



Youth202: An Experiment in Teen-driven Knowledge Management at an Urban American Public Library

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Abstract:

Youth202 is Washington, DC's first centralized, teen-driven digital "space" for information and resources for DC teens. Local youth, mostly from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, learn radio production, web writing, and research skills at DC Public Library, to create and maintain a website (youth202.org), a Twitter feed (@Youth202), and a radio program. Youth202 fills a huge, teen-identified information gap, fully exploiting the power and potential of digital and social media as knowledge management tools. This paper describes the Youth202 program, pedagogy, and process, then discusses it within in a unique, urban community knowledge management context.

Introduction

Youth202 is Washington DC's first central repository for news, information, and entertainment for teens. It is named for the age-group it serves and the telephone area code of the city where it is based. Consisting of a digital radio program, a website, and Twitter feed created by and for teens, Youth202 not only fills a huge gap in the information needs of teens and those who serve them, but does so in an innovative way—by training teens in a bi-weekly afterschool setting, to research, write, and share the information *themselves*—building teens' skills, while capitalizing on the highly popular,

widely accessible, and technologically dynamic social and digital media tools of Twitter, open source content management, and digital radio/podcasting.

By pairing youth with adult library and community media professionals who are skilled in working with teens and who are experts in the information and media fields, Youth202 supports teens' youth development needs, while developing their 21st century literacy skills. With our community partner, Radio Rootz, a non-profit organization specializing in youth radio, teens are trained in research, information analysis, digital audio production, interviewing, online writing, "cyber-marketing", and a host of other skills, while working collaboratively to create content that they share with their peers.

Youth202 not only develops the skills of the teens directly served in the program, but it also increases the awareness of DC's general teen population about the issues, programs, events, and resources available to them—sharing that information through the technology that teens most often access.

@Youth202 is Youth202's Twitter presence. In our timeline of tweets, teens can find information about jobs, scholarships, one-time events, after school programs, articles about teen life, local resources for teen health and wellness, and a whole host of other positive youth-centered material—all gathered from searching the vast "Twittersphere".

Youth202.org is our fixed web-presence. It is accessible on desktop computers, and it has a modified mobile version, so teens can access it using their "third appendage"—their mobile phones. On Youth202.org, teens can find:

- a calendar of events, all color-coded based on categories the Youth202 teens identified (music, sports, education, film, etc.)
- sorted lists of opportunities (jobs, volunteer opportunities, after school programs, and internships)
- a link to online homework help and research databases that DC Public Library subscribes to (offered free to library card holders)
- reviews of books, music, movies, and games—all written by teens from around the city
- links to local and online resources to help them with problems or issues they may have (sexuality and dating, health, family, financial, etc.)
- a teen-written advice column
- a search bar and tag cloud for easy visual searching

Youth202 Radio is co-produced by Radio Rootz. In each episode, teens can find youth-produced segments about informative and entertaining topics as well as youth-produced music.

History and Context of Youth202

The idea for Youth202 was born in the summer of 2010. Teens in DC Public Library's summer and year-round youth employment programs mentioned that they wished they had a space to go to find out about all of the things happening in the city for them. They

wanted to be able to find out about things on their own, in the same way that adults can pick up a newspaper, tune into a radio program, or visit a website to get information.

There is no lack of opportunities and events for teens in Washington, DC. The city is replete with community-based organizations, youth advocacy organizations and policy institutes. It's home to 25 public neighborhood libraries; hundreds of public and private schools; the world-renowned Smithsonian Institute, with its network of 19 museums offering programs free of charge; the Library of Congress; National Archives; hundreds of churches with deep community roots and ample ministries to tend to the communities' needs... All of these resources and opportunities exist for youth in the city, but there are gaps in the channels of communication between those resources and their target audiences.

Teens bemoaned the fact that there weren't any easy mechanisms for them to find out about things happening around the city for them. They didn't know where to look to find out about jobs and volunteer opportunities, scholarships, after school programs, and cool things to do with their friends. They complained that they have to rely on their parents, teachers, or other adults to share information with them; and they said if they find out about things on their own, it's usually right before the event happens (and therefore too late for them to get permission or arrange transportation to go), or they only learn about things after the event or opportunity has already passed. If they find out about things themselves, it is only through word of mouth (which requires them to know the people "in the know"), or by making a concerted effort to seek the information.

