

## Part 5

You are going to read a newspaper article about young people and technology. For questions 31–36, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text. Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

## Young People and Technology

*Danah Boyd is a specialist researcher looking at how young people use technology*

line 5 If there's one cliché that really grates with Danah Boyd, who has made a career from studying the way younger people use the web, it's that of the digital native. 'There's nothing native about young people's engagement with technology,' she says, adamantly. She has little time for the widely held assumption that kids are innately more adept at coping with the web or negotiating the hurdles of digital life. 'Young people are learning about the social world around them,' she says. 'Today that world has computer-mediated communications. Thus, in order to learn about their social world, they're learning about those things too. And they're leveraging that to work out the stuff that kids have always worked out: peer sociality, status, etc.'

It's no surprise she takes exception, really: as one of the first digital anthropologists to dig into the way people use social networking sites, Boyd has a track record of exposing the truths that underpin many of our assumptions about the online world. Along the way, she's gained insights into the social web – not just by conducting studies of how many kids were using social-networking sites, but by taking a closer look at what was going on.

Lately, her work has been about explaining new ways of interpreting the behaviour we see online, and understanding that the context of online activity is often more subtle than we first imagine. She outlined some examples at a recent conference in San Francisco, including the case of a young man from one of the poorest districts of Los Angeles who was applying to a prestigious American college. The applicant said he wanted to escape the influence of gangs and violence, but the admissions officer was appalled when he discovered that the boy's MySpace page was plastered with precisely the violent language and gang imagery he claimed to abhor. Why was he lying about his motivations, asked the university? 'He wasn't,' says Boyd: in his world, showing the right images online was a key part of surviving daily life.

Understanding what's happening online is especially pertinent while discussions rage about how perceptions of privacy are shifting – particularly the idea that today's teenagers have a vastly different approach to privacy from their predecessors. Instead, Boyd says, activities that strike adults as radically new are often more easily understood from the perspective of teenagers. 'Kids have always cared about privacy, it's just that their notions of privacy look very different from adult notions,' she says. 'Kids often don't have the kind of privacy adults assume they do. Adults, by and large, think of the home as a very private space. The thing is, for young people that's often not the case because they have little or no control over who has access to it, or under what conditions. As a result, the online world can feel more private because it feels like there's more control.'

line 32 This concept of control is central to Boyd's work, and it applies not only to debunking myths about teenage behaviour, but also to similar ideas that have emerged about the rest of the web. Unlike some prognosticators who preach unstoppable revolution, Boyd suggests that control remains, line 34 by and large, in the same places it always did. 'Technologists all go for the notion of "techno-utopia", the web as great democratiser,' she says. 'Sure, we've made creation and distribution more available to anyone, but at the same time we've made those things irrelevant. Now the commodity isn't distribution, it's attention – and guess what? We're not actually democratising the whole system – we're just shifting the way in which we discriminate.'

It's a call to arms that most academic researchers would tend to sidestep, but then Boyd admits to treading a fine line between academic and activist. After all, she adds, part of her purpose is to look at the very questions that make us feel uncomfortable. 'Part of it is that as a researcher, everybody's obsessed with Twitter and Facebook, and we've got amateur research all over the place,' she says. 'Plenty of scholars are jumping in and looking at very specific things. The questions I continue to want to ask are the things that are challenging to me: having to sit down and be forced to think about uncomfortable social stuff, and it's really hard to get my head around it, which means it's exactly what I should dive in and deal with.'

- 31 What point does Danah Boyd make about 'computer-mediated communications' (line 5)?
- A They set out to teach the young about social interaction.
  - B They are an integral part of a young person's social interaction.
  - C They act as a barrier to wider social interaction amongst young people.
  - D They take the place of other sorts of social interaction for young people.
- 32 In the second paragraph, what do we learn about Danah's research into social networking sites?
- A It has largely sought to account for their rapid growth.
  - B It has tended to question people's attitudes towards them.
  - C It has taken the form of in-depth studies into how they are designed.
  - D It has begun to investigate whether they are as influential as people think.
- 33 What point does Danah's example of the Los Angeles college applicant illustrate?
- A how easy it is to misinterpret an individual's online activity
  - B how readily somebody's online activity can be investigated
  - C what their online activity can tell us about a person's sincerity
  - D how important it is to check the content of someone's online activity
- 34 The phrase 'debunking myths' (line 32) refers to Danah's view that
- A today's teenagers are less concerned about privacy than previous generations.
  - B teenagers value the idea of privacy more in a domestic environment.
  - C teenagers' attitudes to privacy are changing less than people think.
  - D parents tend not to respect teenagers' need for online privacy.
- 35 Danah uses the term 'techno-utopia' (line 34) to underline her view that
- A her research has resonance for a community of web users of all ages.
  - B people have unrealistic expectations about the influence of the web.
  - C control of the web remains in much the same hands as before.
  - D the web has a largely positive effect on many people's lives.
- 36 In the last paragraph, we are given the impression that Danah
- A feels that a lot of research about the web is lacking in sufficient detail.
  - B is aware that some issues in her field cannot yet be researched fully.
  - C regards herself as being more of a philosopher than a researcher.
  - D is willing to take on research challenges others would avoid.