

Listening to Digital Wisdom:
Youth of Color Perspectives on Their Needs in Navigating New Media

By

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Abstract

This research project employs youth development and critical race theory to understand the participation gap in social media. It does this by prioritizing youth voice as the focal point of knowledge creation. It explores why this is such a vital topic for academic discussion within education and youth development. It delves into previous work on the topic through a literature review. This qualitative study is based on four focus groups (6 -8 youth each) and three in-depth follow up interviews across four different high schools in the Sacramento area. An inductive grounded theory approach was used to analyze the focus groups and interviews. This paper will explain that process as well as state findings and potential implications for youth, parents, and teachers. This research will provide an examination of the online trends of youth activity and help inform strategies for healthy social media use.

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Listening to Digital Wisdom: Youth of Color Perspectives on Their Needs in Navigating New Media

As a youth advocate, I have worked on several initiatives to empower young people. Once a year, I have helped develop curriculum for a conference in South Sacramento called Power of Know. This conference is focused on developing healthy relationship skills in middle and high school aged students. In the last five years, the topic of social media has become increasingly relevant to this population. Stories that have been shared touch on many social difficulties, and even dangers, that youth encounter on the web. These include, but are not limited to, persistent tensions between friends, cyberbullying, online threats, and sexual predators. This conference, along with other interactions with these youth, propelled my interest in research on youth and social media. Through this project, I aspire to further understand the dynamic facets of social media and the unique problems associated with online experiences. I also hope to identify potential solutions for these problematic behavior patterns.

In April 2014, I met Thomas Dodson, the president of Salvage Media, a social media strategy company. In 2013, he started a non-profit organization called Above the Fray (ATF) with the partnership of mental health specialist, Aja Uranga-Foster and communications professor, Shawna Malvini Redden. The mission of ATF is to educate parents and their youth on strategies for effective social media behavior and practice. Their mission as described on their website states:

Above the Fray is a first of its kind program, proactively addressing the numerous issues young people face online, like sexting, social media, cyberbullying, gaming, and more. Our goal is to educate parents and teachers about what life is really like online for young people, and to give adults the tools they need to have meaningful dialogues at home and at school. Our tangible, grounded, and easy to

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understand program is based largely on the startling findings from our Above the Fray youth focus groups. We teach parents what it's truly like for young people right now in the cyber trenches; how it's affecting their minds and bodies. And we offer real solutions to parents that will help keep children safe. (Dodson, 2014).

I later became a partner of the organization and decided to conduct this research project to inform the work of ATF but also to inform teachers, parents, and youth on healthy social media practices.



Shawna Malvini Redden, PhD., Thomas Dodson, Aja Uranga-Foster, and Fong Tran

Figure 1. Above the Fray Team (Dodson, 2014)

Key Definitions

For the purposes of framing this study, “youth” will be defined as high school to college age individuals ages 14-21. Older youth have less restricted access to technology and social media, and therefore are more exposed to heightened degrees of social dangers online as compared to adolescent youth (14 and under). I also believe there is a common notion that teens are highly technologically savvy and, therefore, do not require adult supervision; this research endeavors to unveil a more nuanced perspective. I use the terms “youth” and “young people”

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interchangeably. While the term “youth of color” is used to refer to the same age group but that also identify as non-white or non-Caucasian. A foundational study entitled "Generation M2: Media in the lives of 8- to 18- year-olds" (2008) found that young Americans spend on average 6.5 hours with media per day (p. 2). This is one of the many statistics that illustrates the pervasive culture of media in the lives of young people and the increasing need for research on this phenomenon. Youth of color experience social media differently from their white counterparts. This difference, known as the “participation gap,” manifests itself on multiple levels: a) youth of color lack home devices and the Internet connection for equitable technology access, b) they especially lack the media literacy skills to navigate virtual spaces and properly evaluate the credibility of Internet content, and c) they are unable to fully participate in creating social media content (Jenkins, 2009). Few studies have explored these phenomena and fewer to the same population.

Problem Statement

There are overwhelming statistics that illustrate the pervasive culture of media in the lives of young people in America and its increasing prevalence in everyday life. According to the Internet and American Life Project survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, “94 percent of all American teenagers – which it defines as twelve to seventeen year-olds - now use the Internet (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010, p. 2).” It also found that 75 percent of teens go on daily and 85 percent reported going online at least a few times a week (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). The Kaiser Family Foundation study entitled *Generation M2: Media in the lives of 8- to 18- year-olds* found that “young Americans spend on average 6.5 hours with media per day” (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2008, p. 32). Digital media is significantly intertwined in the day-in and day-out activities of youth. There are many opportunities

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throughout the day for media use. From the time they wake up to the time they go to bed, young people are wired to digital spaces. Digital media activities include, but are not limited to, social media sites, online gaming, discussion boards, fandom, and pornography. Youth engage in these activities through all types of devices such as mobile phones, desktops, tablets, and laptops. The pace at which youth consume digital content is overwhelming and can have implications on their personal identity, sociability, learning, play, and self-expression. Young people are now growing up in environments where digital media is no longer an option but a necessity. There is now an added dimension to social interactions that require youth to navigate the online world as adeptly as they do the real world. It has become a requirement to socially navigate between the real world and virtual world spaces.

This age of new digital media technology has had major impacts on the social and cultural development of human interaction and how society obtains information. Now individuals receive information more quickly, efficiently, and at a much more intense rate than ever (Tapscott, 1997). Being able to accurately assess the credibility and trustworthiness of media content is an essential skill in the new century. The digital technology industry is exponentially growing and young people are developing in a society with multiple mediums of hyper-socialized and connected technology. A Business Insider report projected that social media ad spending has increased from a \$6.1 billion in 2006 to \$14 billion in 2013 (Hoelzel, 2014). Because of their constant connection to the Internet, young people need the skills to properly filter relevant information in order to function effectively in a digitized world. It is widely assumed that social media is limited to popular platforms like *Facebook*, *Snapchat* and *Instagram*, but there are interactive elements to all websites like *Amazon*, *Yahoo*, and *the New York Times* (Ito et al., 2010). The needs for skills to navigate these technologies are crucial for

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young people in the new era of technological innovation and digitized collaboration. These skills are especially critical for historically marginalized communities as they face greater gaps in these technological skills.

There is a popular notion that increased access to technology helps address systemic income inequality and the achievement gap. A White House report stated that, “technology is the great equalizer that will dramatically improve the quality of a person’s life through the click a mouse button”(Kanevsky, 2014, p. 1). However, injecting access to technology into historically marginalized communities does not address those individuals’ relationship to technology or their ability to fully participate in all the capacities that technology has to offer. There is inequity among low-income youth of color that is rooted in the lack of economic, social, and cultural capital. Capital which affluent white families are more inclined to have (Lareau, 1987). Jenkins (2012) proposes that there is a “participation gap” among low-income youth of color, as they are unable to access new media as compared to their affluent and white counterparts. Youth of color tend to have less advanced and less sophisticated devices, such as home computers or laptops. Typically, their access points to social network sites (SNS) are limited to affordable mobile devices or MP3 devices like an *iPod Touch* (Jenkins, 2012). This limits their ability to perform more high-level activities such as research, multitasking, creating media content such as video editing or music production, and utilizing educational tools and games. This barrier has major repercussions on employment skills and opportunities for the future in a growing digital age. Castells (2002) explains that “increasingly, as computer use is ever less a lifestyle option ever more everyday necessity, inability to use computers or find information on the web is a matter of stigma, or social exclusion, revealing not only changing social norms but also the growing centrality of computers to work, education and politics” (p.16). Therefore, a gap in technological

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knowledge for youth of color during this digital age may have negative impacts on gaps that are already present in education, employment and social capital. It is pertinent that the complexities of social media are better understood so that solutions go beyond restricting and limiting Internet use.

To further understand these complexities, Prensky's (2001) digital divide describes the discrepancy in how two different generations conceive the function of the Internet. Prensky talks about two groups of people: the digital natives and the digital immigrants. Digital natives are Millennials, the youth who were born into a world with a strong prevalence of social networking technologies. Digital immigrants are people from older generations, such as parents and other adults, who are much slower to adapt to network technology (Prensky, 2001). However, there are multiple levels to this group, whose gaps in technological engagement vary based on age, basic tech competencies, access, and use of different devices and/or platforms (boyd, 2014). The older generation's familiarity with media technology can vary from expert users for professional purposes to complete novices that avoid Internet use at all costs and defer to more traditional methods of communication. But just when some older social media users are "catching up" and getting *Facebook* accounts, young people are moving away from the social media conglomerate to other niche platforms like *Twitter*, *SnapChat* and *Instagram* (boyd, 2014). The digital divide showcases the gap between how Millennials and older generations consume social media content. This gap leads young people to see older adults as outsiders to the vast world of technology. Because of their outsider status, adults may not be aware of the issues inherent in technology, such as the dangers of cyberbullying, the increase in accessibility and exchange of pornography, the texting of explicit photos better known as sexting, and the increased vulnerability to sexual predators.

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There are a growing number of studies that show the potential psychological impacts of social technologies on youth development. Research has begun to address the claims that social media can lead to an increase in depression and loneliness as well as a decrease in attention span and literacy in youth. It has also been asserted that youth can become addicted to the Internet. (Lenhart et al., 2010). Media is consuming more of young peoples' time and social lives than ever before. Therefore, the generational divide will continue to expand. This digital divide inhibits parents from feeling that they can intervene and support their youth when it comes to Internet use. It also creates a belief among youth that they cannot turn to the adults in their lives for guidance because they do not know anything about technology. Why would a young person who is being cyberbullied ask for help from adults when adults are unaware of the phenomenon of cyberbullying? It is vital that a bridge is built across this digital divide to help encourage adults and youth to work together. Simply starting the conversation about technology with youth is the first and most crucial step in helping them, especially in times of emergencies.

This project seeks to make the opinions and experiences of youth a central source of knowledge, otherwise known as digital wisdom. Digital wisdom is a term coined by Marc Prensky (2011) and states that educators and parents need to listen to youth as a source of knowledge. Young people would know best how teachers can support them. Prensky (2011) explains that teachers and students need to partner in the navigation of knowledge construction through new media. This research project seeks to answer the following question: What do youth identify to be their gaps of knowledge and skills when using new media that are most relevant and meaningful to their development? Ultimately, I hope to better understand youth perspectives, and use those to inform parents and teachers how to best support their youth.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

General Topics

The intersection of youth and social media has quickly fueled many different types of academic inquiries from various disciplines. Some articles even discuss the vast educational tools for students available throughout the Internet. The research addresses the increased access for self-learning, storytelling, and the importance of media literacy for youth (Jenkins, 2009). There are also studies that discuss how social media is used as a tool for activism and political engagement. From the power of crowd funding, viral charity campaigns, and social movements to overthrow corrupt governments in the Middle East, the discussion of new media technology is vast and varied. There are endless possibilities with interconnected media and these possibilities impact youth in tremendous ways (Joyce, 2010). Even though some of these topics are related, I ultimately determined that they deviated from the core topic of my analysis. My main focus is derived from the large-scale survey based studies like Pew Research Center (Lenhart et al., 2010) and the Kaiser Family Foundation (Ride, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005). These studies discussed the wide ranging social impacts of new media on youth, such as sexting, cyberbullying, oversharing inappropriate content, lack of knowledge of privacy and security, pornography, and gaming. As well as the psychological impacts of extended technology use such as loneliness and sleep deprivation. I set out to build on this particular focus of youth and social media as there is a growing body of research that is diversifying across disciplines and research methods.

