Michel Walrave · Koen Ponnet
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Barbara Segaert *Editors*

Youth 2.0: Social Media and Adolescence

Connecting, Sharing and Empowering

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ISBN 978-3-319-27891-9 ISBN 978-3-319-27893-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-27893-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016936661

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG Switzerland

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Michel Walrave is a professor at the Department of Communication Studies of the University of Antwerp. He is responsible for the research group MIOS which conducts research on, amongst others, young people's uses of digital technologies. His research is centered around online self-disclosure and privacy. He investigates adolescents' and adults' online disclosure of personal information to companies and in interpersonal communication.

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Ellen Vanderhoven obtained a PhD in Educational Sciences at Ghent University and currently works as a senior researcher at iMinds-MICT, a research group at the Department of Communication Studies at Ghent University. She specialises in research concerning both education about technology (media literacy) and technology for education (educational technology). In both domains, her expertise lies in the design of educational materials, including evaluation studies in authentic classroom settings.

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Introduction

The social web has become an integral part of young people's lives. Adolescents have embraced these online and mobile applications, which offer them opportunities not only to consume but also to create and share content. Next to blogs, video- and other content-sharing platforms, social network sites (SNSs) have rapidly evolved as young people's preferred avenue for online communication. How the characteristics of SNSs accommodate needs inherent to adolescent development may explain why adolescents have rapidly and enthusiastically integrated SNSs into their daily lives.

During adolescence, young people develop a unified sense of self and belonging (Steinberg 2011). They gain awareness of who they are and where they belong. While striving for more autonomy from their parents, feedback from peers grows in importance (Buhrmester and Prager 1995). Moreover, young people engage in a broader spectrum of relationships, from casual and close friendships to first romantic encounters (Côté 2009). Throughout these developments, SNSs may play an important role. As most online platforms revolve around one's personal profile, they offer young people a platform to present themselves (Peter and Valkenburg 2011). A profile page thus offers an online stage where a user can, besides communicating with others, also divulge personal data in written and visual form (Siibak 2009). Especially during major life events, users may share experiences and receive support from their (online) contacts. In sharing and responding, young people can further refine their social skills (Boyd 2014). Moreover, SNSs do not only consolidate existing (offline) relationships but also offer opportunities to expand one's social circle. Adolescents can broaden their social network to other people with whom they may share similar interests, concerns or problems.

However, young people's disclosure of personal information when constructing an online profile and sharing significant life experiences has raised concern as to the possible consequences of these disclosures. Indeed, personal information may be misused (Taddicken and Jers 2011). These concerns are related to the characteristics of digital content in general and, particularly, of the personal data disclosed on

SNSs. Digital content is characterised by persistence, scalability, replicability, searchability and shareability (Boyd 2008; Papacharissi and Gibson 2011). *Persistence* refers to the facility of storing digital content that may resurface at inconvenient moments or reach unintended audiences. Conversely, persistence offers users the possibility to keep track of their life course and retain important life events. Moreover, digital content is easy to diffuse. A picture or comment may instantly go viral. Put otherwise, digital data are *shareable* and *scalable*, they can reach a single recipient or be forwarded to a large audience. This is possible through digital data's *replicability*. For instance, holiday snaps, but also intimate conversations, can easily, but sometimes also unintentionally, be shared. Once online, personal information becomes *searchable*. Its diffusion and consultation are difficult to control. In sum, while social media offer important opportunities for young people's identity and relational development through sharing life events, personal information may rapidly spread and reach unintended audiences (Boyd 2008; Papacharissi and Gibson 2011; Peter and Valkenburg 2011).

This raises issues about the implications of digital communication in general, and social media in particular, for young people's development and well-being. As a result, researchers are increasingly turning their attention to the reasons behind the attraction social media have for youth as well as to the benefits and risks they entail. Academic interest is growing in tandem with the policy and media attention regarding the risks young people may encounter, such as threats to privacy due to the diffusion and misuse of personal information.

This tension between opportunities for adolescents' identity and relational development and possible drawbacks for young people's privacy and security was the focal point of a 2-day international conference *Youth 2.0*, organised by the University Centre Saint-Ignatius Antwerp (UCSIA) at the University of Antwerp in March 2013.

The three main themes that constituted the central threads of the conference are developed in the respective parts of this publication.

