



A snap of intimacy: Photo-sharing practices among young people on social media

by Jette Kofoed and Malene Charlotte Larsen

Abstract

In this paper we investigate photo sharing practices among young people on the ephemeral social media platform Snapchat. What kind of photos are exchanged amongst 12–17 year olds via this app where pictures are elicited after up to 10 seconds? How is the content of the photos perceived by the young people themselves? We employ an Internet-mediated mixed methods approach. The primary empirical material consists of an online survey focusing on photo-elicitation practices on the two platforms Snapchat and Instagram conducted in 2015 and 2016 amongst Danish young people. Our results suggest that Snapchat is a site for intimacy in that pictures of double chins, ugliness and self-exposure are shared. These activities of photo-sharing and photo-communication bind young people in closeness and friendships. In this respect Snapchat differs from, for instance, Instagram where the pictures shared tend to be more polished, neat and perfect. The intimacy shared and maintained on Snapchat does, however, also cover nudes, dickpics and tarnished pictures. In this respect, intimacy entails both the comfort of sharing and the dramas of disruptions.

Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. Photo sharing practices on social media](#)
- [3. The ephemeral and the persistent: Snapchat and Instagram's affordances](#)
- [4. Empirical data and methods](#)
- [5. The concept of intimacy in relation to Snapchat](#)
- [6. Analytical findings](#)
- [7. Conclusion](#)

1. Introduction

Today, photo sharing practices of young people are heavily intertwined with their mundane everyday life and online interactions. Needless to say, online and off-line lives are intrinsically enmeshed. Young people share photos frequently, through various platforms and often 'on the go'. Such mobility allows users to share photos remotely and irrespective of time and place. On Snapchat young people often employ a higher level of self-disclosure and have reduced self-presentational concerns compared to other social media platforms (Larsen and Kofoed, 2015; Bayer, *et al.*, 2016). Their photo sharing practices can best be described as "networked photography" referring to the sharing of images immediately after they are captured, using, for instance, instant messaging (IM) tools or social media applications (Lobinger, 2016) and as "visual conversations" with a high frequency of interactions among sender and receiver (Katz and Crocker, 2015). As Lobinger (2016) notes, photo sharing has become a pervasive routine communicative act in everyday life. This is especially true for young people who are the most frequent users of photo sharing social media applications such as Snapchat and Instagram (Thaarup and Scheutz, 2015; TNS Gallup, 2015).

In this paper we take our empirical point of departure in the ephemeral social media app Snapchat and our theoretical point of departure in the concept of intimacy (Berlant, 1998). We investigate how Snapchat conditions temporality and intensity in ways that allow for intimacy to flow. Thus, our main research question in this paper is: How do young people aged 12–17 practice intimacy and maintain relationships through the sharing of photos on Snapchat?

To answer this question, we have two analytical foci in the paper. Firstly, Snapchat involves sharing a moment on the move and often non-glamorous selfies (Larsen and Kofoed, 2015; Christensen, *et al.*,

2015; Katz and Crocker, 2015; Bayer, *et al.*, 2016). How does such non-glamorous self-disclosures play out? How are they perceived? Are they utterly unimportant, as respondents often state themselves (Larsen and Kofoed, 2015; Lobinger and Brantner, 2015)? Or are they key players in maintaining and challenging intimate relations because of their apparently unimportant and self-disclosing content such as double chins or ugly selfies?

Secondly, a high level of self-presentational concerns is often expressed in relation to Instagram whereas Snapchat by the young people is seen as an emotional escape and an intimate “free space”; free of having to be evaluated, notified or “liked” thus paving the way for more distributed practices of self-presentations through photo sharing, as opposed to photo sharing on Facebook where users are subject to a more unified self-presentation (Wittkower, 2014). Users are generally aware that snaps might be screenshot and saved on the receiver’s phone, which often creates an even closer bond of intimacy and trust between users. However, these issues also put users at risk of cyberbullying (Kofoed, 2014; Kofoed and Ringrose, 2012) and the feelings of being safe in the shared intimacy of Snapchat can be intimidated. In the paper we discuss ‘public intimacy’ in social media environments where content is shared for a limited period of time and promises to evaporate.

We begin the paper by discussing photo sharing practices on social media with a special focus on the two, at the time of investigation, most popular mobile photo sharing applications, Snapchat and Instagram, and their affordances. Here, we outline most recent research on photo-elicitation practices in order to situate our own analysis focusing on Snapchat. Then we present our empirical data and the methods used and clarify our understanding of the concept of intimacy in relation to social media and photo sharing as this is a central focal point in our analysis. Subsequently, we present our analytical findings. Before we conclude the paper we discuss what happens when the intimacy shared and maintained on Snapchat also involves nudes, dickpics and tarnished pictures that discredit certain individuals; or intimate sharings of nude pictures that are screenshot.



2. Photo sharing practices on social media

When young people exchange and share photos on social media platforms, they do so for various purposes. Drawing on practice theory (Couldry, 2004; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996), Lobinger (2016) points to three central communicative modes of photo sharing practices, all of which can be ascribed to young people’s photo sharing on social media applications such as Snapchat and Instagram: 1) Sharing photos in order to talk about images; 2) sharing photos in order to communicate visually; and 3) phatic photo sharing.

Firstly, when photos are shared in order to talk about images, the photos are used as a supporting conversational resource. Sharing for instance family vacation photos usually involves talking and telling stories *about* the photographs (not *with* them) [1]. This kind of oral storytelling can take place in both online and off-line settings with conversational partners in either remote or collocated situations. On Snapchat it is possible to add text as well as drawings, lenses or emoticons to snaps. Often, young people will use Snapchat to communicate about certain subjects and from our fieldwork we know that they sometimes turn to Snapchat when seeking advice from peers; for instance, taking a photo of a jacket in a clothing store and sending it to a friend with the inscription “Should I buy this jacket?” Snapchat is also used as a way of documenting events or activities (*e.g.*, “Look how wet I got cycling home from school :(”) thus initiating conversations around a specific topic. In this mode of photo sharing, the photo would not make sense without the conversation around it or the story to support it.

On the other hand, when photos are shared to communicate visually, focus shifts to the content and visual qualities of the shared image. In this regard, people share photos in order to express themselves visually or to tell something *with* the photos [2]. This is especially true for the social media application Instagram (*e.g.*, Hu, *et al.*, 2014; Bakhshi, *et al.*, 2014) which has a built-in focus on the aesthetics of the images shared encouraging the usage of different filters and edits to beautify the photographed image. As young people themselves point out, Instagram is mostly about polished, aesthetic and well thought out photo sharing practices (Larsen and Kofoed, 2015). However, sharing photos in order to communicate visually does not necessarily require sophisticated visual modalities and aesthetic qualities of the photos [3]. Thus, many photos sharing practices related to self-presentation on social media involves mundane and unglamorous photos, where the specific depicted situations or people are much more important than the images themselves (Larsen, 2013, 2007; Autenrieth, 2011; Lobinger, 2016).

Thirdly, phatic photo sharing takes place when the photographic object is irrelevant and photos are exchanged mainly for the sake of visual connectivity and to confirm and strengthen relationships [4]. This is a widespread practice among young people on social media (Larsen, 2007; Miller, 2008; Stald, 2008; Radovanovic and Ragnedda, 2012) — and particularly on Snapchat where photos or videos disappear after one to 10 seconds or after 24 hours (if the feature MyStory is used). When photos are exchanged phatically, they function as “a fluid and dynamic material for situational live communication” [5]. Especially, on Snapchat photos only have “situational relevance”; for which reason “sending a snap” could be seen as a new way of texting (Larsen and Kofoed, 2015) and is perceived by youth as more enjoyable compared to other communication technologies (Bayer, *et al.*,

2016; Piwek and Joinson, 2016). Bayer, *et al.* (2016) found that college students do not even see Snapchat as a platform for sharing or viewing photos; rather it is “a lightweight channel for sharing spontaneous experiences with trusted others” [6]. From our own fieldwork we know that adolescents do not refer to Snapchat as “sending a photo” as much as they refer to the act of “sending a message” on Snapchat. Likewise, Piwek and Joinson (2016) found that Snapchat is “mainly used as a playful mobile IM service to rapidly communicate and share content” [7]. Today, Snapchat is, for many young people, the favorite medium and primary tool for phatic communication between close ties and has, to some degree, taken over the function from IM or text messaging (Larsen and Kofoed, 2015; Piwek and Joinson, 2016; Handyside and Ringrose, forthcoming).

