media/rep/

Repositorium für die Medienwissenschaft

DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

Philipps Universität Marburg

Online Cultures and Future Girl Citizens[1]

Anita Harris

Introduction

This chapter explores young women's use of online DIY culture, blogs, social networking sites and related technologies to open up questions about what counts as participatory practice, and what is possible as politics for young people, and young women in particular, at the present moment. It suggests that these activities represent new directions in activism, the construction of new participatory communities, and the development of new kinds of public selves, while also telling us important things about the limits of the kinds of conventional citizen subject positions offered to young women at this time.

In the current 'crisis' of youth citizenship, young people are increasingly called upon to participate in the polity and in civil society, and to develop their civic knowledge, and yet this is in an environment of reduced opportunity for the mobilisation of a traditional citizenship identity and its associated activities. In addition, as many have argued, consumption has replaced production as a key social driver, and this has seen young people targeted as rights-bearers and decision-makers as consumers rather than in any more politically meaningful sense (Miles 2000). Thus while young people are alienated from political decision-making they are also contending with the commercialization of their civil rights, which are reconstructed as choices, freedoms and powers of consumption. Products and expressions of youth culture and youth voice are increasingly appropriated by big business, young people have less public physical space to occupy (Bessant 2000; White and Wyn 2007), and as Bauman (2001: 49) argues, what is left of the public sphere is now 'colonised by the private' and 'the public display of private affairs'; all of which leaves young people with fewer spaces for self-expression, critique and collective deliberation of political and social issues.

This context for youth participation has particular meanings for young women. As argued by McRobbie (2000; 2007) and Harris (2004a), there is an intense focus on young women as the vanguards of the late modern

---

socioeconomic order that foregrounds this diminished citizenship. This has occurred through a dovetailing of feminist and neoliberal agendas resulting in a complex nexus of economic, political and social interest in the expansion of girls' education and employment and the promotion of new family, sexual and reproductive practices for a new global work order. Young women are produced as ideal consumers and skilled choice-makers who approach work, education and family as a series of personally calculated and flexible options disembedded from social structure. They are invested in as those least likely to hold onto modern identities or collective practices, especially political ones, and therefore best positioned to prevail in times that demand individualisation and the forfeit of a traditional rights-based citizenship identity. As McRobbie (2007: 733) argues, the promotion of young women as the ideal 'subjects of capacity' for the new socioeconomic order has been secured through an illusion that we live in a post-feminist time in which young women have no need for social justice politics, or indeed, any conception of themselves as political subjects. As she writes (2007: 734), 'the means by which such a role in economic life are being made available substitute notional ideas of consumer citizenship in place of political identity'.

For young women who continue to seek to insert themselves into the political sphere and to engage in feminism, it becomes necessary to manoeuvre around these biopolitics. Accordingly, their cultural and political action may take on new forms, and emerge in liminal spaces between the public and private and through strategies that are designed to both evade surveillance and containment and reach out to youth (see for example Mitchell et al. 2001: 22). Young women's involvement in online DIY cultures and in social networking can illustrate how they are using new technologies to grapple with shifting boundaries between public and private, their interpellation as consumer citizens, the contraction of a traditional public sphere and in particular the absence of spaces for critique, self-expression and peer dialogue, and a loss of faith in conventional politics and formal political institutions. Activities such as blogging, virtual community engagement and personal website maintenance can be understood as examples of a broader range of practices that young women engage in to create new kinds of politics and new meanings of participation. However, in some manifestations they also reveal the difficulties of contending with the kinds of citizens young women are rewarded for being: consumption-focused and on display. Next, I turn to an analysis of these uses of technologies to explore the ways these activities reflect the possibilities and limits of young women's participatory practices and citizenship status in late modernity.

