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Privacy, self-disclosure and self-image of Spanish teenagers on social networking sites. The case of Fotolog

Privacidad, difusión de información personal y auto-imagen [e imagen de sí mismos] de los adolescentes españoles en las redes sociales. El caso de Fotolog

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents the results of a research study that analyzes the quantitative content of 355 entries on the social network Fotolog to determine the type of information shared by adolescents on the Web 2.0. The variables considered are related to intensity of use of the platform, the personal information disclosed, and the representational strategies used. The study concludes that Spanish adolescents strategically manage personal information and privacy. Adolescents sacrifice part of their privacy in exchange for the popularity and prestige they obtain as a result of being recognized by others in their idealized identity of themselves that they present.

RESUMEN: Este artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación que, mediante el análisis de contenido cuantitativo de 355 entradas de la red social Fotolog, observa qué tipo de informaciones comparten los adolescentes en la web 2.0. Las variables consideradas están relacionadas con la intensidad de uso de la plataforma, la información personal revelada, así como las estrategias representacionales empleadas. El estudio concluye que los y las adolescentes españoles manejan estratégicamente la información personal y la privacidad. Los adolescentes sacrifican parte de su privacidad a cambio de la popularidad y prestigio que obtienen al ser reconocidos por los demás en la identidad idealizada que presentan de sí mismos.

Keywords: Social networking sites, privacy, identity, adolescence, gender.

Palabras clave: redes sociales, privacidad, identidad, adolescencia, género.

Scientific interest in social networks has increased over the last five years. Recent articles consider the uses and content related to identity which are common among adolescents and young adults¹. One of the most interesting lines of research explores the risks and opportunities offered by these

¹ See PATCHIN, Justin W., HINDUJA, Sameer, "Trends in online social networking: adolescent use of MySpace over time", *New Media & Society*, vol. 12, n° 2, March 2010, pp. 197-216; SUBRAHMANYAM, Kaveri, REICH, Stephanie M. et al., "Online and offline social networks: Use of social networking sites by emerging adults", *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, vol. 29, n° 6, November-December 2008, pp. 420-433; THELWALL, Mike, "Social Networks, Gender and Friending: An Analysis of MySpace Member Profiles", *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, vol. 59, n° 8, June 2008, pp. 1321-1330.

new media². This article examines the personal information and self-presentation strategies of Spanish adolescents on the social network Fotolog. First, we consider previous research on social networks, in order to provide a framework for study within a perspective that considers the strategic dimension of adolescents' Internet habits³. We then analyze the type of personal information that Spanish adolescents share, and how this fits in with the construction of their online interactions, by analyzing the content of 355 Fotolog entries. The results show that information about oneself (including self-presentation and relating private experiences) is at the heart of the structure of adolescents' engagement with social networks. Displaying themselves openly in images, identifying themselves with their first name and describing emotional relationships are some of the ways in which they disclose personal information.

1. Social networks, identity and privacy

Social networks play a basic role in the socialization of adolescents⁴. 93% of Spanish young people aged between 11 and 20 years old use them, and Tuenti, Facebook and Fotolog were the three most extensively used networks in 2009, when this study was conducted (Fundación Pfizer, 2009)⁵. The study by Sánchez and Fernández⁶ emphasizes the frequency of use among young people. 66% of the respondents used these networks on a daily basis and 18% did so several times a week. The figures therefore show that participation in social networks is very high among Spanish young people, and that they use them intensively.

2 See LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, "Las redes sociales online, una oportunidad con riesgo para los adolescentes", in GRANÉ, Mariona, WILLEM, Cilia (eds.), *Web 2.0: Nuevas formas de aprender y participar*, Laertes, Barcelona, 2009, pp. 87-106.

3 See SEVICK BORTREE, Denise, "Presentation of Self on the Web: an ethnographic study of teenage girls' weblogs", *Education, Communication and Information*, vol. 1, n° 5, March 2005, pp. 25-39.

