Children and New Technologies: Virtual Communities for Children
Summer, First session
Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development
Curriculum Lab

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Course Description

Exploration of impact of virtual communities, computer games, social media and other digital technologies in the lives of young people. Interdisciplinary course. Focus on both theory and design of technology-rich programs and experiences for children. Attention to different settings such as home, school, after school, hospitals and museums.

Course Requirements

- **Readings**. All students are expected to do all the readings
- **Class participation**. All students are expected to participate in discussions of the readings in class. Readings will be on-line or distributed in class.
- **Class presentation.** All students are expected to present in class the readings for one of the sessions.
- **Pecha Kucha** presentation. This is a presentation format in which content can be easily, efficiently and informally shown. Each student will present 20 images for 20 seconds apiece, for a total time of 6 minutes, 40 seconds[1]. The presentation should focus on the student's personal relationship with technologies.
- **Mid-term assignment.** Students will write two vignettes of children at two very different stages of development using a chosen technology using the PTD framework. Please e-mail the assignment to Prof. Bers and bring a hard copy to class
- **Final paper.** Students can choose two options: 1) write an ethnographic report of their experience with a particular technology. They will use the PTD framework, as well as other theoretical frameworks read in class to analyze their experience; or 2) focusing on the theoretical frameworks studies on class, students will develop an educational experience to support positive development through a chosen virtual experience with a chosen age-range. Please e-mail the assignment to Prof. Bers and bring a hard copy to class the last day.

Tentative Schedule

Day 1: Introduction (Thursday May 27)

This week Prof. Bers will introduce the course materials and goals, herself and the research she is directing at the DevTech's research group. Students will introduce themselves. They will work on the Pecha Kucha.

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[1] The Pecha Kucha presentation format was devised in 2003 by two architects, Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham in Tokyo, who sought to give young designers a venue to meet, network, and show their work. They devised a format that kept presentations very concise in order to encourage audience attention and increase the number of presenters within the course of one night. They took the name Pecha Kucha from a Japanese term for the sound of conversation ("chit-chat"). Klein and Dytham's event, called Pecha Kucha Night, has spread virally around the world. More than 170 cities now host such events. Businesses use the Pecha Kucha format, especially for internal presentations, primarily as a device to limit the length of presentations, force presenters to focus their messages and reduce interruptions.

Day 2 : Social Media (Tuesday June 1)

This session will be an overview of the state-of-the art regarding the emerging field of child and youth development and technology, with respect to social media.

Readings

Shuler, C. 2007. D is for digital: An analysis of the children's interactive media environment with a focus on mass marketed products that promote learning: The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop.

In class readings

Pew Internet & American Life Project (2007) Teens & Social Media

Teens and the Internet
http://www.pewinternet.org/Presentations/2009/Teens-and-the-internet.aspx

PBS' Digital Nation   http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/view/

In class activity

Students will finish their Pecha Kuchas in class.

Students will show their Pecha Kuchas

Day 3 : Video Games, learning and youth (Thursday June 3)

This week will focus on computer game playing and its relationship to child development and learning

Readings:

Shaffer, D. W., Squire, K. D., Halverson, R., & Gee, J. P. (2005). Video Games and the Future of Learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(2), 104-111. http://coweb.wcer.wisc.edu/cv/papers/videogamesfuturelearning_pdk_2005.pdf

In class

Gee, J (2008) Learning and Games
http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/dmal.9780262693646.021?cookieSet=1

Starr, P (1994) Seductions of Sim: Policy as a Simulation Game

In class activity

Some Sites to explore

WebWise:
Games for Change
Games, Learning, and Society (U of WI)

Playing two video games, one educational one and one for entertainment, and interviewing each other.

Day 4 : Virtual worlds and youth (Tuesday June 8)

This week will focus on virtual worlds for young children and adolescents

Readings

Barab, B (2003) An Introduction to the Special Issue: Designing for Virtual Communities in the Service of Learning The Information Society

Bainbridge, W *et al.* (2007) The Scientific Research Potential of Virtual Worlds *Science* **317**, 472

In class

Bers, M. U. (2008). Virtual Worlds as Digital Playgrounds. *EDUCAUSE Review*, 43(5), 80-81

Beals, L. & Bers, M.U. (2009). A developmental lens for designing virtual worlds for children and youth. *The International Journal of Learning and Media, 1*(1), 51-65.

