Using Kenneth Burke's Equipment for Living to Explain Teenage Girls' Engagement with
Online Media in Trinidad and Tobago

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This dissertation titled
Using Kenneth Burke's Equipment for Living to Explain Teenage Girls' Engagement with
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Abstract

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Teenage Girls' Engagement with Online Media as Equipment for Living

Director of Dissertation: Norma Pecora

All teenagers entering high school in Trinidad and Tobago receive a laptop that is capable of accessing the Internet. However, the distribution of laptops to teenagers was highly criticized as many adults were concerned that the teenagers will misuse the laptops, especially by accessing undesirable materials online. Their fears were escalated when a teenage girl posted a defamatory video on social media that went viral in Trinidad and Tobago. Because of this one incident many adults assumed knowledge on how teenage girls used online media. For this dissertation I decided to discover how teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago used online media, and more specifically how, they used online media as equipment for living.

Equipment for living is a theory put forth by Kenneth Burke that essentially explains that people use text as a means to deal with situations that occur in their everyday lives. By using Burke’s philosophy on symbols and symbolic action, I created a model called “Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action” to explain how teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago use online media as equipment for living. Previous research (Stern and Willis, 2007) discovered that teenagers’ online activity fell into three categories: communication, information seeking, and content creation. Through combined methods of surveys and focus groups, as well as asking the teenagers to blog about their online experiences,
conducted in a same-sex high school, I was able to discover that teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago also use online media for communication, information seeking, and content creation, as well as explain how through the symbolic use of online media, such as social networking sites, how the teen girls are able to use online media as equipment for living.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Keith and Rebecca Cumberbatch, who supported, encouraged, and believed in me from the very beginning.
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There are several people I would like to acknowledge for making my dissertation possible. I would first like to thank my advisor and mentor, Dr. Norma Pecora, for her patience, knowledge, advice, and for standing by me during this difficult journey. Gratitude goes out to my committee members for their invaluable advice and time. I especially want to thank the teen girls who enthusiastically participated in this study and the school faculty who, through their willingness and support, made this research process a pleasant, fun-filled, and overall positive experience. Finally, I want to thank my family, especially my parents, Keith and Rebecca, for their unconditional love, support, guidance, and prayers, my cousin Louis for doing everything possible to ensure my safety in Ohio, and my cousin Renee, for helping me stay sane.
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. iii

Dedication ........................................................................................................................... v

Acknowledgments .............................................................................................................. vi

List of Tables ...................................................................................................................... xv

List of Figures .................................................................................................................... xvi

Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 1

Why Study Teenage Girls in Trinidad and Tobago .......................................................... 1

Rationale and Significance for Study ............................................................................... 2

Research Questions ......................................................................................................... 5

Theoretical Framework ..................................................................................................... 6

The Chapters ...................................................................................................................... 8

Definition of Terms ......................................................................................................... 12

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework ................................................................................. 13

Kenneth Burke ................................................................................................................. 13

Burke’s Philosophy ......................................................................................................... 14

Symbols and Symbolic Action ....................................................................................... 15

Dramatism and the Pentad ............................................................................................ 16
Appendix 11: Focus Group and Blog Assent Form .................................................................270

Appendix 12: Focus Group and Blog Assent Form for the Teen Girls to Keep ..........272
List of Tables

Table 3.1: Demographic of Students that Participated in Each Method .......................69
Table 4.1: Number of Teen Girls Based on Age and Form..........................................76
Table 4.2: Frequency of Online Use............................................................................77
Table 7.1: Reading Online Privacy Policies ..............................................................166
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Percentage of Teen Girls’ Online Use Based on Form</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Percentage of Online Activity Use by Teen Girls</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Percentage of Top Six Online Activities Used by Teen Girls Based on Form</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Percentage of Most Participated Online Activities by Teen Girls</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Percentage of Online Activities that was Created by the Teen Girls as Online Media</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Percentage of Online Media Created by Teen Girls Based on Form</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Reasons why Teen Girls Created Content</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Reasons why Teen Girls Created Content Based on Form</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Percentage of Social Networking Sites (SNS) and Social Networking Tools (SNT) Used by Teen Girls</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Percentage of SNS or SNT Used by Teen Girls Based on Form</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Percentage of Girls who Participated in Social Networking Activities</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Percentage of Girls who Participated in Social Networking Activities based on Form</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6.2: Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action for Communication ........................................... 134
Figure 6.3: Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action for Information Seeking ................................. 143
Figure 6.4: Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action for Content Creation ..................................... 149
Figure 7.1: Reasons why Teen Girls Read Online Privacy Policies ............................. 166
Figure 7.2: Reasons why Teen Girls Read Online Privacy Policies Based on Form... 167
Figure 7.3: Reasons why Teen Girls Do Not Read Online Privacy Policies ............... 168
Figure 7.4: Reasons why Teen Girls Do Not Read Online Privacy Policies Based on Form ................................................................................................................ 168
Introduction

Why Study Teenage Girls in Trinidad and Tobago

I first became interested in teenage girls’ use of online media in 2009 while volunteering for a Trinidadian production company that specialized in producing musicals and concerts for children with a cast consisting mainly of teenagers. While volunteering, I had the opportunity to informally observe a group of teenage girls over the course of two months. These girls attended same-sex prestige schools and while their economic statuses ranged across economic classes, they all had an abundant knowledge of various online media outlets. What intrigued me most was that these girls used online media for more than just entertainment. The teenage girls would often view music videos online for choreography ideas. They would use Facebook not only to communicate with their friends, but as a means to voice their opinions on various topics and to get feedback from others on those same topics. The most interesting behavior I observed amongst these girls was that when they had a homework problem, they would call a friend and tell them to go online so they could discuss how to solve the problem via Facebook chat, MSN Messenger or Skype, because the phone call was too expensive. These girls showed intentionality and forethought in their online media use and I wondered if the teenage girls were conscious of their interaction with online media and the role online media played in their lives.

My interest in how teenage girls use online media was rekindled in 2011 when a fourteen year old student created a video to voice her opinions about the State of Emergency and the resulting imposed curfew that occurred in Trinidad and Tobago in August 2011. The student was 14 years old and called herself “Granny Quila” (Julien,
2011a). The video was posted on the social networking website YouTube and was shared quickly throughout the world via Facebook. In the video, the teen used obscene language, racial slurs directed toward the Prime Minister, and threatened the life of the Prime Minister (Julien, 2011a). When “Granny Quila” realized that she was in trouble for creating a video that incited violence, she immediately deleted the video from YouTube and uploaded a video apologizing to the Prime Minister. Because of this teen and her “abuse” of online media, the Attorney General was concerned that other people, and implied that other adolescents, may use the media to form gangs and incite violence (Simon, 2011). Also, as a result of this teenage girl’s “abuse” of social networking sites, the Attorney General also wanted to draft laws to monitor such websites in Trinidad and Tobago (Simon, 2011).

These two examples of teenage girls using online media were vastly different from each other, and it made me question the reasons why teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago use online media.

**Rationale and Significance for Study**

Trinidad and Tobago is considered one of the richest and most developed countries in the Caribbean. The advanced status of this developing country is partly due to having crude oil as a natural resource and partly due to the country’s commitment, no matter the political party in charge, to promoting education and ensuring that the nation has access to the latest information and communication technologies. The government recognized that the children are the future of Trinidad and Tobago; they believed that each child should be well prepared and armed with the correct technology to enhance their education and futures. To ensure this, the government gave every student entering
Form 1 (first year of high school), starting in 2010, a laptop to use because according to
the Prime Minister, children carry the future of the country in their schoolbags (Grant,
2010). The government wanted every high school child to have access to the Internet,
enabling them to have information at their fingertips.

With the announcement of the distribution of laptops to first year high school
students, many people became concerned about whether or not the children receiving the
laptops will use them constructively. The *Trinidad Express* quoted various experts and
research that concluded that giving students laptops was a poor idea because “Students
are masterful time wasters and the computer is the ultimate time wasting equipment.
Without close supervision students will play games, watch movies, surf the net etc.”
(Lucie-Smith, 2010). The article also cited several researchers who found that giving
students laptops had no educational benefit, because the students were using the laptops
for other reasons. After reading this article, I questioned the research results because
research demonstrated that teenagers use the Internet to help with their formal education
such as homework assignments and to look up health information (Lin & Yu, 2008;
Deena et al. 2011). Research also showed that the Internet provided informal education
to teenagers, as certain online activities help develop adolescents’ identities (Bortree,
2005; Thiel, 2005).

The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honorable Kamla Persad-
Bissessar, during her campaign in 2009, promised that every student entering high school
would be given a laptop to use throughout their high school life. Keeping true to her
word, the government spent TT$83 million (US$13 million) on laptops for Form 1 (first
year) high school students (Caribbean News Now, 2010). The government ensured the
continuation of the laptop distribution to future Form 1 high school students by enacting
the promise into the laws of Trinidad and Tobago (Julien, 2011b). The Prime Minister
believed that Trinidad and Tobago needed to move forward in regards to technology and
the students needed to move into the modern age in order to be prepared for the 21st
century (Kamla: Every child deserves a laptop, 2010). In addition to the students
receiving laptops, teachers also received laptops and computer training, in order to
incorporate technology into the education of high school students and to also be mentors
to the Form 1 students who received the laptops (Allaham, 2011).

With the announcement of the laptops for every Form 1 child came the criticisms
of allowing adolescent children access to such devices. Since the students were allowed
to take the laptop home, most of the criticism resulted from the concern that either the
students were using the laptops for the wrong reasons. Allaham (2011) quoted a Form 1
student who received a laptop: “We use it a lot, but not in school.” One principal also
said that because some schools did not have Internet access as yet, the students were
using the laptops in unproductive manners such as playing games or using the webcams
to record fights and other various activities that happened in school (Allaham, 2011). One
main concern was students accessing undesirable websites (Allaham, 2011). No
definition of undesirable was given, so it was uncertain what material was on undesirable
websites, however, various articles implied that social networking sites, such as
Facebook, may be one of the detrimental websites. There is no published research on
teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago online media use. In fact, I could not find any
research concerning teenagers in Trinidad and Tobago and their use of online media. The
lack of available research is astonishing especially since many newspapers published un-
cited research explaining how teenagers use the Internet.

Assuming knowledge about teenagers’ use of online media is futile; for it is only
through research, analysis, and interpretations can one truly understand the importance
online media have in teenagers’ lives. With the introduction of any new media to
vulnerable audiences such as children and adolescents, there is always a concern about
what effects the media will have on them. However, media effects should not be the
concern, for proving media effects can be difficult and inconsistent rather, the goal
should be in understanding the purpose and role of online media from the teenager’s
point of view. The two main aims of this dissertation are: 1) to understand the different
reasons the teenage girls use online media, and 2) understand and explain how the
teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago use online media as equipment for living, that is,
how teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago use online media to help them deal with
situations that occur in their everyday lives.

**Research Questions**

Due to the lack of research on teenage girls’ use of online media in Trinidad and
Tobago, I needed to develop some demographic information on the teen girls’ media
consumption, such as how often they consumed online media, what websites they visited
and if privacy was of any concern to the teen girls. This information needed to be
established to ensure that the girls did indeed use online media, before questioning how
they used online media as equipment for living. Researchers on the topic of teenagers’
use of online media such as the work of The Pew Internet and Family Life Project and
research conducted by Stern and Willis (2007) that established the main reasons why
teenagers use the Internet, the following research questions were developed for this dissertation:

- How often do teen girls use the Internet?
- What websites do the teen girls frequent?
- How do the teen girls use online media?
- How do the teen girls use online media for communication, information seeking, and creation of content?
- How do online media serve as equipment for living for the teen girls?
- Do privacy policies influence what websites the teen girls use?
- Do privacy issues influence what teen girls post online?

The information on privacy will be presented in a separate chapter.

**Theoretical Framework**

The foundational theory used in this dissertation is the American philosopher Kenneth Burke’s theory of equipment for living. Simply put, Kenneth Burke believed that people used the narratives in texts, such as literature and poetry, to help them deal with situations that occurred in their everyday lives, using the texts as equipment for living.

My informal observations of the girls in 2009 and the girl who created the “Granny Quila” video indicated that they frequently used online media to aid them with their current life circumstances, and that therefore Burke’s theoretical framework would be an effective foundation for my study. Previous research based on Burke’s equipment for living theory studied adults (Brummett, 1984; Brummett, 1985; Payne 1989; Young, 2000; Soetaert, Bourgonjon, & Rutten, 2011). However, I argue that because teenagers
have advanced cognitive development, they have the ability to use online media as equipment for living: they are able to comprehend the important role online media play in their lives, and link various online media to their current life situations. The ability to make such a link indicates that the theory of equipment for living can be applied to teenagers, as well to adults.

To explain the link between online media and equipment for living, I use Burke’s philosophy of symbols and symbolic action, dramatism and the pentad, attitudes, and representative anecdote to develop a model “Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action” (see Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1). This model used Burke’s philosophy of how symbols play a crucial role in society, as symbols allowed humans the ability to understand and give meaning to reoccurring instances in life (Burke, 1962). While dramatism and the pentad was not present within the model, dramatism and the pentad explain how audience members are influenced by symbols present in mediated messages, and that attitudes, an addition to the pentad making it a hexad, “is a strategy of interpretation and this more of a cognitive activity that is then reflected in one’s symbolic usage” (Mahan-Hays & Aden, 2003). A representative anecdote is the narrative people use and the attitudes the narrative represents (Mahan-Hays & Aden, 2003) and according to Burke (1962), representative anecdotes are “reflections of realities” (p. 52). I proposed that because teenage girls have advanced cognitive skills, they are able to link online media to attitudes used by the girls, which become representative anecdotes that reflect a reality for girls, which provide a means to deal with situations, hence becoming equipment for living.
The Chapters

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter one explains the theoretical framework. Chapter two discusses past literature and research on teenage online media use. Chapter three focuses on the various methods employed for this dissertation. Chapters four and five report on the findings of the survey and focus groups. Chapter six presents the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Chapter seven contains a discussion on privacy.

Chapter 1 is divided into two main sections: Kenneth Burke’s philosophy and adolescents’ cognitive development. Burke’s ideas on symbols and symbolic action, dramatism and the pentad with an explanation of the addition of attitude to make it a hexad and equipment for living are explained. The model “Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of Symbolic Action” is introduced and explained. Finally a brief literature review of media and equipment for living is presented. To understand the girls’ cognitive status, this section discusses Piaget’s fourth stage of cognitive development, the formal operational stage, using Steinberg’s (2011) five stages of adolescents’ cognitive development: thinking about possibilities, thinking about abstract concepts, metacognition, thinking in multiple dimensions, and relativism.

In Chapter 2, I present a review of the available literature relevant to my dissertation. The chapter begins with literature on adult concerns about teenagers’ media consumption, to establish the significance of this study, as many adults in Trinidad and Tobago were concerned about teenage girls’ consumption and production of online media (Allaham, 2011). The chapter presents information from the Annenberg Public Policy
Center and the Pew Internet Family and Life Project on what were parents’ and adults’ main concerns about teenagers’ online behavior.

As the dissertation’s focus is on teenage girls, an overview and definition of Girls’ Studies is presented, touching briefly on the development of Girls’ Studies and the role Carol Gilligan and Angela McRobbie played in the growth of this field. Next, I explain using the research from several prominent researchers such as Hoffman, Kalsbeek, & Novak (1996); Valkenburg & Soeters (2001); and Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin (2005), the gender difference between girls and boys in relation to using the Internet and why it is necessary to study girls separate from boys, as girls were once considered passive members of society and it was through the study of girls as agents with conscious goals showing intentionality and reflexivity (Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2009). I also explained my contribution to the field of Girls’ Studies as I explore how the medium, in this case the Internet, in conjunction with the medium’s content can be used as equipment for living for teenage girls.

I then present research on the online activities for teenagers using Stern and Willis’s (2007) categories of communication, information seeking and content creation. Once again The Pew Internet and Family Life Project numerous research on teenagers and their various online behaviors are cited, along with other researchers who conducted research both in the U.S. and in Great Britain. Sonia Livingstone’s work was prominently used, as her work is not only well respected in the U.S. but because Trinidad and Tobago was once a British colony and while many of Trinidad and Tobago’s media are influenced heavily by U.S. content, there are still many British ideologies present with Trinidad and Tobago.
The final section in this chapter presents information on social networking sites and the various ways teenagers use it as a communicative tool, an informative tool, and as a production and distribution tool for content creation.

Chapter 3 details the methodology employed in this dissertation. This dissertation uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain the necessary information needed to answer the research questions. The chapter is divided into three main sections: the research, the description of the sample girls, and the participation process. The research section explains why surveys, focus group and blogs were used to collect data. The description of the sample girls explains the demographic of the participants, a description of the school, and an explanation of the school’s academic system. The participation process explains how the girls were selected to take part in the survey and focus groups and blogs. Also a description of the demographic of each focus group is presented.

In Chapter 4, the data from the survey is presented using tables and figures. This chapter is divided into six sections: demographic data which reports on the demographics of the participants; frequency of online activities; online media use which is further divided into the categories of communication, information seeking sand content creation, the three main categories Stern and Willis (2007) discussed as the main activities teenagers participate with online; websites frequented by the teen girls; and unforeseen results that reports on data collected by the survey that does not fall within the three categories of communication, information seeking, and content creation.

In Chapter 5 I present the focus group and blog findings. The focus group and blog findings were divided into five sections: communication, information seeking, content creation, how girls believed adults perceived their use of online media, online
media as a coping mechanism, and living without the Internet. In this chapter the data is presented in narrative forms, as well as using direct quotes from the focus groups and blogs.

Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the survey, focus groups and blogs findings. Analysis was done by categorizing the data into the themes of communication, information seeking, and content creation, the three main online activities that Stern and Willis (2007) reported as the activities teenagers participate in online. The chapter was divided into the analysis of the survey findings and then the analysis of the focus group and blogs, with the information presented under each theme. The Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action is applied to each section and to each of the themes of communication, information seeking, and content creation. Finally, a section on how the other online media activities: listening to music, playing video games, and watching TV shows are equipment for living for teen girls.

Chapter 7 presents all the information concerning privacy. Privacy was a topic that the girls kept discussing in the focus group and blogs. Privacy issues are relevant to teen girls’ online media use; however, as the equipment for living model was not applied to the data collected, the privacy information is presented in a separate chapter. This chapter includes an introduction, literature review, methods, findings from survey and focus group, and analysis and interpretation sections.

In the Conclusion of the dissertation I explain why I choose to study this topic, the theoretical framework I employed as well as the methods I used to obtain the necessary data needed to answer the research questions. I include a section that explains the
limitation of my research methods. I then provide the answers to each research question, a section on reflexivity, briefly explain my contribution to girls’ studies, and also discuss the implications for further research.

**Definition of Terms**

For this dissertation I developed definitions for the Internet, online media, and social networking sites that I used specifically for the context of the dissertation. The Internet is an electronic communications network that connects computer networks worldwide through the World Wide Web which is an information exchange service that enables people to access a variety of materials around the world. Online media is defined as any media, such as photos, videos, newspapers, radio, television, music, social networking sites and any other media that can be accessed via the Internet. A social networking site is a branch of social media. Social media allow people to connect and interact with each other through virtual communities. Social networking sites allow people to create a virtual community where they can create and share information with others. Some examples of social networking sites are Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube.
Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that is the foundation of this dissertation. Kenneth Burke’s theory of equipment for living is the main theory used to explain and analyze the results from the research. Cognitive developmental theory was used as a framework to explain the cognitive skills the teen girls apply when using online media as equipment for living. Researchers need to recognize media can be equipment for living for teens. One way to study media as equipment for living for teens is by examining how teenagers use online media. This can be accomplished by listening to the teenagers explain in their own words how the representative anecdotes, narratives, and stories found online help teenagers deal with everyday situations. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses the works of Kenneth Burke, explaining Burke’s philosophy and his theory of equipment for living. The second section presents cognitive developmental theory as a way of understanding the girls’ ability to actively engage with online media.

Kenneth Burke

Kenneth Burke was an American philosopher and literary theorist whose primary research focused on rhetoric. Rhetoric is “basic stratagems which people employ, in endless narrations, and consciously or unconsciously, for the outwitting or cajoling of one another” (Burke, 1962, p. xvii). Rhetoric also refers to “human behavior and communication seen as embodying strategies for affecting situation” (Gusfield, 1989, p.6). Simply put, rhetoric is a strategy used by orators and writers to inform, persuade or motivate their audiences in a specific position. Burke’s influences were varied and spanned multiple disciplines and fields of thought and his work was heavily influenced
by the German philosopher, economist and sociologist Karl Marx, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, and German cultural critic Friedrich Nietzsche (Anders, 2011). While Burke was influenced by Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, Burke prescribed to no particular political or philosophical principle; however, he believed that symbols played a critical role in society, as symbols enable people to understand and give meaning to seemingly arbitrary yet reoccurring instances that occur in life. Burke proposed that if we understood “what is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it” (Burke, 1962, p. xv) we would achieve the cognitive foundation needed to perceive and comprehend the motives that guide human behavior. Burke believed that symbols were central to understanding how people perceived the world and hence influenced their behavior. Kenneth Burke was a rhetorical theorist; he believed that symbols played a potent role in shaping social understanding. He understood that audience members were actually active and recognized that media audience members have the power to interpret, negotiate, and resist the dominant meanings embedded in media messages. Through his work, Burke explained how symbols and symbolic action played a vital role in how audience members are influenced by and take ownership of mediated messages.

**Burke’s Philosophy**

In this section symbols and symbolic action are first explained, as they are the central components to Burke’s philosophy. Secondly, dramatism and the pentad are discussed with a brief explanation of the importance of the addition of attitude to the pentad. Third, Burke’s theory of equipment for living is explained followed by examples of how researchers have used media as equipment for living.
Symbols and Symbolic Action

Symbols and symbolic action are central concepts to understanding Kenneth Burke’s philosophy because “humans are symbolic-using creatures” (Gusfield, 1989, p.8). But what exactly are symbols? Joseph Gusfield (1989) explained symbols when he wrote the introduction to Kenneth Burke’s On Symbols and Society. Gusfield (1989) clarified that symbols can have two meanings:

In one usage symbols are units of language. Words, concepts, terms are ways of symbolizing tangible objects, like one’s arm, or conceptual objects, such as capitalism. In another usage symbols are a contrast to something else, in the sense that a flag is a symbol of national sentiment or a tiger is a symbol of energy (p. 40).

In other words, symbols can have concrete or abstract meanings. The concrete meanings are agreed upon language by culture and society used to denote physical and conceptual objects, such as one’s arm or capitalism. The abstract meaning of symbols depends significantly on context, because the symbols connote other meanings within the context. For example, in the context of using Gusfield’s (1989) example of the tiger as a symbol of energy, the tiger can be used as the image for an energy drink suggesting that when one drinks the energy drink, one will have power and vigor like the tiger, an animal known for its stamina, speed, strategy, and stealth.

Symbols are then used in symbolic action. Symbolic action “refers to the multiple levels of meaning involved in human activity” (Gusfield, 1989, p. 6). Once again, Burke is trying to get to the root of the answer to the question “what is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (Burke, 1962. p. xv). For Burke,
because “humans are symbolic-using creatures… the ability to use symbols enables human beings to imagine, to select, to create and to define the situations to which they respond” (Gusfield, 1989, p. 8). The capability to actively use symbols not only suggests but also purports a sense of action and agency by humans. Since the use of symbols and symbolic action require purpose and active thought by humans, Burke puts forth his theory of dramatism to explain human behavior.

**Dramatism and the Pentad**

Burke believed that human nature is dramatic. Burke employed the word “drama” as drama “implies action rather than motion. Action is dramatic because it includes conflict, purpose, reflection, and choice” (Gusfield, 1989, p. 10). According to Gusfield (1989), “action implies assessments of situations and the people with whom the person interacts. It implies reflection upon one’s interests, sentiments, purposes, and those of others” (p. 9). Burke proposed that in order for there to be action, there must also be motive. Motive refers to the “springs that lie behind activity… They are the terms that make actions understandable” (Gusfield, 1989, p.11). As Burke explained in *Permanence and Change* (1984) the word motive “is a linguistic device,” (p. 35) “a concept by which the observer, including the self, explains and understands a situation” (Gusfield, 1989, p.11). For Burke, motives are concepts used to understand the meaning behind human behavior and it is “the basic form of thought that [sic] is used in the attribution of motives” (p.14). In other words, motives are symbols that enable people to interpret situations and behave accordingly. Burke developed the pentad which consists of five basic forms or key terms that are used to help analyze situations, which in turn help explain motives and the symbolic action behind human behavior.
The five forms of the pentad, which are also the five key terms of dramatism are the act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. The act answers the questions: “What took place?” or “what was done?” (Burke, 1989 & 1962). The act “names what took place in thought and deed” (Burke, 1962, p. xv). The scene answers the questions: “What is the context in which it occurred?” or “When or where was it done?” (Burke, 1989 & 1962). The scene is “the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred” (Burke, 1962, p. xv). The agent answers the questions: “Who performed the act?” or “Who did it?” (Burke, 1989 & 1962). The agent is “the person who the kind of person who performs the act?” (Burke, 1962, p. xv). The agency answers the questions: “How was it done?” or “How he did it?” (Burke, 1989 & 1962). The agency discovers what instruments were used to perform the act. The purpose answers the question: “Why was it done?” (Burke, 1989 & 1962). The purpose discovers the reason behind the act, which very often reveals the attitude of the agent.

Attitude. As Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003) explained, Burke, in 1968, when he described dramatism for the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, introduced a sixth key term, making the pentad a hexad. The sixth key term, “attitude,” was not clearly explained or defined, leaving the reader to make their own assumptions on what attitude really means. Burke, as cited in Mahan- Hays and Aden (2003) initially wrote “‘the pattern is incipiently a hexad when viewed in connection with the different but complementary analysis of attitude (as an ambiguous term of incipient action)”’ (p. 34). Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003) further explained that “Burke’s use of the term ‘complementary’ seems to suggest that an attitudinal analysis is separate from a pentadic analysis, but his explanation of what he means is unclear” (p. 34). Mahan-Hays and
Aden provided an explanation of attitude by examining several of Burke’s works starting with Burke’s 1968 essay in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Science*, where he first introduced the idea of the hexad and attitude. In that essay, Burke proposed that “attitude is similar to the ‘manner’ in which a drama is told/unfolds” (Mahan-Hays & Aden, 2003, p.34).

However, this was not the first time Burke used the word attitude in his writing. In 1941, when Burke wrote *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, Burke wrote that “the symbolic act is the dancing of an attitude” (Burke, 1973, p.9) and that “dances is a state of mind” (Burke, 1973, p. 11) implying that attitude is a state of mind. Burke gave the example of a man visiting the dentist. His outside demeanor was calm, but the dentist noticed that his saliva was thick, indicating that he was anxious or nervous. The difference in body and biological indicators demonstrate that “while the man in the dentist chair ‘was dancing an attitude of calmness’ on the public level, as a social façade, on the purely bodily or biological level his salivary glands were ‘dancing his true attitude’” (Burke, 1973, p.11). This example suggest that attitudes are “more than simply a state of mind, though, since Burke focuses on the relationships between thoughts and action” (Mahan-Hays & Aden, 2003, p. 35). Attitudes are not motives; as explained earlier, motives are concepts used to explain human behavior. Attitudes aid in the development of concepts that explain human behavior. The man’s motive at the dentist was to appear calm even though he was nervous. His attitude was that he was nervous and was trying his best to appear calm, as to uphold the pretense that man deemed necessary in order to maintain his social grace in that particular situation. Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003) explained that Burke “emphasizes that attitude is a strategy of
interpretation and this more of a cognitive activity that is then reflected in one’s symbolic usage” (p. 35).

Dramatism explains how audience members are influenced by the symbols present in mediated messages. The pentad described the key factors found in mediated messages, which are the act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. The addition of attitude to make it a hexad shows how the mediated messages can shape ideas and cause people to act in a manner that portrays the relationship between mediated messages and ideas forming an attitude. Gusfield (1989) explained that the form of thought is found everywhere such as metaphysical structures, poetry, legal judgment, fiction, rumors, and in any mediated message and it is the form of thought that effect the meaning of content. Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003) explained that the symbolic use of stories, which is a mediated message, “provide us with ‘equipment for living’ or strategies that we use for engaging others rhetoric and/or own experiences” (p. 35).

**Kenneth Burke’s Equipment for Living**

Burke began his essay “Literature as Equipment for Living” (1973) by explaining the significance of proverbs in literature and life. Literature and art are embedded with meaning that can transfer to life. Burke (1973) proposed for almost any situation a proverb could be designed to illustrate the situation. There are proverbs designed for consolation, for example, “The sun does not shine on both sides of the hedge at once.” There are proverbs for vengeance such as “Fools tie knots and wise men loose them.” There are also proverbs that foretell the future, “When the wind is in the north, the skillful fisher goes not forth” (Burke, 1973, p. 294). Burke explained that proverbs are symbols that represent recurrent situations and are used in both literature and life.
Burke described the proverbs using the categories of consolation, vengeance and foretelling. He insisted that the categories suggest the nature of the proverbs and not an explanation of the categories (Burke, 1973). This fact is important because Burke (1973) wrote that “Proverbs are strategies for dealing with situations. In so far as situations are typical and recurrent in a given social structure, people develop names for them and strategies for handling them. Burke used the word strategy because strategy suggests the art of maneuvering through a situation to ensure the most beneficial outcome for oneself (Burke, 1973.) Another name for strategies might be attitudes (pp. 296-297). This means that people create proverbs which are a reflection of their attitudes for dealing with repeating events in their lives. Their attitudes, coupled with the context of the event determine in what category best fits the nature of the proverb. Categories emerge based on the context of the proverb. In other words, the strategies used, or the attitudes developed to deal with situations often determine an individual’s perspective of the situation.

Sociological criticism suggest that categorization of strategies should not only apply to art and literature, but to situations in real life (Burke, 1973). Sociological categories for life would entail strategies for making friends and enemies, avoiding harm, cleansing oneself, inflicting vengeance and consoling oneself and others (Burke, 1973). According to Burke, the same categories and strategies used in art such as tragedies, comedies, and satires in plays, poetry and literature, can also be used in real life to analyze and explain situations with the corresponding attitudes. People can look at the strategies used in the arts as equipment for living, for they can employ the same strategies in their lives. Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003) explained that the stories people tell or use
“and the attitudes they represent are labeled ‘representative anecdotes’” (p.36). A representative anecdote is the principal narrative that represents the primary nature of a text. Representative anecdotes are “proverb-like statements that summarize or name the fundamental motive of drama… Representative anecdotes that provide equipment for living reveal ‘attitudes’ toward social structures” (Mahan-Hays & Aden, 2003, p. 36). Representative anecdotes are as Burke (1962) implied “reflections of realities” (p.59).

Burke (1937) suggested that stories are presented in the frames of acceptance (epic, tragic, comic), rejection (elegy, satire, burlesque), or transition (grotesque, didactic). According to Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003)

Burke’s discussion of equipment for living, representative anecdotes, and frames of acceptance/rejection/transition all speak to a similar notion: that the stories humans use reveal an attitude toward other people and other practices. These stories can be summarized by means of a representative anecdote that provides some sort of equipment for living that in turn reveals and attitude of acceptance, rejection, or transition. (p. 36)

**Burke and Media**

In essence, equipment for living is how people employ the thesis and notions found in mediated narratives and how the media form, together with the narratives help them engage their social, cultural and political situations. For the teen girls, online media are symbols that enable to the girls to engage in the symbolic action of using attitudes and strategies that can be considered representative anecdotes that invoke the notion of equipment for living. Figure 1.1 demonstrates how the symbols of online media coupled with the symbols of communication, information seeking and content creation, the main
reasons why teens use online media, can be considered equipment for living for the teen girls.

Figure 1.1. Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action

According to Figure 1.1, online media represent to the girls a means to communicate, seek out and receive information, and create content. The girls then actively consume or produce attitudes and strategies that reveal the meanings behind the symbolic use of
online media and communication, information seeking and content creation. When the attitudes and strategies reflect reality for the teen girls, the attitudes and strategies become a representative anecdote. Only when the representative anecdote provides a means to deal with a situation that the girls can relate to, does the representative anecdote become equipment for living, indicating that online media can be used as equipment for living for teen girls.

**Media and Equipment for Living**

Brummett (1984) explained Kenneth Burke’s concept of equipment for living as the way people can view literature, relate it to their everyday lives, using it to deal with and confront lived situations. This concept can be held true not just for literature but for any text. Young (2000) believed that according to Burke, the audience can make connections on what is viewed and how it is related to their lives. “Burke's view emphasizes that audiences can be self aware in their consumption of art in what they are sometimes able to make conscious connections between the meanings they see in art works and their experiences in the world” (p. 448).

Equipment for living was a concept that theorists used to explain how adults dealt with the phenomenon of daily experiences. Brummett (1984) gave ample examples of how Burke’s concept of equipment for living assisted adult audiences in understanding politics and other types of discourse through dramatic media anecdotes. Brummett explained how videotapes helped people overcome phobias and how other carefully crafted media helped people to deal or overcome some lived situation. He wrote about the representational anecdotes present within various texts that help adults to adjust to changing circumstances in their lives. Payne (1989) cited examples of how electronic
narratives through folkloric expression can also be used as equipment for living. Payne suggested that a combination of media and folklore such as the movie *The Wizard of Oz* can be used by adults to understand different cultural perspectives. Brume (1985) found through textual analysis of haunted houses films that content, cinematography and real life experiences in haunted houses films engaged the audience’s reality in a dramatic manner, because the films contain strong rhetorical influences that interpose the motives of the films to the real life experiences of the audience. The haunted houses films served as equipment for living for their audience because they helped them overcome feelings of social instability and confusion. Young (2000) showed that there were means of proving text can be used as equipment for living other than doing textual analysis. Young (2000) conducted open-ended question interviews to discover the audience members’ perspectives on a movie that had a significant impact on them, on how they used that movie as equipment for living. Young (2000) argued that open-ended question interviews enabled the researcher to treat the use of text as a symbolic process, discovering individualized meanings and realities to specific to individual audience members.

Soetaert et al. (2011) proposed that video games can be equipment for living for youth because “video game playing has become part of the many ways people create worlds and construct meaning and sense” (p. 1). Soetaert et al. (2011) argued that video games are cultural artifacts that reflect life in a manner that is similar to theater, literature, and cinema. They proposed that video games are equipment for living because many game developers intentionally include symbolic content, and encourage the gamers to discover the meaning and motives of the characters’ behavior while playing the video games. One game they studied, *Heavy Rain*, success relied on the gamers searching for
the motives of the characters, as well as identifying with the feelings of one or more of the characters in the game. Soetaert et al. (2011) proposed that engaging with media can be a symbolic act; media can also be cultural artifacts that can function as equipment for living.

Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003) used the theory of equipment of living to combine rhetoric and cultural studies. Mahan-Hays and Aden demonstrated that the “representative anecdote may provide a particular type of equipment for living, they [sic] are able to describe how- and in what way(s) – rhetoric positions while it circulates” (p. 27). Through a textual analysis of the TV show Talk Soup and an analysis of the comments of the show’s fans, Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003) were able to overlap the rhetorical tradition and cultural studies field. They provided a Burkean criticism by conducting an attitudinal analysis of the TV show Talk Soup; they contended that by using the representative anecdote, equipment for living and the frames of acceptance, rejection and transition, the text in Talk Soup and comments by the fans revealed an attitude toward other people. Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003) provided an example of how Burke’s theories can be “useful theoretical tools, especially within the intersection of rhetorical and cultural studies” (p.53). Young (2000) noted that “cultural studies is not primarily concerned with how audiences use media as equipment for living. Instead, these researchers tend to be most interested in using audience reactions as a window to larger cultural structures” (p. 451). As a cultural studies researcher, this researcher aims to understand how teen girls use and create online media texts as equipment for living.

The majority of research on equipment for living and media has focused on adult audiences. While Soetaert et al. (2011) mentioned youth in their essay, it was mainly
because many youths play video games and that academics and scholars need to re-evaluate literacy as new media emerge, such as video games, as new modes of communication. Equipment for living concepts are not only for adults but can be used for teen audiences as well. The research on how the teen audience uses text as equipment for living is severely lacking, in spite of the fact that teenagers have the intellectual capacity to apply text whether digital or not to their own lives. One of the best ways to accomplish this is to look at online media, and examine how teenagers use online media in their everyday lives. One way this can be accomplished is to listen to the teenagers explain in their own words how the representative anecdotes found via online media assist the teenagers in handling daily situations.

**Adolescents’ Cognitive Development**

Teenagers are well adapted to using online media as equipment for living because of their level of cognitive development. The level of cognitive development in adolescence is more advanced, efficient and effective than that of younger children. The study of cognitive development in adolescents has been strongly influenced by the psychologists Inhelder and Piaget (Lehalle, 2006). Piaget’s classic theory states that cognition advance in four stages: (1) the sensori-motor stage that occurs between birth and two years; (2) the preoperational stage that occurs between the ages of two and seven years; (3) the concrete operational stage that occurs between the ages of seven and twelve years old; (4) the formal operational stage that occurs from ages twelve and older. During the formal operational stage, adolescents exhibit abstract thinking, logical problem-solving and hypothetical reasoning (Scheibe, 2007). Steinberg (2011) summarized adolescents cognitive development into five main cognition changes: thinking about
possibilities, thinking about abstract concepts, thinking about thinking (metacognition),
thinking in multiple dimensions, and seeing knowledge as relative (relativism). All of
which are necessary to understand online media as equipment for living.

Thinking about Possibilities

According to Steinberg (2011), young children’s thoughts are limited to what is
real and concrete, while adolescents have the ability to think about what is possible.
Adolescents are able to see possible explanations for varying situations and provide
alternative explanations for events and situations. They are able to think hypothetically
and therefore plan ahead for future consequences. During adolescence, deductive
reasoning also develops; adolescents are now about to make logical conclusions from a
general set of premises. Because they are able to think about possibilities, adolescents
have the ability to understand other people’s point of view. They also are able to originate
and debate viewpoints because they can now think ahead to what a person might say or
do. Because of this, adolescents are able to view text online and think about the meanings
in the text and the different ways people may view the text, as well as how the text may
be relevant to themselves. Because they are able to think about what might happen,
adolescents are able to move between specific and abstract concepts. As explained
earlier, symbols can either be concrete or abstract concepts. Because teenagers are able to
think hypothetically, apply deductive reasoning, and use symbols to apply and understand
situations, teenagers demonstrate the cognitive ability to engage in symbolic action.

Thinking about Abstract Concepts

Abstract concepts are things that cannot be experienced through the senses. With
adolescence, teenagers are able to understand abstract concepts such as puns, metaphors,
analologies and proverbs. They are able to apply social and ideological concepts such as friendships, democracy, honesty, religion, morality, philosophy, politics and interpersonal relationships. The advanced cognitive skill of the ability to apply abstract concepts directly to their lives enable adolescents to understand the strategies used in negotiating human behavior. For this reason teenagers are capable of viewing online media as a symbol of freedom. Adolescents need to fully understand what an abstract concept means to them, and at the same time think of not only of online media as both concrete and abstract symbols, but also think about the consequences of their actions. The cognitive ability to supervise one’s own thoughts is known as metacognition (Steinberg, 2011).

**Metacognition**

Metacognition is the ability to monitor one’s own cognitive ability during thinking. Metacognition is demonstrated in several ways. According to Steinberg (2011), adolescents demonstrate metacognition when they use a strategy to remember things. They also show metacognition when they can explain the epistemology of their knowledge. Most children can explain what they know; adolescents can not only explain what they know, but also how and why they know it. Unlike children, adolescents can understand that people do not always have complete control over their thoughts and mental activity. Because of metacognition, adolescents have increased introspection and self-awareness and often spend a lot of time thinking about their emotions and believe that others are thinking about them. Metacognition also enables adolescents to develop intellectually because they are able to think through and analyze problems and their own thoughts and feelings. There are some consequences due to the development of metacognition. One consequence, adolescent egocentrism, occurs when an adolescent
becomes extremely self-absorbed. The teen may have extreme self-consciousness and
believe that everyone is watching and judging him or her. Another result of adolescent
ejegocentrism is that the adolescent may believe that he or she is unique and therefore does
not have to live by society’s rules. When teen girls use symbols to express their feelings,
and voice, and examine their problems online, online media becomes a vehicle that
demonstrates their ability to think in multiple dimensions.

Thinking in Multiple Dimensions

Steinberg (2011) explained that adolescents are able to think in multiple
dimensions because they develop the skills to consider more than one aspect at a time.
This cognitive advancement is seen when teens are able to describe themselves and
others in various nouns, adjectives and personalities. They are also able to look at
problems from more than one perspective in order to develop a solution. During
adolescence, teens are able to understand and use sarcasm and double entendres because
they are able to think in multiple dimensions. Adolescents have the ability to view
narratives online and comprehend the meaning behind the narratives as it relates to them,
as well as other people. Adolescents are able to shift from seeing things in dichotomy and
absolute dimensions such as black and white and right and wrong to seeing things as
relative.

