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Introduction

It is usually believed that teenagers do not care about their privacy on social media. However, recent research shows that minors aged between 14 and 17 spend more time than adults administering the privacy settings of their social networking sites, such as Facebook (Blank, Bolsover and Dubois, 2014). Starting from this contradiction, the aim of this article is to understand what privacy actually means for teenagers and how they experience it among themselves on social networks. We will show that since privacy can be defined as shared intimacy with peers, it becomes a form of capital used by teenagers with the purpose to consolidate their social ties and symbolic status in a process of self-valorisation. Based on our fieldwork on teenagers' Facebook and Ask.fm¹ profiles, we will also investigate how they manage the tension between secrecy and transparency in order to maximise their social and symbolic capital.

The end of privacy prophesied in January 2010 by Mark Zuckerberg now appears to be definitively contradicted by sociological research (Coll et al, 2011; Tubaro, Casilli and Sarabi, 2014). The CEO and founder of Facebook even had to retract his statement; he currently agrees that the future development of his service will depend on improving the protection of privacy.² According to Antonio Casilli (2013), the end of privacy hypothesis, which he is also one to reject, originates from two different sources. Firstly, it was engineered to serve the economic interests of companies such as Facebook, which use private data for business purposes and in whose interest it is that such data is as permeable and mobile as possible (see also Glassey and Coll, 2014). The second origin of this hypothesis stems, according to Casilli, from a conceptual "misunderstanding": "Despite these forms of resistance, it was because of a fundamental misunderstanding of the motivations driving the use of social media that the hypothesis of the end of privacy was able to emerge. Too often, analysts and commentators have confused what were in reality *updated forms of a strategic unveiling of personal information for the purposes of managing online social capital with a full waiver of privacy.*" (Casilli, 2013: §14, our translation).

In other words, practices that aim to gain online visibility and indulge in a form of self-unveiling are to be understood as a means to increase social capital, rather than an unconditional

¹ Ask.fm is a very popular social network site amongst teenagers in Switzerland. It allows any owner of an Ask.fm to publish questions anonymously.

² Oremus W (2014) Facebook Has Totally Changed Its Stance On Privacy. Business Insider, 26.06.2014. <http://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-privacy-pivot-2014-7>.

surrender of one's rights to a privacy (Livingstone, 2008; Schwarz, 2010; Marwick and Boyd, 2011, 2014; Boyd, 2014; Litt and Hargittai, 2014). Indeed, in legal literature and among researchers specialised in data protection, privacy is too often regarded as an informational bubble containing sensitive data that must be protected against possible intrusion by private or public institutions (Coll, 2014; Stalder, 2002). Until now, the notion of privacy, despite more than thirty years of scholarly work, is still a very complex and confusing notion (Bennett, 2008; Solove, 2008). What is more, most surveillance studies scholars see the protection of privacy as being inefficient against surveillance. However, even the most sceptical of them agree that privacy and data protection legislation, in spite of its defects, is the most usable and intelligible notion to elaborate a legislative framework (Bennett, 2011a, p. 508), especially without any credible alternative (Stalder, 2011). Some so-called "privacy scholars" are looking for an alternative way, trying to upgrade this concept at a collective (Regan, 2011; Westin, 2003) or relational (Nissenbaum, 2004; Steeves, 2009) level.

In this paper, we precisely consider privacy as a relation which ties people living in a society where there is a right to intimacy (Coll, 2012), rather than a space that must be delineated and protected, but "exists within the relation we have with others and is not defined by specific spatial boundaries" (Jeudy, 2007, p. 13, our translation). We follow the same lines as the definition of teenage privacy given by Sonia Livingstone (2008), which centres on the relational dynamics between peers in the management of personal information. On social networking sites, teenagers endeavour to exert a form of control on the knowledge their peers have of one another, according to negotiation modalities that relate to direct sociability. This process is based on the fact that teenagers primarily communicate with people they know (Cardon, 2008; Livingstone, 2008; Boyd, 2008; Metton Gayon, 2009; Balleys, 2012). We believe that this perspective better reflects the teenagers' relation to intimacy and limits the risk of reducing privacy to a singular notion of interiority that defines nothing more than a relationship of oneself with oneself (Foessel, 2008). What matters for teenagers in the first place, is the social prestige they get from intimate relationships, and from the social presentation of privacy that they are able to build and manage. This enables us to understand the meaning of practices implemented to negotiate, construct and enhance the value of privacy as a resource, which becomes symbolic and social capitals.

