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Young people's creative online practices in the context of school community

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Abstract

This article concentrates on young people's creative online practices, such as making videos, writing lifestyle blogs, and engaging in online role-playing games. It also looks at their relations to different audiences, privacy, and the school community as a central social environment in young people's everyday life.

The research was conducted as an ethnographic study in one public secondary school in Finland during the academic year 2009–2010. The ethnography is preceded by a quantitative survey on media use among school students (N = 305). EU Kids Online research data (N = 1012) regarding Finland was used in the analysis of young people's internet use as well.

The internet offers different possibilities for young people to publish, share, and participate online. Although the study shows that the majority of young people are not especially eager to share their creative productions on the internet, some of the teens studied had a strong interest in creative media production and online activities. The case study shows that young people's creative online activities vary from individual activities, such as school-community–based communal activities, to collaborative activities with peers.

In order to control their privacy online, young people try to manage their self-presentations, their audiences, and their spaces where they share their productions. It also seems that active and creative internet users get more support for internet safety from their peers and teachers.

Keywords: youth; creative online practices; school, publicity; privacy

Introduction

A variety of issues arise regarding the internet when we try to understand the consequences of online life for ourselves and our relationships with others in the public spheres of online communities and social networking sites (SNSs). Young people, especially, have adopted the internet as part of their everyday life and, at the same time, have challenged the way we understand the privacy, intimacy, and publicity of everyday practices. Norbert Bobbio (1989) has labelled the dichotomy of private/public as one of the "grand dichotomies" in our social world. Nowadays, this dichotomy is challenged via online practices, especially on SNSs (Fahey, 1995; Livingstone, 2008).

Numerous studies have been conducted with young people regarding questions of privacy and publicity in social networking. Some of these studies indicate that young people are unaware of the lack of privacy on the online platforms they use and that they give out personal information that exposes them to various risks (Acquisti & Gross, 2006; Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Siibak & Murumaa, 2011). *EU Kids Online* research found that one quarter of 9- to 16-year-old SNS users across Europe have set their SNS profile as public (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011a; Livingstone, Ólafsson, & Staksrud, 2011; Kupiainen, Suoninen, & Nikunen 2012), which may indicate a risk for possible misuse of personal data and stalking by strangers. However, many scholars argue that young people do

care about their privacy in the same way that adults do (Livingstone, 2008; boyd & Marvick, 2011; Janisch, 2011) and that there is no clear connection between privacy settings and data misuse (Kupiainen, Suoninen, & Nikunen, 2012).

At the same time, the whole structure of the private/public dichotomy has changed, and the boundaries between public and private have blurred (Meyrowitz, 1985; Morley, 2000; Nikunen, 2010; de Souza e Silva & Frith, 2012). Adriana de Souza e Silva and Jordan Frith (2012) go so far as to argue that private and public are often a "subjective state of mind rather than any actually demarcated spaces" (p. 55). This perspective helps explain why SNS users may feel safe in public spaces when they communicate with imagined audiences. Different online practices also call for different audiences, some wider, some more intimate. Young people who are engaged in creative media production, in particular, use the internet for different purposes. In a sense, their internet use is individualised. Manuel Castells (1996) has written that in the digital world of networks, individuals constantly redefine their lifestyles and consumption patterns. Media experiences and the subjects of interest are diverse.

People who create online content have different motivations, goals, and social networks for their activities. Therefore, they also understand publicity and privacy differently. In this article, I will focus on these differences and their relations to various social communities, especially school.

Theoretical Framework

I interpret creative online practices in the framework of *networked publics.* Networked publics are spaces that are constructed through networked technologies and collective spaces that emerge from the intersection of people, technology, and practice (boyd, 2011, p. 39). As public spaces, they allow people to gather, share, participate, collaborate, and simply have fun together with friends, family, and others. The word *public* refers to spaces that are highly accessible by a wide audience—by friends as well as strangers.

These are open spaces for all internet audiences but, at the same time, intimate spaces for personal identity performances. Networked publics—for example, SNSs—also allow private and intimate communication, such as chatting. The private area is demarcated with logins and passwords (Livingstone, 2009).