Online DIY Cultures

The first of these activities, online DIY cultures, encompass technology-enabled practices that are socially and politically aware, but not conventionally political. These include websites that are created by young women and

express political points of view on topics of relevance to young women. These often set out key ideas about girl-centred feminism and anti-racism, and direct readers to offline activities that may be activist or cultural. These sites are often, although not always, inspired by the early 1990s riotgrrrl or grrrlpower movement which saw punk and feminism come together in a new, young women-oriented scene focused on music, left wing politics, art and writing (see Harris 2004a). Many bear the hallmarks of the original medium of riot grrrl culture: zines (a comprehensive inventory of e-zines and blogs and other grrrl media can be found at Elke Zobl's site http://www.grrrlzines.net/). They include websites that combine personal points of view, political analysis, strategies for activism, artwork, links to other relevant sites and information about 'real life' activities that relate to the focus of the site. These are sometimes collectively-constructed and represent a loose affiliation of young women, or can be individually authored, in which case they are usually known as blogs; that is, websites that are individually written and narrative based. (Here I am using the term 'blog' in a fairly specific sense, to refer to self-published, regularly updated online narratives that include socially and politically engaged content. I discuss personal journals later).

While it is difficult to measure, mainly due to definitional challenges, some researchers have claimed that young women are the largest group of creators and readers of blogs (Orlowski 2003; Bortree 2006), while others contend that both women and youth are represented at least as frequently as adult men, but that young women outnumber young men (Herring et al. 2004). However, unlike blogs authored by male political pundits, women's blogs are taken less seriously, valued less within blogging culture and in the mainstream, and less likely to be ranked highly or linked to (Ratliff 2004; Gregg 2006). Similarly, girl-centred websites created by and for young women have been a significant subgenre of personal websites since the early 1990s, but have not generally received attention as a politics outside of feminism. I would suggest however that both girl-centred websites and blogs are important practices of 'counter-public' construction in that they are forums for debate and exchange of politically and socially engaged ideas by those who are marginalised within mainstream political debate. However, what is sometimes frustrating for analysts is that these forums are not necessarily outcome-oriented, or rather their end function is often simply to exist as a space for expression and debate. They tend to operate for information sharing, dialogue, consciousness raising and community building, but can also be playful, leisure-oriented and mix up personal and political material. They often focus on having a voice and building a place for speaking rather than agitating for change through appeals to political institutions, the state and its actors (see Melucci 1996). In this regard, they can be seen as just one manifestation of a wholesale shift in activism from the traditional social movements of the 1960s to a postmodern style of glocalised, decentralised and individualised politics. There is of course overlap, and some blogs, e-zines and websites connect up with more conventional political campaigns, activism or advocacy. However,

they often advocate individual strategies, political practices based in youth cultural experiences and culture-industry oriented activism. These include practices like culture jamming (altering an advertising slogan or image to undermine its message), examples of which can be found on the website of the Jammin' Ladies at http://jamming.wordpress.com/, or radical cheer-leading (groups gathering in public with pom-poms calling out political 'cheers'), exemplified on the website of the Dutch grrrl collective Bunnies on Strike at http://bunniesonstrike.cjb.net/.

Young women who are involved in these kinds of activities often articulate a need to act as cultural producers at a time when they feel overwhelmingly interpellated as consumers (see Stasko 2008). Many talk about the need for a new kind of feminist practice that takes into account the encroachment of the culture industry into every aspect of their lives, including politics (Harris 2004b). Using the internet as a space that exists between the public and the private enables them to negotiate a desire to organize and communicate with others with a need to avoid surveillance and appropriation of their cultures and politics. It also operates as a safer and more welcoming space for young women than traditional political forums.