However, the social capital as understood in the context of a teenager's relations to others differs slightly from the social capital as defined by Pierre Bourdieu. Indeed, social bonds weaved among teenage peers do not constitute a "lasting network of relationships" (Bourdieu 1980, p. 3, our translation), because these ties, albeit the result of a strong investment in terms of identity and emotions (Balleys, 2015a), are, in most cases, not permanent. Also, the highly interdependent social and symbolic capitals enjoyed by teenagers are detached from their economic and cultural capitals, which rely largely on that of their parents³. While the

³ In all of its dimensions, the teenage capital is a developing entity that emerges mainly between its symbolic and social dimensions. The statement by Hobbes in the *Leviathan* (1958: 66), "to have friends is power",

social capital of adults is based on weak ties (Lin, 1995; Forsé, 2000), the social capital of teenagers is based on strong ties. For instance, “having friends” (social capital) allows for social prestige (in other words, symbolic capital) and provides a way to climb the teenage social ladder, with its specific set of values. It nevertheless fails to improve school grades, which are more useful in the construction of future capitals as teenagers grow into adulthood. What is more, a pupil who achieves the best academic results at school is often the one who enjoys the least symbolic capital among his or her peers (Dubet and Martucelli, 1996; Balley's 2012). The symbolic capital we analyse here is limited to relationships between adolescent peers – the reference group teenagers use to legitimise themselves that becomes particularly relevant as they grow out of childhood (Galland, 2001; de Singly, 2006; Boyd, 2008, 2014).

Methodology

The results presented herein are derived from a qualitative research project. Over the course of 18 months, between August 2012 and February 2013, an online ethnographic study was conducted on the social networking sites Facebook and Ask.fm (Balley's, 2015b, 2016). The profiles that yielded the data of the study were accessible under various conditions. Some were public, as was the case with the social networking site Ask.fm, where profiles are automatically open to all, and others were semi-public, such as the profiles accessible to “friends of friends” on Facebook. Pursuant to Facebook’s settings, an account was created to qualify as a “friend of a friend” and access the content posted on the second type of profile. We made no statement as to our social belonging or identity, and didn't ask for the “friendship” of other Facebook users. A pseudonym was used, the profile contained no reference to any cultural specificities and a landscape was chosen as its accompanying photo. In order to circulate freely among the plethora of teenage Facebook profiles, the search profile was linked to numerous existing accounts, created under various mentions likely to appeal to adolescents, such as: “The best parties in Geneva”. These anonymous “friendships” provided access to many Facebook profiles, which were set to be accessible to “friends of friends”. Our method complied with strict ethical standards (Ess et al, 2002; Cora Garcia, Standlee et al, 2009), since this is a shadowy area of interaction, situated somewhere between the private and public sphere. We were strictly limited to observation (Gold, 2003), and made sure never to intervene or take part in the exchanges we were monitoring online. Furthermore, in order to protect the anonymity of the teenagers participating in our study, no personal data was collected, other than their age and gender.

Over the course of 18 months, our study included four hours of weekly presence to monitor the profiles both on Facebook and Ask.fm of teenage boys and girls, aged from 14 to 17, selected according to the information provided by their profiles. The two networked sites are

rings with particular veracity in the context of networks of teenage peers. The power accrued through “friends” is limited to the sphere of adolescent sociability; it has yet to open doors to other forms of capital, such as cultural capital.

closely connected in teenagers' social uses. Links from Facebook to Ask.fm are very common in Facebook statuses, in hopes of receiving more questions on Ask.fm: "Please ask me"! Invitations to cross over into Facebook from Ask.fm are also frequent. When teenagers wish to communicate in a more private space they make appointments through the public wall at Ask.fm to meet in a private chat on Facebook. Our methodological goal however was an immersion in the universe of young adolescents' sociability, rather than monitoring the individual trajectories and the relations established between peers.

Being "publicly intimate"

The significance of adolescent privacy in the acquisition of autonomy

The hypothesis that for the teenage population, the significance of privacy resides in the construction of an intimacy that can be transferred to a "market exchange in intimate relations" (Sennett, 1977, p. 8), and not in the protection of a privacy likely to be intruded upon by third parties, has been largely verified through observation. At early adolescence, privacy, as shared intimacy with peers, has to be discussed on line in order to get any social recognition. A couple who doesn't exist on social media isn't considered as serious and a friend who never appears on a Facebook wall cannot be called a "real" friend. Therefore, love and friendship declarations abound on Facebook as ways to legitimate a sort of ability to privacy.

Although teenagers try to protect their secret garden from the potential intrusion of adults (Boyd, 2014), a secret garden still has to be nurtured and open to the pursued gaze of peers. To comprehend what the concept of privacy means in a context of adolescent sociability via social media, one first has to understand the role of strong ties established between peers in the process of juvenile socialisation, since it is those ties that cover the lion's share of the social capital a teenager enjoys.

