

# Digital Media & Learning Conference 2016, UC Irvine

## Individual Talk Abstracts

### 2:00pm – 3:00pm Participation and Inclusion in Digital Practices

Emerald Bay B

*Speakers: Meryl Alper, Kyle Booten, Gloria Mark, Michael Nguyen, Cassidy Puckett, Torrey Trust, Yiran Wang*

#### 65 - Individual Session      Research

#### Cultural Alignment Across Social Spheres and Differences in Adolescents' Acquisition of (Technological) Human Capital

Cassidy      Puckett      Emory University      cassidycody

Human capital is often operationalized narrowly as academic ability measured by cognitive tests. Yet, a broader range of abilities is required for success in the modern economy. In this paper I look at one of the broad forms of human capital: the ability to learn new technologies, or what I call “digital adaptability” (DA). Micro-level research shows DA is positively associated with adolescents’ technology-related educational plans and career aspirations. At the macro level, research links the ability to learn new technologies to income and health inequalities among adults. Using new data from an economically stratified random sample of 897 Chicago 8th graders, I investigate explanatory factors for differences in DA, including material resources and cultural practices. Looking closely at cultural practices, I consider two features of practice—the quality of practice and the level of alignment across adolescents’ social spheres. I find that while increases in quality of practice is associated with higher DA, alignment of cultural practice appears to be consequential only in contexts of lower quality practice. Contrary to past research on the negative effects of cultural heterogeneity, this suggests that certain experiences of cultural heterogeneity can be helpful—for example, after-school technology programs that teach digital adaptability strategies to students who have few in-depth technology learning opportunities at school and home. Overall, the study contributes to our understanding of how culture plays a role in the acquisition of broad forms human capital that, in turn, influence social stratification.

#### 62 - Individual Session      Research

#### Digital Media, Disability, and the “Home Technology Divide”

Meryl Alper | Northeastern University | @merylalper

It is well documented that U.S. educational institutions systematically reward students who can demonstrate the kinds of technological proclivities and digital literacies that upper and middle-class children are more likely to have acquired outside of school. The higher status that schools associate with these seemingly “natural” competencies leads to the reproduction of social inequality, or what media scholar Ellen Seiter terms the “home technology divide.” This presentation focuses on where special education students—and their varied uses of technology—fit into conceptions of this divide, as well as attempts by multiple stakeholders to bridge it. I argue that if youth with disabilities are to be accounted for in cutting-edge digital media and learning research and practice on connected learning, then the “home technology divide” must expand to include “assistive technologies.” While this category covers a broad span of digital and non-digital tools (e.g. power wheelchairs, pencil grips), assistive technologies also increasingly take the form of hardware and software that are increasingly pervasive in and out of schools (e.g. the Apple iPad and built-in accessibility features). Based on 16 months of

# **Digital Media & Learning Conference 2016, UC Irvine**

## **Individual Talk Abstracts**

ethnographic research on parents of children with significant speech impairments who primarily talk through an iPad serving as a voice output communication aid, my presentation details how certain youth with disabilities benefit from additional social, cultural, and economic capital to support new media use across their learning ecologies (including home, school, and therapeutic settings). I also discuss implications of this work for parents, educators, clinicians, policy makers, and technology designers.

### **Individual Session Research**

#### **84 Design, Connect, Learn: Best Practices for Building a Connected Open Online Course**

Torrey Trust | University of Massachusetts Amherst | @torreytrust

How can we build a community of learners in an open online course? How can we design open online courses that motivate learners to stay engaged and connected? These are the questions my 12 graduate students explored as part of EDUC 612: Educational Web Design. During the 13-week semester, my students collaboratively designed, facilitated, and evaluated a connected open online course for educators called, “Designing Digital Media for Teaching and Learning.” My students’ design goal was to create an innovative new online learning experience that shifted away from the traditional methods (e.g., watch, read, discuss). They used the Universal Design for Learning Principles and collaborated with the ISTE Inclusive Learning Network officers to create a course that was accessible, flexible, and personalized. The course featured 12 learning activities that were tiered based on the learners’ needs and interests. All of the learning activities and interactions took place in either the course Google+ Community or the weekly Twitter Chat. Upon completing the course, one of the participants shared, “This course was SO MUCH BETTER than any other (M)OOC I’ve ever participated in before. I’ve done MOOCs through Coursera, and there’s not really a sense of community. With this course, I felt like I had the autonomy to proceed at my own pace while still being able to interact with other course members in meaningful ways.” In this session, I will describe the design process, discuss lessons learned from my students, and share the results of the pre-, mid-, and post-course surveys from the course participants.

### **148 - Individual Session Research**

#### **A Mixed-Methods Study of College Students' Informal Learning on Facebook**

Yiran Wang | University of California, Irvine | @yiranw2

Gloria Mark | University of California, Irvine

Social media use among youth is often portrayed in the media as a source of distraction or unproductive use of time. My research explores the informal learning that takes place via social media, particularly around self-directed and interest-based learning.

I study how college students use Facebook to develop emergent political views, establish and sustain personal interests, explore career opportunities, and exercise critical thinking skills. To capture both the content and context of informal learning, 50 college students participated in a weeklong study, including Facebook activity tracking, experience sampling of attentional and engagement states, diaries of learning, and retrospective interviews.

Results show that social aspects such as identity management and low-maintenance communication (e.g., sharing or liking an article) affect and reflect technological behaviors of

# **Digital Media & Learning Conference 2016, UC Irvine**

## **Individual Talk Abstracts**

attention management and accidental information encountering, which further impact learning on Facebook. For example, learning about politics can be motivated through how one wants to present herself to a social group, which determines which content she chooses to pay attention to and how she configures her social networks to better encounter such information. Using a ground up approach, I also critique and expand what informal learning entails for young adults. These results highlight the importance of and challenges associated with social media use in connected learning. This is useful to educators as it informs issues surrounding personal interests, self-presentation, social relationships, and media affordances in learning; it also benefits education researchers because it contributes to the on-going dialogue of legitimizing different pathways of inquiry and learning outcomes.

### **199 - Individual Session    Research**

#### **Symbiosis Between Old and New Media in Online Quotation Culture**

Kyle Booten | UC Berkeley

According to some contemporary discourses, young people's attention spans have been fundamentally changed by digital media; trained to frenetically check multiple devices and feeds, they less and less have the capacity for the ""deep attention""^ required for traditional literacy practices, such as reading a novel.

My presentation, drawn from an extended ethnography of what I call ""Online Quotation Culture,"" seeks to question this notion by showing the ways that deep attention and digital ""hyper attention"" are now entangled. On Tumblr, sharing quotations from books (from YA to poetry to philosophy) is an extremely popular activity. Through surveys (n=100) and interviews (n=15), I demonstrate ways that young people's participation in quotation culture facilitates and transforms traditional literacy activities; the sharing of digital quotes is a key vector through which these Tumblr users discover books (which they read deeply), yet the search for ""quotable"" texts impacts what these readers value in books. Quantitative analysis of a large collection of Tumblr quotes (n=10,000) and their user-applied hashtags sheds light on the most frequently quoted novels as well as common themes.

Youth cleverly make use of Tumblr alongside other platforms in unexpected ways, cobbling together technologies to suit their quotational practices. Inspired by their creativity, the presentation concludes with design recommendations, suggesting ways that social networks and non-human agents within them (e.g. ""bots""") could be engineered to facilitate the symbiosis of old and new media in the literate lives of youth.

Hayles, N.K., 2007, ""Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes""