The Lives of Tweens & Young Teens

June 25, 2012 (Edited for distribution)

About Smarty Pants

Smarty Pants is a full-service market research and strategic consulting firm dedicated to helping corporate and non-profit clients better understand and connect with youth and families.

Sources of Info for Today’s Presentation

- Talking to kids and families every day – in focus groups, at their homes, in stores, in schools, and through survey research
- A brand-new Smarty Pants study
  - Nationally representative sample of 415 10-to-14-year-olds
  - Academic child development research
  - Secondary sources & media

Just Remember…

There is a big difference between a 10-year-old and a 14-year-old!

77% of 10-12s

But only

36% of 13-14s

identify themselves as a “kid” (vs. a “young adult”)

Young people’s self-perceptions shift over this time period.

About Smarty Pants

10- to 14-Year Olds in Real Life

- Physical
- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Social
- Academic
- Recreations

Presentation Overview

- About Smarty Pants
- Sources of Info
- Who Are They?
- 10- to 14-Year Olds in Real Life
  - Physical
  - Cognitive
  - Emotional
  - Social
  - Academic
  - Recreations

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One More for Fun...

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

10-14s In Real Life

Internal

Physical

Environmental

Cognitive

Emotional

Academic

Social

Recreations

Puberty Begins!

There are huge shifts in physical development from age 10 to 14, and many individual differences.

While most don’t truly reach puberty until age 12-14, societal changes mean that kids begin to demonstrate signs even younger.

Even if they aren’t there yet, 10- to 14-year-olds are THINKING about puberty and their changing bodies!

Obesity Fears

Roughly one in five 10- to 14-year-olds are overweight.*

National attention to this issue means they are bombarded with warnings about youth obesity from multiple sources, including:

Parents

Coaches

Teachers

Media

Friends

Although incredibly important, youth obesity messages may actually be creating even more body image issues among this age group.
**Thinking Big Thoughts**

Shift away from "concrete" thinking (where the focus is on the here and now) toward more "abstract" thinking. With abstract thinking comes the ability to:

- Generate big ideas
- Consider multiple points of view
- Develop and plan goals, strategy
- Understand nuances

Abstract thinking leads to a greater demand for fairness, more sophisticated humor (puns, irony, sarcasm), and increased planning and organization.

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**Who Am I?**

Early stages of identity development (figuring out where one fits in the world) creates interest in:

- More experimentation, rebelliousness, limit-testing
- New ways to express oneself

Increased self-consciousness means:

- Sensitivity over body changes
- Comparisons between self and peers

Emotional volatility leads to:

- Moodiness, roller-coaster reactions, extreme sensitivity

An increasing desire for independence and responsibility is often at odds with 10-14-year-olds' rising risk-taking behavior. 19% of 8th graders report using cigarettes, alcohol, or illicit drugs in past 30 days (Source: Monitoring the Future, 2010)

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**Family Matters**

More connected to parents than previous generations...

- Increasing social life takes priority, but 10-14s still love spending time with family
- Parents value their children's opinions
- Parents and 10-14-year-olds share many of the same interests
- Cell phones/texting means the lines of communication are always open

Despite best intentions, 10-14-year-olds' commitment to friends, sports, and other activities starts to interfere with family life:

- Fewer family dinners/family nights
- "Divide and conquer" mentality of parents

Although there is certainly plenty of angst and conflict, many of today's 10-14-year-olds consider their parents to be their "friends."
But Parents Increasingly Creating Problems, Too
10- to 14-year-olds want to develop their own identities, and take responsibilities for their actions. But...
- Parents are often over-involved in schoolwork, peer interactions, conflict resolution, etc.

Email from coach to league commissioner complaining about parent

10-14s sometimes need “permission” to break away from parents and explore their own interests and solve their own problems.

Need for Social Connections
Peer influence increasingly important
- Care about what their friends—and others—think
- Group membership is part of what defines them as a person—cliques are developing, popularity is noted
- Some develop private clubs or associations—can be in real life or online
- Exclusivity and meanness (“mean girls”)

Appreciation of friendship and qualities that make a good friend
- Respect each others’ personalities, interests, and strengths
- Count on each other for support, especially their BFF

Always-on cell phones, interactive gaming, and social networks mean 10- to 14-year-olds never have to “leave” their friends behind.

“In a Relationship With…”
Hormones are igniting!
- Crushes are turning into relationships
- Group dating, hanging out, parties, experimentation, and “online” relationships
- BUT girls may be much more interested than boys (especially among tweens)

Meet Dance Instructor Jo

The School Bell’s New Ring
Anywhere from 4th to 9th grade, but primarily middle school students
- Often in a big school for the first time
- Emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving
- Technology integrated throughout the curriculum
- Complex homework: ≥ 2-3 hours/night
- Expectation of independence
But the Pressure Is On

For many 10- to 14-year-olds, school performance has become a tremendous source of stress, along with other school-related stressors:

- Standardized testing
- Safety concerns
- Bullying
- Balancing school assignments with an increasingly hectic extra-curricular schedule and social life
- Discussions of college starting already

School pressure is increasingly causing anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues among 10-14s. And remember that stress comes from many sources besides school, too.