In the first part of the book, the significance of social media for adolescent identity exploration and development is investigated. Janette Hughes and her colleagues explore adolescent identity construction through online practices in the SNS Ning. They further investigate how online and offline identities are consistent or differ. Malene Charlotte Larsen then explores young people's online identities. She focuses on emotional statements that young people publicly share online and how these disclosures help co-construct their identities. Central to an online profile is its owner's picture. Rocío Rueda and Diana Giraldo analyse profile pictures from Facebook users in more than 20 cities around the globe. How users sometimes stage their image and what meanings they want to express in this way form the subject of a content analysis and in-depth interviews.

In the next chapter, Koen Leurs applies a multi-method approach to investigate the social media use of Moroccan-Dutch youth. He unravels how factual power relations of race, gender and religion are sustained online.

In the chapter concluding this first part, Ola Erstad explores the potential contribution of social media in education. He illustrates this through the case of an online environment created to engage youth at risk in communicative and collaborative activities.

The second part of this book is dedicated to the tension between online self-disclosure and privacy. Why do privacy attitudes sometimes fail to match our online behaviour? This is the central question addressed by Sabine Trepte. In her chapter, the author focuses on three intertwined aspects, namely privacy attitudes, knowledge of privacy mechanisms and behaviour that protects privacy, in order to shed light on the "privacy paradoxes".

It is not just personal attitudes that are important in relation to privacy protection, social norms also play a role in how SNS users regulate their privacy, states Wouter Martinus Petrus Steijn. In this chapter, dedicated to the interplay between norms and users' online behaviour, differences between age groups are elucidated. In the next chapter, Stephen Cory Robinson further investigates how children, adolescents and emerging adults manage their online disclosure. Based on Communication Privacy Management Theory, the author examines privacy protection mechanisms and their implications for media literacy education.

The third and final part of the book is devoted to specific online risks young people are confronted with and how they can be empowered to cope with them. First, social media may be used to emit signs of distress. Jennifer Laffier presents her qualitative analysis on suicide cases reported in the media and to identify these signs with a view to designing a screening tool. In a second chapter, Jolien Vangeel and her co-authors focus on another issue of concern: the compulsive use of SNSs. Their survey among adolescents goes beyond prevalence rates and focuses on significant psychological predictors. Another risk young people may be confronted with is cyberbullying. Sara Pabian and Heidi Vandebosch provide insight into the relationship between prior victimisation that can lead to subsequent perpetration, based on longitudinal data. They found that this link is stronger for former victims who were more angry and impulsive.

The two final chapters highlight possible interventions for empowering young people. Ellen Vanderhoven and her colleagues investigate the effectiveness of online safety interventions. Using a quasi-experimental design, the study proves that an approach encouraging individual reflection has an influence on both young people's attitudes and behaviours, whereas an approach focusing on collaborative learning only raises young people's awareness of online risks. In the final chapter, Ellen Wauters and co-authors assess pertinent issues related to content classification labeling systems, focusing on online content and SNSs. Based on their analysis of these systems and policy documents, they highlight good practices that could further inspire international standards.

The research described throughout the chapters of this book offers an international perspective on its three main themes: the importance of social media for adolescent identity exploration and development, the tension between online

self-disclosure and privacy and the empowerment of young people to cope with specific online risks. Concerning the last theme, we witness an increasing number of national and international organisations and events promoting online safety. For example, each year, during the Safer Internet Day, more than 100 countries worldwide promote safer and more responsible use of online technology, especially amongst children and young people (Insafe 2015).

It needs to be acknowledged from the outset that the third part of this book mostly reports research conducted in Belgium. Although it has been found that Belgian children comply with the general standard as regards their use of SNSs, the risks they face and the coping strategies they use (d'Haenens and Vandoninck 2012), we should resist the temptation to generalise. Overall, research on children's online safety is conducted in the global North while insight into children's behaviour in the global South is lacking (Livingstone and Bulger 2013). Researchers reviewing the existing literature indicate a growing need for cross-national comparative studies for a better understanding of children's experiences. Moreover, comparative studies can lead to the international dissemination of good practices (Livingstone and Bulger 2013). Together, the studies in this third part of the book demonstrate emerging research topics and research methodologies with regard to the empowerment and support of youth concerning their online safety. We hope they may inspire other researchers to conduct similar research worldwide.

