

Social networking websites have created a more public arena for trying out identities and developing interpersonal skills with a wider network of people, occasionally with anonymity. This can create opportunities for young people who have a limited access to friends (because of rural location, shyness, or rare chronic conditions) to interact with people like themselves. However, most adolescents appear to be using the online social environment to interact with the same peers that they spend their day with at school.

Text messaging has become a common activity and can sometimes be disruptive. In addition, both the online and the text environment can create opportunities for **cyberbullying**, where teens engage in insults, harassment, and publicly humiliating statements online or on cell phones. There is increased danger of adolescents coming in contact and sharing personal information with sexual predators who pose as adolescents in an attempt to make personal contact with underage victims or engage them in sexting (sending sexually explicit or suggestive pictures or messages online) (Dowdell, Burgess, and Flores, 2011). Adolescent sexting, rather than being an innocent anonymous activity, has been linked to risky sexual behaviors in a few studies (Rice, Rhoades, Winetrobe, et al, 2012; Temple, Paul, van den Berg, et al, 2012).

Studies have noted that adolescents are not only enthusiastic technology users, but they frequently use multiple types of media at the same time. They may be listening to music on their digital music player while the television is on, and they are surfing the Internet and texting friends on their cell phone. It is unclear how this multitasking and multiple media exposure will affect development of the brain and attention, but frequent media use has been associated with late nights and sleep deprivation (Owens, Adolescent Sleep Working Group, and Committee on Adolescence, 2014). There is increased concern focusing on adolescent vehicle driving and distractions, such as texting or cell phone usage. In 2011, 32.8% of adolescents reported having texted or emailed someone while driving on at least 1 day in the 30 days prior to the survey (Eaton, Kann, Kinchen, et al, 2012). Many states have outlawed the use of handheld mobile devices while actively operating a vehicle (Chase, 2014).