Traditionally, the development of identity and especially intimacy requires privacy, a place where teens are able to share their thoughts without anybody stalking their social life. In offline life, for example, teens shut the door of their bedroom if they do not want adults or other family members to disturb their practices (Livingstone, 2009). In this way, face-to-face communication is inherently limited to those who share the same space, and people can usually control that space. Online life is more complex. Even the most intimate messages can spread digitally without any possibility of managing who receives them. From the perspective of privacy, the problem usually is that the audience is partly invisible. In networked publics, people may think that only a small part of the actual audience is receiving their message— they address their message to an imagined audience, that is, "part of the audience that the sender thinks about exactly at the moment of sending the message" (Siibak & Murumaa, 2011, p. 13; see also Papacharissi, 2011). However, in spite of the public nature of networked publics, the main logic of online communities is not necessary to open a door for strange individuals but to articulate and make visible people's existing networks (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Young people use networked publics mainly for contacting friends they already know

offline (boyd, 2008; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Peter, Valkenburg, & Fluckiger, 2009; Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter, 2005). Thus, the offline and online worlds of young people are intertwined (boyd, 2008; Liu, 2011; Livingstone, 2009; Notley, 2009). In this article, I use a school community as an example of an existing network: teens use networked publics in order to communicate with their school community. Traditionally, schools have been a private or at least semi-private sphere, but in the age of the internet, they have also shifted to a more public sphere in which students share their school-made photos, video clips, and other school-related comments and media content.

In this way, networked publics are rather complicated, having different visible and invisible audiences in blurry social contexts. As Zizi A. Papacharissi (2011) argues, "networked publics force everyday people to contend with environments in which contexts are regularly colliding" (p. 50). Thus, a sender may not know in which context a message will be received, who will get some of her/his messages, or how and in which context that recipient will use it. This, of course, is a risk of networked sociability.

If networked publics are complicated, the concepts of private and public do not have any clear agreed-upon definition. On the simplest level, they may be defined based on mutual exclusivity: public is what does not remain private and vice versa (Papacharissi, 2010, p. 26). Jeff Weintraub (1997) has characterised four different models of the public/private dichotomy: the citizenship model, the feminist model, the economic model, and the sociability model. For example, from the point of view of the economic model, the discourse about public and private sectors is entirely different from discourses of social intimacy or public spheres of citizenship. Helen Nissenbaum (2010) distinguishes normative definitions of privacy from descriptive definitions and those that emphasise access versus those that emphasise control. For de Souza e Silva and Frith (2012), public spaces are social spaces that are shared amongst strangers and near-strangers; these, as well as private spaces, are negotiated and processed as much as social norms (see also boyd & Marwick, 2011). I agree with these scholars that private and public are not fixed spaces or are merely a matter of technological settings. Privacy can be achieved in the middle of a crowd. For example, the use of mobile technologies can bring private activities into public spaces, as can reading a book in a subway (de Souza e Silva & Frith, 2012). In the same way, internet users may use different strategies in order to achieve privacy in networked publics (see e.g. boyd & Marwick, 2011).

The purpose of this article is to discuss how certain online practices from my data are related to audiences and privacy online when the boundaries between private and public are blurred in networked publics.

Method

The study was conducted using ethnographical fieldwork during the 2009–2010 school year and was preceded by a quantitative survey, conducted in August 2009, regarding media use among the participants. In this article, I refer to my observations from that period, interviews with students and teachers, and my survey ($N = 305$) at a secondary school in Finland. In my survey, 68% of the respondents were female, and the age of the students was from 13 to 16. The school put special emphasis on art teaching, which was a possible reason for having a majority of girls in the school.

During my ethnographic fieldwork, I conducted 34 formal, semi-structured interviews, 26 with students and eight with teachers. All interviews and some of the school lessons were recorded with a digital video recorder. All interviews have been transcribed.

My ethnographical fieldwork was not limited to the school. I observed some students in their homes when they played video games or tried to create a new Facebook profile, but their families were not involved in the research. An important part of my ethnography was so-called "virtual ethnography" (Hine, 2000), a form of ethnographic research using the internet and social networking sites. I followed some students' weblogs, YouTube channels, and social-networking profiles on IRC-gallery[1] and on DeviantArt.

In this article, I use also *EU Kids Online* research data for analysis, especially regarding the internet use of 13- to 16-year-old Finnish children. The data was collected at the same time as my own survey in Finland.

