Troubling the discourse: applying Valsiner’s Zones to adolescent girls’ use of digital technologies

# Details

## Year

2019

## DOI

10.1080/1475939x.2019.1642954

## Issued

2019

## Language

English

## Volume

28

## Issue

4

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Technology, Pedagogy and Education

## Publisher

Informa UK Limited

## Topics

## Sample

15 young UK women

# Abstract

Young people’s use of technology has been extensively explored in the
literature. However, there has been less work theorising their technology-enabled behaviours, integrating understandings of adolescence into
explanations of technology use. The study reported here begins to
address this gap. It explores the digital lives of 15 young women in the
United Kingdom over one year, using the tools and conceptual categories of social cognition in novel ways. An adaptation of Valsiner’s
Zones makes it possible to offer an account of technology use which
avoids romanticism and pessimism, and enables us to: (i) recognise
choice and agency; (ii) articulate technology-mediated development
across disciplines and paradigms; and (iii) locate physiological development within the broader social, psychological and socio-technical realms.
The paper concludes by applying the adapted framework to a single
case, Megan, illuminating unresolved issues for future studies and theorising technology as shaping, rather than defining, adolescent perspectives, behaviours and relationships

# Outcome

"Technology may provide possibilities to amplify or maintain an emotional state. This of course
carries both risk and opportunity as participants in our study tended to recognise and as indicated
earlier in the literature. Furthermore, technology made a difference to the way young people
communicate – different types of software and social networking engendered, invited, stimulated,
constrained or suppressed ways of communicating with other people. The revised framework has
a focus on technology but it also considers how online and offline zones intersect, for example in
Megan’s case it could take in references to the incidence of offline bullying or face-to-face maternal
intervention. However it is not assumed that behaviours manifested in an online zone would
reappear online, or vice versa, and Megan and others in the study provided examples of behaving
'differently' in one context. This suggests contextual complexity" (Levine, 2019: 443).