However, it must be acknowledged that participation in online DIY culture, especially the creation of politically and socially engaged websites, occurs amongst only a minority of young women. Most do not have the resources, time or subcultural capital to engage with these kinds of activities. Moreover, the feminism that is drawn upon in the specifically 'grrrl' online cultures is of a specific kind that has its roots in what is often seen to be an elite, white, US-based scene. This is in spite of its international take-up. However, what is also worthy of note is the popularity with young women of youth-led internet sites that do not necessarily focus on feminist or women's issues. For example, two important Australian-based websites run for and by young people are Reach Out! and Vibewire, which focus on social services and media respectively, and are overwhelmingly used by young women (Vromen 2007). Vromen's (2008) research shows that sites such as Vibewire are valued because they offer a place in the media, which is perceived as *the* site of power in an information society, for young voices to be heard and for young people to be engaged. She has also found that participants appreciate the more open kinds of youth communities that are created through these sites, and that, in contrast to the usual argument, these are perceived to actually bring together diverse groups of youth who hold different opinions on issues rather than simply cater to the like-minded.

However, while online DIY cultures are an important, albeit minor practice in young women's technologically enabled political activities, it remains that if we want to talk about where the girls are in terms of uses of new technologies, we have to turn to much less intentionally political practices, that is, social networking.

Social Networking

'Social networking' has a specific meaning related to the creation of personal profiles on sites such as MySpace and Facebook and the engagement in online interaction with others who also have profiles. These sites feature profiles, friends and a public commenting component. Boyd (2007a: 1–2) explains:

> Once logged into one of these systems, participants are asked to create a profile to represent themselves digitally. Using text, images, video, audio, links, quizzes and surveys, teens generate a profile that expresses how they see themselves. These profiles are sewn into a large web through "Friends" lists. Participants can mark other users as "Friends" . . .. [They can then] use the different messaging tools to hang out, share cultural artefacts and ideas, and communicate with one another.

However, social networking can also be used as a catch-all phrase to mean the various ways that technology is used by people to meet up with others, often peers, and communicate about personal issues. This can include the use of organised, commercial social networking sites, the construction of independent personal websites and journals, the use of internet chatrooms or bulletin boards, photo and video sharing websites and texting and image sharing via mobile phones. In both its broad and specific definition, social networking is a very popular use of new technology by young women (Boyd 2007b). Even before the phenomena of Friendster, MySpace, Bebo, Facebook, LiveJournal, YouTube, Twitter and so on, research has shown that girls have tended to use new technologies more frequently for social purposes through email, chatting facilities and Instant Messaging, whereas boys have been more likely to play and download games and music (Lenhart et al. 2001; Tufte 2003, quoted in Mazzarella 2005: 2). Young women have also been well established as heavy users of text messaging since the early take-up of mobile phones amongst youth in pioneer countries such as Finland (Kasesniemi 2001).

Social networking technologies are often perceived as frivolous or problematic because of their association with youth and femininity, as illustrated by a debate within blogging communities about gender difference in journal-style uses of the internet (see Herring et al. 2004; Gregg 2006). Nowhere is this more evident, however, than in the broader public debate about the risks facing young women in their use of the internet. There is a growing body of literature on the dangers of social networking, wherein young women's own perspectives are not always prominent, and there is little regard for what Driscoll and Gregg (2008: 81–82) describe as 'the forms of literacy involved in being able to control and realise "what you're being" in online spaces'. Current approaches to social networking are heavily weighted towards addressing the risks that face young people, and often young women in particular, by revealing personal information that might become embarrassing, by exposing themselves to online predators, and by spending too much time away from 'real life' (see for example Dewey 2002;

Wolak et al. 2003; and for a critique, Gregg 2007). Young women's social networking is perceived as a risky behaviour that needs to be managed by responsible adults.

When their own points of view are solicited, young women widely report that they use these social networking technologies to simply stay in touch and communicate with their friends (Schofield Clark 2005; Boyd 2007b). Very early research on young women's use of bulletin boards (Kaplan and Farrell 1994) notes that these are activities perceived by young women as an extension of their immediate, offline social worlds. Australian research on young women's use of online chatrooms has found that they use chatting facilities for social interaction and to maintain connection with friends in ways that are outside of adult monitoring and free from some of the social mores they feel constrain their offline lives (Gibian 2003). UK research on mobile phones (Henderson et al. 2002: 508) supports this perspective that young women enjoy the opportunities that are offered by communication technology 'to claim greater personal and sexual freedom in a movement from the domestic to more public spheres.' In summary, research with young female users of social networking technologies shows that they enjoy creating and using a space where they can engage with friends, sometimes meet new people, and express themselves in a public forum where they are not under parental or other authoritarian control.