Methodological Approaches in Literature

Most of the early empirical research regarding social media use were large scale survey studies, but in the last five to eight years, there have been more longitudinal ethnographic research studies. The phenomenon of social media is recent, so naturally, grounded empirical

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research is limited but quickly evolving. There are two main methodological approaches that provide a holistic understanding of youth and social media. First, large scale survey studies were conducted through online and phone communications, such as the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life project (Lenhart et al., 2008), USC Center for Digital Future (Cole, 2000) and the Kaiser Family Foundation study of young Americans (Ride, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005). These studies provided strong quantitative data on the topic, which painted a broad landscape of youth engagement on social networking technologies and gave a starting point for deeper analysis. As briefly mentioned before, many of these studies reinforce the idea that social media is problematic, but can be juxtaposed with social media's universal benefits such as education and digital activism.

The second methodological approach is ethnographic research, which provides a deeper sense of how youth experience social media. Through in-person interviews and observations, ethnography allows scholars to hear the authentic voice of a participant and consider ideas beyond the purview of a researcher. This form of qualitative exploration captures story and detail that a standardized survey may not. In danah boyd's (2014) book, *It's Complicated, the social lives of networked teens* she interviewed 166 youth over a 10 year period and provided a more comprehensive and summative analysis of the state of youth and social media. Her data complicates the overgeneralized findings of many survey studies. She discusses how social ills, like Internet addiction, oversharing personal content, and cyberbullying, are due to social forces they were born into and not simply natural behaviors of youth. Studies like boyd's provide thorough data that demystify some of the generalized views of youth and social media. Social media provides a sense of agency to youth in these virtual spaces (boyd, 2014). She explains the decrease of youth-only spaces in real life creates the need for youth-only spaces in virtual life. It

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is shown that adults are less likely to let youth play in open public spaces due to fear of sexual predators. This loss of youth-only space in real life was quickly supplemented with youth-only spaces online (boyd, 2014). She also explains that youth learn negative social media behaviors, such as addiction and bullying, from adults but adults typically cannot identify their own hypocritical behaviors. Adults perpetrate the negative behaviors that many youth are chastised for - adults post inappropriate photos, say offensive statements, and are on media as often, if not more often, than their youth. It is vital to acknowledge that healthy media practices must first be modeled and then reemphasized by the adult (boyd, 2014). boyd's research proposes a need for a holistic approach to the problem and more collaborative solutions. Condemning youth from social media use is neither realistic nor productive. She suggests that parents and teachers engage in more shared dialogue with their youth around new media, even if the adults do not feel like experts in the matter. It is vital to the overall well-being of youth that adults have a strong presence in this space where youth are identified as the experts, or natives.

boyd is one of many scholars who is approaching this research topic from an ethnographic method. Mizuko Ito (2010) led a three year collaborative ethnographic project with several other researchers that attempted to answer the question, "How are new media being taken up by youth practices and agendas? And how do these practices change the dynamics of youth-adult negotiations over literacy, learning and authoritative knowledge?" (p. 2). This text provides a deeper understanding of how youth construct identity and relationships through virtual spaces. It is explained eloquently and appropriately through the title of the book - *Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out*. These terms of youth vernacular are generalized by adults as insignificant play activities and spaces that youth engage in, but Ito and colleagues complicate these notions by explaining that youth are participating in high levels of learning and creative

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production when they “geek out” (Ito, et al., 2010). Youth are producing music, making and editing videos, creating their own websites, and promoting their own entrepreneurial endeavors. Most importantly, they are doing this all on their own with little to no guidance from adults. When young people are “hanging out,” they are creating crucial self-autonomous spaces that are not regulated by adult presence (Ito, et al., 2010). These spaces are vital for youth to construct their own identities beyond family structures and influences; they also need to shape their identities with their peer group. When youth are “messaging around” they connect with peers of common interests and engage in activity, experimentation, and play. This experimentation may be perceived to possess no value to formal learning, however, these spaces create opportunity to learn new content, create processes of trial and error, and co-construct knowledge among peers and community groups (Ito, et al., 2010). All these practices involve high-level learning and the development of skills, knowledge, and capital. It is important to acknowledge that youth are learning this content in order to navigate the new social and cultural norms under digitalized media. It is necessary in an ever-evolving world of technology. It is a means of social survival to have a Facebook, maintain an Internet profile, and send emails almost every day. However, it is not solely about the social aspect. Our current workforce also demands skills related to navigating social media and digital content.

Previous survey studies and ethnographic methods have made great strides in constructing knowledge on this topic. This research project makes a methodological contribution by conducting focus groups, which are described more fully in the methods section. Focus groups are a unique process that stimulate the collective voice of multiple youth participants that cannot be replicated by individual interviews or survey studies alone. They allow interaction and consensus building between participants and uncovers information in a different manner than

other research methods (Rabiee, 2004). This methodological approach is informed by the theoretical frameworks used in this study.

Theoretical Concepts in Literature

This project is grounded in literature that takes into account the quickly evolving field of new media. The following terms are the most up to date concepts that best explain the complex systems of digital media and its multifaceted relationship with youth culture and development.

Digital wisdom. Prensky has recently moved away from the digital divide concept and placed more emphasis on the need for digital wisdom (Prensky, 2001). Digital wisdom is the acknowledgement that youth have incredible autonomy and agency in this virtual space and have proved to be adaptable and self-taught. Prensky believes that digital wisdom “begins with the students – what they need and how we can give it to them,” (2012, p. 2). Digital wisdom is a theoretical concept that informs this project’s methodological approach through focus groups. It seeks to find that wisdom from youth of color by telling their collective stories as they construct them with one another. This knowledge should not be re-interpretations of data from researchers, rather, it should be established by the source of wisdom: the youth. We must value the wisdom that is already there, while acknowledging that the youth have gaps and needs that adults can help support and address.

Many believe that older generations, or digital immigrants, are ill-equipped to help the younger generation with new media. Due to this divisive thinking, youth face serious ethical choices that can be destructive when dealt with in isolation (Prensky, 2011). Youth are exposed to pornography, cyberbullying, and flawed content disguised as authentic information, and they need adult support to address these issues. Far too often youth face an onslaught of social issues like cyberbullying, traumatic stress, sexual violence, domestic violence, racism, and homophobia

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all by themselves with little to no guidance from adults. With that in mind, digital wisdom acknowledges that youth are navigating these issues with or without their parents.

New media. New media explains the complex landscape of digital media and its relation to other forms of multimedia. It moves beyond the traditional belief that social networks operate on popular social media platforms like *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *SnapChat*, etc. New media explains that complex and interwoven social interactions that take all Internet-based technologies such as mobile devices, gaming systems, and websites like the *New York times*, *Amazon*, etc. (Ito, 2012). Every platform has a comment or discussion board which intersects a large “ecology of traditional media such as books, television and radio” and other interactive media (Jenkins, 2006, p. 6). As Ito explains, “the constellation of media changes, in a move toward more digital, networked, and interactive forms... (Ito, 2012, p. 10)” This definition articulates how is youth culture manifested in real world experiences while simultaneously occurring in virtual space. Youth hear about their favorite *YouTube* personality releasing a new video on police brutality and then they watch it with their friend during lunch period, which prompts them to read blog posts together. Their research catalyzes them to join a teach-in or rally, and they ask their teachers to discuss more about the topic in class. Real world and virtual world become less separated and more interconnected. Researchers use this definition of new media to encompass the nuanced and multi-layered landscapes that youth move through.

Participation gap. A key concept explored through this study is the idea of the participation gap and how low income youth of color are not able to participate and access technology at the same capacity as their white and affluent counterparts (Jenkins, 2012). There is a gap in how these marginalized communities understand and connect with information; therefore, there seems to be a need for critical media literacy as well as enhanced technical skills

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(Jenkins, 2012). The participation gap is not to be confused with the digital divide. Simply being a youth does not mean that one has equitable access, engagement, and participation with technology. Digital divide refers to differences in generational culture and their relationship to technology. There will be major negative repercussions on youth of color and their education and employment opportunities if they cannot have equal access to technology. This project seeks to take a deep and careful examination of race, gender, and class as it relates to social media. Research on the needs of disadvantaged communities is necessary to address their unique needs. It better informs parents and school practitioners on how to help low-income youth of color obtain equitable engagement in technology.

Therefore, the focus on this research project is grounded in the diverse youth's perspectives on new media and what they identify to be their needs in learning new media. My research attempts to address this gap through a unique focus group method to determine the collective voice of youth. Additionally, I did not find any research that specifically answered the question of youth-identified needs adults can help with.

Theoretical Framework

The value of youth perspective is an essential foundation to this research because it recognizes the incredible value and power of youth agency and autonomy. Positive Youth Development Theory recognizes that youth are the experts of their own experiences and their areas of growth (Lerner, 2005). Adults play a critical role in creating holistic safe and healthy spaces for young people to flourish and make significant contributions to their communities. However, the generalized and disempowering perspective that the new youth generation is disengaged and uneducated inhibits the recognition of youth wisdom (Joyce, 2010).

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For instance, traditionally, the input of youth is rarely considered in the policy making processes that directly impact them. In turn, there is a lack of investment from the youth who have to put up with systems that were created for them and not by them. There is a lack of a leadership pipeline to ensure future leaders who are engaged and aware of policy-making structures (Joyce, 2010). By making youth voices the source of my research data, I not only recognize youth expertise but potentially ignite critical youth engagement. The founder of Sacramento Area Youth Speaks (SAYS) Dr. Vajra Watson states that “The more you know, the more you owe (Watson, personal communication, 2012)”. Recognizing one’s agency in knowledge construction engenders community involvement and the need to create an impact beyond one’s self. I hope for my project to inspire these types of conversations and to empower youth in recognizing their own needs when navigating new media spaces.

Most of my literature review speaks about the experiences of highly skilled youth who are using networked technology in sophisticated capacities or the general experiences of white affluent youth, but rarely does it cover the experience of historically marginalized youth. Critical Race Theory (CRT) enables the intentional examination and validation of the experiences of youth of color in virtual experiences. “Although students of color are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings” (Bernal, 2002, p. 106). Much of the new media literature replicates these same patterns by generalizing youth as a homogeneous group. The current research represents more of a white dominant narrative and overlooks the complex experiences of marginalized youth. Youth development is argued to be narrow and comes from an ‘all youth are the same’ school of thinking. However young people are not equal blank slates who all come from the same starting line. Youth development fails to recognize the

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historical marginalization of youth of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, gender, sex, class, and race (Bernal, 2002). Critical Race Theory recognizes that youth of color face systemic barriers that hinder them socially, politically, and economically (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999) and these barriers need to be considered in research. Routed by the term critical, CRT also recognizes that race should not be analyzed in isolation, but also at the intersection of other identity categories such as gender and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1991) What it means to be a female student using social media has different implications for a black female youth from a low-income household. This is not to say that all possible intersections must be considered, but instead brings to light that intersectionality exists and that diverse experiences should be validated.

