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Sense of Community and Social Capital: The Role of the Internet in Shaping Social Dynamics

Abstract

This paper presents the findings of an empirical study on the role of internet based mediation among children's communities and proposes a theoretical framework for the study of communities and their related online experience, introducing social capital and activity as key elements. The main goal is to understand the ways children interact with online social technologies and how they use them within the context of their own community to promote social interaction and knowledge acquisition.

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Artikel werden die Ergebnisse einer empirischen Untersuchung zur Rolle der internetbasierten Vermittlung zwischen Communitys von Kindern vorgestellt. Es wird ein theoretischer Rahmen vorgeschlagen, um Communitys und deren online Erfahrungen zu untersuchen, wofür soziales Kapital und Aktivität als Schlüsselelemente eingeführt werden. Das Hauptziel ist zu verstehen, wie Kinder mit online Social Technologies interagieren und wie sie diese im Kontext ihrer eigenen Community nutzen, um soziale Interaktion und Wissenserwerb zu fördern.

1   Introduction

Today's society is ever more immersed in a flow of technological innovations that shape our interactions and mediate our access to things and to others. Children in particular seem to use technologies, namely internet based ones, as core communication tools and expressive medium, one that helps shape their identity and their view of the world.

This paper discusses the results of a study carried out with a community of 4th graders in relation with their uses of media technologies for social interaction purposes. In order to evaluate how children use media technologies to support social interactions and knowledge acquisition, an on-line platform for communication was developed