4 See GARCÍA GÓMEZ, Antonio, "Disembodiment and Cyberspace: Gendered Discourses in Female Adolescents' Personal Information Disclosure", *Discourse and Society*, vol. 2, n° 21, March 2010, pp. 131-165; HUFFAKER, David A., CALVERT, Sandra L., "Gender, identity, and language use in teenage blogs", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 2, n° 10, 2005, <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue2/huffaker.html>; SEVICK BORTREE, Denise, *op. cit.*; SVENINGSSON, Malin, "Young People's Gender and Identity Work in a Swedish Internet Community", in FISCHER-HÜBNER, Simone, DUQUENOY, Penny et al. (eds.), *The Future of Identity in the Information Society*. Springer, New York, 2008, pp. 113-128; THELWALL, Mike, *op. cit.*

5 See FUNDACIÓN PFIZER, *La juventud y las redes sociales en Internet*, Fundación Pfizer, Madrid, 2009. http://www.fundacionpfizer.org/docs/pdf/Foro_Debate/INFORME_FINAL_Encuesta_Juventud_y_Redes_Sociales.pdf

According to more recent data, 91% of Internet users have at least one account on a social network, and participate in an average of 2.31 different social networks (4^a OLEADA Observatorio de Redes Sociales: Las marcas empiezan a encontrar límites. 10 April 2012. <http://tcanalysis.com/blog/posts/las-marcas-empiezan-a-encontrar-limites-en-la-utilizacion-de-las-redes-sociales>, consulted 16 June 2012. However, the figures show a migration in terms of the networks they participate in - to Facebook (85%), Tuenti (36%) and Twitter (32%), in 2012, from Tuenti (69%), Facebook (33%) and Fotolog (8%) in 2009 - and a desertion of Fotolog (3% in 2012, albeit with 19% of respondents reporting they they had kept their account open, despite not updating it), it should borne in mind that the data are not comparable, because the 2012 study worked with a population aged between 16 and 45 years old, and the age band of the population in the 2009 study was 11-20 years old. Moreover, our research does not focus on the evolution of Fotolog, but instead practices in social networks, although we accept the limitation that this research presents, and the difficulty of analyzing such ephemeral spaces.

6 See SÁNCHEZ, Adolfo, FERNÁNDEZ M. Poveda, "Generación 2.0, 2010. Hábitos de los adolescentes en el uso de las redes sociales", <http://www.slideshare.net/ucjc/generacin-20-hbitos-de-los-ad>.

These 2.0 platforms are an important environment for the exploration of identity⁷, intimate self-disclosure⁸, social comparison and the expression of idealized aspects of who the individual would like to be⁹. The desire to construct a representation that affirms the individual and is affirmed by the peer group is at the heart of the explosion in online communication¹⁰. The main uses of social networks have a social objective: staying in touch, chatting and finding out what friends are doing, sharing interests, giving opinions and sending one's own content¹¹. In this context, the ability to share content that reinforces sociability and makes relationships with friends stronger becomes very important¹². These networks are therefore organized around the information users provide, which is mainly about themselves. As suggested by some authors, as these networks draw on the biographical data of their users, they encourage privacy to be opened up to others¹³.

Despite the wide range of possibilities offered by each network, the strikingly similar uses made of them by young people confirms the existence of conventions about ways of presenting oneself on the Internet¹⁴, as well as the information that should be disclosed, concealed or reserved. These conventions are transformed by use and interplay between users¹⁵. The combination of a peer-based culture with the utilities offered by each social network thereby ends up defining how young peoples' identities are expressed, and the terms in which online relationships are established¹⁶.

Some of the motivations for the adolescents' extensive involvement in generating these online identities is related to self-examination¹⁷ and the search for environments to share experiences and create situations of intimacy with friends¹⁸, although the information is also usually simultaneously shared with contacts, or even with strangers¹⁹. Adolescents are therefore forced to make strategic decisions about how they use their social networks, and especially about the information they want to publish on them, taking into account the perceived audience and what they want this audience to know about them²⁰. In general, young people are cautious about the information they share²¹.

7 See STERN, Susannah R., "Expressions of Identity Online: Prominent Features and Gender Differences in Adolescents' World Wide Web Home Pages", *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 48, n° 2, 2004, pp. 218-243. MANAGO, Adriana M., GRAHAM, Michael B. et al., "Selfpresentation and gender on MySpace", *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, vol. 6, n° 29, November-December 2008, pp. 446-58.