To recognize the experiences of diverse youth, it is necessary to look at both Critical Race Theory and the Youth Development framework. Critical Race Theory originated in the late 1970s from the work of lawyers, activists, and legal scholars as a new strategy for dealing with the emergence of post-civil rights racial structure in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). It is a lens to address colorblind ideology, which masks the existence of white privilege and invalidates the existence of structural racism (Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009). While Critical Race Theory is useful in contextualizing the lived experiences of youth of color, it is also important to ask youth themselves about what racial and gender dynamics are at play when they are using new media. Youth of color carry multiple identities with them in any space they occupy, and it therefore plays a factor on influencing the people they interact with. Race, ethnicity and gender are a play at one time and not in isolation of one another. Youth Development coupled with Critical Race Theory allows youth to critically analyze the dynamics that they have felt and witnessed in virtual space. These theories add value to their experiences and opinions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

The design of this research project resembles previous methodology approaches with youth regarding new media. It contributes a new comprehensive qualitative study from a Grounded Theory approach using focus groups and interview methods (Rabiee, 2004). Focus group is a unique method that has a lot of potential of contributing to the topic of youth and social media. Focus groups galvanize a collective voice among participants. They allow for the “group effect,” where youth identify gaps and needs in navigating new media as a collective thought process (Carey, M.A., 1994). In focus groups, participants also discuss combined strategies and interventions that can be implemented by teachers, parents, and other adults. Focus groups allow for the “chaining effect” where participants connect one concept to another and as a result form a shared reserve of experiences (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). While the interview method has been used extensively in previous studies, this study gives it more dimension. Interviews were used as a process to confirm, challenge, and add further data after initial synthesis of focus group findings. This “member checking” process increases the trustworthiness of the data and the voice of youth in the research (Tracy, 2010). It reaffirms the value of listening to youth and honors digital wisdom. If youth disagree with the findings, it warrants some critical reassessment and redevelopment. Member checking aims to align my own constructed themes and opinions with the perspectives of youth statements from the study. As Malagon, Huber, and Velez (2009) state, a “critical element of a critical race-grounded methodology is the inclusion of research participants in data analysis for co-construction of knowledge” (p. 262). The interview emphasizes a collaborative process that deconstructs the traditional “researcher-subject” role, recognizes the true value of participant knowledge, and allows for the participants to

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communicate their own narratives (Malagon, Huber, & Velez., 2009). The design of this study, process, and procedures was approved through the University of California of Davis Internal Review Board to assure the protection of participants.

Data Collection

Focus group. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2009), “the focus group is a useful social laboratory for studying the diversity of opinion on a topic, the collaborative process of meaning construction and the cultural performance of communication” (p. 183). This cooperative process of knowledge construction in a small group setting allows for youth to synthesize ideas about new media. It allows for collective thought to manifest, but also for differentiating opinions to arise, resulting in diverse perspectives (Rabiee, 2004). A standardized and structured protocol keeps the process consistent across multiple focus groups and allows for comparing and contrasting across focus groups. This method unveiled large themes about new media including the youth-identified gaps and needs in their media practice.

These focus groups go beyond asking survey questions in a large group setting; they also incorporate interactive writing activities. These methods include a writing reflection and a concept mapping activity. Certain questions that are politically charged and personal can be difficult for participants to respond to in a group setting (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Therefore, a writing reflection activity is incorporated for participants to process survey questions in a more in-depth manner. Additionally, a concept-mapping activity allows for youth-constructed knowledge to be made in pairs or groups of three. “Concept mapping allows students to understand the relationships between concepts and hence understand those concepts themselves and the domain to which they belong” (Davies, 2011). The activity also has less facilitator bias because they are not involved (Davies, 2011). Youth are asked to write various responses to a

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question and then work in small groups to cluster common themes and trends they see among their responses. This encourages them to discuss suggested interventions for parents, teachers, and peer groups and address gaps in social media learning.

Most importantly, these non-traditional data collection methods are grounded in critical pedagogy and positive youth development (Breunig, 2005). Like all people, youth are the owners and creators of their own knowledge. This knowledge is based upon their unique experiences as well as their race, gender, and class. Taking into account the diversity of student learning and expression modalities, this study allows for writing and other interactive discussion activities. The study supports one of the many youth development objectives such as promoting bonding, fostering self-determination, and positive social involvement (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004). The study also expects that youth leaders have competency in the following areas - social, behavioral, moral, and emotional. Assuming these skills and knowledge helps promote the idea that youth have great knowledge to contribute to the researcher and to their peers.



Figure 2. Writing reflection process

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Figure 3. Concept mapping activity

Throughout this study, I conducted four different 2-hour long focus groups with 6-8 youth each that took place in four different schools across the Sacramento region. Youth were recruited through a public flyer and they were asked to contact their parents for approval. Teachers made announcements in their classrooms, but did not help in recruitment or participant selection. Youth who chose to participate in the focus groups were provided with food and refreshments as a small incentive for their time. I made a conscious effort to assemble a focus group that was as diverse as possible across ethnic, gender, and grade level categories.

A protocol is necessary to assure reliability across all four focus groups and allow for a baseline to explain inconsistencies. To avoid confirmation bias, focus group questions were asked in a neutral manner and in an order that would avoid leading responses (Rabbie, 2014). In *Advanced Focus Group Research*, suggests that there are “few opportunities for participants to speak in large groups” so “reticent group members may be likely to hide in the crowd and withhold their participation in the discussion” (Rabbie, 2014, p. 11). Therefore, it was determined that 6-8 participants would be ideal for each focus group. The number balances

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having enough participants with having too many and assures that all participants feel equally engaged (Rabbie, 2014, p. 11).



Figure 4. Focus group by Yohei Kato.

All groups were conducted in circles to challenge the notion of a hierarchy between the participant and facilitator. As the facilitator, it was important to appear invested and involved while still remaining neutral. I made a conscious effort to avoid being an authoritative expert and focused on creating inclusive conversations around new media (Barbour, 1998). Community agreements and an icebreaker were standard across all focus groups to help cultivate a safe environment for dialogue and sharing. It is especially vital for youth to feel like they are in a safe space to share their sometimes-personal experiences (Kirkland, 2014). Community agreements were co-constructed with participants and the facilitator to establish healthy group dynamics and practices. Icebreakers are meant to be fun activities that build rapport among participants, as well as with the facilitator (Barbour, 1998, p. 13).

Finally, it is important to stress that all of the information shared in the focus group was kept confidential. These steps were necessary to assure a systematic and smooth research process and was approved through the Internal Review Board. An electronic recorder was present during all focus group sessions and transcription were used for the purposes of coding and data analysis.

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All recordings were password protected to prevent access by anyone other than the principle researcher and research assistant. They were the only individuals who transcribed the data collected from focus groups and interviews. Students chose pseudonyms that were used in the transcription process - no real names were used in this study. A teacher was in another room during each session as a resource in case of an emergency or to address any issues beyond matters related to the study. Such matters could be urgent student issues that required immediate attention, personal health issues, family emergencies, or fire drills. The teacher did not provide input or intervene in the study in any way. Students and their guardians (if under 18 years old) signed consent forms.

Interviews. The interview method allows for insight into people's motives and opinions and facilitates an exploration of individuals' complex social processes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Three interviews were conducted with students from the initial focus group to investigate deeper findings. The three interview participants were compensated with a \$5.00 gift card for a 1.5 hour period. The gift card was provided on pro-rated amount of \$3 for agreeing to start the study and another \$2 dollars for completing the study. This ensured students were not punished for unexpected withdrawals or for incomplete study procedures. With a sample of only three interviewees, there cannot be a high level of racial diversity, although steps were taken to ensure as diverse a selection as possible. A random sampling would avoid bias, but it would not assure diversity. Therefore, purposive sampling was chosen to make sure that different perspectives would be represented in the interviews.

Interviewing is a method that allows for gaining more detailed data, while also providing youth with a more comfortable space to share details that the group forum could not. It serves to gauge if the results of the focus group were valid and reliable by consulting the most credible

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source: the youth. Additionally, this method allows for deeper examination of potential flaws or pitfalls as identified by the youth. Creating a systemized interview protocol is necessary to address threats to reliability and validity. The interview process was revised based on the findings and themes of the focus group stage and therefore, went through a second approval with Internal Review Board. The interview processes used similar elements from the focus group stage, such as conducting all interviews on the school campus and having a standardized briefings with all students prior to the interview in order to minimize bias. As with the focus groups, it is vital that I create a safe space where the youth feel comfortable sharing personal information and details. During the interview, I reminded participants that I would keep their information confidential and students chose pseudonyms that were used in the transcription process. Students and their guardians (if under 18 years old) signed information consent forms.

Data Analysis

Using a Grounded Theory approach, the analysis of this data was systemized through a coding process to identify common themes. The themes were compared across other data points and analyze potential themes that align with concepts found in the literature review. As Malagon, Huber, and Velez state, “by working to situate grounded theory within a critical race framework, we strengthen the interdisciplinary, methodological toolbox for qualitative critical race research, which seeks to build theory from the lived experiences of the researchers’ informants and research collaborators,”(2009, p. 254). Therefore, a grounded theory approach was used in the coding process to honor the voices of the youth and ensure there would be less researcher bias.

Inductive approaches in research structure the raw data from the study and establish clear links to previous research (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Transcripts were read twice before categorizing each participant statement into a general theme or concept. Codes were established

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by synthesizing each participant quote into a short 2-5 word phrase or statement such as “negative impacts on social life,” “negative impacts on academics,” “hacking,” “low parent involvement,” or “gender double standards.” The different codes were then clustered together into six major themes. These themes include addiction/moderation, lower levels of participation, basic media literacy, complex social issues, and digital divide. While examining the evidence, the researcher considered its credibility - whether it was strong, clear in logic, and ruled out other alternative explanations. The researcher also looked at dependability - whether or not the evidence could be replicated if the study was conducted again. This process involved a cross-analysis of data sets and sources. Finally, the data was examined for confirmation basis (Glaser & Strauss, 2009).

While the focus groups were analyzed through an inductive approach, the interviews were analyzed through deductive reasoning. Interview questions were created based on the themes established from the focus group findings in order to more carefully analyze those concepts. All similar qualities of analysis were considered in the interviews, including credibility, conformability, transferability, and dependability (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Interviews were analyzed more deeply along the identified themes to critique or establish areas of alignment with the initial findings. Interviews might elicit responses and trends that complicate or challenge the initial findings of focus groups. Therefore, it is important to consult the participants on whether or not they agree with the findings from the focus groups. It was important to avoid confirmation bias during this stage of the process as well (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). The researcher was critical of the credibility and the strength of the results found. Although the number of interviews are low, this portion of the study is not meant to be compared across interview data sets rather, it is meant to be cross referenced to the findings of the focus

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group. The sample size of the study is relatively small, especially compared to previous studies in the field. However, focus groups provide chains of data points that may shape patterns and themes that are unique to the experiences of youth of color. I sought to understand gaps of knowledge identified by youth responses while considering inconsistencies or outliers.

Description of Setting

The purposive sampling process must be intentional to best reflect the diversity of the term “youth of color” (Lindolf & Taylor, 2010). Because this research focuses on the experiences of youth of color, steps were taken to make sure our sample population resembled this diversity. For the purposes of the research, youth of color is defined as non-white ethnic groups such as: Asian, Pacific Islander, African/Black, Latino/Hispanic, Native, and mixed identity youth. As mentioned previously, youth are defined as high school to college age teens (13-20). This project reached out to four different Sacramento area high schools, including Luther Burbank High School (Meadowview Area), Grant High School (North Sacramento/ Del Paso), Hiram Johnson High School (South Sacramento Area), and C.K. McClatchy High School (Pocket Area).