Relativism

Adolescents develop the ability to see things in relation to the world around them.
Because of this, adolescents are more likely to start questioning adults and others’
statements, and stop accepting so called facts as absolute truths. This is why people often
believe that adolescents are skeptics because they begin to question everything because
everything seems uncertain and they are unsure of what knowledge is completely reliable. Teenagers will go online to search for information, stories or narratives to help them understand the multiple perspectives they now recognize exists, as well as, seek out knowledge to aid in their understanding of the world (Steinberg. 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical foundation for this dissertation. At the center of Burke’s philosophy are symbols and symbolic action. Comprehending the importance of symbols and symbolic action are necessary in order to apply Burke’s notion of dramatism and the five key terms of the pentad to human behavior. Literature on how past researchers applied equipment for living toward media was also presented in this chapter. The chapter concluded by explaining adolescent cognitive development and its relationship to symbols, symbolic actions, and equipment for living. Burke’s theory of equipment for living is used as the theoretical framework as I argue that teenagers have the cognitive capabilities of recognizing online media as a symbol, whether concrete or abstract, that provide the teens with a means to communicate, seek out information, and create content, that leads to the consumption or production of attitudes and strategies, such as stories, music, quotes, videos etc. When these attitudes and strategies reflect a reality for the teens, the attitudes and strategies become a representative anecdote. If the representative anecdote is used by the teens to help them deal with situations that occur in their lives, then the representative anecdote has become equipment for living. When this occurs the teens have used online media as equipment for living.

According to Kaiser Family Foundation Study published in 2010 on the media in the lives of 8 to 18 year olds, one of the more common media used by teenagers is the
Internet (Generation M2). The Internet and its various online activities provide enormous amounts of text that can help teenagers cope with their everyday lives. Some girls’ studies scholars stated that research should focus more on how girls negotiate media messages rather than the actual message (Durham, 1999a; Duke, 2002). Dawn Currie (1999) emphasized the importance of scholars and researchers of girls studies “moving beyond the immediacy of the text” (p. 309). Online activities as equipment for living for teenagers go much further than the online content. The fact that teenagers can be agents in their online activities pushes the notion that online texts are not the only factors at play. Because online activities are interactive, and often require teenagers to actively create, communicate, and seek out information for themselves, the online texts are not the sole path, but it is the interaction with text and then the opportunity to create content is how the symbolic activities involves in using the Internet can be considered equipment for living for teenagers.

I propose that for the teen girls, the media are symbols in the concrete aspect as it allows them to transfer and their thoughts and ideas, as well as, receive information and create content; online media allow them to communicate. I also propose that online media are symbols in the abstract aspect as online media represent or express an intangible idea such as freedom. Online media represent a symbol of freedom to communicate, seek out information, and create content without censorship from adults. Engaging with online media is a symbolic action because there are multiple levels of meaning for using online media, all of which fall under the category of equipment for living. Figure 1.1 offers a model to explain how online media are equipment for living for teenage girls based on
Burke’s interpretation of a symbolic action. The next chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to this project.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Each new technology gives rise to new fears on how it will impact society; new media are considered scary and children and teenagers are vulnerable members of society. New media, especially in the hands of children and teenagers present challenges for adults, for new media often give youth the ability to find information on their own, as well as offer them a means of creative outlets, uncontrolled by adults (Weber & Dixon, 2007).

The Internet is perceived by adults as unsafe for children and youth, as it is unmonitored and contain information that when accessed by children and teens, can blur the lines between adulthood and childhood. As mentioned in the Introduction, in 2010, a teenage girl in Trinidad and Tobago created an online video criticizing the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. The language used in the video was extremely obscene and offensive. The rapid distribution of the video initiated adults concern, specifically parental concerns, on how teenagers, especially teenage girls use online media. The focus of this dissertation is not on adult’s concerns on how teenagers use the Internet, rather the dissertation’s research is exploring how teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago use online media, and specifically how they use online media as equipment for living. We begin with an attempt to comprehend teenage girls’ use of online media, specifically how they use it as equipment for living, because many adults in Trinidad and Tobago were concerned about teenage girls’ consumption and production of online media. Therefore, it is necessary to establish what previous researchers found about adults’ concerns on tweens and teens Internet use, as well as what type of risky behavior adults perceived the tweens and teens engaged in while on the Internet. This chapter is organized into five
sections: parental concerns of tweens’ and teens’ Internet use, girls’ studies, online activities of teenagers, social networking site.

**Adults’ Concerns of Tweens’ and Teens’ Internet Use**

In 1999, the Annenberg Public Policy Center conducted research to obtain parents’ views on the Internet. Their research found that parents were mostly afraid of the Internet’s interconnectivity and its open-nature to all information. Another concern was that the information children viewed online opposed the values and beliefs that parents were trying to instill in their children. Also, three quarters of parents surveyed were concerned that their children would reveal personal information and view explicit sexual illustrations online (Turow, 1999). In a U.S. national survey conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project in 2012, the researchers discovered that “72% of parents of online teens are concerned about how their child interacts online with people they do not know; 69% of parents of online teens are concerned about how their child’s online activity might affect their future academic or employment opportunities, and how their child manages their online reputation” (Madden, Cortesi, Gasser, Lenhart, & Guggan, 2012, p. 2). Dowdell (2013) discovered that parents of middle school children were most concerned that their child will accidently be exposed to pornography; their child will be enticed into a sexual relationship by an adult; and that their child will be bullied.

In a study conducted by Livingstone and Helsper (2010) that studied “the role of selected measures of Internet literacy in relation to teenagers’ online experiences” (p. 309) in the U.K. discovered that the more time teenagers spent online increased their risk of engaging in dangerous online activities. Livingstone and Bober (2004) reported that
children in the U.K. often took measures, such as deleting emails and mislabeling files, to hide their online activities from their parents, as a means of protecting their privacy and remaining autonomous from their parents. Adults were concerned with the autonomy children and teens had while using the Internet, because according to Stern and Willis, (2007) the Internet afforded teenagers the independence that allowed them to be active participants online, which was what parents were often afraid of happening.

According to Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, and Ólafsson (2011) some of the risky online behaviors that children reported doing were giving out personal information, viewing pornography and violent or hateful content; being bullied, harassed or stalked; receiving unwanted sexual comments; and meeting an online contact offline. The media played a role in fueling parental concerns as Good Housekeeping magazine presented several categories to its readers on teenagers’ risky online behavior.

**Girls’ Studies**

This section presents a review of the literature on girls’ studies that is relevant to this dissertation because teen girls were the participants in this because of the actions of Granny Quila, the teenage girl who made the video harshly criticizing the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, spawned much media debate about the behavior of young girls on the Internet. Because of this one incident, teen girls’ actions online in Trinidad and Tobago were being scrutinized and criticized without first being researched. First, the field of girls’ studies is defined. Second, the gender differences between boys and girls are explained. Third, an explanation on how this dissertation uses the information from and contributes to the girls’ studies field is discussed.
Defining Girls’ Studies

Wald (1998) defined girls’ studies as “a sub-genre of recent academic feminist scholarship that constructs girlhood as a separate, exceptional, and/or pivotal phase in female identity formation” (p. 587). Prior to the 1990s girls’ research was initially marginalized by many researchers and sex and gender issues were only studied by feminists. (Kearney, 2009). The woman-centered approach to research was known as “cultural feminism,” however, the researchers of cultural feminism still looked at women as a homogenous group and failed to recognize or acknowledge the many differences among females, especially recognizing the importance and diverse nature of young girls (Kearney, 2009). During this time, feminists rejected the notion and use of the word “girl” and saw the word as a derogative term (Mazzarella and Pecora, 2007; Kearney, 2009). Not until what became known as “third-wave feminism” was the term “girl” revamped and empowered by feminists who understood and dealt with the concerns of not only oppressed women, but females, including girls with marginalized issues such as race, sex, gender and identity (Mazzarella and Pecora, 2007, Kearney, 2009).

Carol Gilligan and Angela McRobbie have been named the foremothers of girls’ studies (Mazzarella and Pecora, 2007). Gilligan, whose background is in psychology, worked alongside Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg whose main research were centered on the developmental stages of boys. Gilligan realized that there was little research focused on women, as women were primarily seen as caregivers. As a feminist, Gilligan began questioning if women and men were actually equal in all aspects, as that was what most feminist at her time believed. Gilligan asserted that women think in a different voice than men, as women are prone to think in terms of relationships and
caring for people, while men tend to think in terms of rules and justice (Jackson and Goossens, 2006; Lerner and Steinberg, 2004; Steinberg 2011) and both views should be considered of equal importance to society.

In her book *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan proposed that “women’s development arises from the differences observed in their experiences of relationships” (1982, p.24). Her work with adolescent girls focused on moral development and identity formation. Gilligan noted that girls of ages eleven and twelve manifested ‘resistance’ as they were “outspoken and willing to stand up for their opinions and ideas” (Mazzarella and Pecora, 2007, p. 107). Gilligan made these important revelations by observing and studying adolescent girls at a private girls’ school. Gilligan and her colleagues found that at the cusp of womanhood, the girls learn the social norms of when it is acceptable to voice their opinion, and when they remain silent. One very important contribution Gilligan and her colleagues made to girls’ studies, was their “voice-centered methodology that built on the girls’ dissatisfaction with the use of traditional survey methods to understand issues central to who they are” (Mazzarrela and Pecora, 2007). Their voice-centered approach guided future researchers to employ humanistic methodologies when researching girls, hence allowing their voices to be heard. However, as noted by Mazzarrela and Pecora (2007), Gilligan’s work ignored popular culture, while popular culture and media was central to McRobbie’s research.

Angela McRobbie’s research is in the field of cultural studies; McRobbie (1991) aimed to change the focus of study from solely boys to include teenage girls’ perspectives on gender, age, and class from the context of their own lived experiences. As her focus was on popular culture and teenage girls, McRobbie’s essay on the magazine *Jackie* “has
served as a central text informing girls’ studies scholars” (Mazzarella and Pecora, 2007). McRobbie, like Gilligan, listened to the girls’ insights and opinions of their “lived experiences” of the world surrounding them; however, McRobbie, unlike Gilligan, was more interested in understanding girls’ subcultures and the girls’ “shared interests” (Mazzarella and Pecora, 2007). Kearney (2009), explained that “McRobbie demonstrated a consistent commitment to researching girlhood and girls’ culture as unique social formations” (p. 1). McRobbie believed that girls are not simple consumers of culture; rather, they are active creators and negotiators popular culture. According to Mazzarella and Pecora (2007), “girls’ voices can be heard in the cultural products they create” (p. 112).

**Gender Differences in Use of the Internet**

Research in Taiwan found that the primary reason girls go online was to obtain information, especially to help with homework, and to socialize. Boys, on the other hand, would normally go online to play videogames (Lin & Yu, 2008). Tsai and Lin (2004) discovered that Taiwanese boys treated the Internet more like a toy, while Taiwanese girls relied on the Internet to complete or help them find information to accomplish a task. This information suggested that for Taiwanese girls, the Internet was a practical tool, while the boys viewed it as an entertainment device. Literature suggested that girls focus more on relationships than boys (Gilligan, 1982). Because of this, when using the Internet, girls focused on using the Internet for communicating and socializing. In a study conducted in the U.S., researchers reported that girls used the Internet more for emailing, while boys used it for downloading software (Hoffman et al., 1996). Boys also engaged with interactive media online such as videogames more than girls (Funk, 1993; Kubey &
Larson 1990). Valkenburg and Soeters (2001) discovered from their research that girls were more likely than boys to go online to find information about animals and their role models or idols. Girls also used the Internet more for information and social interaction, while boys used it for entertainment purposes (Valkenburg & Soeters, 2001). Lenhart et al. (2005) found that more bloggers were teenage girls than teenage boys.

However, the differences in Internet use were not the reason why girls’ Internet use should be studied. Girlhood researchers studied various aspects of girls’ culture as a way to understand how girls “claim a place by participating in systems of meaning and identity practices that define them socially” (Currie et al., 2009). According to Mann (1994) gender was considered a construct that was passively acculturated from society and popular culture. Girlhood researchers no longer consider girls as passively absorbing popular culture that defined their gender, but actually “doing girlhood” and by being agents in their identity development (Currie et al., 2009). This meant that girls are not only rationale actors, but it also “implies intention and reflexivity” (Currie et al., 2009, p. 3) as conscious goals of girls. Researchers (Buckingham, 1993; Currie, 1997; Lemish, 1998; Mazzarella & Pecora, 1999) have found that girls are self-aware and reflexive in their consumption and creation of media texts, for they are often searching for alternative means of empowerment against the ideological patriarchal hegemonic powers of society. Girls needed an outlet for creativity and express their voices and the Internet provides such a space. Girls required a safe space to create content (Durham, 1999b). The Internet may not always be a safe space, but it does provide the freedom for girls to be both consumers and producers of the content (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007). It should be noted that boys are not excluded in the gender talk, but only until recently, boys were the focus
of study and were often used to define adolescence and youth (Erikson, 1950; Erikson, 1968). This study focused on teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago, because there was an example of a teenage girl using the Internet to create media to give herself a voice, where she was chastised for the content created, and adults became concerned about her welfare because of her ability to create such content (Julien, 2011a). This project examined how teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago consume and produce online media, as well as how they employ online media as equipment for living by creating and using online content.

**Contribution to Girls’ Studies**

For this project this researcher used the humanistic methodological approach employed by both Gilligan and McRobbie, where listening to the girls’ voices was key to understanding the reason why girls’ integrated online media into their lives. Digital media are major aspects to girls’ lives (Lenhart et al., 2005; Mazzarella, 2005) and understanding the reasons for using online media are essential to understanding the teenage girl. This researcher focused not only why teenage girls use online media, but also on how they used online media as equipment for living. While the narratives of media texts, perceptions of media and identity formation are important, more emphasis was placed on the girls as active agents with online media, and how the medium, in this case the Internet, in conjunction with the medium’s content, help them deal with situations that occur in their everyday lives.

This section presented a review of the literature on girls’ studies that were relevant to this dissertation. First, the field of girls’ studies was defined. Second, the gender differences between boys and girls in their Internet use were explained. Third, an
explanation on how this dissertation uses the information from and contributes to the girls’ studies field was discussed.

**Online Activities of Teenagers**

This section presents a review of the literature regarding the online activities of teenagers. First, Stern and Willis’s (2007) three online activities that teenagers engage in are discussed. The three activities are communication, information seeking, and content creation. Second, other online activities that were not represented by Stern and Willis (2007) are discussed. These activities are playing games, listening to music, and watching television and movies.

Stern and Willis (2007) have organized the online activities of teenagers into three categories: Communication, information seeking, content creation. These categories are not mutually exclusive and many online categories can be found in more than one category.

**Communication**

According to Vickery (2010), the Internet was one of the main ways teenagers communicated with each other. With the Internet came instant messaging, chatting and emailing that enabled teenagers to be the constant contact generation. In addition there were also bulletin boards, blogs, social networking utilities, video sharing, photo sharing, videogames, and virtual worlds (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) provided descriptions of each online communication form.

- **Email** - Write, store, send, and receive asynchronous messages electronically; can include attachments of word documents, pictures, audio, and other multimedia files.
• **Instant messaging** - Allows the synchronous exchange of private messages with another user; messages primarily are in text but can include attachments of word documents, pictures, audio, and other multimedia files.

• **Chat rooms** - Synchronous conversations with more than one user that primarily involve text; can be either public or private.

• **Bulletin boards** - Online public spaces, typically centered on a topic (such as health, illnesses, religion), where people can post and read messages; many require registration, but only screen names are visible (such as [www.collegeconfidential.com](http://www.collegeconfidential.com)).

• **Blogs** - Websites where entries are typically displayed in reverse chronological order (such as [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)); entries can be either public or private only for users authorized by the blog owner/author.

• **Social networking utilities** - Online utilities that allow users to create profiles (public or private) and form a network of friends; allow users to interact with their friends via public and private means (such as messages, instant messaging); also allow the posting of user-generated content such as photos and videos (such as [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)).

• **Video sharing** - Allows users to upload, view, and share video clips (such as [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com)).

• **Photo sharing** - Allows users to upload, view, and share photos (such as [www.Flickr.com](http://www.Flickr.com)); users can allow either public or private access.

• **Massively multiplayer online computer games (MMOCG)** - Online games that can be played by large numbers of players simultaneously; the most popular type
are the massively multiplayer role playing games (MMORPG) such as *World of Warcraft*.

- **Virtual worlds** - Online simulated 3-D environments inhabited by players who interact with each other via avatars (such as Teen Second Life) (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008, p. 121).

Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) studied teenagers’ relationships with friends, family, romantic partners and strangers in the framework of online communication. Subrahmanyam and Greenfield found that teenagers primarily used email, instant messaging as well as communicative Internet sites such as social networking and blogs to “reinforce existing relationships both with friends and romantic partners” (p. 119). Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) also discovered that instant messaging and social networking sites were used to keep in touch with offline friends, or to contact friends with whom they have little face to face contact. Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) reported that blogs provided a platform for teens to share the details of their everyday lives and communication with strangers occurred when they posted on bulletin boards, shared video and photos on public websites or played massively multiplayer online computer games or interacted in virtual worlds.

Waechter, Subrahmanyam, Reich, and Espinoza (2010) researched teenagers’ behaviors in chat rooms and social networking sites and discovered that regardless of the platform, the online communication that occurred both in places were important for teenagers’ identities and intimacy. Waechter et al. found that the communication in chat rooms were often in the context of meeting potential romantic partners and experimenting
with identities and behaviors with potential romantic partners; the communication that occurred on social networking sites were used to keep in touch with offline friends.

Lenhart et al. (2005), the primary researchers for a U.S. national survey on teenagers and technology use conducted by the Pew Internet and Family Life Project found that 89% of teens between the ages of 12 and 17 years in the U.S. have sent or read emails online, while 75% send or receive instant messages online. Ólafsson, Livingstone, and Haddon, (2013) discovered that 62% of children in Europe between the ages of 9 and 16 years used instant messaging. Stern and Willis (2007) reported that instant messaging were more popular among teenagers because it was a more relaxed, casual form of communicating with friends, without fear of the uncomfortable silences or uneasy laughter that can occur, specifically with romantic or potential romantic partners. Stern and Willis (2007) discovered that teenagers reported that instant messaging was favored over the other communication forms because “it is relatively easy to use, it’s inexpensive, it allows for multitasking, and it’s efficient – in the sense that teens can respond to multiple people at the same time” (p. 213). Also, ending conversations were easier when using instant messaging for if the teenager was frustrated with the conversation, or simply wished to end it, the teenager can simply log off or sign out, or even make themselves invisible to that user.

Thiel (2005) found that teenage girls specifically used instant messaging to experiment with identity formation because instant messaging gave girls the freedom to explore different styles of language with respect to word choice and tone, both of which are normally constrained during everyday conversations in school and in the home. Thiel (2005) also discovered that instant messaging allowed the girls to control what type of
personality they presented online to their friends, coupled with multitasking and engaging in multiple conversations at one time, gave the girls a persona of an elevated social status.

Subrahmanyam and Lin (2007) explored the relationship between teenagers’ online communication activities and loneliness and perceived social support. Subrahmanyam and Lin discovered that lonelier teens communicated with online acquaintances during times of need. Also, the main reason teens turned to online communication for support from online acquaintances was because the teens reported not receiving support from their parents.

**Information Seeking**

The Internet was usually the first place the teenagers turn to for information on a wide array of topics. Lin and Yu (2008) found that the primary reason teenage boys and girls went online was to look for information. The second and third reason they partook in online activities were for socializing and boredom avoidance respectively. Lenhart et al. (2005) conducted a national survey in the U.S. on how teens use technology and discovered that information on popular culture was one of the most popular topics searched by teenagers on the Internet, where 84% of online teenagers in the U.S. used the Internet mainly for this purpose. This was due to the fact that the Internet was easy to use, and information about movies, television shows, music, artistes, celebrities, and sports events were readily accessible through key word searches on search engines such as Google and Yahoo.

The 2004 report from the U.S. Department of Education stated that 94% of online teenagers use the Internet for school projects, papers and tutoring. High school seniors and juniors employed Internet search engines and other various websites to help them
find information about universities and colleges, as well as looking for jobs (Morrison, 2008) and 57% of online users specifically use the Internet to search for colleges and schools to which they were attending or hoping to matriculate (Lenhart et al., 2005). Hunley et al. (2005) explored the relationship between computer use and academic achievement and found that about 50% of the teenagers using the Internet to help them with homework and school projects, yet there was no relationship between using the Internet for help with homework and higher grade point averages. Ólafsson et al. (2013), discovered that in Europe, 85% of 9-16 year olds used the Internet to help them with school work, even without being told to do so by a teacher.

Researchers found that many teenagers go online in search of health information (Stern and Willis, 2007; Chisolm et al., 2011). Lenhart et al. (2005) reported that 31% of teenagers use the Internet to search for information on health, fitness and dieting. Larsen and Martey (2011) found that one of the reasons why more teens do not go online to search for information on health was because all the information they needed were provided to them in school by teachers or textbooks. However, according to Stern and Willis (2007) the health information obtained by teenagers online was normally information about their bodily conditions and the seriousness of conditions. Stern and Willis (2007) reported that the anonymous status the Internet provided made teens feel more comfortable obtaining health information on embarrassing or personal issues from the Internet before or instead of asking their parents or a doctor. Research conducted by Gray, Klein, Noyce, Sesselberg, and Cantriw (2005) also found that the Internet was most teens primary source for researching health information, and girls were more likely than boys to search for health information online. Lenhart et al. (2005) found that 22% of
online teens used the Internet to search topics such as depression, drug use and sexual health; these topics are often considered difficult or uncomfortable to discuss with adults.

Lenhart et al. (2005) also discovered that 55% of online teenagers used the Internet to obtain up to date information on news and politics and 26% of online teenagers used the Internet to find information on religions and spirituality, while 30% used it to find jobs.

**Content Creation**

Much of the research on teenagers’ creation of content was directed toward identity development. While identity formation is not the focus of this dissertation, the information presented in this section focuses on content creation and identity formation in teenagers, as there is little research on other reasons why teenagers create content online. Teenagers, until recently had little or no creative outlet of self-expression (Stern & Willis, 2007). The Internet provided a platform for teenagers to communicate their thoughts via varying texts such as the written word, music, video, photography and original artwork. Researchers discovered that the creation of content, whether it was on social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace, or blogging, or creating and posting videos on YouTube were all ways to project the teenagers’ identities (Livingstone & Brake, 2010; Giddens, 1991; Chittenden, 2010; Saul, 2010).

Livingstone (2008) researched the reasons why teenagers in the U.K. created content, especially profiles on social networking sites. Livingstone found that teenage girls created profiles that expressed their personalities and identities, and girls liked that the profiles can be changed to express different sides of them. For many of the participants in Livingstone’s research, the profiles they created on social networking sites
were not just for expressing personal information, but, it was also used to maintain a position in their peer networks. Without a profile, the participants will not be involved in the network.

Vickery (2010) discovered that for girls, blogging presented a space to give teenage girls a voice, create media, as well as create an online community to help with their identity development. Warburton (2010) found that when teenage girls engaged in producing fan fiction, they were not only creating alternative identities of themselves, but they were also producers of culture. Mazzarella (2005) noted that when girls produce fan culture on the Internet, they create a community and space in which they feel safe. When girls created content online, in any form, they were agents of their own identity and culture. “Agency refers to the conscious, self-directed actions of girls” (Currie et al., 2009, p. 103). When teenagers create content, in any form, they are revealing themselves to the public and/or to their friends, by actively experimenting with varying forms of expressive voice.

**Other Activities Teenagers Engaged with Online**

Stern and Willis (2007) only included the three categories of communication, information seeking and content creation as the main activities performed by teenagers online. However, teenagers also engage in other online activities such as playing games, listening to music, and watching television and movies online.

**Playing games.** Lenhart et al. (2008) conducted a national survey for Pew Internet and American Life Project and discovered that almost all American teens play some type of video game on platforms varying from computers, consoles, and cell phones. Playing video games is worldwide with teens and is often considered a social
experience. According to Lenhart et al. (2008), playing video games is a social experience because three-quarter of the teens they surveyed reported that they sometimes play video games with other people. 27% of the teens also admitted to playing video games with people they found online. Video games are also diverse in nature and span many categories including puzzles, adventure, sports, and racing (Lenhart et al., 2008). Homer, Hayward, Frye and Plass (2012) found that boys play more video games than girls, but as aged increased, so did the amount of time each gender played video games.

There is an immense amount of research on the problems of teens playing video games. For example, Porter, Starcevic, Berle, and Fenech (2010) discovered that teens who are addict video gamers have fewer friends in person and more online friends; Messias, Castro, Saini, Usman, and Peeples (2011) learned via their research on the link between video games, suicide and sadness that teens who reported playing five or more hours of video games were at risk for teen depression and suicide; Chan and Rabinowitz (2006) found that teenagers who play more than one hour of console and Internet video games were more at risk for developing attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; Colburn (2011) reported that teens that played violent video games were more likely to show aggressive behaviors that teens who play non-violent video games. However, there is a lack in the literature on the reasons why teenagers play video games, especially video games found online. Frostling-Henningsson (2009) conducted research to discover the motives for online gaming found that people who engaged in online gaming for mainly social reason, as it allows them to connect with other players via cooperation and communication in the gaming world. Frostling-Henningsson also discovered that many
gamers used online gaming as means to escape into a virtual world where they can experiment with different behaviors that would not be acceptable in the real world.

Initially, researchers assumed that teens play video games for mainly entertainment or pleasure, but research has shown that teens use video games as a coping mechanism to escape from reality and connect with other players in a social setting.

**Listening to music.** Forde (2009) reported the results of market researcher NPD group which found music to be a key component in the social activities amongst teenagers. Social networking sites were essential for teenagers in discovering new music and artistes; 19% of teenagers in 2008 reported that they listened to music on social networking sites. Digital downloading of music was on the rise and Pandora use (an online radio station where one can choose what genre and artistes to listen to) was on the rise amongst teens (Forde, 2009).

Listening to music is an important activity for teens, as music provided teenagers with valuable information that enabled them to cope with their emotions, provide them with a source of information, and also help them express their developing social and personal identities (Zillman and Gan, 1987). Vannini and Myers (2002) found that teen pop music was an important facet in helping teens develop their identity, as well as help them understand feelings of love and the complexity of interpersonal relationships. Many researchers found that music fulfilled an emotional need for teenagers (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neill, 2000; Roe, 1985), as well as aided teenagers in the relief of stress and anxiety (Gantz, Gartenberg, Pearson, & Shiller, 1978).

Research indicated that social networking sites were major platforms for teens to be exposed to and listen to music. Research also pointed out that listening to music is
important to teenagers as music aides in their identity development, as well as their overall mental health as listening to music enables teenagers to work through emotions, stress, and anxiety.

**Watching television and movies on the Internet.** With the accessibility of the Internet, more teens are opting to watch television and movies online. Anderson (2010) found that 82% of teens watch TV shows online and 68% of teens watched movies online. With the rise of new media platforms with Internet access, such as laptops, tablets, cell phones, and e-reader, teens have more avenues to watch TV and movies than before. Many television stations make popular television shows available on their websites, so the audience can view episodes at their convenience. Gruenwedel (2008) reported that 20% of prime-time shows were watched online. There are a number of websites available to view television and movies online, such as Netflix.com, Hulu.com and HuluPlus.com. All these websites have available a number of TV shows and movies that can be downloaded and viewed at any time. While it was obvious that teens are watching TV shows and movies online, there is little to no research on the reasons why they choose to do so.

This section presented a review of the literature regarding the online activities of teenagers. First Stern and Willis” (2007) three online activities that teenagers engage in were discussed. The three activities were communication, information seeking, and content creation. Second, other online activities that were not represented by Stern and Willis (2007) were discussed. These activities were playing games, listening to music, and watching television and movies.
Social Networking Sites and Teens

Teenagers obsession with social networking sites often baffle adults, as social networking sites allow teenagers to maintain a network of friends and engage in various activities that often exclude parents. boyd and Ellison (2008) defined social networking sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 211). Lenhart and Madden (2007) explained social networking sites as “an online place where a user can create a profile and build a personal network that connects him or her to other users” (p. 1). boyd and Ellison (2008) reported that social networking sites allowed individuals to connect with people of varying relations, such as strangers, friends, coworkers, and family, and present them all on one place as that individual’s social network; moreover, many of the people on an individual’s social networking site are known to the individual prior to including them on their social networking site.

According to boyd and Ellison (2008), social networking sites are unique tools that ask individuals to create profiles which contain identifying information that represented that individual in some way. Different social networking sites have different types of profile, but in general, profiles are visual displays about an individual’s personality, history, and personal information. Depending on the social networking site, many users can include multimedia content to enhance the visual appeal of the profile. boyd (2008) reported that social networking sites became a popular online destination for
many teenagers. According to Lenhart et al. (2011) in 2011, 80% of U.S. teenagers who were online used social networking sites.

This section reviews the relevant literature on social networking sites. First, social networking sites as a communicative tool is discussed. Second, social networking sites as an informative tool is explained. Third, how social networking sites have been used as production and distribution tool for content creation is clarified. Fourth, information on how social networking sites can be both beneficial and detrimental to teens is presented.

Social Networking Sites as a Communicative Tool

The Pew Internet and Family Project (Lenhart and Madden, 2007) conducted a phone survey in 2006 with over 500 teenagers on the reasons why teenagers use social networking sites. The results indicated that the teens that used social networking sites mainly used them to stay in contact and communicate with people they see and don’t see on a regular basis. Many of the teens also used social networking sites to make plans with their friends. Lenhart and Madden (2007) reported that social networking sites allowed teens to stay in touch with their friends by a variety of communication tools such as posting messages to a friend’s page or wall, sending private messages to a friend within the social networking site, posting comments to a friend’s blog, sending a bulletin or group message to all their friends and virtually winking, poking, giving “e-props” or kudos to their friends. Lenhart and Madden (2007) also found that while girls used social networking sites to maintain pre-existing friendships, boys use it as a tool to make new friends and flirt.

Many parents believed that teenagers who use social networking sites to stay in contact with friends have an unfulfilled social life; however Lenhart et al. (2005) found
that nearly half of all teenagers believed that they have more of a social life because of social networking sites. Farrington (2008) reported the social networking sites were beneficial to teens because it is a means of communication “these sites help young people create and maintain lifelong connections with others and give them a sense of community” (p. 60), and according to Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) also help maintain friendships by, according to Waechter et al. (2010), allowing teenagers to keep in touch with their offline friends. Reich, Subrahmanyam, and Espinoza (2012) found that the communication that occurs on social networking sites help strengthen teens’ offline relationships.

**Social Networking Sites as an Informative Tool**

There is little to no peer-reviewed academic research on how teenagers use social networking sites as an informative tool. However, there is some research available on how social networking sites have been used as an informative tool.

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter were designed to keep people informed not only on celebrities and popular culture, but also on their friends and acquaintances. Facebook, specifically, allowed teens to view friends websites and browse their pages at their own leisure; obtaining information about their love lives, jobs and family. According to Livingstone and Brake (2010), social networking sites were excellent means of obtaining personal information about friends, without having a conversation with them. Westerman (2008) also found that individuals use social networking sites to obtain information on people who both well known and less known to them.
Social Networking ProCon.org, a nonpartisan, nonprofit charity organization that promotes critical thinking, education, and informed citizenship presented facts and studies on social networking sites. One of their studies “Are Social Networking Sites Good for Our Society?” (socialnetworking.procon.org) reported that students use social networking sites to discuss information on educational topics and school assignments. They also reported that social networking sites distributed information about news faster than any other media outlet.

**Social Networking Sites as a Production and Distributive Tool for Content Creation**

In a U.S. national survey conducted by the Pew Internet and Family Life Project in 2007, researchers found that 64% of online teenagers participated in content-creating activities on the Internet such as creating artwork, photos, videos, stories, webpages or blogs. In 2007, 55% of the teenagers surveyed created a profile on a social networking site (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007); in 2012 this number grew to more than 80% (Madden et al., 2013). According to Lenhart et al. (2007), girls were more likely to create blogs than boys, while boys were more likely to upload videos onto social media sites such as YouTube. The researchers also found that when teens posted content they created such as photos, videos or artwork on social networking sites, it sparked conversation, because people commented on the posted content.

Greenhow (2010) conducted research on youth as content producers on Hot Dish, which is an application within the social networking Facebook; Hot Dish allowed youth to essentially be citizen journalists and create articles, videos or blogs, or even comment on other people’s posts on a variety of socioscientific issues. Greenhow (2010) discovered that because youth were allowed to contribute to the debate of issues by
producing and posting their own original works to the website, as well as comment on other’s people work, the youth became more civically involved, made social connections and more confident in expressing their thoughts.

Clarke (2009) found that young teens expressed their identity through original creative works on social networking sites. In fact, Clarke found that as the teens aged, the more they would express their identities through original photographs and creative texts.

**Benefit and Detriment of Social Networking Sites for Teens**

According to Farrington (2008) social networking sites are beneficial to teenagers because social networking sites permit teens to express who they really are, and the teens, while they are being judged by viewers of their profiles, are being judged on their ideas, and not on superficial characteristics such as appearances and fashion. Also, because social networking sites allow teenagers to openly express their opinions, as well as create profiles that are reflections of their personalities, researchers argue that social networking sites help in the development of teenagers’ identities and negotiate gender Livingstone (2008) discovered that teens viewed social networking sites as a means of expressing and exploring their identities because social networking sites are flexible and allowed constant changing of profiles and information. Clarke (2009) conducted a two year ethnographic study of young adolescents in the U.K. on how they use social networking sites. Clarke found that the older the teens became, the more likely they were to express their identities on social networking sites through original creative works.

Clarke (2009) discovered that social networking sites played an important role to young teens as social networking sites allowed the teens to have a network of online friends that gave emotional support through difficult times of changes, such as a change
in school or houses. Clarke (2009) also discovered that popularity was an important factor for teens and their online friends’ list grew from an average of 50 to a few hundred over the two year study. Clarke noted that the group effect that social networking sites offered was an essential component for young teens because the group both reassured the teens and allowed them to room for experimentation of identities.

Social networking sites are also beneficial as they allowed teenagers to maintain a sense of much needed privacy in their home, away from their parents, as many teens have access to the Internet in their bedrooms (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001) and many teens do not have their parents as friends on their social networking sites, and those that do reported having problems with their parents due to social media (Madden et al., 2013).

Many researchers argue that social networking sites can be harmful to teenagers, especially since Moreno, Brockman, Wasserheit, and Christakis (2012) found that adolescents frequently displayed risky behavior on social networking sites. Duncan (2008) quoted many cases in a law article were teens were harmed after meeting people on a social networking site. In many of the cases, the criminals were sexual predators. Burke (2008) found that a small percentage of teens experienced sexual solicitation and harassment online. These concerns echo the concerns that many of adults have with teen girls using online media.

One of the major detriments of social networking sites for teens is the risk of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can take many forms such as name-calling, insults, threats, spreading of rumors, distribution of embarrassing photos and private information online without the person’s permission (Parks, 2011). Parks (2011) reported that “cyberbullying has been identified as one of the most serious problems associated with online social
networking, and numerous young people have been victims of it” (p. 39). According to Lenhart et al. (2011), 88% of U.S. teens who use social media reported that they witnessed people being cruel to others on social networking sites; 8% of teens admitted to being bullied online and more girls than boys reported being bullied via online media such as email or social networking sites; 90% of teens who witnessed cruel behavior on social networking sites have ignored the behavior; 67% have witnessed others join in with the cruel behavior on social networking sites and 21% who witnessed others join on the behavior, admitted to also participating with the harassment of others on social networking sites.

O’Connell, Price and Barrow (2004) found that a large number of teenagers do not report to their parents incidents of cyberbullying. Mishna, Saini, and Solomon (2009) conducted focus groups to get the youth’s perceptions on cyber bullying. They discovered that while anonymity was key to cyber bullying, much of the bullying occurred amongst the children’s online social groups and relationships, therefore while they may not know exactly who the bully was, they knew the bully was part of their social group, which often made them feel worse about the situation. Other children, especially girls reported to being coerced by boys into taking photos of themselves with a webcam. Many times the coercion was in the form of blackmail. Other girls reported that friends would take conflicts online and post negative comments about someone in a blog. While research has shown that parents fear that their children are being bullied online (Dowdell, 2013; Madden et al., 2012), Mishna et al., (2009) found that children prefer not to tell their parents about being cyber-bullied in fear that their computer privileges will be revoked. Not all negative incidents online can be labeled as bullying, for teens can have
negative experiences on a social networking site, such as arguments, that cannot be
categorized as bullying. According to Lenhart et al. (2011), 25% of teens said that they
experienced a social networking incident that led to a face-to-face confrontation, 22%
reported that a social networking incident ended a friendship with someone, 8% said that
a social networking incident caused a physical altercation with someone, and 6% said a
social networking incident got them in trouble at school.

Cyberbullying on social networking sites is only one of the many negative incidents
that can occur on a social networking site. Many adults fear that teenagers are revealing
too much information on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as
communicating with strangers on YouTube. Adults main concern is that the teenagers’
privacy is invaded, which can lead to harmful consequences.

This section reviewed the relevant literature on social networking sites. First,
social networking sites as a communicative tool was discussed. Second, social
networking sites as an informative tool was explained. Third, how social networking sites
have been used as production and distribution tool for content creation was clarified.
Fourth, information on how social networking sites can be both beneficial and
detrimental to teens was presented.

This chapter reviewed the literature relevant for this dissertation. The chapter was
organized into five main sections: parental concerns; girls’ studies which was divided
further into defining girls studies, gender differences, and contribution to girls’ studies;
and online activities of teenagers which were further divided into communication,
information seeking, content creation and other online activities that included playing
games, listening to music and watching television and movies; social networking sites
and teens which was further divided into the subcategories of social networking sites as a communicative tool, social networking sites as an informative tool, social networking sites as a production and distributive tool for content creation, and benefit and detriment of social networking sites for teens.

There are many studies and research articles on how teenagers, and more specifically how teen girls used the Internet and various online media. What makes this dissertation unique is that there are currently no research on the reasons why teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago consume and/or produce online media, and there are no studies that I found describing and/or explaining how teenage girls in any part of the world use online media as equipment for living. The next chapter explains the methods used to conduct the research for this project.
Chapter 3: Conducting the Research

This chapter examines the various methods used to answer the following research questions about Trinidad and Tobago teens:

- How often do teen girls use the Internet?
- What websites do the teen girls frequent?
- How do the teen girls use online media?
- How do the teen girls use online media for communication, information seeking, and creation of content?
- How do online media serve as equipment for living for the teen girls?

To answer the research questions, the researcher employed two research methods: survey and focus groups. In addition I used blogging to allow the girls a space for their voice. Often writing in diaries or journaling is used a method to gain information, however, because this project is about online media use, I choose blogging instead of writing in diaries. A survey was distributed to the students as an initial means of collecting information that shaped the questions in the focus group and established a blog to be directed specifically to the girls’ interests. However, the majority of information came from the focus groups. While the survey addressed the first three research questions, the focus group and blog addressed all the research questions because it enabled the researcher to converse with the girls, where they were more likely to reveal anecdotes about their online media use.

The Research

The method of questionnaires was used, only to obtain basic information of the teens’ general media use. While this method was generally considered quantitative and
not qualitative in nature, the survey allowed vast amount of information to be collected from a larger population. The answers from the surveys provided a catalyst for the focus groups. Therefore, the survey was the first information collected from the girls, then the focus groups were conducted and finally the blog was created.

Teenagers are often considered an enigma to adults; their thoughts and actions were often considered irrational and they are thought to be impulsive and careless in their behavior (Steinberg, 2011). Teenagers’ online activities were often questioned, while their constant Internet use seemed to be a mystery to many adults (Sternheimer, 2003). In order to understand the varying reasons behind teenagers’ use of online media, the researcher must comprehend the social and media worlds from the teenagers’ perspective. Mazzarella and Pecora (2007) stated that previous feminist and cultural studies scholars “acknowledge the need to shift the focus toward studying how girls negotiate these artifacts and messages, and more importantly, to listen to the voices of girls themselves instead of relying on adult academician deconstruction of media content” (pp. 111-112). I would argue that this was best accomplished through a qualitative approach, because such an approach enabled the researcher to listen, personally interact, establish and adjudicate relationships with the girls. Qualitative research invited conversations with the girls, which in turn helped develop a mutual trust between the participants and the researcher. Mutual trust was an essential component in obtaining critical information from the participants.