8 See VALKENBURG, Patti M., SCHOUTEN, Alexander P. et al., "Adolescents' identity experiments on the internet", *New Media & Society*, vol.7, n° 3, June 2005, pp. 383-402.

9 MANAGO, Adriana M., GRAHAM, Michael B. et al., *op. cit.*

10 See LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, BRAKE, David R. "On the rapid rise of social networking sites: new findings and policy implications", *Children & Society*, vol. 24, n° 1, January 2010, pp. 75-83.

11 See SÁNCHEZ, Adolfo, FERNÁNDEZ M. Poveda, *op. cit.*; SÁNCHEZ-NAVARRO, Jordi, ARANDA, Daniel, "Internet como fuente de información para la vida cotidiana de los jóvenes españoles", *El profesional de la información*, vol. 20, n° 1, January-February 2011, pp. 32-37; SUBRAHMANYAM, Kaveri, REICH, Stephanie M. et al., *op.cit.*

12 See SÁNCHEZ-NAVARRO, Jordi, ARANDA, Daniel, *op.cit.*

13 See VALKENBURG, Patti M., PETER, Jochen, "The Effects of Instant Messaging on the Quality of Adolescents' Existing Friendships: A Longitudinal Study", *Journal of Communication*, vol. 59, n° 1, March 2009, pp. 79-97.

14 See STERN, Susannah R., "Sexual Selves on the World Wide Web: Adolescent Girls' Home Pages as Sides for Sexual Self-Expression", in BROWN, Jane D., STEELE, Jeanne R. et al. (eds.), *Sexual Teens, Sexual Media. Investigating Media's Influence on Adolescent Sexuality*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah NJ, 2002, pp. 265-285.

15 See SEVICK BORTREE, Denise, *op. cit.*

16 See LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, *op. cit.*

17 See VALKENBURG, Patti M., SCHOUTEN, Alexander P. et al., *op.cit.*

18 See LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, *op. cit.*

19 See SEVICK BORTREE, Denise, *op. cit.*

20 See STERN, Susannah R., *op. cit.*

21 See PATCHIN, Justin W., HINDUJA, Sameer, *op.cit.*

Information (by means of text or images) and connections with others give meaning to the network, but also redefine the notion of privacy, which is gradually becoming less related to the amount of information published, and more closely linked to controlling which part of the audience has access to what type of information²². What adolescents disclose about themselves can help them to achieve social control over their relationship with others, and this disclosure is therefore undertaken strategically, with the goal of achieving desired social outcomes and gaining public approval²³ which leads to increased self-esteem. It should also be remembered that social networks are spaces for risks and opportunities with a gender bias²⁴.

This study considers adolescents' media habits and specifically the type of information that adolescents share on the social network Fotolog using the photographs, texts and comments they generate. The results presented below compare our research with previous studies.

2. Method

This research is based on a content analysis of a total of 355 entries on the Fotolog social network, using a structured observation template. We analyzed the images, text and comments in each entry, which were all collected on the same day (in January 2010). The universe chosen was the population consisting of Fotolog members with autobiographical updates aged between 13 and 25 years old and living in Spain. We used snowball sampling to determine the 400 sample units. We selected only one entry (the most recent) in each Fotolog account, and as a result the sample consisted of 400 different user inputs. The analysis was conducted for one month (April 2010). Between the collection of the sample and the data analysis, 45 of the Fotolog accounts to which these entries belonged were closed, and as such the final sample consisted of 355 entries, of which 256 were by girls (72%) and 99 were by boys (28%). The data were coded using an online observation template that enabled them to be automatically registered in a unified database. The data analysis was performed with SPSS statistical analysis software.

Two pilot tests were carried out before the observations. The observation template, which was designed specifically for this study, was refined after an initial evaluation. The second pilot test consisted of an initial application of the template to a subsample of 40 entries, and was conducted by two researchers. The intercoder reliability as measured by Cohen's Kappa test (Table 1) resulted in a "substantial" or "perfect" agreement for all variables except for the "Body" variable, for which a "moderate" agreement between the coders was obtained, according to the interpretation suggested by Landis; Koch²⁵.