Figure 5. Demographic information about the schools that hosted focus groups

School Name	Percentage of Free Reduced Lunch/ Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	Ethnic Demographics (Group by Highest represented groups)
Luther Burbank (Meadowview)	100%	Hispanic: 41.6% African: 19%

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Area)		Asian: 30.9% White: 3.1%
Grant High School (North Sacramento/Del Paso Heights)	92%	Hispanic: 43% African: 23% Asian: 20% White: 7%
C.K. McClatchy (East Sacramento)	57.9%	Hispanic: 37.40% African: 9.5% Asian: 20.4% White: 24.0%
Hiram Johnson High School (South Sacramento)	93.6%	Hispanic: 42.9% African: 14.4% Asian: 29.2% White: 7.4%

(Sacramento City Unified School District Accountability report, 2012, Grant High School Accountability, 2015)

All four of these schools serve a highly diverse population with a high density of low-income households. Participants are diverse throughout multiple identity groups including gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. The selection of each focus group was not a

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perfect representation of each ethnic, gender, and income category because Critical Race Theory is less focused on representativeness than theory construction (Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009). This theory allows us to focus on the lived experiences of people of color and illuminate on the narratives of those who are marginalized. The theory is less concerned with addressing external validity of traditional research methodologies and aligning with a prescribed theoretical framework (Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009).

I was able to gain access to this youth population because of my previous partnership with the selected schools. Students were given food and drink as a small compensation for their participation. The students were also provided with the researcher's contact information, in case students wanted resources on job opportunities or applying to college. It is unethical and a disservice to the youth if a researcher does not practice reciprocity and allow for further connection and rapport building (Kirkland, 2014). There were only four sessions with no more than nine participants, so there were 31 participants in total throughout the whole process.

Figure 6. Demographic information about focus group students from each school

School/ Total Number of Participants	Gender Demographic	Ethnic Demographic
Luther Burbank High School (8)	3 Female/ 5 Male	5 - African American/Black 2 - Hmong 1 – Mexican/Latino
Grant High School (8)	5 Female/ 3 Male	8 - Hmong
Hiram Johnson High School (6)	3 Female/ 3 Male	1 – African/Black 3 – Chinese

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		2 – Mexican/ Latino
C.K. McClatchy High School (9)	7 Female/ 2 Male	2 – African/ Black 2 – Latino 5 - White

This is the ethnic and gender demographic information for the four focus groups that were hosted. A concentrated effort was made to make the groups as diverse as possible but due to limited access to youth, an ideal proportion of each demographic group was difficult to reach.

Positionality

As the principal researcher, who facilitated all focus groups and interviews, and the main analyzer of all the data, it is important to acknowledge my own positionality coming into this project. Critical Race theorist H. Richard Milner (2007, p. 395) argues,

“that researchers in the process of conducting research pose racially and culturally grounded questions about themselves. Engaging in these questions can bring to researchers’ awareness and consciousness known (seen), unknown (unseen), and unanticipated (unforeseen) issues, perspectives, epistemologies, and positions.”

My positionality as Southeast Asian heterosexual male graduate student from Sacramento has many intersectional layers. It is vital to acknowledge that it may influence participants. I believe it is a strength of this study that the researcher is a person of color whose identity is tied to the Sacramento community. It is rare but ideal when the researcher can directly relate to the youth narratives that they attempt to gather. Most of the time, the researcher is seen as an outsider or hierarchical figure that cannot relate to the participants and this results in a

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problematic savior complex (Bourke, 2014). My cultural positionality creates a sense of relation between the participants and me. Although some of my identities align with those of the participants, that does not mean I presume to completely understand their narratives and struggles. “It may be necessary for researchers to consider dangers seen, unseen and unforeseen in conducting research” (Milner, 2007). Meaning that I have privilege identities that may unintentionally leave opportunity for me to “misrepresent, exploit, silence and take for granted” (Milner, 2007). For example, this may include being a heterosexual, cis-gendered male and making assumptions about the experiences of female, lesbian, gay, transgender, or gender non-conforming youth.

One of the most salient identities that I carried the one of a graduate student researcher, coming into a high schools to probe students about new media. It is vital to acknowledge that this power dynamic may have made it difficult for students to share fully and sincerely. Researchers should base their themes, trends, and findings on empirical evidence and not personal bias informed by previous experience. Another facet of my identity that I must be conscious of as I analyze the data is that I am an adult. I am 28 years of age and in a different generation than the youth of color that I hope to gain wisdom from. They are living an experience with new media that is completely different from my own. I cannot assume their feelings or opinions based on my own bias. In this study, I attempted to sincerely listen to their knowledge and honor it, rather than reinterpret it for my own means.

Chapter 4: Findings

New Media Addiction and the Need for Moderation

One of the most salient findings that youth of color identified was that new media can be addicting and that their peer group needs support in moderation, but not restriction. Participants had many similar comments such as “most people get addicted...like a drug...hard to stop using it” (Luther Burbank, Focus Group, April 16, 2015). Participants explained that high levels of technology use have negative influences such as lowered levels of physical activity, increased risk of obesity, and decreased attention toward schoolwork. They commonly said that when individuals are so dependent on online communication, it lowers their ability to socially navigate real life.

When participants were asked to describe individuals who frequently used new media, participants often responded by using descriptors such as “do not go out often,” “stay inside a lot,” “less physically fit or healthy.” When participants were asked “What would you be doing if you didn’t have access to new media?” participants responded saying that they would be out more, hanging out with friends outside. One participant said, “I’d be a bookworm ...I’d probably get more homework done” (Luther Burbank, Focus Group, April 2015). Another participant stated that they might find interest in academic subjects like science or biology for fun, or read more (Grant High, Focus Group, April 2015). Youth identified that new media impacted their educational engagement by distracting them during class periods. Youth stated that due to how easy and accessible new media is, they can use it anytime.

When youth described the support they would need around this issue, they reported that some regulation from parents and teachers would be helpful, but they did not want complete

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restrictions. Ultimately, new media is a major resource for youth. It provides many helpful functions such as school resources, academic support, job opportunities, online tutorials, and connecting with friends and family. Low-income youth of color in particular have lower levels of intervention from their parents. One participant stated that “I don’t get a lot of parental control” (Grant High School, April 28, 2015). Participants stated that parents are less familiar with the technology and seem to be less likely to intervene because they do not fully understand the social dangers of the Internet. They stated that it is important for parents to help moderate new media so that youth are more physically active and focused in school. Moderation could be limiting new media during certain family activities or during certain times of the day, such as periods for homework. However, students shared that parent involvement is important during emergencies, such as cyberbullying or hacking. Some participants suggested that parent intervention may happen more frequently among white families. “Yes, I feel like those type of parents [white parents] are more strict” (Hiram Johnson, Focus group, May 18, 2015). This is not to suggest that youth of color require pervasive supervision as some white parents demonstrate; rather youth of color expressed the need for parent involvement, awareness of new media issues, and intervention during emergencies. Emergencies include hacking, cyberbullying, evasion of online security, etc. It is important to acknowledge that class and socioeconomic status play a huge factor in the level of parental involvement. Often times parents of working class backgrounds work extensive hours and multiple jobs making it more difficult to support their children with school and social media (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). For many immigrant families, language becomes a substantial barrier that inhibits parent and children communication around education (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

Lower Levels of Participation and Media Production

Based on the findings, youth of color tend to show lower levels of new media ‘participation’. Most youth generally take part in new media ‘consumption’ which includes practices like watching videos, playing games, reading articles, sharing blogs, pictures, and music. However, as defined by Henry Jenkins (2009), ‘participation’ occurs when users create their own content such as producing videos, writing blogs, designing graphics, programming, and coding. Youth of color tend not engage in these more sophisticated and complex levels of media production as shown in the data. During this study, when participants were asked why they do not produce content, many of them replied that they do not know how or that it takes too much time. They also stated that they felt discouraged by peers. They may be put down for creating content that is not “good enough” (Hiram Johnson High School, Focus Group, May 18, 2015). Some youth explained that it is difficult to produce content when you do not have access to programs and devices such as advanced cameras and video editing software. “Financial wise... some families don't have wireless connections” (Hiram Johnson High School, May 18, 2015). Some youth reported that they did not have access to the Internet at home, so they had to go to cafés or fast food restaurants to get free wifi. Some youth only had access to the Internet through their mobile device which severely limits media production. This class inequity inhibits student access to the technology and information necessary to fully participate in new media. (Prensky, 2012).

Youth of color usually do not have parents who engage with technology at these high levels, and therefore would not be able to pass on knowledge of media production. Some participants described their parents as “afraid to explore” or “more traditional” (Grant High School, Focus Group, April 28, 2015). Traditional meaning being more accustomed to basic

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forms of communications like newspapers and telephones as compared to advanced forms of media like social media sites and texting. One participant expressed that “minorities fell on it [media/Internet] while white people led them into this. [It’s] something you can use and you should be able to use it” (Hiram Johnson High School, Focus Group, May 18, 2015). This excerpt shows how some youth of color differentiate their experiences from that of their white peer group. They feel like they had to learn more on their own, while white students had more guidance and support from their parents. Youth of color participants also stated that some schools have special programs to help youth engage in programming, coding, and other forms of digital media production. Youth of color in low-income school tend not to have access to these programs.

Even though youth of color show lower levels of participation, they show high levels of self-agency, media creativity, and expertise. These strengths, despite technical barriers, should not be overlooked. Many participants reported that they learned new media practices on their own or through their peer group. They use innovative ways to troubleshoot issues through viewing online videos or reading public discussion forums. They become knowledgeable enough to be the media experts for their families. One participant stated that “I feel like those type of parents [white parents] are more strict and they have more knowledgeable about stuff that goes on like current events, they're more a part of that part of the world, for my parents, they're under the rock and they don't know anything that happens and I'm the one that tells them” (Hiram Johnson, Focus Group, May 18, 2015). This excerpt explains a fundamental difference between how youth of color are positioned in their families as compared to their white peer group. Participants shared various anecdotes of how their parents asked them to demonstrate basic

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media functions like pulling up *YouTube* to watch Vietnamese News, downloading Latin music, or sharing photos with other family members overseas. There are still gaps to be addressed, but these gaps should not overshadow the resiliency, creativity, and self-taught expertise of youth of color.

Media Literacy and Safety Basics

Youth of color believe that there should be more education on basic media literacy in school and at home. Based on the data collected, youth identified the following areas as necessary media basics:

- How to set privacy settings
- How to protect online identity, sensitive information, and other confidential content
- How to identify credible and fake information/content and scams
- How to properly make secure financial transactions online
- Understanding what content is and is not appropriate for sharing online
- How to protect devices and prevent hacking or viruses

Youth participants expressed that many learn this type of content on their own, but not everyone has the same information, practices, and principles. This leads to inconsistencies that endanger youth and their peers. One participant stated that, “After I got hacked 3 times... I deleted every information about myself. I kept my *Facebook* but I took off my birthday and where I lived and stuff like that” (Grant High School, Focus Group, April 28, 2015). Most youth of color did not seem to have parental figures who could help them with these necessary lessons, so they end up learning through trial and error. Some errors are much more costly than others. For example, an incriminating photo that goes viral and is incapable of being removed from the

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Internet. Low-income youth of color are more vulnerable to hacking, having their personal information endangered because of the lack of protection and security. One participant shared that they accidentally gave out sensitive financial information through a fake website (Grant High School, Focus Group, April 28, 2015). Some shared that they have older siblings who give them advice on new media. This content is not readily available in schools nor are there formal spaces for teachers to help students navigate the basic functions of the Internet. Youth expressed a need for both parents and teachers to engage in more dialogue around these new media basics.

