exists between exposure to X-rated or violent sexually explicit media and engagement in sexually aggressive behaviors

Impact of Pornography on the Adolescent Brain

- Limbic system is more mature during adolescence, making teens more emotionally driven
- Visual stimuli of pornography may be encoded in an indelible fashion
- These 2 factors make adolescents disproportionately vulnerable to the impact of sexually explicit images
Impact of Pornography on the Adolescent Brain

Parent and Provider Resources
- TeenSafe
- Net Nanny
- NetSmartz
- ConnectSafely
  - Several Parent Guides by parents, for parents
- iKeepSafe
- Family Online Safety Institute
- NCTSN: Staying Safe While Staying Connected
- Thorn
- OnGuardOnline.gov
- Mobile Device Restrictions
  - iPhone: Settings > General > Enable Restrictions
  - Android: “SecureTeen” or “AppLock” in the Google Play Store
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Protective Factors
- Parental Education
- Parental monitoring and supervision
- Clear rules and expectations
  - Use of a cell phone and SNS are earned privileges
- Parental access
  - Usernames and Passwords
  - Being “friends” on SNS
  
  *Communication and Critical Thinking*
“And speaking of critical thinking, there’s no need to panic every time you hear a media report about something awful happening in social media. The reason the news media cover awful situations is because they’re rare. How often do you see headlines about planes landing safely? We only hear about the ones that crash. Of course kids can get into trouble using Snapchat or any other service, but the same can be said for swimming pools. That’s why we teach them how to swim.”

- Parents Guide to Snapchat, ConnectSafely

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Referenced Citations

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