22 See LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, *op. cit.*

23 See STERN, Susannah R., *op. cit.*

24 See RINGROSE, Jessica, ERIKSSON, Katarina, "Gendered risks and opportunities? Exploring teen girls' digitized sexual identities in postfeminist media contexts", *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, vol. 7, n° 2, August 2011, pp. 121-138.

25 See LANDIS, J. Richard, KOCH, Gary G., "The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data", *Biometrics*, vol. 33, n° 1, March 1997, pp. 159-174.

Table 1. Cohen's Kappa values for each variable

Item	Kappa value	p
Displays nudity	.787	$p < 0.001$
Face visible	.803	$p < 0.001$
Gaze	.776	$p < 0.001$
Pose	.742	$p < 0.001$
Body	.574	$p < 0.001$
Action	1.000	$p < 0.001$
Partner	1.000	$p < 0.001$
Friends of the same sex	1.000	$p < 0.001$
Friends of the opposite sex	1.000	$p < 0.001$
Others not specified	.899	$p < 0.001$
Nobody else	.628	$p < 0.001$
Location	1.000	$p < 0.001$
N of valid cases = 40		

The final version of the template includes the technical/descriptive details of each update, the information published by the users, the content of the comments they exchange, and finally, shows how adolescents present themselves in photographs, in terms of privacy and displaying their body and space.

3. Results

3.1. Personal details

The adolescents carefully prepare the environment in which they are going to share information. They combine idealized presentation strategies and dialogue, and use technology to create spaces for communication and exchange. The first item used for presentation in the virtual space is the alias. When choosing this, 25% of users and the users choose a pseudonym that reveals their first name, which is usually distorted but still identifiable, such as: 'nurichan', 'xesco_15', 'laiietah' or 'laur3taaa'. Another identifiable trend is the choice of a sexualized alias, as in 21% of cases, with names like: '*sexaddicted*', '*strawberriescondom*' or '*feelmybody*'²⁶. Personal information is shared in the first case, while the second strategy is used to build a provocative identity. This provocative identity may be linked to the shop window identity aspect observed by Livingstone in adolescents' virtual habits. Adolescents may choose to use networks to communicate or to display themselves²⁷. These two actions are not mutually exclusive and as shown by the figures, display often has a significant presence.

75% of the girls and 67% of the boys in the sample analyzed had uploaded at least 50 personal photographs to their photolog; some had even uploaded more than 1,000. Unlike other networks,

26 In Spanish original: 'adicttoalsex', 'coondondefressax', or 'sienteemicuerpoo'. This figure is for the initial sample of 400 subjects, since although some accounts were closed prior to the analysis, the aliases were still available.

27 See LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, *op.cit.*

Fotolog only allows one photograph to be posted every day, and as such the amount of data also reflects the amount of time young people spend actively connected to this network.

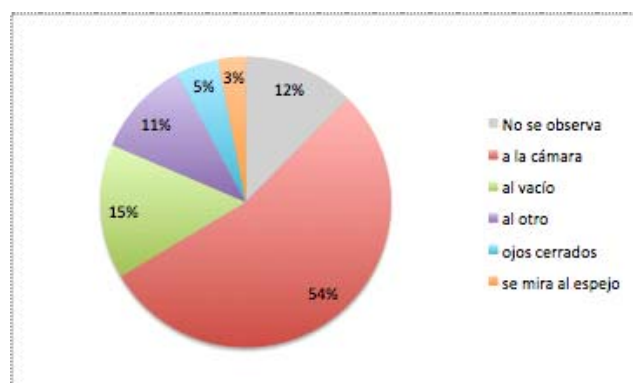
In some cases, users exchange passwords in order to update another person's space, and mention this in texts that they post which usually praise personality and actions of the owner of the photolog. These dynamics are clearly visible in the update: 'Hoy no hay este golfo de /kevin_5_95 sino esta golfa /meenloqezees' [*The layabout /kevin_5_95 isn't here today the layabout /meenloqezees is here instead*]. Meanwhile, some photologs belong to more than one person. This is also evidenced by the alias, which may be a combination of various user names or a shared alias devised specifically for the occasion, such as: 'THEEEE 4 MEMBEEERS' or 'SISTERSall.'²⁸