It is important to stress that these modes of photo sharing practices are entangled and applied in different situations with different technological affordances, as we shall also see in the analysis of this paper.



3. The ephemeral and the persistent: Snapchat and Instagram's affordances

Technologies are not innocent. They all come with different affordances that affect the way they are used and how social life is played out. As Nagy and Neff (2015) stress “users’ perceptions, beliefs, and expectations of what the technology does [...] ‘shape how they approach them and what actions they think are suggested’” [8]. In this paper we use the concept of ‘affordance’. Bucher and Helmond (2017) propound that we distinguish between a high-level and a low-level understanding of the term. We take off from this distinction but argue that we, in this study, need to allow the two to entangle. This entails that we focus on both the dynamics, conditions and communicative practices that are enabled by the social media apps (a high-level understanding) as well as the specific technical features, buttons and symbols of the apps’ user interface (a low-level understanding).

Whether or not Snapchat can be characterized as a ‘social media’ has been discussed within the Internet research community (*e.g.*, Christensen, *et al.*, 2015; Rettberg, 2016). Surely, the features and affordances (or lack thereof) of Snapchat does not fit with one of the most quoted definitions of a ‘social network site’ (boyd and Ellison, 2007), as also pointed out by Rettberg (2016). This definition emphasizes the public or semi-public nature where having a profile and a searchable ‘friend list’ is central. Also, Snapchat does not fit the description of ‘networked publics’ proposed by boyd (2011) as a way of understanding social media and social network sites. On Snapchat, online expressions are *not* automatically recorded and archived, content cannot be duplicated (unless receiver takes a screenshot or if sender saves a copy to the phone’s camera roll before sending), for which reason the content is *not* meant to reach a larger audience — and *cannot* be accessed via searching — all of which are the elements or affordances that define social network sites as networked publics, according to boyd (2011). The ephemeral nature of snaps and the lack of a feed with archived content makes the app difficult to fit into any predefined categorisation of social media. As Piwek and Joinson (2016) point out, Snapchat can be seen as an IM platform — with additional features (for instance the possibility of making finger-drawn ‘doodles’, using selfie lenses and geofilters to edit pictures) that make the app unique in terms of instant messaging services.

However, there is no doubt that Snapchat is in fact a social medium and we — as well as our respondents — understand it as such. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggest that we classify different types of social media based on their level of self-presentation and self-disclosure on the one hand and the degree of social presence and media richness on the other hand. Following their argumentation, there is no doubt that Snapchat is an example of a social media platform that affords a high level of self-presentation and self-disclosure as well as a rather high degree of media richness and social presence due to the possibility of video-messaging, albeit content is self-destructing.

The most noteworthy and pioneering about Snapchat as a social media app is the fact that content self-destructs after a short interval. However, sometimes the content is screenshot by the viewer — and possibly shared again. Ephemeral social media such as Snapchat thus interrupts linear temporality and, we argue, plays with both temporality and intimacy (Handyside and Ringrose, forthcoming). Instagram, on the contrary, can be described as a media where content sharing is persistent [9] — that is, the app allows the users to organize, use, document and remember in a persistent manner (Bayer, *et al.*, 2016).

This study is carried out when Snapchat and Instagram were still easily distinguishable as outlined above. This allows us to dwell at the particularities of the ephemerality of self-destruction. We do so by studying the particularities of Snapchat up against the differences to Instagram. The survey and analysis was carried out during the autumn of 2015 and spring of 2016, in the momentum before the two apps began looking more alike. During the summer of 2016, at the time when we finalized the analysis, both apps have added new affordances that makes it harder to distinguish the two.

Until recently Snapchat was all about sharing real time “in the moment” photos whereas Instagram could contain both photos taken instantly or previously (so-called “#latergrams”). On Snapchat all content is ephemeral — snaps are visible either one to 10 seconds, or 24 hours if they are posted to “MyStory” — and content on Instagram used to be solely persistent in the sense that all photos or videos were stored in the user’s feed unless he or she deliberately deleted them. However, changes

made during the summer of 2016 made the differences between the two apps smaller. Snapchat has added the feature “Memories” allowing for the use of previously saved snaps or content from the phone’s camera roll. Concurrently, Instagram copied Snapchat’s “MyStory” launching “Instagram Stories”; a secondary feed where users can add content that is available for 24 hours from the time of posting. The latter has been described as “a near-perfect copy of Snapchat stories” (Newton, 2016) and Instagram CEO Kevin Systrom openly conceded that the story feature is in fact a copy of Snapchat’s (Constine, 2016). The purpose of adding this feature is to encourage Instagram users to share “smaller moments” and not just add highlights from their lives (Constine, 2016) — as has been the most widespread practice so far, especially among teenagers (Larsen and Kofoed, 2015).

These changes have blurred the boundaries and differences between the two apps. Now, both apps play with temporal structure; the main difference is that Snapchat still lacks the persistent content (*e.g.*, a feed with archived photos and videos) — and that the ephemeral nature of Instagram only consists of “stories” with unlimited viewing for 24 hours (and not one-time viewing of individual one to 10 seconds photos). Even though the distinction between the ephemeral and the persistent might soon be bypassed by the development of new social media and new affordances in existing media, the particularity of ephemerality is worth scrutinizing.

It remains to be seen how the recent changes will affect the future use of the two apps. We present analysis from the moment *before* these recent changes of affordances. We propose that this analysis before the ‘newness’ of the affordances provides fertile ground for exploration of the phenomenon. This allows us to dwell at the particularities of ephemerality which is studied in its ‘rawest’ shape, Snapchat, when it was still new to the young people, to the research field and before it was merged with more familiar affordances of persistence. We are especially interested in photo sharing where content evaporates after a very short time (the one to 10 second snaps) since this feature affords certain communicative practices and expectations among users. We argue that the possibility of sending short, self-destructing messages or photos especially paves the way for closeness and intimacy.



4. Empirical data and methods

Our overall methodological approach can be described as multi-sited (Marcus, 1995) as we have been present across off-line and online spaces (the classroom, interview situation, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Ask.fm, Snapchat) and have used different methods (survey, online ethnography and interviews). In pursuing media practices amongst young people we need, as argued by Leander and McKim (2003), to “move beyond place-based ethnography and develop ethnographic methodologies that follow the moving, traveling practices of adolescents online and off-line.” We have developed an Internet mediated mixed methods approach (Hesse-Biber and Griffin, 2013; Larsen, 2014; Hansen, *et al.*, 2014) in which we have attempted to grasp the understandings of social media use by young people themselves (in interviews and online surveys) and by following these young people as they live their online lives.

The primary empirical material for this paper consists of an online survey focusing on photo-elicitation practices on the two platforms Snapchat and Instagram; secondary empirical material consists of qualitative interviews conducted prior to the survey. The primary focus in the survey is typical content and most commonly shared pictures on Snapchat and Instagram as well as the sharing of and experience with photos that are seen as unpleasant or disruptive by the receiver. The survey was, as mentioned, conducted in 2015 and 2016 amongst Danish young people.