Profiles on social networking sites and personal webpages and blogs often reflect this peer orientation strongly through their design and discursive style. To adults they are often hard to 'read', and can appear aesthetically messy and full of banal, inconclusive exchanges. As Kaplan and Farrell (1994: 8) note in relation to bulletin boards, 'the sociability of [the] exchange seems its sole reason for being', and this is primarily a peer to peer sociability that confounds those it excludes. In this respect, there is a case that social networking is a way for young women to create new participatory communities for and by their peers. As Barnes (2007: 2) suggests, 'teenagers are learning how to use social networks by interacting with their friends, rather than learning these behaviours from their parents or teachers.' This capacity to bypass adults in the construction of public communication communities is seeing young people generating public selves in their own ways. This is qualitatively different from traditional constitution of youth cultures or subcultures, which have also operated to allow young people to create identities and spaces of their own, because of the reach offered by the global stage and the large-scale participation on the part of 'ordinary' youth that characterise online social networks.

This in turn has implications for young people's political participation in two significant ways. First, theorists such as Boyd (2007b) suggest that these kinds of youth communities ought be understood as counterpublics, even though the content of the sites is usually personal rather than related to matters of the public good. She suggests that social network sites are places where young people 'write themselves and their community into being' (ibid.: 13–14) in view of an audience, and that they do this online

because they have very little access to real public spaces (Boyd 2007b: 19). She says 'their participation is deeply rooted in their desire to engage publicly.' (ibid.: 21). Social network sites are therefore an important way for young women in particular to participate in a public sphere, regardless of the fact that the nature of their public expressions is not necessarily political. Second, others have argued that social networking facilitates or can be a precursor to 'real' participation. That is, it is valued insofar as it can lead to the formation of communities or collective activities focused on civic or political practices (see for example Burgess et al. 2006: 2). This kind of analysis of social networks sits within a larger body of work on the political significance of virtual communities, where claims and counter-claims are made about their capacity to empower the marginalised and to deliver more democratic modes of communication.

Do Online DIY Cultures and Social Networking Constitute Political Participation?

I would suggest that there are several ways in which both online DIY cultures and, more controversially, social networking, ought be included in the conversation about young women's political participation, but there are some important arguments that qualify these interpretations. First, I would argue that these activities are about creating a public self, which is the first step in seeing oneself as a citizen. They give young women an opportunity to bring the private into the public in ways that were unprecedented prior to these new technologies. Whether or not these private matters can then be worked into associated publicly deliberated issues is an open question, but it is clear that many young women are attempting the work of public self-making in the counterpublics of online DIY cultures, while others are simply engaged in creating public identities that can connect with others, which may be valuable in itself. Moreover, literature that looks at social networking as a technique for young women's identity construction work demonstrates that the kinds of public selves they create can be undermining of gender expectations. New technologies facilitate young women's capacity to play with gender and to resist feminine stereotypes, for example by acting more confidently than they might face to face, and by feeling less constrained by gendered norms concerning appearance, especially in the cases of pre-video mobile phones, instant messaging and chatrooms (Henderson et al. 2002; Gibian 2003; Thiel 2005).

However, many would claim, along the lines of Bauman (2001: 106–7), that these young women are merely filling what is left of public space with personal stories and troubles, without any capacity for these to be, as he says, 'translated as public issues (such that) public solutions are sought, negotiated and agreed'. From this perspective, the kinds of communities and dialogues that occur in online DIY cultures and social networking cannot be political because they infrequently move beyond personal sharing. This

is most clearly a problem in social networking, as online DIY cultures often explicitly attempt to make this move beyond the personal to a structural critique, and sometimes work towards public solutions. It can appear that even the structures of the messaging tools of social networking (with their emphasis on expression rather than listening, lack of closure or resolution, absence of moderators) seem to work against the conventions of democratic deliberation, as does the style of much interaction (see Davis 2005: 130). For example, as Kaplan and Farrell (1994: 8) note in relation to bulletin boards: 'the conversations among these young women and their contacts on the bboards often seem, at least to an outsider, driven more by the desire of the participants to keep the conversation going than by their desire to achieve understanding of or consensus about some topic or issue'.