3.2. Visual information and idealization

The face is identifiable in 79% of cases, either because it is completely visible (58%) or because although it is only partially displayed, the person can be easily recognized (21%). In only 7% of cases, it is impossible to ascertain the identity of the person in the photograph because the face is not shown or it is covered. The adolescents therefore want to be recognized. The interaction space is constructed based on the link between their online identity and their offline identity. The game is based on using the tools of the virtual platform to idealize or enhance the offline identity rather than creating a false identity. Other studies also reinforce the idea that social networks facilitate integration rather than fragmentation of identity (Manago, Graham et al., 2008).

Moreover, as also shown by the data above, boys and girls pose for the photo, and think about how they want to be seen before taking it. They look at the camera in most cases, although around 15% of them look into space (graph 1): these are the poses used by most models in advertising. In any event, the pose, which is carefully conceived and orchestrated, is an indicator that displaying the face is not a contingency but instead a conscious and strategic decision by the users.

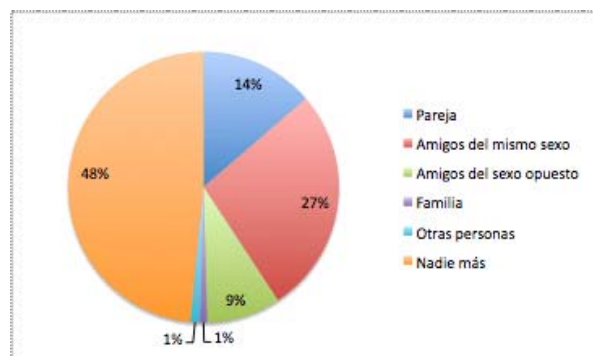
Graph 1. Percentage distribution of gaze direction. [Not observed, At the camera, Into space, At the other person, Eyes closed, Looking in the mirror]



Only the user appears in 48% of the photographs in the entries analyzed (Figure 2). Far from being interpreted as a tendency towards isolation, this can be seen as an indicator of the focus in social networks on working on one's self-image.

²⁸ In Spanish original: 'LEEEES 4 MEEMBRIIS!' or 'HERMANAS todo'

Graph 2. People appearing in the photograph in addition to the user. [Partner, Friends (same sex), Friends (opposite sex), Family, Others, Nobody else]



Girls present themselves alone more often than boys. Of the 170 photographs in which the user appears alone, 113 are of girls. Girls also appear most often with their friends (with friends in 79 of the 95 photos taken). Family members are present in the photographs to a very limited extent, while friends appear more often (36%). The presence of the peer group shows at whom the adolescents are aiming their messages and interactions. The presence of partners is also common (14%), albeit to a lesser extent than friends. There are erotic connotations in 7% of the photographs in which the partner appears. These results match the findings of Boyd²⁹ about the higher level of participation by girls in social networks and how they focus their content on their relationships more than boys do.

The importance of photographs on social networking sites supports the idea of the importance of display compared to text in these virtual spaces³⁰. These practices involve the challenge of simultaneous self-display for real and virtual friends as well as acquaintances and strangers³¹. Young³² noted that photographs were the information that was most frequently updated in the profiles, and looking good and displaying the desired image for oneself are two of the factors behind the choice of images.

The home is where photographs are taken most often (36%); and specifically in spaces such as the bathroom or bedroom (graph 3). The adolescents make no explicit effort to hide their location, and the fact that most images are taken in the home reinforces the argument that young people want to have control over their privacy in order to capture images of their own bodies.