A qualitative approach operates under the assumption that through expressive communication and habitual, socially understood communicative acts, people negotiate the meanings of relationships (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Therefore, the goal of
qualitative research was to understand the complex, lived experience of human beings, because qualitative researchers believed that “humans infuse their actions – and the world that results – with meaning” (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, p. 5). Comprehending humans’ actions and the connotations supporting those actions was core to the subjective approach used in this dissertation. The implicit supposition of girls’ online media usage were understood through the applications of the assumptions about the nature of girls’ created reality by examining the epistemological and ontological nature of the girls’ realities.

Epistemology “is the philosophy of knowledge or how we come to know” (Krauss, 2005, 758). Burrell and Morgan (1985) stated that epistemology is “about how one might begin to understand the world and communicate this as knowledge to fellow human beings” (p. 1). For qualitative researchers, humans gain knowledge via direct contact and experience with the world around them. The world, whether physical or social, from the people who are experiencing the world. Ontologically, qualitative researchers assume that each person experiences a different reality, because each person has a unique perspective on each situation, depending on their past experiences (Krauss, 2005, p. 760). However, not every experience is completely unique to an individual. Often in society there are subcultures where the members of that subculture share the experience encountered and there is a consensus on the particulars and outcomes of the shared experience. The teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago formed their own subculture, therefore establishing a shared experience of online media. For qualitative researchers, epistemology and ontology are closely linked, as one of the questions qualitative researchers hope to answer is: How do people come to know their realities and how researchers come to understand that reality? (Krauss, 2005).
Survey

The first stage of this study was a survey distributed to Form 1 and Form 2 students in the high school who had received parental permission. The relevance of a survey is to create reliability, consistency, and validity of questioning across the participants (Babbie, 2010). The survey enabled the researcher to ensure reliability as questions were repeated in different forms to see if the questions will yield to same answers. The validity of the questions was assured but using questions from Pew Research reports, where similar research was conducted in the U.S. (Lenhart et al., 2005). Survey questions for this dissertation provided a means to identify what online media the girls in Trinidad and Tobago use, as well as how often they used it (see Appendix 1 for survey). The online media included in the survey were social networking sites, sending or receiving email, sending or receiving instant messages, buying things online, searching for health information, searching for religious information, looking for information about jobs and schools, looking for information about hobbies, watching television and movies online, playing games and information concerning schools assignments. The survey also consisted of questions about creating media, reasons for creating media and reading privacy issues (see Appendix 1). The data were entered into SPSS to obtain frequencies about the girls’ online media use. The surveys were the initial data collection from the students. In addition, the answers from the survey helped refine the questions for the focus group.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were important to this research because having conversations with the students in small groups allowed the researcher to gain information about the
students’ media use due to the “group effect.” When the students were placed in a group, their opinions stimulated ideas and opinions from other members of the group. These ideas often led to different opinions and generated debates about the topic (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Patton 2002). The focus group created opportunities for anecdotes and clash of world views that enhanced the conversation experience and enabled the girls to share their world views. The focus groups assisted in interpreting the students’ suppositions of communication that was common place and understood among them. The meanings of communications elicited by the students when using or creating media was better understood, for their concepts and stories about online media was extracted and explained via argumentative conversations among the girls. Overall, the focus groups granted the researcher in-depth analysis of the students’ feelings, attitudes, and beliefs, which were extremely imperative in understanding the messages they received and created via the media, as well as interpreting the motive to using and creating media.

**Focus Group Guide**

The questions asked attempted to obtain information about access to media they have and how they use it. This topic was similar to that of the survey, however, depending on the answers received, the researcher delved into specifics about the varying media use. The focus group guide included topics about their views on creating media and the reasons why the students created media, such as for civic action, social action or for relationship building. Other questions included topics on their understanding of privacy in relation to the media and whether or not privacy issues influence their online activities (see Appendix 2).
In order to analyze the focus group, I first transcribed the conversation held during the focus groups (see Appendix 3 for the transcription of the focus groups). After transcribing, I conducted a thorough review of observer notes, video tapes and transcripts of the focus groups. I created a coding guide using the factors that influence online behavior, such as for communication, information seeking, and content creation. I categorized the focus group responses using the coding guide. Finally, the data was interpreted looking for common themes through the responses.

**Blogging**

A blog is defined as “a hierarchy of text, images, media objects and data, arranged chronologically, that can be viewed in an HTML browser” (Winer, 2003). The creator of the blog created text entries known as posts and readers of the blog left comments under each post. Blogging allowed the girls to anonymously discuss anything that they wanted about online media. The blog was created using the website [http://www.blogger.com/home?pli=1](http://www.blogger.com/home?pli=1). The blog was a private group, where only the researcher and students had access to the blog. The posts and comments on the blog can be found in Appendix 4. While the researcher posted stories and questions about online media use, the girls were encouraged to post anything they wanted about various types and uses of online media. The advantage to having the students blog is that the students wrote about their attitudes and feelings anonymously. The students wrote their thoughts and feelings that sometimes cannot be expressed verbally during the focus groups. For the researcher, the blogs gave a glimpse into their identities and personalities. The blogs enabled the researcher access into the student’s minds, granting first-hand views of their perspective of the world and how their perception of online media. The blogs enabled the
students to express sensitive and personal material that they were afraid to express in the focus groups for fear of ridicule. The blog also offered the opportunity to clarify statements made during the focus group.

The blog was coded in the following manner. First, I conducted a thorough review of the blog posts. Second, I created a coding guide using the factors that influenced online behavior, such as for communication, information seeking, content creation. Third, I organized the data by the topics about online media that arise in the blog posts. Fourth, I categorized the blog responses using the coding guide. Fifth, the data were interpreted, looking for common themes throughout the responses.

**Description of the sample girls**

Trinidad and Tobago’s school system was based on the British system of education. There are three levels of education: primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. Primary school begins at the age of 5 and ends at around ages 11 or 13 depending on the child’s date of birth and intelligence level. Primary schools can be same-sex, mixed-sex, government, government assisted, private, and/or various religious denominations, and the students that attended come from families with various economic standings. A Catholic primary school can be same or mixed sex, as well as either government, government assisted or private and have students that come from families with varying economic statuses.

At the ending of the primary school, the children write Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) that determines what high school they can attend. The students’ placements in high school depend on how well they do in SEA exams. The high scoring students normally get placed in a prestige school. Parents or guardians provide a list of
schools to the government before the SEA stating in order of highest preference what high school they will like their child to attend. High schools, like primary schools can be same sex, mixed sex, government, government assisted or private and/or various religious denominations, and the students that attend come from families with various economic standings. Some high schools are for five years while others are for seven years. Most prestige schools are seven year schools. Forms one to upper six represent the seven years of school, with the last two years divided into lower six and upper six.

At the ending of five years, (Form Five), students write Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), taken throughout the Caribbean, or Ordinary Level or O-Level (British) exams, on various subjects, which determine whether or not they have a complete certificate to be considered a high school graduate. A high school certificate consists of five passes, including Mathematics and English Grammar. If students do well in these exams, they can return to the same school or transfer to a seven year school or a school that specializes in only lower and upper six classes so they can then write Advanced Level or A-Level (British exams) or Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). A-Levels and CAPE determines whether or not students will get into university. Because of this system, high school student ages can range from 11 – 19 years of age.

**Participation Process**

The principal of an all girls’ high school in Trinidad and Tobago gave permission to survey, conduct focus groups, and blog with the Form 1 and Form 2 students. IRB approved me to conduct research in the school under the condition that the students were twelve years or older, and that they had written parental permission (see Appendix 5 for IRB approval).
There are three Form 1 and three Form 2 classes. The researcher had access to students during the last two weeks of the second school term of the school year. During this time, the students did not have exams nor did many of the teachers hold classes. There are 105 Form 1s and 107 Form 2s. Table 3.1 demonstrates the demographic of students that took part in each method. While there are many same sex schools in Trinidad and Tobago, this high school was chosen as field location, as this particular school’s population was representative of Trinidad and Tobago’s population in reference to race, culture, and economic status.

Table 3.1
Demographic of Students that Participated in Each Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th># of Girls</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Form 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group 3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students were recruited for the project by posting flyers (see Appendix 6) in all the Form 1 and Form 2 classrooms. After the school’s assembly, the principal required all the Form 1 and Form 2 students to remain in the assembly hall and the principal
introduced the researcher to all the students and the researcher explained the project, and distributed the consent forms; two consent forms were given to each student in an envelope, one for the parents to sign and return and one for the parents to keep for reference (see Appendices 7 and 8). The next day additional consent forms were given to the students who were absent at the first distribution. The consent forms were then collected daily by the class teacher, principal or vice principal and kept in the principal’s office. After a week, 67 consent forms were collected.

**Survey.** To fill out the survey, the students who returned the consent forms were summoned to the assembly hall and were told to bring a pen or pencil. The surveys were then distributed and were immediately filled out by the students. Out of the 67 students who returned the consent forms, 62 students filled out the survey: 31 Form 1 students and 31 Form 2 (refer to Table 3.1). The students were given survey assent forms to sign (see Appendix 9) and one survey assent form for them to keep for their records (see Appendix 10). The names on the surveys’ signed assent forms were verified against the list of the names of students who had received parental or guardian consent. The average time to fill out the survey was about 13 minutes. After 20 minutes all the students had completed the survey and all surveys were returned to the researcher.

**Focus groups.** Out of the 62 students who received consent from their parents or guardian to fill out the survey, only 40 students were received permission partake in the focus group and blogs. A total of three focus groups were conducted. At the start of each focus group the participants’ were asked to read and sign the assent form in order to participate in the focus group and blog (see Appendix 11). The focus groups were conducted in the audio-visual room. The audio-visual room was air-conditioned, and had
only two doors with no windows. This enabled complete privacy for the students and a controlled environment in order to tape the focus groups.

**Focus group 1.** The first focus group consisted of six Form 1 students all from the same class. The vice-principal checked the Form 1’s and Form 2’s class schedule everyday to verify when students had a double period of classes. The vice-principal discovered that a teacher was absent for a double period and allowed me to obtain students from that class for the focus group. The principal accompanied me to the classroom and I then asked the willing students with parental consent to participate in the focus group and blog to identify themselves. The willing participants’ names were verified against the list of students with parental consent. The six students then accompanied me to the audio-visual room. The students then read and signed the focus group and blog assent forms.

**Focus group 2.** The second focus group consisted of ten Form 2s from two different classes, eight girls from the first Form 2 and two girls from the second Form 2. In the first Form 2, the students had a double period and the teacher allowed me to have the students from her class who had permission. One of the girls in that class was extremely interested in participating in the study and she asked her friends who had parental permission to join her in the study. In the second Form 2, the students had a free double period. The two girls that participated were also friends with the girls from the first Form 2, and wanted to participate with their friends. The willing participants accompanied me to the audio-visual room, where their names were verified against the consent form list. After verification, the students read and signed the focus group and blog assent forms.
Focus group 3. The third focus group consisted of eight Form 2s from the third Form 2 class. The students had a free double period and the vice-principal, who was supervising the students, allowed the willing girls with parental consent to leave the classroom in order to partake in the focus group. The two remaining Form 1 classes also had free double periods but no students who had parental consent were willing to participate. The students accompanied me to the audio-visual room where their names were verified against the list of students who had parental consent. The students then read and signed the focus group and blog assent forms.

Blog. A private blog was created by the researcher for the sole purpose of this research project. The same students that participated in the focus group also participated in the blog. At the beginning of the focus group after the students signed the assent forms (see Appendix 11), the students provided their email addresses. The rules of the blog were explained to the girls and the instructions on how to access the blog was also explained and handed out to the students (see Appendix 12). Emails were sent out to all the students with instructions on how to sign up and participate in the blog in the email. The students were instructed to create a username and password that no one else would recognize. The students would then sign in with their username and were not allowed to publish any identifying material about themselves. The researcher then published specific questions on the blog, and the students replied to the question. The researcher posted a total of 13 stories with questions attached to them. The blog received a total of 276 views, 35 comments.

This chapter explained the process and the importance of using the qualitative approach for this research project. The chapter also provided an explanation of why
surveys, focus groups and blogs were used to attain data. An explanation of Trinidad and Tobago’s school system was also provided and how the girls were chosen to participate in this study.

The methods used in this study produced data which I analyzed using Burke’s idea of equipment for living. The researcher conversed with the teen girls via focus groups and blogs, to allow the teen girls to express what online media were relevant to them and why the attitudes and strategies consumed and produced through online media were inherent facets in their lives. Through the teen girls’ discussion during the focus groups and blogs, this researcher was able to extract and analyze themes within the cultural context of the teenage girl and hence explain how online media were equipment for living for the teen girls. These themes were considered in light of Stern and Willis’s (2007) three categories of teenagers’ online activities: communication, information seeking, and content creation. Specifically, I identified symbolic themes within each of these three categories and then determined, using the model outlined in Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1, how those themes merged into a single representative anecdote which would explain how the girls employed online media to serve as equipment for living with their particular social and cultural conditions. Those social and cultural conditions were specific for the teen girls in this particular school in Trinidad and Tobago.

Although Burke’s approach has been used by previous researchers only to study mediated messages, I used it here to examine qualitatively gathered data about online media usage. This approach was more beneficial as I was able to examine online media texts from the teen girls’ perspectives, giving me the advantage of understanding the important roles that online media played in their lives from their own stories and
experiences. From their narratives, I am able to apply the model to explain how the girls used online media as equipment for living, as well as explain the cultural context of their online media usage. In the next chapter, the survey results will be reported and discussed.
Chapter 4: Survey Findings

This chapter reports on the findings of the survey conducted as the first stage of the project. Many of the questions from the survey were modeled after research conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (Lenhart et al., 2005) and attempted to answer the first three research questions on Trinidad and Tobago teen girls:

- How often do the teen girls use the Internet?
- What websites do the teen girls frequent?
- How do the teen girls use online media?

The survey data described the demographics of the group and I categorized the data by the following themes: 1) Online media activities theme that was divided into the subthemes of communication, information seeking, and content creation; 2) Websites frequented by the girls; and 3) Unexpected findings.

Demographic Data

In this section, the demographic data, as well as the frequency of online media data are presented. Three Form 1 classes and three Form 2 classes participated in this research project. As explained earlier, there were 212 possible respondents between both Forms, averaging 35 girls per class; 105 Form 1s and 107 Form 2s. Among the 212 possible respondents for the survey, 62 teen girls completed the survey, because only 62 girls’ parents gave permission and returned the consent forms.
Table 4.1

Number of Teen Girls Based on Age and Form

N=62

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Girls</th>
<th>Number of Girls</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form 1</td>
<td>Form 2</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 4.1, equal number of teen girls from Form 1 and Form 2 participated in the survey. The majority of students were 13 years of age (45%). However, during the initial analysis, it was concluded that age was not a determining factor in this research; therefore, the data will be represented by Form only.

**Frequency of Participation in Online Activities**

To discover how often the teen girls participate with online media, the teen girls were asked to choose an option that best represented their frequency of online use.
Table 4.2

Frequency of Online Use

N=62

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Online Media Use</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once a day</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once a week</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less often</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 4.2, the majority of girls went online at least once a day (76%), while 21% of the girls went online at least once a week. Even though all the teen girls had personal laptops, the teen girls did not always have access to the Internet. The school’s Internet was unavailable to the teen girls, and many of the teen girls only had the Internet access on weekends, or when they visited relatives or friends.

Figure 4.1. Percentage of Teen Girls’ Online use Based on Form
As seen in Figure 4.1, 74% and 77% of the Form 1s and Form 2s respectfully went online at least once a day. The teen girls in Form 2 go online slightly more often than teen girls in Form 1.

**Online Media Use**

Pew Internet and American Life Project (Lenhart et al., 2005) discovered that all teenagers go online to accomplish specific functions such as search for information about hobbies, school related assignments and health information. The project also discovered that the girls often go online to watch television and movies. Using the categories from Pew Internet and American Life Project, the teen girls were asked to choose all the online activities in which they participated.

*Figure 4.2. Percentage of Online Activity Use by Teen Girls*
As seen in Figure 4.2, the top six online activities the girls participated in were the information seeking activities of looking at websites about hobbies, and searching for information to help with homework (98% and 95% respectfully); the entertainment activity of watching movies or TV shows online and playing games online (93% and 87% respectfully); and the communication activities of sending or reading emails and sending or reading emails (89% each).

![Bar chart showing the percentage of top six online activities used by teen girls based on Form](chart.png)

*Figure 4.3. Percentage of Top Six Online Activities Used by Teen Girls Based on Form*

Using the top six most often used online activities, as seen in Figure 4.3, the Form 2 teen girls participated in the online activities, more than the Form 1 teen girls.
The teen girls were asked to choose the one online activity in which they participated in the most, as seen in Figure 4.4, 32% of the teen girls reported that the online activity they participated in the most was sending or receiving instant messages.

**Communication**

The communication activities the survey tested for were:

- Send and receive instant messages
- Send or read email

As seen in Figure 4.2, a large percentage of the teen girls (89%) reported that their online activities were based on communicating with others either by sending or reading emails or sending and receiving instant messages. In Figure 4.3, the majority or all the Form 2 teen girls go online to send or receive email and to send or receive instant messages (97%
and 100% respectfully), as oppose to the Form 1 teen girls who sent and received emails and sent and received instant messages (81% and 77% respectfully). Since many of the teen girls performed multiple actions online, the teen girls were asked to choose one online activity they performed most. Even though, as seen in Figure 4.2, the majority of girls went online to go to websites about hobbies (98%), however, as seen in Figure 4.4, the one online activity performed most by the girls was the communication activity of sending or receiving instant messages (32%).

**Information Seeking**

The information seeking activities the survey tested for were:

- Websites about hobbies
- Information for homework
- Information about a school
- Information about hard to talk about health topics

As seen in Figure 4.2, many girls reported that the majority of their online activities were focused on seeking information about hobbies (98%), as well as looking for information for homework (95%). The data in Figure 4.3 suggest that more Form 2 teen girls go online to look for information about hobbies and information for homework (100% and 97% respectfully) than Form 1 teen girls (97% and 93%).

**Content Creation**

Many of the girls created content and posted it online through a social networking site or uploaded unto a social networking site. Some of the content created by the girls were:

- Photos they took themselves and/or edited and posted online
(To clarify, when the teen girls created music, they would change it, or add something to it, like lyrics, photos, or a caption, in order to make it their own).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photos uploaded onto a website or SNS</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS profile</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group page on a SNS</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music uploaded onto a website or SNS</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A video uploaded onto a SNS like YouTube of Facebook</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.5. Percentage of Online Activities that was Created by the Teen Girls as Online Media*
As seen in Figure 4.5, the two activities which were created most by the girls were creating a photo which was then loaded onto a website or SNS and creating a social networking profile, 77% and 72% respectfully.

![Figure 4.6. Percentage of Online Media Created by Teen Girls Based on Form](image)

As seen in Figure 4.6, more Form 2 teen girls (87%) than Form 1 teen girls (68%) uploaded photos that they created onto a website or SNS. While many of the activities were created more by the Form 2 teen girls than the Form 1 teen girls. The one activity created more often by the Form 1 teen girls than Form 2 teen girls was music that they created and uploaded onto a website or SNS, 52% and 35% respectfully.
Figure 4.7. Reasons why the Teen Girls Created Content

As seen in Figure 4.7 the majority of girls created content for fun or for entertainment value (48%). Only 50% of the girls created entertainment to express personality. No girls (0%) created media to as a political statement.

Figure 4.8. Reasons why the Teen Girls Created Content Based on Form
As seen in Figure 4.8, equal number of Form 1 and Form 2 teen girls created content for fun or entertainment (77%). More Form 1 teen girls created content to express opinions on social issues (29%) than Form 2 teen girls (13%). Also, more Form 1 teen girls (16%) than Form 2 teen girls (0%) said they created content for other reasons such as: to communicate with family, for other people, and to make friends.

The online activities the teen girls most engaged in were the communication activities of sending or reading emails and sending or receiving instant messages (89% each); the information seeking activities of going to websites to look for information websites about movies, TV shows, music or other hobbies in which they were interested (98%) and to look for information to help them with homework and other school related assignments (98% and 95% respectfully); the content creation activity of photos that they uploaded onto a website or SNS and creating a SNS profile (77% and 72% respectfully); and 77% of students create online content for fun or entertainment. More Form 2 teen girls than Form 1 teen girls engaged with online activities.

Websites Frequent by the Teen Girls

Research has shown that teenagers spend enormous amount of time on social networking site (SNS) or using social networking tools (SNT) (Lenhart et al., 2011). Social networking sites were defined as websites that allow people to communicate, stay in contact with, build networks, connect with each other, and build communities online using a virtual world, such as Facebook or Twitter. Social networking tools help people connect with each other such email, video, instant messaging, video and photo sharing sites, posting and commenting on photos, links, videos and statuses, and social networking sites (Mooney, 2009; Engdahl, 2007; Parks, 2011). Therefore, all social
networking sites can be a social networking tool, but not all social networking tools are social networking sites. For example, Facebook was a social networking site that allows people to communicate with each through instant messaging, private messaging, posting videos and photos, and by commenting on people statuses; MSN (hotmail) was social networking tool that can be downloaded onto a computer and used to video chat and instant message people while connected to the Internet without being on the world wide web.

The girls were asked to choose all the SNS and SNT that they have or used. Figure 4.9 represents the percentage of the top six SNS and tools used by the girls.

Figure 4.9: Percentage of Social Networking Sites (SNS) and Social Networking Tools (SNT) Used by the Teen Girls
As seen in Figure 4.9, the most used social networking site used by the girls was YouTube (82%). YouTube is considered a SNS because a person can create a profile based on the videos they like, comment on other people’s videos and even create different playlists, which can then be viewed by other users. YouTube users can follow and be followed by other users, as well as comment on videos.

![Figure 4.10. Percentage of SNS or SNT Used by Teen Girls Based on Form](image)

As seen in Figure 4.10, Form 2 teen girls used the SNS YouTube more than Form 1 teen girls, 87% and 77% respectfully. The only SNS that was equally used by both the Form 1 and Form 2 teen girls (23%) was MSN. The data concluded that the Form 2 teen girls used SNS and SNT more than Form 1 teen girls.
Figure 4.11. Percentage of Girls who Participated in Social Networking Activities

As seen in Figure 4.11, the majority of girls used their SNS or SNT to send private messages to a friend within the same SNS (92%). The majority of girls also used their SNS to send instant messages or text messages to a friend through the SNS, as well as to browse or update their social networking profile (87%). The social networking activity names were abbreviated for space purposes.
As seen in Figure 4.11, all the Form 2 teen girls send private messages to a friend within the social networking site (100%), while only 83% of the Form 1 teen girls used their SNS or tool for the same function. In all categories except sending group messages, the data demonstrated that the Form 2 teen girls participated in the SNS or SNT activities more than the Form 1 teen girls.

Most of the girls visited YouTube (82%). All of the girls used their SNS or tool to send private messages to a friend within the social networking site (100%). More Form 2 teen girls than Form 1 teen girls used SNS and tools.
Unforeseen Results

The survey found some unforeseen results. While the survey included questions that tested the for the entertainment factor, it was unexpected to discover how many of the teen girls used online media specifically in replace of, or in addition to traditional entertainment, such as going to the movies, or watching television. As seen in Figure 4.2, 93% of the girls watch movies and TV shows online, and 87% of the girls play games online. More Form 2 teen girls (100% and 90%) watch movies and TV shows online, as well as play games online respectfully, than Form 1 teen girls (87% and 84% respectfully).

Summary

In summary, the survey data revealed information that helped answered the research questions:

- How often do the teen girls participate in online activities?
- What websites do the teen girls frequent?
- How do the teen girls use online media?

The data findings were divided into the following categories: demographic data, frequency of participation of online activities, online media use, websites frequented by the teen girls, privacy, and unforeseen results.

Sixty two girls participated in the survey. Equal number of Form 1 and Form 2 teen girls filled out the survey, and analysis revealed that age was not a determining factor in this research. The majority of girls go online at least once a day and the teen girls in Form 2 went online more often than Form 1 teen girls.
Online Media Use

The top six online activities the teen girls participated in were: The information seeking activities of: 1) going to websites about movies TV shows, music or other hobbies in which they were interested; 2) to look for information to help with homework and other school related assignments. The communication activities of: 3) sending and reading emails; 4) sending and receiving instant messages. The entertainment activities of: 5) watching movies and TV shows and 6) playing games. The majority of girls created photos that they uploaded onto a website or SNS, and more Form 2s than Form 1s created content that they posted online. The majority of girls, who created content, did so for fun or entertainment.

Websites Frequent by the Teen Girls

Research showed that all teens frequented social networking sites the most. The most used SNS or SNT used by the teen girls was YouTube, and more Form 2s than Form 1s use SNS or tools. The majority of girls who use SNS or tools used them to send private messages to a friend within the SNS.

Unforeseen Results

Unexpectedly, the online activity that majority of girls participated in was watching movies or TV shows online. These results were unexpected, because while the survey tested the entertainment value of online media, previous research did not reveal such an overwhelming percentage of teens who consumed media for the main purpose of watching movies and TV online.

This chapter presented the survey data. The next chapter focuses on the findings from the focus groups and blog.
Chapter 5: Focus Group and Blog Findings

This chapter reports on findings from the focus group and blog postings about the girls’ use of the Internet. Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 24 female students who were also invited to participate at a blogging site set up as a follow-up to the surveys and focus groups. The focus groups afforded the girls the opportunity to discuss their reasons for engaging with online media; the blog allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions. Three focus groups were conducted on March 19th, 21st and 22nd in the year 2012, and the blog began on April 2nd 2012 and ended on June 30th 2012. On the blog, the girls were able to discuss anonymously any issues concerning online media. The Focus Group and Blog attempted to answer the following research questions:

- How do the teen girls use online media for communication, information seeking, and creation of content?
- How do online media serve as equipment for living for the teen girls?

Findings from both the focus groups and the blog supported the idea that girls do use online media for communication, information seeking, and content creation. All the themes supported the notion that the girls used online media as equipment for living.

Focus Groups 1, 2 and 3 are represented by the FG1, FG2 and FG3 respectively. The students from FG1 are labeled from S1 to S6. The students from FG2 are labeled from S7 to S16. The students from FG3 are labeled S17 to S24. The researcher’s is labeled as R. Although the students, who wrote on the blog, were the same students from the focus group, the students who wrote on the blog created their own user names and cannot be identified with the labels from the focus group. When a posting from the blog is used, the exact text is copied from the blog. Since many of the posts are written in broken English, a translation will be included, and explanations of terms, where necessary will be included in the parenthesis.
Within the themes of communication, information seeking, and content creation subthemes were identified:

The communication theme was divided into subthemes of keeping in touch, social networking, conflict management, and introspection.

The information seeking theme was divided into the subthemes of school assignments, health, and special interests.

The content creation theme was divided into the subthemes of self portrait, original creative works, and the consequences of content creation.

In addition, the girls identified using online media for entertainment, such as listening to music, playing video games, and watching television. Finally, the girls discussed what it would mean to live without the Internet.

**Communication**

A growing number of young people worldwide spend their leisure time on the Internet communicating with others online. The most commonly used online communication tools are email, social networking sites, blogs, instant messaging, and chat rooms. (Waechter, Subrahmanyam, Reich, & Espinoza, 2010, p. 152)

The definition of communication in this research project was based on the work of Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) and Stern and Willis (2007). Communication was defined as the sending and/or the receiving of messages, through which the girls expressed feelings, sought information and shared thoughts using various forms of online media, such as email, chatting, and instant messaging. In the focus groups the girls said they used online media to keep in touch, for social networking, for conflict management,
and for introspection. The girls who used online media found that it was a necessary tool to communicate with each other.

**Keeping in Touch**

Many of the girls expressed that their online use was centered on communicating with their classmates and friends using social networking sites, such as, YouTube, Google + and Facebook as demonstrated in Figure 4.9 in Chapter 4. Using SNS and the video chatting tool, Skype, the girls kept in touch with relatives and friends that they did not see often. Online chat took the place of face to face interaction, as the people with whom they are chatting, often lived in a different country. Sometimes, the only time they talked with these relatives and friends were on Facebook.

**FG1 - S1:** *I basically just use Facebook to keep in contact with people I know I don’t see very often face to face.*

**FG2 - S13:** *When you have a lot of friends on Facebook that you don’t really see, you want to go online and talk to them.*

**FG2 - S11:** *Especially when you have relatives you don’t see often except on Facebook.*

One student explained how the social networking site MSN helped her stay in contact with people from an extra-curricular activity that occurred outside of school. The extra-curricular activity was playing the steel pan, referred by the student as just pan.

**FG2 – S12:** *The only people I use MSN to talk to is the people I am in pan with right now, because it hasn’t started back yet and I am not seeing them, so I use MSN to talk to them.*
This extra-curricular activity was seasonal, and the season had not started yet. Her friends from her extra-curricular activity lived in the same country, but because the activity took place outside of school hours and the school compound, she only saw her friends during the scheduled activity times. **FG2-S12** only used MSN to speak with her friends from this extra-curricular activity.

**Social Networking**

Some students reported that social networking sites’ communication devices facilitated their social life online, because their parents did not permit them to partake in certain activities offline. When asked to clarify how they use the Internet for a social life, the girls explained that many times their parents would not give them permission to go out with their friends, so they will go online and chat with people online via Facebook chat, MSN or Skype, all of which allowed the girls to not only instant message, but also to video chat with each other. Their online conversations provided the girls with entertainment with their friends from the safety of their homes.

**FG3 - S19:** *Well to entertain yourself because you can’t go out and find something to do so go online.*

**FG3 - S23:** *Talking to people online*

**FG3 - S19:** *But not strangers, that just weird.*

**Talking with strangers.** **FG3-S19** in the conversation above mentioned how talking to strangers online was weird. The majority of students throughout the focus groups agreed with this, however, one student in focus group 2 admitted to having conversations with strangers online. The members of focus group 2 questioned her about it and even offered her advice on how to deal with strangers who communicated with her
online, making the student contemplate about the consequences of conversing with strangers.

**FG2 - S13:** I spend a lot of time on Facebook and sometimes random people add me on Facebook and was like Hi and I am like Hi, and I said do I know you and the person is like no and I am like cool. The person start to ask me what school I go to and how old are you. I have the profile picture and I will look at the person’s profile picture and if it is a normal person like a young girl or a teenage guy or something, but when the person start to ask me questions and I am answering the questions and I am thinking is this really a rapist or a really the person, because you know sometimes people make profiles to get at children.

**FG2 - S15:** Like pedophiles

**FG2 - S13:** So you know I am there thinking like, is this real or and I am playing it out in my mind and why he asking so many questions about me and I am responding.

**FG2 - S12, S14, S9, S11:** Why are you answering?

**FG2 - S13:** Because you know...

**FG2 - S15:** If they ask you questions tell them “I don’t know you, I don’t talk to strangers, bye bye.”

**FG2 - S13:** And sometimes you hear someone say that you know this person from Facebook, next day you go online and the person add you and then person is like Oh My God my friend was talking about you and you are thinking that maybe this person isn’t that nice.
It is interesting to note that none of the students in the group told FG2-S13 to not answer stranger’s questions online. The advice was to tell the stranger that she did not know the person and then stop talking to them. As if it will be rude to not respond in the first place.

**Silence is golden… or not.** The students admitted that communicating online did have its disadvantages. Many of the students expressed anger when they emailed or instant messaged someone and the person didn’t respond in a timely manner, especially on SNS where the girls could observe if their communication partner was currently online. The girls often retaliated by ignoring their communication partner, when the person finally responded. Other girls felt guilty when they didn’t respond to someone immediately. The silence during online messaging was often construed as a sign of anger, or disrespect by the girls.

Silence, however, was sometimes viewed as a necessary tactic in online messaging. The girls felt that it was important to either ignore someone or appear invisible to other online users. Even though online communication allowed them to be in constant contact with friends and family, sometimes they girls felt that there could be too much contact, and often felt crowded by the constant interaction with others. One student explained the need for silence online as requiring her own space.

**FG1 - S1:** *Because you need your own space and you need time for yourself to just do what you have to do instead people always being there, stuck up under you, always talking to you.*

The majority of students recognized the need to respond to people in a timely manner, as well as the need to not respond at all. While they may feel guilty to ignoring someone, or
feel hurt for being ignored, they understood that sometimes silence was needed, even online. Other students dealt with conflict through online chat.

**Conflict Management**

Antagonistic feelings and opposing ideas were frequent characteristics among the teen girls. Often the girls disagreed with their friends, family and classmates. Some of the girls believed that when dealing with confrontational situations, it was easier to converse with the person via chat or instant message, rather than face to face. The girls thought that talking online afforded them the opportunity to reply in a calmer manner.

**FG1 - S4:** *You can talk calmer online than face to face.*

**FG3 - S24:** *Well you know. To express your view. Well if I chatting with someone and they get me vex, I will say something in my status about it. How they make me feel.*

**FG1 - S1:** *But if you seeing the person everyday it kind of hard to do it online because you will still have to deal with the person when you see them.*

While one student recognized the advantages of handling conflicts online, another acknowledged that if the conflict was with someone she saw on a regular basis, handling the conflict online can be awkward. Many other students commented about conflicts online, however, this information will be presented under the content creation theme, as they choose their methods involve creating online content such as social networking statuses.

**Introspection**

The girls in focus group 1 acknowledged that technology, especially online media, replaced traditional communicating tools, even with recording intrapersonal
communication. The majority of girls preferred to write about their feelings online as a status or chatting with a friend than writing in a diary.

**FG1-S1:** *People really do communicate and let out their feelings online. People don’t really write in diaries anymore.*

**FG1-S6:** *I write in a diary. My diary is a word document on my laptop, and I protect it with a password on my laptop.*

The student who wrote in her diary was not allowed to use social networking sites or go online on a regular basis. However, the students that went online used social networking sites to express their feelings and thoughts. This information will be presented under the theme of content creation, as they do so by creating content and posting it online.

Under the communication theme the girls employed online media to keep in touch, to engage in social networking, for conflict management, and for introspection. Other communication that occurs online will be discussed under the information seeking theme, which is the next section of this chapter.

**Information Seeking**

“Information seeking is one of the most popular online activities for young people and can provide an additional information channel, which may enhance learning” (Eynon & Malmberg, 2012, p. 514).

Information seeking was defined as knowledge gained through the exploration of the Internet. The students often used online media to chat with friends to obtain specific information concerning various topics for school. Since the girls do not have access to the Internet in school, all their information seeking activities took place outside of the school compound, with the majority of activities taking place in their homes. The majority of
girls used the Internet at one time or another to find information online about various topics, relating to school assignments, health, and special interests.

**School Assignments**

The general consensus among the girls as to main reason for seeking information online was to help with school assignments and their homework. As mentioned earlier, the themes of communication, information seeking and content creation are not mutually exclusive and often overlap. To demonstrate this, one student explained how she used online media not only to look up information about her homework, but to also share the information to her classmates about the assignments. Through the act of sharing information, she communicates with her classmate via a chat tool on a SNS, where they converse about the assignment.

**FG1 - S3:** Well when we can’t figure out the homework we go online and chat with each other about how to do the homework or when we forget what the homework is.

**FG3 - S23:** In our group on Facebook, if we didn’t get any homework, we can just ask somebody for the homework.

**FG3 - S19:** Or if we getting trouble with homework we can just ask somebody what is the answer for number one.

**FG3 - S17:** Sometimes it have links in the group and you can use it to look up information.

**FG1- S6:** Um for art like she did not come to school for the week and the teacher gave us homework so I posted the picture of how it looks so she will have an idea what she was supposed to do for homework. So she knew how to start it.
In focus group 3, the girls created a closed group on a social networking site, ensuring only the students from that class can access the group. In that online group, the students discussed school projects and activities and often helped each other concerning homework assignments. On the closed group page, homework for the class, projects, and helpful links were posted, in case a fellow classmate was absent or did not understand or needed assistance completing the assignments. This was a clear example demonstrating how the information seeking and communication themes overlapped. The students contacted each other online via social networking sites to obtain information for school related assignments.

**FG3 - S23:** *So if you can’t go to somebody’s house because you don’t have transportation, on the social networking sites you can chat, and that is a way for you to get in contact with each other.*

**FG3-S23** made the point that online media, such as social networking sites, were important for her because it allowed her to get information about school assignments by communicating with her fellow group-project members. Many times the students were given group assignments for homework and the social networking sites permitted them to complete the assignment without the hassle of trying physically meet in one place outside school.

One of the girls mentioned that she often googled a topic and chose the first link on the Google results page. There was a consensus among her group members that this often done by the other girls, and using aggregator sites such as Google and Yahoo, to assist with their schoolwork was a common practice among the girls. However, some of the girls admitted that they had to use other sources, such as encyclopedias and library
books to get information, because they did not always have access to the Internet, or were not allowed to be online without supervision. The students found this method of research to be tedious and outdated.

**FG1 - S5:** Whenever I have to go by my grandmother there is no Internet there and I have homework to do she tells me to go look it up in the encyclopedia. That is what she used to do and it is so much harder it to do that.

On the blog, I asked the students about the accuracy of the information they get online. One of the girls replied and explained how many times she does not question the information she obtains.

**expert^_^:** Most times you don't really think about if it accurate or not you just use it but there are those few times when you really question it.

Some of the students explained how some teachers instructed them to use the Internet to look up information for school assignments. The students recited a few examples of this occurring. The teacher’s names are replaced by the word teacher to ensure confidentiality.

**FG2 - S13:** When teacher says, I am giving you homework, go on the Internet and look up the Congo genocide and then the next day she comes to class and says “did anyone go on the Internet and print it out and bring it for me?”

**FG2 - S8:** Or when teacher says makes us print a picture and bring it to school.

Some of the students were upset when the teachers told the students to go online and research topics for school. Their tones were ones of annoyance and disgust.
Health

While homework and school related assignments were the main reasons they looked up information online, one of the other topics they searched for online was health related information. Some of the students commented that looking up the information online was often easier than asking others, whether it were their peers, family or physician, because, they often felt that the people they asked judged them or gave them incomplete or inaccurate information. The following is an excerpt from focus group 3 on the reason why the girls preferred to research health related topics online.

**FG3 - S23:** Well I have asthma, so sometimes I go and check out what it is to find out or what I can do to help myself with it. Plus I have a lot of family members with it so if I am in a situation where my brother or something having an asthma attack and I don’t know what to do, so I check it out in advance to see what can be done.

**FG3 - S24:** Because when you ask somebody, you not sure you getting the accurate information, but then again on the Internet there are some websites that not good.

**FG3 - S18:** And it depends on what you are asking the person. They can judge you about it.

The fear of being judged for asking about certain health topics seemed to be the main reason why they preferred to do their own research online. While accuracy of the information was also a concern, when discussing the topic, the girls’ tones were one of antipathy, when they spoke about people judging them for asking about health topics.
Special Interests

There were many different interests that the girls researched online. Music, celebrities, and short stories were the three main interests on which the girls searched for information.

**Music.** Music was widely discussed among the three focus groups. The girls looked up songs they liked and also the lyrics for those songs. The SNS, YouTube, was the main site used to find music and lyrics. The girls often heard a song they liked and would go on YouTube to find it. The reason they preferred to use YouTube was because almost every song can be found on YouTube by just typing in what little words of the song they knew.

**Celebrities.** Some of the girls in the focus group admitted to using the Internet to research various celebrities. The girls called the celebrities stars or people they liked. While hardly any of the celebrities were mentioned by name, the few that were mentioned were popular North American music artistes. Most of the girls were very careful not to mention the name of celebrities they liked during the focus group.

**Short stories.** A couple of students explained how they used the Internet to read short stories written by strangers. The girls enjoyed finding websites with original short stories written by unknown and unpopular authors. The girls find the stories online refreshing, and exclaimed that some of the stories were better than many traditionally published books.

**FG3 – S18:** *People on it write stories and some of them are actually better than some books that are published.*
The girls who read stories online admitted to posting stories that they create on the same websites where they read online stories. This information is presented under the content creation section of this chapter. The girls expressed that when they researched information online they explored websites that helped them with school assignments, health, and special interests such as music, celebrities, short stories.

**Content Creation**

As access to networked digital communities increases, a growing number of teens participate in digital communities by creating and sharing a variety of content. The affordances of social media—ease of use, ubiquitous access, and communal nature—have made creating and sharing content an appealing process for teens.