Individual Identity Performance on Weblogs

I will first focus on blogging as a creative online practice because it seems to be quite a popular activity, especially among teenage girls. The Pew Internet and American Life Project reported in 2007 that in the United States, 28% of teenagers were blogging, most of whom were girls (Lenhart, Madden, & Smith, 2007). The *EU Kids Online* study (Livingstone et al., 2011a, p. 34) shows that in 2010, 15% of 13- to 16-year-old boys and 18% of 13- to 16-year-old girls across Europe had a blog or online diary. In Finland, the numbers are 8% of 13- to 16-year-old boys and 27% of girls in that age group. Interestingly, girls seem to practice online writing in Finland more than European girls on average.

According to my research, 16% of students aged 13 to 16 blogged once a month or more (3% of boys and 20% of girls). The most common activity among the students were publishing and sharing photos: 52% published photos once a month or more, while 8% of all students wrote fan fiction and 11% uploaded video content (see Figure 1).
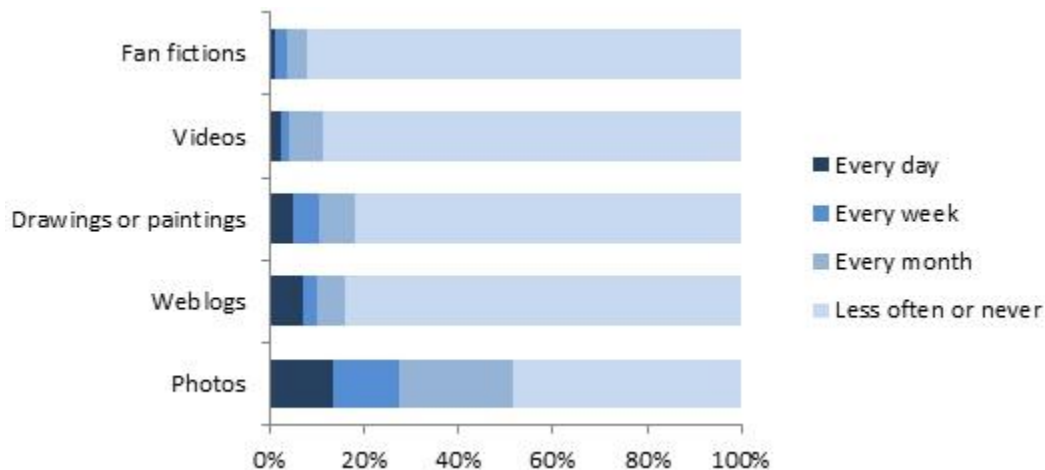

Figure 1. Media Production and Publishing One's Own Material (N = 305)

The most popular web blogs among girls are so-called "fashion blogs" or "lifestyle blogs". These blogs are part of one's online identity performance, or impression management, using the term given by Ervin Goffman (1959). Impression management is a social process whereby people give an image of themselves via their clothes, speech, facial expressions, and

other bodily impressions. Impression management requires social skills that we learn in everyday social situations. These skills are necessary when individuals are being sociable and have so-called "street credibility" in particular contexts. Impression management is also important on the internet that allows for more possibilities to construct an impression of the self and make identity performances.

In fashion and lifestyle weblogs, sharing photos of the self and so-called "photo publicity" in order to get attention from the audience are examples of identity performances. For instance, one of the girls at the school, Susanna[2] (14-years-old), commented that images on her blog are a guarantee that she will get some comments from her audience. Another girl, Kaisa (14-years-old) told me that she hoped other people would be interested in things she was doing and that the blog would serve as a virtual business card to possible employers:

When we were in the flea market selling bags I had made, I wrote my blog address on the bags. There was somebody who bought my bag, and she has a company that renovates old clothes. My parents advertised my blog address and that woman promised to go and have a look at my blog. (Interview with Kaisa, 14, female)

For both girls, publicity and the audience were important. Their audience partly consists of strangers who can comment on their photos and have contact with them. Jodi Dean (2010) suggests that a blog is a medium that enables content production to be potentially accessible to anyone who happens to find it: "Blogging opens possible encounters with the different and unexpected, whether in the form of the blogger's own reflection on what she posts or in the reflection of others" (p. 46). Perhaps that helps explain the popularity of blogging among girls: blogging opens a new and exciting world where one can create unexpected connections to other people, such as potential employers. Susanna mentioned that she has not shared her blog address much with friends and classmates: "It is much more fun to write to totally unknown people than to know that some friends read them".

