Over-exposed portraits: social media overload and the identities of the young

Giulia Ranzini
Christoph Lutz
Prof. Dr. Miriam Meckel
Background and Rationale for the Topic

• A range of studies have researched information overload at the workplace. (Eppler & Mengis, 2004)

• Recently, many studies have researched downsides of Social Network Sites, such as cyber bullying, stalking, distraction and negative academic performance, unfriending, narcissism and envy. (e.g. Junco, 2011; Krasnova et al., 2013; Lyndon et al., 2011; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Sibona, 2013)

• Still, feelings of stress and overexposure caused by SNS are so far understudied, both for teenagers and other age groups: We do know next to nothing about the phenomenon. (Hargittai et al., 2012)

• For teenagers, social media induced stress and overexposure might have (especially) serious consequences.
Theoretical Background: Digital Identities
Theoretical Background: Digital Divide

- Different **forms of divides** in terms of Internet access, skills, use, participation and motivation

- SES and age as important predictors of different divides (van Dijk, 2006)

- Also gender plays a role (Helsper, 2010)

- We suspect differences in SNS induced stress and propose an *overload divide*

- Interplay of SNS overexposure and digital identities
Research Question: Overload Divide

How do demographic characteristics and status influence teenagers’ exposure to SNS overload?
Follow Up Question: Digital Identities

What do differences in SNS overexposure and stress mean in terms of digital identities?
Sample

- Survey of visitors of exposition «Kommunizieren Gefährdet» in Berne (Switzerland) 2012: 23’878 respondents in total
- **6989 teenagers** aged 13-18
- Gender: 54.8 percent female, 45.2 percent male.
- Age:

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<th>Percent</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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Analysis: Two Steps

1) Descriptive Analysis

*How stressed and overexposed are Swiss teenagers visiting the exhibition?*

2) Logistic Regression

*How can we explain such differences?*
Descriptive Analysis: SNS Use

- Average Use of SNS and Online Communities of 70 minutes per day
- Median of 30 minutes might be more accurate
- 16 percent non-users (1110 out of 6989)
- About 13 percent heavy users
Descriptive Analysis: Strain and Stress Caused by SNS

«Social Network Sites stress me out.»

- Vast majority is not stressed by SNS and does not perceive them as a burden
- Average value of 1.16 points to relatively little stress and burden in general
- About 13 percent stressed or very stressed
Descriptive Analysis: SNS Overexposure

«Do you have the feeling you spend too much time with SNS?»

- Normal distribution
- Average value of 2.01 says teenagers spend occasionally too much time with SNS
- About 37 percent has the feeling to often or very often spend too much time with SNS
### Explanation: Logistic Regression «SNS Stress»

<table>
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*Model $\chi^2 = 98.588, df = 7, p < .001; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.034; -2 \text{ Log likelihood}=4087.18*

- Age, Language, Gender and Residence (City) are significant predictors of SNS stress
- SNS use intensity not significant
- Low explanatory power
Explanation: Logistic Regression «SNS Overexposure»

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Model $\chi^2 = 431.171$, $df = 7$, $p < .001$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.105$; $-2 \text{Log likelihood} = 6662.99$

- Age, Language, Gender, SNS use, Residence and Employment are significant predictors of SNS stress
- SNS use intensity strongly significant
- Better explanatory power
Key Findings

• **Age** differences consistent across overexposure and stress: older teenagers are more likely to feel stressed and overexposed

  => Age 13-18 as a transformational period with increased autonomy and larger network over time

• Noteworthy **gender** effects: male teenagers have higher propensity to feel stressed out by SNS, but female teens are more likely to (have the feeling to) waste time on SNS

  => Viewed in terms of self-expression and digital identities, this results very interesting.
Key Findings

• **Place of residence** weighs heavily: differences between city and countryside kids
  
  => Different networks and options for leisure activities

• **Time spent on SNS** not a significant predictor of stress, but of wasted time.

• **Language** and cultural context as decisive.
Wrap Up and Conclusion

- Overload divide exists: significant differences in coping with SNS between different teenager groups

- Generally, most teenagers in the sample are able to cope with the affordances of SNS, especially younger ones

- Indication of an overload divide that is connected to teenagers’ lifeworlds and their identity management on SNS
Limitations and Directions for Further Research

- Relatively superficial **quantitative study**: qualitative in depth interviews and observations (ethnography or ethnomethodology) needed to explore the interconnections of different aspects that cause SNS stress and overexposure.

- **Only one country**: extension to other countries would increase our understanding of cultural and contextual aspects of SNS stress and overexposure.

- **Cross-sectional study**: dynamics of SNS stress and overexposure.
Thank You For Your Attention

Institute for Media and Communications Management
University of St. Gallen
Blumenbergplatz 9
CH-9000 St. Gallen
Contact

**Christoph Lutz**  
Research Assistant and PhD Student  
Institute for Media and Communications Management  
Blumenbergplatz 9  
9000 St. Gallen – Switzerland  
christoph.lutz@unisg.ch  
Twitter: @lutzid

**Giulia Ranzini**  
Research Assistant and PhD Student  
Institute for Media and Communications Management  
Blumenbergplatz 9  
9000 St. Gallen – Switzerland  
giulia.ranzini@unisg.ch  
Twitter: @giuliaranzini

Feel free to contact us if you’re interested in our research or in collaborations!
Resources


Resources