Navigating Complex Social Issues

Youth of color face complex social issues online such as racism, sexism, cyberbullying, homophobia, transphobia, and more. With the easy access to technology, conversations surrounding these issues are happening more frequently and more explicitly than ever. Youth receive little to no education on how to navigate these issues. All focus groups discussed the prevalence of bullying that happens online and the manifestations of bullying on campus and in person. Many participants said that they had either experienced bullying before or they knew someone close to them who experienced it. One participant bravely shared:

When I was in 7th grade, I used to be bullied for being gay, and so this lady's daughter would bully me and this girl thrashed the whole bathroom, she made graffiti dissing all the gay people at my school. She ended up getting suspended, so the mother wasn't happy about it and she found me on *Facebook* and she started harassing me because her daughter told her I was trying to hit on her. So the mother was cyberbullying me, so I deleted my *Facebook* (Luther Burbank High School, April 16, 2015).

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This specific incident showcases that both youth and adults can perpetuate negative toxic behavior that is grounded in homophobia and cyberbullying. It is vital that we create spaces for both parents and teachers to support youth around incidences like this. Narratives like this also suggest that cyberbullying impact students differently based on racial and gender identities. Therefore, further research on cyberbullying should take into account critical race and gender perspectives. A recent 2013 study analyzed cyberbullying patterns along race and gender lines and concluded that “African American students presented as a higher risk group, with higher levels of risk factors (e.g., family violence, AOD use, hostility) and lower levels of protective factors (e.g., parental monitoring, empathy)” (Low & Espelage, 2013). Information like this should be taken into account when creating policy recommendations and school intervention programs. Ultimately, the youth proposed that more support, resources, and strategies should be provided to help their peer group address these complex social issues. A recent study suggests, “While some traditional methods for reducing bullying may be useful for cyberbullying too (such as curriculum work, and peer support), some more specific interventions will be helpful, including how to contact mobile phone companies and Internet service providers, and legal rights in these matters” (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, & Tippett, 2006).

There was a specific time during the focus group to discuss how gender and race impact an individual’s engagement with new media. Many of the female participants shared that they experienced discrimination, harassment, and stalking. They discussed how females face double standards and are ridiculed for posting revealing pictures. A male student stated that “if a guy has a lot of girls then he’s the man. If a girl does she’s a thot” (Hiram Johnson High School, May 18, 2015). “Thot” is a new derogatory slang term that can be equated to a prostitute or a female’s promiscuous behavior that is negatively perceived. A female student said “boys feel like they can

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say whatever they want without feeling bad to the girl” (Grant High, April 28, 2015). These oppressive issues are salient in the real lives of young women and they occur more frequently because of new media. Female participants who play video games online shared that they were made fun of or targeted because other people assumed that because they were female, they could not play well. One female participant stated, “I play basketball games on Xbox live, so when I’m talking and they hear that I’m a girl, and they get mad, and they end up quitting.” (Luther Burbank High School, Focus Group, April 16, 2015). When discussing gender, many of the male participants said that gender did not impact their online presence. However, this is not to say that male youth do not face issues concerning their gender.

When asked about race, most participants who identified as non-white said that race is a big factor in their online presence. Youth said that when meeting new people online or in person, stereotypes were made about them based on their race. Black male students were described by others as “aggressive,” “intimidating,” and “mean” (Hiram Johnson High School, Focus Group, May 18, 2015). Some of the male Hmong students were perceived to be quiet and people were surprised that they could play sports. Many of these comments were made online through private messages or public comments on Facebook news feeds and were then perpetuated in person. Many youth talked about how race is such a popular topic due to current events like the killings of Trayvon Martin, Eric Gardner, and Freddie Grey. All participants, including white identified students, said that there has been an increased prevalence of discussion about race online. Youth of color are particularly engaged in these conversations around race as it relates to police bias and discrimination. While discussing the implications of race on social media, the following exchange took place during the focus group at C.K. McClatchy High School:

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Facilitator: “How does your ethnicity/race impact your interactions with people online?”

White/female identified participant: “I know people post race videos and ethnic inequality and stuff like the Ferguson case people go off what they see on social media instead of facts or what actually happened. Sometimes a case will be extremely justified but just because he was this race or another they will take it to the extreme to ratify it and make it seem like a racist case even though it was an average case or a police shooting or crime.”

Facilitator: “How does everyone else feel about that?”

Black/female identified participant: “...I don’t agree with that. There’s a lot of incidents that happen like that, not just like Mike Brown, there’s a lot of people that are getting killed that shows that it’s systematic and its happening at the institutional level and it’s a serious problem. It’s not just one riot or one person”

White/female identified participant: “I wasn’t aware of these issues before but when it was posted and circulating I started learning about it more and I was able to be more aware and at the same time I agree that it was a struggle and that there’s a problem.”

(C.K. McClatchy High School, Focus Group, June 9, 2015)

This excerpt demonstrates the complex nature of race relations that take place online and inevitably in person. Participants explain that youth of color tend to share explicit and violent content online, such as public fights or shootings. Many of the participants identified *WorldStarHipHop* which is:

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“A content aggregating video blog. Founded in 2005, the site averages 1.1 million unique visitors a day. Alexaranks the site 247th in site traffic in the United States and 983rd for worldwide traffic. Described by *Vibe* as a "remnant of the Geocities generation", the site regularly features public fighting caught on video, music videos and other content targeted to young, black audiences. O'Denat refers to the site as the ‘CNN of the ghetto’ (WorldStarHipHop. 2016, February 6).

This content is targeted to communities of color and it quickly gains traction. Many participants of color expressed that this website comes up on their news feeds on a daily basis. Some youth implied that content like this reinforces negative stigma and stereotypes associated with people of color, while other youth simply saw it as entertainment. In reference to *WorldStarHipHop*, one scholar argues:

“This is more than just a spectacle; it has become a way for blacks to communicate with each other and express how they feel. I argue this freedom of negative representation is the result of a very long history of forced representation of Blacks, Africans, and African Americans. The forced representation I have studied are in the forms of museums, human zoos, and World’s Fairs” (Fowlkes, 2015).

It is important to have discussions with youth around the content they see online, how they can engage with it, and the repercussions of that engagement.

Youth said that new media is made more complicated due to anonymous posting, new media fame, and popular online trends. Due to anonymous posting, it is easy to start disputes online. When someone makes a hateful statement, there are very few consequences for the individual because they cannot be identified. This accessibility of have visible of anonymous

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content may still cause the increase of suspension, insecurity, anonymous bullying toward one other. This may cause youth to feel unsafe in their virtual and real life peer groups. The data also shows how youth have begun to chase media fame or popularity. People place a lot of importance on the number of likes or comments they get on a picture or post. One student stated, “I do it for competition with my brother, like who can get to 3,000 faster, I got to 2,000 faster” (Luther Burbank, April 2016). Youth said that this is a problem because it prioritizes being popular through superficial means instead of being a good person who treats others well. Finally, new media has many viral trends that young people are required to keep up with. If youth do not know about these new trends, they are perceived to be late or ill-informed on youth culture. Youth mentioned new dance trends like the whip and twerking or Internet challenges like the ALS ice bucket challenge or the Kylie Jenner lip challenge. These elements of anonymous posting, viral trends, and new media celebrity redefine youth culture for this generation. If they ignore Internet activity, adults will be closed off to an integral part of youth culture development. The Internet is an immense landscape so it is important that youth find support in navigating these spaces.

Chapter 5: Solutions and Interventions

The following proposals are based on this study’s findings and are geared to addressing the needs and gaps identified for low-income youth of color. These proposals are a combination of best practices and up to date policy recommendations as reviewed in the literature. These recommendations are informed from a Critical Race and Youth Development theoretical framework that consciously attempts to provide equity and justice to marginalized youth of color whose interactions vary along race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and income.

Comprehensive Approaches to Social Media Education

Based on the findings, there is a strong need for more new media education for youth in formal school settings and at home with parents. There have been some new media initiatives at school to address cyberbullying and suicide, such as stopbullying.gov and the Ophelia Project. However, there are few campaigns and school curriculum that attempt to discuss new media practices holistically. Cyberbullying was a salient issue within the findings; however, it is only one phenomena among a plethora of other social problems. The discussion on new media should include education on media basics, such as maintaining privacy settings, protecting personal information, assessing content credibility, and making secure financial transactions. As explained in the findings, many of youth of color learn these concepts on their own, through a trial and error method that can be damaging. Providing more equitable spaces for youth to discuss new media use and practices will be helpful in navigating the complex landscapes of media.

It is particularly important for youth of color to have media education because they generally do not receive it at home. As shown from the data, youth of color do not learn about new media through their parents, but rather from other peers. This creates a lot of inconsistent and flawed media practices. boyd finds in her study that teens vary in their technical understanding. “A few can code complex algorithms that make them rich before they’re 20, some can use readily available scripts to exploit government-released open data, most can use the software and services provided to them, however some are not proficient in using Google search. The failure to understand this is hugely damaging. Ignoring these disparities in access and technical skill further marginalizes an already-struggling group” (boyd, 2014, p. 155).

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I propose that schools could make more effort to integrate new media education in the classroom and curriculum. As expressed by the youth, teachers can either serve as partners in navigating new media or agitators of a digital divide. Students expressed that some teachers avoid technology or Internet use and rely on traditional modes of communication. They also said that some other teachers assign projects that utilize opportunities to do Internet research, produce media content, or interact on social platforms for educational purposes (Brunner & Tally, 1999). I recommend more should be done to integrate the complex social experiences of youth on new media into the classroom, particularly because youth are receiving more of their news on new media than any other form of news media outlet (Anderson & Caumont, 2014). It is suggested that teachers bring contemporary issues and culturally relevant content from media into the classroom for discussion and analysis. These discussions could persist online and teachers could capitalize on that by providing a safe space for progressive learning, critical thought, and linking current issues to larger themes and core curriculum. Current issues may be controversial and politically charged, but ultimately they are culturally relevant and necessary for youth of the digital age. Naturally, a barrier to this proposal is balancing these curriculum needs with the strict national standards, testing, and limited funding of certain disadvantage schools. I do not have a simple answer to this much larger educational problem, but I firmly believe that preparing our students for the digital and technology age is a part of the pursuit for strong educational reform.

With new media, there is an increased need to integrate discussion and education around social issues such as race, gender, and sexuality. As shown from the findings, youth face an array of social dilemmas such as cyberbullying, suicide, and racial and gender bias with little to no guidance. New media education can create safe spaces for students to be more aware about these

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issues and understand how to navigate dialogues about social justice and equity. Education researchers have already called for the need for ethnic and gender studies in schools but I believe new media has only increased that demand (Ladson-billings, 1992). Participants from the focus groups expressed that teachers and curriculum should use more current events to be more culturally relevant. With such easy access to diverse new media, it makes it more reasonable for teachers to bring contemporary content into the classroom. Gloria Ladson-billings (1992) calls for culturally relevant content that moves away from a one size fits all curriculum and utilizes current issues and viral trends in mainstream news and pop culture as platform for critical and educational discussion. “Through the content, which often is related to students’ lives, they help students develop the knowledge base or skills, to build a bridge or scaffolding and often accompany the student to new and more difficult ideas, concepts, and skills” (Ladson-billings, 1992, p. 122).