Despite New Tech, TV Still Tops

Despite New Tech, TV Still Tops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 10-12</th>
<th>Activities do ≥ 1/week</th>
<th>Age 13-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go online</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play video games</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch movies/DVDs</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor activities</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read books</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk on phone</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang out w/ friends</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send/receive texts</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of these activities are higher than playing with toys – which are no longer relevant for most 10- to 14-year-olds!

Environmental

Recreations

Multitasking to the Max

Often, many of those activities are being done at the same time.

For example:

- One screen is often not enough – TV may be on next to the computer, with a cell phone or iPod Touch in hand
- Online chatting while doing homework
- Music always on in background
- Eating in car on way to after-school activity

It's All About Digital Brands

Top 50 Brands for Tweens (9-12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1 Wii</th>
<th>#11 iPad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#2 iPod touch</td>
<td>#21 Minecraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Cereal</td>
<td>#22 YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 iPad</td>
<td>#23 College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 iTunes</td>
<td>#24 Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6 McDonald's</td>
<td>#25 Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7 YouTube</td>
<td>#26 YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8 Minecraft</td>
<td>#27 YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9 Disney</td>
<td>#28 YouTube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10 YouTube</td>
<td>#29 YouTube</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Smarty Pants Young Love Study, 2011
“Benefits” of Screen Time – Any Time, On Any Device

Entertainment
- Whether it's watching TV/videos, playing a video game, or listening to music – 10- to 14-year-olds can use their phones, TVs, laptops, tablets, iPod touch, etc.

Relaxation
- Screens help 10-14s relax or unwind – just what they need after their hectic days

Connections
- Mobile devices allow 10-14s to keep in touch with parents when outside of the house
- And, even more importantly, mobile devices & the Internet help them stay connected to friends at all times

Information
- The Internet – on a computer or on a phone – is used for homework or just always-on info gathering
- This age group has never had to WAIT to look something up

Any Time, On Any Device

Benefits of Screen Time

Best websites:

- Facebook
- YouTube
- Games!
- “Like”/follow celebrities/personal interests
- Check-ins with family
- “It’s important to keep up with the latest new video games”

Facebook offers multiple benefits:

- The allure of something potentially “off-limits”
- Ability to keep up with/show off to friends
- Check-ins with family
- “Like”/Follow celebrities/personal interests
- Games!

But Facebook, along with other social networks, has created new problems:

- Privacy concerns
- Exposure to inappropriate content
- Predators
- Cyber bullying

Facebook

A Word About Facebook

Outdoor Galore

Despite the prevalence and popularity of technology, outside is THE place to be!

- 10- to 14-year-olds actually want to be outside
- Many young people prefer being outside to playing video games or watching TV indoors. Outdoors can mean:
  - Social time
  - Fewer prying eyes, annoying siblings
  - No homework/responsibilities

Although traditionally tech-free, mobile devices mean that even outdoor play may now include screens.
Sports, Sports and More Sports

When 10- to 14-year-olds play sports, their lives—and their whole family’s lives—revolve around the sports. By this age:
- Practices and/or games 4-5 days/week
- Attendance is “mandatory”
- Dads often become coaches (though many coaches of this age group are professional)
- Moms often become “managers”
- Siblings become cheerleaders or honorary mascots

Sports can be a blessing and a curse
- Sports provide structure and discipline
- But the time investment and potential for problems can be considerable

And Now, the World of Books

It won’t be news to you that 10- to 14-year-olds’ most loved books are:

Favorite Books (open-end)

How Books Stack Up

Very/Somewhat Important to Keep Up With the Latest...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech products</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video games</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes/fashion</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New TV shows</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Books: Higher for girls 13-14: 73%; Lower for boys 13-14: 50%)

76% would rather: “watch a movie” than read a book
(69% higher for boys 12-14: 82%)

75% say: “I learn things from books that are just as important as the things I learn in school”

Meat Molly, age 11

A Final Note…

68% say: “Grown-ups need to do a better job finding out what’s important to kids”

Meet Molly, age 11

Would you rather...

- Read a hard copy of a book (with real pages) 55%
- OR Read an electronic copy of a book (on a Kindle, iPad, or other e-Reader/electronic device) 45%

BUT...

Recently released research from Southern Methodist University suggests that boys become more positive about reading after using e-readers.

(Source: School Library Journal, April 6, 2012)

However, given this age group’s love affair with all things tech, it’s likely that the scale will tip the other way in coming years!

Q: What Do You Like About e-Readers?

A: FLEXIBILITY!
- Can take it with you, no matter where you go
- Can change your mind about what to read
- Can easily switch to other activities—whether that’s texting or gaming!

Meet Molly, age 11

For other resources...

Free newsletters with research, industry trends, etc.

And of course…