In research conducted on urban teen information-seeking behaviors, Agosto and Hughes-Hassell (2006) found that as with most adults, teens generally rely on people they trust to get their information. Relationships and social networks are, therefore, key.

Youth202 was created to fill this huge information gap, bringing the city's vast resources to teens in a way that honors the teens' desire to be self-sufficient in the discovery of information, that is grounded in the research about their information-seeking behaviors, and that capitalizes on the tools, platforms, and technology they already use.

Knowledge, media, power, and participatory culture of urban teens

Knowledge is the sum of what we know--information contextualized and understood through the filters of our lived experience. Knowledge is developed through a continuous feedback process of experiencing, dialoguing, listening, and reading. This "sense-making" is a highly contextual, highly social phenomenon. Teens have no lack of knowledge. Though young, they experience and sense-make just as adults do. They have no shortage of opinions and thoughts, and because of their developmental stage, they are "playing around with" ideas, and are "trying on" ideas for size. Through this process they are at the same time shaping their identities.

Media is an essential portal for our human knowledge development. There are plenty of media portals for adults--whether they be traditional mass media portals (major newspapers, broadcast news shows, documentaries, radio shows, etc.), or participatory media portals (popular blogs, commentaries and “letters to the editor”). These are spaces for adults to learn, see their thoughts and ideas represented, share their ideas with each other, and make sense of their worlds.

The same space does not exist on any broad scale for youth. Though a 2005 study by the Pew Foundation (as found in Jenkins, 2006) found that 57% of teens have engaged in some form of media creation (posting original photos or videos online, commenting on online media, etc.), opportunities for young people to be part of the mainstream media dialogue are largely absent. As well, though much emphasis is given, especially in libraries, to closing the digital divide by providing free wi-fi and public access computers, there is still a digital *participation* divide, with working-class youth and families being less able to not only access technology, but also less likely to learn the essential skills to be able to participate fully in the new media culture. (Jenkins, 2006)

Youth generally, and low-income youth specifically, are bystanders and observers to a predominantly adult dialogue. Therefore, a tremendous amount of latent knowledge remains untapped. Teens are being robbed of the chance to learn from each other, and the adult community is losing the valuable opportunity to learn from the teens.

The field of “youth media” has evolved over the course of the last 15-20 years to address this. One leader in the field, Ingrid Dahl, notes that youth media supports

the process, products, and impact of authentic youth voice and create[s] opportunities for young people whose power and value is often overlooked. As Keith Hefner of Youth Communications, NY, explains, “We began doing this work because we saw that young people’s ideas were systematically excluded from the marketplace, to their detriment and to the detriment of the institutions that served them and the larger society. Worse, not only did young people not have a voice, they were ignored and/or caricatured in the mainstream media—or treated simply as consumers. Most people who went into youth media also felt youth audiences deserved media that accurately reflected their lives and concerns. (Dahl, 2004, p 4)

Youth media is not only about shifting power dynamics and bringing marginalized voices into the center. It is also about recognizing, documenting, culling, and sharing the knowledge of the youth community with others both within and outside of their communities. Furthermore, in the Youth202 context, it is also about developing young people’s 21st century literacy skills, to be able to master the conventions, language, and nuances of media; become responsible users of it; and create media with the explicit purpose of connecting and engaging their communities.

How Youth202 works: The Process

There are many “moving parts” to the Youth202 program. In order to successfully share relevant, credible information and knowledge, there are information literacy, media production, and writing concepts that the teens have to first develop. I will focus mainly on the information literacy and initial stages of the production process here.

As with everything on the open web, the lack of an editorial body or authority control means that knowledge and information sharing is more democratic and potentially more reflective of a larger swath of voices. It also means, however, that sometimes material of dubious veracity finds its way to others, and those without the ability to judge that information can be led to believing untruths. On Twitter, this problem is infinitely compounded. With the 140-character limit, not much context can be given to things, which can lead to misunderstandings. Also, the character limit oftentimes necessitates the use of URL links to lead the person to more information. With the “retweet” button offering the convenience of immediate “as-is” sharing, information gets blasted across communities of followers within seconds. If a link is dead, links to misinformation, links to an advertisement or pornography, or is in some other way not useful, it is much harder to retract the retweet and share the real or correct information.