From an adolescent perspective, being able to establish and develop strong bonds with peers, i.e. friendships and amorous ties, is a sign both of prestige and maturity (Balley's, 2015a, 2016). In teenage circles, the worth of a person, his or her prestige and symbolic capital, are assessed against the social capital that person can boast. Social capital is not only measured in quantitative terms, i.e. by the teenager's popularity, which is known to varying degrees depending on the various networks of peers he or she is involved with. It is also measured in qualitative terms, i.e. by the "authenticity" and degree of intimacy that the teenager enjoys and that is acknowledged within the various networks of peers he or she is part of. This is demonstrated, for instance, when a teenager shows off his or her social capital as a symbolic capital by boasting, online or offline, of having "many friends". Broadly speaking, adolescent representation of the notion of privacy can be defined by a certain form of intimacy, which we will endeavour to delineate.

Building, fostering and displaying strong ties among teenage peers is a fundamental socialising activity, in the sense that it enables them to maintain and display a certain distance to the

familial sphere, and allows them to show that they're "grown-up" (Metton-Gayon, 2009). A friendship or a romantic tie is a privileged bond that teenagers are keen to show off, unlike parental and family ties, which are imposed at birth. The ability to choose and to seduce individuals who will become "very close", closer than parents in everything that pertains to intimate matters, is a strong act of acquired autonomy (Balleys, 2015a). Acquiring autonomy during teenage years is therefore closely related to the acquisition of one's own social capital, which is constituted of strong ties with a selected group of peers. The notion of intimacy among teenage peers bears a strong relation to the concept of exclusivity, since the relationship is defined by the sharing of personal information to which others are not privy. Intimacy entails confidence, secrecy and everything one shares with a chosen few, to the exclusion of everyone else. According to the definition given by Michaël Foessel, intimacy is to be understood as "the symbol (...) of a freedom of choice whereby individuals experiment with their ability to establish unique relations" (Foessel, 2008, p. 77, our translation).

Valorising oneself by valorising intimacy

There is, in fact, a description of this form of intimacy management to be found in sociological literature that is already a century old. It appears in the writings of Georg Simmel, *The Secret and the Secret Society* (Simmel 1950, first published in 1908), who analyses the valorisation power of secrets and the exclusion dynamics they entail: "In the first place, the strongly emphasized exclusion of all outsiders makes for a correspondingly strong feeling of possession. For many individuals, property does not fully gain its significance with mere ownership, but only with the consciousness that others must do without it. The basis for this, evidently, is the impressionability of our feelings through *differences*. Moreover, since the others are excluded from the possession – particularly when it is very valuable – the converse suggests itself psychologically, namely, that what is denied to many must have special value. Inner property of the most heterogeneous kinds, thus, attains a characteristic value accent through the form of secrecy, in which the contextual significance of what is concealed recedes, often enough, before the simple fact that others know nothing about it" (Simmel, 1950, p. 332). If we are to follow this logic, as it enables us to rephrase our argument, having a secret to protect is a symbolic resource in the management of adolescent social capital, and deals social value to the person who holds it and to those who share it.

It seems to us that this dynamic of secrecy sheds a good deal of light on the issues that teenagers have to face in the way they manage their sociability, which has become increasingly complex with the emergence of social media, and which ultimately amounts to the valorisation of their privacy. How does one display one's privacy, made of strong ties between peers, in order to secure social prestige, while protecting its actual core, which is its intimate nature, its exclusivity? How can an individual, among the various networks of peers to which he or she is affiliated directly and through social media, ensure that the value of his or her privacy, i.e. its legitimacy and "authenticity", are acknowledged? In short, and according to Simmel, one has to reveal enough to secure the prestige associated with secrecy, but not

too much in order to preserve that very secrecy. It is a clever balancing act that teenagers seem to master better than adults, as they know how to seize upon social media and use them as "distributors of social respect" that "participate in the production and reproduction of symbolic hierarchies of acknowledgement" (Voirol 2005, p. 62, our translation). In this perspective, privacy and the notion of intimacy it implies clearly become a factor in the assessment of an individual's social value.

Teenagers are not only driven by the desire to protect their privacy against potential invasions, especially against the gaze of their parents. They are also attracted to privacy as a resource to expand their own autonomy and their own social capital. In other words, they have to learn to be "publicly intimate": they must learn how to valorise their privacy in order to gain social prestige, while maintaining its substance, without which it would lose its credibility and its ability to work as a resource. In fact, teenagers construct their social life by revealing only partially information about themselves and by carefully selecting the individuals who will enjoy access to such information. Through practices that aim to make friendships and amorous ties to peers visible to a more or less diffuse public, engaging in "private conversations with the masses" (Cardon 2009, p. 64, our translation), teenagers are able to rank the members of their social networks according to how much they choose to reveal to each one of them, thereby establishing scales of proximity and affinity. These relational strategies also play a role in the degree of prestige teenagers hope to gain within their networks of peers, according to the alliances, and non-alliances, that they are able to display and have publicly acknowledged.

