BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN WORK AND PLAY: YOUTH PRACTICES AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

December 19, 2017 // Sandra Cortesi

In collaboration with Christian Fieseler and team // Nordic Centre for Internet and Society // BI Norwegian Business School

Silly Robots by Chris Lloyd @ www.yllw.co.uk/sillyrobots/
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Platform Diversification
1. Individual / peer group(s)
2. Audiences
3. Features / affordances
4. Context
5. Perceived intimacy/privacy
Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Evolution of Digital Divides

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Gaps, divides, and splits are a common feature of contemporary societies and economies. Both at the global and the national level, inequalities persist across multiple social dimensions, interacting and intersecting in complex ways. From income to education, to digital gaps, divides shape an uneven playing field where access to resources and opportunities are not evenly distributed. With the rapid advance of information and communication technologies, inequalities have continued to reproduce and, in many cases, amplify. Despite efforts to close digital divides, their contours keep evolving in parallel with the rapid technological transformation.

Theorization of the "digital divide," therefore, has become more nuanced and complex. A number of studies have found that there are gradients not only in the quality of access to technology, but also in the sociocultural practices and skills that people develop (Hargittai, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2006; Van Dijk, 2005; Watkins, 2012), the information they consume and produce (Robinson, 2009; Schradie, 2011), and the outcomes of their usage (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2013; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015).

Instead of one digital divide, researchers have identified multiple ones. Although the divide in access to material technology is still important (referred to as the "first-level divide"), other digital gaps are now widely recognized. The "second-level digital divide," for instance, indicates the gap in terms of online skills and practices (e.g., Hargittai, 2002; Jenkins et al. 2006). More recently, scholars have also discussed the existence of a "third-level divide" that consists in the differential tangible outcomes that come from technology usage. For instance, the differences in people's use of the Internet for improving their socioeconomic status, and earning different forms of capital (e.g., van Deursen & Helsper, 2015).
Range of involvement depending on skill level / resources / time / interest etc.

- **Video Blogger** (Vlogging, Youtubing, Video game streaming)
- **Written Blogger** (fashion, food, travel, etc.)
- **Social Media Influencer**
- **Music / Podcasting**
- **Art / Design / Photography**
- **Coding and ‘Modding’**
- **Material Production e.g. Etsy**
FACTS:
Also Known As: Loren Gray
Famous As: Social media personality, Musical.ly star
Nationality: U.S.
Birth Date: April 19, 2002
Age: 15 Years
FACTS:
Also Known As: EthanGamerTV
Famous As: Gaming YouTuber
Nationality: U.K.
Birth Date: July 9, 2006
Age: 11 Years

FACTS:
Also Known As: FARSATTACK
Famous As: Gaming YouTuber
Nationality: Switzerland
Age: 18 Years
FACTS:
Also Known As: Tolly Dolly Posh
Famous As: Blogger
Nationality: U.K.
Age: 17 Years
Increasingly aware of their ability to create value and earn social, cultural, and economic capital through the activities they engage in online, some youth are developing an entrepreneurial spirit in which their actions are motivated by various rewards — some monetary, others more abstract (e.g., cultural, social), some short-term, others long-term. From receiving advertising and sponsorship revenue to garnering high followership, youth activity online is influenced by numbers and metrics that account for different kinds of social, cultural, and economic rewards.
Intrinsic Motivations
- Passion
- Enjoyment
- Creativity
- Self-Expression
- Meaning
- Progress
- Skill-development

Extrinsic Motivations
- Financial Rewards
- Approval/Feedback
- Obligations
- Avoidance of Repercussions
- Fame
- Networking
- Fear of Failure
CASE STUDIES
Youth Capital-Enhancing Activities

Some youth are actively participating in the digital economy by engaging in activities that allow them to earn different forms of capital and improve their social status. These activities involve the creation and sharing of multimedia content on a range of social media platforms, as well as communicating with others and forging social connections. However, as digital divide scholars have argued, not all youth engage in these types of online activities. The skill set needed to participate in the digital economic landscape creates gaps and amplifies existing socioeconomic inequalities. What forms of capital can youth gain as they participate in the digital economy? What are the online activities that allow youth to earn some kind of capital and improve their social status?
Aspirational Labor

This deep-dive is intended to highlight how young people are not only leveraging online activities for immediate gains but are also often viewing their online practices as investments for future employment — a phenomenon termed “aspirational labor.” In an effort to increase their employment opportunities in desirable industry sectors, or to make an entrepreneurial break, many young people develop specific networks, skills, and online identities. How are young people negotiating long- and short-term gains as they engage in economically-oriented online activities? What are the risks and opportunities that youth confront as they engage in aspirational labor?
Virtual Collaboration

Virtual collaboration is an interpersonal and technology mediated practice that rests at the intersection of sociocultural and economic forces. Virtual collaboration supports cultural production processes that are essential for success in the digital economy. As youth socialize, interact, and participate in online communities, they develop skills for collaborating online. Using the Scratch platform and online community as a case study, we explore how virtual collaboration is practiced by youth (with a focus on ages 8-15) as they engage in the process of collaboratively making digital animations. What are the barriers youth confront when collaborating online? How can youth overcome those obstacles?
Area “Digital Economy”: Knowing how to navigate economic activities online and offline to earn different forms of economic, social, and/or cultural capital (e.g., earning money; increasing social connections; building personal brands).
ONWARD

- Youth
- Friends and Family
- Teachers, Coaches, and Mentors
- (Tech) Companies
- Law and Policy Makers