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Youth Scan

November 2007

From the National Youth Council

"Developing a Vibrant, Highly-Connected, and

Self-Sustaining Youth Sector, and Nurturing World-Ready Youth"

Bringing you snippets of youth trends and issues compiled from

diverse sources such as news reports, journals and press releases,

Youth Scan aims to help you stay in touch with the constantly evolving youth scene.

For this month's issue of Youth Scan, we highlight selected youth research studies:

1. How to Reach America's Disconnected Youth – Just Listen New Report Answers Old Questions

PR NewsWire, 11 June 2007

2. How Young People Use Media: Youth DNA Study Measures Trends

World Association of Newspapers, 3 June 2007

3. Online Social Networks are Booming

Jackie Burrell, *The Oakland Tribune*, 30 May 2007

4. Seminal Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters' School-Based Mentoring Program Finds That Students With a 'Big Brother' or 'Big Sister' in School Show Positive Impacts

PRNewswire, 2 Aug 2007

1. How to reach America's Disconnected Youth – Just Listen New Report Answers Old Questions

PR NewsWire, 11 June 2007

A new report released by the Youth Development and Research Fund (YDRF), "Listening to the Voices and Aspirations of Disconnected Youth", takes a candid look at America's current drop-out situation from the perspective of the disconnected youth.

Focus groups were conducted with disconnected youth in five cities (Madera, CA; Fresno, CA; Dallas, TX; Gaithersburg, MD; and Baltimore, MD). In these cities, youths engaged in open discussions on why such a large number of youth are out-of-school and jobless and why they have little motivation toward reversing this growing trend. Youths expressed their lack of faith in the current educational and job training programmes offered and shared their resistance to returning to these programmes.

Some of the recommendations made include:

- Strategically demonstrate evidence of engagement, collaborations, and positive outcomes
- Provide monetary incentives
- Secure credible endorsements
- Transform the program
- Provide meaningful transferable work experience
- Provide effective substance abuse and mental health services
- Build motivational triggers

- Alter traditional hours of operation
- Understand youth culture and methods to utilize it to address insidious behaviors and values.

Click [here](#) for the full research study.

(Source: *PR NewsWire*, Accessed on 14 November 2007,
<http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/06-11-2007/0004605628&EDATE=>)

2. How Young People Use Media: Youth DNA Study Measures Trends

World Association of Newspapers, 3 June 2007

Preliminary findings of the "Youth Media DNA" research project were released during a seminar on the eve of the World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum in Cape Town, South Africa. The goal of the research was to have young people from around the world confirm or challenge hypotheses regarding their media usage habits and attitudes. The preliminary findings will be used to guide the next phase of Youth Media DNA, a quantitative study in which 1,000 youths between 15 and 29 years old will be surveyed in every country that participates in the study.

For the first phase of the study, 100 youths, 15-24 years old, in Columbia, Japan, Philippines, Lebanon, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, United States and United Kingdom, were recruited to document their media habits and discuss their attitudes towards news and newspaper readership. This was done through one-on-one long interviews, on-line discussions and media diaries. Several hypotheses were tested and the corresponding reactions are included below:

- *Hypothesis: Are young people getting news and information from many media sources?*

"Many participants said that they feel uncomfortable trusting a single authoritative source -- even among those that they rely upon on a regular basis," the report said. The use of multiple sources and formats is true not only for the formats they use, but also for the news brands they are loyal to."

- *Hypothesis: Is interest in 'passive' forms of media (radio, TV, etc.), waning as young people want to interact with -- and contribute content to -- news media?*

"Despite the stated preferences for the internet as a news and information source, and the growing interest in personal devices that facilitate citizen journalism, most participants still value more traditional media sources and formats, because they are perceived as being more accurate, reliable and trustworthy," the report said.

- *Hypothesis: Are young people spending less time with traditional media and more with new media?*

"Young participants said that usage of new media (i.e., computers, mobile phones, the internet, and MP3 players) is increasingly taking up time participants would have spent with traditional media, though this time is obviously restricted in countries where the digital divide remains a strong barrier," the report said. "Despite this, many participants say they would like to spend more time with newspapers and other traditional sources of information. Many young participants remained respectful of traditional information sources and few dismiss them as obsolete."

- *Hypothesis: Is the biggest competition for news and information in the future the young people themselves and their social networks?*

"Feedback from participants in this phase listed 'discussion with friends' as a top source for news and information, sometimes ranking higher than TV or newspapers," the report said. "In particular, social networks appear to be key in spreading entertainment news for most young people.

" Although information gathered from family and friends may not be accurate, young people appear to trust family and friends much more than media sources. Why does this appear to be the case? What topics are more appropriate for this kind of relationship? In future research, it will be interesting to probe deeper about the nature of how news and information are shared through social networks."