The field observations made on Ask.fm show well how the management of secrecy generates attention amongst peers, as this website allows users to discuss intimacy with a wide audience. Anyone owning a profile can anonymously ask questions, but the nicknames of those answering are shown. Our observations reveal that the exchanges occur between people who know each other. Although the person who asks questions stays anonymous, the contents of questions and answers indicate closeness and shared knowledge about peers. This configuration allows fellows to publicly discuss secrets through complex forms of allusive speech, aiming to show that one knows things others do not. Many questions asked on Ask.fm concern two topics. First, the identity of someone the owner of a profile has a "crush" on. Secondly, the identity of a person who is hated by the owner of a profile. Most often, according to our observations, this identity is not revealed by the owner of the profile, allowing him or her to maintain some mystery while promoting a form of sensational relational news. For example, when Greg, a 15-year-old boy, was asked: "Who do you love?" by an anonymous person, he answered: "I will tell you if you tell me who you are". So the anonymous asker went on: "I'm too shy...", to which Greg responded: "Okay I can say It begins with H...".

By using social media, what we may well call the *online representation of privacy* is performed by means of practices that appropriate, and even divert, the parameters and functions

developed by companies such as Facebook or Ask.fm. A finely-balanced negotiation takes place between exposing and concealing, in order to awaken the interest of one's peers and to poke their curiosity, according to the dynamics of secrecy described above. The strongest and most efficient instance of legitimisation, in this context, is the romantic couple: stories about couples occupy a predominant place in terms of social prestige and in the subtle game of representing private life to one's peers, because being in a couple is the best statement of one's acquired intimacy and autonomy. Online processes that serve to make a couple official are therefore particularly important and codified, as are references to the tribulations experienced by the couple itself, the "highs and the lows" that pave the way of its existence (Balley's, 2016).

A double strategic significance

Facebook offers two communication platforms: one that is used by teenagers as a semi-public space, the "wall", and another, which they use as a private space, the "instant messaging" space, widely known under the acronym "IM". It is important to distinguish the "wall" from "IM", as teenagers use them in different and complementary ways. By juggling these public and private modes of conversation according to infinite modalities, they are able to show publicly that they maintain a private sentimental life, toying with the tension created by their eagerness to show that they have a privacy (secrets) and their unwillingness to completely lift the veil over it (Simmel, 1950).

The Facebook profiles of the teenagers included in our study have between 500 and 5000 "friends". It therefore follows that they do not personally know all the people within their Facebook network. The analysis of the content published on the walls of teenagers' profiles reveals that this space is used very much like a stage on which teenagers represent themselves. It is, in fact, very similar to a theatre stage, according to Goffman's terminology (Balley's, 2015b). This carefully orchestrated representation of privacy and its accompanying content is aimed at a potentially significant audience, as the large majority of teenagers set their profiles to be accessible to "friends of friends". This public is in fact an "imagined audience" (Boyd, 2008), in the sense that teenagers never actually know who will read the content they publish. On the other hand, access to discussions held in the IM space is carefully guarded and afforded only to a select few. One can compare this space to the backstage of the semi-public socialising that occurs on the wall; the latter is subject to team negotiations (Goffman, 1959), whereas the IM is a strictly private area. Unlike the visibility of the content published on the wall, the scope of which cannot be controlled because, by default, it is accessible to all Facebook friends (and to the friends of friends), the content shared within the IM is open only to a selection of individuals. Those who are allowed in the IM area are systematically chosen, whereas the others are left to take note explicitly of their exclusion from this personal information sharing process. The selection of privileged conversation partners is part of a game of privacy representation, and increases the tension surrounding secrecy, and therefore social prestige. The following excerpt, taken from the Facebook profile

of a 15-year-old girl whom we will call Sophie shows how access to information pertaining to her private life is publicly and collectively bargained. She posts the following status for all of her 2970 Facebook friends to see: "I regret everything! I miss him:’/4". 23 people click on the "like" button relating to her status, and an exchange of comments ensues between Sophie and her friends:

Mark: Who?

Juliette: who?

Paul: ??

Sophie: Forget it : \$⁵

Mark: C l... ?

Sophie: Nooooo!!

Mark: Oh OK

Juliette: Sophie go to IM

Sophie: OK

Ana: Who?