Prior to the online survey we conducted interviews in an off-line setting (a Danish elementary school) which subsequently led to online fieldwork and observations on social media, where the young people interviewed were present (Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat). This research design is inspired by a virtual ethnographic approach (Hine, 2000). On the basis of this, we were able to formulate the questions that appeared in the online survey where we employed both qualitative and quantitative oriented approaches (using both open- and close-ended questions).

The data collection thus started out in January 2013 with focus group interviews with 25 14-year olds (four interviews with five participants) focusing on social media use, in particular photo sharing practices among the young people and experiences with dating/flirting and sharing of nudes (inspired by the methodology used in Ringrose, *et al.* (2012). At this point in time, Snapchat was still a relatively new phenomenon, but nevertheless it was already among some of the respondents’ favorite social media platforms (along with Facebook, Instagram, Tublr and Twitter). Especially, it — back in 2013 — caught our interest that a few of the young people pointed out that some photos were only suitable for sharing via Snapchat and not on any other social media platforms. To illustrate how this initial observation affects the development of the methodology, let us share how some of the girls put it:

Q: What do you share, on which platforms?

Group of girls answering all at once: On Instagram it is everybody who follows you [who can see your posts], you don't know half of them ... So it is kind of, I can't really explain, but ... well it is probably a bit more safe and good on Facebook. On Snapchat you send more photos because they are kind of unimportant and trivial. You can appear ugly or tired or ... they are only exposed in 10 secs. But also people cannot save the photo — unless they screenshot it, and you have to be really fast. You can allow the photo to show for only 2 secs.

Q: Are there any photos that you would only send on Snapchat, and, say, not on Instagram or Facebook?

A: Indeed. Some photos are only shared on Snapchat. If you are really ugly, or geeky, or make ugly faces — just for fun, you know. They are only meant for one friend, or somebody who knows you really well. It is kind of trivial and they just do the same.

(Focus group interview, January 2013)

Such statements suggested from the very beginning that we needed to focus on the particularities of Snapchat and ephemerality of self-destruction. The questions in the online survey were therefore developed on the background of these focus group interviews carried out in 2013 as well as online fieldwork during 2013–2015.

Before sending out the online survey, we carried out two “think aloud-tests” where test respondents (who were both Snapchat and Instagram users) within the target group provided us with feedback — both in terms of wording as well as technical insights. After that, the survey was tested three times among groups of university students before it was sent to the actual respondents: 230 primary school students aged 12–17. The students come from different social backgrounds in different parts of Denmark. They participated in the survey online during school hours sharing information on what kinds of photos they send and receive on Snapchat and Instagram, how they feel about the feedback they get and what kind of unpleasant experiences they have had on the platforms. The questions focus on use and communicative practices — not opinions and attitudes. For instance, we asked young people to describe most recently received snaps, who sent them and how they felt about them as well as their most recent Instagram upload, number of likes on the photo or video, how they felt about the amount of likes, the comments they received etc.

As pointed out by Piwek and Joinson (2016) it is difficult to study instances of communicative practices and sharing of photos that no longer exist and one can only employ introspective methods (what Piwek and Joinson call memory sampling methods). Hence, we asked the respondents about most recent snaps keeping in mind *what they could remember receiving*, or what Handyside and Ringrose (forthcoming) call Snapchat memory. We are aware that this approach has obvious shortcomings since the snaps were most likely inaccessible, though indeed it carries new strengths as well.

The empirical material has been analysed in multiple layers informed by the research question's focus on photo sharing practices and its implications for friendship and intimacy. We read, re-read, organised and re-organised the answers to the open-ended questions of the survey. In this process of analysis we took notes and created codes, categories and themes which were then gradually refined into the categories we present below. In themselves the numbers of respondents to specific codes are not significant. Rather, we follow the patterns revealed by the categories and the numbers related to them. This process of analysis is inspired by qualitative research methodologies (Clarke, 2005; MacLure, 2013).

Niels Brügger distinguishes between a social scientific approach to studying media and a human/media approach [10]. Brügger argues that the latter takes a primary interest in the text as such, whereas the social sciences have been preoccupied with living human beings and their actions. This difference draws on different research traditions where he highlights direct or indirect interaction to be of importance in understanding why there has been an epistemological distortion by the social sciences. We place ourselves in the midst of this distinction as we take a double interest in the content of the photos shared (though not shown, but accounted for in words) and in how the photos are entangled with social practice and relationality.

In pursuing this distinction Lobinger helps us specify our focus. As mentioned, Lobinger argues that “photo sharing has become a pervasive routine communicative act” [11]. Photography has become networked due to the fact that most people in contemporary highly mediatized societies carry smartphones with cameras which allow them to take photographs whenever they like and, not least, to share the photos via relevant social media apps. Lobinger points at how photo sharing practices have become a research field in itself. She reminds us that photo sharing as such is not a new

phenomenon. Photos have always been handed on and shared. When photo sharing practices are now embedded in information and communication technologies she cautions how most people make use of multiple technologies, and hence develop what she calls “complex communication repertoires” [12]. We need to develop comprehensive knowledge about photo sharing practices, Lobinger argues, which – in her view – calls for a transmedial, non-media-centric perspective [13].

This is indeed a persuasive argument. Nonetheless, we have set up a more limited scope where we focus on the two most used apps for photo sharing, Snapchat and Instagram, amongst young people in Denmark. In the terminology of Lobinger this is a transmedial analysis, but only with focus on two apps. Since our analytical scope differs from Lobinger’s, this empirical data allows for insights into the details of how the affordances of the two apps are delicately intertwined with 1) the use of the apps; 2) what content is shared; and 3) how intimacy is lived amongst young people in Denmark.

5. The concept of intimacy in relation to Snapchat

When we talk of intimacy we find inspiration in Lauren Berlant’s work. In 1998 – well before Snapchat or any other social media was introduced – she wrote:

... to intimate is to communicate with the sparest of signs and gestures and at its root intimacy has the quality of eloquence and brevity. But intimacy also involves an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way. [14]

Berlant seemingly describes two key characteristics of Snapchat – which was launched some 15 years later. These characteristics are: 1) scarcity of signs and brevity in communication; and 2) a shared narrative. Crudely speaking, this definition could pass for a description of Snapchat and its core affordances where the self-destruction of photos makes communication brief and ephemeral, and the Snapchat function of ‘MyStory’ where a narrative of your day can be updated. We find that intimacy is lived within social media in ways which entail that these performances “are choreographic in the sense that they are highly relational and interactive, involving mutual attunement and resonance, sometimes even dialogical sequences of call and response” [15].

Often such intimacies are lived with families, friends or lovers. Berlant, however, from the very outset pinpoints how the “inwardness of the intimate is met by a corresponding publicness. The basic point about intimacy is that all the positive and desirable sides to it inevitably meets the instabilities, dramas, and betrayal.” Intimacy thus embeds strong ambivalences which is explained by how intimacy carries a potential failure to stabilize closeness, it is latently vulnerable [15]. This is a pivotal starting point as it takes the risk of articulating how intimacy carries strong normative ideas of positivism, or what Berlant calls “utopian, optimism-sustaining versions of intimacy” [17]. Contrary to the optimism-sustaining view Berlant includes what is usually seen as dangers to intimacy to be part of the very phenomenon. She takes the vantage point that “contradictory desires mark the intimacy of daily life: people want to be both overwhelmed and omnipotent, caring and aggressive, known and incognito” [18].

We depart from this contradictory understanding of intimacy as being composed of both the normativities of closeness and the betrayal and dramas of it. In so doing we go beyond Chayko’s (2002) definition of intimacy as “... the closest, strongest, most involving and generally most intense form of social bond” [19]. Berlant’s more complex understanding of intimacy assists us in the analysis of empirical material where snaps seem both to maintain close relationships in appreciative manners as well as intimidating relationships in instances where snaps are screenshot or when unwanted ‘dickpics’ are disclosed. The analytical promise held in Berlant’s notion of intimacy is to bypass normativities of intimacy as being either good or bad and to grapple with the contradictions of ephemerality and persistence and their affective effects.