Identity-performance blogs present photos of the bloggers themselves. Kaisa uses her blog to share photos of herself and her clothes, journeys, parties, and everyday life in school and during free time. She writes short posts in Finnish and in English about her life. She describes her blog as her "very own corner" where she shares elements of her life. She is an active blogger—in 2010 she created 92 blog entries.

Kaisa's description of a blog as her "very own corner" indicates that a blog is individual, partly intimate, and made by one person. I call these kinds of media production *individual activities*. The focus is a person, a self, and her/his feelings and life. Papacharissi (2010) characterises blogging as new narcissism but not with any pejorative connotations or in its pathological sense. Rather, *narcissism* here refers to the "introspection and self-absorption that takes place in blogs and similar spaces" (p. 145).

However, blogs are not necessarily simply "networked individualism," using the term offered by Gustavo S. Mesch and Ilan Talmud (2010). This term is adapted from the theories of sociologist Barry Wellman, who thinks that society has changed in modernity from having the form of rather small, homogeneous social groups to the form of individual-basis groups, regardless of membership in social groups. However, the unique aspect of blogging is that a life is shared in the public sphere; it is an expression of networked publics. It can be empowering when a person is reflexive and makes blog posts and representations of his or her own life. Papacharissi (2010) argues that the "subjective focus of blogs and similar

forums encourages plurality of voices and expands the public agenda. While narcissistically motivated, blogs are democratizing in a unique manner" (p. 148).

Blogs and bloggers have an extremely interesting relationship with the audience. Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown (2011) write that blogs generate the space for a collective to emerge. In fact, the blog's audience is not just an audience, but they are called *followers*. The term *follower* suggests a hierarchy, "almost a religiosity" (Chittenden, 2010, p. 514), in the relationship between the blogger and the follower. Followers are people who wait, read, and comment on blog entries, and in this way, a blogger is an author with an explicit audience.

According to these theoretical perspectives, weblogs are intended to expand the number of followers and also hook the followers so that they follow subsequent entries. By blogging, Kaisa, Susanna, and other bloggers express themselves by sharing text and photos with their followers. One's body, of course, is an important part of identity performance in everyday interactions (boyd, 2008). Interestingly, although the body traditionally has been a private domain, it has been moving more and more into the public realm (Koskela, 2004). Hille Koskela pointed out that identity performance may, in this way, take on even political and empowering dimensions when people play an active role in the array of visual representations. This is one example of how private and intimate elements have turned public.

Communal Video Blogging

Kaisa's and Susanna's blogging can be seen as making a private agenda public. As an individual activity and a part of networked publics, their blogging is also actually connected to existing networks, though not in the same manner as *communal activities*.

Communal activities on the internet focus creative production on local communities, such as schools. An example of a school-community–based practice in my case study is a video blog (vlog) that was produced and published by 14-year-old Gomi. She was interested in movies and filmmaking and had plans to enter into the movie business. In spring 2010, she launched a vlog about her everyday life in which school and school friends played a large role. In her video clips, she spent time with her friends at home, in the city, and at school. Gomi and her friends had fun in the video clips: they played guitar, sang, danced, made food, watched movies, ate snacks, had birthdays, and went shopping. The shots from school showed students making art works in art class, drawing on the blackboard, eating in the school's canteen, socialising, and running in the corridors.

An important aspect of Gomi's video production is that it was made with school friends and then shared with other school friends on the internet. Thus, the target audience for her vlog is not unlimited, and she does not present herself on her videos. The vlog is for a special group—her friends and schoolmates. Her friends comment on her "silly" videos and encourage her to continue. They have made comments such as "You have to continue. Upload fun and different videos so that we can enjoy watching them". Thus, the school community is extremely important to Gomi and her online practices.

Sometimes, SNSs such as Facebook or IRC-gallery are a part of communal activities. This is the case when students share photos taken at school, start a chat about school issues, or gather in school-related groups. For example, on IRC-gallery I observed a group of students who used the name of their Swedish-language textbook as a group name. Although the group was

very small and not very active, it showed that the school community is important to students and that they have some common interest with people outside the school community as well.