- *Hypothesis: "Are free newspapers driving curiosity in news and inspiring youth to dig deeper?"*

"This issue appears to be key to the development of future strategies on youth newspaper readership," the report said. "Free commuter newspapers are common to most young participants around the world and the consensus is that they drive curiosity in news and information. Overall, most participants said they read paid newspapers more frequently than free newspapers. Many respondents said that free commuter newspapers are well-suited for travel to and from school and work, while paid newspapers are more likely to be read at home."

Click [here](#) for the full research study.

(Source: *World Association of Newspapers*, Accessed on 19 November 2007, <http://www.wan-press.org/article14281.html>)

3. Online Social Networks are Booming Studies show today's teen chat rooms are as safe as yesterday's soda shops

The Oakland Tribune, 30 May 2007

A rash of new studies by Harris Interactive, the PEW Report and a Cal State psychology professor - and a new book by youth culture expert Anastasia Goodstein- say teens are using MySpace, Facebook, et al., to deepen and enrich existing friendships, not to chat with strangers.

More than half the nation's youths ages 12 to 17, and 70 percent of girls 15 to 17, use social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, according to Pew Internet and American Life study released in January. 91 percent of them use these sites to stay in touch with friends they see frequently.

Virtual Hangout

For teens, especially high school students who have little free time, "the Web has become their virtual hangout", said Goodstein, "a place to go online after school or at night and connect with their friends away from the parental gaze". Teens use such platforms to interact with their classmates, friends they met at camp, buddies who have left for college and friends' friends too.

The use of such online platforms helps to deepen and enrich existing friendships. A recent Harris Interactive poll found that online communication actually strengthened and enriched

existing friendships. Roughly half, 52 percent of the teens polled said that they felt “extremely” or “very” close to friends they only talk to in person or on the phone, but 77 percent felt that depth of emotion with friends they talked to both online and in person.

Youth research manager Suzanne Martin wrote in a Harris report, “teen friendships that are nurtured in both the ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ worlds are more long standing and intimate.” This is echoed by teens who revealed in the poll that they felt that they could “show more of their truer selves online” and that talking to their friends online made them feel as if they were “always connected”.

Not exactly strangers

While more than a third of teens (36 percent) indicated that they had online friends they never met, the statistic neglects that “friends”, in the context of MySpace and Facebook, are users that have been granted access to their personal websites. “It is not someone I already know,” one interviewed teen remarked, “it’s someone I have a connection to, like ‘Hey, you should talk to my cousin.’” Though online friends may include strangers, the category may also include classmates’ friends, siblings’ friends and assorted college roommates.

However dangers still prevail in such websites. A study conducted earlier this year by Habbo.com, another online teen community, found that 19 percent of the 3,500 teens polled had encountered adults posing as children online, and 27 percent said that on at least one occasion someone had asked them sexual questions that made them feel uncomfortable.

This is echoed by findings in a landmark CSU Dominguez Hills study of MySpace use last year by psychology professor Larry Rosen. 7 percent of MySpace users had been propositioned or been asked sexual questions at least once; however every teen shrugged, blocked the sender and continued chatting with friends.

(Source: *The Oakland Tribune*, Accessed 11 November 2007, http://www.insidebayarea.com/search/ci_6019012)

4. Seminal Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters' School-Based Mentoring Program Finds That Students With a 'Big Brother' or 'Big Sister' in School Show Positive Impacts

PRNewswire, 2 Aug 2007

A seminal study of the school-based mentoring (SBM) programme of Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) shows that students with a “Big Brother” or “Big Sister” have better academic performance, attitudes and behaviours over the course of a school year than students who did not have a Big Brother or Big Sister. The study entitled, “Making a Difference in Schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters School-Based Mentoring Impact Study”, is the first large scale evaluation of school-based mentoring. More than 1,000 children in 70 schools were tracked and studied for one and half years as part of the study.

The study reports positive outcomes in the first year of participation in overall academic performance, improvement in quality of class work, increased in the number of assignments turned in while serious school infractions, including visits to the principal’s office, fighting and suspensions had decreased. The mentored children had also reported feeling more competent academically.

However the study also found that most academic improvements recorded in the first year were not sustained into the third semester. This occurred in part because in the third semester only 5 percent of all students mentored in the previous two semesters continue to receive mentoring. Many had transferred to different schools because they graduated to middle or high school and

mentoring matches did not carry over to the new schools. Hence, one full academic year of the BBBS School-Based Mentoring programme is not enough to permanently improve youths' academic performance.

A task force was set up to examine the study's findings and make recommendations that would strengthen BBBS' School-Based Mentoring model. The recommendations include increasing the length of the mentor-student relationship, supporting summer activities to create continuity between the mentor and student and strengthening volunteer training and professional support.

Click here for the full research study.

(Source: *PR Newswire*, Accessed 12 November 2007

[http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=109&STORY=/www/story/08-02-2007/0004638173&EDATE=\)](http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=109&STORY=/www/story/08-02-2007/0004638173&EDATE=)

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