As mentioned above, Lobinger focuses on photo sharing practices and typologies of this. To tie this observation to a focus on intimacy Amparo Lasén can assist us in grasping what is at stake for the young people engaged in sharing photos. Lasén suggests that the option of sharing photos while on the move provides new ways of modulating intimacy [20]. Photos are taken, modified, added texts or lenses, uploaded, sent, re-sent, commented upon, liked, stored, forwarded. Photo sharing is far from the simple process of merely taking the photo. Such modulating of intimacy entails what we can term ‘the talk of snap’ which hints at how the exchange of snaps covers much more than the visual, but addresses how the visuals talk, and how the visuals literally are texted.

6. Analytical findings

In 2016, Facebook is still a popular and used site in Denmark. According to DR Medieforskning (2015) Facebook is less a site for sharing personal information, but a practical and social infrastructure that is

much used. Eighty-seven percent of all Danish teenagers use Facebook on a daily basis. If Facebook is no longer the preferred site for sharing personal information, Snapchat and Instagram are. According to 'Medieudviklingen' two out of three Danish teenagers use Snapchat on a daily basis, whereas every other teenagers use Instagram. Snapchat is thus the second most used social media platform among young people in Denmark [21]. Our online survey confirms these findings and stress how Danish young people are daily users of Snapchat which is currently the fastest growing social media in Denmark (it increased 140 percent from 2013 to 2015) [22]. As mentioned, Facebook to a large degree organise the lives of teenagers. Different social media thus play different roles. Snapchat does not organise lives, but seems to have become one of the preferred sites for sharing personal information and communicating phatically (Larsen and Kofoed, 2015; Bayer, *et al.*, 2016; Piwek and Joinson, 2016). Let us investigate these particular practices of sharing photos on these preferred apps further.

Eighty-two percent of the respondents in our survey report themselves to be Snapchat users. Generally, more girls than boys use Snapchat, and they use it more frequently than boys (86 percent of female respondents state that they use Snapchat compared to 77 percent of male respondents). Sixty-nine percent of Snapchat users use Snapchat on a daily basis (45 percent several times a day, 24 percent few times a day). Fourteen percent of the respondents use Snapchat rarely (lesser than monthly) or never. We do not know why they prefer Snapchat, but we know what they like about Snapchat. When asked, respondents generally point to the temporal (it is "easy" and "fast") and ephemeral (pictures are self-destructing) nature of the app. As a user you do not have to do anything to make the photos disappear, quite the contrary, you need to bypass the self-destruction by screenshotting a given photo if you want to keep it.

In the online survey, we specifically ask the respondents how they feel about the self-destructing nature of shared photos. Here, they stress the fact that the content of photos shared on Snapchat has "situational relevance" (Lobinger, 2016) pointing to the phatic mode of photo sharing as "the whole point" of the app:

I think it is okay. That it the point of Snapchat. If they were to change that it would not be "rare" in that way! ...

(Boy, 15
years old)

It think it is okay that you are not dependent on people stalking you and that strangers can't look at it several days later.

(Girl, 12
years old)

It is okay, it is just a little message that you only need to see once.

(Boy, 15
years old)

The respondents also stress how the option of mixing photo and text is an asset when using Snapchat. This is especially an asset in terms of avoiding misunderstandings compared to other forms of communication:

When you are, say, writing text messages, they can easily be misunderstood, but with Snapchat you can add a picture and it is easier to see the meaning of the text — say irony or if something is meant as a joke.

(Girl, 14
years
old)

In the following we will present what the 12 to 17 years old respondents report to be the most typical content and most commonly shared photos. The following is based on descriptions of the latest snaps respondents reported to have received.

6.1. Most typically shared content on Snapchat

To no surprise, selfies are the most frequently reported type of snap received. Here, the young people express themselves visually (Lobinger, 2016) and engage in often playful and dialogical exchanges of selfies. As Katz and Crocker point out, Snapchat provides an optimal medium for selfie practices since the platform is intended to be a playful means of communicating how users appear at a given time without long-term consequences [23]. We know from our fieldwork that sending a selfie-snap is most often not an isolated event. Rather, users tend to respond to a received selfie with a new selfie and engage in what Katz and Crocker (2015) call "selfie-exchange-as-conversation". There are several examples of these types of interactions in our empirical data. As a 14-year old girl points out in the survey: "we [she and her friend] have a habit of sending each other random pictures where we are looking somewhere else than in the camera ... [...] I laughed because we almost always look really stupid in the photos." Similar examples can be found in the coding category "Fooling around" where

young people engage in playful interaction using the built-in affordances of filters or silly selfie lenses.

The second largest group of received snaps are photos of friends and peers from school (where the photo does not document the sender, but rather someone else who the sender is collocated with). This resembles the use of the tagging feature that is known from for instance Facebook. Often, the senders document events or tell stories about activities (Lobinger, 2016) — as *they occur* — with these types of photos. These photo sharing practices bind young people in closeness and are part of inclusion processes — as this 13-year-old respondent describes it:

Somehow you are part of the snap community, for example if your friends are sending you a snap, then you kind of know what they are doing, and in that way you are part of the community.

(Boy, 13
years old)

Sometimes, snaps picturing friends are sent as a way of including peers, who were not able to attend, in certain events or activities. This finding is in line with Piwek and Joinson (2016) who found that Snapchat is used to forge small networks of close relationships — rather than cultivating larger and “weak” networks (like on Facebook) [24].

Thirdly, many snaps could be described as ‘phatic’ in nature as the respondents state that they have received snaps of “nothing important”. Most often, these examples include pictures of random objects, ceilings or blurred background with finger drawn doodles or texts like “What’s up?” or “What are you doing?”. For instance, a 14-year old girl reports having received a snap of a shoe from a friend. In another example, a 16-year old boy received a snap from a friend with a photo of a cookie and the inscription “When mom doesn’t cook breakfast”. When asked what he thought about the snap, he stated: “It wasn’t a big deal”.

In [Figure 1](#) a list of the 10 (out of 50) main categories from the coding process can be found. We included a category termed “anti-answers” since some of the respondents were not willing to answer the question about most recent received snap, typing for instance “Not your business” (aimed at us as researchers) or stating that it was “personal”. Such anti-answers make up an entire field of inquiry in itself, which is, indeed, worth pursuing.