On SNSs, local and global boundaries are permeable. Young people interact with their closest friends, local communities, and a global audience at the same time. As Sonia Livingstone (2009) writes, however, "distinct aspects of identity are variously performed for particular rather than indiscriminate anticipated audiences" (p. 108). In communal activities on the internet, the audience is not intended to be global. Rather, communal activities are a continuum of existing networks in school and everyday life. Like social networking, communal activities articulate, strengthen, and make visible these networks (cf. boyd & Ellison, 2007). Thus, the purpose of Gomi's vlog is different from Kaisa's and Susanna's blog. Kaisa was proud that she had 400 visitors after two weeks on her blog. Gomi, on the other hand, is communicating directly with her existing friends. She asks them specifically what kind of videos they want her to make. Though only a few friends make any comments online, that does not mean that they have not had any conversation "in real life" in the school community.

Collaborative Forum Playing

Some students tried to find "affinity spaces" (Gee, 2007), where they are able to share practices with people with the same affinity, interest, and endeavours. Affinity spaces are participants' own online spaces involving special peer-to-peer relationships and learning settings without previously established social bonds. Members of an affinity space, such as video-game or fan-fiction communities, relate to each other through a common interest. I call activities in these kinds of spaces *collaborative activities*.

In many cases, affinity space participants know each other only through virtual spaces and do not have any existing relationship outside these spaces. Audiences of collaborative activities are thus different from audiences of individual and communal activities. Nevertheless, collaborative activities on the internet are not global and public in a sense that they are intended for a global audience. Collaborative activities mean interactions with peers within some existing collaborative context. Still, on the internet, people do not necessarily close off virtual communities, and sometimes communication that is intended for a smaller audience is left open to wider audience. Still, the activities in the "open community" can be made more private due to practices that are known only by active members. For outsiders, these kinds of practices seem to be incomprehensible so that they do not understand what is happening in affinity spaces.

For example, Santeri, a 14-year-old boy from the research school, shares a passion for fantasy books with other gamers in a role-playing-game forum on the internet. He is a participant in a small community of 30 peers. The community is a virtual world that participants inhabit via avatars or other characters. Participants do not make representations with the intention of large audiences seeing them. Rather, they play together, and for an outsider it is difficult to understand what is happening without knowing the rules, history, and regime of the world.

As a collaborative activity, play is limited to insiders of the game. Of course, collaborative activity can be much wider. Charles Leadbeater (2009) writes about the principal of "we-think". On the web, we usually see that people either argue or agree with each other. "We-think" means they actually think together. According to Leadbeater, we-think has three ingredients: participation, recognition, and collaboration. People participate in and join

collaborative communities of practices when these "communities provide participants with what they most value: recognition for the worth of their contribution, the value of their ideas, the skills of their trade" (p. 21). Leadbeater emphasises that this kind of participation is not the same as "group-think," which is submersion in homogeneous and unthinking masses.

According to Leadbeater (2009), in order to achieve "full we-think" (p. 87), an activity has to be both participatory and collaborative. This is not the case in blogging or other individual activities that allow people to contribute without collaboration. Communal and collaborative activities are more open to collaboration. For Leadbeater, Wikipedia presents an example of full we-think: people are able to contribute and collaborate in a public sphere. Online role-playing is akin to we-think because it is more collaborative than participatory. As collaborative practice, it creates some shared private activities in which privacy is experienced subjectively while writing the online story with peers. For instance, certain expressions in the text are not understandable without being an active member of the play and of the world that the players share.

danah boyd and Alice Marwick (2011, p. 22) present social steganography as one tactic of hiding information from strangers in public spaces. Steganography does not refer to encrypting messages but to hiding messages in such a way that outsiders do not know to look for a hidden message. boyd found that this is one way that young people achieve privacy on social networks. For example, the word "Yes!" on a Facebook wall may be understandable only for people who share the same context. I have found that the more communal and collaborative are online practices, the more hidden and private are the messages and communication on networked publics. For example, Gomi's videos can be seen as part of a genre of videos of affiliation (Lange, 2009), which are not necessarily interesting, original, creative, or understandable from the perspective of those who are not part of the creator's network and community (Kupiainen, 2013). Thus, communal ties create privacy in online communication.