To help the Youth202 teens find accurate, relevant information to tweet, they were taught some basic information literacy concepts. I introduced the acronym RADCAB, created by educator Karen Christensson (2005). Teens must analyze:

- Relevance—Is the information relevant to them and their target audience?
- Authority—Who wrote it, and what makes that person qualified to write it?
- Detail—Is it too much information, or too little information?
- Currency—Is the information up-to-date, or is it outdated?
- Appropriateness—Does it fit the criteria for the kinds of things Youth202 tweets about?
- Bias—Is it trying to sell something, or is it just information for information’s sake?

Beyond that, there is a protocol that they must follow. The events and opportunities they tweet about must:

- Be for young people between the ages of 12-19 in DC
- Be accessible by public transportation, so the teens can get there without needing to rely on their parents
- Be either free of charge or low cost (which the teens defined as \$10 or less), so the teens can afford it, and so we’re not excluding low-income teens

And the tweet itself, or information the tweet links to must:

- Be current, versus being about an event that has already passed
- Link to the original information about the event or opportunity, rather than leading to a continuous chain of links or leading to information from a third party
- Be understandable, interesting, and targeted towards teens, versus being targeted towards adults who serve or parent teens

The teens are also instructed to, where possible, create new text to accompany a link. They must add their own context to it, rather than simply retweeting what someone else wrote. Adding this additional step makes it more likely that they'll follow the protocol, and it helps them really think about why this opportunity is relevant and worthy of sharing with their peers.

In order to start their search into the vast Twittersphere, the teens type keywords such as: “youth dc”, “teens dc”, “students dc”, “scholarships dc”, etc. They then look at the timeline of most recent tweets by the people we follow. Then they go directly onto the pages of the “usual suspects”—a list that they compiled of organizations and people who regularly tweet relevant information. Then they go to onto the pages of other organizations and people we follow, who may not tweet quite as regularly. This ensures that we locate great information that may still be timely, but that may have been swept away in the ever-flowing tsunami of tweets. Whenever they find something worthy of sharing, they mention the original tweeter's Twitter handle, so that person or organization knows we are sharing their information, and so our Youth202 followers can find the original source.

In order to better manage the flow of tweets, we set restrictions on who we follow. We follow local youth-serving organizations, museums and educational institutions, a few local musicians and artists, national youth news services, and some local individuals who are connected to youth-serving organizations. As a general rule, Youth202 does not follow people or organizations simply because they follow us. This is a sacrilege in the teen Twitter world, where a person's status is measured by how many followers or friends they have.¹ But it is the only way to ensure that the information that appears on our timeline is as relevant as possible—making it easier for us to find the “gold”.

In order to create the radio pieces, there is a three-stage process involved: pre-production, production, and post-production. Pre-production includes selecting a topic, determining the essential questions, and conducting research. Production includes the actual recording of the audio. And post-production includes logging audio footage, writing scripts, and editing the final piece on a digital editing system. This is typically not a linear process, however. For example, narration has to be recorded to bring to life the text in the script, and sometimes new research has to be done or new interview footage has to be recorded, to fill in gaps in a narrative. At all phases of the process, teens' knowledge is being tapped, shared, and re-created.

In the Youth202 program we use a constructivist, student-centered teaching approach, based in critical literacy pedagogy. In this pedagogy, “the students' learning is driven by their own questions about their lived experiences; the social, cultural, and historical conditions that shape those experiences; and the media's representations of those conditions and experiences.” (Goodman et al, p 157)

To begin, the entire group engages in a brainstorming session to identify all the different topics they're interested in. This includes serious topics (like current events, politics, problems and issues, etc.) and more light-hearted topics (like horoscopes, music reviews, and advice). Once all the ideas are on the board, we look at the list and cross off all the topics that are either too broad, too hackneyed, too abstract, or too "boring". Once that list is narrowed, each teen picks the one they like the most. Sometimes an eliminated topic finds its way back to the list, as the teen justifies why she thinks she can do a "better or different" job with the topic than has been done with it before.

After each teen has her topic, they create a graphic web to explore all the known aspects of the topic, the relationships between those aspects, and the things they don't know about the topic. This helps the teens zero in on what exactly they want to focus on in their piece. Then we create questions around those areas. They do research to learn more about the topic and answer some of their questions. And they then identify all the people in the community they might have to talk to, in order to get a fuller picture of the story.

