Spaces for public orientation? Longitudinal effects of Internet use in adolescence

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## Authors

Ekström M.;Olsson T.;Shehata A.

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## Topics

## Sample

"The study uses data from three waves in a longitudinal study conducted among youths who were between 13 and 17 years old at the time of the first data collection. There was approximately one year between the data collections. The study was performed in Örebro county, a region with a population of approximately 275,000 people in Sweden. This region is representative of the national averages in terms of demographics such as unemployment rate, family income, population density and political leanings. The proportion of people with immigrant backgrounds is, however, somewhat higher among 5–24-year-olds compared with Swedish average (33% vs. 20%; Statistics Sweden, 2010). The sample included all 13–14-year-old students (junior high school) and 16–17-year-old students (senior high school) at 13 different schools in the region. This represents 13 of 26 schools and approximately 50% of all students in the target groups. The schools were selected so that the sample comprised both vocational and theoretical programmes and schools in areas representative of differences in the distribution of social and ethnic backgrounds. The data collection was conducted during scheduled school hours and was managed by trained research assistants.

Cohort 1

2010: Sample = 960; N = 904; Participation rate = 94%

2011: Sample = 987; N = 883; Participation rate = 89%

2012: Sample = 954; N = 843; Participation rate = 88%

Cohort 2

2010: Sample = 1052; N = 892; Participation rate = 85%

2011: Sample = 996; N = 807; Participation rate = 81%

2012: Sample = 914; N = 740; Participation rate = 81%"

(Authors, 173)

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Impact of Internet use in early adolescence on public orientation during adolescence

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

The article departs from an overarching research question: How does young people's engagement in different Internet spaces affect the development of their public orientation during adolescence? It analyses longitudinal panel data in order to explore how young people's public orientation develops during a phase in life (13–20) which is critical for political socialization. Data are derived from three waves of data collection among young people who were 13–17 years old at the time for the first data collection. The concept public orientation is measured by three indicators: young people's values, interests and everyday peer talk. These indicators are analysed with reference to respondents' Internet orientations, which we conceptualize as four separate but inter-related spaces (a news space, a space for social interaction, a game space and a creative space). The results primarily emphasize the importance of orientations towards news space and space for social interaction. Overall, the findings strongly suggest that orientations towards these spaces are related to adolescents' public orientation. The findings confirm the centrality of news and information in political socialization, but they also challenge the idea that social media facilities – such as Facebook, Twitter and blogging – enable forms of social interaction and creative production that have an overall positive impact on young people's public orientation.

# Outcome

"We have developed a notion of Internet spaces that covers contexts and practices in analytical middle ground in-between analyses of either Internet use as such or specific websites and Internet applications. The suggested distinction between news space, space for social interaction, game space and creative space is closely related to infrastructures and social practices on the Internet. Based on this conceptualization, we have observed consistent differences in longitudinal influences with regard to all three aspects of public orientation. Such a conceptualization is obviously not able to capture all the differences in social practices on the Internet that may have implications for young people's public orientations. Finding ways of developing our concepts of the Internet in more depth is an important challenge for political socialization research. We, however, believe that this study demonstrates the benefits of understanding the Internet as consisting of rather distinct spaces.
Second, the study confirms the centrality of news and information in political socialization. The study demonstrates the positive longitudinal effects of young people's involvement in the online news space....
Third, the empirical results challenge the idea that Internet facilities such as Facebook, Twitter and blogging enable forms of social interaction and creative production that have an overall positive impact on young people's public orientation."
(Authors, 179)