Sophie: Vibeer baby! ❤️

Stefan: J. C.?? ❤️

Sophie: Nooooo

Melissa: For fuck's sake Soph! You're such a stupid bitch! Why the fuck did you do that!

Sophie: Join me on IM baby!!

This exchange informs the network of Facebook friends of the quality of the bonds that unite its various members, and of the level of intimacy that these bonds carry. The first reactions from Sophie's peers are requests for further information, namely enquiries as to the identity of the young man whom she "misses". When Sophie refuses to provide any more information, by enjoining them to "forget it", Mark speculatively suggests the initials "CI", which Sophie emphatically rejects. Juliette then asks Sophie to join her in "IM", an invitation Sophie promptly accepts. One is to understand that Juliette is a close friend of Sophie's, as she possesses sufficient authority and legitimacy to invite her to further the exchange backstage, very much like Ana, who is invited to join the discussion on Viber, an application they can use to continue their exchange privately. On the other hand, the various boys who intervene in the comments space, i.e. Mark, Paul and Stefan, are left to speculate in vain and clearly kept in a state of ignorance. In other words, they are stranded at the gates of secrecy, which, according to Simmel, will give some symbolic value to Sophie. In the ensuing comments, Melissa crosses another boundary and demonstrates her closeness to Sophie when she scolds her publicly for her behaviour, alluding to elements of the event that a mere "friend" or a "friend of a friend" on Facebook cannot, she feels, understand. The familiarity she displays by calling her a "stupid bitch" is proof of their strong relation and adds a dramatic effect to the

⁴ An emoticon showing a crying face.

⁵ An emoticon showing a frowning face.

event being discussed. This shared complicity is then confirmed by Sophie's response: "Join me on IM baby!"

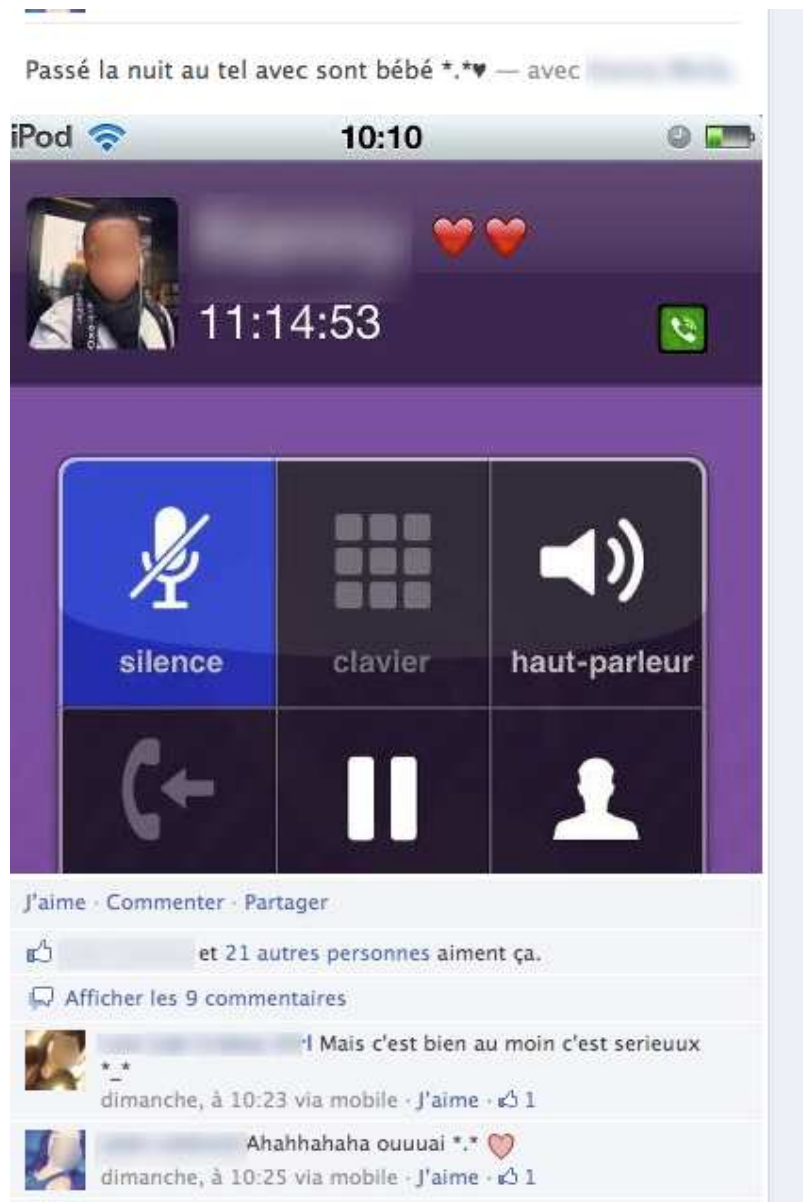
By posting a comment to the attention of her entire network of Facebook friends, Sophie's display and valorisation of her privacy is twofold. Firstly, she states that she feels regret and misses a boy, which implies that she was in an intimate relationship with someone of the opposite sex, a token of prestige in itself. A mention of romantic troubles is indeed a statement to the effect that she entertains a private life. Secondly, she uses manifest curiosity as to her status to mark the territory of her affinities, sorting those who will enjoy access to all the information from the others, in a manner that is visible to all. With this process of selection of her intimate friends, Sophie maintains and valorises openly her privacy, of which friendships are a part. Her friends, like her former boyfriend, are objectivised as currencies that can be traded on the intimacy exchange market (Sennett, 1977). The reciprocity of exchanges is one of the significant dimensions of this sentimental and relational exchange area, and Sophie will now expect that Juliette, Ana and Melissa will afford her the same elective practices.

