Gendered Internet Use across Generations and Life Stages in the UK

AOIR 9.0 Conference Copenhagen (October 2008)

Ellen J. Helsper
Background

- What explains people’s engagement with ICTs?
  - Resources?
    - Focus on Access, Skills, Attitudes – Digital inequalities
  - Culture? Identity?
    - Focus on differences in use – Digital engagement

- If culture what kind of culture?
  - When/where we grew up?
  - Centuries old ‘offline’ socialisation processes?
Age

Use by Age [QH19 by DQ1]

2005 2007

% that uses the Internet

< 18 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 > 75

OxIS 2005: N=2,185; OxIS 2007: N=2,350
Life stage

Use by Lifestage (QH19 by QD14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OxIS 2003: N=2,029; OxIS 2005: N=2,185; OxIS 2007: N=2,350 (Students: N=202; Employed: N=1,262; Retired: N=506)
Differences between men and women

- Access differences minimal, still differences in intensity and use.

Which model is the most appropriate for continuing gender differences in usage intensity and genre?

- Generational – Time limited inequalities/differences
  - Solution to inequalities = ‘Die off’

- Life stage – ‘Continued’ inequalities/differences
  - Solution to inequalities = Changing patterns of socialisation

Or both?
Generation as the be all and end all?

Place and time – Terminology grouping different cultures together
- Place gaps: ‘Information societies’, ‘Knowledge society’, ‘Network society’ (Manuel Castells and many many others)
- Time gaps: ‘The (Tech savvy) Next generation’ (Carlson 2005); ‘Nintendo generation’ (Murdoch – Green, Reid & Bigum 1998) ; ‘Digital Natives and Immigrants’ (Prensky 2001); ‘Cyberkids’ (Holloway and Valentine 2000)

The individual embedded in immediate social cultural context
- Domestication (Silverstone & Haddon)
- Socialisation (Sociologists & Social psychologist – Any number) in relation to Gender/Ethnic/Racial/Sexual Identities
Life stage model: Gender case study

Level determined by age

Men

Women

Difference determined by life stage

Young  Middle age  Older
### Interactions: Breadth of Use: 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>11.46</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>0.20</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>-7.18</td>
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<td>Employed</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>8.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>GenderXAge</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Base: Users of the internet ($N = 1,578$)
# Interactions: Breadth of Use: 2003 & 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2005</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>20.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.94</td>
<td>-2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
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<td>-0.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>GenXStudent</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GenXEmployed</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current Users N=1,305; Current Users N=1,187;
Age and breadth of use

Breadth of use (standardised score)

Current Users 2003 N=1,187; 2005 N=1,305; 2007 N=1,578
What about children?

Base: Users of the internet ($N = 1,578$)
Specific uses: Mars & What about Venus?

♀ Health: Predominantly female

➢ Shopping: Gender ‘neutral’ - ambiguous

♂ Sexual material: Predominantly male
Specific (gendered) uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sexual material</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Shopping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
<td>-0.43**</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.12**</td>
<td>0.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>GenXAge</td>
<td></td>
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<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GenXStudent</td>
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<td>-0.17**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GenXRet</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.10**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GenXSingle</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GenXMarried</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.13**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Users of the internet (N = 1,578)
Sexual material, Gender and Life stage

Base: Users of the internet \((N = 1,578)\)
Sexual material, Gender and Life stage

% looking at 'adult' sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life stage</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Users of the internet (N = 1,578)
Age X Life Stage:
Sexual material and Employed persons

% Looking at 'adult' sites

Men, 31%

Women, 8%

Employed

18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-55 | 56-64 | 65-74

22% | 10% | 8% | 7% | 2% | 9%

OxIS
Oxford Internet Surveys

Oxford Internet Institute
University of Oxford
Age X Life Stage: Sexual material and Married persons

% looking at 'adult' sites

Men, 14% 25% 16% 8% 9% 11%

Women, 8% 6% 5% 0% 0% 0%

25-34 35-44 45-55 56-64 65-74 75+
Shopping, Gender and Life stage

Base: Users of the internet (N = 1,578)
Shopping, Gender and Life stage

Base: Users of the internet (N = 1,578)
Specific behaviours

♂ Sexual material: Gender throughout life stage
   Gender interacts strongly with life stage (Employment and marital status)

♀ Health: Gender and Employment throughout the life stages – No changes

➢ Shopping: Gender, Age, Employment and Marital status
   Gender interacts with age and life stage
Conclusions

- A *generational model* of engagement with ICTs (i.e. Digital natives) does not fully reflect reality - Age effect is not-linear

- *Socialisation* cannot be ignored, but needs to be understood as part of different life stages – Gender roles differ depending on life circumstances

- *Life circumstances* are important and reflected in internet practices – Life stage model useful to explain some of the age effects … We need to look at how the internet fits into people’s everyday lives

- Life stage and generational models need to be specified according to the *nature of engagement* – Identity related/culturally coded uses might feel greater pressure due to life stage effects
Wanted!

- Panel studies
  - What really happens when people go from being single to cohabiting to marrying to divorcing to remarrying to…?
  - What really happens when people go from studying to working to unemployment to retirement?

- Household studies & Qualitative research
  - How are these relationships played out in different household types?
  - What are the negotiation processes?
  - What are the reinforcements/discouragements that take place?
Thank you.

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Oxford Internet Surveys
http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/microsites/oxis/
Sample and design OxIS (WIP-UK)

- 2003, 2005 and 2007
- Probability sample of England, Scotland & Wales
- Respondents: 14 year olds and older
- Face-to-face interviews
- Sponsorship: Hefce, British Library, Cisco, Ofcom, Talisma, AOL, BT, and Orange
## Sample composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fielded in</td>
<td>June-July</td>
<td>February-March</td>
<td>March -April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>2,030</td>
<td>2,185</td>
<td>2,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>