In sum, this book emphasises three intertwined themes, namely identity, privacy and support or empowerment of youth, and offers a multidisciplinary overview of topical research. The contributing researchers explain relevant theories, answer a variety of pertinent questions, discuss practical solutions and reveal emerging issues that should lead future research and policy agendas.

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Part I
Identity: Online Identity Construction and Expression

Who Do You Think You Are? Examining the Off/Online Identities of Adolescents Using a Social Networking Site

Janette Hughes, Laura Morrison, and Stephanie Thompson

Abstract The aim of this qualitative research study was to examine the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of adolescent identities by exploring social practices within the digital landscape of a social networking site called Ning. More specifically, we ask: (a) how are adolescents' identities shaped and performed, as they use a social networking platform to present themselves to the world, and (b) how do offline and online identities correspond and differ in the context of their out-of-school and schooled lives? We share the findings of this study that examines how twenty-three 12 and 13 year old students constructed and presented their identities to their classmates and teacher and how these identities compared to and contrasted with their offline classroom identities, focusing on an in-depth analysis of two students who participated in social practices in ways that both reflect and challenge their online and offline identities.

The out-of-school reality of digital age students now heavily relies on the use of personal mobile devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones. Through these mobile devices, adolescents interact with a variety of multimodal digital texts and robust communication and social networking tools. Undoubtedly, this influences students' digital literacy and identity development; however, without education, students may only be partially cognisant of this. Remarkably, many education settings have not kept pace with students' out-of-school practices. Schools are hesitant to incorporate these technologies and social networking platforms, ignoring their educational potential. In actively banning students' mobile devices and social networking sites, a marked divide has been created between students' in-school practices and their out-of-school digital realities. As a result, the development of adolescents' digital literacies and their identities are not typically fostered within an education setting where students would benefit most.

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M. Walrave et al. (eds.), *Youth 2.0: Social Media and Adolescence*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-27893-3_1

Incorporating mobile devices and social networking platforms into a multi-literacies pedagogy encourages students to be active in their learning communities. In this way, students learn not only course content, but also about themselves and their place in their community. Using qualitative case study analysis, this research explores the relationship between a multi-literacies pedagogy and the development of adolescent digital literacies and identities. More specifically we ask, (a) how are adolescents' identities shaped and performed when using a social networking platform to present themselves to the world, and (b) how do offline and online identities correspond and differ in the context of their out-of-school lives and their schooled lives?

As Subrahmanyam and Smahel (2011) point out, "constructing a stable and coherent identity is a key developmental task during adolescence". In this period of their lives, adolescents begin to define and redefine themselves in relation to people around them (Erikson 1968); therefore, understanding developmental change requires us to examine the individual, the social context in which s/he is engaged, and the interaction between the two over a period of time. Kroger (2004) notes that a number of studies have explored identity issues in the context of the diversity of cultural, ethnic and social classes; however, there is now a pressing need to investigate how adolescents make sense of their own identities in the context of their relationships and their surrounding environments. In their study on homepage construction as a way to express social development, Schmitt et al. (2008) found that the online creation of homepages and blogs was related to feelings of mastery, expressions of identity and represented a means to socialise. Subrahmanyam et al. (2006) found that adolescents frequently used online spaces to communicate identity information to others. Given that adolescents are immersed in digital media, there is a growing need for educators to recognise and respond to the needs of adolescents in a digital age.

Adolescents constantly seek ways to express themselves in the process of performing their identities. Therefore, in our digitally connected world, the rapid adoption of mobile technologies has implications for the adolescents who use them. In their work on multi-literacies, Cope and Kalantzis (2000) identify the different domains in students' lives (i.e. Lifeworlds and School-Based Worlds) as discourse worlds and they draw on these various domains to make meaning and create identities. Anstey and Bull (2006) suggest that "these domains or discourse worlds also help form a person's literacy identity, providing a repertoire of resources that a person can draw on when engaging in literate practices". They go on to explain that a student's literacy identity "includes social and cultural resources, technological experience, and all previous life experiences, as well as specific literacy knowledge and experience" (Anstey and Bull 2006). Weber and Mitchell's (2008) notion of identity as "personal and social bricolage" views identity construction as "an evolving active construction that constantly sheds bits and adds bits, changing through dialectical interactions with the digital and non-digital world, involving physical, psychological, social, and cultural agents". The use of an SNS, Ning in

this case, allows adolescents to "try on" or play with alternate identities as they continue to develop a sense of self-identity.