The following is an example of how this process looks. CeeCee, a 15 year-old young woman, selected the topic of single-parenthood for her first radio piece. As she mapped out her story, decided she wanted to look at what life was like for children of single parents. What kinds of common experiences did children of single parents experience? Was there any difference between the experiences of children growing up with only their fathers versus with only their mothers? Are children of single parents more at a disadvantage than those who grow up with both parents? CeeCee is herself a daughter of a single mom. She had both first-hand knowledge, and a real motivation to find answers to her questions.

To start her research, she decided that she would need some statistics about the prevalence of single parenthood, so a librarian helped her find the census bureau's website. She also began mapping out what kinds of people she needed to interview: a single mom, a single dad, a child raised with a single mom, a child raised by a single dad, a psychologist, etc. Then she began identifying who she already knew in each of those categories, and she created a set of questions for each person. When she realized that she didn't know a psychologist, she queried another teen who she knew had interviewed a psychologist for his story on teen depression. Ceecee tapped her own knowledge, then the knowledge of a peer to help determine her story strategy.

Youth202 as a community knowledge management system

Dalkir (2005) defines knowledge management as "a deliberate and systematic approach to ensure the full utilization of the [community's] knowledge base, coupled with the potential of individual skills, competencies, thoughts, innovations, and ideas to create a more efficient and effective [community]." (p. 2) Though his original text used the word "organization" rather than "community", the substitution of the word "community" functions well in this context. Community knowledge management is about knowing what knowledge exists within a community and making that knowledge available to the right people at the right time. It is about community members being able to recognize,

access, and deploy expertise—whether that expertise be from themselves, their own peers, or other more traditionally-defined experts. It is about both access to knowledge and effective use of knowledge. It is about creating and sharing new knowledge.

In this context the Youth202 process and the Youth202 products are examples of community knowledge management systems (CKMS). There are several communities involved: the community of Twitter, the community of DC teens, and the community of Youth202 program members.

The community of Twitter is vast, and its knowledge base infinite. Information is accessed as immediately as it is shared; and information is immediately dated. Much of the information is useless in a knowledge management sense. But some of it is “gold”. It is the gold that we’re interested in Youth202. We are miners of golden information nuggets that would otherwise be buried in a rapidly piling timeline of tweets in just hours. Kuhlen (2003) states, “The success of electronic communication for knowledge management depends highly on effective coordination mechanisms (the moderators of forums are extremely important) and on incentives for the members to participate actively in the exchange of knowledge, namely to share one’s own knowledge with others.” (p 11). In this sense, Youth202 acts as a moderator of the perpetual “conversation” of tweets. Our practice of mentioning (or “shouting out”) the people and organizations whose information we share is an incentive for them to keep us in the loop.

The @Youth202 Twitter feed becomes a stream of useful information, all targeted to the specific audience of 12-19 year-old DC residents. It is the first stage of managing the flow of knowledge from the Twitter community. In the second stage, the teens take those information nuggets, as well as information nuggets they find elsewhere (in their schools, churches, after school programs, etc.) and further sort them to post onto our digital “home base”—Youth202.org.

In the first semester of the program in the Fall of 2011, participating teens designed the Youth202.org logo and look, identified the kinds of information they would want to see on such a site, categorized that information and assigned headings for major sections, and identified sub categories for each section. Now, whenever they find information to post, they simply select the kind of information they want to post (event, opportunity, review, etc.), and they use the tagging feature of our content management system (Drupal) to assign terms that they think their peers might use to search for that information. The Drupal system then posts the information in its appropriate place on the site. In this way, the information is organized to facilitate efficient search and retrieval, so teens can easily scan and find things of interest.

Youth202 brings both access to knowledge, and facilitates efficient use of it, for the community of teens in Washington, DC. Through the information shared, the city’s youth learn more about the resources and opportunities available to them, and those youth, in turn, share that information with others. Sometimes this works too well. Ngozi, a 15-year old teen in the program, learned from a friend about a science-based high school internship offered at the Smithsonian Institute. According to her, she posted the

opportunity on Youth202, and the post was re-tweeted by lots of followers—so much so that many of her friends applied, and she didn't get accepted. Of course, there could have been other factors involved in the program's decision not to accept her, but Ngozi faults the efficiency of Youth202! In another example, an arts-based after school program has benefited immensely from Youth202's information sharing. Many of our former teen "regulars" have abandoned our library, preferring to hang out at the art program, instead. On one recent visit to the program, I spotted a crew of teens who used to always be at our central branch after school. They said they found out about the program from Youth202, decided to visit, told all their friends, and now that was their new hang out.