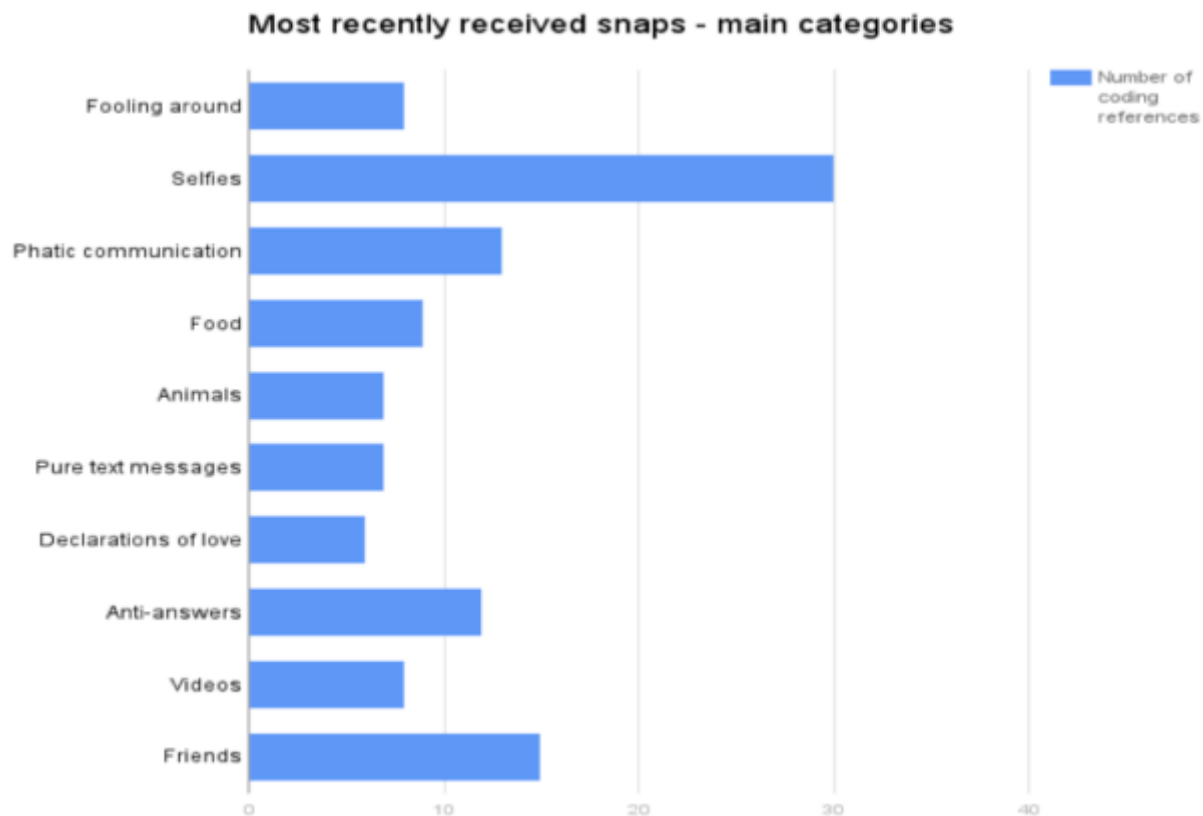


Figure 1: Most recently received snaps.

When asked how they feel about recently received snaps, respondents often describe them as “boring”, “unnecessary” or just “normal”. It is striking how the respondents seem to find these kinds of exchanges unimportant and rather irrelevant, yet they exchange these photos at high speed and seemingly, with great pleasure. Hence, the *unimportance* of Snapchat does not refer to any affordances, but to the content shared and an everyday mundane evaluation of the un/importance of the content in/for the relationship in which it is shared. The respondents stress how what they share is superficial. Yet they describe Snapchat as one of their favorite social medias and the communication possible on this app as particularly cherished. Snapchat is, on the one hand, unimportant, yet, on the other hand, much preferred and liked. As one respondent in the survey points out:

You can send quick photos and messages to people that disappear again quickly. You can also send more unimportant things, so it is in a way easier to talk to your friends without having to talk about a specific topic.

(Girl, 15 years old)

Another respondent, a 16-year old boy, describes how “*you can send all kinds of cool photos — such as a photo of a toast*”. Yet another respondent explains how the ephemeral nature of snaps makes room for the unimportant and mundane experiences from everyday life:

... you can send several things such as photos of what you are doing, if you are eating or something. Things that are not so important to keep.

(Girl, 15 years old)

Such kind of communicating is ‘phatic’. Lobinger describes it as photo sharing “where the communicative significance, the pleasure of communication and connectivity of photo sharing comes to the fore” [25]. Here relationships are maintained. Miller has coined such activity to be incidents where “content is not king, but ‘keeping in touch’ is” [26].

As described, Lobinger presents a broad analytical typology with three modes of photo sharing. Phatic is one, another is “communicating visually and sharing visual stories”. We argue that what takes place among young people on Snapchat contain aspects of all modes. The photos shared leave traces of information about body shapes and sizes, choice of clothes and accessories, lifestyle and — not least — who you are hanging out with. The connectivity conveyed is part of the phatic communication of photo sharing. And the phatic communication seems to be part and parcel of how Snapchat is utterly unimportant, yet conveying lots of information and being preferred above other social media.

Thus, a paradox of unimportance and ephemerality of the exchanges seem to be at the crux when grasping the particularity of Snapchat. We propose that the unimportance stressed when it comes to what content is shared is — contradictory — important. In comparison to what is shared on Instagram, we find how polished surfaces and self-presentations (which reign popular at Instagram) differ from the utterly mundane and everyday practices shared on Snapchat. Instagram is often referred to as a persistent media, where the content is saved (Bayer, *et al.*, 2016). We suggest that ephemerality provide relationalities in a different manner than persistent media, which up until Snapchat has been understood to be a core characteristic of social media (see earlier discussion).

6.2. Double chins and ugly selfies: Utterly unimportant, but intense

Snapchat allows for more distributed online practices than other social media platforms. As described by Wittkower (2014), especially Facebook (and other social network sites) forces its users to have a unified self-presentation due to what is often described as a “context collapse” (*e.g.*, Vitak, 2012; Marwick and boyd, 2011; Wesch, 2009); the fact that people are communicating to multiple audiences at once. As Vitak (2012) points out, self-presentation strategies on social network sites vary based on audience, and especially audience size and diversity impacts disclosures and use of advanced privacy settings. A higher level of self-disclosure and reduced self-presentational concerns exist on Snapchat (Larsen and Kofoed, 2015; Bayer, *et al.*, 2016) as a result of the ephemerality described in the above as well as the lack of a profile and a news feed with archived content. In the survey, we asked the respondents: “Are you sending photos through Snapchat that you would never share on any other social media?” More than half (57 percent of the respondents) answered ‘yes’ to this question. As a follow up question to those who had replied yes, we asked “What could be on those photos?”. It is interesting to investigate the respondents’ answers to this question in depth as it further points to what makes Snapchat unique and how the app can be understood as an app for intimacy. In [Figure 2](#) a list of the 10 (out of 30) main categories of shared photos can be found. Once again, we have included a coding category with what we call “anti-answers”; respondents refusing to share the requested information — which is an interesting point in itself keeping in mind the paradox of unimportance and ephemerality.

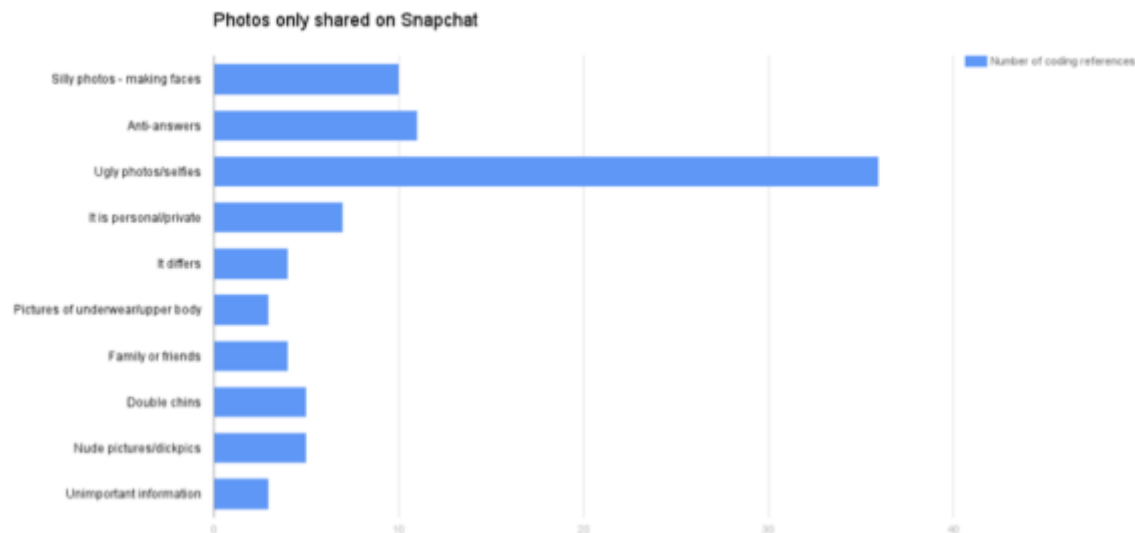


Figure 2: Photos only shared on Snapchat.

