Bradley Clark

Sue Muecke

Eng 1020

November 7, 2010

America’s youth are spending an alarming amount of their time behind a computer monitor. Be it Facebook, Myspace, or Runescape; children are hampering their development with the over-use of these websites and services. This is a problem. Children are becoming accustomed to typing rather than talking and logging in rather than going for a walk. It is these social networks and online gaming sites which are allowing children to become socially under-developed; therefore, a regulated timeslot for using these services should be implemented.

Before expressing how my solution will fix the problem, I must first reinforce the fact that a problem does exist. Children are becoming socially under-developed. According to Doug Foderman and Marjie Monroe of the National Association of Independent Schools, 16-year olds say they would rather break up with their partner via texting, instant-messaging, or by Facebook “because it’s easier.” (Foderman, Marjie) Their extreme usage of these online chat services such as Facebook is leading towards awkwardness when face-to-face conversing is required. This then leads to the lack of ability to function properly in these circumstances; and, often, fear of these situations altogether. Not only does this lead to the lack of proper social development, but it births within the minds of America’s children the need for instantaneous results.

Hit a few keys and children are one mouse click from getting what they were looking for the moment they needed it. Furthermore, a quiet pop is heard from the speakers of a young girl’ computer; and, within moments, she has already given an inquiring friend her entire agenda for the day. The need for instant results has only come about in recent years, but it is a disease that is rapidly spreading throughout school systems, households, and families. Through the boom of social networking and online gaming, America has single-handedly created a generation of impatient minors. When a parent does not give an immediate response to one of their children’s questions, a negative association is already placed on the situation in the mind of the child – when, in all reality, the parent could genuinely need to think before giving the appropriate response. This is due to the child becoming programmed to expect what they want when they want it at the click of a mouse – or, in this case, at the time of questioning. Not only this, but, as a result of the technology boom, children have the need to be constantly connected.

Take a child’s phone away as a form of punishment and prepare to hear about it before the child storms off to their room. The same goes for Facebook, Myspace, and online gaming. Children are losing the ability to live without being connected. Losing their phone or laptop is taking away their window to the outside world. In an article entitled “Are texting and Facebook worse for teens than TV?”, Ron Neal, father to a teenage, “tech-driven” daughter, acknowledges the fact that there are several frightening aspects to the dependence that today’s teenagers have on technology before stating: "They are so emotionally connected to being tied in with their friends 24 hours a day, if they get a text, they feel obligated to respond in seconds," he said. He recalled a group of girls showing up for a birthday party at a restaurant, and "everyone of them had their head down, texting."” (Daily Mail) This account he recalls is one of many ever-increasing cases of the same incident. Not only are there negative psychological effects to this dependency on technology that teens have developed, but there are also several health concerns associated with this new trend in children and teens.

In a study of obesity, and, more specifically, childhood obesity, one of the main points that were noted was to watch the “media diet” of children. Proper diet can aid to maintain and stabilize a weight, but a child needs both proper diet and activity level in order to remove the problem altogether. Computer and video games – many of which are played online – together make up two of the three most prominent media-related activities “replace physical activity in your child’s daily routine.” (Boyse) With the rate of childhood obesity rising to affect more than one in every three children(Childhood Obesity), a direct link can be made between the lack of physical activity created by extended exposure to the internet and online gaming. From childhood obesity, conditions such as Hypertension, Type 2 Diabetes, Sleep Apnea, Depression, and Asthma can develop (Thompson)– and this all falls back to the lack of activity in today’s youth. If you haven’t realized by now, this *is* a problem.

Now that the issue has been identified as a problem, I will introduce my new concept to try to fix this problem. I propose that we introduce the ISN – Internet Security Number. The ISN will be run by the Internet Security Agency and will work similar to a social security number which effectively identifies you as *you* in the ever-expanding World Wide Web. The ISN will mandate that minors under the age of 18 are required to log-in using their ISN and clock the amount of time used on services such as social networking and online gaming. A strict, 1-hour per week limit will be imposed on minors which will promote proper development in children. The ISN brings with it many benefits which reach much further than the scope of the original intent of the proposition.

With the ISN, children will be able to properly develop socially before given the leisure of unlimited access to online functions. Furthermore, it could serve as a new source of jobs in a struggling economy. As of 2007, approximately 62,000 people were employed by the Social Security Administration. (Shinn)Seeing as the ISN would work similar to the Social Security Administration, there is a huge potential for jobs within this new concept; however, this idea is not without opposition.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in America. (Social Security Online), and many, especially those who have fallen victim to identity theft, may argue that introducing the ISN will be simply another number to be stolen amidst the ever-evolving world of cyber-crime. This issue falls directly in-line with the integration aspect of the ISN

Integration of the ISN will not be an easy task. First and foremost, it will need a financial support. Be it adopted by the government or invested in by private entities, the fiscal support is the first step to realizing this idea. This concept will be gradually integrated into society. As with the Social Security Number, children will also be assigned an Internet Security Number upon birth. Adults can also voluntarily register for the ISN for any potential future benefits this idea may birth. While this idea is groundbreaking, it is useless unless adopted by larger social networking and online gaming companies.