(Harlan, Bruce & Lupton, 2012, p. 569)

For this project, content creation was defined as any expression of verbal or non-verbal texts that are created and/or posted online. The content can be statuses, photos, videos, poems, comments or sharing of quotes or sayings as statuses. The girls in this study expressed that the creation and sharing of content was an integral part of their online behavior, for it allowed them the freedom of expression that was often craved by teenage girls. The manifestations of their content were exhibited through online statuses that acted as self portraits via expressing feelings, and posting quotes, music as their statuses, and original artwork, such as short stories and videos. The girls also discussed the consequences of creating and sharing content online.
Self Portrait

**Expressing feelings.** The creation of content was displayed in various forms from the creation of statuses on SNS, to the making and uploading of videos online. The frequency of updating of statuses on SNS often depended on how the girls were feeling.

FG1 – S4: *I update it whenever something happens to me... Because you just need to get it all out. And I want people to comment on it.*

FG2 – S13: *Sometimes it is to get out your feelings and I cannot say it, I just write it as a status and I just post it. Because I can't say it in front of people face, so like when I want to tell somebody something I will write and they will see it.*

FG3 – S24: *Well you know. To express your view. Well if I chatting with someone and they get me vex, I will say something in my status about it. How they make me feel.*

Articulating their emotions to their friends was intrinsic to their online statuses, as well as their friends commenting on the status.

**Quotes.** Some of the statuses the girls created were reposts of links to quotes and sayings that they found online or on someone else’s status. The posting of motivational quotes and sayings were also an expression of their feelings, as well as a means to communicate with their friends positive attitudes and also to make themselves feel good.

FG1 - S5: *I only change my status when I get a good quote or something that I want to share with my friends... Well if I see it and it sounds interesting maybe I just want to share it with my friends.*

FG1 - S4: *For motivation.*
The girls seemed to have a need to make their friends on their SNS happy and let other know what sort of things makes them happy. Many of the quotes they posted online were gestures to make their friends feel motivated and happy as explained by FG3-S21 when she was asked why so felt the need to post the quotes as her status.

**FG3 - S21:** *Because it could put a smile on somebody’s face.*

Other times, the girls posted quotes as a way to communicate how they are feeling about other people, without directly mentioning the person’s name or situation. Once again, it was a way of expressing their feelings in an indirect manner. This is an example of the overlap between content creation and communication themes.

**FG3 - S17:** *Sometimes you direct it at someone but you don’t want them to know that you talking specifically to them.*

**FG3 - S19:** *But everyone knows that the quote is directed at that person. It is kind of obvious.*

**FG3 - S18:** *You don’t want them to know, but you want them to know.*

**FG3 - S19:** *You don’t want to make it direct. You don’t want them to say what is it you saying about me, then you can say that you not saying anything about them, it is just put out there.*

The quotes the girls spoke about that they specifically post for someone without mentioning the person’s name can be both motivational and confrontational. While, many times the quotes were motivational, sometimes the girls will use quotes and their statuses to deal with conflict.
Music and music videos. Many times music and music videos were created or shared by the girls on YouTube or Facebook. The girls found music, lyrics, music videos and songs online, mostly on YouTube and shared it with their friends as a status on Facebook. There were several reasons for posting music to their profiles on SNS. Listening to music and watching music videos were cathartic actions by the girls, and they often wanted to share what they were listening to with their online community, as a way of expressing their emotions. In focus group 1, the girls were discussing the various ways they deal with frustration or anger. One of the girls reported that when angry, music helped her manage her anger.

FG1 - S5: Some songs help with that situation.

FG1 - S1: I put it all up on my wall. I find it on YouTube and I put it up on my wall.

FG1 - S1: When people comment and they actually give their opinion. If the song helps them as well and they tell you at least you know that you have something in common with that person.

The knowledge that the girls were able to help someone and that others can empathize with them was one of the main reasons the girls posted music related statuses to their SNS’ walls. Other girls post songs to their SNS to advertise the type of music and artistes that they enjoy.

FG1 - S1: ... If I really like an artiste or I really like a song I would put it up and I will be like I really like this artist, This song real bad.
FG3 - S21: *Because if you like it and you really want your friends to see it too. Because they like the same music and you and they might not know the song so you introduce them to something new.*

FG2 - S9: *So if you find this song and it is not popular artiste, or he is not like a popular artiste but you want all your friends to start listening to him because he is amazing, but they really won’t know about him because he is not on the radio all the time, but by me posting the link they will find out about him.*

The girls posted music on their SNS because they want their friends to know what music they enjoyed and hoped that their friends will also like the music. They felt the need to introduce their friends to new artistes that were not yet popular. The girls also believed that it was important for their friends to know how the girls were feeling almost all the time, and posting music and music videos online conveyed the message.

FG1 - S5: *I think it is important for them to know, like if it is something that they missed, or it is sometimes important for them to know that this is a part of you.*

When the girls were asked about the reason they preferred to share things with their friends rather their parents, the girls responded that often they thought that their parents did not understand many of the feelings they were experiencing.

FG1 - S5: *… your parents are not in your generation so they don’t understand half of the things you want to share with your friends. So I think it would not be interesting to them and they would want to know why it is so interesting to you.*

FG1 - S1: *…They (friends) will understand why you posting it and what you mean without any big explanation.*
The girls’ answers demonstrated that the need to be understood by their peers was stronger than the need to be understood by their parents. They believe that the generation gap between them and their parents caused a breakdown in understanding between them, and speaking with their parents will require too much energy and explanation. Communicating with their friends, however, only requires the posting of creative content on SNS profiles without a deep explanation of content.

**Original Creative Works**

Several of the girls admitted that they created original artworks, such as short stories, photos and videos and posted them online.

**Short stories.** A couple of girls wrote online stories and posted onto a website that was created for the publishing and reading of short stories. Membership to the website was free, and once a member, access was granted to upload and download stories from the website. One of the girls started writing stories in primary school and someone told her that her stories should not be hidden in a notebook. She transferred her stories to her laptop and started posting them online. The girl insisted that the only reason she posted the stories online was because she was bored one day and was curious about what other people thought of her stories.

**FG3 - S19:** *I posted it because I was home alone and I was bored one day, so I was like let’s do it and see what happens.*

Even though the **FG3-S19** insisted that she started to post her stories out of boredom and curiosity, she was very passionate about her writing whenever she spoke of it and she while she claimed to not feel obligated to post her stories, she continued to post them whenever she finished a chapter. She welcomed the criticism from others writers and
readers, and used it to improve her writing skills. The other girl, who wrote and posted stories, did not share her reasons for posting stories. The only contribution she made to the conversation was when she received negative comments about her work, she would get angry. She admitted that did not take negative criticism well.

**Photos.** There is an inherit need amongst the girls to please and get approval from their friends and even approval from groups and celebrities in which they were interested. The girls took photos of themselves, friends and/or relatives or of their artwork and posted them online for their friends, family and celebrities to see.

**Friends.** Some girls posted photos to please their friends. One girl, who considered herself a tomboy, rarely wore dresses. Her friends often pestered her to wear dresses, so they could see her in a dress. When she finally wore a dress, she posted the photo online for her friends to see.

*FG2 - S12:* *I put up a picture because they said they never saw me in a dress, so when I went out I had on a dress, my mother took out these pictures so I put it on MSN, so they will finally see me in a dress.*

When asked why she felt the need to post a picture of herself in a dress, she responded that they were her friends and they wanted to see her in a dress, so she posted the photo. Her friends responded that she would never let them see her in a dress in real life, so the picture was the next best thing. They also responded on the photo how much they liked how she looked. **FG2-S12** had an overwhelming need to satisfy her friends. Another girl created a collage with photos of all her friends and posted it to her Facebook page. She said that the collage of photos delighted her friends, which in turn made her happy.
Celebrities. One of the girls was obsessed with a group called Mindless Behavior. The girl mentioned the group several times in the focus group discussion and explained the goal of the group.

FG2 - S14: Definition, Mindless Behavior is doing a movement called “Be Mindless” which is a lifestyle, if you are smart and confident and you know you are stylish, then you are mindless and once you know, no one can stop you from being who you are, you are mindless.

FG2-S14’s obsession with the group and their goal caused her to create original artwork that she intended to post onto her Mindless Behavior account.

FG2 - S14: Miss I intend to because I just scribble Mindless Behavior all over my book and I intend to take a picture of it and post it up on the Internet hoping that Mindless Behavior will see and say “Oh that is so creative I love your picture... I love your artistic abilities... I love your artistic abilities.”

FG2-S14 wants recognition for her artistic work and abilities from the celebrities she liked. Posting the picture and getting the approval was important for her and her self-esteem.

Videos. One of the girls explained that she once created a video and posted it online because she felt that no one was listening or cared about what she had to say.

FG1 - S1: I tried to talk to my dad and he did not listen. I tried to talk to my stepmom and she did not listen. My stepmom and dad are divorced now. I tried talking to my niece and she did not listen. I tried talking to my aunt and she did not listen either. I just got really upset so I took like two weeks of space in between and then I made the video. A lot of people commented on FB and said
stuff like “I know what you mean. I feel the same way” Some people disagreed with me. That was ok with me. I did not mind.

The girl enjoyed the comments that were posted about her video because she felt that her opinions were finally heard. It did not matter if people agreed with her or not, all that mattered was that someone had finally listened to what she said. These practices of agency were various forms of self expression that gave each person a voice, when they often felt like they were being ignored.

Other girls, who created videos, did so for pure entertainment value, and to express and share their creativity with their online community.

FG3 - S21: Like there was a time when current went in the school and it was real raining and it was dark. So, we made a horror movie, it was really funny.

FG3 - S19: It was the worse horror movie ever.

FG3 - S20: Yes it was real fun.

FG3 - S17: The atmosphere and surrounding were perfect for it.

FG3 - S19: We have a lot of creative people in our class who think out of the box a lot.

FG3 - S21: I was like let’s make a horror movie and everyone was like yea!

FG3 - S19: So people just started shouting ideas.

Some girls videotaped a practice dance performance for the school’s talent show and posted it to YouTube. One group of girls admitted to creating a horror film and posting it online for everyone in their class to see. In addition, they girls took secret videos of their classmates dancing in the classroom. To ensure the safety of everyone involved, the girls
posted it to a closed group page on Facebook, and only posted videos with people’s permission.

**Consequences of Content Creation**

Some of the girls were aware of how creating content and posting it online can have serious consequences. One group of girls discussed how they got into trouble for their statuses. An argument occurred in school and the girls involved created statuses on Facebook, explaining their point of view and why they thought the other girl was wrong. They mentioned the other girl by name in their statuses online and reported how one girl got suspended for using inappropriate language in her status directed toward the girl. This is an example of how the girls created content to communicate their feelings about someone else, and to deal with a conflict online.

**FG2 - S12:** *When some people in the class don’t see your opinion and your opinion is right and what they did was wrong and they don’t want to listen to you, so you go online and make them know they were wrong by saying whatever.*

**FG2 - S13:** *In a status or something.*

**FG2 - S12:** *To get back at other people.*

**FG2 - S13:** *In a negative way.*

**FG2 - S14:** *Once it has no curse words and it doesn’t appear very very negative. You good.*

**FG2 - S8:** *A girl got suspended for that in our class.*

**FG2 - S13:** *And she used a lot of cursing and stuff. I wrote a status about her.*
FG2 - S8: *I wrote a status about her too and we all got buff and our dean has a folder with all of our statuses, and we have peer counseling sessions. It is real funny I swear.*

Apparently, most of the girls in focus group 2 were involved in this incident. While some people may view it as cyber-bullying, the girls saw it as getting a chance to voice their opinions, because while the argument was happening in school, they believed that they were not given the chance to explain their side of the issue, and the girl who started the argument, her opinions were the only one being heard. They felt that they were being bullied in person, so they retaliated online, where they knew their voices would be heard.

It should be noted that when *FG2-S8* said it “It was real funny I swear” she meant the peer counseling sessions that they were forced to attend. When asked if they would partake in that online behavior again, they all responded yes, and that they would just not use the girl’s name or use inappropriate language. They all still felt it was the only choice they had to voice their opinion.² Some of the girls admitted that when faced with difficult or confrontational situations, they often listened to music and watched music videos on the Internet, to help them get through the situation.

The girls created content online by producing online statuses as self portraits that included the posting of feelings, quotes, music and music videos, and original artwork such as, short stories, photos, and videos. The girls also discussed the consequences of creating and posting content online.

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² The details about the argument are not in the transcription but are in the field notes. This was a long focus group and the video recorder ended before the focus group discussion, so, the last 5 minutes of the conversation was recorded in the field notes.
How Girls believed Adults Perceived their Use of Online Media

“How new technologies elicit fears of the unknown, particularly because they have enabled children’s consumption of popular culture to move beyond adult control” (Sternheimer, 2003, p.38).

In this section, the adult perceptions of online media were viewed from girls’ ideas on how they thought adults viewed their online media use. The girls were asked during the focus groups and on the blog how they thought adults view their online use. Many of the girls replied that adults expressed concern about their online activities. One student explained that her parents don’t trust her online, and her parents thought that she was not old enough to have a social networking profile. When asked if she thought this was reasonable of her parents, she replied:

**FG1 – S2:** Well I feel this is kind of fair because I was kind of involved in miserable stuff when I was younger. By the time I hit 13 I should be able to go on Facebook.

Other girls admitted that they were not allowed on social networking sites, but disobeyed their parents’ wishes. While many students reported that their parents wanted to know everything that they did online, the same student who disobeyed her parents reported that her parents trusted her and never questioned her about her online activities. One student from the blog posted how her parents constantly tell her what she can and cannot do online, and if she was caught disobeying them, she will be punished.

A couple of the girls reported on the blog that their parents were more concerned about their safety.
sweetstar-peacelover: Wel u dont really hear comments u jus mostly hear warnings" remember what you put online is there forever,dont do this dont do dat watch who u tlk to, dont tel anyone where you live blah blah blah" sometimes it gets very annoying its sometimes like dey dont trust u bt we no they jus paranoid at times

Translation: Well you don’t really hear comments. You just mostly hear warnings, such as: remember what you put online is there forever, don’t do this and don’t do that, watch who you are talking to, don’t tell anyone where you live, blah blah blah. Sometimes it gets very annoying. It is sometimes feel like they don’t trust you, but we know they are just paranoid at times.

Other students on the blog agreed with sweetstar-peacelover and commented how her parents told her to use a fake name, but she doesn’t. When asked why they thought parents were paranoid about the girls being online, sweetstar-peacelover responded:

sweetstar-peacelover: Well mostly iz cuz ah LIFETIME!!!!!!! Dey watch to much of it. Dey feel cuz some ppl on d tv dos go in these chatrooms dat we mite b prone to goin dey too bt all dey need to understand iz dat everythin ur do hav some risks in it an ur jus need to no wats rite an wats rong an if choldren keep hearin d same thin ova an ova dey go jus stop listenin after ah while nt sayin datbdey sud nt warn their children from time to time bout d dangers, risks, an mad ppl dat on d social networkin sites

Translation: Well mostly because of Lifetime (the cable channel). They watch too much of it. The feel because some people on TV go into these chatrooms, that we might be prone to go in there also. But, they need to understand that everything
you do have risks, and you just need to know what is right and what is wrong. And if children keep hearing the same thing over and over, they will stop listening after a while. I am not saying that they should not warn their children from time to time about the dangers, risks and mad people on the social networking sites.

Sweetstar-peacelover believed that due to the influence of television programs on the Lifetime channel that her parents were constantly worried about her safety online. A few girls in focus group 1 believed that their parents’ generation doesn’t understand their reasons for using online media. When asked why they were willing to tell me, they replied it was because I took the time to ask.

FG1 - S4: You are actually asking what we think.

FG1 - S1: Yeah parents don’t ask you anything. You actually have to tell them stuff if they willing the listen.

FG1 - S2: Yes, I think you should tell parents things. You should and shouldn’t. Anything that concerns them you should tell them but anything that don’t concern them you should not tell them.

Some of the girls thought that their parents were not willing to speak with them about their online use. Other girls felt that parents did not need to know all the online activities in which the girls engaged. One girl firmly believed that the girls preferred to tell their friends rather than their parents about their online activities, was because unlike their parents, their friends cannot ban them from the Internet. The girls perceived that their parents as paranoid and over protective, while one student thought that her parents’ concern and ban on social networking sites were warranted based on the girl’s past
behavior. There were mixed views on whether or not they should tell their parents about their online media activities.

**Online Media as a Coping Mechanism**

“The most frequent use of the Web was for entertainment – playing and browsing various sites” (Ferguson, & Perse, 2000, p. 169).

Listening to music, playing games, and watching television were some of the online activities that the girls partook in for entertainment purposes. While the girls are not creating content with these activities, they are using these forms of online entertainment media as a way to cope with situations in their lives.

**Listening to Music**

Some girls reported that they listened to music online to help them deal with frustrations, disappointments and other emotions that they were experiencing. When asked about how they handle situations where they felt they had no control, or upset, some of the girls responded that listening to music often helped with deal with the situation.

**FG3 - S19:** *Listening to music helps us deal with situations in life. Certain lyrics, like if you listening to a song and you are in a really sad mood and you hear a line.*

**FG3 - S21:** *You can relate to it.*

**FG3 - S19:** *Right you can relate to it, and like if you going through a heartbreak, not necessarily a heartbreak but you going through some kind of situation. There are certain bands or artists and you know you have a connection because they have a certain genre, and they have a certain message in all their songs.*
FG2 - S13: And when you go on YouTube you can listen to the specific song that you want to listen to and you don’t have to wait on the radio. You see when you go on the computer you can listen to the music that you want to listen to and no one can tell you what to listen to. If you want to listen to Drake, the censored or uncensored version, you can listen to Drake the uncensored version, you don’t like that version then fine you can play the censored version.

FG2 - S14: Sometimes when I am feeling sad I want to dance. When you in your house in your bedroom where nobody could see yah and you want to do your little dance and thing, that is the best time to listen to music.

A couple of student from the blog wrote on the reasons why they listen to music online. Their reasons were similar to ones expressed during the focus group discussions.

expert^_^: Well you can listen to it online if you dont have a mp3, ipod or sometimes when you are looking to download it the song isnt always available so you can just search it up on youtube save it to your playlists and listen to it whenever you like. Also if you want lyrics to a song you can do that as well. yes there are websites that have the lyrics typed out but it is better (well to me at least) to watch the lyric videos on youtube so you can sing along kinda like a karaoke.

sweetstar-peacelover: Well We does listen to music online mostly because when everyone else in the house want to listen to the radio your parents mostly would take d remote because they dont wanna hear you fight so then they would put the radio on what they wanna listen to. And sometimes when you on the laptop it kinda boring jus to do your work so you have to put on some music an it easier to
go on youtube rather than finding d remote for the radio that might not even be playin what you want to listen to

Playing Video Games

Video games, like music were also used for more than entertainment value. Some of the students spoke about playing video games online as a means of escaping the stress that accompanied school.

FG1 - S6: Sometimes you just need to get away from all the stress of homework and school and you can go into this virtual world and have fun.

FG1 - S2: For the shooting games online. I like that basically because that is just part of me. I like to play it as a means of escaping. I also like to do it because I like to play strategy games. I like to escape from the pressures of school and stuff.

Video games for these girls were not just for entertainment. While many of them enjoyed creating virtual worlds in games such as Second Life and SIMS, the majority of the girls expressed their interests in playing video games were therapeutic in nature, as video games enabled then an outlet to relieve stress.

Watching Television

All the girls watched television shows online. Everyone did not have cable television and not all the television networks that were popular among the girls were received through the cable companies in Trinidad and Tobago, so the girls found the episodes of the shows that were not available on television and viewed them online.

FG2 - S10: Yes because I watch that online because I don’t have cable.
Television shows, whose target audience was teenagers, were the main shows that were viewed by the girls. Shows such as ABC Family’s *Pretty Little Liars* and *Switched at Birth* were examples given by the girls of shows that they watched online.

**FG2 - R:** *When you hear online media what do you think of?*

**FG2 - S10:** *Pretty little Liars.*

**FG2 - R:** *When you hear online media you think of Pretty Little Liars?*

Other reasons the girls watched television online were because the shows were scheduled at inconvenient times, and because local television would repeatedly broadcast old episodes of their favorite shows.

**FG3 - S18:** *I don’t watch TV anymore. I unplugged the TV from my room and stick my laptop charger in because I am watching something online.*

**FG3 - S24:** *Because if you like a specific show you don’t have control over what time that specific shows show so you can just go on the internet and look up the episode that you missed.*

When the topic of watching television online was discussed, the girls all started talking at once about all the different shows they viewed online. This was not in the transcription because it was difficult to follow any one stream of conversation. In the field notes, however, it is noted that many of the girls were talking about certain episodes of shows and discussing it amongst themselves. While the girls may watch television online for varying reasons, one thing that was clear, was that they all seemed to watch the same shows and often had discussions about the shows with each other during school.
This section explained the reasons the girls employed online media for entertainment purposes by listening to music, playing video games and watching television online.

**Living Without the Internet**

“To this generation, the Internet is like the fridge. They don’t belabor the nuts and bolts of its operation; it’s just part of life” (Tapscott, 2009, p. 3).

In this section, the girls vividly described their feelings and emotions about being disconnected from online media for an extended period of time. The girls also explained how without the Internet, they were unable to communicate with their friends, due to the high cost of telecommunications in Trinidad and Tobago.

The girls were asked both in the focus groups and on the blog how they would feel if they could not access online media. Some of the girls were distressed by the idea of not being able to go online.

**FG1 - S1:** *I would be really upset because I know all my friends are looking forward to seeing me and they can’t I would feel really bad.*

**FG1 - S2:** *I would feel like a piece of me left me.*

**FG1 - S1:** *As if someone cut out my heart.*

**FG1 - S4:** *I would feel like a prisoner or like the people back in the 20s where you could not do anything.*

**FG1 - S5:** *I would feel sad without it because you can’t communicate with your friends there because I would have to find another way to talk to them other than online.*
**FG1 - S6:** I would feel kind of upset at times but it is just um, it is not reality it is just a virtual kind of world. It would bother me for a while but I will kind of get over it.

A question was posted on the blog about not being able to use the Internet for a month. The girls that responded thought that the idea was of not having Internet was inconceivable.

**sweetstar-peacelover:** AH MONTH WITHOUT EMAIL YOUTUBE GOOGLE HOTMAIL MSN FACEBOOK OMG I WOULD DIE!!! i would miss it all dawg I dos b able to tlk all kinda things on msn wen i home cuz in school ya always hav to study, do work and all dem stuff bt serious tlk i would die if i spend 1 day without Internet i on d Internet for at least an hour ah day even wen ah get ban from it an at test time

**Translation:** One month without email, YouTube, Hotmail, MSN, Facebook! Oh my god I would die! I would miss it all, dog (slang term used to stress the seriousness in her tone). I am able to talk all kind of things on MSN when I am at home because in school, you always have to study, do work and all that stuff. But serious talk, I would die if I spend one day without the Internet. I am on the Internet for at least an hour a day, even when I got banned from it, and even during test time.

**Dark ninja:** with out Internet, i would be lost! i would not be able to schoolwork properly, no more free downloads of music, movies and games, a huge gap in my long distance relationships. but wat i would miss d most is YouTube!
While the majority of the students expressed some form of displeasure, one student thought that she would be fine living without the Internet. She admitted that she would miss it, but she believed that she would adjust without it. The other girls who commented on this issue all thought that their life would be too difficult without the use of online media and never thought of what would happen if they didn’t have it. The majority of girls always had access to the Internet at home, so living without it was a foreign concept to them.

**Cost of communication.** FG1-S5 commented that without the Internet she would have to find another way to communicate with her friends. While the telephone would be the ideal alternative medium to communicate with friends, the girls do not consider this a viable option because telecommunication services in Trinidad and Tobago were expensive. Several students commented that the main reason they used social networking sites to communicate was because their parents were angry with the high cost of the landline phone bills or they had no money on their prepaid cell phones. Across the focus groups, the girls mentioned the high cost of using landlines and cell phones as a motivation for using online chat and instant messaging.

**FG1 - S3:** *If I could not talk to my friends online I would feel really bad because I would raise up my mother’s phone bill because I would be calling people all the time on her phone.*

**FG3 – S19:** *So say you have no school a day and your parents working and you can’t go out with your friends and you happen to have one friend stay home, you’ll chat online. That is because you don’t want to run up your phone bill.*
One student posted on the blog the reason why she used instant messaging on social networking sites.

**Rockstar-Peace\&LoveRockz:** *I use instant message cuz i wud tex but dat cost mone an my parents wud nt buy post paid for me an i dont lik callin cuz my parents wud b dere an if im tlkin bout guys dat r nice of course dey cant hear me so rather im it easier alot less questions an plus i cud think for a while b4 i respond oda dan calin if theres silence dey go b lik y u nt tlkin so i Just use msn*

**Translation:** *I use instant messaging because I would text, but that cost money and my parents would not buy a post paid (cell phone) for me and I don’t like calling because my parents would be there and I’m talking about guys that are nice, of course they can’t hear me (her parents). So, instant messaging is easier and a lot less questions are asked (by her parents), and plus I could think for a while before I respond, other than calling because if there is silence, they will be asking why I am not talking, so I just use MSN.*

**Rockstar-Peace\&LoveRockz** also brought up the issue that using online media such as MSN and other social networking sites are not just more cost efficient than cell phones, but the social networking sites also provide them with privacy.

This section described the reasons why the girls used online media, especially SNS, as an economical alternative to landline and cell phones. This section also emphasized the girls’ attitudes toward living without the use of online media.

This chapter presented the information from the focus group and blogs. Most of the information came from the focus groups, for only a few of the students wrote on the blog. The themes discussed in the focus group and blog were communication,
information seeking, content creation, how the girls believed adults perceived their online use, online media as a coping mechanism, and living without the Internet. The communication theme was divided into subthemes of keeping in touch, social networking, conflict management, and introspection. The information seeking theme was divided into the subthemes of school assignments, health, and special interests. The content creation theme was divided into the subthemes of self portrait, original creative works, and the consequences of content creation. Finally, the online media as a coping mechanism theme exemplified how listening to music, playing video games and watching television online were more than entertainment media, but also media that helped the girls deal with situations that occurred in their lives. All the themes supported the notion that the girls used online media as equipment for living.
Chapter 6: Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter presents an analysis of the findings from the survey, focus group and blog. The survey data established media use and participation. The focus groups and blogs explained how the girls used online media for communication, information seeking and content creation, also, how the girls used online media as equipment for living.

Analysis of Survey Findings

The survey was conducted to verify and establish the teen girls’ online media use. The survey answered the following research questions:

- How often do teen girls use the Internet?
- What websites do the teen girls frequent?
- How do the teen girls use online media?

Research found that the majority of teenage girls (76%) went online at least once a day, and all the girls went online at least once every two weeks. The data established that even though the teen girls do not have internet access at school, the majority of girls actively sought out access to the internet and use the Internet at least once a day.

The results from the survey showed that the girls visited many social networking sites (SNS). The top three SNS used by the girls were YouTube (82%), Google+ (66%) and Facebook (63%). The girls also visited websites about hobbies, websites that provided them with information about homework and websites that allowed them to watch movies or TV shows online. The survey also found that Form 2 girls used SNS and online media more than Form 1 girls. As age did not prove to be a factor, based on my personal experience and understanding, a reason the Form 2 girls used SNS more than the Form 1 girls were that the Form 2 girls had their own personal laptops longer than the
Form 1 girls. The personal laptops given to them on entering high school afforded the girls with the online privacy from parents and guardians. Also, the Form 2 girls were at the perfect time in their lives to explore SNS. At the time the study was conducted, the Form 1 girls were only in their second term of their first year in high school and had their laptops for only a few months, while the Form 2 girls were in high school and had access to their own personal laptops for over a year. Also, Form 2 girls were in a comfort zone or a transient stage in high school. Form 1 girls just entered high school and were trying to adjust to the new academic demands, environment, and people; Form 3 girls were in an academically demanding stage in high school, where their classes increased in subject, number and demand, and they had to decide their academic careers at the ending of Form 3; Form 2 girls were in between those stages, as they were already settled in high school, comfortable with their environment and had the same academic demands they had when they were in Form 1. The Form 2 girls had less stress and more time to explore online media and SNS than Form 1 girls.

The survey results demonstrated that the teen girls used online media for various reasons; the three main reasons fell into the categories previously established by Stern and Willis (2007) which were communication, information seeking, and content creation.

**Communication**

Communication via online media appeared to be very important to the teen girls. The majority of teen girls reported that most of their online activity, 89% was spent communicating with others either through instant messages or email. When asked to choose the one online activity in which the girls participated in the most, the results were consistent with previous research findings (Stern & Willis, 2007; Lenhart et al., 2005)
that the number one activity chosen was sending or receiving instant messages. SNS which were major websites frequented by the girls had features that encouraged communication by the teen girls. The SNS Facebook and Google+ both have instant message and private message applications that promoted communication within the SNS. One reason why communication was the main activity and one of the most participated online activity by the teen girls was because using alternative communication methods such as speaking on the telephone, either a landline or cell phone was very costly, while communicating online was much cheaper and incur any additional utility expense to paying the internet bill, findings which were consistent with previous literature and research findings (Stern & Willis, 2007). The data from my survey established that the girls used online media for communication purposes.

**Information Seeking**

The majority of teen girls reported that their online activities included actively seeking out information about hobbies in which they were interested and information about homework, 98% and 95% respectively. The teen girls were at a stage where they were exploring their varied interests, so seeking out information about hobbies and topics in which they were interested were the number one activity the majority of girls participated in online. The laptops were given to the girls to be used for school, therefore, it made sense that the girls reported using online media to help them with homework and school related assignments, seeing that the majority of their waking time during the week was occupied by school work. This data established that the teen girls used online media to seek information and the main information they looked for was information about hobbies and information to help them with homework and school related assignments.
**Creation of Content**

Many of the content created by teen girls were created on or uploaded via a SNS. The two online activities that were created most by the teen girls were photos uploaded onto a website or SNS and creating a SNS profile 77% and 72% respectfully (see figure 5). The teen girls reported that the main reason they created content was for entertainment or fun (see figure 7). This data established that the teen girls used online media to create content and mainly did so for entertainment.

**Analysis of Focus Group and Blogs Findings**

This dissertation set out to answer the following questions in the context of equipment for living:

- How do the teen girls use online media for communication, information seeking, and creation of content?
- How do online media serve as equipment for living for the teen girls?

To explain how online media serve as equipment for living for the teen girls, I apply the equipment for living model for teen girls based on Burke’s interpretation of a symbolic action was applied to the findings.

**Communication**

The focus groups and blogs revealed that the teen girls used online media as a communicative tool to keep in touch with family and friends, for social networking, for conflict management and for introspection. Many times the motivation for using online media to perform the aforementioned activities was because for the teen girls, online media provided them with the necessary platform. Communicating via telephone in Trinidad and Tobago was an expensive medium for the girls. Online media not only
provided a cheap way to communicate with others, but also provided the teen girls with necessary privacy. As mentioned in the findings, SNS such as Facebook provided the teen girls with a platform to chat online via instant message, to write a status, send a private message or even post comments on other people statuses as means to keep in touch with family and friends, to have a social life, to manage/resolve/cause conflicts, and to help them sort out and express their own thoughts and feelings.

**Using Online Media as Communication for Equipment for Living**

To understand how communicating via online media are equipment for living for the teen girls, the equipment for living model for teenage girls based on Burke’s interpretation of a symbolic action will be applied to the findings. Figure 6.1 is the equipment for living model as presented in Chapter 1.
Figure 6.1: Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action

Figure 6.1 is the model applied to findings on how teen girls use online media for communication which in turn makes online media equipment for living. This model helps illustrate how various online media can be used as equipment for living. As mentioned in Chapter 1 online media serve as a way to communicate, seek out and receive information, and create content. The girls then actively consume or produce attitudes and strategies that expose the significance behind the symbolic use of online media and communication,
information seeking and content creation. When the attitudes and strategies reflect reality for the teen girls, the attitudes and strategies become a representative anecdote. Only when the representative anecdote provides a coping mechanism that the girls can relate to, does the representative anecdote become equipment for living, showing that online media can be used as equipment for living for teen girls.

**Figure 6.2:** Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action for Communication
In figure 6.2 the SNS Facebook was the online medium used by the teen girls. According to Gusfield (1989) who wrote the introduction to Burke’s *On Symbols and Society*, a symbol can be concrete where it symbolizes a material object, or it can be abstract where it symbol where it can be compared but dissimilar to something else, and depends heavily on the context in order to be understood. Facebook was a symbol that had both concrete and abstract meanings. Facebook had a concrete meaning as it was a physical platform that the girls used to communicate. Facebook and communication had abstract meanings as symbolically they represent freedom of expression for the girls, where they communicated with others freely, openly and/or privately. The symbol of communication, that is, the symbols of expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas led to the action of attitudes and strategies. Attitudes and strategies in this example of communication were the Facebook statuses that were produced by the teen girls. A Facebook status allows users to post and share content on their social networking profile. The Facebook statuses they produced were means to communicate between the teen girls and their Facebook friends. The production of the statuses on Facebook was a symbolic action as the statuses reflected a reality for the teen girls, and because the Facebook status reflected a reality for the girls, the Facebook statuses became a representative anecdote. The representative anecdote provided a means to deal with a situation establishing that the representative anecdote became equipment for living. In turn, the girls used Facebook, the online medium, as equipment for living.

The representative anecdote for communication for these teen girls was *sharing emotions*. A representative anecdote, according to Burke, is the story that represents the essence of discourse or text. Brummett (1984) explained that in order “to identify a
representative anecdote as immanent within a number of media discourses is to sum up the essence of a culture’s values, concerns, and interests in regard to some real-life issues or problems” (p. 164). *Sharing emotions* was the representative anecdote for the category of communication for these teen girls because every Facebook status they shared was a means to communicate with their family and friends about how they were feeling at that particular moment. Teen girls often believed that no adult wanted to listen to their problems, issues, and interests and often the teen girls felt that the adults thought that teen girls’ emotions were insignificant or over dramatized. The belittling of their feelings was a real concern for girls, so they communicated their feelings by sharing Facebook statuses that conveyed their emotions.

This representative anecdote was revealed in the attitude and strategies the girls shared when they spoke about managing and dealing with a conflict via Facebook statuses and comments. The conflict began in school and when the teacher refused to allow the girls to express their disgust about the unfairness of a situation. The girls got angry and shared this anger via Facebook statuses.

**FG2 - S12:** *When some people in the class don’t see your opinion and your opinion is right and what they did was wrong and they don’t want to listen to you, so you go online and make them know they were wrong by saying whatever.*

**FG2 - S13:** *In a status or something.*

**FG2 - S12:** *To get back at other people.*

The girls informed me at the end of the focus group session the reason they spoke about this conflict in a vague manner because they were not allowed to reveal the details of the
conflict because one girl got suspended, and the girls were told that if they spoke about it to others they would get in trouble with the school faculty.

The representative anecdote was again exposed in the attitude and strategy when they girls talked about using Facebook statuses as a means of introspection. One girl in the focus group exemplified this when she said:

**FG1-S1:** People really do communicate and let out their feelings online. People don’t really write in diaries anymore.

**FG2 – S13:** Sometimes it is to get out your feelings and I cannot say it, I just write it as a status and I just post it. Because I can’t say it in front of people face, so like when I want to tell somebody something I will write and they will see it.

The girls explained that they shared their feelings online via Facebook statuses, or through instant messages to a friend, and by sharing quotes, music, and poems via SNS. The girls often shared their emotions to make other people happy.

**FG1 - S5:** I only change my status when I get a good quote or something that I want to share with my friends... Well if I see it and it sounds interesting maybe I just want to share it with my friends.

**FG3 - S21:** Because it could put a smile on somebody’s face.

Many times *sharing emotions* helped the teen girls work through their problems, but also, to get feedback and affirmations about their feelings from their friends.

The representative anecdote served as equipment for living for the teen girls because at that age many girls were insecure about themselves, their bodies, and their feelings. Their bodies are going through hormonal changes, which often cause body issues. As explained in Chapter 1, because of their cognitive development, teenagers
often questioned everyone and everything. Teenagers are able to think in multiple
dimensions, where they recognize that not everything is dichotomous in nature
(Steinberg, 2011). The teen girls were able to think abstractly and hypothetically. They
were often confused because they had the ability to recognize the consequences of their
actions, and they realized that behaving ethically was not as simple as black and white,
but contain many shades of gray. They were unsure who they can trust and if their
feelings were valid. They wanted to be popular and accepted by other teens, so they
shared their feelings online to connect with others who felt the same, or, they did not
sharing their emotions face-to-face to avoid being judged by other teens. For example, a
conflict in school often led to insults, which can cause the teen girls to become
embarrassed and lose social status amongst their friends and/or the popular girls. Due to
the teen girls cognitive development, they often experience metacognition, where they
have increased self-examination and spend enormous amounts of time thinking about
themselves and how others perceive them (Steinberg, 2011). Therefore, embarrassing
moments in school was often a concern for them. By communicating online, they were
more prepared to deal with insulting comments, as they were not humiliated by a live
audience, and they were able to reply in a calmer demeanor, which made them appear
wise and mature.

**FG1 - S4:** *You can talk calmer online than face to face.*

Another explained how she posted a status to specifically explain why she was mad.

**FG3 - S24:** *Well you know. To express your view. Well if I chatting with someone
and they get me vex, I will say something in my status about it. How they make me feel.*
Stern and Willis (2005) also found that teenagers often preferred to communicate online so they can end an unpleasant conversation by simply not replying to a message, which helped the teenagers avoid humiliation and avoid conflict. When the girls shared their emotions using online media, they often received replies from their friends, who agreed, understood, and helped them work through their emotions. In other words, *sharing emotions* online elicited comments from their friends who validated the teen girls’ feelings and helped boost their self-esteem which gave them the means to eliminate some of the uncertainty in their lives. This information is consistent with findings from previous research as Subrahmanyam and Lin (2007) found that teenagers often communicated online to receive social support from their friends.

The representative anecdote for the activity of communication was *sharing emotions*. Through the representative anecdote of *sharing emotions*, the girls dealt with uncertainty through attitudes and strategies of creating Facebook statuses that enabled them to express their feelings. The representative anecdote of *sharing emotions* became equipment for living as the act of *sharing emotions* online became a way for the girls to eliminate uncertainty, boost their self-esteem, and maintain or upgrade their social status.

**Information Seeking**

The teen girls used online media to look up information for 1) school assignments, 2) information on health topics and 3) information on special topics they were interested in such as music, celebrities, and short stories. The teen girls used online media to look for information for school because they considered online media to be a faster, easier and more up to date source than encyclopedias. The girls mentioned that
they often used aggregator sites such as Google or Yahoo to research a topic and choose the first link that the search generated. For the teen girls, online media made research for school assignments a lot easier. However, when the girls were told by teachers to use the Internet to look up information for school, they found the instruction annoying, and suggested that the teacher was lazy, and was making the girls do the teacher’s work. This suggests that the girls only wanted to look up information online on their own cognition and resented when ordered to do so by the teacher, for the Internet and online media for the girls were means to aid themselves, not their teachers. For the girls, using online media needed to be their choice, where they can take complete ownership of their actions.

The teen girls combined communication and looking up information for school often using SNS such as Facebook and SNT such as Skype or MSN to chat with each other about school related assignments. For example the following excerpts from the focus groups explained how the girls used SNS and SNT to both communicate and get information on school related assignments.

**FG1 - S3:** Well when we can’t figure out the homework we go online and chat with each other about how to do the homework or when we forget what the homework is.

**FG1- S6:** Um for art like she did not come to school for the week and the teacher gave us homework so I posted the picture of how it looks so she will have an idea what she was supposed to do for homework. So she knew how to start it.

**FG3 - S23:** So if you can’t go to somebody’s house because you don’t have transportation, on the social networking sites you can chat, and that is a way for you to get in contact with each other.
The girls recognized the barriers to completing school assignments and found a way to use online media to break down the barriers. One specific barrier that was mentioned by FG3-S23 was that group assignments were often difficult to accomplish as people lived far apart, or had different schedules and online media such as SNS and SNT enabled the group members to communicate with each other to obtain information and complete the group assignment for school.

Many of the girls admitted to looking up health information online. The main reason that they researched health topics online was because it was easier than asking someone and also provided them with anonymity to search sensitive topics. The girls often felt judged when asking adults about health topics. They also thought that the information provided online was more accurate than asking other people because they can check various websites to verify the information. Anonymity and privacy were important facets to the teen girls when looking up health information and online media provided the platform to obtain such information and ensure anonymity and privacy.

The teen girls used online media to look up information on special topics they were interested in such as music, celebrities and short stories. The girls used online media, such as YouTube to look up music and lyrics they liked because of the convenience online media provided. With online media such as YouTube, the girls can look up any song or lyrics even if they don’t know the name of the song or the artist. Online media also provided the girls the platform to look up celebrity information anonymously. During the focus groups many of the girls were cautious not to mention which celebrities they liked suggesting that they were embarrassed that they were interested in the lives of certain celebrities. Also, online media provided the girls with
current information about the celebrities and the convenience of obtaining that
information at their fingertips. The girls used online media to access short stories written
by strangers online. The girls turned to online media because they provided them with a
plethora of nontraditional sources for obtaining short stories, many of which the girls
considered better than traditional literature, opening up the girls’ minds to new ideas
and information they would not normally obtain from traditional literature.