As it can be seen, the typical content shared *only* on Snapchat is ugly selfies, silly faces and double chins. The content of the photos on Snapchat differ from that of other social media. Where ugly selfies prevail on Snapchat, more polished pictures are shared on Instagram. An implicit effect of the ephemeral nature of Snapchat is thus that photos do not stay and hence cannot be liked, commented or followed, as on Instagram or Facebook. One of the respondents explains the urge to survey the number of views and likes on Instagram and delete correspondingly:

It [the number of likes] means a lot. If you only get two likes, of course you will delete the photo.

(Girl, 13 years old)

This particular affordance of liking on Instagram or Facebook thus invites the young people in to take up social practices of surveillance, caring and not caring as well as self-presentational concerns. The ways you need to (not) survey thus follows the particular affordances of the specific social media platform, and not the other way around.

As opposed to Instagram, Snapchat content is referred to as unimportant, and we might (with Lobinger and Miller) term it phatic when they respond, for instance, that 'nothing' is shared on the photo. In this respect few absolute facts seem to be shared, rather the content seems to be of an intimate character where the social relations are widened, deepened and maintained. This has been studied extensively within communication studies and within media use and is, as mentioned, referred to as phatic communication (*e.g.*, Larsen, 2007; Miller, 2008; Stald, 2008; Radovanovic and Ragnedda, 2012). But perhaps the particularity of Snapchat adds a new dimension to a discussion on phatic communication. Snapchat addresses both the perplexity of unimportance, and the intensity of the use an added value in the sense that the ephemeral nature of photo sharing plays with self-disclosure and trust in new manners.

Thus, Snapchat is not without intensity. The intensity of this particular app seems to lie in the affordances of self-destruction and in the speed and pace of the regularity of exchange of snaps (*i.e.*, "visual conversations" [Katz and Crocker, 2015]). There seems to be a certain insistence embedded in the practice of sending and receiving snaps: You need to be ready and prepared for snaps and for grasping the message:

Sometimes it is really cool that your photos disappear, but when you miss reading an important snap, it is really annoying.

(Boy, 12 years old)

It, so to speak, calls you in as present and attentive even though — in the perspective of the respondents — nothing much is shared. We argue, that intensity is maintained through the speed and pace of exchange. The snaps gather importance in their daily unimportance, in the invitation to respond and in how the snap does not remain available over time. Yet, Snapchat carries weight as a preferred social media amongst the young people and perhaps the trait of ephemerality carries a promise of new intimacies — because it differs from the persistence the young people have grown

accustomed to when it comes to social media. In and through this perplexity of un/importance, high pace and self-destruction temporality as linear is disturbed. Only the present can be grasped and shared (at least before Snapchat introduced 'Memories'). The shared photo is available for a limited time, the experienced temporality of accessing the snap vary and timelines become blurred.

Let us unfold this further. The apparently unimportant content becomes important in maintaining friendships and relationships exactly because it invites selected relations in to witness the double chins, the hanging out on a Sunday, the boring and dull moments, the photos of food etc. Or as the invitation from Snapchat goes: "We want you to share the small moments". This indeed seems to be the case. The snaps bear witness to the everyday lives of ordinariness and not of the spectacular and fancy aspects. Such an invitation to witness the everyday ordinary life is an invitation to intimacy in its brevity, as Berlant reminds us is a core characteristics of intimacy [27]: "At its root intimacy has the quality of eloquence and brevity". Not only is the content of the snaps brief and a Snapchat-specific way of communicating has been developed which entails a specific kind of Snap-eloquence. The snaps themselves are exposed in quite radical brevity. Somehow the ephemerality of the snaps exaggerates the brevity inherent in intimacy and hints at how the particularity of the ephemeral seems to hyper-intimate relations.

So rather than *being* unimportant the unimportance of the content stresses the meaningfulness and importance of the friendship as exactly intimate. Intimacy, in the case of Snapchat and youth life, seems to be carried by the mundane sharing of ordinariness. Intimacy is stressed by the affordance that no one can see who else the sender has shared the snap with. You are, so to speak, limited to the intimacy of the dyad and not exposed to an unending public audience, as is otherwise often depicted as a key feature of social media (Shariff, 2008; boyd, 2011; Wittkower, 2014).

6.3. A snap of intimacy

The entanglement of intensity, ephemerality and the seemingly unimportance of the snaps suggests that we bring a subtlety from Berlant's text to the fore, *i.e.*, the use of intimacy as a verb: to intimate [28]. To make use of the verb is to stress the agency of "communication with the sparsest of signs and gestures", as she says. In stressing the agency of intimacy we allow for grasping the vividness and forcefulness of how intimacy in cases of Snapchat exchanges involves the 'doing' in no straightforward manner, but rather in the entanglements of ephemerality, unimportance and intensity.

We have stressed how Snapchat is a social media of intimacy. We have highlighted this in analysis of closeness and friendship. This could be confused with a utopian, optimism-sustaining view on intimacy. However, Berlant's notion of intimacy is based on an acknowledgement of how intimacy is carried within contradictory desires. She reminds us that "people want to be both overwhelmed and omnipotent, caring and aggressive, known and incognito" [29]. This seems also to be the case among young Snapchat users: The snaps are shared within boundaries of closeness and familiarities yet potentially witnessed publicly. The snaps self-destruct, yet they are often screenshot. This possibility is inherent in the photo sharing practices of the young people; they know that receivers can screenshot snaps and share them elsewhere for which reason snapping is also a question of trust. Here, one of our respondents comment on the type of content she only shares on Snapchat:

An ugly picture of myself, but I only send it to my friends and I know that they will not screenshot it. But if they do, I ask them to delete it or else I know that they will not use it in an evil way.

(Girl, 14
years old)

So far we have stressed the particularities of the ephemeral and the self-destruction of the photos. However, this particular affordance is bypassed by the social practice of screen shooting. In this manner snaps are saved, made persistent, and exceed the boundary of self-destruction. When reading the empirical material we find that snaps are randomly saved. Either by using third party apps such as "Snapsave" which allows the user to circumvent the self-destruction of snaps without the sender being aware of it, or by screen shooting the snap (even though the sender will receive an alert). This social practice of saving snaps points to Berlant's crucial investigation of intimacy as also known, omnipotent and even aggressive in cases where snaps are not only saved, but distributed on other social media, such as Twitter or Facebook (which we know from our fieldwork is not an uncommon practice).

6.4. Publicly intimate

In our survey, 23 percent of all respondents report to have had unpleasant experiences with Snapchat. Most examples point to sexualisation of content or misuse of sexualised images, *i.e.*, nudes that are shared beyond the first receiver. "Dickpics" are the most frequently received snaps that (mostly) girls report to have received, and find unpleasant. In [Figure 3](#) the main coding references regarding unpleasant experiences can be found.