Another way that Youth202 acts as a community knowledge management system is with the radio podcasts. Through their process of producing podcasts, the Youth202 teens make new discoveries and create new knowledge to share with their peers. UNESCO (in Rawsthorne, p 15) says this about youth media production's relationship to knowledge management:

This involvement [in media production] is not a singular act: rather an active and collective process of learning. Within these social settings, young people create and develop their own perspectives and knowledge. Participation provide[s] young people a context and community to explore imaginations and ideas. This process of learning, situating educational activity in the lived experience of young people, is dialogical and open-ended. The various media become more than facilitators and instruments; they enable and mediate learning and literacy. They become "social networks" of learning.

As Youth202 teens post podcasts and corresponding blog articles, other teens listen, read, and can comment on the stories—creating this dialogical and open-ended knowledge environment.

Youth202 as a community knowledge management system (CKMS) not only applies in relationship to the "outside" world. It also applies internally. The Youth202 teens are learning a lot about the events, jobs, and opportunities they're sharing with their peers, and they are also learning media production, information literacy, writing, and critical inquiry skills. They are becoming experts in areas of knowledge that not many teens have. As new teens join the program each semester, those teens who continue from previous semesters are tasked with teaching and coaching the new arrivals. This cycle of information sharing offers teens a valuable leadership opportunity, but also ensures that all the institutional knowledge is not lost when teens leave the program.

Youth202 functions as a CKMS in another surprising context, as well. Part of knowledge management deals with the idea of helping people "know what they know", recognize that their experiences and the knowledge gained through those experiences are valuable, and recognize that their knowledge and voices need to be shared with others as part of the larger dialogue. From my empowered adult perspective, I took for granted that the teens

would easily accept these truths. As I quickly learned, however, there were some behaviors that the teens had to un-learn, in order to bring their voices fully to the table.

As previously mentioned, one of the stipulations of the information shared on Youth202 is that it be interesting, understandable, and relevant to DC teens. While this seems like a relatively simple “given”, it actually takes some time for the teens to achieve. Young people have no power in U.S. society. They are marginalized. Young people of color from low-income communities are even more marginalized. They are subjected to a school culture that places heavy emphasis on standardized testing and knowing “the right answer” and that does not generally reward creative and individual thinking. Adults are their typical audience, except when they are amongst their own friends in social contexts. Teens are engaged in a constant process of “code switching”—switching between their own culture and the adult culture; their youth voice and a formal, standardized voice; their own true thoughts and ideas, and those they *think* adults really want to hear. They have been trained to give what they think adults will think is “the right” answer.

Youth202 offers a paradigm shift, however. In the Youth202 space, it’s not only okay for teens to express themselves and put their voices in the center, but it’s also *required*. This is the essence of the Youth202 identity, but it takes a lot of time for them to believe that. For example, the teens will sometimes tweet things that are clearly for adults. When I push back and ask them to explain why they think another 16-year old would care about that thing, they shrug their shoulders and say, “I don’t know. I thought that’s what you wanted.”

The teens also have a difficult time trusting their voice. One teen, Les, was notorious for this. Les is a 17 year-old African-American young man who attends a technology-centered public school in DC. Les has a strong interest in documenting local youth culture. His first radio story was on local teen music, and his second was on DC slang. These are both topics that a teen from DC is undoubtedly most qualified to speak on. Les was essentially wanting to “capture indigenous knowledge”, which is at the heart of the idea of community knowledge management. (Rawsthorne, 2006). However, when Les sat down to write his script on DC slang—a piece that at its core was about youth voice, he struggled to place his voice truly in it.

Notice the differences between Les’ first draft and his final draft.

[Draft 1] (words in italics are slang words)

DC slang. My definition would have to be: Words that are loosely used to replace common words in the everyday English language. Some people say that slang is a fun way to express yourself without being structured. Peer to peer slang usually includes words to replace their names, right? I don't know. But, let's see what slang words are used in certain parts in the District.

insert sound bite

“Moe”, “son”, “cuz”, “champ”, “guh”, “oh nooo”, “For my life”, and “Zaughta”? I wonder what those words mean. They probably take place of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Hmm... Let’s find out.

insert sound bite

Some of my friends don't use slang, and some people use slang all of the time. Let’s see if people use slang or if they don't use it at all.

insert final sound bite

About 86% of teens in the District of Columbia use slang everyday. That means 14% of Teens don't use slang at all. Maybe the words aren't intriguing enough for them to use, or maybe some people feel that slang is unnecessary. Well, whether somebody calls you “Son” or if they call you by your “government name”, make sure it’s positive and respectful. This is Les signing out with Youth202 Radio!

