

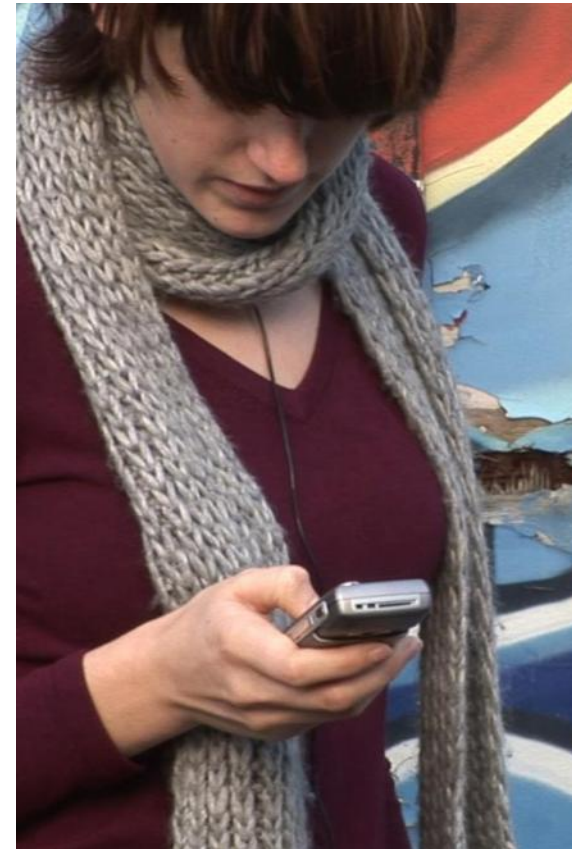
Excluded young people's perspectives on how digital technologies support and challenge their lives

Dr Sue Cranmer
Futurelab

Why is this research important?

First of all...

- Digital participation matters
 - 'to participate in new kinds of social activities, civic life, learning and work [...] it is especially important to become informed and educated digital participants, equipped with the capacities to be active in interpreting the world around them'.
(Hague and Williamson, 2009)



Why is this research important?

Secondly...

- Most UK research carried out with young people in mainstream schools.
- Excluded young people's perspectives very often silenced in educational technology research.
- Essential if we are to identify and address all aspects of the participation gap.
- Young people are not a homogenous group - different kinds of lives lead to different kinds of online experiences.
(S Craig Watkins, 2010)



Why is this research important?

Thirdly...

- This is not just about 'Access' - the material, economic ability to pay.
- Social networks and cultural competences:
 - skills, interests and life experiences that can shape the online environment that they make for themselves
 - 'emerging digital differentiation approach' - predicts differential use patterns will occur even if young people have access to the internet (Peter and Valkenburg, 2006)
 - 'If gaps close at one stage, they open at another. For example, if internet gaps are bridged, internet skill gaps or internet usage gaps occur'.

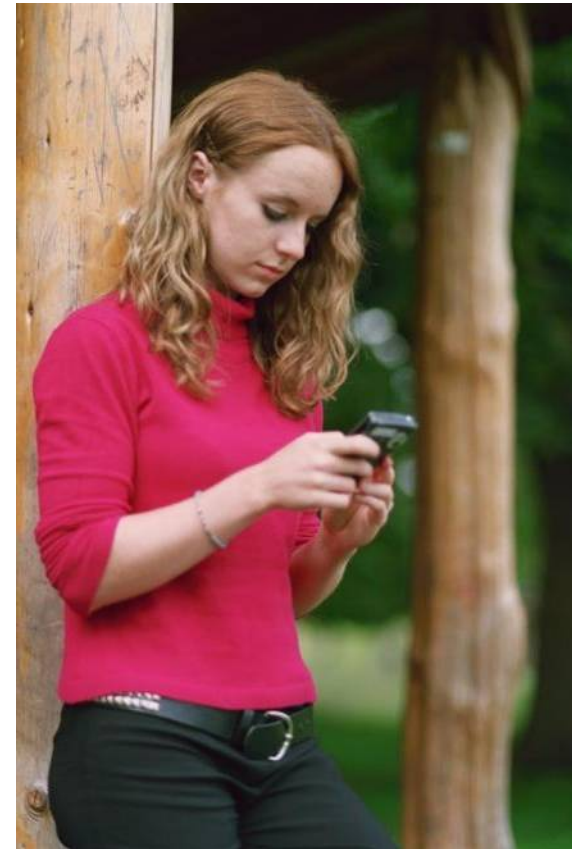
The learner and their context

Becta - government agency

Department of Education, University of Oxford, UK

explored young people's behaviour and experiences outside of formal education with digital technologies:

- Ownership
- Preferences
- Activities
- Skills
- Risk and safety



Full study - data collection

Year 1: Data collection

- 100 semi structured interviews –school, college, university
- 40 Case study meetings at home
- 1000 responses from home survey
- Excluded: 12-15, 8 boys, 5 girls (Pupil Referral Unit)



Sample of excluded young people

Age group	Boys	Girls	Total number
12-13	3	0	3
13-14	2	4	6
14-15	3	1	4
			13

What is a pupil referral unit?

