

Understanding the Tweens' Media World

The 8 to 12-year olds are often referred to as digital natives. They have been living in a media-saturated world their whole life, and most of them now have a smartphone, which gives them access to whatever message, whenever they want it. According to research, they spend more time immersed in media than they do sleeping. In the midst of many key issues, questions related to values, identity, and worldviews stand out as very important from a Christian perspective. Despite being digital natives, the tweens also need practical guidelines for living with the media. These challenges related to the tweens media world need to be properly addressed by the Church.

Margunn Serigstad Dahle, the co-leader of the European Media Communicators Network, is Associate Professor at Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication, NLA University College, Norway, where she has taught in the fields of communication, media and worldviews since 1991. She is Programme Director for the Communication and Worldviews Bachelor Program, which is designed to equip evangelical communicators and apologists in various fields for the contemporary Western cultural context. Especially connected to her Damaris involvement, she is a regular lecturer, speaker and writer in various contexts in Norway and beyond. She formerly served as Chairman of Lunde Publishing House.

I. Introduction

- A. Tweens – the concept / category and the cultural context.

- B. Tweens – and our need for understanding them and their media contexts in order to engage with them.

II. Tweens and personal worldview development

- A. Developing a personal worldview (1): Different circles: “Self”, “Peers”, “World” and “Beyond”

- B. Developing a personal worldview (2): Different contexts: Home, Church, School – and the Media

III. Tweens and the media

A. What sort of [media] stories?

B. What are the typical [media] messages?

IV. Tweens, media and worldviews

A. Identifying traces of worldviews in the media

1. Values
2. View of humanity
3. View of reality
4. View of faith (as anchoring search for meaning / trust)

B. Identifying points of contact and points of tension

V. Tweens and the need for media literacy / media awareness

A. Key questions

VI. Tweens and the need for biblical content and clarity

A. Key approaches

VII. Tweens and the need for integrity, flexibility and interactivity

A. Key elements of trust – and the need for common criteria of dignity and discipline.

B. Key approaches

VIII. Tweens and the need for incarnational involvement

A. Challenging questions and honest answers

B. Communicating ‘the old truths’ in new creative ways

IX. Q / A – Discussion

Suggested Readings:

- Barna, G. (2007). *Revolutionary Parenting: Raising Your Kids to Become Spiritual Champions*. Ventura, CA: Barna Group.
- Clark, C. (2001). «The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development». In K. C. Dean and C. Clark (red.) *Starting Right: Thinking theologically about youth ministry*, (p. 41-62). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House / Youth Specialties Academic.
- Global Children's Forum. (2012). *Children in Church and Mission: A Bibliography, Lausanne Global Conversation*, <http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/resources/detail/12811>, published 30.11.2012.
- Hoechsmann, M. and S. Poyntz (2012). *Media Literacies: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Holmen, M.A. (2005). *Faith begins at home*. (Ventura, CA: Regal)
- Howell, D. (2002). Religion and Youth Culture. I C. Partridge (red.) *Dictionary of Contemporary Religion in the Western World*, (s. 130-134). Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Kennedy, H. (2003). Book review. [Livingstone, S. (2002). *Young People and New Media*. London: Sage Publications.] *New media & society*. Vol. 5 (4). (p. 573-575).
- Kim, K. (2011). Mission in the Twenty-First Century. In K. Kim and A. Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow*, (p. 351-364). Oxford: Regnum Books International.
- Kinnaman, D. (2011) *You Lost Me. Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church... And Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books)
- Powell, K. E. and C. Clark. (2011). *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon*, October 2001, 9 (5). Lincoln: NCB University Press.