

“The App Generation deals with a crucial issue for our future... A pioneering and prophetic work.” —Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience

“Provocative ... Provides useful frameworks for future research.”—Publishers Weekly

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The App Generation

NEW RESEARCH SHOWS HOW APPS ARE SHAPING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE

For the current generation of youth, an app at the fingertips is the natural way to address almost any task. Their fluent use of mobile apps from an early age makes them different from all previous generations, even from young adults who grew up with the internet.

There is much speculation about the impact of this constant immersion in new technologies. Do apps open new horizons or limit creativity? Do today’s youth have a firmer or a more fragmented sense of identity? Are social media enriching young people’s lives or impoverishing their relationships?

In *The App Generation*, to be published October 22 by Yale University Press, renowned Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner and digital media expert Katie Davis present original research that illuminates these important questions.

Gardner and Davis focus on three vital areas of adolescent life: identity, intimacy, and imagination. Through interviews with young people, focus groups with teachers, camp counselors, psychiatrists, and religious leaders who have worked with youth over at least two decades, and comparisons of drawings and stories created by kids before and after the digital

revolution, the authors uncover both drawbacks and potential advantages of an app-suffused environment. And through comparisons of today's world with the world of a half-century ago, including conversations across four generations, the authors throw into sharp relief the magnitude of changes that have occurred in our time.

Parents and educators are right to be concerned, Gardner and Davis argue. Their research shows that dependence on apps and related new media technologies can indeed foreclose a coherent sense of identity, encourage superficial relations with others, reduce empathy, and stunt creative imagination. Yet *The App Generation* also reveals the potential for striking benefits. The interaction of young minds and apps is complicated, and, if used thoughtfully, some apps can actually encourage strong identity development, offer opportunities for deep relationships, and enhance creativity. Today's student artists, for example, enabled by digital media, are by some measures more creative and unconventional than earlier students.

How can we respond to such apparently contradictory findings? Gardner and Davis argue it's all about how we design and how we use apps in our lives. Our children can easily become *app-dependent*, increasingly relying on narrowly designed apps and employing them in prescribed ways. Or our children can be *app-enabled*, exploring the world using flexible apps as a springboard, and imagining uses not even envisioned by the app designers. As apps move into the classroom and continue to permeate daily life, we—citizens, consumers, parents, educators—must support apps that promote healthy development and reject those that facilitate narrow dependence. We must also establish and, indeed, insist on the value of exploring the nondigital world, providing time for respite and reflection as well as opportunities for face to face interaction.

Thirty years ago, Howard Gardner's groundbreaking theory of multiple intelligences transformed practices in both education and parenting. *The App Generation* promises to have a similar impact, providing valuable new evidence illuminating technology's impact on youth, as well as concrete guidance for protecting and nourishing young minds in this hitherto uncharted territory.

For more information, or to arrange an interview with the authors, please contact Liz Pelton, Senior Publicist, Yale University Press, 410-467-0989, Elizabeth.pelton@yale.edu.

Advance Praise

“The authors approach their subject in a constructive spirit, providing analytical tools to distinguish among apps, the ones that will stifle and the ones that will nurture. In the end, they see a way forward: We are responsible, individually and in our communities and families, to use technology in ways that open up the world rather than close it down. *The App Generation* is not anti-technology; it simply puts technology in its place.”

—**Sherry Turkle, author of *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other***

“[*The App Generation*] possesses an interesting insight. ‘Young people growing up in our time are not only immersed in apps, . . . they’ve come to think of the world as an ensemble of apps, to see their lives as a string of ordered apps, or perhaps, in many cases, a single, extended, cradle-to-grave app.’”

—**Dwight Garner, New York Times**

“This book is must reading for parents, teachers and policy makers. It presents a portrait of today’s young people, not in terms of the traditional historical events of their lives, but instead the digital technology that shaped this generation. It compellingly and powerfully examines the impact, consequences, and implications for their and society’s future.”

—**Arthur Levine, President of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation & Former President of Teachers College, Columbia University**

About the Authors

Howard Gardner is Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and senior director of Harvard Project Zero, an educational research group. He is renowned as father of the theory of multiple intelligences. He lives in Cambridge, MA.

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By Howard Gardner and Katie Davis

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