In class activity

Some popular industry level virtual worlds for under 18 to explore

Club Penguin, Disney: http://www.clubpenguin.com/
Barbie Girls: http://barbiegirls.com/homeMtl.html
WeeWorld: http://www.weeworld.com/
Zookazoo: http://www.zookazoo.com/
Gaia: http://www.gaiaonline.com/
Habbo Hotel: http://www.habbo.com/
Neopets: http://www.neopets.com/
Pixie Hollow: http://pixiehollow.go.com
Teen Second Life: http://teen.secondlife.com/
Webkinz: http://www.webkinz.com/
Dizzywood: http://www.dizzywood.com/

Day 5 : New Media Literacies (Thursday June 10)

This session will focus on new media literacy by paying particular attention to approaches that engage youth in making their own content in creative ways. The concepts of technological literacy and fluency will be studied.

Readings in class:

Resnick, M (2007) Sowing the Seeds for a More Creative Society

Report from the National Academy of Engineering Technologically Speaking: What is Tech Lit?

Technological Fluency

On line child safety and literacy
http://www.pewinternet.org/Presentations/2008/Online-child-safety-and-literacy.aspx

Jenkins, H. et al. (2006). Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century. MacArthur Foundation.

In class activity: Making posters: What are the new digital literacies needed for the XXI's century?

Day 6 : The Positive Technological Development framework (Tuesday June 15)

Too often youth experiences with technology are framed in negative terms (e.g., cyber bullying, sexual predation, invasion of privacy, addiction to videogames, etc.). This session will present alternative to this deficit discourse about youth experiences with technology.

Readings

Bers, M (under review) NDYD journal

In class Readings:

Bers, M. (2007). Positive Technological Development: Working with computers, children, and the Internet. *MassPsych,51*(1), 5-7, 18-19.

Bers, M; Doyle-Lynch, A & Chau, C (in press) Positive Technological Development: The Multifaceted Nature of Youth Technology Use towards Improving Self and Society. Technology and Identity: Constructing the Self in a Digital World" Ed (Carter-Ching & Foley) Cambridge University Press.

In class activity: PTD and examples of technologies that we have studied using SCRATCH.

Day 7 : Digital landscapes for youth development (Thursday June 17)

This session will present an overview of the current uses of technology by youth through the developmental span (pre-school to high school). Next sessions will focus on each developmental stage.

Readings

Wartella, E. A., & Jennings, N. (2000). Children and Computers: New Technology-Old Concerns (in PDF) or Children and Computers: New Technology-Old Concerns (in HTML). *The Future of Children: Children and Computer Technology, 10*(2).

Greenfield & Yan (2006). Children, adolescents, and the Internet: A new field of inquiry in developmental psychology. *Developmental Psychology, 42*(3), 391-394.

In class activity

Mapping the territory: On-line search and lit review. Child development and new technologies.

The handbook activity.

In class readings

Greenfield (2004). Developmental considerations for determining appropriate Internet use guidelines for children and adolescents. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 25*(6), 751-762.

Mid-term paper is due

Day 8 : New technologies in Early childhood and Elementary school (Tuesday June 22)

Readings

Resnick, M. (2007). All I Really Need to Know (About Creative Thinking) I Learned (By Studying How Children Learn) in Kindergarten. ACM Creativity & Cognition conference, Washington DC, June 2007.

Wartella, Vanewater, Rideout (2005). Electronic media use in the lives of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. *American Behavioral Scientist, 48*, 501-504

In class activity: Playpens and playgrounds

In class activity: On the media

News articles: "Why an iPhone could actually be good for your 3-year-old"
http://www.boston.com/community/moms/articles/2009/11/01/why_an_iphone_could_actually_be_good_for_your_3_year_old/ by Neil Swidey, The Boston Globe, 11/1/09

Day 9: New technologies in the years of middle and high school (Thursday June 24)

Boyd, D (2007). "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life." MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning - Youth, Identity, and Digital Media Volume (ed. David Buckingham). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 119-142.

Lenhart (2007). Cyber bullying (Pew Report).

Lenhart & Madden (2007). Social Networking Websites and Teens.

Subrahmanyam & Greenfield. (2008). Online communication and adolescent relationships. *The Future of Children, 18*(1), 87-118.

Guest speaker: Clement Chau

In class activity: malls and cars

Day 10 : Designing positive technological environments: robotics (Tuesday 29)

This session will focus on a specific type of learning environment that promotes knowledge about robotics.

Guided observations of robotics summer camp

Day 11: Digital youth (Thursday July 1)

Ito, M., et al. (2008). Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Project. MacArthur Foundation Reports.