

Chapter 1

Toward an Integrated Conceptual Framework of Research in Teen Online Communication

Robert Z. Zheng

University of Utah, USA

Jason J. Burrow-Sanchez

University of Utah, USA

Stephanie Donnelly

University of Miami, USA

Megan E. Call

University of Utah, USA

Clifford J. Drew

University of Utah, USA

ABSTRACT

This article presents a conceptual framework for research exploring teen online communication. It brings attention to the influences of related elements such as social and individual factors on adolescent needs and behaviors in online communication. The proposed conceptual framework posits that adolescent online behaviors are linked to their needs pertaining to developmental, social-psychological, and cognitive demands. While adolescent needs are influenced by the social and individual factors, such influences also impose indirect impact on adolescent online behaviors. This framework provides a comprehensive picture of teen online communication in terms of the components involved in such communication. Suggestions for future studies are outlined with regard to the validation and implementation of the proposed framework.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60566-926-7.ch001

INTRODUCTION

Research on adolescent online communication has grown rapidly in the past decade ranging from developmental identity to individual differences, and from behaviors in chatrooms to communication patterns on the Internet (Anolli, Villani & Riva, 2005; Greenfield, 2004; Gross, 2004; Livingstone, 2002; Valkenburg & Pater, 2007). Along the way, several researchers have provided major conceptual and practical insights into our understanding of how cognitive, psychological, social, and biological influences have affected adolescent online communication behaviors (Eastin, 2005; Sheeks & Birchmeier, 2007; Whitlock, Powers & Eckenrode, 2006). The key to deepening our understanding of adolescent online communication behavior is to synthesize existing conceptual frameworks to create new, eclectic models that capture the dynamics of teen online communication. These new models must incorporate relevant historical frameworks while simultaneously presenting new theoretical perspectives that address the interaction of the multiple domains of teen online communication within a contemporary context. Current theories explain teen online behaviors based on developmental models (Greenfield, 2004; Subrahmanyam, Smahel & Greenfield, 2006) or from the perspective of personality traits (Anolli et al., 2005; Widyanto & McMurrin, 2004) or social relationship (Peter, Valkenburg & Schouten, 2006; Sheeks & Birchmeier, 2007; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). However, a comprehensive model that examines the relationship of adolescent development and online behavior needs to be set forth. If there is to be an in-depth and more accurate understanding of adolescent online behaviors, researchers must account for the factors that influence teen behaviors in online communication such as adolescent developmental needs, individual differences, and social environments. This paper explores the multifaceted aspects of adolescent online communication by identifying adolescent developmental needs, and related social

and individual factors. An integrated conceptual framework will be proposed that examines the relationship of various components including adolescent cognitive, developmental and social needs as well as individual and environmental factors in teen online communication.

A REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON TEEN ONLINE COMMUNICATION

Past research has been primarily focused on the relationship between media effects and teen behaviors (Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Hrastinski & Keller, 2007; Rubin, 2002). For example, Suoninen (2001) explored the media effects on adolescent social communication and concluded that media play an important part in adolescent “identity work when young people build their own personal spheres of life” (p. 218). Groebel (2001) examined youth media behavior such as aggressiveness using the Internet by focusing on media effects involved in teen online communication. Greenfield and Yan (2006) argue that the existing research should go beyond “media effects” to examine how adolescent developmental needs relate to online communication. Buckingham (2004) made a similar statement by asserting that media studies including the study of the Internet “need to move beyond a determinist view of the effects media technology on children ... to consider these new media and communication technologies within the context of broader changes in children’s culture” (p. 108). Lloyd (2002) points out that mass media constructs must become integrated into a broader understanding of adolescent psychological functioning.

Investigation of teen online communication has shown that adolescents vary significantly in their online communication behaviors (Anolli et al., 2005; Gross, 2004; McKenna, Green & Gleason, 2002). While some adolescents are proactive in communicating with their peers, others are less involved. Some try to develop positive relation-

11 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/toward-integrated-conceptual-framework-research/39287

Related Content

Digital Storytelling with Web 2.0 Tools for Collaborative Learning

Najat Smeda, Eva Dakichand Nalin Sharda (2014). *Cyber Behavior: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1089-1107).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/digital-storytelling-with-web-20-tools-for-collaborative-learning/107776

Transparent Classrooms: How the Mobile Phone is Changing Educational Settings

Carla Ganito (2013). *Ethical Technology Use, Policy, and Reactions in Educational Settings* (pp. 142-152).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/transparent-classrooms-mobile-phone-changing/67920

Connected at any Cost: Adolescent Developmental Needs and Online Relationship Formation

Susan M. Miller, Kenneth L. Miller and Christine Allison (2010). *Adolescent Online Social Communication and Behavior: Relationship Formation on the Internet* (pp. 50-68).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/connected-any-cost/39290

Are University Students Ready to Dump Their Textbooks?: A Survey on Student Attitudes Towards E-Readers and Tablet Computers

Mark van Heerden, Jacques Ophoff and Jean-Paul Van Belle (2012). *International Journal of Cyber Ethics in Education* (pp. 15-44).

www.irma-international.org/article/are-university-students-ready-to-dump-their-textbooks/90235

An E-Portfolio to Support E-Learning 2.0

Hedia Mhiri Sellami (2014). *Cyber Behavior: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 673-688).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-e-portfolio-to-support-e-learning-20/107753