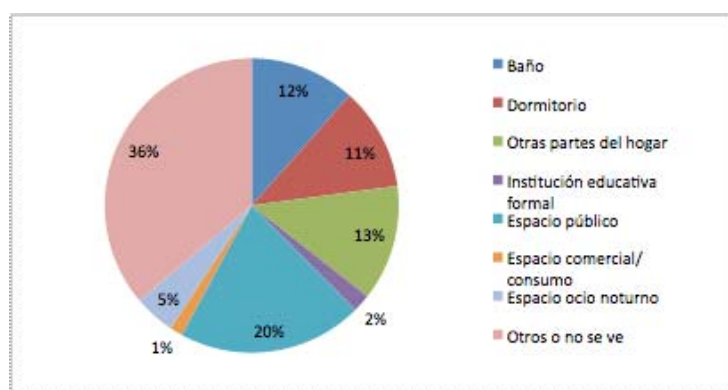
Graph 3. Percentage distribution of the place where the photograph is taken. [Bathroom, Bedroom, Elsewhere in home, Official educational institution, Public space, Commercial/consumer space, Nighttime leisure space, Others/not seen].

29 See BOYD, Danah., "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life", in BUCKINGHAM, David (ed.), MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning – Youth, Identity, and Digital Media Volume, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2007, pp. 119-142.

30 See Zhao, Shanyang, Grasmuck, Sherri, Martin, Jason, "Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships", *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 24, n° 5, September 2008, pp. 1816-1836.

31 SEVICK BORTREE, Denise, *op. cit.*

32 See YOUNG, Kirsty, "Online Social Networking: An Australian Perspective", *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, vol. 7, n° 1, 2009, pp. 39-57.



The adolescents display themselves for the camera in a sexually provocative pose or in their underwear in 44% of the photolog updates analyzed. As noted in other studies (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010), individuals displaying themselves in their underwear account for a very small percentage (3%), although in both this study and other prior research (Manago, Graham et al., 2008), there is a clear sexualization of images in social networks. In a prior qualitative study by the authors³³ it is apparent that while many adolescents do not initially upload eroticized photographs of themselves, they often end up doing so.

22% of individuals display themselves in a reclined or leaning pose, and almost half of these (48%) do so in sexually provocative clothing or wearing underwear (as shown in contingency table 5). Reclining postures are clearly associated with some degree of eroticism.

Table 2. Contingency table with count of clothing and body position variables

				Pose			
		Not observed	Lying or leaning	Standing	Sitting	Moving	Total
Nudity	Not observed	29	40	84	14	33	200
	Underwear	1	3	6	0	1	11
	Sexy clothing	31	34	58	15	6	144
							355

The different ways of displaying the body suggests that to a greater extent than men, women display themselves in reclining, passive poses, or poses implying submission to influence, while men display their body in a more active manner, showing signs of strength. The self-representations of adolescents in terms of postures match the traditional codes used by advertising to represent men and women³⁴.

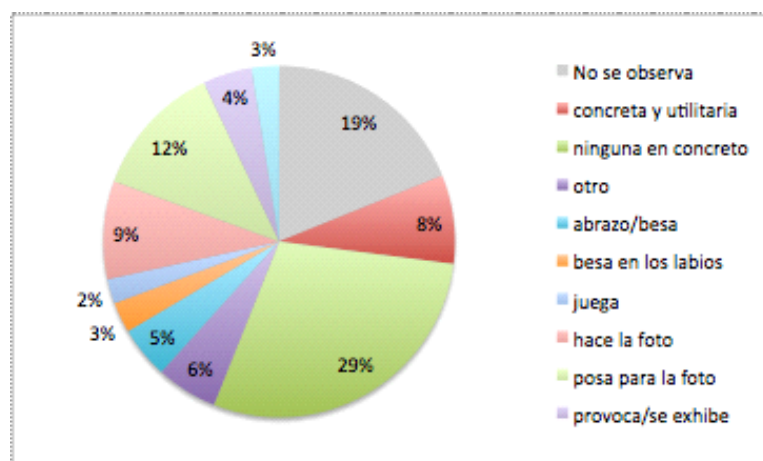
³³ WILLEM, Cilia, ARAÑA, Núria, CRESCENZI, Lucrezia, TORTAJADA, Iolanda, "Girls on Fotolog: Reproduction of Gender Stereotypes or Identity Play?", *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*, vol. 2, nº 3, 2012, pp. 225-242.