Using Online Media for Information Seeking as Equipment for Living

To understand how using online media for information seeking was equipment for
living for the teen girls, the equipment for living model was applied using the example of
searching online media for health information. Figure 6.3 is the equipment for living
model for teenage girls based on Burke’s interpretation of symbolic action for
information seeking.
In Figure 6.3 the online media of blogs or health websites were symbols that had a concrete meaning. The blogs and websites were the physical platform used by the girls to seek information on health topics. The symbol of information seeking had an abstract meaning for the girls, as information seeking represents knowledge and a means to expand their minds. Expanding knowledge led to the actions of consuming the strategies or attitudes of personal health stories, health information, and frequently asked questions
about health topics. Those attitudes and strategies reflected a reality, that is, the attitudes and strategies mirrored a truth about their current situation, therefore the health stories, health information and FAQs helped uncover the representative anecdote. The representative anecdotes provided a means for the girls to deal with their current situation, hence becoming equipment for living.

The representative anecdote for the activity of information seeking was addressing uncertainty. By addressing uncertainty, the girls actively searched for information that can answer any questions or doubts they had concerning any topic or issue they faced. This representative anecdote was revealed in the attitudes and strategies when the girls shared stories about going online to look up information on health topics and issues. For example, one girl explained that she, as well as many members of her family, suffered from asthma. She was unsure exactly what asthma was, or how to behave when she or her brother had an asthma attack.

**FG3 - S23:** *Well I have asthma, so sometimes I go and check out what it is to find out or what I can do to help myself with it. Plus I have a lot of family members with it so if I am in a situation where my brother or something having an asthma attack and I don’t know what to do, so I check it out in advance to see what can be done.*

This teen girl used online media, such as medical websites and personal stories posted on blogs, to obtain information to help relieve the stress of not understanding her medical condition.

The representative anecdote of addressing uncertainty was again exposed when the girls spoke about searching for information online to help them with school
assignments. Many times the girls were unable to complete their school assignments because they simply did not understand it, or had the necessary information to complete the assignment. The girls used aggregator sites, such as Google and Bing to search for whatever information they needed. The girls explained that they would use SNS to communicate with their classmates to get help with school work assignments, or to even obtain the school assignments when they were uncertain what the assignment was, or did not even receive the assignment.

**FG1 - S3:** Well when we can’t figure out the homework we go online and chat with each other about how to do the homework or when we forget what the homework is.

**FG1 - S6:** Um for art like she did not come to school for the week and the teacher gave us homework so I posted the picture of how it looks so she will have an idea what she was supposed to do for homework. So she knew how to start it.

**FG3 - S23:** In our group on Facebook, if we didn’t get any homework, we can just ask somebody for the homework.

**FG3 - S19:** Or if we getting trouble with homework we can just ask somebody what is the answer for number one.

**FG3 - S17:** Sometimes it have links in the group and you can use it to look up information.

The girls explained that by using online media to find out information on school assignments, they, as well as their friends, were able to complete the school assignments, which allowed them to maintain or improve their grades and keep on par with their
classmates. These findings are similar to the 2004 report from the U.S. Department of Education.

The representative anecdote of addressing uncertainty served as equipment for living for the teen girls because at that age many of the girls were uncertain about many aspects of their lives. Stern and Willis (2007) stated that the Internet provided teenagers with anonymity, allowing them the ease of finding out health information that can be considered uncomfortable for teenagers to discuss with adults. The teen girls were experiencing embarrassing body changes and needed to comprehend what those changes were and how those changes affected their lives. Because of their cognitive development, the girls had the ability to think about the possibilities of obtaining the information from other sources. Also, because they spend a lot of time thinking about themselves and on how others see them, the teen girls were aware of the consequences that may result from such inquiries (Steinberg, 2011). Many times the girls were embarrassed to ask adults about sensitive health topics, or, they believed that adults judged them negatively for inquiring about sensitive health issues. Steinberg (2011) explained that one of the consequences of metacognition was egocentrism, where the teens became self-absorbed and believed that adults were constantly judging them. Online media afforded the teen girls anonymity to search health topics, and hence they avoided the humiliation of asking the information from adults, or even from their friends.

For these teen girls knowledge equals power. As mentioned in Chapter 3, these girls attended a prestige school, where academic competition was fierce and their social status often depended on their grades in exams. This was one of the reasons why addressing uncertainty was important to them. They needed to ensure that they had all
the knowledge to succeed academically, which in turn enhanced their social success. Also, knowledge and information gave them a type of control in their lives during a time when they often felt powerless in other aspects. The teen girls were constantly monitored by adults, they often felt like they had no control over their daily lives, for their daily activities were routine and regulated, especially during school hours. The two things the girls controlled were what they learned and how they used the information they learned.

The representative anecdote for the activity of information seeking was addressing uncertainty. This representative anecdote became equipment for living as seeking information via online media became a way for the girls to search for information that helped them understand health and body issues they were experiencing, obtain knowledge to handle difficult situations, have control in their lives, and maintain and/or build their academic and social statuses.

**Content Creation**

The teen girls used online media to create content as representation of their self and to share original creative works. The teen girls created statuses that expressed their feelings through words, music, and videos. The teen girls believed that online media such as SNS provided them with the platform to share their feelings with their friends. Statuses also allowed them to voice their opinions on topics. They got feedback which they either acknowledged or ignored, but the important aspect was that they were given a chance to voice their feelings. Often the girls reposted motivational quotes and music on their statuses as way to express their feelings, as well as a means to communicate with others. The girls admitted to posting motivational quotes and music to their statuses to make their friends happy and to inform their friends on what made the girls happy. Online
media enabled the girls to fulfill this need and without online media, expressing their feelings to their friends and finding ways to make their friends happy would be much more difficult for the girls to accomplish. The girls acknowledged that many times the music and quotes they posted as statuses communicated unspoken feelings that they believe only their friends can understand. Also, the positive comments posted on the girls statuses and links made the girls feel accepted and elevated the girls’ own perception of their status amongst their friends.

The girls used online media to post original artworks. A few of the girls wrote short stories and posted in online. While one girl insisted that she posted the stories because she was bored, her body language and other nonverbal behavior suggested that she was passionate about her works and enjoyed the criticism she received from readers about her short stories. Most girls admitted to creating and posting pictures on the SNS profiles. The girls admitted that they created pictures, not just pictures they took and posted, but collages of pictures, and pictures they edited themselves to show their friends their abilities and skills and to get approval from their friends via comments. For the teen girls, approval from their friends was highly ranked and boosted the girls’ self-estees. Another girl created a video to express her opinion. She felt that she was muted and no one cared about her thoughts. She created the video and posted it online simply to give herself a voice, however, when she started getting feedback on her video, she finally felt that she was heard. She did not care if the people agreed with her opinion, all she cared about was that her voice was finally heard and acknowledged. Without online media the girl would not have been able to voice her opinion and finally felt that she her opinion was heard and mattered, boosting her self-esteem.
Using Online Media for Content Creation as Equipment for Living

To understand how using online media to manifest the creation of content was equipment for living for these girls, the equipment for living model was applied using an example of creating and posting photos online. Figure 6.4 is the equipment for living model for teenage girls based on Burke’s interpretation of symbolic action for content creation.

Figure 6.4. Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action for Content Creation
In Figure 6.4 Facebook was a symbol with a concrete meaning, as Facebook was the physical platform the girls used to upload and display the photos they created. The creations of content, in this case the photos, were symbolic and had an abstract meaning, for the creation of the photos was a vehicle of expression and voice for the girls. The creation of content represented agency and freedom of expression by the girls. As Burke explained, the abstract meaning for symbols is contextual, and in this example Facebook also had an abstract meaning, for Facebook was a symbol of freedom, because Facebook enabled the girls the choice to display the photos they created, which gave them freedom of expression. The girls then uploaded the photos they created, which were attitudes and strategies. The photos then reflected a reality for the teens. In many of the cases the photos represented a reality of true friendship, or how the girls view themselves. Because the photos represent a reality, the photos became a representative anecdote.

The representative anecdote for the activity of content creation was forming bonds. Forming bonds means the processes of developing relationships with others. This representative anecdote is reveals in the attitudes and strategies the girls shared when the talked about creating photos and Facebook pages and profiles. The girls created photos of themselves and their friends as a means to please their friends. One of the girls explained that she posted a photo of herself on her SNS profile, because her friends never saw her in a dress. It should be noted that when the girls created and posted photos, they changed the original photo either by editing it or by adding text to the post.

**FG2 - S12:** *I put up a picture because they said they never saw me in a dress, so when I went out I had on a dress, my mother took out these pictures so I put it on MSN, so they will finally see me in a dress.*
FG2-S12’s need to please her friends was not a unique case. Other girls admitted to creating and posting videos of their friends performing to show support for their friends. A group of girls created a horror movie and posted it to their Form’s Facebook page to highlight the creativity of the girls involved.

FG3 - S21: *Like there was a time when current went in the school and it was real raining and it was dark. So, we made a horror movie, it was really funny.*

FG3 - S19: *It was the worse horror movie ever.*

FG3 - S20: *Yes it was real fun.*

FG3 - S17: *The atmosphere and surrounding were perfect for it.*

FG3 - S19: *We have a lot of creative people in our class who think out of the box a lot.*

FG3 - S21: *I was like let’s make a horror movie and everyone was like yea!*

FG3 - S19: *So people just started shouting ideas.*

One group of girls explained how the girls in their class created and maintained a closed Facebook group page solely for the members of that class.

FG3 – S24: *We have a group on Facebook. Any videos we make in school we post it there. It is a closed group.*

FG3 - S19: *It is a closed group so only people from the class can see it.*

On that Facebook page the girls posted school assignments for anyone who was absent, created group chats where they met and discussed group projects for school, helped each other understand homework, and posted pictures, videos, and other materials concerning the class. This group Facebook page contained personal and identifying materials.
The representative anecdote of forming bonds served as equipment for living for teen girls because at that age teen girls wanted to be accepted by their peers. They craved friends who they could trust. Steinberg (2011) explained that because teenagers are able to think abstractly and apply sociological context to relationships, they possess the capabilities of manipulating situations and people, as well as applying various strategies to maintain friendships. As Steinberg (2011) explained, teen girls experience metacognition where they spend time thinking about their emotions, how others view them, and how they view others. Popularity and social status were key facets in their lives and one way to attain these were to have friends who they could trust. The teen girls demonstrated their friendships by creating and posting photos and videos online to delight and entertain their friends. Every comment they posted on the pictures or videos were to affirm their friends’ self-esteem and solidify friendships. The girls who created the closed Facebook group page demonstrated a high level of trust, establishing loyalties that would last throughout their school life. Livingstone (2008) found that teenagers in the U.K. created social networking profiles to sustain a position in their peer networks. The girls who created the closed Facebook page, as well as created the videos and photos demonstrated an understanding of human behavior and acted accordingly in order to maintain their social status amongst their friends.

During a time when their lives a filled with uncertainty, the teen girls yearned for loyalty, without the fear of betrayal. The girls who created the closed Facebook group also established success in their academic careers by establishing cooperative competition. Because academic success was high on their priority list due to the competitive nature of the prestige high school culture, these girls pushed each other to
succeed, setting the academic bar higher for themselves. The bonds that these girls formed by trusting each other on the closed Facebook group with their personal and academic lives, helped them deal with the scary life of high school.

The representative anecdote activity of content creation was *forming bonds*. This representative anecdote became equipment for living as creating and posting content online media became a way for the girls to form friendships, establish loyalties, and succeed both academically and socially in high school.

**Other Online Activities as Equipment for Living**

Stern and Willis (2005) reported that teenagers used online media for communication, information seeking, and content creation. Since that time teenagers have used online media for other activities. I identified three activities: listening to music, watching television, and playing games, and while I do not have much data, the data I do have demonstrates the important roles these activities play in the teen girls’ lives, especially how those activities also served as equipment for living. Because these activities were not part of the categories listed by Stern and Willis (2005), the model was not applied to these categories.

**Listening to Music Online as Equipment for Living**

The girls admitted that listening to music helped them deal with emotions such as frustrations, disappointments, sadness, happiness, and anger which was consistent with the previous research findings of Zillman and Gan (1987) who discovered that music helped teenagers deal with emotions. A girl in focus group 2 explained why they chose the online medium, YouTube, to access the music.
**FG2 - S13:** *And when you go on YouTube you can listen to the specific song that you want to listen to and you don’t have to wait on the radio. You see when you go on the computer you can listen to the music that you want to listen to and no one can tell you what to listen to.*

The girls turned to online media to get the music because they were able to control what songs they listened to, how often they listened to it and in what order the songs played. YouTube was the main online medium of choice, and the girls found YouTube not only convenient, but also cheap and readily available. Since much of the music was available digitally, many of the girls did not have CDs or CD players or even MP3 players, therefore YouTube became their medium of choice. Also, YouTube gave them the freedom to listen to any music they wanted to without an adult monitoring their activities. Freedom and privacy were important facets for the girls and online medium provided them with both.

The representative anecdote for listen to music online was *dealing with emotions.* In order to deal with emotions the girls needed to process and discover how they felt, why they felt that way, and what to do with their feelings. The representative anecdote of *dealing with emotions* was revealed in the attitudes and strategies the girls shared when they spoke up playing music to help them deal with heartbreak and loss.

**FG3 - S19:** *Listening to music helps us deal with situations in life. Certain lyrics, like if you listening to a song and you are in a really sad mood and you hear a line.*

**FG3 - S21:** *You can relate to it.*
FG3 - S19: Right you can relate to it, and like if you going through a heartbreak, not necessarily a heartbreak but you going through some kind of situation. There are certain bands or artists and you know you have a connection because they have a certain genre, and they have a certain message in all their songs.

The representative anecdote of dealing with emotions served as equipment for living for the girls due to all the uncertainty in their lives; the girls often felt like they were on an emotional rollercoaster. Steinberg (2011) discussed that due to metacognition, teenagers spend an enormous amount of time thinking about their feelings, and due to relativism, teenagers can think in multiple dimensions where they are able to recognize the many different aspects in their lives. Between all the competitions in school and negotiating relationships to maintain or build academic and social status, the girls felt overwhelmed, sad, and often confused about their feelings which are consistent with previous research as Zillman and Gan, (1987) also reported that music helped teenagers develop their personal and social identities. When the girls spoke about heartbreaks, they may be speaking about a crush, however, since they were young, attended an all-girls high school, and highly supervised after school, many of the girls did not have boyfriends, or interacted much with boys. Heartbreaks could have also meant feelings of betrayal by their friends. This finding is consistent with previous research as Vanninni and Myers (2002) discovered that music was important in the development of teens’ identities because it aided in their comprehension of feelings, especially in interpersonal relationships. It should be noted that when the girls communicated what they felt, the representative anecdote changed to sharing emotions.
The representative anecdote for the activity of listening to music was *dealing with emotions*. This representative anecdote became equipment for living as listening to music online allowed the girls to deal with emotions they felt from the constant uncertainty they experienced in their lives.

**Playing Video Games as Equipment for Living**

Many of the girls admitted to playing video games online, and they mainly played video games as a means to cope with the stress of school and escape into an alternative reality that helped them deal with stressful situations. The representative anecdote for the activity of playing video games was *escapism*. *Escapism* is the inclination to search for a diversion or relief from unpleasant realities. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is a lack of research on the reasons why teenagers played video games online, however, Frostling-Henningsson (2009) found that people played video games as a means to escape into a virtual works, where they can experiment with alternate identities. Two girls from focus group 2 explained the importance of playing video games.

**FG1 - S6:** *Sometimes you just need to get away from all the stress of homework and school and you can go into this virtual world and have fun.*

**FG1 - S2:** *For the shooting games online. I like that basically because that is just part of me. I like to play it as a means of escaping. I also like to do it because I like to play strategy games. I like to escape from the pressures of school and stuff.*

Online media provided an avenue to access video games. Video game consoles and cartridges were expensive and bulky. Many online video games were free to download and available through many SNS.
Burke explained equipment for living provided people with a means to manage daily experiences, and Burke used Proverbs as an example of equipment for living as proverb foretold, consoled, or explained events that people regularly experienced. These girls’ lives were filled with stress. They constantly worried who they were as they tried to develop their identities; they were competing daily academically and socially; and they were overwhelmed by emotions. The representative anecdote of *escapism* served as equipment for living for the teen girls because playing video games helped the teen girls handle their stressful lives by allowing them to escape into an alternate reality. Steinberg (2011) explained that due to teenagers cognitive development, teenagers are able to think in multiple dimensions, where they can experience and experiment with different identities. Therefore, playing video games allowed the girls experiment with different identities through the representative anecdote of *escapism*. Frostling-Henningsson (2009) also found that people who played video games often played for social reasons, as it helped them connect and communicate with others who shared their interests. However, if the teen girls played video games for social and communicative reasons, the representative anecdote changes from *escapism* to sharing emotions.

**Watching Television as Equipment for Living**

Many of the girls watched television using online media such as YouTube, Megavideo, www.tvlinks.com, and other websites that offered viewing of television shows online outside of the United States. Since watching TV shows from the broadcast station websites and other websites that offered online on-demand streaming of television shows such as Hulu and Netflix were not available outside the U.S. due to copy write laws, the girls actively searched online avenues to watch television shows. The girls
chose to watch television shows online because the TV shows they were interested in where not provided by their cable provider or local television stations, or because the shows were broadcasted on television at inconvenient times. Girls from two separate focus groups explained how they only watched television shows online and why they watched certain TV shows online.

**FG2 - R:** When you hear online media what do you think of?

**FG2 - S10:** Pretty little Liars.

**FG2 - R:** When you hear online media you think of Pretty Little Liars?

**FG2 - S10:** Yes because I watch that online because I don’t have cable.

**FG3 - S18:** I don’t watch TV anymore. I unplugged the TV from my room and stick my laptop charger in because I am watching something online.

**FG3 - S24:** Because if you like a specific show you don’t have control over what time that specific shows show so you can just go on the internet and look up the episode that you missed.

The dynamics amongst the girls in the focus groups proved the girls watched TV shows online to not only keep up with the storyline of the shows, but more importantly to be able to discuss the television show with their friends. There is currently no research available on the reasons why teenagers watch television shows online. However, Anderson (2010) reported that 82% of teenagers viewed television shows online, and Gruenwedel (2008) discovered that 20% of prime-time shows were watched online.

The representative anecdote for the activity of watching television was building social status. Building social status meant increasing their importance amongst their friends and classmates. As mention in Chapter 5, when all the girls started talking about
what television shows they watched, they all started speaking at once and it was difficult to transcribe the conversations. However, I recorded in the fields notes the meanings behind the conversations and interactions. Most of the girls in all the focus groups watched the same television shows. They explained the plot and spoke in detail about the characters to one another. The girls who did not watch the show felt ostracized as they could not join in any conversation. The girls who did not watch the latest episode where criticized for being behind in the show. According to Steinberg (2011), teenagers spend time contemplating their feelings, their identities, and how they want to be perceived by others, and their place in society. The television shows were social capital for the girls, granting the status and acceptance among their classmates and friends. Some of the girls discussed how they related to some of the characters on the shows they watched, and how the storylines, especially storylines dealing with friendships and relationships helped them understand and manage their own personal relationships. Online media provided an avenue to access television shows online.

The representative anecdote of building social status served as equipment for living for the girls because teen girls wanted to be popular and accepted amongst their friends. Being popular and accepted amongst friends made them feel good about themselves. Watching the popular television shows online provided them with the means to build their social status and be accepted by other teen girls. When the girls used the information they learned by watching television shows online to help them with interpersonal relationships, the representative anecdote would change to dealing with uncertainty.
Summary

The majority of girls used the internet at least once a day. When they did go online, the girls mostly frequented SNS, as well as websites about hobbies, websites that gave them information on school assignments, and websites that allowed them to watch movies and TV shows online. I argued that Form 2 girls went online and used online media more than Form 1 girls because the Form 2 girls had access to their personal laptops longer, and therefore a better understanding on how to use it than Form 1 girls. I also argue that based on my personal experience and understanding Form 2 girls had more time than Form 1 girls to use the Internet, because Form 2 girls were more comfortable academically than Form 1 girls.

Consistent to previous research and as well as the categories previously identified by Stern and Willis (2007), the teen girls in Trinidad and Tobago used online media for communication, information seeking, and content creation. The girls used it for communication to keep in contact with their friends and family, mainly through SNS and SNT because it was the cheapest and most convenient method. The girls used online media for information seeking because they found it efficient, convenient, and current. The girls used online media for content creation because it was fun and entertaining, and it provided them with a platform to express their feelings, and voice their opinions. Also, by posting created content online, the girls got feedback from friends and strangers that often boosted their self-esteem.

Online media was used as equipment for living by the teen girls because online media gave them a cheap, easily accessible platform that they needed to express their feelings, display their creativity, access information needed to maintain relationships, to
handle stress, for school assignments, for health issues, and to communicate with their friends. Also, the representative anecdotes for the activities of communication, information seeking, and content creation were: sharing emotions, addressing uncertainties, and forming bonds respectively. These representative anecdotes served as equipment for living because it helped the girls manage many aspects of the lives, such as eliminate uncertainty, boost their self-esteem, comprehend health and body issues without feeling embarrassed or humiliated by adults, deal with competition both academically and socially, and build and/or maintain social statuses. The girls used online media as equipment for living when they listened to music, played video games, and to watched TV shows online. The representative anecdotes for these activities were: dealing with emotions, escapism, and building social status. These representative anecdotes served as equipment for living because it helped the girls cope with their personal and school lives by helping the girls shift through and understand the uncertainty of their lives and their emotions, aiding in their stress management activities by allowing them to experiment with different identities, and building their self-estees when they feel accepted by their peers. Online media became such essentials tools for the teen girls that the girls expressed horror and dismay when faced with the possibility of not being able to access online media. Online media has been so ingrained in the girls’ everyday lives, that living without it will effectively disrupt their cultural and social lives, leaving them unprepared and uninformed to handle daily situations.

The next chapter discusses whether or not teen girls read online privacy policies and the influence privacy issues have on the teen girls online media use.
Chapter Seven: Privacy

This chapter discusses the issue of privacy for teenage girls. The issue of privacy is presented as a separate chapter as the equipment for living model does not apply to it, however, the issue of privacy was an important topic for the girls as the issue invoked much discussion during the focus groups, and the teen girls had very definite opinions about the issue. This chapter first presents a literature review on teens and privacy, the research questions and methods of obtaining data are explained, the results of the survey are presented, followed by the findings from the focus groups, and finally the analysis and interpretation of the results and findings are discussed.

Literature Review

Teenagers, Privacy and Social Networking Sites

Privacy measures on social networking sites and blogs gave teenagers the control to block people from seeing their websites (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). However, in order for teenagers to use the privacy settings effectively, they need to read the privacy policy and learn how to manipulate the settings. There were varying levels of privacy depending on which online communication form was used. Public chat and bulletin boards were the least private as the posts were available to the public to read (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Communication between email and instant messaging were presumably the most private out of all the communication forms. However, all the messages sent via those forms can be transcribed, recorded and even forwarded to third parties (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Public sharing of photos and videos allowed any unregistered user to view the photo and video. This was especially true for video sharing sites such as www.youtube.com where anyone can view
the videos on the websites. Some photo sharing sites allowed users to control who can view their photos. Games and virtual websites were public spheres, however, only registered users had access to the site and these sites were often paid subscriptions, where some require the users to be eighteen years or older (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

Because teenagers are considered a vulnerable group, many adults fear that teens unknowingly reveal information about themselves that can potentially be used to harm the teenagers. Walravem, Vanwesenbeeck, and Heirman (2012) discovered that in a comparison study between adults and adolescents who use social networking sites, adolescents tended to reveal more information about themselves and had more lenient privacy settings than adults. According to Madden et al. (2013) who conducted the Pew Internet and American Life survey on teens’ social media and privacy use, 92% of teens post their real names online, 91% post a photo of themselves, and 71% put their school name and the city where they live. The report also indicated that among Facebook users, many teens keep their profiles private, restricting public access to their profiles. 60% of teens on Facebook only allow their friends to have access to their profile (Madden et al. 2013). However, the report also indicated that the level of privacy settings applied to teens profiles also depended on the type of social networking site. 64% of teens who have Twitter account have their account as public, where anyone can read their tweets (Madden et al., 2013). The reason why teens were more willing to have their Twitter accounts as public than their Facebook accounts were not clearly indicated in the research, however, it was suggested that the type of platform, as well as the type of posts
may play a role. Twitter limited posts to 140 characters and some teens indicated that they post nothing private on Twitter.

**Teenage Privacy Use in Relation to Confidence and Self-Efficacy**

Research showed that pre-teens and teens that have high self-efficacy about information privacy and who also had the opportunity of hearing the importance of maintaining online information privacy, practiced online information privacy behaviors such as not opening unsolicited emails, unknown files, and protecting personal information (Chai, Bagchi-Sen, Morrel, Rao, & Upadhyaya, 2009). Madden et al. (2013) also reported that most teens who used social media had high confidence in managing their privacy settings on social networking sites. Research also indicated that pressure from external sources such as parents, teachers and peers made the teens and preteens more aware of their online information privacy behavior and teens were more encouraged to protect their information (Chai et al., 2009). Madden et al. (2013) found that teens’ confidence in keeping their information private had less to do with the privacy settings, and more to do with controlling the content of their posts. Many of the teens admitted that it was through parental influences that the teens monitored the content of their posts.

**Gender Differences in Teenagers Concerning Information Privacy Behavior**

Adults often assume that predators use social networking sites to prey on teens, however, research have shown that many predators use more direct means such as emailing and instant messaging to contact their prey (Harris, 2010). Research also indicated that teens more often block unsolicited advances that occurred online (Harris, 2010). However, research found a gender difference in terms of information privacy behavior. Youn and Hall (2008) discovered that girls have a higher privacy concern than
boys because they perceive more privacy risks. Because of this, boys engaged in more harmful privacy behavior than girls, such as, opening unsolicited emails and downloading files from unknown sources. Madden et al. (2013) found that girls had more private profiles than boys. 70% of girls reported that their profiles were visible to their friends only, while only 50% of boys reported the same. Moreover, only 8% of girls had completely public profiles on Facebook, while 25% of boys reported to making their Facebook profile completely public.

**Research Questions and Method**

The following research questions were proposed concerning teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago and privacy:

- Do privacy policies influence what websites the teen girls use?
- Do privacy issues influence what teen girls post online?

In order to answer these research questions data was collected both via the survey during the distribution of questionnaire process as well as during the focus group and blogs. For full information on the methods and the participants please refer to Chapter three, the methods chapter of the dissertation.

**Survey Findings**

The Pew Internet Family and Life Project reported that many teens checked their privacy settings on their SNS to ensure that only their friends and not the public were able to see their profiles, some of them every month (Madden et al., 2013). Micheti, Burkell, and Steeves (2010) discovered that most teens do not read online policies because they were too long or boring.
Table 7.1
Reading Online Privacy Policies
N=62

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read Privacy Policies</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Read Privacy Policies</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 7.1, 23% of the girls reported that they read online policies, while the majority of the girls (77%) reported that they did not read online privacy policies.

Out of the students who read online policies 50% of the students were from Form 1 and Form 2 equally. Out of the students who do not read online policies, 50% of the students were from Form 1 and Form 2 equally.

![Figure 7.1: Reasons why Teen Girls Read Online Privacy Policies](image)

*Figure 7.1: Reasons why Teen Girls Read Online Privacy Policies*
As seen in Figure 7.1, (n=14), 86% of the girls who read online policies care about who saw their online activities and 78% of the girls read online privacy policies because their privacy online was important to them. Twenty-eight percent of teen girls, who read privacy policies for other reasons, reported that they read it for peace of mind, so they can use the site carefully, to know exactly what they were joining and because it was put there to read for a reason.

![Figure 7.2: Reasons why Teen Girls Read Online Privacy Policies Based on Form](image)

Figure 7.2: Reasons why Teen Girls Read Online Privacy Policies Based on Form

The data in Figure 7.2 (n=14) concluded that all the Form 1 teen girls (100%; n=7) as oppose to 71% of the teen girls in Form 2 (n=7) who read privacy policies, do so because their privacy was important for them. The majority of Form 1 teen girls (86%) who read online privacy policies care about who views their online activities.
Figure 7.3: Reasons why Teen Girls Do Not Read Online Privacy Policies

As seen in Figure 7.3, (n=48) the majority of girls (83%) who do not read online privacy policies reported that they do not read the policies because the online privacy policies were too long. The 3% of girls who chose the other category said that they do not read online privacy policies because the policies were too complicated to understand.

Figure 7.4: Reasons why Teen Girls Do Not Read Online Privacy Policies Based on Form

Figure 7.4: Reasons why Teen Girls Do Not Read Online Privacy Policies Based on Form
As seen in Figure 7.4 more Form 2 teen girls (92%; n=24) than Form 1 teen girls (75%; n=24) do not read online privacy policies because they are too long.

Out of the 23% of girls who read online policies, 86% of them read the privacy policies because they care who sees their online activities. Also, more Form 1 teen girls than Form 2 teen girls (100% and 71% respectfully) reported reading online privacy policies because their privacy was important to them. The data report that 77% of girls don’t read online privacy policies. Out of the 77% of girls who don’t read online privacy policies, 83% said that they don’t read the privacy policies because they are too long. Also, more Form 2 teen girls than Form 1 teen girls (92% and 75% respectfully) do not read online privacy policies because the privacy policies are too long.

**Focus Group and Blog Findings**

“Not only have the next generation not given up on privacy, but they’re actually trying to find ways to achieve privacy in networked publics” (boyd, 2012, p. 349).

Most girls do not read online privacy policies because they think they are too long. The girls that do read online privacy policies do so because they care about who see their online activities. Online privacy was one of the major topics discussed in the focus group and blog. The girls discussed the reasons why online safety was often not a concern for them, while others recognized the need to be cautious online.

**Online Safety**

Some of the girls in the focus groups voiced their lack of concern about people trying to find them due to their online profiles and photos. In focus group 2, the girls made a video about themselves dancing. The person, who uploaded the video, posted the school’s name and some of the girls in the video were in their school uniform. However,
even though her words said she was not worried, the tone of her voice and facial expression was one of concern. Some girls voiced their lack of concern for privacy online, stating that it did not affect what they posted on the Internet. However, there were a couple of girls who were concerned about maintaining their privacy online. One girl in focus group 1 gave an example of how dangerous it was to have identifying information online.

**FG1 - S1:** *He posted up one of his pictures up on FB of himself in his uniform and someone actually came looking for him to steal his Blackberry and they came and stole his Blackberry and I find exactly for that reason it is not safe.*

Another girl gave an example how her friend was stalked in person because she posted a photo of herself in her school uniform.

**FG1 - S4:** *Miss my friend was going to a certain school and this boy he was some stalker man and she looked, she had a picture of her in uniform and he saw and he came to the school once to ask for the person and stuff.*

When the girls gave these personal examples, the other girls in the focus group were shocked and dismayed that there were instances such as these occurring in Trinidad and Tobago. One girl commented that privacy online was an issue because of the length of the privacy policies.

**FG2 - S13:** *Why do they make those privacy policies so long. I will never read it because it is so long.*

Other students agreed that the privacy policies for many of the websites they frequent were too long and incomprehensible for them to read, therefore, they never read the privacy policies for websites.
Some of the girls described how they managed to have privacy on social networking sites. The girls explained that when they messaged their friends, or posted statuses, the messages will be coded, so that the message can only be understood by the intended recipient. These coded messages included inside jokes and nicknames known only to the participants.

One group of girls explained how they created a closed Facebook group page for the class where only the members of the class had access to the information on that Facebook page.

**FG3 – S24:** *We have a group on Facebook. Any videos we make in school we post it there. It is a closed group.*

**FG3 - S19:** *It is a closed group so only people from the class can see it.*

The girls shared homework assignments, discussed group projects, posted videos and pictures of activities in which girls in the class participated, and discussed their feelings with each other. The girls explained how the Facebook page was a great way to communicate and share information with each other, without having adults censor their activities. One of the girls commented how the closed Facebook group page allowed the members of the class to have more in-depth conversations with each other, without the fear of consequences for sharing information.

This section explained the girls’ perceptions on online safety and whether or not it influenced that content the girls posted online. The reasons why the girls did not read privacy policies were also discussed in this section.
Analysis and Interpretation

Previous research (Micheti et al., 2010) found that many teenagers do not read online privacy policies. Consistent with previous research findings on teens in the U.S., the majority of Trinidad and Tobago teen girls (77%) do not read online privacy policies (see Table 7.4). The main reason for not reading online policies was because the privacy policies were too long. The girls who read privacy policies reported that the main reason was because they cared who saw their online activities. The survey data established that the majority of girls do not read privacy policies and hence for the majority of girls, the privacy policies do not influence what online media the girls use.

The survey data revealed that the majority of girls did not read privacy policies and did not care who saw their online activities and what online media the girls’ used. The focus group and blogs information exposed similar findings, however, despite their lack of concern over the privacy policies, some of the girls acknowledged the danger of posting personal information while using online media. The girls understood why adults, specifically their parents and guardians were concerned about their online activities; however, many of the girls chose to partake in online activities mainly because their activities were concealed from the parents and guardians. One girl explained in the blog the reasons why her parents didn’t trust her.

**sweetstar-peacelover:** *Wel u dont really hear comments u jus mostly hear warnings" remember what you put online is there forever,dont do this dont do dat watch who u tlk to, dont tel anyone where you live blah blah blah" sometimes it gets very annoying its sometimes like dey dont trust u bt we no they jus paranoid at times*
Translation: Well you don’t really hear comments. You just mostly hear warnings, such as: remember what you put online is there forever, don’t do this and don’t do that, watch who you are talking to, don’t tell anyone where you live, blah blah blah. Sometimes it gets very annoying. It is sometimes feel like they don’t trust you, but we know they are just paranoid at times.

This is consistent with Steinberg’s (2011) explanation of how teens become egocentric due to metacognition, where the teens constantly think about their emotions and how other view them, which led them to believe that adults are constantly judging their actions. While the girls recognized the need for online safety, it did not influence what online media they used, it did however influence how they presented the information. Some of the girls actively coded their communication so that only the intended recipients can decode the message and limited exposure and access of their personal information to only certain friends. So, while the privacy policies do not influence what website the girls use, privacy issues did influence what information the girls put online and how they presented the information online.

During the focus groups, many of the girls were surprised to hear stories of teenagers being stalked and injured due to a lack of online privacy, or due to the revealing personal information available online. Teens do not want to view themselves as vulnerable, but the reality is that teen girls are extremely vulnerable when they share personal information online. For example, a girl in focus group 2 shared information with a complete stranger online. She only started questioning her behavior when the questions got too personal.
**FG2 - S13:** I spend a lot of time on Facebook and sometimes random people add me on Facebook and was like Hi and I am like Hi, and I said do I know you and the person is like no and I am like cool. The person start to ask me what school I go to and how old are you. I have the profile picture and I will look at the person’s profile picture and if it is a normal person like a young girl or a teenage guy or something, but when the person start to ask me questions and I am answering the questions and I am thinking is this really a rapist or a really the person, because you know sometimes people make profiles to get at children.

**FG2 - S15:** Like pedophiles

**FG2 - S13:** So you know I am there thinking like, is this real or and I am playing it out in my mind and why he asking so many questions about me and I am responding.

Not only were the girls exposed to unsolicited attention, but they were also exposed to adults’ prying eyes. Some of the girls recognized that vulnerability by creating a closed Facebook group page for their class.

**FG3 – S24:** We have a group on Facebook. Any videos we make in school we post it there. It is a closed group.

**FG3 - S19:** It is a closed group so only people from the class can see it.

In that closed group setting, the girls were free to express themselves away from the prying eyes of adults and ensure that their personal information is not available to anyone outside of the group. The girls understood the dangers involved and established a level of trust amongst themselves, by forming bonds within the class that will benefit them both academically and socially.
As mentioned earlier, the girls do not read privacy policies, but privacy issues influence how the girls used online media. This disconnect could be a result of the uncertainty that many teenagers experience. According to Steinberg (2011), teenagers possess the ability to think in multiple dimensions which enables them to think hypothetically and foresee consequences for their actions. These girls were aware that their online activities could result in negative consequences for them, but since reading the policies were too long and tedious, they found their own ways of maintaining privacy online.

The majority of teen girls did not read online privacy policies because they were too long. However, the girls were aware of privacy issues such as revealing too much personal information, or their information being received by the wrong person. Some of the girls explained that they dealt with these issues by coding their information online. Some of the girls felt that adults did not trust them online to be safe, and judged them on how they used online media. One girl exemplified teens’ vulnerability when she shared the story of talking to complete strangers online who asked her personal information about herself.

Once again referring to boyd’s quote previously mentioned in this chapter “Not only have the next generation not given up on privacy, but they’re actually trying to find ways to achieve privacy in networked publics” (boyd, 2012, p. 349), the teen girls in Trinidad and Tobago have not given up on privacy, but many of the girls have indeed found a way to have privacy on public networks such as the social networking site Facebook by coding their messages and by using features and application that only allow the intended receiver to view the messages.
Conclusion

My Big Idea

This dissertation set out to demonstrate how teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago used online media as equipment for living. I first became interested in this topic in 2009 after informally observing a group of teenage girls using online media to help them with choreography, homework, and to communicate with friends. My interest was further peaked in 2011 when a fourteen (14) year old girl created an online video voicing her opinion about the Prime Minister and the State of Emergency in Trinidad and Tobago. The girl, who called herself “Granny Quila” made national news because after uploading her video the SNS YouTube, her video was shared on other SNS like Facebook, and soon her video was seen by many people in many different countries. The teen girl, “Granny Quila,” sparked a media frenzy on how teenagers, especially teenage girls used online media. My interest in this topic was fueled further because many people were blaming technology and its ease of access for Granny Quila’s behavior. This was due to the fact that in 2010 the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago ensured that every student entering high school was given a government issued internet ready laptop to use during their high school years. The distribution of laptops to high school children was heavily criticized and the national newspapers citing experts on the matter who stated that “Students are masterful time wasters and the computer is the ultimate time wasting equipment. Without close supervision student will play games watch movies, surf the net etc.” (Lucie-Smith, 2010). Other researchers said that the students would not use the laptops for educational purposes. At the time this was published I questioned the research results. When Granny Quila created her infamous video, she was one of the students who
received a laptop and her online media activities seemed to start the debates and critics again on how teenagers, especially teenage girls used online media.

Assuming girls’ online media use was futile and I believed that only through research, analysis, and interpretation can a researcher truly discover how teenage girls used online media. Instead of assuming knowledge of teenage girls’ online media use, I decided to research their online media habits for this dissertation. Therefore, the two main aims of this dissertation are: 1) to understand the different reasons the teenage girls use online media, and 2) understand and explain how the teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago use online media as equipment for living, that is, how teenage girls in Trinidad and Tobago use online media to help them deal with situations that occur in their everyday lives.

Theoretical Framework

Kenneth Burke’s theory of equipment for living was the main theory used throughout this dissertation. Burke believed that people used the narratives in texts, such as poetry or literature to help them cope with situations that occur in their everyday lives. As text refers to content rather than physical form, researchers applied the theory of equipment for living to other mediated texts, such as movies, television shows, and video games (Brummett, 1984; Brummett, 1985; Payne 1989; Young, 2000; Soetaert et al., 2011). However, previous research had focused on adults, and I believed that teenagers can also use media as equipment for living, because they have the cognitive development to negotiate and relate the narratives of mediated texts to their lives. I explained how teenagers have the cognitive ability to use online media as equipment for living based on the following: the fourth stage of Piaget’s (Lehalle, 2006) cognitive advanced theory, the
formal operational stage that occurs in people twelve years of age and older, and Steinberg’s (2011) five categories of adolescents’ cognitive changes: thinking about possibilities, thinking about abstract concepts, thinking about thinking (metacognition), thinking in multiple dimensions, and seeing knowledge as relative (relativism). For example, because teenagers have the cognitive skills to think about possibilities as well as think about abstract concepts, the teen girls in this study viewed online media as both a concrete symbol and an abstract symbol. Facebook represented a platform for them to communicate, seek information, and create content and at the same time, Facebook also represented freedom for the girls, freedom that allowed them to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

In order to fully understand how teenagers use online media as equipment for living, I developed a model using Burke’s philosophy of symbols and symbolic action, dramatism and the pentad, attitudes, and representative anecdote. The model: “Equipment for Living Model for Teenage Girls Based on Burke’s Interpretation of a Symbolic Action” (see Figure 1 in chapter 1), used Burke’s philosophy on how symbols play an essential function in society, as symbols allowed people the capability to recognize, comprehend, and give meaning to reoccurring instances in life (Burke, 1962).