The classroom may be a great space for adults and youth to share dialogue around social issues while aligning with school core competency and learning outcomes. I would go so far as to suggest that a course on media literacy basics should be required. As informed by the youth participants, the course could emphasize healthy media practices such as:

- How to avoid inappropriate content, hacking, and viruses.
- Demonstrate how to identify legitimate content and inaccurate content online.
- Teach about privacy, security, and how to control what is being presented on social media.
- How to interact with others safely and appropriately.
- What negative behaviors to avoid.
- Raise awareness about responsibilities and consequences of social media.

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- How to develop a positive social media image or brand.
- Demonstrate how social media can be a practical tool for school, work, and personal development.
- Have programs and resources for students to effectively address cyberbullying when they see it or experience it.
- Provide tools and strategies to help youth focus on school and employment goals (online calendars, time management tools, task completion apps, etc.)
- Encourage more participation (music and video production, writing blogs, coding, design apps, research, etc.).

There could be resistance to this proposal because of high costs of additional curriculum or other educational priorities. However, I strongly believe that media education is vital and there will be greater social costs if we do not address the education gaps in new media. These costs include cyberbullying, jeopardizing the sensitive information of youth, and hacking. Integrating technology holistically into the classroom prepares our students for the new century and with the new skill sets and social knowledge to navigate it.

Partnering Education

The best model of new media learning is “partnering education,” which is equitable co-learning between adults and youth where they can maximize each other’s expertise (boyd, 2014). There are new media basics that are necessary for all youth to understand; however, youth experiences with new media are still extremely varied. Therefore, a one size fits all curriculum will not be enough to address the diverse experiences of youth, especially youth of color. Marc Prensky calls for “digital wisdom” which maximizes the media capital that already exists among youth and asks educators to “really listen to the kids they teach” (Prensky, 2012). The traditional

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understanding of education centers on a banking model where students are simply empty vessels to be filled with information (Freire, 2000). However, youth come in with knowledge and experience. Prensky (2012) states that “today’s teachers need to find ways to create 21st century citizens (and workers) who parrot less and think more. This requires fully integrating into our teaching ‘meta’ skills like critical thinking, problem solving, video and programming, just as we not integrate reading and writing” (Prensky, 2012, p. 3).

This type of education engages and challenges students, while utilizing their existing wisdom. It suggests that knowledge is not constructed from a hierarchy but from an ecosystem of experiences and is co-constructed through exchange and dialogue. It allows for peer-to-peer and adult-to-youth co-construction of education and dialogue around healthy media practice. Many researchers on new media have proposed that media education can be taught in a “partnering” format where both adults and youth construct healthy media practices and knowledge together in exchange (boyd, 2014; Ito et al., 2010; Jenkins, 2009). Prensky explains that “we have an urgent need to create a wholly new curriculum for our 55 million students, retaining the wisdom of the past but reflecting the enormously changed needs of not only our 21st century students, but also of their eventual 21st century employers.” (Prensky, 2012, p. 12). I view “partnering” as pedagogy and practice where adults learn from youth and youth learn from adults. This thinking is a paradigm shift from the digital divide and rather, it is a digital bridge. The exchange is not only equal, but both parties can grow through this exchange with one another because each side can bring different and new knowledge to the table. Both teachers and parents should engage in a partnering model of learning.

This partnering education comes in many different forms, some of which may be more realistic for certain school campuses than others. For example, teachers could take conscious

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steps to survey students about current issues and trends they see online and integrate that into class discussion. Students could help develop curriculum with teachers by integrating technology and social media. Students could troubleshoot issues like cyberbullying, Internet fraud, and hacking through role-play activities and small groups with parents and teachers. Leadership positions could be created for youth to create classroom and school policies, especially those involving social media use and intervention.

Partnering Method for Parents

As seen in this study, youth believe that parents should be involved in their new media lives. Parents should engage in partnering education with their youth; however, their intervention should not be simply restrictive or hierarchical, rather it should be collaborative and empowering. Parents should not be invasive of youth's social media without the permission of their children. Some parents believe they have to monitor everything their child does online. This is not only an overwhelming task, but one that youth claim is ineffective. Youth of color did not express that there was over monitoring by their parents, but they did acknowledge the restrictions in schools and by teachers. The participants expressed that this not only inhibits their ability to connect with their peers, but it bars access to information and media. Young people desire youth-only spaces in real life, as well as virtual spaces that are free of adult supervision (boyd, 2014). This need is not rooted in the stereotype that young people are naturally mischievous, rather it is because they need youth-only spaces to develop self-autonomy, independent thinking, and interaction with their friends without adult intervention. Parents should know that young people are trying to find themselves and social media is another space where they are doing this self-searching (boyd, 2014).

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Partnering education is grounded in an equitable relationship that respects the perspective and expertise of both partners. The partnering method for parents has the fluidity and flexibility to address the diverse gaps of new media learning identified by youth of color. A benefit of partnering is that it creates an equitable relationship between youth and parent to address topics such as media addiction by both parties. Some of the youth of color have already displayed elements of partnering relationships by serving as technology consultants to their parents and guiding them through use of their phones, Facebook, or YouTube. This is especially apparent among immigrant families as children often serve as translators and messengers for their parents (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). The self-learning and creativity of youth of color provide an opportunity for a digital bridge, where increased interactions around media cultivate a shared responsibility of how to safely use social media and how to curate a more responsible digital identity.

Systems of accountability should be initiated when partnering. Examples of these systems could be agreements to not have media at the dinner table, periods of non-disrupted work or study, and receiving social media entertainment after completion of tasks. These agreements should not be enforced from parent to child, rather they should be a common healthy practice that both parties uphold.

While many parents feel they do not know enough to help teach youth about new media, they do not need to know everything. Parents should get to know the specific interests of their children so that they can encourage activities that cultivate their child's learning, interests, and passions. Sonia Livingstone (2015) explains that it is "worth asking whether their online activities are really imaginative or stimulating, offering some kind of progression or learning," (p.1). She goes on to say that she was, "struck by how few children used educational apps, and

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how difficult parents found it to articulate just how and why digital media could be beneficial, beyond a general positivity” (Livingstone, 2015, p.1). New media contains tremendous opportunities for learning and empowerment for youth. For example, young people engage their interests and exchange ideas around topics such as skating, video and music production, fandom, photography, and do-it-yourself activities (DIY). Many adults perceive these activities as other forms of entertainment; however, these tools present powerful methods for learning, creativity, and community engagement. The main goal of parent involvement should be to start conversations about media practices.

These conversations will open the door to help navigate complex social issues, provide support to students around bullying, and more. As Thomas Dodson of Above the Fray states, “we don’t hand over the keys to the car without teaching them how to drive. So why do we give them these devices, why do we give them laptops, why do we give them all the information in the known universe and say, ‘don’t screw up,’” (Dodson, Speech, 2015). It is vital that we support youth as they navigate the complex spaces of new media. It is important to protect them and help them understand responsible representation of themselves online. When people use social media, they are creating a personal brand. Youth need to be strategic in presenting a persona that is true and representative of their positive values. Parents should help develop those online personal brands the same way they help youth develop their personal presentation in real life. Ultimately, the goal is to build strong digital citizens who understand how to navigate virtual spaces in a healthy manner.

Proactive School Policies on Social Media

Schools can address new media through a comprehensive and proactive approach at the policy and institutional level. The following are examples of school policies that youth mention in relation to new media:

- Cyberbullying campaigns that came from a significant rise of suicides caused by online bullying.
- Stricter Internet access policies on campus.
- If school staff see online content relating to aggressive threats, degrading messaging or video evidence of fights, they can use that content to take administrative action against students.

Many of these policies were implemented in reaction to social media. Even though they appear to be necessary and productive, I believe policies should be implemented that are more proactive and comprehensive to prevent issues like these from happening. Some of these policies include avoiding the blockage of Internet access on school campuses, increased teacher training on social media, and the establishment of an online school safety committee.

Avoid blocking Internet access. Youth also mentioned that schools have implemented more restrictions to Internet access from sites deemed to be non-educational, including popular media platforms like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Pinterest*. I assert that limiting Internet access is more damaging than it is helpful. Many teachers believe that they are protecting the safety of youth from explicit content or preventing youth from distractions during school. However, Craig Watkins (2012) of Digital Media Learning argues that “many students use social media to enhance their learning, expand the reach of the classroom, find the things they ‘need to know,’ and fashion their own personal learning networks” (p. 1). Learning should be interactive and involve exchange between peer groups and adults. Removing social media access prevents the communal learning that takes place in and out of media spaces. Youth from the study said that sometimes when they try to look up certain sites for school purposes, they are **not** able to access them due to school Internet restrictions. Having full Internet access is especially vital for students of color, as they may not have access at home. This hinders learning and prevents youth from engaging with higher levels of media production such as “design blogs, websites, games, and graphic art,” (Watkins, 2012, p. 1).

By blocking social media, schools are also blocking the following opportunities:

1. To teach students about the inventive and powerful ways communities around the world are using social media.
2. Experiencing the educational potential of social media together.
3. For students to distribute their work with the larger world.
4. For students to re-imagine their creative and civic identities in the age of networked media (Watkins, 2012, p. 1).

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It can easily be argued that students would be even more distracted and addicted to social media with increased Internet access. Just as I proposed that parents make social media agreements with their youth, teachers and school administrators should establish agreements with their students. This might include balancing class periods that prohibit technology with free periods that intentionally allow and incentivize media use and interaction. Within this process, it is important to not treat technology as strictly a recreational tool for fun, but a tool for learning and empowerment.

Teacher training and online safety committees. Not only should social media be addressed at the policy level, but in the preparation and training of teachers. This might include how to use social media or how to incorporate social media in their curriculum and pedagogy as it aligns with their teaching styles and learning outcomes. These trainings may also help address concerns of the adult/youth digital divide and demystify the heavy perception that older adults do not have anything to teach youth about social media. In a 2010 study by Meagan Genell Irish Bulter, she discusses the implication of social networking for counselors and made a recommendation to create a team of online safety experts on each school campus. I believe this concept is realistic and a strong tangible first step to building a positive and healthy social media culture on school campuses. Blocking Internet access may prove to be counterproductive and create a negative stigma toward new media among teachers and students. Social media should be embraced by both parties so student and teachers have an equitable platform to engage in communal learning. As Bulter (2010) suggests,

“This team should include the school counselor, school administrators, technology director or school computer lab instructor, teachers and parents. In addition, members of the school staff such as librarians, lunchroom monitors, security guards, coaches, and bus drivers should be

invited to join the committee; sometimes these members of the school community see students in their most relaxed state and can have great influence on student behavior” (p. 30).

I would expand this network to include youth. Youth are integral in developing policies and practices that fit their needs. The team of media experts can serve as consultants for both teachers and students. Students can refer to these advocates for help with high level media production, addressing problematic behavior they see online, and more. Teachers can defer to this committee for questions that may arise among their youth especially in times of crisis. Ultimately this step will start the conversation and create the culture that social media is important for learning and school.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Although there are credible findings in this study, there are still some limitations in its design that should be addressed. A higher number of focus groups and interviews would have assured stronger validity and reliability. However, due to the time constraints of this project, the number of focus group and interviews was limited. Another limitation was that focus group sessions were short and only occurred once. If future research was conducted using the focus group and interview mix method, multiple longer sessions would be recommended. Youth are always more reluctant to share fully and sincerely when rapport has not been built between facilitator and participant.