³⁴ DYER, Richard, "Don't look now", *Screen*, vol. 23, nº 3/4, September 1982, pp. 61-73; GOFFMAN, Erving, *Gender Advertisements*, Harper and Row, New York, 1979.

Only 8% of adolescents perform a specific and utilitarian action in their photograph. In 12% of cases, the person takes the photo while posing for it at the same time. An explicitly provocative and exhibitionist intent was observed in 4% of cases (Graph 4).

Finally, adolescents often express their affection for the other people appearing in the photograph (friends or partner) by kissing them on the lips (3%), embraces (5%) or playful postures (2%).

Graph 4. Percentage distribution of the action carried out in the photo [Not seen, Specific and utilitarian, None specific, Other, Kiss/embrace, Kiss on lips, Playing, Taking the photograph, Posing for the photograph, Suggestive/display]



3.3. Fotolog as a space for intimacy: sharing feelings

These adolescents, and the girls in particular, write extensively about their personal relationships. 37% of the girls' entries specifically discuss issues relating to sex and relationships. The most recurring theme is the description of a positive relationship, by 15% of the girls, although there are also descriptions of break-ups and arguments, in 11% of cases.

Users interact on Fotolog by means of comments. If the individual wishes, anyone with a Fotolog can comment on his/her updates. The construction of the networks is thereby based on the exchange of comments between users and aggregation to a panel of 'favourites'. Fotolog has implemented security measures which it did not initially include, and those using it can now choose whether they want to keep their comments space closed, or to open it up only to their friends, or to everyone. Those making comments can also decide whether their comment is private and not open to the public. In fact, 12% of the users had restricted their comments space, either by not allowing others to write to them, or by only allowing their friends to make and view comments. The remaining Fotolog content is open and public, unlike other social networks such as Facebook. This is because Fotolog was conceived as a blog focused on photography, and then it gradually implemented 2.0 tools because of the uses made of it. 16% of the users had not received any public comments on the day analyzed, 43% had received up to 10 comments, 24% up to 20, 11% up to 50, 2% up to 100, and 3% up to 294.

Boys and girls write a similar number of positive comments, and there are hardly any negative comments (less than 3%) on Fotolog. The networks reinforce adolescents' self-representations by

means of positive feedback about their physical appearance (20%) or by providing emotional support (about 55% of users). The reinforcement of comments could encourage young people to display more information and images –carefully produced– about themselves.

4. *Conclusions: Privacy vs. Popularity*

This study shows that the fact that adolescents share some personal information on social networks cannot simply be considered a risk, as it is part of the significance that using these networks has for them. We agree with Livingstone³⁵ in that risk is a characteristic that is more inherent in adolescence than in social networks, and that both risks and opportunities for identity can be found in virtual spaces. Self-presentation and disclosure of intimate experiences are the most common activities undertaken by these young people on Fotolog. Personal information assumes great value for sociability, and privacy is redefined as a result: disclosure of things about oneself, uploading eroticized images, creating a shared photolog or updating another person's page are common media activities among adolescents, in which popularity and prestige take priority over what is decided to be preserved. Furthermore, adolescents discriminate in terms of the kind of information they provide, using text, images and comments to do so, and demonstrate skill in managing this data. As previous studies indicate³⁶, direct contact information such as full names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are rarely revealed, although there is abundant and even eroticized display of the body. The research presented reinforces this conclusion, and also highlights the ease with which adolescents are identifiable by means of the images they upload, since the vast majority do not bother to hide their faces. However, identification by means of the face defines who the people are that adolescents expect to be able to connect their online and offline identities: people they already know offline, and those who they can make aware of more aspects of their personality and even an 'improved' (i.e. a photogenic) version of their beauty. However, as already suggested by other authors³⁷ it is naive to think that other possible audiences and the possibility of making new contacts are not taken into account. Using the comments, it is possible to observe the interactions, and it is easy to distinguish between those with friends, those with close acquaintances and those with strangers. The first group can be identified because the comments are sometimes longer, and generally refer to their interaction spaces offline. Interactions with strangers usually only refer to the visit, with short messages such as “visit and sign”.