Online Digital Skills

Individual, communal, and collaborative activities online demonstrate that the dichotomy of private and public is difficult to maintain. In principle, all communication on the internet is basically public unless a user specifically denies access to content or to a profile. boyd (2008) has noted that one defining characteristic of networked publics and mediated communication is that they do not have structural borders in the same way that unmediated communication does. In offline unmediated environments, boundaries and audiences can be structurally defined. However, because networked publics are made out of bits, technologies introduce some new affordances that shape these publics. boyd (2011) introduces four affordances: persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability.

Persistence means that all online expressions are automatically recorded and archived. Whatever you do on the internet, you leave traces, and your images and comments are preserved. *Replicability* means that all digital content can be duplicated and shared across the internet. Digital data made out of bits is possible to copy without limits. *Scalability* means that all digital data on the internet can be potentially scaled and distributed among all users. One bit can be shared limitlessly; it is a possibility for "tremendous visibility" (boyd, 2011, p. 48). *Searchability* means that content in networked publics can be accessed through a search. However, underage users of some SNSs are not searchable by using Google and other search engines. These four affordances all make privacy more problematic. The internet is a difficult

place for hiding. Rather, it is more for social networking, seeing others, and being seen by others: in short, it is networked publics.

At the same time, social ties, online and offline communities, and different practices and tactics allow communication modes that are more private. boyd and Marwick (2010) write:

By using different strategies to achieve privacy in networked publics, teens are simultaneously revealing the importance of privacy and public life. They want to participate in networked publics, but they also want to have control over the social situations that take place there. They want to be visible, but only to certain people. They want to be recognized and validated, but only by certain people. This is not a contradictory stance; it parallels how people have always engaged in public spaces. (p. 24)

However, achieving privacy on networked publics requires special skills and digital and media literacy, such as understanding the differences between unmediated and mediated communication, online affordances, and various privacy tactics. Identity performance on blogs, for example, does require digital skills regarding personal identity and information protection. Some young people seem to be acutely aware of problems they may have in networked publics. Some girls, for example, make jokes with strangers who try to contact them. One student posted the following conversation on her wall:

Stranger: how u look like?
Answer: I don't know
Answer: we don't have mirrors in Finland
(14-year-old girl on her SNS wall)

Conversations such as this one demonstrate how girls can protect themselves by making jokes. Still, not everyone is as savvy as this girl, and younger children are particularly at risk. SNSs also tend to challenge people's sense of control—everything seems to be in order, but after some minor changes in privacy settings by the provider, everything has changed. People have to enhance their strategies for controlling privacy in changing digital environments that lack structural borders of privacy. As well, they must understand the new relations between public and private.

Parents worry about their children's online activities. Kaisa's parents were concerned and considered whether they should restrict what Kaisa presents in her blog. They chose not to, in part because they had a trusting relationship with Kaisa. Trust is an extremely important aspect of online life. Even though parents should know what their children are doing online, teenagers have a right to their own privacy in relation to their parents. boyd (2008) writes that there are two groups that have a great deal of interest in children: "those who hold power over them—parents, teachers, local government officials, etc.—and those who wish to prey on them—marketers and predators" (p. 133). These groups act in different ways, and children have to know how to protect themselves. The most common dilemma children face is how to remain "cool" in the eyes of their peers and yet acceptable to their parents. A trusting relationship between parents and children helps solve this dilemma.

The internet and social networking are an inseparable part of school as well, both in formal learning and in students' free time between classes. Students use mobile phones to access the internet and SNSs during the school day. Some use other media devices at school, such as still and video cameras, and publish photos and videos on SNSs and blogs. These activities

open the school space to the public sphere and reveal the school to the wider internet audience (Kupiainen, 2011, 2013). Moreover, when students share video clips and photos on the internet, the school itself becomes a public space. Therefore, also, teachers are involved in online life, whether they want it or not. The head teacher in my research reported that teachers often have to solve for example conflicts caused by photo sharing on Facebook. Stronger communal ties can help solve this kind of problem. When a media-production activity is visible and accepted among peers, problems do not emerge on the same scale. However, at the same time, students themselves have to know what is accepted in online life and what is morally, ethically, and legally problematic and forbidden.

The discussions about digital and media literacies and skills have not traditionally included questions regarding privacy management on networked publics or the permeable boundaries of the private and public. However, young people's various creative online activities indicate that they already implicitly use tactics that protect their privacy and that they implicitly understand the differences between online audiences.