The Method Without My Madness

This dissertation attempted to answer the following research question:

- How often do teen girls use the Internet?
- What websites do the teen girls frequent?
- How do the teen girls use online media?
• How do the teen girls use online media for communication, information seeking, and creation of content?
• How do online media serve as equipment for living for the teen girls?
• Do privacy policies influence what websites the teen girls use?
• Do privacy issues influence what the teen girls post online?

To answer these questions I employed two methods: surveys and focus groups. I also asked the girls to blog about their online activities. Surveys were used to obtain demographic and general online media use. The focus groups and blogs obtained more in-depth information from the girls, enabling the girls to express their ideas and opinions in their own words for according to Burrell and Morgan (1985) the social world “can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities being studied” (p. 3).

The participants were twelve to fourteen year old girls who were in Form One and Form Two, that is, the first two years of high school in Trinidad and Tobago. The participants attended a prestige same-sex denominational school. Out of the potential 112 participants, 62 girls participated in the survey and 24 girls participated in the focus groups and blogs.

**Limitations of Methodology**

There were a few methodological limitations in this study. One of the major limitations I faced during this project was the time constraint I had to collect the data. I had exactly three weeks to travel to Trinidad, recruit participants, get parental permission, and arrange the time period to conduct the focus groups. One of the major advantages was that the three week period fell during the last three weeks of the school term for the
girls, and many times the teachers were absent or gave the girls free periods. All the teachers were cooperative, with the most help from the principal and vice principal. The teachers were all interested in the research, and encouraged the students to participate in the research for their own benefit. However, because of the time constraint, research was conducted in only one school. The school was a same-sex denominational same-sex school government assisted prestige school, and the girls who attended this school had achieved very high grades in previous exams. I would have liked to collect data from a non-prestige, non-denominational same-sex and both-sexes schools for a comparison of data.

Another major limitation was that many of the parents did not give parental consent because many Trinidad parents thought that my research was spying on their family. I found it frustrating that the parents refused to give parental consent based on their preconceived beliefs about Internet use and the reasons behind my research. I found it even more frustrating that the parents would rather make assumptions about my research rather than contact me personally with questions. Even though I supplied the parents with many different ways to contact me, all of the parents voiced their objections through their children. Understanding the Trinidadian culture was imperative and being Trinidadian myself enabled me to understand their perspectives and gave polite, diplomatic responses to their accusations. Only one parent, a single father, contacted me about the project. He commended me for my research interests, and appreciated that someone was taking the time to listen to what the girls had to say. He wanted to ensure that his daughter was included in the focus group, as he believed his daughter was extremely shy, and the focus group gave her the opportunity to interact with other girls in
a controlled setting, as well as give her a chance to voice her opinions in a safe, non-judgmental environment I discovered that many of the girls, despite their parents’ objections wanted to participate in the study, explaining that their parents were uninformed about the important role the Internet played in their lives.

One limitation that I did not expect was that many of the Form One girls, even though they were given parental permission, chose not to participate in the focus group and blog part of the study. Many of these girls said that they did not want to participate in the focus group and blogs because they were shy and a few admitted that they did not trust that what was said in the focus groups will remain in private for they did not all trust their classmates as they had only been together as a class for a few months. Due to their lack of participation I was unable to have four focus groups, as originally planned, and also, less Form One girls’ opinions and voices in the focus group discussions.

Another major limitation was that only a few girls posted on the blog. I discovered that while the majority of girls did read the blog posts and read the comments left by the few girls who wrote on it, the girls were more lurkers than writers. I did not anticipate this problem as the survey and focus groups demonstrated that the girls were active users of social networking sites and regularly commented on statuses and various posts. I propose several reasons why the girls decided not to write on the blog. First, the girls were not active writers on the blog because of the anonymity the blog provided. In the focus groups, the girls enjoyed voicing their opinions, interacting, and engaging their friends in conversations. The girls gained attention and popularity from the other girls present within the focus groups when they discussed various topics. Attention and popularity were craved by girls at that age in their lives, and while they achieved this by
participating in the focus group, this could not be achieved by participating on the blog because of the anonymity the blog provided. Therefore, I propose that the girls were not interesting in writing on the blog, since they had nothing to gain by participating. Second, while participating in the focus group the girls had the advantage of giving and receiving verbal and non-verbal encouragement from one another; since the blog was only text and anonymous, the girls did not receive the support from each other to participate in the conversation on the blog. Third, blogging may not have worked as a method because the girls were on school break when the blog started and the girls were no longer interested in writing on the blog since they were on vacation. Finally, I discovered that while previous research (Lenhart et al., 2005) found that girls were more active bloggers than boys, these girls were not bloggers; in fact, many of them had never participated in a blog and were wary of the process, opting to observe through lurking, rather than be active participants on the blog.

**The Answers to the Questions**

This section provides a summary of the findings for each of the research questions. The section is organized by research question and the corresponding findings.

*How often do teen girls use the Internet?* Research found that 76% of the teenage girls surveyed went online at least once a day, and all the teen girls used the Internet at least once a week.

*What websites do the teen girls frequent?* Results showed that the teenage girls visited social networking sites the most. The most visited social networking site was YouTube (82%), Google+ (66%), and Facebook (63%). The data from the survey also showed that the girls visited websites about hobbies, websites that provided them with
information to help them with homework and other school related assignments, and websites that provided them with a means to watch television shows and movies online.

**How do the teen girls use online media?** The three main reasons the girls used online media was for communication, information seeking, and content creation which were consistent with the finding from previous research (Stern & Willis, 2007; Lenhart et al., 2005).

**How do the teen girls use online media for communication, information seeking, and creation of content?** The girls used online media as a communicative tool to keep in touch with family and friends, for social networking, for conflict management, and for introspection. Many the girls used online media for communication because it was cheaper than using the telephone and online media also provided the girls with the necessary platform in order to stay in contact with people, to make and maintain friendships, to manage conflicts because they found that it was easier and safer to deal with conflicts online instead of in person. The teen girls also thought that online media also facilitated a platform for them to sort out and express their own thoughts and feelings.

The girls used online media to look up information for school assignments, information on health topics, and information on special topics they were interested in such as music, celebrities, and short stories. The girls used information to look up information for school assignments because they found it easier, faster, and more up to date than encyclopedias and other books. However, it should be noted that for the girls to use online media for school related assignment, the choice to use online media needed to be their choice, where they can take complete ownership of their actions. If they were
told by a teacher to go online to look up information for a school assignment, the girls found this instruction annoying and resented being told what they had to do online. Many of the girls used online media to look up information on health topics because it was anonymous and easier than asking someone. The girls used online media to look up information on special topics they were interested in such as music, celebrities, and short stories mainly because online media was the most convenient way to obtain information on these topics.

The teen girls created online media as representations of their selves and shared creative online works. Online media such as SNS provided the girls with a platform to express their feelings through creating statuses on their SNS profiles. The girls also posted short stories, pictures, and videos they created themselves. The girls admitted that they posted their original works to get feedback and approval from their friends and even strangers via comments. The girls said that the feedback often boosted their self-esteem.

*How do online media serve as equipment for living for the teen girls?* Online media provided a platform and a means for the girls to communicate, seek out and receive information, and create content. In other words, online media provided symbols of communication, information seeking, and content creation, and symbols, such as online media, a social networking site like Facebook for example, played a critical role in society, as Facebook enabled the teen girls to understand and give meaning to seemingly arbitrary yet reoccurring instances in their lives. Symbols can be abstract or concrete, online media were both abstract and concrete symbols for the teen girls. Online media, such as the social networking site, Facebook, provided a platform for the girls to communicate, seek information, and create content, therefore making it a concrete
symbol. I argue that online media had the abstract meaning of freedom for the teen girls; freedom for the girls to communicate freely with family, friends, and even strangers, without the prying eyes of adults; freedom for the girls to obtain information; freedom for the girls to express themselves through statuses on profiles on SNS or through original creative works of art such as music, pictures, and videos. The girls then actively consumed or produced attitudes or strategies which were stories, narratives, proverbs, quotes, music, videos, or any created or consumed content that reflected the girls’ feelings and revealed the symbolic use of the girls’ consumption and production of online media. When these attitudes and strategies, for example a Facebook status, reflected a reality for the teen girls, the Facebook status became a representative anecdote. When the Facebook status became a means to deal with a situation, such as manage a conflict, or express their feelings, then the Facebook status became equipment for living for the girls; therefore, the girls used online media as equipment for living, by recognizing online media as symbol that helped them deal with situations that occurred in their lives.

The representative anecdote for the activities of communication, information seeking, and content creation were: *sharing emotions*, *addressing uncertainties*, and *forming bonds* respectively. These representative anecdotes served as equipment for living because it helped the girls eradicate ambiguity, increase their self-confidence, understand health and body issues without feeling self-conscious or judged by adults, deal with competition both academically and socially, and build and/or maintain social statuses. The girls used online media as equipment for living when they listened to music, played video games, and to watched TV shows online. The representative anecdotes for these activities were: *dealing with emotions*, *escapism*, and *building social status*. These
representative anecdotes served as equipment for living because it helped the girls manage their personal and academic lives by helping them sort out and handle the uncertainty of their lives and their emotions, assisting in their stress management activities by allowing them to experiment with different identities, and building their self-esteem when they feel accepted by their peers.

*Do privacy policies influence what websites the teen girls use?* The majority of girls (77%) in Trinidad and Tobago who participated in the survey did not read online privacy policies and reported that the main reason was because the privacy policies were too long. The girls who did read online privacy policies reported that they cared who saw their online activities. Therefore I argue that for the majority of girls, privacy policies do not influence what websites the girls use.

*Do privacy issues influence what the teen girls post online?* While research indicated that while the privacy policies did not influence what websites the girls used, most of the girls acknowledged the need to protect their personal information online. The girls would often code their communicative activities so that only the intended recipient would understand the message. Therefore, while privacy policies did not influence what websites the girls used, privacy issues such as posting sensitive personal information online was recognized as dangerous online behavior, therefore privacy issues influenced what information the girls posted online, as well as how they presented the information online.

**Reflexivity**

As the researcher, I had to be aware of my presence, as well as my verbal and nonverbal behavior influencing the girls’ responses. As mentioned earlier, I am
Trinidadian and understand the Trinidadian high school culture, as well as the culture of attending a same-sex denominational high school. This knowledge enabled me to relate to the girls on a more personal level, however, this may have influenced how they answered and talked about their experiences in the focus groups. The questions asked in the focus groups made the girls reflect about their online activities, however, I was surprised how easily the girls opened up to me. The girls said that it was easier to speak with me than any other adult about their online media use. I discovered that their ease was not only due to the confidentiality I promised, but many of the girls told me that I did not speak to them in the condescending manner that most adults did, and they viewed me more like one of them, rather than an adult prying into their lives. I was also told that my vernacular was similar to theirs and was very curious on how I was able to speak their language even though I currently lived in the United States. Also, many of the girls simply stated that the main reason they assented to participate was because I was the only person who asked them about their online activities instead of assuming the worst about their online activities.

**Contribution to Girls’ Studies**

In this dissertation I employed the humanistic methodological approach of obtaining information, the approach which both Carol Gilligan and Angela McRobbie, called the foremothers of girls’ studies by Mazzarella and Pecora (2007), themselves used. Using Gilligan and McRobbie’s approach of listening to the girls’ voices, I obtained information on how the girls consumed and produced online media, as well as how the teen girls used online media as equipment for living. While previous girls’ studies scholars normally focused on the narratives of media texts and the perceptions of
media and identity formation, I placed more emphasis on the girls as active agents with online media, and how the medium, in this case the Internet, in conjunction with the medium’s content, help the teen girls deal with situations that occur in their everyday lives.

**Implications for Further Research**

The project was a stepping stone to discovering how the girls used online media, specifically how online media was equipment for living for the girls. However, what this research did not address and perhaps future research can, is what happens after the girls use it as equipment for living. I propose that future research take into consideration the frames of acceptance/rejection/transition posited by Mahan-Hays and Aden (2003). Future research can determine if the girls either accept or reject the information given to them in the representative anecdote or use the information to transition to another representative anecdote. Also, future research can also determine if once equipment for living occurs, the girls return to online media to help them deal with the situation they are experiencing, making the processes cyclic instead of linear.

Finally, it was be interesting to see if the girls’ online media use increase or decrease, or in what areas do their consumption and production change with the progression of school and increased academic pressures. I proposed that the Form 2 girls were more adept in using online media was because they were in a comfortable place in school between the stages of initiation into high school and increased academic demand. Future research can do a longer cross-sectional study from Form ones to Form 3s to determine if my proposition is accurate.
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Appendix 1: Survey

Trinidadian Teen Girls and Their Online Media Use

I am interested in the way Trinidadian teens use online media. Online media is defined as any form of communication that can be used or found on the Internet. These include but are not limited to, social networking sites, emailing, video gaming, instant messaging, blogs and informative websites.

Your answers to this brief survey are anonymous – that means that I do not know which response is yours. Unless you put some information on here that identifies you specifically, no one will be able to tell which survey belongs to you.

1. I am interested in the kind of things you do when you go online. Not everyone has done these things. Please tell me whether you ever do each one, or not.

Do you ever...?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Send or read email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send or receive instant messages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy things online such as books, clothing and music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for health, dieting and physical fitness information online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go online to get news or information about current events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for news or information about politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for religious or Spiritual information online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for information about a job online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go online to get information about a college, university or any other school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to websites about movies, TV shows, music or other hobbies you are interested in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch movies or TV shows online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play games online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for information online about a health topic that’s hard to talk about, like drug use, sexual health, or depression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for information to help with homework and other school related assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Which of the above activities do you do most often?
3. Overall, how often do you go online? Check only one.
   [ ] Several times a day  [ ] Once a day  [ ] 3-5 days a week
   [ ] 1-2 days a week
   [ ] Every few weeks  [ ] Less often

4. Which of the following social networking sites (SNS) do you use? Check all that apply.
   [ ] Facebook  [ ] Bebo  [ ] Habbo
   [ ] Twitter  [ ] Friendster  [ ] Tumblr
   [ ] MySpace  [ ] Hi5  [ ] Second Life
   [ ] Google +  [ ] Foursquare  [ ] I do not use SNS
   [ ] YouTube  [ ] Blogster  [ ] Other (Please specify)

5. I would like to know the specific ways you communicate with your friends using social networking sites.

   Do you ever…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Can’t do this on my SNS</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post comments to a friend’s page or wall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send a bulletin or group message to a group of your friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send private messages to a friend within the social networking site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send instant messages or text messages to a friend through the social networking site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post comments to a friend’s blog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add comments to a friend’s picture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add comments to a friend’s video</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add comments to a friend’s link</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browse or update your social networking profile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join groups on a social networking site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Have you ever created any of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social networking site (SNS) profile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group page on a SNS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A video that you uploaded onto a SNS like YouTube or Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Blog
Website
Music that you have uploaded onto a website or SNS
Photos that you have loaded onto a website or SNS
Other (please specify) __________________________________________

If you have not created any of the above, please go to question 8

7. Why did you create the online media mentioned in the previous question. Check all that apply.

- [ ] Express personality
- [ ] Political Statement
- [ ] For Fun
- [ ] Express opinions on social issues
- [ ] Entertainment
- [ ] For school
- [ ] As a creative outlet
- [ ] Other (please specify) __________________________________________

8. People have different opinions about the impact of the Internet on kids today. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most teens are not careful enough about the information they give out about themselves online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teens who use the Internet to stay in touch with their friends have better social lives than teens who don’t use the Internet to do this</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teens waste a lot of time online, when they could be doing more important things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most teens do things online that they wouldn’t want their parents to know about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Do you read privacy policies online?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

If you answered YES, please go to question 11.

10. If you answered NO, why not? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] Privacy policies are too long
- [ ] I am not interested in the website’s privacy policy
- [ ] I don’t care who sees my online activities
- [ ] Other (please specify) __________________________________________

If you answered question 10, please skip to question 12.

11. If you answered YES, why? (Check all the apply)

- [ ] My privacy is important to me
[ ] I care who sees my online activities
[ ] The website's privacy policy influences what I put online
[ ] Other (please specify)

12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your online media use?

13. How old are you? Check only one.
[ ] 12  [ ] 13  [ ] 14  [ ] 15  [ ] 16  [ ] 17  [ ] 18

14. What class are you in? Check only one.
[ ] Form 1  [ ] Form 2  [ ] Form 3  [ ] Form 4  [ ] Form 5

Thank you for giving me your time!
Appendix 2: Focus Group Guide

Focus Group Guide

Note: - Before starting the focus group, ensure that the participants have the signed parental consent form

Do you understand the assent form you were asked to read and sign?

Do you have any questions before we start about the assent form, or what is expected from you today?

I want to remind you that everything you tell me is confidential.

Online Media

1. When you hear the term online media, what do you think of?
2. Why do you use the online media?

Social Networking Sites (SNS)

3. Do you have a social networking site like Facebook or Twitter?
   a. If yes.. why do you have one? What do you use it for?
   b. If no, why not?
4. How often do you use SNS
5. How often do you update your statuses on SNS?
6. How would you feel if you were unable to partake in the online activities?

Granny Quila Video

7. Do you remember the state of emergency (SOE)?
8. Do you remember a 14 year old who got in trouble because she made and posted a video about the SOE and posted it online?
   If not tell them the story.
9. What do you think about her actions?
10. Some people think that posting her video was ways of letting people know how she felt, because no one else was listening to her. What do you think?
11. Do you think posting videos or other artwork that you created yourself a good way of expressing how you feel?
12. Will you ever do it?
Appendix 3: Focus Groups Transcription

Focus Group 1

M: When you hear online media what is the first thing you think of?
SA1,3,4,5,6: Facebook
M: Facebook?
SA1,3,4,5,6: Yes Facebook.
M: Why Facebook?
S1: Because it is just different. The things you get to do you don’t get to do. It is really exciting. It is the thing to do when you go online.
M: So why do you use Facebook then?
S6: To talk with my friends and family members
M: So to talk with your friends and family members
S6: Yes
S4: To get the latest gossip or to take and mind people’s business
M: So to mind people’s business and take about gossip
S1: I basically just use facebook to keep in contact with people I know I don’t see very often face to face
M: So to stay in contact with people you don’t see everyday face to face. So to communicate with people you don’t get to see.
S1: Yes
M: So why else do you use Facebook
S3: To find out about homework
M: To find out about what?
S3: Homework.
S1,3,4,5,6: I actually use it do homework
M: You actually use it do homework?
S3: Well when we can’t figure out the homework we go online and chat with each other about how to do the homework or when we forget what the home work is
M: So you’ll use it when you forget things you go online and ask….
S4,5,6: Yeah we go online ask.
M: You have FB S2?
S2: No but I use FB to see what my sister does be doing online?
M: So you use it to keep tabs on your sister?
S2: Yes
M: So why you don’t have FB? Is there a reason why you don’t have FB?
S2: Well because my parents think it is not age appropriate for me yet. I guess they don’t trust me.
M: Do you think that is a fair assessment from your parents?
S2: Well I feel like it is kind of fair because I was kind of involved in some miserable stuff when I was younger. By the time I hit 13 I should be able to go on FB.
M: Ok that is fair.
S2: Yes
M: Ok what about you guys? Because I know not all of you guys are 13 right?
S1,3: I am 12
S1,3: I cheat with entering my age.
M: So your parents allowed you to be on FB?
S1: My father told me don’t go but I still went.
M: So you disobeyed your parents?
S1: Yes
M: So um, if your parents allow you to be on FB, do they trust you? Or, do they want to
know everything that you do?
S5: They want to know everything that I do
S1: They trust me (same student who disobeyed her parents)
S3: I think they trust me.
S6: They don’t know that I am on FB
M: Are your parents actually aware of what FB is?
S2,3,4,5,6: Yes
S1: No
S3,4: My parents know about FB
S1: My father has no clue
M: For those of you that have FB how often do you update your status?
S3: I always go online but I never update my status
S1: I barely update my status like 3 times in 2 months (same student as above)
S4: I update it whenever something happens to me
M: So you update it whenever something happens to you. Why do you feel the need to
put it up?
S4: Because you just need to get it out. And I want to people to like comment on it.
S1: You want people to know what happen
M: So if something good or bad happens you feel like you want to tell someone
S4: Yes
M: And your status is an easy way to tell someone?
S4: Yes – 4:15
M: And then you get friends to tell you
S1: to give you advice
S: Some of them do you pull you down and I have to admit for me I change my status 3
times every 2 months
S6: I don’t really change my status. I hardly ever change my status
S1: Yeah me too
S5: I only change my status when I get a good quote or something that I want to share
with my friends
M: Oh that is good, that is interesting. Why do you put quotes on your facebook then?
S5: Well if I see it and it sounds interesting maybe I just want to share it with my friends
S4: For motivation
M: Like what kind of quotes? Like Life inspiring
S5: Motivational
M: Motivational quotes?
S5: Yes
M: And how does that make you feel when people comment on that?
S5: Good because sometimes it makes them feel happy
M: So S2 if you had FB do you think you will be updating your statuses all the time or what do you think you would want to put up on FB then?
S2: If I had FB I would not be putting up statuses all the time because most likely I will forget about it. I would rather play games and talk with my friends and stuff.
M: No well I am online I don’t update my status all the time. Ask her and she can tell you that I am never updating my status.
S2: I never change my status.
M: So let me ask you this. You guys use it for home work, you use it to communicate with each other and to communication with friends. You use it to make friends feel happy or to just express yourself right?
S4: Yes. All those things
M: How would you feel if you were not allowed to take part in any online activities? If you could not go on FB, if you could not check your email? If you could not do anything online including FB? How would you feel?
S1: I would be really upset because I know all my friends are looking forward to seeing me and they can’t I would feel really bad
M: How would you feel?
S2: I would feel like a piece of me left me.
S1: As if someone cut out my heart
M: You would feel like a piece of you left you?
S4: I would feel like a prisoner or like the people back in the 20s where you could not do anything.
S5: I would feel sad without it because you can’t communicate with your friends there because I would have to find another way to talk to them other than online
S3: If I could not talk to my friends online I would feel really bad because I would raise up my mother’s phone bill because I would be calling people all the time on her phone
M: So how would you feel?
S6: I would feel kind of upset at times but it is just um, it is not reality it is just a virtual kind of world. It would bother me for a while but I will kind of get over it
M: But say for example you guys go online and put something up on Facebook or YouTube or Twitter or you send someone an email right, and that person does not reply within a week or does not comment within a week, how would you feel?
S4: That’s bad. I will quarrel.
S1: I would feel really upset. That happens to me so many times.
S5: I would feel bad but the next time that person talk to me I would not respond.
S3: I would not do anything
S1: I would like you to know that happen to me already and every time I send a message it would be “I’m Sorry! I’m sorry! I’m Sorry!” Every message would be “I am sorry. Please forgive me.”
M: Yes, you would feel bad if you do that to someone?
S1: I will keep saying sorry, sorry, sorry.
M: Have ya’ll ever done that to someone?
S4: Done what?
M: Like when someone sent you a message, like email or anything and you don’t reply to them.
S3,4: Yes, all the time.
S4: Yes, especially when I don’t want to speak to them.
S1: Yes, especially if you send them something really really nice and they don’t reply you get really ticked off.
M: So do you think it is okay for you to do it to people but it is not ok for people to do it to you?
S1: No, it is not ok either way.
M: But you think it is a good thing that you can be invisible to people sometimes?
S: Yes.
S3: Sometimes, yes.
S1: Because you need your own space and you need time for yourself to just do what you have to do instead people always being there, stuck up under you, always talking to you.
M: What do you guys go online to look up besides FB do you guys look up information online?
SA1: Homework!
S1: I look up pictures of what other people like
S2: Weapons, like crossbows and archery and stuff (makes the gesture with her hands like shooting an arrow)
M: Weapons? That is pretty cool. Like Archery and stuff?
S2: Yes just like that
M: So you go online to look up hobbies. What else?
S1: I do scouting
S5: I use for research about homework or games
M: So do you think the internet helps you with everything that goes on with your life?
S3: Yes. It teaches you how to cook
M: It teaches you how to cook?
S3: Yes.
S1: Yes when you play games
M: What about playing games? Me on FB I have 3 friends and we are in competition for $100, 000 pyramid. It is an old TV game show. And we play it all the time and we are always competing with each other, and we are always helping each other out. For us, we don’t live in the same country, we live all over the world, but we all went to convent together . We play games to compete with each other. We don’t message each other, we are just competing. It is just fun. What do you guys do like stuff like that? Do you play games?
S1: I play games
S5: I don’t play games on FB
S3: I don’t play games either
S1: I play a lot of games on FB.
S5: I hate it. I get 40 something requests to play games a day
S6: They are very addictive
S1: Yes they are very addictive.
M: Forget FB. Do anyone else play games online besides on FB
S: All but one student raises her hand – S6
S: I play Second Life
M: Second Life! What do you play?
S2: Escape games
M: Escape Games?
M: What do you play?
S4: I play Good game fashion and those kind of managerial games.
S1: Yeah the fashion games
S6: Dress-up?
S4: Yeah dress up
M: Can you tell me about Second Life? What is Second Life about?
S5: My friend was talking about it from primary school so I went on it and it like a game where you can have a house or something like that, but all I saw was people walking around. You can make your own character and you can have a house and stuff
M: So you can have a virtual life online?
S1: Yeah like SIMS
S5: Yeah I have build-a-bear workshop. I have two profiles there. I go online and play games and you can build a house and there are games you can play to get points
M: So why do you play those things?
S5: Because it is interesting. You can go online and have a virtual world.
S6: Sometimes you just need to get away from all the stress of homework and school and you can go into this virtual world and have fun.
S1: You can create your own world on how you want it to be
M: Ok let me ask you this. Any of you ever created anything and put it online?
S1: I created a video
M: You created video! You want to tell me about the video?
S1: Nahhh
M: No. Ok so why did you create it?
S1: I created because I felt that I had an opinion to express.
M: So you felt you had an opinion to express so you created a video. Did you put it on YouTube?
S1: I put it on YouTube and on FB
M: And how did you feel when you put it up on youtube and FB?
S1: A lot of people commented on FB and said stuff like “I know what you mean. I feel the same way” Some people disagreed with me. That was ok with me. I did not mind.
M: What do you guys think? You think that is good that she created a video because she had an opinion to express.
S5: Well once it is a positive opinion.
M: Well what about those that have negative opinions. You guys remember Granny Quila right?
S3,4,5,6: Yes.
S1: Who?
M: Well Granny Quila was this 14 year old girl who created a youtube video and was talking really badly about the Prime Minister.
S1: Oh my Gosh. Her?
M: Yes. Now she had an opinion to express and she got in trouble because she used curse words
S1: and you don’t cuss Indian people. That is one thing you need to know you don’t cuss Indian people
M: You don’t cuss people on a whole! So what do you think about her actions? She did it because she had an opinion to express and Granny Quila had an opinion to express and she felt that nobody was listening to her so she created a video what do you think is the difference between her actions and Granny Quila actions?
S4: Even though you disagree with something and you want to put up a video you should talk about the person respectfully. Like, even though you want to say something bad you don’t have to say “yah mudda so and so” like you could. (gesturing with hands to express good things)
M: Yeah
S3: Yes that is true. She did put it up on Youtube and she tried to remove it, and she did remove it and then other people made a page about her again and posted the video there.
M: So what do you have to say
S5: Well actually, if you have something positive to say about somebody that is ok, but if you have something to say, even if it is negative, like what S4 said, even if it is negative there is a certain way you should say it, not in a bad way like cursing and using disrespectful words.
S1: Yeah you could say instead “I really don’t find the Prime Minister doing too good a job.” I would not go and curse the prime minister because it is because of her I am here right now with a laptop.
M: Yes S2
S2: I find you really should not put up your opinions on FB or online at all. You should try to minimize it.
M: You should try to minimize it. Why?
S2: Because some people are there and they can get to see your personality just by your opinion. And I think that is kind of dangerous.
M: Ok so why do you feel that is dangerous.
S2: No because it is not private or confidential
M: What she is saying is not just about FB but online you should try to minimize what you say online because you never know who is reading your stuff, who is watching your stuff and people can get into your stuff even though you are not friends with them
S3: People can hack your profile
M: Yes they can hack your profile
S5: I think what she said is true because now what Mrs. Guerrero was telling us that when you apply for a job now people go on your FB to see what type of person you are, to what you are like to see if they can work with you
M: Now let me ask you this. I have seen pictures with people in their school uniform all the time on FB. You think that is safe?
S A1: No. That is not safe
S1: No that happen to one a colleague of mine. I hate to say this but since it is only you guys hearing this. When I was eleven I had a “man” as we say in Trinidad and that happened….  

214
M: Wait hold on… Remember that everything that is said here stays here.
S5: Wait I did not hear what she said.
S1: Apparently when I was 11 years old I had as they say in Trinidad “a man”
S6: So she had a boyfriend
S1: And he posted up one of his pictures up on FB of himself in his uniform and someone actually came looking for him to steal his Blackberry and they came and stole his Blackberry and I find exactly for that reason it is not safe.
M: So she gave a personal example of how someone can find you in your school uniform.
S4: Miss my friend was going to a certain school and this boy he was some stalker man and she looked, she had a picture of her in uniform and he saw and he came to the school once to ask for the person and stuff.
S3: What? That is madness!
M: So how do you feel about that?
S1: That is pretty scary! Next thing you know the guy actually waiting for her after school and go and grab her and stuff.
M: SO when you create content. Do you guys understand the term create content?
S3: Not completely
M: When you put a status up you are creating content. When you comment on someone’s picture you are creating content. These are your words, your ideas that you are expressing online. So when you guys do stuff like that and people reply do you even think before you put it up “Oh I wonder who is going to see this.”
S5: No not always
S4: Obviously you think before you act but I think it is easier said than done, because I cannot do that all the time
S1: If you in that moment, and you are in the moment, you are not thinking about all of that. If it is a negative status and you in that negative way, you not really thinking about what it is you are saying.
S5: Like if you mad at someone you want to say you mad at that person and why you man
S4: You just want to type it up and get out what it is you want to say
S5: In that moment you not really thinking about if everybody going to know who she really is
S1: If you are upset and that is how you are really are and feeling you not going to think through what you are writing.
S1: So you not really thinking about that person you talking negatively about and if that person will see it and you just want to write about it. You not thinking about if someone else will tell that person or share your status for that person to read.
S4: You just want to get it off your chest.
m: So you just want to get it off your chest
S4: Yeah
M: And the internet is a good way
S4: Yeah the internet is good way to express this.
S5: It is easier than face to face.
S1: People really do communicate and let out their feelings online. People don’t really write in diaries anymore
S6: I write in a diary
S4: I don’t understand writing in a diary. It does never work.
S6: My diary is a word document on my laptop, and I protect it with a password on my laptop.
M: She does not have FB so she does not get to go online, but she writes on a diary on her computer. You think if you guys did not have FB you guys would write in a diary?
S. 1,3,4: NO
S3: I have a friend when she is really upset you writes poems
S1: Yeah I do that too. When I am feel bad I will write a poem
M: So would you ever put those things online
S6. No
S2: No
S4: Yes
S5: I have a friend right she real get me vex and I try to talk it out and write about it for myself, but sometimes that is not enough. Sometimes I just want to Aaahhhhh....
M: You’ll just ever call up your friends and rant.
S1,6: Yes I do that all the time
S1: Yeah because you need to get it out to someone who will listen
S3: I don’t call anyone. I will go on chat and do it there. It is too expensive to call them
M: Ok so S3 just made a very important point right. She said instead of calling the person because she said earlier it will run up her mother’s phone bill, she will just go online and talk to them.
S1: yes I do that too
M: So do you get the same kind of interaction you get online as you would over the phone because say for example
S4: You could video chat. Video chat freezes and that does get sickening and I will just get irritated
M: So do you think it is easier to deal with someone you are vex with online than on the phone or face to face
S3: Yes and it is cheaper and you don’t waste any money
S4: You can talk calmer online than face to face
S1: But if you seeing the person everyday it kind of hard to do it online because you will still have to deal with the person when you see them
M: S2 and S3 you are kind of quiet. What do you have to say? If you vex with me and you have to see me and deal with me in everyday in class, do you think it would be easier to talk to me in school or talk to me online?
S3: Online.
S2 – (No FB) : I would talk to the person in school.
M: Yeah! Why?
S2: One I like to always choose the hard way. And two, if they tell me anything I will just get my revenge right there. I like to strategize when dealing with people and I would strategize when talking to them.
M: ok let me tell you a story when I was in school here someone spread a rumor about me to this girl and the girl was coming in school to confront me but I don’t know what was going on. But, we had a mutual friend and the mutual friend came into school early
just to let me know that this girl was going to come with her posse and confront me, right. So my friend just warned me up front. So she came, the girl came with her posse to tell me to stop talking bad about her and I had no clue what she was talking about. So O just calmly tell the girl. You know whoever told you that, you should go ask the girl what she is talking about because I don’t know what you talking about. And the girl just got madder and madder because apparently the girl who said all this was her neighbor and her neighbor met me once. So I was like, I don’t know what you are talking about, I don’t know what you are talking about. And the girl just kept getting madder and madder and eventually one of her friends was like maybe Melissa really don’t know what you are talking about. Then she turn around and say, well don’t talk about my business and she leave. And then the other day we were talking online and she brought that up. Then the girl was telling me how she found one of the pictures I put up on FB was disrespectful and apparently one of the girls in the picture did not like how she looked and instead of telling me, she told this girl to come and tell me. And the girl found it much easier to tell me on FB because remembered back in the day how she will get so mad. So she thinks it is so much easier to talk on FB than to talk in person, because with her personality she tend to get mad very quickly.
S6: Yeah it is true because even if people get mad you can just disconnect and leave and there is no fear of people hurting you physically.
M: So S2 said she strategizes her confrontation in person. But it is very hard to strategize on FB. You never know what is going to happen on FB.
M: So do you think it is easier or harder to maintain relationships online like via FB
S3,4: Easier.
S1: Depending on the situation it is so much easier.
M: SO it is easier to lie?
S1: yes it is easier to lie. I do it all the time.
M: Is it also easier to misinterpret?
S1: yeah because people will tell you they really like you and you may think they like you one way but really they like you another way.
M: So have you guys ever misinterpreted stuff that was put on FB or anything online?
S6: No. I don’t think I have.
S1. People tag me all the time.
S3: Well I will put on a picture and tag someone and the person will remove the tag and don’t leave a comment.
M: So how do you feel when people tag you in pictures without your permission.
S1: I get really upset.
S5: I get real vex because last term for class party they took pictures and two of them I didn’t look good in and they girl still put it up on FB and tagged me and I just removed the tag. But I wish I can delete it.
S1: I said something once and my friend tagged me online in his status putting what I said as his status and I was real mad. That was private conversation and he actually put my name and said so and so said this to me and people were commenting on what he put up that I said and he did it without my permission.
M: S2 how would you feel if someone put a picture of you online without your permission?
S2: I would feel betrayed because I feel like they have abused my trust.
M: So let’s back track a little bit. You said you put a video online to express how you felt. Do you feel like no one else was listening to you?
S1: I tried to talk to my dad and he did not listen. I tried to talk to my stepmom and she did not listen. My stepmom and dad are divorced now. I tried talking to my niece and she did not listen. I tried talking to my aunt and she did not listen either. I just got really upset so I took like two weeks of space in between and then I made the video.
M: So have you ever felt that way. That no one is ever listening to you.
S6: I write in my diary when that happens
M: You write in your diary when that happens.
S6: Yes
S3: Well if no one want to listen to me at home I will talk it with one of my friends.
M: So you talk it out with one of your friends in person or online?
S3: I do it online. They not always available in person.
S4: Either or. I think the time it takes to make the video I think the anger will die out in me.
S3: and you might forget what even happen.
S4: yeah for real.
S5: Some songs help with that situation.
M: You said some songs really help. Do you post this music online?
S1: I put it all up on my wall. I find it on YouTube and I put it up on my wall.
M: So what does posting the song online do for you’ll?
S1: When people comment and they actually give their opinion. If the song helps them as well and they tell you at least you know that you have something in common with that person.
S3. Yeah that
M: What do you think?
S6: Well I don’t really post songs so I don’t know.
M: S2 do you think you will post songs online. If you find a song real help you through a situation, do you think you would post it online.
S2: Yeah if I could.
S1: What do you mean if you could?
M: Remember she does not have FB so she can’t post things to her wall.
S2: I would listen to music that I like and I probably post only the music that I like
M: Do you post music for other reasons?
S4: What do you mean?
M: For example I live all the way in Ohio right and carnival for me is really hard because I am never here so, my friends will always let me know when some songs come out and I would put it up on FB and share so that my other friends who are not at home, like in Australia or in India or somewhere else, they can see the music too. So for me posting music online, sharing videos and stuff online is a way of expressing to my friends “Hey guess what came out for Carnival!”
S1: I do that too. If I really like an artiste or I really like a song I would put it up and I will be like I really like this artist, This song real bad.
M: When you use the internet. What is the one thing besides FB that you would use it for?
S1,2,3,4,5,6: MSN, Twitter, yahoo, google and youtube and games and Homework. We can’t forget homework.
M: So let’s talk about the homework part. This fascinates me, the homework part. When I have homework when I was in Convent we had to go look things up in an Encyclopedia. S5: Whenever I have to go by my grandmother there is no internet there and I have homework to do she tells me to go look it up in the encyclopedia. That is what she used to do and it is so much harder it to do that.
S3: And it is boring too
S4: It is so much easier to just google it
S5: The encyclopedia is so much reading
M: But it is the same reading you have to read when you google it
S5: Yeah but it is easier reading. You can copy and paste stuff instead of having to write things out by hand.
M: SO homework is one of the biggest things you use the internet for. So what do you do for homework S2, since you don’t get to go online as much as everyone else here.
S2: Well I have a couple of encyclopedias at home that I can use or I will use the books in we have in school in the library to get work done.
M: So do you feel left out when you see everyone else getting to use FB and the internet and you don’t get to?
S2: I feel left out with the aspect of the games but everything else I don’t really care about.
M: SO the games part
S2: Like plant versus Zombies.
M: What is this plant versus Zombies game I keep hearing you guys talk about?
S1: Oohhh… That is the best game ever.
S4: That game is really addicting. I can play that game all day long.
M: So I guess that is your version of Angry Birds
S2: I think it is just escapism.
S4: Yeah escapism in to the games.
M: SO you guys plays that game online then
S4: No I have it on my laptop
M: It comes with the laptop
S4: No. I downloaded it so I can play it whenever I want since we don’t always have internet access
M: So what online games you play?
S3,4,1: SIMS, Angry Birds, Fruit Ninja, cityville, Mafia wars
M: You’ll play a lot of online games. Ok so why do you like to play games online then
S3: Because my family sends me request for games and I want to see what it is about.
S1: Some of the games, you know like the fighting games and the shooting games and I just like to sit in front of the computer all day shooting things.
M: But why do you playing it though? Does it give you some kind of satisfaction?
S1: It helps me. It helps me to get out all my anger.
M: So when you are angry you make a video or you go on FB and play games?
S1: Yes
M: What about you S2 why do you play games online?
S2: For the shooting games online. I like that basically because that is just part of me. I like to play it as a means of escaping. I also like to do it because I like to play strategy games. I like to escape from the pressures of school and stuff.
M: Why do you play games? I can’t remember your name.
S6: Well I don’t play games online and stuff.
M: So why don’t you play games?
S6: Well I find whenever you start to play games online you start to get addicted and I don’t need to get addicted.
S4: Even if my eyes hurt me I don’t stop.
M: Do you think posting videos, posting artwork you did yourself, posting poems, posting pictures you did. Posting all those things do you think that is a good way of expressing how you feel?
S3: Sort of. Once it is a not a vulgar picture.
S1: And once all the people in the picture approve that they want to be there and they like how they look.
M: And what about the videos that you do or the artwork and poetry that you do?
S1: Once it have nothing bad in it.
M: But what about just the action of putting it online. Why would you put it online?
S3,4,5: So your friends can see it and comment on it.
M: But why do you want your friends to see it?
S6: Um for art like she did not come to school for the week and the teacher gave us homework so I posted the picture of how it looks so she will have an idea what she was supposed to do for homework. So she knew how to start it.
M: Oh that is so cool. But you still did not answer the question. Why do you want your friends to see it?
S5: I think it is important for them to know, like if it is something that they missed, or it is sometimes important for them to know that this is a part of you.
M: so you think it is important for your friends to know how you feel?
S4: Yes
M: Or what you have to say?
S4: Yes, exactly!
M: So the same stuff that you do when you post online pictures, or poems, or anything that you create. Would you feel comfortable showing it to your parents?
S1,2,3,4,6: No
S5: Sometimes yes but your parents are not in your generation so they don’t understand half of the things you want to share with your friends. So I think it would not be interesting to them and they would want to know why it is so interesting to you.
M: So you think it is easier to post it online for your friends to see and you can talk to them through all the artwork.
S1: Yes because they will understand why you posting it and what you mean without any big explanation.
M: So you just think the older generation don’t get it
S1: Yeah. Exactly
M: But I am part of the older generation and you are willing to talk to me and not to your parents. What is the difference?
S3: They won’t understand.
S4: You are actually asking what we think
M: I am actually asking. That is the big difference.
S1: Yeah parents don’t ask you anything. You actually have to tell them stuff if they willing the listen.
M: Well thank you very much. Is there anything else you want to tell me?
S2: Yes, I think you should tell parents things. You should and shouldn’t. Anything that concerns them you should tell them but anything that don’t concern them you should not tell them
M: Well I can tell you this. I think our family we over share and we share too much and everybody basically knows what is going on and because we over share, everyone looks out for everyone else. So my mother always knows what is going on with me and I know what is going on with my family how many miles away. Because everyone looks out for each other, my cousin, her friend put up pictures and videos of her in her school uniform and while in school, and we saw it immediately and they called her and take it down one time and come off of FB. Because her parents didn’t quite understand because she does not talk to her parents about these kind of things, and they banned her from FB. And when she finally started talking to them about what was going on it got a little but better.
M: DO you think you will ever be able to tell your parents stuff like what. What is going on in your life, especially online?
S3: My mother was with me when I started FB
S2: Why some people will tell their friends and not tell their parents stuff is because their friends can’t ban them from FB and other online stuff’
M: That is very true. Well thank you guys very, very much.
S: You are welcomed!