I would recommend that focus groups be hosted in ethnic and gender specific focus groups. This may allow for a more clear sense of collective voice from a particular identity group. An enhanced purposive sampling “is not generalizability per se but understanding of an issue or topic in sufficient detail to provide information to design subsequent studies” (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). I especially found that when male participants were asked about

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issues of gender and sexuality, many of them seemed reluctant to discuss their personal gender dynamics. Establishing a gender specific focus group might allow them to feel more comfortable.

The inability to establish rapport and trust between participant and researcher makes it difficult for youth critically challenge the researcher and their findings. During my interviews, I sensed that participants were hesitant about challenging or complicating my research findings and proposed solutions. Multiple longer sessions would allow building trust and openness between participants and research to create a norm of critique and feedback. It also would have allowed for more probing questions and richer data sets.

Financial constraints limited the ability to conduct a larger scale study, as well the ability to incentivize and compensate participants for their participation in this research study. There are many opportunities within this qualitative study for bias and skewed findings. It is up to the researcher to best address those threats to validity and reliability and minimize them throughout the research process. Even though there were limitations to this study, I still believe this project makes significant academic contributions to the topic.

This study's methodological design and theoretical approach create a foundation for policy and systems change. This study was inspired by many other large scale and comprehensive studies that have come before it. It was difficult to add current and significant findings to such a quickly evolving field. However, the best source of knowledge for this topic are the voices of youth. The agency of youth is not only my theoretical lens, but it is a fundamental principle that I uphold in my work as a youth practitioner. Youth are experts of their own experiences and development and we must value that in this landscape of new media. Additionally, Critical Race Theory was vital in recognizing the holistic experiences of

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marginalized youth as they navigate new media. It was the lens in which I saw experiences unique to that of youth of color. It informed the design of the research, made sure it was accessible to all communities, and made sure to properly present the voices of youth that were traditionally marginalized. This study should not be the only one of its kind and further research about communities of color should continue. The research should continue as the changing dynamics of new media and youth of color continue. There is a lot of opportunity to understand the impacts of new media to specific youth identities.

Fundamentally, I sought to answer the following question: What do youth identify to be their gaps of knowledge and skills when using new media that are most relevant and meaningful to their development? The findings from this research went beyond the simple function of inquiry and resulted in recommendations for teachers, parents, and other professionals to serve youth with new media. The findings of this research will also inform a formal recommendations report to Above the Fray. It will outline strengths of the organization as well as areas for improvement, especially areas relating to the needs of youth of color. It also seeks to create a Social Media 101 youth curriculum that is fundamentally informed by this research project. Acknowledging the gaps is the first step, but attempting to fill those gaps through education and engagement is a necessary next step.

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Appendices

- A. Research Consent form (Focus Group)
- B. Research Consent form (Interview)
- C. Focus Group Protocol
- D. Interview Protocol

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Appendix A

Permission to take part in a Human Research Study Focus Group

Principal Investigator: Fong Tran
UC Davis Community Development Graduate Group Masters Student

Title of the Study: Listening to Digital Wisdom: Youth Perspective on their Needs in Navigating New Media

We invite you to take part in a research study because your perspective, experience and contributions will make this study about youth and social media more thorough and rich. This study will actively work to inform other parents, teacher and youth about best practices for social media use. Your transparency about your experience with the new media technology will be greatly appreciated.

Upon consenting to participate, someone will explain this research study to you, including:

- The nature and purpose of the research study.
- The procedures to be followed.
- Any common or important discomforts and risks.
- Any benefits you might expect.

Whether or not you take part in this study is up to you. You can choose without force, fraud, deceit, duress, coercion, or undue influence. At any point, you can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part now and later change your mind. Whatever you decide it will not be held against you. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide. If you agree to take part, you will be given a signed and dated copy of this document.

If you at any point have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the principal investigator.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB").

Information to help you understand research is on-line at <http://www.research.ucdavis.edu/IRBAdmin>. You may talk to a IRB staff member at (916) 703-9151, IRBAdmin@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu, or 2921 Stockton Blvd, Suite 1400, Room 1429, Sacramento, CA 95817 for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the principal investigator.
- You want to talk to someone besides the principal investigator.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

APPROVED by the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, Davis	
Protocol	Approved
709846	04/14/2015

The principal investigator expects that you will be in this research study until its completion in May 2015. Upon the studies completion you will be given a copy of and presentation about the results, outcomes and perspectives of the principal investigator.

If you say yes to be a part of this study you will participate in one focus group with the principal investigator, you will be a part of the study until the completion of the paper in May 2015. You will interact with the main researcher through focus group as well an interview if you showed your interest and randomly elected. The study will take place at your current high school site. If you take part in this research, you will be asked to complete the focus group and possibly an interview. I will ask you to provide your contact information at the end of focus group if you are interested to be interviewed. There will be a focus group made up of 6-8 participants at each of the 4 different school sites. There will be an additional 3-5 follow-up interviews from any of the 4 school sites. There will be anywhere from 24 – 32 total participants in this entire study. If you agree to the study, you will agree to be recorded in both the focus group and interview upon request. Otherwise you will not be able to participate. You're main responsibility is full and honest participation. All files of recorded session will be password protected for only the use of the principle investigator and research assistant to access.

You may decide not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you. If you do decide to leave the research, there will be no consequences. In the case that you would like to leave the study please contact the investigator so that the investigator can find a different member of the community to be in the focus group. If you stop being in the research, already collected data may not be removed from the study database.

Every effort will be made to limit use or disclosure of your personal information, including research study, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete confidentiality. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other University of California representatives responsible for the management or oversight of this study. There are no direct ways you will benefit from your participation aside from the opportunity to dialogue about your social media experiences.

The person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include a lack of cooperation or a low level of appropriateness for the study.

The University of California, Davis and the Erna and Orville Thompson Graduate Research Fund are funding this research.

There is no charge for you to participate in this study. Subjects participating in the focus groups will be provided food and refreshments for a 2-3 hour period. The 3-5 interview participants will be compensated a \$15 gift card for a 1-2 hour period. The gift card will be provided on pro-rated amount of \$7 for agree to starting the study and another \$8 dollars for completing the study

Your contributions during the focus group will help contribute to recommendations for parents and teachers to better understand how to best serve youth in navigating social media. Specifically these recommendations will go to a non-profit organization called Above the Fray which seeks to bridge the digital divide between parents and their youth

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around topics such as social media, cyberbullying, etc. Throughout this process, your true name will never be used and there will be no trace to responses that you provided to us to be referenced back to you.

If you are interested in participating in the interview session, you will be asked to provide contact information. I will randomly select 3-5 participants for interview and will contact to set up another meeting for consenting and interview.

Signature Block (If Participant is under 18 years Old)

Your signature documents your permission for the named child to take part in this research.

Printed name of child

Signature of parent or individual legally authorized to consent to the child's general medical care

Date

- ☐ Parent
☐ Individual legally authorized to consent to the child's general medical care (See note below)

Printed name of parent or individual legally authorized to consent to the child's general medical care

Note: Investigators are to ensure that individuals who are not parents can demonstrate their legal authority to consent to the child's general medical care. Contact legal counsel if any questions arise.

If signature of second parent not obtained, indicate why: (select one)

- ☐ The IRB determined that the permission of one parent is sufficient.
☐ Second parent is deceased
☐ Second parent is unknown
☐ Second parent is incompetent
☐ Second parent is not reasonably available
☐ Only one parent has legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child

Assent ☐ Obtained
☐ Not obtained because the capability of the child is so limited that the child cannot reasonably be consulted.

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

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Signature Block (If Participant is 18 yrs or older)

Signature of participant if 18 yrs or older

Date

Printed name of participant if 18 yrs or older

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

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Appendix B

Permission to Take Part in a Human Research Study **Interview**

Principal Investigator: Fong Tran
UC Davis Community Development Graduate Group Masters Student

Title of the Study: Listening to Digital Wisdom: Youth Perspective on their Needs in Navigating New Media

We invite you to take part in a research study because your perspective, experience and contributions will make this study about youth and social media more thorough and rich. This study will actively work to inform other parents, teacher and youth about best practices for social media use. Your transparency about your experience with the new media technology will be greatly appreciated.

Upon consenting to participate, someone will explain this research study to you, including:

- The nature and purpose of the research study.
- The procedures to be followed.
- Any common or important discomforts and risks.
- Any benefits you might expect.

Whether or not you take part in this study is up to you. You can choose without force, fraud, deceit, duress, coercion, or undue influence. At any point, you can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part now and later change your mind. Whatever you decide it will not be held against you. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide. If you agree to take part, you will be given a signed and dated copy of this document.

If you at any point have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the principal investigator.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB").

Information to help you understand research is on-line at <http://www.research.ucdavis.edu/IRBAdmin>. You may talk to a IRB staff member at (916) 703-9151, IRBAdmin@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu, or 2921 Stockton Blvd, Suite 1400, Room 1429, Sacramento, CA 95817 for any of the following:

Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.

You cannot reach the principal investigator.

You want to talk to someone besides the principal investigator.

You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

You want to get information or provide input about this research.

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The principal investigator expects that you will be in this research study until its completion in May 2015. Upon the studies completion you will be given a copy of and presentation about the results, outcomes and perspectives of the principal investigator.

If you say yes to be a part of this study you would have already participated in one focus group with the principal investigator, and you will now agree to be apart of a one on one interview. You will interact with the main researcher through the interviews. The study will take place at your current high school site. There will be a focus group made up of 6-8 participants at each of the 4 school sites. There will be an additional 3-5 follow-up interviews from any of the 4 school sites. There will be anywhere from 24 – 32 total participants in this entire study. You will be a part of the study until the completion of the paper in May 2015. If you agree to be in this interview session, you will agree to be recorded. . Otherwise you will not be able to participate. You're main responsibility for this interview is full and honest participation.

Interview will be recorded with a digital recorder and written notes will be made on a copy of the interview questions otherwise known as the interview protocol. As reference to your real name was be referred to in pseudonym of your choosing. These recordings will be kept till the duration of the entire study will may last up to October 2015. All files of recorded session will be password protected for only the use of the principle investigator and research assistant to access.

You may decide not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you. If you do decide to leave the research, there will be no consequences. In the case that you would like to leave the study please contact the investigator so that the investigator can find a different member of the community to interview. If you stop being in the research, already collected data may not be removed from the study database.

Every effort will be made to limit use or disclosure of your personal information, including research study, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete confidentiality. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other University of California representatives responsible for the management or oversight of this study. There are no direct ways you will benefit from your participation aside from the opportunity to dialogue about your social media experiences.

The person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include a lack of cooperation or a low level of appropriateness for the study.

The University of California, Davis and the Erna and Orville Thompson Graduate Research Fund are funding this research.

There is no charge for you to participate in this study. Subjects participating in the focus groups will be provided food and refreshments for a 2-3 hour period. The 3-5 interview participants will be compensated a \$15 gift card for a 1-2 hour period. The gift card will be provided on pro-rated amount of \$7 for agree to starting the study and another \$8 dollars for completing the study.

Your contributions during the focus group will help contribute to recommendations for parents and teachers to better understand how to best serve youth in navigating social

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media. Specifically these recommendations will go to a non-profit organization called Above the Fray which seeks to bridge the digital divide between parents and their youth around topics such as social media, cyberbullying, etc. Throughout this process, your true name will never be used and there will be no trace to responses that you provided to us to be referenced back to you.

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Signature Block (If Participant is under 18 years Old)

Your signature documents your permission for the named child to take part in this research.

