

This paper studies and analyzes Instant Messaging (IM) use by teenagers (high school and college). The authors conducted a study with 16 teens to analyze the role IM takes in their lives. This was done by looking at how teens used IM in daily life in terms of adoption methods, teen groups using IM, use for social congregation and interaction, and how IM is made part of a teen's domestic environment. Also analyzed were practices adopted by teens in IM communication, and issues concerning privacy of data communicated and use in domestic environments. The underlining hypothesis of this study was that the place, purpose and use of IM in a teen's life changes with age and autonomy. The impacts of both age and autonomy were studied through the differences in IM use observed between high school teens living at home and college students living away from home.

The study shows that IM in teen lives was impacted by age, autonomy, technology such as internet connectivity and computer access etc., and other non-technological issues such as peer pressures, ease for socializing, planning and collaboration of activities, privacy (especially for high school teens). The paper concludes that the major role of IM in teen lives is due to its seamless support within the constraints placed by other factors (mainly age and autonomy).