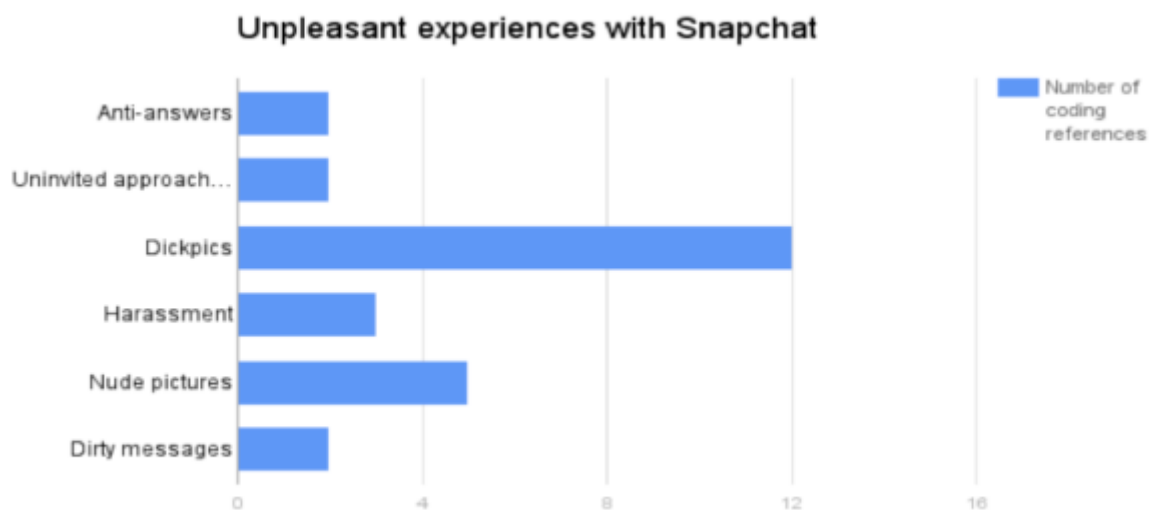



Figure 3: Unpleasant experiences with Snapchat.

With Berlant we need to go beyond naïve, optimism-sustaining understandings of intimacy as merely close happiness and grasp the complexities of intimacies, social media and young people.



7. Conclusion

Intimacy builds social worlds. It builds closeness as when the young people share unimportant photos of food, silly doodles or double chins and ugliness. At the same time it also threatens to destabilize closeness when snaps are screenshot and shared and hence carries the strengths and vulnerabilities in rapid exchanges of snaps and saved snaps. It carries the promise of closeness and potential failure of intimidating this very promise. Snaps of intimacy thus reverberate as utterly unimportant, yet publicly embarrassing, yet threatening vulnerabilities.

It seems that exactly these complex dynamics make Snapchat popular among young people. They relish a social media platform that on the one hand lets them bond in closeness by just "being themselves" and lower their self-presentational concerns and on the other hand intensifies shared intimacies by adding high-paced, disturbed temporalities and vulnerabilities. Thus, it seems that Snapchat has made room in the social media landscape for new kinds of intimacies where the inherent dramas, desires, betrayals and declarations are lived both incognito and publicly. 

About the authors

Jette Kofoed is Associate Professor at the Department of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark.
E-mail: jeko [at] edu [dot] au [dot] dk

Malene Charlotte Larsen is Associate Professor at the Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Denmark.
E-mail: malenel [at] hum [dot] aau [dot] dk

Notes

- [1.](#) Lobinger, 2016, p. 479.
- [2.](#) Lobinger, 2016, p. 480.
- [3.](#) Lobinger, 2016, p. 281.
- [4.](#) Lobinger, 2016, p. 481.

5. Lobinger, 2016, p. 482.
6. Bayer, *et al.*, 2016, p. 956.
7. Piwek and Joinson, 2016, p. 365.
8. Nagy and Neff, 2015: p. 5, cited in Bucher and Helmond, 2017, p. 14.
9. However, with Instagram's most recent added feature "Stories", users have the possibility of adding photos that will self-destruct after 24 hours — similar to Snapchat's "MyStory".
10. Brügger, oral presentation at seminar in May 2016.
11. Lobinger, 2016, p. 475.
12. Lobinger, 2016, p. 478.
13. Citing Hepp, 2010; Lobinger, 2016, p. 478.
14. Berlant, 1998, p. 281.
15. Lasén, 2015, p. 65.
16. Berlant, 1998, p. 282.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Berlant, 1998, p. 285.
19. Chayko, 2002, p. 119.
20. Lasén, 2015, p. 61.
21. DR Medieudviklingen, 2016, p. 18.
22. DR Medieudviklingen, 2016, p. 24.
23. Katz and Crocker, 2015, p. 1,862.
24. Piwek and Joinson, 2016, p. 364.
25. Lobinger, 2016, p. 481.
26. Miller, 2008, referred in Lobinger, 2016, p. 481.
27. Berlant, 1998, p. 281.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Berlant, 1998, p. 285.

References

- U.P. Autenrieth, 2011. "MySelf. MyFriends. MyLife. MyWorld. Photo albums and social network sites and their communicative functions for adolescents and young adults," In: U.P. Autenrieth and K. Neumann-Braun (editors). *The visual worlds of social network sites: Images and image-based communication on Facebook and Co.* Baden-Baden: Nomos, pp. 61–99.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5771/9783845232935-61>, accessed 20 October 2016.
- S. Bakhshi, D.A. Shamma, and E. Gilbert, 2014. "Faces engage us: Photos with faces attract more likes and comments on Instagram," *CHI '14: Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, pp. 965–974.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2556288.2557403>, accessed 20 October 2016.
- J.B. Bayer, N.B. Ellison, S.Y. Schoenebeck, and E.B. Falk, 2016. "Sharing the small moments: ephemeral social interaction on Snapchat," *Information, Communication & Society*, volume 19, number 7, pp. 956–977.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2015.1084349>, accessed 20 October 2016.
- L. Berlant, 1998. "Intimacy: A special issue," *Critical Inquiry*, volume 24, number 2, pp. 281–288.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/448875>, accessed 20 October 2016.
- d. boyd, 2011. "Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications," In: Z. Papacharissi (editor). *Networked self: Identity, community and culture on social network sites.* New York: Routledge, pp. 39–58.
- d. boyd and N.B. Ellison, 2007. "Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship," *Journal of*

Computer-Mediated Communication, volume 13, number 1, pp. 210–230.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x>, accessed 20 October 2016.

T. Bucher and A. Helmond, 2017. "The affordances of social media platforms," In: J. Burgess, T. Poell, and A. Marwick (editors). *SAGE handbook of social media*. London: Sage; version at <http://www.annelmond.nl/2016/08/01/the-affordances-of-social-media-platforms/>, accessed 20 October 2016.

M. Chayko, 2002. *Connecting: How we form social bonds and communities in the Internet age*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

J.R. Christensen, J.C. Hansen, F.H. Larsen, and J.S. Nielsen, 2015. "From Snapshot to Snapchat: Panopticon or synopticon?" *Akademisk kvarter*, volume 11, pp. 69–84, and at

<http://www.akademiskvarter.hum.aau.dk/pdf/vol11>

[/6_JoergenRiberChristesenJulieCecilieHansenFrederikHolmlarsenJesperSigNielsen_FromSnapshotToSnapchat.pdf](#), accessed 20 October 2016.

A.E. Clarke, 2005. *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

J. Constine, 2016. "Instagram CEO on Stories: Snapchat deserves all the credit," *TechCrunch* (2 August), at <https://techcrunch.com/2016/08/02/silicon-copy/>, accessed 8 August 2016.

N. Couldry, 2004. "Theorising media as practice," *Social Semiotics*, volume 14, number 2, pp. 115–132.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1035033042000238295>, accessed 20 October 2016.

DR Medieforskning, 2015. "Medieudviklingen 2015," at http://www.dr.dk/NR/rdonlyres/D8F466AE-9EFB-4617-B8CD-5737425911FD/6140447/medieudviklingen_2015_3.pdf, accessed 20 October 2016.

S. Handyside and J. Ringrose, forthcoming. "Snapchat memory and youth digital sexual cultures: Mediated temporality, duration, and affect," *Journal of Gender Studies*.

H.R. Hansen, I. Henningsen, and J. Kofoed, 2014. "When classroom culture tips into bullying," In: R.M. Schott and D.M. Søndergaard (editors). *School bullying: New theories in context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 267–300.