As with the findings of other research³⁸, despite the sexualization of the images, there are very few poses in underwear except in percentages of less than 5%. Sexualization is different for boys and girls³⁹; with boys emphasizing activeness and strength, and displaying this with muscles, while girls emphasize beauty and fragility, and display this using cleavage, legs, lips, and a series of reclining postures⁴⁰ consistent with mainstream media culture⁴¹. The issues of gender and sexuality are at the heart of online social interactions among adolescents and young adults⁴².

35 See LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, *op.cit.*

36 See PIERCE, Tamyra A., “X-posed on MySpace: A Content Analysis of 'MySpace' Social Networking Sites”, *Journal of Media Psychology*, vol. 12, n° 1, February 2007. http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/sfisco/X-posed_on_%20MySpace.htm.

37 See SEVICK BORTREE, Denise, *op. cit.*

38 See HINDUJA, Sameer, PATCHIN, Justin W, *op. cit.*; PATCHIN, Justin W., HINDUJA, Sameer, *op. cit.*

39 See R INGROSE, Jessica, ERIKSSON, Katarina, *op. cit.*

40 See TORTAJADA, Iolanda, WILLEM et al., “Fotologs and Love Socialisation processes. A conventional or a

Another aspect that warrants greater attention is that according to our data, Fotolog is a space in which participation by girls is more common (they maintain 72% of the photologs in the sample in our study). This contradicts the conclusions of other studies, which found that the habit of keeping a diary, traditionally associated with women, was also being adopted by men⁴³ and it would therefore be interesting to ascertain the cultural and technological factors that explain these differences.

Some of the phenomena observed on Fotolog are applicable to other social networks. The users are very active and participate in the social network enthusiastically. They use this space to provide their friends with emotional support (especially with comments), and girls in particular use the environment to present and reflect on their sexual and emotional relationships. They also explicitly want to display their body, and to use it in a provocative manner in many cases. The main protagonists of the photos are the users themselves, and in half of the cases, they are the only people appearing in the pictures. This should not be interpreted as a tendency towards isolation, but instead suggests a new use of photography to represent themselves, with the clear aim of asserting their own role among the peer group. These adolescents thereby promote themselves in their own social network, and generate various types of textual and visual information to that end. A previous study of Fotolog use among Spanish adolescents⁴⁴ shows how uses vary over time, and how patterns of representation that are nourished by the constructs of traditional media are established, thereby recreating new forms of gender-biased representation.

In line with other research, we can conclude that Fotolog is a window of opportunity for self-presentation and management of privacy⁴⁵, the exploration of sexual identity and play, and opens up new ways of approaching gender and sexuality⁴⁶. However, the construction of gender identity is determined by pressure from mainstream media culture, which pushes boys towards continuing to portray themselves as strong and powerful, and girls towards seeking to emphasize their beauty⁴⁷. This suggests that if some initiatives based on media education are implemented to address these issues, adolescents could construct online communication spaces that are much more egalitarian and beneficial. Meanwhile, future research should consider the inclusion of longitudinal studies in order to study trends and changes in the personal information being shared on social networks, in addition to collecting the motivations, meaning and strategic meaning that adolescents attribute to these habits. As a result, quantitative studies like those presented herein should be complemented by qualitative studies that include the voices of the participants in social networks.

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41 See MANAGO, Adriana M., GRAHAM, Michael B. et al., *op. cit.*

42 See MANAGO, Adriana M., GRAHAM, Michael B. et al., *op. cit.*

43 See VAN DOORN, Niels, VAN ZOONEN, Liesbet et al., "Writing from Experience: Presentations of Gender Identity on Weblogs", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 14, n° 2, May 2007, pp. 143-159.

44 See WILLEM, Cilia, ARAÑA, Núria et al., *op. cit.*

45 See LIVINGSTONE, Sonia, BRAKE, David R. *op. cit.*

46 See RINGROSE, Jessica, ERIKSSON, Katarina, *op. cit.*

47 See MANAGO, Adriana M., GRAHAM, Michael B. et al., *op. cit.*; TORTAJADA, Iolanda, WILLEM, Cilia et al., *op. cit.*

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