Our aim in this research study was to examine the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of adolescent identities through an exploration of their social practices within the digital landscape of a social networking site similar to Facebook called Ning. We were particularly interested in how students would present themselves on Ning and how the social networking community might bolster the students' "social presence" as defined by Swan and Shih (2005). In this chapter, we share the findings of this research study that examines how twenty-three 12 and 13 year old students constructed and presented their identities to their classmates and teacher and how these identities compared to and contrasted with their offline classroom identities. For the purposes of this chapter, we share an in-depth analysis of two case studies, which explore how two of the students participated in social practices in ways that both reflect and challenge their online and offline identities.

1 Social Presence on Ning

Brady et al. (2010) argue that social networking sites offer great educational potential to enhance the participants' "social presence", defined by Swan and Shih (2005) as the "degree to which participants in computer-mediated communication feel affectively connected one to another", by Picciano (2002) as a "student's sense of being and belonging in a course", and by Rourke et al. (2001) as "the ability of learners to project themselves socially and affectively into a community of inquiry". Our decision to use a social networking site, reaffirms our belief that it is critical for students to articulate who they are and what values, backgrounds, beliefs and experiences they bring to the learning environment. In this context, learning is viewed as a social practice that is culturally, historically and geographically situated, despite the fact that Ning allows us to break down spatial barriers.

In their work exploring how individuals' identities affect discussions, Ke et al. (2011) conclude that identities are critical for extracting meaning from discussions and Kear (2011) points to the importance of beginning from "an inviting place" where "contributions should be friendly, supportive and informal". The students seem to have an intuitive understanding of the social nature of learning, which is evident as they ease into their relationships through casual talk. In their study examining the use of Moodle vs. Facebook, DeSchryver et al. (2009) concluded that there was a positive correlation between social presence and active participation in online discussions, while other scholars (Cobb 2009; Swan and Shih 2005; Brady et al. 2010) confirm that students with a higher social presence online are often more likely to be more engaged in these conversations. Cobb (2009) argues that, "when information is presented in a way that increases social presence, it is better remembered by learners and the learning process is considered more engaging". In a review

of the literature surrounding relationships between social presence, motivation and online learning, Bai (2003) states that social presence "can enhance closeness in online learning communities, reduce feelings of isolation and detachment, encourage interactions and facilitate participation in online learning".

There is no denying the popularity of social networking sites like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Given the age of the students we could not have used Facebook and opted instead for Ning, which would be deemed more acceptable to parents who are naturally concerned about their children's privacy and safety. Ning was one of a variety of digital tools we used within the larger context of a year-long research project that had students engaging with new media and many online resources. The students had ubiquitous access to wireless Internet and tablets for their learning and they used Ning to respond to media articles, YouTube clips and to extend their literature circle discussions. The research team felt that providing a social networking tool for these purposes would break down the temporal and spatial barriers of the classroom and reach more learning styles. Some students are quieter than others yet still participate fully in their learning. Likewise, some students need more reflection time before they contribute and an asynchronous communication tool allows this.

As boyd (2007) points out, social networking sites enable participants to: (1) create uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users and/or system-provided data; (2) publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and (3) consume, produce and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site. When we set up the Ning, we asked students to identify by first name and location only and to post a profile picture that did not have to be a personal photo. The discussion forum on Ning is multi-threaded and includes categories, photos and attachments. We enabled the discussion forum feature to allow students to create forum topics, as we wanted to encourage them to take ownership of their learning. Like Facebook, Ning members are able to "friend" other members, send virtual gifts to friends and use the "like" button for photos or comments posted by others. Unlike Facebook, Ning networks are ad free.

While Ning afforded the students a safe online social environment, it also limited the potential to share their work with a wider network of people – something public platforms permit with their webbed connections. Another disadvantage included the limited functions of Ning. Students are used to the integrated games and apps on Facebook, the ability to create "events" and to "like" websites, videos and articles and have this appear on their walls. These additional features keep adolescents returning to check for updates, play games and interact. Furthermore, the limited number of people on Ning makes it less appealing than Facebook. While students may initially exhibit enthusiasm and invest time setting up their profile pages, interest groups and chatting with peers, the lack of additional features or higher volume of people seemingly impacts their long-term interest levels.