S. Hesse-Biber and A.J. Griffin, 2013. "Internet-mediated technologies and mixed methods research: Problems and prospects," *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, volume 7, number 1, pp. 43–61.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1558689812451791>, accessed 20 October 2016.

C. Hine, 2000. *Virtual ethnography*. London: Sage.

Y. Hu, L. Manikonda, and S. Kambhampati, 2014. "What we Instagram: A first analysis of Instagram photo content and user types," *Proceedings of the Eighth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, at <http://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM14/paper/view/8118>, accessed 20 October 2016.

A.M. Kaplan and M. Haenlein, 2010. "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media," *Business Horizons*, volume 53, number 1, pp. 59–68.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>, accessed 20 October 2016.

J. Katz and E. Crocker, 2015. "Selfies and photo messaging as visual conversation: Reports from the United States, United Kingdom and China," *International Journal Of Communication*, volume 9, at <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3180/1405>, accessed 20 October 2016.

J. Kofoed, 2014. "Non-simultaneity in cyberbullying," In: R.M. Schott and D.M. Søndergaard (editors). *School bullying: New theories in context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 159–184.

J. Kofoed and J. Ringrose, 2012. "Travelling and sticky affects: Exploring teens and sexualized cyberbullying through a Butlerian-Deleuzian-Guattarian lens," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, volume 33, number 1, pp. 5–20.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2012.632157>, accessed 20 October 2016.

M.C. Larsen, 2014. "Internetbaseret feltarbejde, spørgeskemaer og kvalitative interview: Unges brug af sociale medier," In: M. Frederiksen, P. Gundelach, and R. Skovgaard Nielsen (editors). *Mixed methods-forskning: Principper og praksis*. København: Hans Reitzel, pp. 155–186.

M.C. Larsen, 2013. "Unges identitetsdannelse på Facebook," In: J.L. Jensen and J. Tække (editors). *Facebook: Fra socialt netværk til metamedie*. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur, pp. 157–185.

M.C. Larsen, 2007. "Understanding social networking: On young people's construction and co-construction of identity online," paper presented at the Internet Research 8.0: Let's Play conference, Association of Internet Researchers (Vancouver).

M.C. Larsen and J. Kofoed, 2015. "Snip snap snude — dobbelthagerne er ude: Analyse: Hvorfor hitter Snapchat?" *Kommunikationsforum*, volume 8, at <http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/artikler>

[/Analyse-Hvorfor-hitter-Snapchat](#), accessed 20 October 2016.

A. Lasén, 2015. "Digital self-portraits, exposure and the modulation of intimacy," In: J.R. Carvalheiro and A.S. Telleña (editors). *Mobile and digital communication: Approaches to public and private*. Covilhã, Portugal: LabCom Books, pp. 61–78, and at http://www.labcom-ifp.ubi.pt/ficheiros/20150707-2015_12_public_private.pdf, accessed 20 October 2016.

K.M. Leander and K.K. McKim, 2003. "Tracing the everyday 'sittings' of adolescents on the Internet: A strategic adaptation of ethnography across online and offline spaces," *Education, Communication & Information*, volume 3, number 2, pp. 211–240.

K. Lobinger, 2016. "Photographs as things — photographs of things. A texto-material perspective on photo-sharing practices," *Information, Communication & Society*, volume 19, number 4, pp. 475–488. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1077262>, accessed 20 October 2016.

K. Lobinger and C. Brantner, 2015. "In the eye of the beholder: Subjective views on the authenticity of selfies," *International Journal of Communication*, volume 9, at <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3151>, accessed 20 October 2016.

M. MacLure, 2013. "The wonder of data," *Cultural Studies — Critical Methodologies*, volume 13, number 4, pp. 228–232. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1532708613487863>, accessed 20 October 2016.

G.E. Marcus, 1995. "Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, volume 24, pp. 95–117. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523>, accessed 20 October 2016.

A.E. Marwick and d. boyd, 2011. "I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience," *New Media & Society*, volume 13, number 1, pp. 114–133. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313>, accessed 20 October 2016.

V. Miller, 2008. "New media, networking and phatic culture," *Convergence*, volume 14, number 4, pp. 387–400. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1354856508094659>, accessed 20 October 2016.

C. Newton, 2016. "Instagram's new stories are a near-perfect copy of Snapchat stories," *The Verge* (2 August), at <http://www.theverge.com/2016/8/2/12348354/instagram-stories-announced-snapchat-kevin-systrom-interview>, accessed 8 August 2016.

L. Piwek and A. Joinson, 2016. "'What do they snapchat about?' Patterns of use in time-limited instant messaging service," *Computers in Human Behavior*, volume 54, pp. 358–367. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.026>, accessed 20 October 2016.

D. Radovanovic and M. Ragnedda, 2012. "Small talk in the digital age: Making sense of phatic posts," *Second Workshop on Making Sense of Microposts* (Lyon, 16 April), at http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-838/paper_18.pdf, accessed 20 October 2016.

A. Reckwitz, 2002. "Toward a theory of social practices: A development in culturalist theorizing," *European Journal of Social Theory*, volume 5, number 2, pp. 243–263. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/13684310222225432>, accessed 20 October 2016.

J.W. Rettberg, 2016. "What if the Web is almost over?" (22 May), at <http://jilltxt.net/?p=4492>, accessed 8 August 2016.

J. Ringrose, R. Gill, S. Livingstone, and L. Harvey, 2012. "A qualitative study of children, young people and 'sexting': A report prepared for the NSPCC," *National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* (London), at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/qualitative-study-children-young-people-sexting-report.pdf>, accessed 20 October 2016.

S. Shariff, 2008. *Cyber-bullying: Issues and solutions for the school, the classroom and the home*. London: Routledge.

T.R. Schatzki, 1996. *Social practices: A Wittgensteinian approach to human activity and the social*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

G. Stald, 2008. "Mobile identity: Youth, identity, and mobile communication media," In: D. Buckingham (editor). *Youth, identity, and digital media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, pp. 143–164, and at https://mitpress.mit.edu/sites/default/files/titles/free_download/9780262524834_Youth_Identity_and_Digital_Media.pdf, accessed 20 October 2016.

R. Thaarup and S. Scheutz, 2015. "Snapchat er dobbelthager der forsvinder igen," *Medieudviklingen 2015*, pp. 23–27, at http://www.dr.dk/NR/rdonlyres/D8F466AE-9EFB-4617-B8CD-5737425911FD/6140447/medieudviklingen_2015_3.pdf, accessed 20 October 2016.

TNS Gallup, 2015. "Social media life 2015," at <http://www.tns-gallup.dk>, accessed 20 October 2016.

J. Vitak, 2012. "The impact of context collapse and privacy on social network site disclosures," *Journal*

of *Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, volume 56, number 4, pp. 451–470.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.732140>, accessed 20 October 2016.

M. Wesch, 2009. "YouTube and you: Experiences of self-awareness in the context collapse of the recording Webcam," *Explorations in Media Ecology*, volume 8, number 2, pp. 19–34.

D.E. Wittkower, 2014. "Facebook and dramauthentic identity: A post-Goffmanian theory of identity performance on SNS," *First Monday*, volume 19, number 4, at <http://firstmonday.org/article/view/4858/3875>, accessed 20 October 2016.

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v19i4.4858>, accessed 20 October 2016.

Editorial history

Received 24 August 2016; accepted 20 October 2016.

Copyright © 2016, Jette Kofoed and Malene Charlotte Larsen. All Rights Reserved.

A snap of intimacy: Photo-sharing practices among young people on social media
by Jette Kofoed and Malene Charlotte Larsen.

First Monday, Volume 21, Number 11 - 7 November 2016

<http://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/rt/printerFriendly/6905/5648>

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v21i11.6905>