Social Networking and Online Gaming companies will not be required to enable the ISN, and it will be up to the company itself if they want to adopt this new concept. That being said, I believe they will do so willingly if they see the benefits as strongly as I do. Falling back to counter-argument to the proposition, if companies decide to adopt the ISN, the Internet Security Agency will have to certify their encryption method of any data-storage prior to enabling their online services with the ISN. Once a web service has been approved by the Internet Security Agency, their log-in page will route the user to a separate internet page which the Internet Security Agency hosts. From this page, the user will have to enter their ISN and still have time remaining from their weekly internet usage quota before being re-routed back to the desired internet page. Additionally, a child will be unable to access their own personal data associated with their ISN when trying to log-in using another individual’s ISN.

Idealistically, if major internet entities were to adopt the ISN, entering ones ISN would be part of the registration process. This would bind the individual’s ISN with their log-in information. Should a child try to use another individual’s card (be it their mother’s, father’s, best friend’s, etc.), they would be unable to access their own data which has already been associated with their log-in information and ISN. While this idea may take one or two of the larger internet companies adopting the concept before others will consider it, these other companies may face social pressure to conform to the ISN.

Hypothetically speaking, if Facebook and World of Warcraft were to adopt the ISN, other, less-successful social networking websites and online gaming companies may face criticism for the continued allowance of unlimited usage of their services. Again, opposition comes in the form of a counter-argument. On debate.org, one of the many debates that have surfaced in recent weeks was one entitled “Teenagers Should Have Unlimited Access to Computers and The Internet”. There are many opinions amidst the debate with the majority of users disagreeing with the argument, yet there is still a fairly strong advocacy of the debate (Austinyb). They fear that, with the introduction of restrictions on children’s internet use, they may be unable to access information that they need for schooling or personal research. It is within the ideals of the Internet Security Agency that the ISN will only be used on larger online entities and non-academic sources – leaving search engines, educational websites, informational websites, etc. still fully functional and without pressure to conform to the ideals of the Agency.

Today’s youth are growing in an age that is leaving them under-developed. Children would rather type than talk or register than explore. It is through extended usage of these social networking websites and online gaming companies that children are failing to gain the necessary skills to function in a corporeal setting. I am proposing both that childhood development is an issue directly correlated with their use of online entities and that my proposed solution is both feasible and practical. If adopted, the ISN will bring a new layer of psychological benefits to a generation of under-developed children and give the world what it deserves – fully functional, working, and prosperous adults.

Works Cited

“Are texting and Facebook worse for teens than TV? .” *Charleston Daily Mail*. N.p., 28 Oct. 2010. Web. 6 Nov. 2010. <http://www.dailymail.com/‌News/‌TechnologyNews/‌201010280471?page=2&build=cache>.

Austinyb. “Teenagers Should Have Unlimited Access to Computers and The Internet.” *Debate*. N.p., 9 Oct. 2010. Web. 6 Nov. 2010. <http://www.debate.org/‌debates/‌Teenagers-Should-Have-Unlimited-Access-to-Computers-and-The-Internet/‌1/>.

Boyse, Kyla. “Obesity and Overweight.” *University of Michigan Health Systems*. N.p., May 2008. Web. 6 Nov. 2010. <http://www.med.umich.edu/‌yourchild/‌topics/‌obesity.htm>.

“Childhood Obesity.” *Center for Disease Control*. N.p., 3 June 2010. Web. 6 Nov. 2010. <http://www.cdc.gov/‌HealthyYouth/‌obesity/>.

Fodeman, Doug, and Marje Monroe. “The Impact of Facebook on Our Students.” *National Association of Independant Schools*. N.p., 12 Jan. 2009. Web. 6 Nov. 2010. <http://www.nais.org/‌resources/‌article.cfm?ItemNumber=151505>.

“Identity Theft And Your Social Security Number.” *Social Security Online*. N.p., Aug. 2009. Web. 6 Nov. 2010. <http://www.ssa.gov/‌pubs/‌10064.html>.

Shinn, Robert. “We Represent Those Applying For Social Security Disability Benefits.” *North American Disibility Advocates*. N.p., 2010. Web. 6 Nov. 2010. <http://www.disabilityhelp.org/‌physicalimpairment.html>.

Thompson, Tess. “Childhood Obesity Health Risks, Diagnosis and Treatment.” *Native Remedies*. N.p., n.d. Web. 6 Nov. 2010. <http://www.nativeremedies.com/‌articles/‌childhood-obesity-health-risks-diagnosis-treatment.html>.