- Type of school for children in UK who cannot attend school, up to 16
- Most typically - young people who have been excluded from school for bad behaviour
- Sometimes children with medical problems, pregnant teenagers and mothers
- Sometimes children who are school phobic
- Attendance low
- Strong gatekeepers



Ownership and access

- Most had access to:
 - a computer or laptop with internet connection at home
 - mobile phone
 - personalised music player
 - games console
- 1 (14 year old boy) said it was too expensive
- 1 (14 year old girl) had access once a week when visiting her mother



How do digital technologies support these young people?

- Entertainment
 - Downloading/listening to music
 - Playing console games
- Enhancing hobbies and interests
- Keeping in touch



How do digital technologies support these young people?

- Some enhancing hobbies and interests (playing the guitar, railways)

– but some rejection of this!

All my life's boring at the minute. [...] I ain't got no hobbies, I don't do nothing. Actually shopping is a hobby. When my mum's spending, spending lots of money on me.(Girl, 15)

– Pornography

I ain't gonna say that I don't like porn because I do like porn so I don't care about it.' (Boy, 14)

How do digital technologies support these young people?

- Mobile phone 'part of my family'
(Girl, 14)
- Helping support mother who has panic attacks:

Yeah, yeah I see. And I said to her, if you ever need me just ring me and I'll come... I'll see if I can come home to sit with you for a bit and then come back to school.

(Boy, 13)

- Facebook for mourning a friend



How do digital technologies challenge these young people?

Digital literacy

- Some lack motivation/confidence for learning to use digital technologies

Boy Yeah, sometimes I wish I was like better at it, yeah, but...[...]

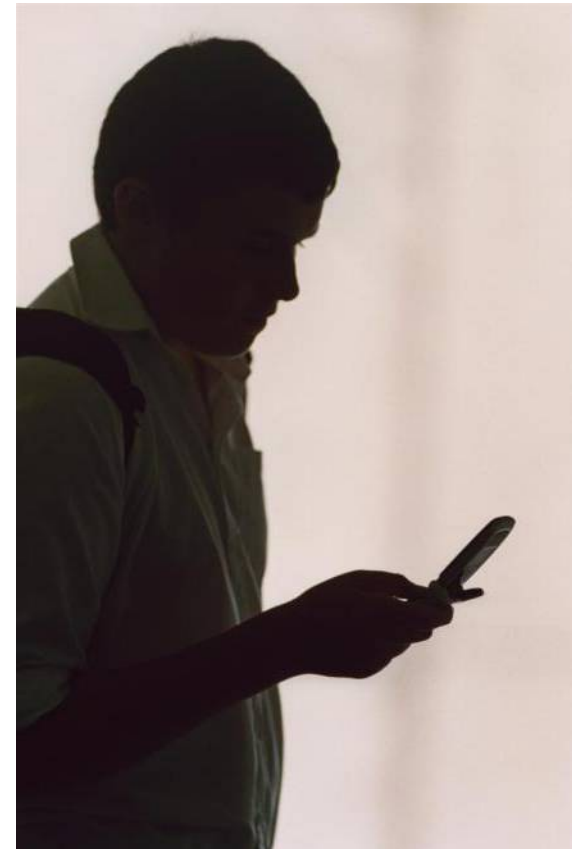
Int. And there's nobody trying to teach you to here? Nobody saying, come on...?

Boy Yeah, they try like when I do ICT, they try and get me like... but I just get bored with it.
(Boy, 15)

How do digital technologies challenge these young people?

Safety

- Some awareness/articulation of safety advice
- Some sexually abusive comments on Facebook and MSN
- Scary pop-ups
- Receiving death threats (on/offline migration)
- Searching for pornography



How do digital technologies challenge these young people?

Safety

- Less threatening online?

It's in between really because if a person is far away from you and you was on MSN speaking to him or her then if they said what they was going to do to you they wouldn't be able to find you. But if it was in person they could do it to you there and then.

(Girl, 14)

How well are these young people supported to use digital technologies?

- Some family support – mothers, fathers, step-fathers, siblings, uncles, cousins.
- Support at the PRU but some barriers for young people in accessing this.
- Lack of reported peer support
 - Boy, 14: peers also do not use internet
 - Girl, 14: said she did not make friends easily.



Conclusions

- Most have access to the internet and a range of other technologies.
- Wide variations in type and range of digital technology uses amongst small group.
- Wide variations in abilities, skills, confidence
- Some reject internet for formal and informal learning.
- Safety strategies underdeveloped
- Not homogenous group
- Challenge for educators





futurelab
innovation in education

sue.cranmer@futurelab.org.uk