Printed name of child

Signature of parent or individual legally authorized to
consent to the child's general medical care

Date

- ☐ Parent
☐ Individual legally authorized
to consent to the child's
general medical care (See
note below)

Printed name of parent or individual legally authorized to
consent to the child's general medical care

Note: Investigators are to ensure that individuals who are not parents can demonstrate their legal authority to consent to the child's general medical care. Contact legal counsel if any questions arise.

If signature of second parent not obtained, indicate why: (select one)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The IRB determined that the permission of one parent is sufficient. | <input type="checkbox"/> Second parent is incompetent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Second parent is deceased | <input type="checkbox"/> Second parent is not reasonably available |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Second parent is unknown | <input type="checkbox"/> Only one parent has legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child |

Assent ☐ Obtained
☐ Not obtained because the capability of the child is so limited that the child cannot reasonably be consulted.

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

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Signature Block (If Participant is 18 yrs or older)

Signature of participant if 18 yrs or older Date

Printed name of participant if 18 yrs or older

Signature of person obtaining consent Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

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Appendix C

Listening to Digital Wisdom: Youth Perspective on their Needs in Navigating New Media

Focus Group Protocol

Location:

Date:

Time:

Materials:

- ◆ Food and Refreshments
- ◆ Sign-up Sheet
- ◆ Copies of consent/informational forms
- ◆ Easel Pad Paper or White Board
- ◆ Colored Markers
- ◆ Recorder
- ◆ Name Tags (Pseudonym Names)

1. Welcome, Sign-up and provide refreshments (15mins)

Right now, I would also like to gain your consent to record this focus group. If you grant me consent to record this session, please understand that it will be digitally recorded. Digital recordings may have your identifiable information to you but they will be coded in such a way that protects you when transcribed. The audio files will be protected under lock and key. All files of recorded session will be password protected for only the use of the principle investigator and research assistant to access.

2. Introduction (5mins):

Thank you again for your participation in this study. Your comments and answers to my questions are valuable to my research and are greatly appreciated. Again, I am Fong Tran, a graduate student at UC Davis in the Community Development Graduate Group. I am conducting

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this study in an effort to understand the needs for youth when social media. I am hoping to gain a clearer understanding of what teachers and parents can you to help support youth in their navigation of social media. I will be conducting 4 focus groups that will only occur once and 3-5 follow up interviews that will only occur once. The focus groups will all happen first and there will be a potential one time individual interview session. Student selected for the interviews will be selected randomly. You will be asked to sign another consent form and schedule the interview session at a different time.

Perform sound check to ensure that the recording quality is good. If not, make adjustments and re-test

The group will agree to keep everyone's responses to my questions confidentially but I cannot promise as a researcher that everyone will commit to full confidentially however I highly trust everyone will. Every effort will be made on my part t keep your responses confidential with my record keeping, analysis and paper. Your name will be changed in anything that I write and all notes taken will be protected. Before entering this focus group you or your guardian/s signed a consent form for you to take part in this study

The focus group will involved a series of reflective and sharing activities about your engagement and opinions on social media. This means that these activities are not rigid and at any point you wish to share something you feel is related or important please do so. This focus group will take no more than an 2 hours depending on your willingness to discuss the questions. My intention with the focus group is that feels causal and comfortable for you all to share an honest reflection of your experiences.

I want to emphasize that you have every right to decline participation, right to skip a question and right to stop the interview when desired at any point during the interview. Finally, please let me know if you have any questions as the interview proceeds.

3. Establish Community agreements (5mins):

- Respect each other opinions. Diversity is appreciated.

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- [Elaboration Clause: This community agreement means that all participant should respect each other contribution to the focus group and that differentiation in opinions and thoughts are appreciated in this focus group]
- Safe space: Be honest and share openly
 - [Elaboration Clause: This community agreement means this is space for participants to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions openly free of ridicule and criticism]
- Ask for clarification
- Confidentiality (Pseudonym)
 - [Elaboration Clause: This community agreement means that all responses shared during the focus group will be held confidential and the researcher will use pseudonyms to protect the identities of participants]
- You are the experts
 - [Elaboration Clause: This community agreement means that all participant are valued as experts of their own experiences and have agency in determining what they believe to be their needs in social media]
- (Ask participants if they would like to add any other community agreements)
 - Participants should have agency in the process of this focus group and they should contribute community agreements that contribute to the productive action of this focus group.

3. Conduct Icebreaker (10mins):

“Introduce a other participant”: Please share with one other person your name, grade, and what you like to do on social media? What do you find most useful, helpful or beneficial? Instead of sharing your information to the rest of the group, you are going to introduce your friend to everyone and share what they shared with you to the rest of the group.

4. Self-Reflection Writing Activity & Discussion (30mins):

Write down responses to the following on a piece of paper:

- What good has social media provide you or people in your age group?

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- What challenges do you or people in your age group have with social media?
- What things should youth need to know more about when it comes to social media?

Share out responses from the questions

Ask follow-up questions

- What benefits about social media stands out most from your discussion? What do you have most in common? Is there anything missing from what you all already shared?
- What challenges about social media stands out most from your discussion? What do you have most in common? Is there anything missing from what you all already shared?
- What do you most collectively believe that youth should know more about social media? Who should be teaching or guiding you? Is there anything missing from what you all already shared?

5. Unique perspective (30mins):

Consider the following:

- How does your racial/ethnic identity impact your interactions with people online if at all? How do those interactions revolving your racial/ethnic differ with in-person interactions if at all?
- How does your gender/sexual orientation impact your interactions with people online if at all? How do those interactions revolving your gender/sexual orientation differ to those that are in-person interactions if at all?

5. Strategic Planning (30mins):

Write responses to following on different colored post-it notes, use as many as you would like.

- Poster 1: What skills, knowledge and concepts should teachers be providing to youth?
- Poster 2: What skills, knowledge and concepts should parents be providing to youth?
- Poster 3: What skills, knowledge and concepts should youth be sharing with other youth?

Post up your various responses on the three different posters.

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Have student volunteer read some of the responses.

Discussion:

- What skills, knowledge and concepts were most mentioned for teachers?
- What skills, knowledge and concepts were most mentioned for parents?
- What skills, knowledge and concepts were most mentioned for youth to youth?
- Are there skills, knowledge and concepts everyone should be talking about?
- Is there anything missing from what you all already shared? Write down some of those responses

Participants will then work together as a group to put together the most common responses to these questions by putting the similar themed post it notes together in the small area of the poster paper.

6. Conclusion Discussion:

- Was there anything that you learned from this focus group?
- Any last thoughts or comments that you'd like for me to know

We have reached the end of our focus group. Thank you again for your participation.

If you are interested in participating the interview phase of the study, please provide me with your contact information. There will be a random of interested candidates and so you may be contact for further consent and interview.

Appendix D

Listening to Digital Wisdom: Youth Perspective on their Needs in Navigating New Media

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Location:

Date:

Time:

Materials:

- ◆ Copy of Interview protocol
- ◆ Copies of consent/informational forms
- ◆ Recorder
- ◆ Note Pad and Pen

Welcome and provide refreshments

Right now, I would also like to gain your consent to record this focus group. If you grant me consent to record this session, please understand that it will be digitally recorded. Digital recordings may have your identifiable information to you but they will be coded in such a way that protects you when transcribed. The audio files will be protected under lock and key. All files of recorded session will be password protected for only the use of the principle investigator and research assistant to access.

Introduction:

Thank you again for your participation in this study. Your comments and answers to my questions are valuable to my research and are greatly appreciated. Again, I am Fong Tran, a graduate student at UC Davis in the Community Development Graduate Group. I am conducting this study in an effort to understand the needs for youth when social media. I am hoping to gain a clearer understanding of what teachers and parents can you to help support youth in their navigation of social media. I have conducted 4 focus group and now I'm following up with 3-5

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students with one on one interviews. All the focus groups have taken place and now I'm currently conducting the interviews

Perform sound check to ensure that the recording quality is good. If not, make adjustments and re-test

Your responses to my questions are confidential, and every effort will be made to keep it this way. Your name will be changed in anything that I write and all notes taken will be protected. Before entering this interview you or your guardian/s signed a consent form for you to take part in this study.

You may decide not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you. If you do decide to leave the research, there will be no consequences. In the case that you would like to leave the study please contact the investigator so that the investigator can find a different member of the community to interview. If you stop being in the research, already collected data may not be removed from the study database.

I will ask you a series of about 26 open-ended questions about your participation with social media and 4 simple background questions. This means that these questions are not rigid and at any point you wish to share something you feel is related or important please do so. This interview will take no more than an hour and a half or so depending on your willingness to discuss the questions. My intention with the interview is that relaxed and causal and you feel comfortable to share a honest reflection of your experiences.

I want to emphasize that you have every right to decline participation, right to skip a question and right to stop the interview when desired at any point during the interview. Finally, please let me know if you have any questions as the interview proceeds.

Background Questions

1. How old are you? What grade are you in?
2. How do you define your racial or ethnic category?

Social Media

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1. How often are you on social media? How many hours a day would you guess you are online?
2. Walk me through an average day when you're on social media? What types of activities are you typically doing online?
3. How important do you think social media and the Internet is to your everyday life? Why or why not?
4. What would be the effect of not having any internet access and social media?
5. Tell me about a time when the internet was restricted? What did that cause you to do?
6. Tell me about a time that you use social media as a tool for you?
 - a. Probing if needed: Tell me about a time when social media help you find a job if at all?
 - b. Probing if needed: Tell me about a time when social media help you understand more about college if at all?
 - c. Probing if needed: Tell me about a time when social media helped you with school if at all?
7. What type of web-enabled devices do you spend the most time on?
8. How does Internet and social media activity impact your real life?
 - a. Probing if needed: How does Internet and social media activity impact your school?
 - b. Probing if needed: How does Internet and social media activity impact your sleeping?

Participation Gap

1. How involved are your parents in your Internet activity?
2. How involved are your teachers in your internet activity?
3. What would you like to learn more of that your parents can show and teach you?
 - a. Prob: If they can't show you, tell me why not?
4. What would you like to learn more of that your teacher can show and teach you?
 - a. Probing if needed: If they can't show you, tell me why not?

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5. Do you feel like you been taught or shown how to properly use the Internet or how to interact with people on social media? If not, what do you wish teachers or parents taught you? (credibility of content, create content (participation))
6. Do you feel your experience on what you've been taught about social media is different compared to white students? Especially how their parents may have influenced them?
7. What do you think all youth or students should be taught at home when it comes to social media and the internet? In school?
8. Do you actively create online/ media content (participation)?
9. Do you think a lot of people your age create online/ media content (participation)?
10. What do you want to know more about when it comes to social media?
11. Is there anything else that you'd like to share?

Share Findings

1. I found through my research that the following issues were most salient:
 - a. internet addiction and the need for moderation
 - b. youth of color participate less than their white counterparts
 - c. there is a need for safety and media literacy basics
 - d. youth of color face complex social issues (sexism, racism, internet fame, cyberbullying, suicide) and need support from adults by more conversation/education on social media and these major topics
2. What do you think about these findings? Do you agree or have any suggestions or feedback?
3. Which finding stand out to you most? Which finding stand out to you the least?
4. If you agree, why so? Could you provide examples? If you disagree, why so? Could you provide examples?
5. What do you think about these solutions and interventions? Do you agree or have any suggestions or feedback? If you agree, why so? Could you provide examples? If you disagree, why so? Could you provide examples?
 - a. More social media education
 - b. Parent and teacher involvement

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- c. More research on the complex needs of youth of color

We have reached the end of our interview. Thank you again for your participation.