Focus Group 2

M: So I have a question for you guys. For the record every person here signed the assent form right?
S 7-16: Yes.
M: Every single person here got parental consent?
S 7 – 16: Yes
M: What is the first think you think of when you hear online media?
S16: Free Games
S 13: Facebook
S 14: Internet
S 16: Free Games
S 15: MSN
S 10: Twitter
S9: TV links
S7: That is for people who don’t have cable.
S9: I know right!
M: S10 what do you think of?
S10: Pretty Little Liars.
M: No when you hear online media what do you think of?
S10: Pretty little Liars
M: When you hear online media you think of Pretty Little Liars?
S10: Yes because I watch that online because I don’t have cable.
M: So you watch TV online?
S7-16: Yes
M: All of you watch TV online?
S7-16: Yes!
S13: I watch Switched at Birth when I miss it on TV.
M: How do you watch it on TV. Flow does not have ABC Family.
S13: I don’t have Flow I have the best cable in Trinidad. (No name cable company
given). But I go online to watch it when I miss it on TV.
S12: I think about YouTube.
M: So you have all these different things and most of the stuff you mentioned is Social
Networking Sites and YouTube is actually considered a social networking site because
you can comment and stud like that right. So how many of you’ll have a social
networking site?
S12: You mean a profile?
M: Yes a profile
Every one raises their hand.
M: Everybody has it?
S 7-16: Yes.
M: So what you’ll have?
S7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 – MSN, Tumble, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, VooVoo.
M: How do you guys keep track of everything?
S7: I use the same password for everything.
S14: If I am on a game that lets you comment on what is happening and on other people’s
stuff is that a social networking site?
M: Yes
S13: You’ll this is a real bad game, this is a real bad social networking site IMVU.
S8: You are on IMVU?
S13: No I am not.
S8: That is a 19 year old porn chat kind of thing.
M: Is it?
S7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15: Yes
S13: You get to strip and be naked and go with boys
S8: You make a character that looks real and the actions are like to strip or pole dance
and stuff.
M: So why are you on it if it is so bad?
SA: No I am not on it. Who is on it? No way!
S11: I went on it without knowing what it was.
M: Wait wait.. one at a time.
S13: Me!!! It does be on YouTube in the corner. Whenever you type the name of a song
you see the IMVU ad comes up.
S11: I joined IMVU without knowing what it was about, thinking it was a game or something, and after when I realized I just never went back on it. But I think I may have downloaded something because every time I turn on my laptop something comes up where I have to sign in.
S15: You have to download the app kind of thing
S11: So that every time you have to sign in with your password but I always just click it off.
S13: You can meet people online and lie about your name and your age and you it just like watching people
M: So how often do you go on your social networking sites?
S12: Everyday! (4:24)
SA-S16: Everyday
S13: Five (5) times a day
S16: Every 5 months
S13: If it is not Facebook it’s YouTube. If it is not YouTube it is Twitter. If it’s not Twitter it is Google. It it’s not Google it’s Skype. If it’s not Skype it’s MSN. If it’s not MSN it’s Tumblr.
S14: I go on MSN every day. I went on Tumblr twice and I go on Mindless Behavior every two days.
M: What about you two in the back there because I have not heard from you’ll yet.
S16: I go on the internet every 5 months.
M: What’s that?
S16: I go on the internet every 5 months
M: How come?
S16: Cause it does not attract me.
M: Why do you think that is so?
S16: I don’t like, like on Facebook, there is nothing to do, so I just spend time doing other stuff home.
M: Like what?
S16: Like talking to friends and playing Hide and Seek
S13: When you have a lot of friends on Facebook that you don’t really see often and thing you want to go online and talk to them.
S11: Especially when you have relatives you don’t see often except on Facebook.
M: What about you?
S15: I am online like every other day. Sometimes every day. But when I go online I will go on MSN or fiddle with YouTube
M: What is the attraction of YouTube? Everybody here goes on YouTube?
S13: Because of all the videos you can see.
S8: The videos are silly and funny.
S14: I don’t have an account on YouTube but I watch videos
S8: The only reason I created an account was because I wanted to watch this video S & M by Rihanna and it was 18+ so I had to make an account
S13: On YouTube you can lie real easily and the only reason I created an account was so I can watch a video, what is the name of that video? Some video by Pitbull am no, Sexy and I know it and they blocked it and they put it 19 and over
S8: yeah that was 18+ too
S13: So I didn’t have an account so I created an account so I can watch that video. (6:27)
S9: That is too much work
M: That is a lot of work to watch a video!
S9: I know right that is too much work just to watch a video.
S8: Creating an account on YouTube takes about a minute
S12: But after you create it you can watch whatever you want.
S8: It is not like the normal thing where you have to put email whatever whatever. It just
username and password and email.
S13: When you sign in you don’t sign out you have to sign out for yourself, once you
sign in it stays sign in.
S15: Then you get to add videos.
M: So any of you ever put a video up on YouTube?
S13: Yes me. Of my friends they were being chickens and it was like real hilarious and
we wanted to see how many views we can get to so we put up on Facebook and we got
like a million views.
S8: No but I have a video of me up on YouTube.
M: I know that. How do you feel about that?
S8: Normal!
S7: What was the video about?
S8: Atomic Breakdown. The dance
S7: That is on YouTube?
S12: Yes go on YouTube and search Atomic Breakdown.
M: You feel normal about it but what about the fact that you are there on YouTube for
everyone to see and you can tell what school you go to because you are in your school
uniform.
S8: We are in normal clothes
S12: But other people around are in their school uniforms and a girl (girl named removed
for confidentiality) had the school’s name (school’s name removed for confidentiality) on
it.
S8: Yeah (sounding worried) I don’t mind.
M: So you are not afraid of anything happening to you?
S8: Not really (her voice sounds worried and her face has a concerned look)
M: Why not?
S12: Because we are in Trinidad!
S8: Well you can’t really make out our faces perfectly and the video turned upside down
for a part.
S14: It does not really matter because it has nothing bad on it anyway.
S13: I spend a lot of time on Facebook and sometimes random people add me on
Facebook and was like Hi and I am like Hi, and I said do I know you and the person is
like no and I am like cool. The person start to ask me what school I go to and how old are
you. I have the a profile picture and I will look at the person’s profile picture and if it is a
normal person like a young girl or a teenage guy or something, but when the person start
to ask me questions and I am answering the questions and I am thinking is this really a
rapist or a really the person, because you know sometimes people make profiles to get at children.
S15: Like pedophiles
S13: So you know I am there thinking like, is this real or and I am playing it out in my mind and why he asking so many questions about me and I am responding.
S12, S14, S9, S11: Why are you answering?
S13: Because you know...
S15: If they ask you questions tell them “I don’t know you, I don’t talk to strangers, bye bye”
S13: And sometimes you hear someone say that you know this person from Facebook, next day you go online and the person add you and then person is like Oh My God my friend was talking about you and you are thinking that maybe this person isn’t that nice.
M: Ok let’s come off this topic for a little bit and come back to it. Let’s go back to the social networking sites. You’ll create statuses all the time.
SA: Yes!!!!!
M: Why?
S12: Cause we love doing it.
M: Why do you feel the need to put your?
S13: Sometimes it is to get out your feelings and I cannot say it, I just write it as a status and I just post it. Because I can’t say it in front of people face, so like when I want to tell somebody something I will write and they will see it.
M: So to express yourself.
S8: I will write a status and if something was really really funny I will write ok “mummy said this I said this lol” and post it.
M: But I do that, S8 you see my statuses all the time. I said this somebody said this and someone else said this and this is really funny.
S8: Yes
S14: You put it for people who cannot see jokes and you put it for them to see.
S12: Sunday I starting back pan so I real excited. So every two minutes,
S14: Everybody knows about your excitement.
S12: I am very excited yes. I put up on yesterday and the day before that. I am very excited and I put up one day, Pan starting back Sunday I can’t wait. Next day, Pan starting back Sunday I can’t wait to see who I missed.
S14: She is so excited.
S12: Pan starting back Sunday, my lips are sealed I miss you. But my lips are sealed I won’t say who it is but I am just so excited!
S14: just to let people know what you doing nah.
M: Why do you update your status.
S15: I update my status with YouTube links so if I see a video I like or something I will just post the link.
M: So why do you post the link of?
S15: So other people can see the video.
M: But why do you want other people to see it?
S15: Because it is good.
S12: Because it is hot. That is all.
M: Because it is good, Ok?
S15: If it was a good song on some day.
M: Ok so what I am getting at is that for carnival and I am never here and it sucks. So my friends will put the videos online or they will tell me that. So for example my cousins said that Kimba Sorzano, when he released his video, his sister and my cousin told me one time, “Kimba Sorzano is releasing his video at 2 am” you know, so that they let me know so I can go find it and spread the word because I was so excited because I grew up with him and everything.
S13: Really can I meet him
S14: Can I get an autograph.
M: But I post the videos online for my friends to know what music from Trinidad is like. So I do it so I can show all my friends in the States what our music is like, because they don’t know what Soca music is. But that is why I am asking why would you post the links?
S13: For other people to see.
S15: For other people to see. So you can share if you like this song, you can share it with your friends
S9: So if you find this song and it is not popular artiste, or he is not like a popular artiste but you want all your friends to start listening to him because he is amazing, but they really won’t know about him because he is not on the radio all the time, but by me posting the link they will find out about him.
M: Ok. So how do you feel when people comment on the links you put up or comment on your statuses?
S12: Some of the statuses that they comment on right, you like it because then you start to comment back. But some of them when you don’t like it or their status they does get real vex nah because you don’t like their status. They does tell you that they don’t like your status and sometimes I does get real annoyed saying you does start to comment back and tell them thing and they will start to comment back too, and tell you that they don’t like you because of this and that and the other. (13.39)
S13: When I post something on Facebook and most people like it I feel like most people agree with me.
M: Have you’ll ever gotten into fights on Facebook?
S13, 8, 9, 12, 14: Yes
S10: No
M: By commenting on statuses?
S13: Yes
M: How did that happen?
S13: Well this girl posted “I hate Drake” and I am in love with Drake, so it started as “You need to get off Drake because I real like him” and the girl was like “I hate because he is ugly” and then it just started like that.
S14: I posted something on MSN. I posted something on Chris Brown and Mindless Behavior people will tell me that every minute I talking about Mindless Behavior and they will come up with how Chris Brown is a woman beater and
S15: He is a woman beater
S14: I will be like get off Chris Brown that happened in the past and he trying to make amends and stuff. God said forgive and forget and people are not forgiving and I know people will not forget but they have to at least try to forgive and people will end up in a whole long thing.

S12, 8: Inaudible arguments
M: Calm down, calm down. Ok why do you put stuff on Twitter.
S10: Well I don’t really put stuff on Twitter but I am mostly on Facebook and if I watch videos that are on YouTube and stuff I put those on Facebook and update statuses and stuff.
S13: I think Twitter is ridiculous. People does put “Oh my God I am eating pancakes. Oh my God these pancakes are tasting so good. Now I am drinking water. Now I am going back to eating pancakes.”
M: You don’t need any more sugar in your body ok?
M: So when you create your status right. Say for example you put “You are having a bad day”
S13: People will comment awww why? What happened?
M: But why do you think you need to express on Facebook that you are having a bad day?
S13: So people will know not to annoy me because I am having a bad day.
S14: I don’t post stuff like that because I don’t think people need to know how you feeling unless you real close to them or they in front of you. They don’t need to know that you having a bad day because them in their house and they can’t do anything to help you if you having a bad day.
M: Anybody else? Maybe they can call you.
S12: I don’t want anyone to call me. You having a bad day what they calling you for?
S8: Because they can help you or cheer you up.
S12: for them to say “Hi you want a tub of ice cream or what?”
M: Actually my friends and I in the States do that a lot. If my friend puts up she is having a bad day I will her up and tell her we are going for ice cream or we going to the movies.
S12: Yeah but 12 o’clock in the night you can’t be doing that.
M: Well yeah Walmart open 24 hours, so is Wendy’s and all those places.
S12: So when you post these things right, do you ever put up anything you created yourself? Online? Like a picture or a poem?
S14: Miss I intend to because I just scribble Mindless Behavior all over my book and I intend to take a picture of it and post it up on the internet hoping that Mindless Behavior will see and say “Oh that is so creative I love your picture”
S8: Oh my gosh did you hear that they are doing a school thing
S14: Yes! But we could not do it because…
M: Question who is Mindless Behavior?
S14: Definition, Mindless Behavior is doing a movement called “Be Mindless” which is a lifestyle, if your are smart and confident and you know you are stylish, then you are mindless and once you know, no one can stop you from being who you are, you are mindless. (18:32)
M: So you want to talk a picture and put it up on Facebook?
S14: Not Facebook but my Mindless Behavior account.
M: Why?
S14: So they can see it and say this is so creative, I love your artistic abilities.
M: You said you would put up something?
S11: so you know on Facebook how you can create photos, like pizzaz or picnic or something. You can take pictures from all your friends’ profiles and create this one photo
S15: Yeah you can edit it and stuff.
S12: I put up a picture because they said they never saw me in a dress, so when I went out I had on a dress, my mother took out these pictures so I put it on MSN, so they will finally see me in a dress.
S8: Everyone was like Oh gooood.
M: So why did you feel the need to let them see you in a dress?
S12: They are my friends. Well some of them, some of them are my friends right, so I was like alright, I will show them a picture of me in a dress.
S14: She will never let them see her in a dress in real life, so all they will get is a picture.
S13: We put pictures on Facebook because I guess pictures and Facebook go in the same sentence. Picture, status, profile picture. These are things people do in Facebook. People don’t normally chat on Facebook. Every once in a while people chat. Post on people wall is more
S14: Maybe because it there. Maybe because the thing is there and you can put up pictures you take the opportunity to do it.
S13: Yeah and people will more post on people wall than chat
M: S9 do you put up any of your drawings or your artwork?
S9: No
M: Do you put up anything?
S9: No
M: Nothing
S9: No
M: Nothing you created?
S9: No.
S13: She put up pictures (pointing to S10). I saw it.
S11: She does like everything. (S10 laughing)
M: S11 why do you put up pictures?
S11: I like to put up pictures. I don’t know why I do but I just like to put up pictures.
S8: For people to see you.
S13: For people to see your beauty. (S10 laughing)
M: Why do you’ll feel the need to like what people put up?
S12: I have no idea. That is so annoying.
S14: You don’t need to like it. People just feel the need to do it. I have been a part this, I liked it.
S11: I don’t know if this is yes or no but in my class I am like the “Holy One”
S8: What? No
S14: Oh no!
S11: Anyway but I don’t really put up pictures or videos of things like Soca and all that. I would rather put up Gospel music and all of that, so I won’t put up comments on other people things I would just put up comments thanking God for daily life (21.54).
M: So why do you feel you need to do that?
S8: To prove that she is the holy one.
M: Remember what I said about sarcasm?
S8: No I was being real serious, to prove that she is the holy one.
S11: is laughing, I don’t do it to prove that I am the holy one. It is just to put it up to show what I believe and to get my other friends to believe in God.
M: But I see a lot of that on Facebook. I see a lot of people post a lot of things about God and Jesus.
S13: I see a lot of stuff “Like if you will answer the door if Jesus came knocking and share this photo.” And I am like why do you have to do these things if you love God that is your business. You don’t have to do this on Facebook.
S12: and you shouldn’t be telling people to share.
S13: But you know I love when people make a page that you real like. Like say how ‘I like people who text back fast” I real like that page on Facebook. I real like those pages.
S8: Oh goooood and wha chubble is dis.
S7,8,9,10, 11,13: Yeah me too.
S8: Those pictures are real kicksy
M: OK so moving past Facebook right. What else you’ll use the internet for?
S7: To watch TV and play games.
S14: I use the internet to research people I like.
M: Like celebrities and stuff.
S14: Yeah
S8: For homework and look up lyrics and stuff
M: Homework you said?
S8: Homework and Lyrics.
M: How do you use it for homework?
S12: Google translate
M: Did you just say Wikipedia?
S9: Yes
M: Jewel, I know you not too interested right now, but what do you use the Internet for.
S16: To play games and to listen to music.
M: Ok. Play games and music. What games?
S16: Assassin 3 and 5.
S8: Oh lawd!
M: So why do you want to play games online? What is the reason for playing those games?
S16: Out of boredom. When you have nothing to do you go on the internet and play games and listen to music.
M: So why do you listen to music online?
S16: Because most of the time someone else is using the radio in the house and we have nothing else to listen to music on, so I use the internet.
S13: and when you go on YouTube you can listen to the specific song that you want to listen to and you don’t have to wait on the radio. You see when you go on the computer you can listen to the music that you want to listen to and no one can tell you what to
listen to. If you want to listen to Drake, the censored or uncensored version, you can listen to Drake the uncensored version, you don’t like that version then fine you can play the censored version. (25.50).

M: When do you go online to listen to music?
S13: whenever!
S14: happy, sad, angry.
S15: Anytime.
S14: Sometimes when I am feeling sad I want to dance. When you in your house in your bedroom where nobody could see yah and you want to do your little dance and thing, that is the best time to listen to music.

M: Anneliese what about you when do you go online to listen to music? When you feeling happy? Sad?
S10: When I feeling sad. Well I don’t really listen to music on YouTube and I have music on my iPad.

M: All yah remember Granny Quilla?
S7: Yes I know who she is.
S8: No
S11: Yes
S13: Or the girl that bad talk the Prime Minister?
M: Yes. Do you know who she is now?
S9: No
S8: I don’t know why she was charged for bad talking the Prime Minister.
S13 to S9: Ok so it is this girl who bad talk the Prime Minisiter.
S8: Why would she get charge for bad talking the Prime Minister?
M: She wasn’t charge for bad talking the Prime Minister. What she was charged for was inciting violence. It is against the law in every single country in the world. You cannot create a video asking people to do violent acts. No matter what age you are.
S8. 11: Ohhh. So if you put up a video on YouTube saying let’s go TP The school or whatever, that is against the law?
M: Yes. Because it could be seen as a terrorist act.
S8: TPing a school?
M: No what she did. Because she was asking people. What she said is that the Prime Minister should be killed.
S12: She said that?
S13: Yes she said that. I saw the video.
M: She said that. She said the Prime Minister should be shot. That is inciting violence.
S9: Ohhh
M: So that is why she got charged.
S13: That is like what happened in Fatima. 2 gay boys made a video. And it was posted all over the news. Someone took a video of them on their phone and went and post it on YouTube and on Facebook so everyone can view what two gay boys were doing in Fatima on that day.
S8: In their school uniform.
S13: And it had over a million views.
S14: People don’t seem to understand that if they do it people don’t need to see it.
S8: And there was the guy who had sex with the goat.
M: Moving on! Why do you’ll think she felt the need to create that video.
S13: She was upset with the curfew.
S7: She was upset about the curfew.
S13: And maybe she wanted people to see how she really feel and to hear how she really feel so she created a video.
S15: Or she was just looking for someone to make her out.
S16: She was looking for attention.
M: So you think it was because she was upset and she wanted people to know she was upset?
S7, 13: yes
M: So why not tell your friends? Why not tell your parents?
S8: If you tell your parents, your parents will just be like you can’t day that about the Prime Minister.
S14: If you tell your parents they will be like you can’t say those things. If you tell your teacher they will be like what you using all that bad language for. If you tell your friends them will be like whatever.
S13: And sometimes you want other people like other people in the country to see what you really think and to see if anyone agrees with you.
M: So you think she did it because she wanted to express her.
S13: her feelings
M: Her opinion and nobody was listening?
S12, 13, 14, 15: Yes
S14: Because they say express yourself in the most unique ways and when you do you get in trouble.
S13: A unique respectful way, a unique respectful way.
M: so have you’ll ever felt that way?
S12, 13, 14: Yes
M: What have you’ll done?
S13: Listen to Drake
S15: Listen to music
S14: Go online and listen to music. Chris Brown…
M: So you go online and listen to music.
S13, 14, 15: Yes
S12: When some people in the class don’t see your opinion and your opinion is right and what they did was wrong and they don’t want to listen to you, so you go online and make them know they were wrong by saying whatever.
S13: In a status or something.
M: So you use your status
S12: To get back at other people
M: To communicate with people?
S13: In a negative way.
S14: Once it has no curse words and it doesn’t appear very very negative. You good.
M: You ever see that backfire?
S7, 8, 12. 13. 14: Yes
S8: A girl got suspended for that in our class.
S13: And she used a lot of cursing and stuff. I wrote a status about her.
S8: I wrote a status about her too and we all got buff and our dean has a folder with all of our statuses, and we have peer counseling seasons. It is real funny I swear.
M: What do you’ll think in the back about that whole granny quilla thing?
S16: It was cool.
M: Why was it cool?
S16: Because I would have done it and I, if I get the opportunity will tell Kamla too.
M: But would you post it online? There is a difference between telling the Prime Minister that to her face and putting it online.
S16: Well now that I know it is a crime I won’t put it online.
S13: Because sometimes you can remove the video but you can go back to deleted videos and see it.
M: I found it. I have a copy of it.
S13: So you can never really delete anything off online.
S12: Can you show us it.
M: I am not allowed to show you’ll it. It is against the law for me to show you’ll that.
S7: Because it have too much cursing.
S8: So why do you have it?
M: Because I am over 18. Way over 18
S14: So if you delete the history you can still find it?
S12: It is still on the hard drive.
M: That is a good question. Do you know that once you put something online it never ever goes away?
S10, 12, 13, 14: Yes.
S13: I learnt that because I posted a status about a friend and the friend felt real bad and thing, so I deleted it. But later on I was going down the page of my statuses and I saw it and I thought I deleted it. So, I deleted again and it said “this status is deleted” but it is still there.
S8: That same thing happen to me, when I posted after I went to the doctor and I found out I was anemic, and I posted that and then I realized that I didn’t want some people to know and I deleted it and it was still there.
M: So do you think the videos you create and the statuses you create that you put up online is a good way of expressing yourself?
S12,13: Some of them
S13: In some particular ways. Because you have to know not to curse, not to bad talk people, not to call people names, because you will get in trouble and experience will teach you that. And then videos that embarrass yourself like that girl. Everyone will be watching in the country and be like you are the girl who bad talk the Prime Minister. So you cause shame for yourself too in the way that you do it.
M: Now that this girl got in trouble and all that. How do you think she feels?
S8: Embarrassed
S13: Regretful
S12: According to her personality she might not even mind.
M: Her apology video was really bad. Her apology video was horrible. She made it in a way that no one can hear what she was saying.

S8: In some cases some people will be more vex with the government after that. Because they made her apologize,

M: The Prime Minister forgave her.

S8: But they still charged her.

M: The Prime Minister forgave her. The Attorney General charged her, because by law the attorney general has to charge her. No matter if the Prime Minister beg, she has no say on whether or not the girl gets charged or not. Because the Prime Minister is not doer and owner of this country. There are a lot of different things that happen. So this girl, who is just trying to express herself, because she probably thinks that there is no one else that is listening, is now branded for the rest of her life. Does that make you’ll think twice about posting stuff online?

S9: No

S8: It makes me think twice about posting stuff about Kamla online.

S13: Actually I forgot about it. I did not remember it until you brought it up just now.

S14: She might think twice now about what she says, but she may not think twice about posting stuff online.

M: Ok those of ya’ll that got in trouble for your statuses. Do you still do statuses like that?

S8: I will do another status like it but I won’t put her name this time. The only reason all of us did not get suspended is because we did not use the same language as she did.

S13: But they saying that you should not get suspended for saying stuff like that on Facebook because there is a lot of people who have my password for Facebook and they go on my Facebook and put things.

S14: What if it have people who using your name on Facebook and putting things up on Facebook because they have something against you.

M: Ok let me give you an example. One of my cousins got in trouble because her friend hacked her Facebook and put some very bad things on it.

S13: Same thing happen to me.

M: So now, she thinks twice about every single thing she puts up on Facebook and online because she got into so much trouble because her friend hacked her Facebook and put up “I need a man now” and stuff like that. She got banned and in all kind of trouble. Now she has a very strong password, and she is very careful about what she puts up. You’ll think you will every behave like that and be very careful what you put up.

S14: I am very careful with what I put up. Especially since my aunt is on MSN and if it is anything she will call my mother immediately, even though she is a million miles away, she will have my mother on the phone within 5 minutes of seeing it and my mother will make me take it down.

S13: I am very careful about relationship statuses because I have cousins, about the language I use and about the song that you put up, because some songs that you post have real cursing in it. And I have a teacher as my friend on Facebook.

S8: Ms. Guererro the vice-principal

S7: On Facebook it have this thing where you can stop certain people from seeing your status.
M: Like block them
S7: No not block them but….
S8: You can classify them as a friend or acquaintance and then choose what you want them to see.
M: Ok we need to wrap it up. I want to touch on the homework aspect again. How do you guys use it for homework besides looking up information?
S7: Because encyclopedias don’t have everything
S12: And encyclopedias are out of date.
M: Can you give me a specific example?
S13: Yes, When Ms. Khanhai says, I am giving you homework, go on the internet and look up the Congo genocide and then the next day she comes to class and says “does anyone go on the internet and print it out and bring it for me?”
S8: Or when Ms. King says makes up print a picture and bring it to school.
S9: Like when you have to get a picture of an artist or their work, or get research on an artist.
M: So when have you’ll done it personally for yourself.
S16: Well I wanted to find out how some people can sell their souls so I went online to research and see how they do it.
S8: When I have a Spanish project and we have to write an essay I use it to translate some stuff.
M: Do you’ll use it to talk to each other?
S13: To talk to her (S8). She’s (S12) talk to me and I ignore her.
M: Do you’ll use it to talk to your friends online?
S12: Yes. The only people I use MSN to talk to is the people I am in pan with right now, because it hasn’t started back yet I am not seeing them, so I use MSN to talk to them.
M: So anything else you’ll want to tell me on how you use online media?
S13: Yes.. why do they make those privacy policies so long. I will never read it because it is so long.
S8: Girls need to stop taking pictures of themselves and posting it online and then saying how they look ugly in the picture.
M: Let me rephrase the question. Anything else you want to tell me about your online media use?
S16: I don’t read privacy policies.
S12: Yeah if you want to know anything about anyone all you have to do is Google the person. I have done it to look up people before I found out all their information. Even people in Trinidad.
M: Why do you feel the need to comment on other people statuses?
S8: I don’t really comment on people statuses.
S12: Well because this boy I know put up on his status, “ What do you think of me? 0 = don’t like me 1 = decent etc.” So I commented and told him he was cute.
M: But why do you feel the need to comment on his status
S12: Because he asked. And 1 he is cute and 2 because he was not online for like 3 weeks so everyone was like Oh my gosh he is alive.
M: Ok that is the bell for lunch so we need to stop there for today.
S7-16: No…. we can stay.
M: How do you feel when adults are mean to other adults online.
S14: They tell us that we need to be respectful on the internet, but then they come and do
the same things they tell us not to do.
S16: That is like teachers talking to us about not bullying people online but they bully us
in person.
S11: That is so true. That happens all the time.
S16: I find adults can behave very immature online too.
S13: Adults always telling us not to curse on Facebook but then they curse all the time on
Facebook so how they could tell us not to curse when they always cursing?
M: So you think it is ok to do things because other people are doing it?
S12, 13 and 14: No
M: Online
S15: Most teachers are on Facebook and they tell us we shouldn’t be on Facebook and
post pictures on facebook but when you go on their page most teachers have pictures big
and bold on their page, so what are we supposed to do, just sit down and watch it and say
well Miss say we not supposed to go on facebook so I not going on. That doesn’t make
any sense.
M: So why do you think they tell you that you not supposed to be on Facebook?
S12: Because they on it and they don’t want their professional reputation to go down the
toilet because you saw what they have on Facebook