Audience control strategies

As the above exchange demonstrates, there are a variety of ways to limit, and especially to control, the audience of certain posts: by turning to the "IM" area, but also by arranging to use messaging applications and software such as Viber or WhatsApp. The question is then why do teenagers choose to engage in such stagings. Why don't they simply resort to messaging applications right away to discuss topics that, in any case, they will keep to a very close circle of friends? Why use public platforms to arrange private meetings? These are questions we are now able to answer in a clear and straightforward manner. For privacy to retain the characteristics of a symbolic resource, i.e. for it to be used as a means to valorise social capital and to raise social status with regard to one's peers, it must not only exist within the "IM" space, for instance, but also be visible to everyone, which explains why these public and semi-public areas are used and surrounded by so many theatrics. This aspect is what we call the *representation of privacy*. The passage to backstage discussions must therefore happen in front of an audience of peers, and be carried out in a fairly ostentatious manner. Displaying the most exclusive intimacy possible in front of the largest crowd possible is a means to optimise the social worth of an individual before the entity that has the required legitimacy to act as his or her judge: the peers. Ensuring the couple's visibility, since it is the form of relationship the most eagerly exploited by teenagers to gain social prestige (Balley's, 2015a, 2016), and also the most legitimate in the eyes of one's peers, is first and foremost a way of bringing proof of the existence of a shared intimacy, which is the indicator of the "seriousness" of a romantic commitment (Schwarz, 2010).

Another method frequently used by adolescents to prove the existence of their privacy, while protecting the intimate nature of the couple's relationship, is to create a screen capture on a mobile device. This practice enables them to share an instant that occurs on device's screen,

either in the form of text, or of a picture. There are numerous ways in which this is done, and it provides teenagers with as many experimentation fields to test the boundaries between the public and private spheres. The principle remains the same: to call upon an audience of peers to bear witness to feelings of love, to fights, to states of emotional turmoil, to humiliations, and so on, in short, to declarations of love and of war.



Having spent 11 hours, 14 minutes and 53 seconds on the phone with her boyfriend, Alizée creates a screen capture just before hanging up, with the name of her boyfriend and the duration of the phone call displayed on the screen. She then posts the photo on her Facebook wall, with the following comment: “spent the night on the phone with her baby”, a statement that earns her 22 clicks on the “like” button and nine comments from her friends, among which features the following: “well that's good, it means it's serious”. By responding to Alizée’s solicitations, her peers acknowledge and validate the couple's authenticity. Screen captures allow, successively, to officialise a couple, and to objectivise a break-up, both processes relying

on the publication of certain intimate exchanges. However, they are the result of a work of representation of the social bond.

Our empirical research furthermore shows that this staging of privacy is not limited to love relationships, even though they can benefit from a higher prestige, especially at this age since they are rather rare. Facebook posts show that teens seldom pretend to be in love relationships, especially high school students. For example, the post of Maxime, 14-year-old – “Like if you're single! Discuss whether you're a couple, with the name and date!” - got eighty-five “likes”, meaning being single. Only three teens have posted a comment mentioning the name of their partner with the Facebook link to the partner’s profile, as well as the date their couple started. Friendships are much more frequent and have less symbolic value. However, they are essential to the acquisition of prestige in adolescence. Whoever has “no friends” is systematically banned from juvenile sociability (Balleys, 2015a, 2016). The way friendship ties are shown is the same as that which applies to love relationships. It is important to show that a tie exists, even if it is not considered as strong as a love relationship. Screenshots are very useful in these processes: they provide the proof that a relation is shared. For example, some publish on Facebook extracts from a conversation held on a messaging application, between them and their friends. In the excerpt below, Diane, 16 years old, decided to publicise messages she exchanged with Cora, in order to show the complicity that binds them:

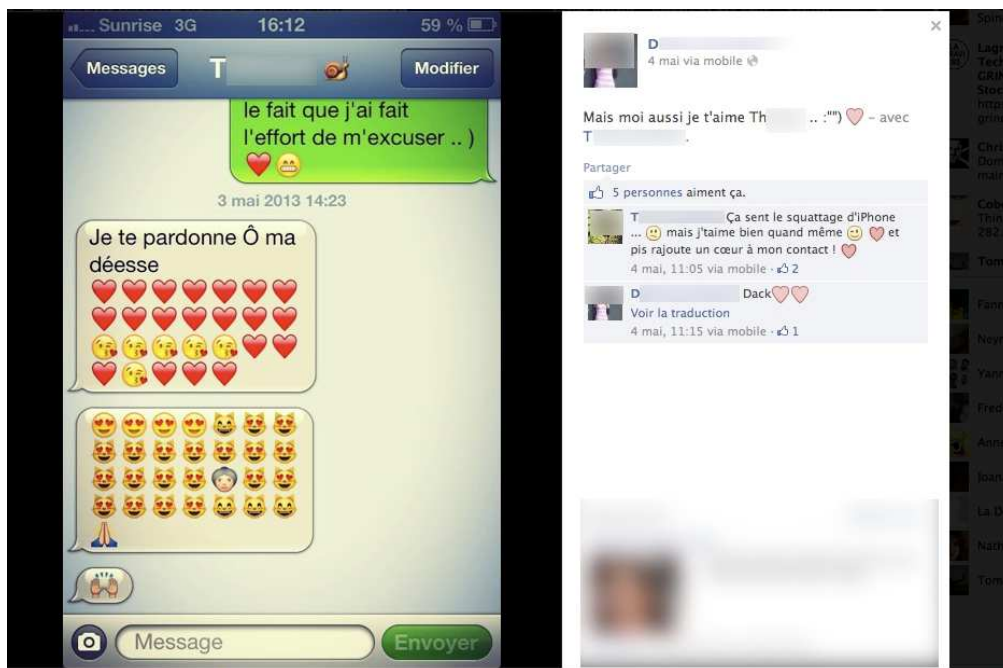


This⁶ shows how an initially private conversation can be continued on a public platform like Facebook, in order to claim social prestige from peers. Indeed, the content here is nothing

⁶ “[...] We are so damned fool! – Fool fool - We are so damned fool, life! – Me too! – Forgive me I posted this – No worries, my serious love”

"secret" but nevertheless constitutes a form of private joke, as only good friends can share and understand, like this self-made parody of a worldwide hit. On the left is the capture of the conversation that took place on WhatsApp, where the two girls were having fun about the words of a popular song. On the right is the screenshot of the Diane's timeline and the comments that followed. Only eight people have "liked" this status, which is rather little compared to Diane's other publications. All comments are actually the result of an exchange between Diane and Cora. This conversation is the opportunity to reaffirm their mutual complicity: first when Diane apologizes to Cora because she posted an intimate exchange and secondly when Cora accepts the apologies saying "no worries, my serious love". Sending multiple small hearts is yet another confirmation of their commitment. We understand that the act of publication officially states their friendship: it makes public the intimacy between them. The absence of response by peers does not mean there is no reception. At the very least, the presence of an audience is expected by Cora and Diane. What is more, the publication of an intimate exchange also validates and secures the social tie for the protagonists themselves. Cora finally agrees very well to this move from a private conversation to a semi-public space of Facebook. It shows mutual affection rather than any feeling of violation of an area considered private.

However, the screenshot and its publication play with the limits of what is acceptable to both parties, especially for the one who did not choose to share content. When teenagers spontaneously choose to publicise the interest and the affection they receive without consulting the people concerned, temporary conflicts sometimes ensue. In the extract shown below, Lola, 15, reproduces a number of private messages she received from her friend Sebastian: a multitude of hearts, emoticons expressing kisses as well as the sentence "I forgive you, oh, my goddess".



Lola publishes a screenshot of this talk on Facebook⁷, with the comment: “I love you too, Sebastian.” Again, the conversation that follows in the comments eventually becomes a public exchange between the two protagonists of the private conversation, without any peers intervening. But Sebastian feels that this practice is a form of “squatting”, i.e. taking possession of something that does not belong to us completely, and he comments this remark with a smiley face with a rather unhappy face. However, in the following sentence he reverts to a softer and more reassuring tone, “but I love you anyway”, to finally ask her to add a heart on her contact (rather than a snail, in this case). The publication of this conversation allows Lola to show off her new shared intimacy with Sebastian, which was not stated in previous Facebook statuses. Through this exchange, Lola demonstrates, to the peers as well as to Sebastian, that she appreciates this growing complicity. Indeed, the screenshot is the confirmation that the relationship is assumed socially, and that no one is ashamed to “appear” as close friends.