Les sheepishly gave me this first draft to read. When I handed it back to him, I told him that I felt like his personality was completely missing from the piece. I asked him who he wrote the piece for. When he said he wrote it for his “mans” (friends), I asked him to think about how his “mans” would want to hear that same story. What would his “mans” want to learn or think about from the piece? I told him to visualize them as he re-wrote the draft. I had to keep reiterating that this story was not for adults. This was for his “mans”.

Here is an excerpt of Les’ final draft.

[Final draft] (Words in italics are slang words)

Wassup with y’all? See, today my man tried to go smack at this shawty and she pressed him smooove out. He was like, “Ay shawty, wassup with you?” She wasn’t tryna hear none of that. Cuz was too sick. Then he tried to get mad at me cause I was sicin’ it. It ain’t my fault she ain’t want your number boy. But anyway, I was coolin’ round the way, and my man tried to say I was on nannies. I was like, “On what?” He was like, “You on nannies, fool!”

Words like this get entered into the DC Slang Dictionary everyday. Let’s see what other words have made it there, too.

insert soundbite

Stamp, I use *them* words. “Son”, “cuz”, “moe”, and “oh nooo” are some of my favorites, though. “Champ” was popular in like ’07, and people over use it now. Me? I prefer “bush”. Why? ‘Cause it’s short and smooth. I’ve never heard of “Zaughta” and “For my life”, though. They must be

low-key slang words, because I'm around people that always use slang, and they've NEVER been used around Les. Let's find out what they mean, because I'm real confused right now.

insert soundbite

...

The final draft continues, using the general framework of moving between standard English and slang, in order to help describe and explain the slang words “native” to youth in Washington DC. Les told me that when he gave me the first draft, he knew it didn't truly reflect how he wanted to share his story, but he needed my permission and my prodding to be able to tell it the right way—“right” being defined here not from an adult/academic perspective, but from the perspective of the storyteller himself.

The importance of using “indigenous voice” here cannot be overstated. In describing a similar incident that took place during a youth media workshop I co-facilitated in Soweto, South Africa with Steve Goodman and Christine Mendoza of the Educational Video Center, we noted, “Using those [indigenous] languages represents a shift in the power dynamic. Speaking and learning in their own languages validates the richness, knowledge and power of their own cultures, communities, and family histories.” (Mendoza, Renard, & Goodman, 2008, p 158)

This issue of language is not only about power, but it also enables understanding. Use of indigenous language provides an entry or access point into the conversation and helps ensure that all members of the community can partake, regardless of their command of standard English. It ensures that no member of the community is left out of the circle of knowledge.

Conclusion

On a very basic level, Youth202 allows the library to provide a quality service that meets a critical information need. But Youth202 is much more than that. By putting teens in the center of the process, it ensures a level of connection and relevancy to its target audience that would have been impossible if it were driven by adults.

And more than that, Youth202 is a platform that empowers a new generation of citizens:

- Youth who are self-sufficient and proactive information seekers, no longer having to solely rely on adults for information
- Youth who are self-determinate, learning about and taking advantage of opportunities that broaden their horizons and world views
- Youth who share information with their community of friends, growing the circle of knowledge
- Youth who recognize the validity of their experiences, the value of their ideas, and the power of their own voices

- Youth who understand the conventions, language, and nuances of digital media, and who use that knowledge to enter the mainstream dialogue
- Youth with the skills and confidence to step from the margins to the center, to fully participate in this 21st century global economy.

Youth202 has arrived...

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ⁱ [Jessen and Jorgensen](#) (2012) discuss the concept of “aggregated trustworthiness” in the online environment. Someone is deemed credible to the extent that she has social capital (if a lot of people follow and re-tweet her), she is connected to other people that a person knows (if a person’s friends follow her, she is more likely to be trusted), and she is connected to an institution or organization traditionally-deemed authoritative (such as a good school, a major newspaper, a library, etc.). In that sense, gaining followers is key component of the trinity of online credibility and importance, so teens want to be followed; and the idea of reciprocal following is a critical piece of that.