Focus Group 3

M: Just to verify, everyone here signed the assent form?
S17-S24: Yes
M: Everyone’s parent signed the consent form
S17-S24: Yes
M: First question I have for you, when you hear online media, what is the first thing you
think of?
S19, 20, 23, 24: Facebook
S18: No
M: What do you think of?
S18: Nothing really comes to mind
S21: I think of whatever I do online. I think Google
M: Ok so what do you do online?
S21: YouTube
S18: I listen to music. My sister tells me that I should have an iPod because all I do is
listen to YouTube.
M: What else do you do online?
S18: Read stories.
S19: Yes me too
S24: I like to go on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, which are the three main websites.
S20: So basically the social networking sites.
S21: I like to go to websites and see stars and see what they doing and stuff like that.
S19: Yes me too.
M: So you like to read up on celebrities?
S21, S19: Yes
S23: I like to play games.
S21: I like to look up colleges because I want to go to Cambridge when I get older.
M: You want to go to Cambridge?
S21: Yes.
M: That is so cool. So you said you like to read stories. What stories do you like to read online?
S18: I don’t know. Any stories. It is a site.
M: There is a site that give stories?
S18, 19. 21: Yes
S19: There are so many sites with stories.
S18: People on it write stories and some of them are actually better than some books that are published.
S19: Some of them after they have finished write their book, they don’t include the last chapter and then say “Oh you can buy it as an ebook”
S18: Yeah
S19: That gets me upset.
M: So what websites are those? I have never heard of it before?
S18: wattpad. It is literally spelt W-A-T-T-P-A-D
M: Ok that is interesting. I have to go look that one up. Ok so you know what I mean by online media right?
S22: Whatever is online.
S24: Entertainment you find online
M: Do you guys know what media are?
S24: Your definition of online media might be different from ours so can you explain yours?
M: Ok. I have a future researcher in front me.
S24: hahaha
M: Ok my definition of online media is anything you use on the internet.
S24: Ok, right. That is my definition.
S19: Ok we on the same page.
S23: That is the same thing as me.
S21. I agree with that.
M: So why do you’ll use it. Tell me the reasons why you use it.
S18: Because there is nothing better to do.
S24: When you are bored. (3.38)
S18: Especially when you have no siblings.
S19: When your parents don’t allow you to have a social life, you have to find other ways.
M: For a social life?
S19: Well to entertain yourself because you can’t go out and find something to do so go online.
S20: And TV real boring.
M: So how do you have a social life online.
S24: Video chatting
S23: Talking to people online
S19: But not strangers, that just weird.
M: So video chatting.
S24: Chatting with your friends.
M: Like what IMing?
S24: Like Facebook chat.
M: Skype, Facebook,
S23: MSN
S19: So say you have no school a day and your parents working and you can’t go out with your friends and you happen to have one friend stay home, you’ll chat online. That is because you don’t want to run up your phone bill.
M: I am realizing this is a theme. You guys get plenty buff for the phone bill or what?
S17-24: Yes!
S19: My phone gets topped off at the first of every month and when the money runs out I have to buy phonecard
S23: Or your parents get so tired of it that they cut off your phone and you only have a one way.
M: Wow that is serious. So what you’ll do on Facebook then?
S20: Well they on Facebook. I am not on Facebook.
S21: I don’t be on Facebook all that much.
S18: The only thing I do on Facebook is open chat, see which of my friends on and see if there is anyone I want to talk to.
S21: I stay online because it is on my phone.
M: Well my iPhone doesn’t work down here but people tell me I am always online because I have Facebook on my phone. So what you do you use Facebook for. You said you chat with your friends and what else?
S24: I like playing games
S18: Well you follow these people who have quotes and pictures and when you bored you keep going through the pictures and quotes
S17: Yeah and some of them real funny.
M: So let me ask you this, why do you feel the need to comment on people pictures and statuses.
S19: I don’t
S17: Because you agree with it or disagree with it
S19: Because you want people to know you like it or something
M: Why do you feel they need to know this?
S18: Some people do it just cause bacchanal
M: Ok to cause trouble
S21: To make them feel good.
S22: I don’t like it when people have a whole conversation in the comments.
S18: So someone will like your picture and say this picture is nice and then someone else will say that this picture is nice. They would then reply, how was your day and then have a whole conversation on the comments section of the picture and you keep getting notifications of their conversation.
M: Why do you guys put statuses up on Facebook?
S18: I don’t
S21: I hardly put statuses.
S24: Well you know. To express your view. Well if I chatting with someone and they get me vex, I will say something in my status about it. How they make me feel.
S17: I put more quotes
M: Why do people put quotes up on their status?
S23: To motivate people. If it motivates you, you want it to help motivate other people.
S21: Because it could put a smile on somebody’s face
M: So you want to motivate people and put a smile on their faces.
S18: Or just because you like it
S23: Or because you like it and you want other people to see it.
M: Ok so if I like a quote I would mention someone like – Ria check out this quote, because it is specific for her, because I found a quote that I like and I know she would like it too. So why would you put up quotes, do you have someone in mind?
S17: Sometimes you direct it at someone but you don’t want them to know that you talking specifically to them,
S19: But everyone knows that the quote is directed at that person. It is kind of obvious.
S18: You don’t want them to know, but you want them to know.
S19: You don’t want to make it direct. You don’t want them to say what is it you saying about me, then you can say that you not saying anything about them, it is just put out there.
M: So you covering your butt?
S19: yes, basically.
M: So as vague as possible so you can’t get in trouble. Ok sometimes I put up statuses to make my cousins jealous. Do you guys ever do anything like that?
S17 – 24: Yes
M: Can you give me an example?
S17: So my friend she had a sleep over and she did not invite the other girl, but she didn’t tell her she just tell her she cancelled it, because she didn’t want her to know that. The other girl found out and she wrote “haha I am at a sleep over with my best friend” just to rub it in her face that she actually got to go to the sleep over.
S23: Or if you have your group of friends and you have an inside joke and you have a different nickname for them, in a comment or something you will laugh with that nickname and they would know and no one else.
S21: If you have a joke between two people you can say and no one else will know what it means but the other person will know what you mean.
M: So it is a good way to communicate
S18: So it is like code. My friends will understand me but others won’t.
M: So it is a good way to communicate with your friends
S24: It is a good way to communicate with your friends without letting anyone else know what you are talking about.
M: So why you’ll go on YouTube then?
S24: Some celebrities if you really like and stuff, they keep posting videos
S19: Like people who have video blogs
S18: I like it for the music.
S23: I just go there to look up music that I like.
S22: Sometimes you don’t know the whole song and you can go on YouTube and look up songs so you can look up the piece you don’t know.
S18: That is what I love about YouTube
S19: You don’t have to type out the whole thing, you just have to type you know and you will find it.
M: So do you’ll post videos on Facebook?
S17-24: Yes
M: Why?
S21: Because if you like it and you really want your friends to see it too.
M: So my question is why do you feel the need to have your friends see the video you like?
S21: Because they like the same music and you and they might not know the song so you introduce them to something new.
S18: And when you post videos, your friends may not have been there with you and you want them to know what you were doing or what was so funny
M: So have you’ll ever created any videos and put it up on Facebook or YouTube?
(12:46)
S17-24: Yes
M: Ok tell me about that
S17: Sometimes we take secret videos of people dancing in class
M: Are you serious? You took videos of people dancing in class and posted it on Facebook?
S17: Well I didn’t do it. Other people did it?
M: But why would you do that?
S17: It was funny.
S19: But we make sure and do these things to people who won’t take it to their heart.
M: OK
S19: Because it have certain people if you do it they would want to kill you and it will cause a whole bacchanal
S23: So if the person doesn’t like you we wouldn’t bother
M: So are they in their school uniform?
S17: Yes
S19: The teachers are not seeing this so we can say what we want to say.
M: Is this on Facebook or YouTube?
S19: Facebook
S24: We have a group on Facebook. Any videos we make in school we post it there. It is a closed group.
S19: It is a closed group so only people from the class can see it.
M: Ok ok. You’ll got me kind of scared just now. So what other videos have you created and put up?
S24: On YouTube I made a video for this song “Girls talking bad” and I put pictures and stuff on it.
M: Cool. So why did you make that video/
S24: I was just bored that day.
S19: Or she just wanted to express her creativity.
S24: No not really. I was bored.
M: Any other reason why you’ll create videos and put it up on Facebook or YouTube?
S21: Just for fun. Like there was a time when current went in the school and it was real raining and it was dark. So, we made a horror movie, it was really funny.
S19: It was the worse horror movie ever.
M: This is a very creative class. I like this. This is so cool. So you’ll created a whole horror movie
S20: Yes it was real fun.
S19: So people were sitting down eating popcorn
S21: and we came out the screen and people started screaming.
S19: It was real fun
M: So you’ll created the horror movie because?
S24: We were bored?
S17: The atmosphere and surrounding were perfect for it.
S18: Idle hands
S19: We have a lot of creative people in our class who think out of the box a lot.
S21: I was like let’s make a horror movie and everyone was like yea!
S19: So people just started shouting ideas
M: That is so cool. So you’ll use your camera phones?
S24: No it was the last day of school and someone brought a camera to school.
M: That is so cool. My class was not that interesting.
M: Ok so how often do you update stuff on social networking sites?
S18: Every hour
S17: Everyday
S24: Every time I go online
S18: I am always online so I do it all the time.
S22: I am not on Facebook. I normally go on MSN
S21: MSN is so boring!
S19: Facebook is also becoming boring because they keep changing the format.
S21: That timeline is so annoying, and it is time consuming to have to learn how to use everything again.
S24: How do you remove a timeline.
S21: You can’t remove the timeline.
S22: Well I really don’t go on MSN anymore.
M: What can you do on MSN?
S19: You can video chat and stuff
S21: At first it was exciting but then everyone just went on Facebook
S19: Now I just use it for email.
M: Have you’ll ever created anything like poems or stories and ever put it up.
S19: I used to write and post but I have not written anything in over a year so my friends are kind of mad at me.
M: So you used to post all the time?
S19: Well frequently
M: Why?
S19: Well I used to write in primary school and someone told me that I shouldn’t just have it in a book so I started putting them on the laptop and then when I discovered this site I thought I should probably do this so all my English assignments I will upload them for people to read them.
M: Do you get feedback
S19: Yes people will comment and vote and share them on Facebook or Google or whatever
M: How do you feel though when people comment on your stuff
S18: It depends if it is a good comment or bad comment.
S19: If I get a bad comment I will take it as constructive criticism
S18: I normally get vex
S19: that is her. But if they tell me how to improve it, I would say thanks so now I know if people are reading what they are looking for so now I can make it more interesting for them.
M: So do you post it because people are asking you to post it or do you have a personal reason for posting it?
S19: I posted it because I was home alone and I was bored one day, so I was like let’s do it and see what happens.
M: But why do you continue posting it because you not bored anymore?
S19: It is not like I can just stop posting. Once I start something I can’t just stop. Although I really have stopped
M: So you feel obligated to post?
S19: No, whenever I write I post. If I am satisfied with the length of my chapter I would put it up but I haven’t written in a while.
M: So are you aspiring to be a future author?
S19: No it is just something I do in my spare time.
M: Anyone else ever created anything like that, like artwork
S21: When I was in Form 1 in my old school, my friend and I like every morning before our form teacher comes in, we would be rapping in front of the class, and they would tell us to write it down. Like or that real good write it down, so we would write down little lines and stuff and post it up on Facebook.
M: That is so cool. So you put the songs and stuff on Facebook. So why did you put the songs up?
S21: Everyone in class thought I was a good rapper so they tell me to post it up.
M: So they tell you to post it up so you post it. Do you get feedback on it. (20:53)
S21: yes, from children in my school
M: And how did you feel about the feedback
S21: Normal, because it was a normal thing in the school everybody used to be rapping and stuff
M: That is so cool. What school is this?
S21: Arima Central Secondary
M: I had a friend that went there. Apparently that is a very creative school. Apparently a lot happens in class that does not happen in convent.
S21, 19: Yes, a lot
M: What else you’ll use the internet for? Do you’ll use it for homework?
S17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24: YES
S23: In our group on Facebook, if we didn’t get any homework, we can just ask somebody for the homework
S19: Or if we getting trouble with homework we can just ask somebody what is the answer for number one.
M: So you’ll use it to look up information and stuff?
S19: All the time
S20: Yes
S17: Sometimes it have links in the group and you can use it to look up information
S19: So if you have a link to help with Spanish homework, everyone will have the same thing of course because everyone will Google it and click on the first link and people will put it up on the group page.
M: So you’ll help each other out with homework and stuff.
S18: Most times yes. If you want to call it that. That is a nice way of putting it.
M: So you’ll Google stuff and you’ll put the links for each other to find.
S19: Or if you randomly browsing the web and you find something interesting or something you think people in class will like you put it up.
M: What about for projects?
S19: When we doing the same project everyone will go and we will chat in there for our group.
S23: So if you can’t go to somebody’s house because you don’t have transportation, on the social networking sites you can chat, and that is a way for you to get in contact with each other.
M: That is so innovative!
S23: Thank you
M: That is very innovative. Because honestly when we had to group projects when we were in school, we had to wait till school. We didn’t have the internet. Internet came in Trinidad when I was in Form 4.
S18: Serious?
M: Yes
S19: Oh My. I would have died.
M: Do you’ll ever use it to look up any other information like okay… Let’s say you want information on sensitive topics such as drugs.
S18, 24: No
S21: Yes. I like to read about different stuff.
M: Different stuff like what?
S21: I want to be a motivational speaker, I want to learn about the world and all those kind of things.
S23: Wait what you talking about would it include like diseases and health
M: Yes
S23: Well I have asthma, so sometimes I go and check out what it is to find out ore what I can do to help myself with it. Plus I have a lot of family members with it so if I am in a situation where my brother or something having an asthma attack and I don’t know what to do, so I check it out in advance to see what can be done.
M: So would you’ll rather look up stuff online or ask somebody?
SA: Look up stuff online.
S24: Because when you ask somebody, you not sure you getting the accurate information, but then again on the internet there are some websites that not good
S18: And it depends on what you are asking the person. They can judge you about it.
S19: because people are very judgmental.
M: I agree. A lot of the things I look up online. But also a lot of things I will just call my sister, because my sister is a doctor so I will call my sister : Aye, what is this? And she will be like, you know you can just go look it up.
S20: Yeah but it is so much easier to call her and ask her
M: So you guys will go look up for information if you have questions, you go online to find it. Do you watch TV online?
SA: Yes
S18: I don’t watch TV anymore. I unplugged the TV from my room and stick my laptop charger in because I am watching something online.
M: So how do you watch TV online? What websites do you go to? So megavideo got sued so they close down.
S20: Why?
M: Megavideo got sued due to copywrite law. The copywrite means that say for example White Collar, the people that own White Collar, USA Network, copywrited it so only they are allowed to show that episode and you need their permission to show it. Megavideo is people who videotaped it on their DVR or something and then upload it onto the website. So they did it without permission.
S24: Ohhh ok.
S18: But there are other ones now.
M: Like what websites you’ll use?
S22: Stream2K
S18: I go on watchseries.eu and they have a whole list you can you use to watch
M: So why don’t you just watch it on TV
S24: Because if you like a specific show you don’t have control over what time that specific shows shows so you can just go on the internet and look up the episode that you missed
S19: and sometimes TV just keeps replaying the same episode over and over
M: Someone was saying something about the hours it was showing?
S19: Sometimes it shows really late in the night. They will show new episodes but at later times.
S18: What happen is that things show on American time and normally when they show it, it will be 8 there but 9 here
S17: Sometimes you don’t have that channel that they show is on
S20: You know that if you have a different type of cable company, it will have different channels
M: You’ll ever do it because your parents won’t let you watch they show?
SA: No
S19: I do it because my father and my brother occupy both TVs in the house so I don’t get a chance.
M: OK. I have a new question for you. Apparently a lot of people use Facebook to deal with conflict. Do you'll do that?
S19: We don’t have any serious conflicts like nothing
M: So no one ever had a fight and they had to deal with it and they rather deal with it through Facebook than in person?
S19: Yes
S21: To get details about the fight yes. When they had fights in school they used to post it up
S19: Some people create arguments and bacchanal online because they know if they do it in real life somebody will beat them up real bad. So behind a screen they kind of protected if you know what I mean
S21: The smallest person trying to fight back the biggest person
S19: So they don’t even try to confront them nicely. They try to make things worse “So. Um.. you want to say it to my face now?” They can’t say it to your face, because they need to have that screen, that protective barrier. It is like a medium they speak through because they can’t say it to the person. (29:12).
M: You’ll sure you’ll in Form 2?
SA: Yes. Because I don’t remember having this level of conversation even with my college students
S19: We’ve been through a lot.
M: So do you think it is easier to confront someone through Facebook than in person
S19: Nor necessarily through Facebook but yeah
S21: I like to tell people things to their face.
S19: I am very outspoken person so if I want to tell you something, I will just tell you. I won’t hold it back and then go online. That is really petty.
M: Megan you are really quiet. Would you rather confront someone on MSN or in person.
S22: In person
S19: Because what people do after you say it online they don’t have the confidence to shoot you down and you are like you can’t say it to my face. They are not really afraid
S20: They just can’t say it to someone’s face.
M: So what about apologizing to someone? Easier in person or online?
S24: In person
S19: It depends on the situation
S18: If it is somebody I don’t like I won’t apologize to them. I just leave it as it is. Or we can just go on without talking, because I really don’t care. If you don’t like me so what.
M: Ok let’s move past this and we will come back to it later. So you’ll remember Granny Quilla?
S21: I never saw that video
S18,19,20: Oh yeah
M: She was the one who posted a video on Facebook and YouTube, um, she threatened the life of the Prime Minister, she is a lot of curse words.
SA: Right, Yeah.
M: What do you think about her actions?
S24: I think she was real stupid.
M: Why?
S24: Because you are on a website that is open to everybody and you are talking about the Prime Minister.
S19: Obviously somebody will find it. Someone with authority will end up seeing it because not only people our age go through YouTube and Facebook
S23: I don’t think the consequences were not really thought through as much. It was probably in the heat of the moment and just did it. If you have that in mind you do it and you want to post this up so other people can see it
S19: She let her emotions get the better of her
S21: I think probably she was… I think she was in a household where they wanted Patrick Manning to be the Prime Minister and after she hearing all those comments, she get so worked up that she wanted to let it out. She probably didn’t even know that it would get that far.
M: She need to vent
S23: She was not aware of the consequences
S21: She could not talk about it to her parents, so did it on a video.
M: You’ll know why she got in trouble right
SA: Yes
M: You know it is not because she posted the video.
S23: Yes
M: It was because of what she said in the video
S23: Yes it was because of the content.
M: It is against the law to threaten the life of the prime minister. It is considered acts of terrorism because you are inciting violence. That is the reason why she got in trouble. She did not get in trouble for posting her opinion. If she posted her opinion and said it in a nicer way it won’t have caused that much of an issue. So, why you’ll think she did it? Why do you think she posted it?
S18: To get attention
M: To S21 – you said earlier maybe she needed to vent.
S21: Yes
S19: Well some people you know, say you don’t like the neighbor next door and your parents only saying bad things about the neighbor. You will go out, and because that is how you think, that is your opinion, you will go out and saying something, yeah that is how my parents think, somebody else will hear it and go back and tell the neighbor.
S21: If she hearing what her parents are saying she will think it is okay to do it too.
S19: I hate black people but I am not a racist. That girl made me so upset.
S18: Right that video and girl is very racist because the thing is if a black person was to go up to her and say “I hate white people” it will be national news, she will be in jail the next day. A white person said it and it was a joke.
M: Ok I am not allowed to touch that topic. This is why I am staying really quiet. You guys can talk but I am not allowed to get involved.
M: Okay some of you’ll thought it was for attention. Anyone thinks it is because no one was listening to what she has to say?
S19: Yes
S21: Yes, maybe
S18: Right for attention
S17: well maybe she did it because no one was listening to her in person and she wanted to express her feelings
S18: Because she is a child and no one was listening to her
M: You’ll ever felt that way?
SA: Yes
S20: But we wouldn’t do what she did
M: Would you go and post a video to get your opinion out.
S17, 18, 19, 20, 23: No.
S19: I would make them listen to me. I would sit down in front of them and tell them they better listen to me.
M: But Danielle (S19) you said you would not post a video right
S19: No I won’t. Because with my parents if I do something like I would be in the grave before I could do it.
M: Not what she said you know. Just something else
S19: No
M: But you put your stories online
S19: That is different
S18: That is so much different. You are writing about fictional characters that may be based on someone from real life, but people cannot pin point and say she is talking about this person or talking about that person.
S19: You can twist the situation up. You can use different people. They have the same message but in a different situation.
M: So no one is seeing you and you are not verbally… um saying exactly who you are talking about.
S19: It is different. What happen to me when I have my stories I kind of dream them in my head, then when I wake up I think that was a good idea let me write it
M: Okay so you’ll say you wouldn’t put videos online like what she did, but you will put other videos online like friends dancing
S19: Comical stuff. She may of thought that was comedy but it wasn’t and it was a lot more serious.
S21: She did not think of the consequences of what can be done to her.
M: So you’ll think about that. You’ll think about the consequences of your actions.
SA: Yes
M: You’ll thought of the consequences because of what happened to her or you’ll thought about the consequences before that.
S19: Well you see, some of us have the kind parents where they force these things inside of you. You slip up and that is it.
S18: I never thought about before because I never thought about posting a video like that so I never had a reason to think about the consequences
S19, 23: That is true
M: But what about just posting anything?
S21: Like in school when we post videos
M: OK think about it this way. You are posting videos of your friends dancing around in their school uniforms online.
S20: But that is a closed group
M: So you think because it is closed it is protected. But someone can hack it
S24: The consequences is that someone may find out that you had a camera at school and they might come and search.
S21: But we really don’t think about it that way
S18: we don’t think about all of that
S19: We have our ways. We know how to deal with the situation if it comes up. Don’t worry about it.
M: But S22 and S23 you guys have not said anything about this yet. What do you think?
S23: About what posting videos online?
S19: Yeah if you think about the consequences
M: Do you think about the consequences before you post?
S23: Yes
M: So you won’t post anything online?
S23: Well if I knew there were going to be bad consequences or that it was going to harm the person on the other end in any negative way, I won’t post it online or anything like that, but if it is something in general like my opinion or something that won’t really be targeting anything or hurting anybody, I wouldn’t mind posting anything up (39:09)
M: What about you S22?
S22: I won’t put up anything negative. I am really happy with myself.
S23: She is always making jokes.
M: So would you put up jokes online?
S22: Yes
S20: It depends on the content of the joke.
S22: I won’t put up anything negative.
M: So why won’t you put up anything negative, because of the consequences?
S22: Yes
M: So why would you put up something that is not negative?
S22: You mean positive?
M: Well it does not have to be positive it can be neutral
S21: Well we have videos that we watch like comedies and one of our friends she would tag us in the video just to show us. Then the next day when we come to school…
S19: Everybody of the lines from the video memorized, then that whole group will come and they would be saying the video word for word and the rest of us is like what you talking about, then everybody goes home, looks up the video and they are like, Oh that is what they were talking about.
S21: Yes, and then they next that person will come to school and say, I watched the video.
S22: Because of a girl in our class I know about a comedian. Kevin Heart
M: So you’ll share a lot of information online with your friends and classmates
S21: Yes we are like one big family. The class is very united
S19: Although I would not talk to S21 every day, we still look out for each other. Like say for example…
S18: Like someone brings in a camera phone and we have to hide it
S19: Right so say I don’t talk to S21 everyday or I don’t even like S21 very much, but we are in a situation, everyone will come together and help out.
M: So you have each other backs?
SA: Yes!
S23: We are not best best friends with everybody but at the end of the day we have each other’s back.
M: So when the Form Mistress comes searching for the camera, you guys just pass it from hand to hand to hand.
SA: No
S21: No it will be in one hand and it will stay on one hand, but everyone will be calm and no one will panic.
S19: Everyone is under lock and key. We all know what to say and what not to say. Everybody knows who has it.
S21: There are the people who are undercover so no one will know.
S19: Then you have the ones who kind of waverish, where you have to be like
S21: Shhh… shut up
S19: You know we had thing in the past but we cool now.
M: So in this class if one person do something wrong then the whole class get in trouble, because you’ll covering for everybody.
SA: Yes
S18: But even still we won’t sell it out.
S19: We will take the blame for everybody because if that one person, you can’t just blame it on that one person because if everyone else knew about it, you still have to blame us for knowing and not doing anything
S21: And the person will get vex for selling her out and then sell out other people in the class.
S19: The everybody will sell out everyone else. See the majority of us have one so if we sell out one we sell out all.
M: That is so cool. I think you guys are very interesting. But going back to the topic. When you guys say you listen to music, is it only out of boredom?
S21: No music is our life. It helps us concentrate.
S19: Listen to music helps us deal with situations in life.
S21: Like certain lyrics you know.
S19: Certain lyrics, like if you listening to a song and you are in a really sad mood and you hear a line
S21: You can relate to it.
S19: Right you can relate to it, and like if you going through a heartbreak, not necessarily a heartbreak but you going through some kind of situation. There are certain bands or artists and you know you have a connection because they have a certain genre, and they have a certain message in all their songs.
M: So the YouTube music help you’ll find the songs to help you’ll deal with whatever is going on in your lives.
S19: Yeah that is the same thing with quotes. You look it up if you are in a mood and you see a quote and you think this relates to what I am going through so you post it. Or like
me, I copy and paste it into a word document and then when you go through it at a later date, I think, “I remember when I need you.”
M: That is so cool.
S18: I listening to music online to help me concentrate with work. I can’t do Math homework without listening to music.
M: You guys are really helping me out. Thank you and I love it.
S24: You have anymore questions for us?
M: Do any of you have anything else you want to say about how you use the internet or online media?
SA. No not really.
Appendix 4: Blog Postings

Blog about online media

Wednesday, February 22, 2012

Welcome

Hello all!

Welcome to Girls Use Online Media Blog.

This blog is private and only invited members are allowed to post and view your comments.

Feel free to post and reply to comments concerning various online media.

Your thoughts and feelings about using and creating online media are welcomed.

Posted by Girls Use Online Media at 10:22 AM 12 comments:

12 comments:

Dark ninjaApril 2, 2012 at 3:00 PM

hi, is anyone here?

Reply

Dark ninjaApril 2, 2012 at 3:01 PM

This comment has been removed by the author.

Reply

Girls Use Online MediaApril 2, 2012 at 3:13 PM

Hi Dark Ninja. People won’t always be online, but hopefully some more people will be online soon. Welcome to the blog

Reply

sweetstar-peaceloverApril 6, 2012 at 12:00 PM

Hey am here am here yall dont have to miss me anymore!!!!!!

Reply
Dark ninja April 7, 2012 at 2:25 PM
hi sweetstar-peacelover:-)
Reply
Replies

sweetstar-peacelover April 9, 2012 at 4:46 AM
Hey dark Ninja wats up???
Reply

sweetstar-peacelover April 9, 2012 at 4:49 AM
R we d only on here???? We needs to b makin dom four calls tellin som ppl d invite came
Reply

Girls Use Online Media April 10, 2012 at 2:58 PM
If you guys can convince the others to join I will greatly appreciate it. The more people the better. It will be great to have a good debate about all things like we had in the focus group.
Reply

sweetstar-peacelover April 30, 2012 at 5:47 PM
Hw com nobody commin on dese days dawg????
UNBELIEVABLE is jus me??????!!
Reply

Dark ninja May 1, 2012 at 4:58 PM
me still here
Reply

Girls Use Online Media May 1, 2012 at 7:46 PM
Trust me I am still here and I wish more people will come on. I wish all the people will comment and say stuff.

Anyway how are you two doing? I am so ready for a beach day. I wish I can just go to Maracas or better yet to Tobago and lie on the beach and do nothing all day.

If you guys can do anything you want online, what would it be?

Reply

Dark ninja May 21, 2012 at 7:14 PM
to download every game and movie that i want!

Reply

Monday, April 2, 2012

Using Online Media for Homework

Many of you discussed using the Internet to help with homework. Can you give me examples of how you use the Internet to help with homework?

Posted by Girls Use Online Media at 11:00 AM

4 comments:

Unknown April 2, 2012 at 2:53 PM
sometimes i go on gmail and ask my friend for the homework if i was absent at school but normally i tell her the homework :-(

Reply

Girls Use Online Media April 2, 2012 at 3:12 PM

Today I used the Internet to help me look up the facts for the class I had to teach. But I often wonder if what I found is accurate. Does that ever happen to you?

Reply

Replies

Stu April 2, 2012 at 9:22 PM

expert^_^ April 4, 2012 at 10:17 AM

Most times you dont really think about if it accurate or not you just use it but there are those few times when you really question it,
well as for me my class has a closed group on facebook and someone is always online so you just post a message if you want the homework or even if you want someone to help you with it.

Monday, April 2, 2012

Music!

So today I had a song stuck in my head, but only a small part of the song. It was annoying me that I could not remember the rest and I remembered how some of you said that sometimes you can type in only part of the song in YouTube and you can get the song. I did this and got the song. Then I spent some time listening to music on YouTube. It really helped me feel better because I was feeling sad not being in Trinidad anymore.

Why do you listen to music online? Can you give me specific examples?

Posted by Girls Use Online Media at 3:18 PM

4 comments:

expert^_^April 4, 2012 at 10:27 AM

Well you can listen to it online if you dont have a mp3, ipod or sometimes when you are looking to download it the song isnt always available so you can just search it up on youtube save it to your playlists and listen to it whenever you like.

Also if you want lyrics to a song you can do that as well. yes there are websites that have the lyrics typed out but it is better (well to me at least) to watch the lyric videos on youtube so you can sing along kinda like a karaoke.

Reply

sweetstar-peaceloverApril 6, 2012 at 11:57 AM

Well We does listen to music online mostly because when everyone else in the house want to listen to the radio your parents mostly would take d remote because they dont wanna hear you fight so then they would put the radio on what they wanna listen to. And sometimes when you on the laptop it kinda boring jus to do your work so you have to put on some music an it easier to go on youtube rather than finding d remote for the radio that might not even be playin what you want to listen to

Reply
i don't really listen to music online but when i do i go online because i'm not much of a radio person, my laptop doesn't have any and i don't have an mp3 so it's easier to go on metro lyrics and websites like that, i don't really use YouTube.

---

Well whenever i want to listen to music, i go to jango.com and it's like youtube juss nuh lookin at any video but you can listen to any song you an u doh have to wait for d song to load! i'm on the website right now actually!! lolzz

---

Anything you guys want to write about?

Hello guys

I want to remind you that this is a safe place to write about your online media use. Are there any topics you will like to discuss, please free to do it here.

---

So, how do your parents, guardians and other adults view your online use?

What kind of comments do you hear from them?

What do you think they think you do online?

Where do you think they get their perceptions of you from?
Unknown May 5, 2012 at 7:09 AM

gyurl.. my mother too and my father does tel me to put a fake name...pshh yhh right!!!

Reply

Girls Use Online Media April 11, 2012 at 8:46 PM

Why do you think they get so paranoid?

Reply

Replies

sweetstar-peacelover April 12, 2012 at 2:48 PM

Well mostly iz cuz ah LIFETIME!!!!!!! Dey watch to much of it. Dey feel cuz some ppl on d tv dos go in these chatrooms dat we mite b prone to goin
dey too too bt all dey need to understand iz dat everythin ur do hav some risks in it an ur jus need to no wats rite an wats rong an if children keep hearin d
same thin ova an ova dey go jus stop listenin after ah while nt sayin datbdey sud nt warn their children from time to time bout d dangers, risks, an mad
ppl dat on d social networkin sites

Reply

Dark ninja April 15, 2012 at 3:05 PM

my parents aren't like that, they think i'm great on the Internet, they think, they almost never say" you're spending to much time on the net". they normally
think that i do a bunch of science stuff or home work. they think that, well,because i have a sister that literally sucks all the bandwidth and they cut her
time on it, increasing mine

Reply

Rockstar-Peace&amp;amp;LoveRockz April 17, 2012 at 1:34 PM

My parents care so dey does keep sayin wat i sud an sud nt b doin on d Internet an dey keep sayin if dey c wat i does b doin an dey doh lik it i wil get in
trouble

Reply

Monday, April 16, 2012

Easter!!!!!
Hi guys

I hope you had a wonderful, relaxing Easter break.

Now that you guys are back in school I hope I will see more of you come online.

I know I have not been posting a lot lately but I will soon.

Things have been tough and haven't had much time.

Anyone want to share how they spent their Easter break and what online activities they did during the break?

Wednesday, April 25, 2012

Instant Messaging

So I have been looking at the survey data and your focus groups. One of the things that stood out to me was how many of you use instant messaging (IM). I remember I use to use IM all the time, but now I prefer to call on the phone. Well I have tons of minutes on my phone so I can call without paying extra. Now when I use IM I normally use Skype to talk face to face with my family who live far away from me and Whats App do I can message my friends and family about random things during the day when I am not near my computer. I really like Skype and Whats App. I dislike Facebook chat. I think it slow and I can't really multitask while using it, like I can with Skype, because FB requires me to stay on the FB page.

How come you guys use IM so much? What are some of the reasons? What IMs do you use?

Posted by Girls Use Online Media at 10:18 AM

I comment:

Rockstar-Peace&amp;amp;amp;LoveRockz May 13, 2012 at 5:45 PM

I use instant message cuz i wud txt but dat cost mone an my parents wudnt buy post paid for me an i dont lik callin cuz my parents wud b dere an if im tlkin bout guys dat r nice of course dey cant hear me so rather im it easier alot less questions an plus i cud think for a while b4 i respond oda dan calin if theres silence dey go b lik y u nt tlkin so i Just use msn

Tuesday, May 1, 2012

An entire month without Internet

So I am addicted to my iPhone. I use it constantly for school and work and if I don't check my email at least 10 times a day, by the time I come home and feel overwhelmed because I would have over 50 emails. I sometimes wish I can spend a month without the Internet. But then I think I will go nuts if I can't get online. I know when the Internet goes I get so mad because I can't get online. I wonder if I can go a whole month without the Internet. Can you? What would you miss most?

Posted by Girls Use Online Media at 7:52 PM

7 comments:
sweetstar-peacelover May 13, 2012 at 3:50 PM

AH MONTH WITHOUT EMAIL YOUTUBE GOOGLE HOTMAIL MSN FACEBOOK OMG I WOULD DIE!!! i would miss it all dawg I dos b able to tk all kinda things on msn wen i home cuz in school ya always hav to study, do work and all dem stuff bt serious tk i would die if i spend 1 day without Internet i on d Internet for at least an hour ah day even wen ah get ban from it an at test time

Reply

Replies

Coral Tang May 15, 2012 at 4:14 PM

I KNOW RIGHT !!!

sweetstar-peacelover June 8, 2012 at 6:49 PM

Lol like we all feelin it an we eh goin through it

Reply

Rockstar-Peace&LoveRockz May 13, 2012 at 5:35 PM

Am i doh really kno cuz i mite nt b online all d time so mayb ywice three times a week i online an if i get about some hrs a week ib dat month il b fibe cuz i think since my sisyer does take my ipod an neva give bac i wud b able to deal wit it but maybe nt i will get a lil paranoid an hav a fit sometimes web i realy need som entertainment but d lucky thing is u said a month without Internet if i dat d week b4 d minth an i download everytjing i need i think il b jus fine jus dont add tv an computer ipod an all technology known to man i wil possibly have a panic attack !!

Reply

Replies

Dark ninja May 20, 2012 at 2:14 PM

with out Internet, i would be lost! i would not be able to schoolwork properly, no more free downloads of music, movies and games, a huge gap in my long distance relationships. but wat i would miss d most is YouTube!
Girls Use Online Media June 2, 2012 at 10:18 AM

I just spent a week with only access to my email and nothing else. It was not as hard as I thought. Maybe because I really did not have a choice since I was in a place where the Internet was too unreliable and I also did not have time to go online. It was so much easier than I thought.

However, Dark Ninja I know what you mean. I really missed my friends and family who live far away.

Reply

Thursday, May 17, 2012

Season Finales

So this is the time for season finales. What season finales are you looking forward to seeing. I can't wait to see Grey's Anatomy tonight but I just found out that I have a meeting tonight :-( I guess I am going to have to watch it online tomorrow.

I can watch it in hulu or ABC's website.

What shows season finales are you looking forward to seeing and where do you guys go online to watch them?

Saturday, June 2, 2012

I am back!

Hello everyone

For the last week I have been in Phoenix Arizona for a conference. I did not get to see the Grand Canyon :-( I have also been moving and cleaning. It sucks to move. My body is hurting from all the lifting and packing and cleaning and transporting.

Anyway I went online to try to buy stuff and I occurred to me that for some stuff I cannot buy because I don't have an American credit card.

How do you guys buy stuff online without an American Credit card?

Listening to music online

Do you guys know any good websites to listening to music online? Maybe some radio stations or something? When do you guys normally listen to music online? Like I do it when I am cleaning the house.

Coping

Hello all

As I am transcribing the focus groups we did, some of you mentioned that the Internet helped you cope with life. Can you explain to me how the Internet helped you coped with life and what is happening in your life?

Saturday, June 30, 2012

4 Girls and 1 Bathroom
Hello everyone

I am back in Trinidad!!!!!! Woohoo!!!!!!

Before I came back I had to move into my new place and let me tell you it was hilarious when I first moved in. There were 4 girls and only 1 bathroom!!!! let me just tell you that getting ready in the morning was so funny. Everyone needed to use the bathroom at the same time.

So I know exams are going on but I will try to come to school to see you guys soon.

Hope all is well and good luck in exams!

Posted by Girls Use Online Media at 10:24 AM

2 comments:

sweetstar-peacelover July 3, 2012 at 6:07 PM

Lol so hw dat work out?? Ah bet Some ppl waz late for work/school i know i wuda sleep later an get up after everyone leave

Reply

Rockstar-Peace&amp;LoveRockz August 24, 2012 at 1:54 PM

Yea must hav been hectic i wud hav gotten up early an left b4 so i didnt hav to hear al d fussin

Reply
Appendix 5: IRB Approval

The following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University for the period listed below. This review was conducted through an expedited review procedure as defined in the federal regulations as Category(ies):

Project Title: Teenage Girls' Engagement with Online Media as Equipment for Living in Trinidad and Tobago

Primary Investigator: Melissa Alicia Cumberbatch
Co-Investigator(s):

Faculty Advisor: Norma Pecora
Department: Media Arts and Studies

Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

Approval Date: March 7, 2012
Expiration Date: March 6, 2013

This approval is valid until expiration date listed above. If you wish to continue beyond expiration date, you must submit a periodic review application and obtain approval prior to continuation.

Adverse events must be reported to the IRB promptly, within 5 working days of the occurrence.

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Appendix 6: Flyer

Want to talk about the way you use online media?

***************

This is your chance ... I am interested in the way teen girls connect with sites like

![Icons for YouTube, Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, Pinterest, and Habbo]

If you have questions or want to participate in this project contact me - Melissa Cumberbatch - at

GirlsUseMedia@gmail.com
Appendix 7: Parental Consent Form

Parental Consent Form

Title of Research: Teenage Girls and Online Media Use

Researcher: Melissa Cumberbatch

You are being asked permission for your child to participate in a research project. For you to be able to decide whether you want your child to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your child’s personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your child’s participation in this study. You will receive a copy of this document.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done in order to learn what media devices your child uses, and to understand why your child uses the media and what significance the media has for your child.

If you agree to allow your child to participate, your child will be asked to take a survey about her media use. Some girls will also be asked to participate in a focus group and to blog about her media use. You may give your consent for your child to take part in (1) only the survey; (2) the survey, focus group and blog; or (3) not to participate in the study. Participating in the study will not help your child’s grade: choosing to allow her to participate will not help her grades and refusing to allow your child to participate will not harm your child’s grade. Your child’s participation in the study will last anytime about 10 minutes for the survey, two hours for the focus group, and about three hours over one month depending on the activities in which she partakes.

Your child should not participate in this study if she is under the age of 12 years.

Risks and Discomforts

While no risks or discomforts are anticipated, the girls will be aware through the assent form that when they partake in the focus group, other girls in the group can hear what they say and tell other girls who were not in the group what they said. I will advise them to think before they say anything and to respect the opinions of all people present. If they partake in the blog, their identities on the blog will be anonymous and they will be given strict guidelines on the type of language and comments that are allowed on the blog, to ensure a respectful and safe environment for all participants.
Benefits

This research will help to address critics’ concern that students rarely use laptops for educational purposes by surveying the type and frequency of online media used by a sample of adolescent girls. This information can be used by the Trinidad and Tobago government to help assess the degree to which the law they enacted to provide all first year high school students with laptops for educational purposes is having its intended effect. By understanding the way adolescent girls use online media, as well as their attitudes toward and the meaning they give to their online media use (through the survey, focus groups, and blogs), educators will be in a better position to design instruction that engages, shapes, and builds upon adolescent girls’ online media use culture. For example, if we better understand how adolescent girls express their voices through online media, educators can better design instruction that uses online media to facilitate girls’ discussion of their ideas about literature and science.

Confidentiality and Records

Your child’s information will be kept confidential by ensuring only the persons directly involved in the study will have access to your child’s information and all information will be password protected and the hardcopies will be locked in a cabinet.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your child’s study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* The principal or other school administration. Information will be shared with the principal and other school administration if the child reveals information that can endanger her or others.
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU.

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Melissa Cumberbatch at mc357009@ohio.edu or you can call her at phone# (868)***-**** (Trinidad) or (740)***-**** (Ohio, USA).

If you have any questions regarding your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
you have been informed of potential risks to your child and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries your child might receive as a result of participating in this study
you are 18 years of age or older
your child’s participation in this research is completely voluntary
your child may leave the study at any time. If your child decides to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to your child and she will not lose any benefits to which she is otherwise entitled.

************************************************************************
************
I agree to allow my child (Print Child’s Name) ________________
to take the survey.

Parent Signature_________________________ Date____________________

Printed Name_________________________

I agree to allow my child (Print Child’s Name) ________________
to be part of the focus group and blog.

Parent Signature_________________________ Date____________________

Printed Name_________________________
Appendix 8: Parental Consent Form for Parents to Keep

Please Keep this Copy for Your Own Records
Parental Consent Form

Title of Research: Teenage Girls and Online Media Use

Researcher: Melissa Cumberbatch

You are being asked permission for your child to participate in a research project. For you to be able to decide whether you want your child to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your child’s personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your child’s participation in this study. You will receive a copy of this document.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done in order to learn what media devices your child uses, and to understand why your child uses the media and what significance the media has for your child.

If you agree to allow your child to participate, your child will be asked to take a survey about her media use. Some girls will also be asked to participate in a focus group and to blog about her media use. You may give your consent for your child to take part in (1) only the survey; (2) the survey, focus group and blog; or (3) not to participate in the study. Participating in the study will not help your child’s grade: choosing to allow her to participate will not help her grades and refusing to allow your child to participate will not harm your child’s grade. Your child’s participation in the study will last anytime about 10 minutes for the survey, two hours for the focus group, and about three hours over one month depending on the activities in which she partakes.

Your child should not participate in this study if she is under the age of 12 years.

Risks and Discomforts

While no risks or discomforts are anticipated, the girls will be aware through the assent form that when they partake in the focus group, other girls in the group can hear what they say and tell other girls who were not in the group what they said. I will advise them to think before they say anything and to respect the opinions of all people present. If they partake in the blog, their identities on the blog will be anonymous and they will be given
strict guidelines on the type of language and comments that are allowed on the blog, to ensure a respectful and safe environment for all participants.

Benefits

This research will help to address critics’ concern that students rarely use laptops for educational purposes by surveying the type and frequency of online media used by a sample of adolescent girls. This information can be used by the Trinidad and Tobago government to help assess the degree to which the law they enacted to provide all first year high school students with laptops for educational purposes is having its intended effect. By understanding the way adolescent girls use online media, as well as their attitudes toward and the meaning they give to their online media use (through the survey, focus groups, and blogs), educators will be in a better position to design instruction that engages, shapes, and builds upon adolescent girls’ online media use culture. For example, if we better understand how adolescent girls express their voices through online media, educators can better design instruction that uses online media to facilitate girls’ discussion of their ideas about literature and science.

Confidentiality and Records

Your child’s information will be kept confidential by ensuring only the persons directly involved in the study will have access to your child’s information and all information will be password protected and the hardcopies will be locked in a cabinet.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your child’s study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* The principal or other school administration. Information will be shared with the principal and other school administration if the child reveals information that can endanger her or others.
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU.

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If you have any questions regarding your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.
By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks to your child and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries your child might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your child’s participation in this research is completely voluntary
- your child may leave the study at any time. If your child decides to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to your child and she will not lose any benefits to which she is otherwise entitled.

********************************************************************************
************

I agree to allow my child (Print Child’s Name)________________________ to take the survey.

Parent Signature________________________________________ Date__________

Printed Name____________________________________________

I agree to allow my child (Print Child’s Name)________________________ to be part of the focus group and blog.

Parent Signature________________________________________ Date__________

Printed Name____________________________________________
Appendix 9: Survey Assent Form

Teenage Girls and Online Media Use
Survey Assent Form

My name is Melissa Cumberbatch. I am trying to learn about how teenage girls use
online media because different people use online media for different reasons. If you
would like, you can be in my study.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will answer questions about how what
online media you use.

If you help me in my project, the schools and government will be able to understand why
media is important in your life and why media such as the Internet can be helpful in your
education. Participating will not affect your grade in class. Choosing to participate in this
study will not help your grade. Refusing to participate will not harm your grade.

The questions are easy and since your name is not on the paper, no one will know your
answers to the questions unless you tell them. I will put things I learn about you together
with things I learn about other teens, so no one can tell what things came from you. When
I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I
am talking about.

If you answer these questions, I will be able to see what media you have access to, and
how often you use it. These questions will also allow you to see how much time you
spend using media devices.

My telephone number is (868)***-**** (Trinidad) and my email address is
girlsuseonlinemedia@gmail.com. You can call me or email me if you have questions
about the study.

Agreement

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don’t have to do it. [Name of
researcher] has answered all my questions.

______________________________ ________________
Signature of Study Participant   Date

______________________________ ________________
Signature of Researcher/ Date
Appendix 10: Survey Assent Form for Teen Girls to Keep

Please Keep this Copy

Teenage Girls and Online Media Use
Survey Assent Form

My name is Melissa Cumberbatch. I am trying to learn about how teenage girls use online media because different people use online media for different reasons. If you would like, you can be in my study.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will answer questions about how what online media you use.

If you help me in my project, the schools and government will be able to understand why media is important in your life and why media such as the Internet can be helpful in your education. Participating will not affect your grade in class. Choosing to participate in this study will not help your grade. Refusing to participate will not harm your grade.

The questions are easy and since your name is not on the paper, no one will know your answers to the questions unless you tell them. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other teens, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

If you answer these questions, I will be able to see what media you have access to, and how often you use it. These questions will also allow you to see how much time you spend using media devices.

My telephone number is (868)***-**** (Trinidad) and my email address is girlsuseonlinemedia@gmail.com. You can call me or email me if you have questions about the study.

Agreement

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don’t have to do it. [Name of researcher] has answered all my questions.

_________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Study Participant   Date

_________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Researcher/ Date
Appendix 11: Focus Group and Blog Assent Form

Teenage Girls and Online Media Use
Focus Group and Blog Assent Form

My name is Melissa Cumberbatch. I am trying to learn about how teenage girls use online media because different people use the media for different reasons and I want to learn the different ways teenage girls use the media and the reasons why they use different media such as Facebook and YouTube. If you would like, you can be in my study.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will (1) partake in a focus group where you will talk to other teenage girls in a group about the way you and the other girls use online media and (2) write on a blog about the different online media you use, how you use it, and why you use it. Choosing to participate in this study will not help your grade. Refusing to participate will not harm your grade.

If you help me in my project, the schools and government will be able to understand why media is important in your life and why media such as the Internet can be helpful in your education. However, if you say or write something that makes me think you are going to hurt yourself or other people, I will have to tell the school principal what you said.

If you choose to be part of the focus group and blog, you need to be aware that while in the focus group, other girls in the group can hear what you say and can tell others girls who were not in the group what you said. If you write on the blog, you will choose a username that will hide your true identity, but you need to be aware that even though no one knows your username, unless you tell them, others who write on the blog can see what you write.

I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other teens, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

If you partake in the focus group and write on the blog, I will be able to understand what online media you have access to, and the reasons why you use online media.

Your parents or guardian have to say it’s OK for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don’t want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that’s OK. You can stop at any time.

My telephone number is (868)***.**** (Trinidad) and my email address is girlsuseonlinemedia@gmail.com. You can call me or email me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study any more.
I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.

**Agreement**: I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don’t have to do it. Melissa Cumberbatch has answered all my questions.

__________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Study Participant       Date

__________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Researcher             Date
Appendix 12: Focus Group and Blog Assent Form for the Teen Girls to Keep

Please Keep this Copy

Teenage Girls and Online Media Use
Focus Group and Blog Assent Form

My name is Melissa Cumberbatch. I am trying to learn about how teenage girls use online media because different people use the media for different reasons and I want to learn the different ways teenage girls use the media and the reasons why they use different media such as Facebook and YouTube. If you would like, you can be in my study.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will (1) partake in a focus group where you will talk to other teenage girls in a group about the way you and the other girls use online media and (2) write on a blog about the different online media you use, how you use it, and why you use it. Choosing to participate in this study will not help your grade. Refusing to participate will not harm your grade.

If you help me in my project, the schools and government will be able to understand why media is important in your life and why media such as the Internet can be helpful in your education. However, if you say or write something that makes me think you are going to hurt yourself or other people, I will have to tell the school principle what you said.

If you choose to be part of the focus group and blog, you need to be aware that while in the focus group, other girls in the group can hear what you say and can tell others girls who were not in the group what you said. If you write on the blog, you will choose a username that will hide your true identity, but you need to be aware that even though no one knows your username, unless you tell them, others who write on the blog can see what you write.

I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other teens, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

If you partake in the focus group and write on the blog, I will be able to understand what online media you have access to, and the reasons why you use online media.

Your parents or guardian have to say it’s OK for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don’t want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that’s OK. You can stop at any time.

My telephone number is (868)***-**** (Trinidad) and my email address is girlsuseonlinemedia@gmail.com. You can call me or email me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study any more.
I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.

**Agreement**: I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don’t have to do it. Melissa Cumberbatch has answered all my questions.

______________________________  ________________
Sign of Study Participant       Date

______________________________  ________________
Signature of Researcher         Date

**Instructions on how to access the blog**

In order to access the blog, you must have given me your email address. If you have not got given me your email address, please send me an email at girlsusemedia@ohio.edu.

Once you have given me your email address, I will send you an email inviting you to join the blog. Remember this blog is an invitation only blog, this means you can only access it, if you have been invited by join and cannot be found via an Internet search.

To access the blog, click on the link in the email. You'll need to sign in with a Google Account to confirm the invitation. If you don't have a Google Account yet, they will show you how to get one in minutes, or you can view the blog as a guest for up to 30 days.

Once you have signed in, you will create a display name. The display name will be used to sign your blog posts. Please use the following guidelines when creating your display name.

- Do not use your real name or anything that can reveal your identity to others. You can use animals, plants, flowers or be creative, just don’t include information that can reveal your identity to others.
- Do not use curse words or other profanities in your display name
- Do not tell others your display name

After you create your display name, you have to accept the terms of service. Please read the terms of service before accepting.

Once on the blog’s homepage, you can read and comment on the blog by clicking comment and posting your thoughts. Below are rules to posting on the blog

- You are not allowed to curse on the blog
- You are not allowed to disrespect other’s opinions on the blog. You can disagree, but do so respectfully.
- No name-calling is allowed on the blog
- No bullying is allowed
- You are not allowed to reveal or ask others to reveal their true identity on the blog

Disobeying the rules will result in you being blocked from the blog.