Conclusion

In the dynamics of privacy representation we describe above, an audience of peers serves as an authority of legitimisation of the couple. It provides acknowledgement and validation of the authenticity of the feelings and commitment invested in the relationship. This instance that bestows legitimacy also exerts a relatively strong pressure on teenage couples, submitting them to a form of social control with a scope that has been significantly increased since the emergence of social media. A very subtle dialectic can be observed on social networking sites, and marks the various milestones of teenagers' private lives. This private life – that is to say, according to our perspective, their privacy – is mainly driven by their love relationships, when there is one, and their relations with close friends. Sites such as Facebook or Ask.fm provide communication platforms on which couples must learn ways to make themselves visible, while maintaining their audience of Facebook friends in a state of suspense; this helps explain the dramatic effect and theatrics that surround their intimacy. For a network of teenage peers, managing privacy through social media is more akin to a form of “strategic sociality” (Voirol, 2011, p. 142), the purpose of which is to develop and valorise intimacy as a resource harbinger of prestige, rather than a surrender of the notion of privacy and the value one associates with it. This view echoes the precursory writings of Simmel, where he describes the social dynamics of secrecy (Coll, 2012).

Also to be considered is the exchange market of intimacies (Sennett, 1977), developed and bargained among adolescent peers based on their assessment of the value of privacy. This criterion shows a certain degree of symbolic violence, as acts of social judgement are passed on. This notion is rather specific in that it includes a judgement of someone's intrinsic value based on that person's capacity to establish strong ties with his or her peers. It therefore

⁷ “[...] given the fact that I apologized [...] Me too, I love you! – It looks like someone squatted my iPhone in... But I love you even though – So, add a heart to your profile! – Okay.”

follows a logic whereby social bonds are used as commodities, a logic which is then extended to individuals (Foessel, 2008; Voirol, 2011; Illouz, 2007, 2012), because the degree of “authenticity” teenagers enjoy resides in the public validation of the intimacy they’re able to secure; this becomes the criterion upon which a teenager’s own value is acknowledged. Furthermore, the privacy of an individual also becomes a commodity. The people working in the digital industry are starting to wise up to this fact, and are beginning to design tools that are meant to safeguard people’s privacy (Coll, 2015).

By suggesting that privacy can be viewed as a resource used to bolster a person’s social and symbolic capital, and not just as a substance to protect, this article also demonstrates the extent to which the notion of privacy is beset by power struggles and manoeuvres geared towards gaining control. In this perspective, privacy can be understood as an instrument of self-governance (Foucault, 1986) and as a means to gain autonomy. But, from the moment privacy acquires a normative definition, it can also be viewed as a tool to govern individuals (Coll, 2014). Although researchers, as well as jurists and politicians, are accountable for creating this definition, it remains at odds with the meaning that individuals want to instil in their privacy on a daily basis (Coll, 2015).

The next step in the research into adolescent representations of the notion of privacy and the sociability practices that ensue will be to examine the issues surrounding the social constraints exerted upon those who are forced to openly valorise their privacy, and therefore to actually have one. Future research methods will enable us to observe teenagers who are excluded from this dynamic of using strong ties as a means of self-valorisation, those who peers call “friendless”. A first limitation to the results presented herein resides in the fact that our research only considers a fraction, albeit a dominant one, of the teenage population, which consists of individuals who actually enjoy a privacy that they can mobilise as a resource to manage their social capital. For reasons of social, economic and cultural belonging, a study more closely focused on individual teenagers is necessary. The next research objective is therefore to concentrate the methodology on individuals and their own social experience of the juvenile hierarchical system, and how it relates to the concept of privacy. A second limitation to this research may well reside in the over-interpretation of the capacity of teenagers to make information technologies their own. This has given rise to an endless debate between authors and institutional stakeholders who seem to be of the opinion that teenagers are prey to every type of danger. In this article, we felt it right to insist on their autonomy and their capacity to find new ways of using the technologies at their disposal. What is the extent of teenagers’ ability to exert indirect control over the social dynamics of secrecy, which we have hinted to? Do they have the means to achieve their goals, without having to resort to a process of representing and valorising their privacy? Or are they actually forced to engage in these efforts of representation? These are the central questions our investigation has led us to, and they will certainly guide further research on this subject.

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