The *EU Kids Online* research suggests that parents, but also teachers and peers have a vital role in keeping children safe on the internet. Sixty-nine percent of 13- to 16-year-old Finnish children reported that their teachers, and 64% of their parents have suggested ways to use the internet safely. Accordingly, 37% of 13- to 16-year-olds got advice from their peers. Interestingly, children who wrote blogs got more advice about internet safety, especially from their teachers and peers: Seventy-seven percent of the 13- to 16-years-old who blogged got advice from their teachers, 65% from their parents and 45% of that age-group received some from their peers. Conversely, 67% of those who never blogged got advice from their teachers, 63% from their parents and 36% received some from their friends. Those who blogged also spent more time on the internet than non-bloggers did.

Online activities increase online skills and opportunities but also risks (Sonck, Livingstone, Kuiper, & de Haan, 2011). However, according the *EU Kids Online* study, "experienced networkers," who are 14,2-old in average and mostly girls, encounter relatively few instances of harm (Livingstone et al., 2011b, p. 40). Networking, peer relations, tight community ties, and support from teachers and parents help young people to manage their online activities and creative practices in safer online environments.

Discussion

The internet and SNSs include a promise of enabling cultural activities that are more democratic and liberating. Nevertheless, the "explosion of creativity" (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, p. 112) seems not to have happened on so vast scale as some scholars once thought. Still, the internet and SNSs have offered great possibilities for individuals to publish their own media productions. Publishing is an act that needs publicity and audiences; therefore, the issue of privacy in networked publics is not a simple one. This is partly because networked publics are complex public arenas with visible and invisible audiences in relation to other social communities, like school.

In this article, I have typified creative media production, from the individual to the more communal. I have also examined different audiences, from the large and global to more intimate and collaborative ones in local spheres.

Various creative activities challenge traditional borders of private and public, thus requiring that young people understand how to control their privacy and identity online and how online affordances shape the public space. Instead of the internet being one platform and having one SNS, there are various types of online spaces, where people have different activities and audiences and ways to manage their privacy. For instance, bloggers' identity performance may be empowering when they feel that they control their publicity and visual representations of themselves. But even their "very own corner" is a multiplication of the place, as the place of the event and that in which it is watched (see Papacharissi, 2011; Moores, 2012), at the same time intimate and public.

All online activities described in this article have special relations to school. Although the lifestyle bloggers in this study wanted to expand their audience from merely friends to global followers outside of the local school community, they still presented themselves as students and as part of the school community. This is because school is a central locus in the lives of youth and, therefore, is part of their identity and self-presentation. It is also a place to acquire skills concerning online practices, especially when students create new media productions, like photographs, and share them via their blogs. A visual-arts teacher at the school mentioned that some students showed him what they had published, and even after they had started upper secondary school, they contacted him in order to show him their creative productions online.

Gomi's vlog is an example of close relationships between online and local offline spaces, a space for a school community to continue everyday communication after school. Gomi's vlog even strengthens offline community ties. These kinds of creative online activities open schools to larger audiences when students share photos and videos of the school on the internet. Teachers should also be aware of the permeability of school boundaries and should understand the communal meaning of the school for students. Specifically, besides learning, school is a space for sociality that continues on the internet and within the creative online activities of the students.

Some of these activities are collaborative, peer-based activities in which collaborators practice their skills in affinity spaces. Santeri and his friends did not need any invisible audience; they wrote to themselves while creating a completely new world and space for their avatars. Santeri explained that he tries to create avatars that are different than he himself. This kind of practice is far away from self-presentation. From this point of view, privacy or publicity was not a big issue for these gamers. The game was more about having fun together by using "full we-think," in which interested gamers could create jointly.

Even though active and creative media practices imply more risks, active users get support for safer internet use from their peers and teachers. When boundaries between private and public are more permeable on networked publics, students need more negotiation and strategies in order to maintain online safety. Usually, the problem is that spaces for online activities are neither strictly private nor strictly public. Privacy depends more on how people understand the context in which they share their creations and information, as well as what skills and strategies they have for defending their privacy.

Notes

(1) IRC-gallery is one of the most popular Finnish social-networking sites among youth. In the past two years, it has lost its popularity due to Facebook.

(2) All names are changed.

Acknowledgements

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