Even so, I would argue that there is much to be gained from understanding how young women interact online. Feminists have noted that traditional ideas about deliberation and how public conversations should look are gender biased (Tannen 1995). Sociability and the capacity for deliberation are not necessarily inconsistent, and in fact the former may even expand the conventions of the latter. Coleman (2006: 258) has written that it is 'random sociability that makes the internet such an attractive place for young people', and to learn from this, 'policy designed to promote democratic online interaction must resist the anxieties of managed communication and take its chances within networks of autonomous and acephalous interaction.' In other words, online deliberative democracy and random social networks of unmanaged participation are not mutually exclusive, and to draw young people into deliberative democratic practices online requires adaptation to their preferred modes of interaction. Social networking activities are also not cut and dried in terms of their relationship with conventional politics or activism. They do not always sit easily on the 'private' side of the divide, but negotiate this very border. For example, there is a considerable amount of activism and social justice campaigning that occurs on these sites. MySpace alone has over 33,000 'government and politics' groups. Kann et al. (2007: 4) suggest that 'this merging of social networking and online politics has the potential to integrate political discourse into youths' everyday lives.'

Notwithstanding this issue of what kind of public conversation counts as politics, there is perhaps a thornier one of what kinds of public selves are being constructed by young women in these sites. The very project of making a self that is publicly visible is contained within the new discourses of femininity for young women that link success to image, style, and visible work on oneself rather than a more robust concept of citizenship (McRobbie 2000; Harris 2004a). Hopkins (2002) argues that young women have become the stars of a postmodern contemporary culture obsessed with omnipresence of identity, image and celebrity. Being 'somebody', however, means living a celebrity life: looking good, having a watched and envied persona, and engaging with leisure and consumption rather than politics. Thus the public selves that young women are encouraged to create are not political subjectivities, but self-inventing celebrity selves who gain status

from their take-up of consumer culture. McRobbie (2007: 734) suggests that it is through the construction of 'spectacular femininity' that a shift away from the political is made possible. For young women creating public identities online, the goals of self-expression and peer connection are bound up with being on display as a consumer citizen.

What seems indisputable, though, is that these activities allow young women to take up virtual public space at a time when physical public space for young people is diminishing. As noted by White and Wyn (2007: 240–41), there has been 'a considerable narrowing of places where young people can comfortably hang out freely', owing to the mass privatisation of public space and the intensification of the regulation of that space. If young people have few free spaces left to them, then these online activities indicate a desire to create and occupy new public spaces beyond these constraints. Bessant (2000: 117) notes that 'young people are not "moved on" in this new social space and public sphere as they have been in the streets and shopping centres. . . . Likewise, the presence of young people in most electronic space is not prohibited or subject to curfews as it is in the actual social and political space of modern industrial capitalism.'

Relatedly, both online DIY cultures and social networking signify a desire to be a cultural producer, that is, to actively engage in the construction of one's cultural world, rather than simply consume. There is considerable pleasure to be taken in the design and upkeep of personal websites and blogs, especially when youth culture artefacts are used creatively and playfully in order to attribute them with new meanings. Young women have been the primary targets of a shift to consumer citizenship for youth, and these creative uses of new technologies demonstrate how they play with, negotiate and sometimes resist the encroachment of the consumer imperative on their everyday lives. The idea of talking back to youth consumer culture is an explicit political agenda of many girl-centred websites, but even the engagement with the products of this culture as evident in the profiles and conversations on social network sites often reveals a critical agency rather than passive consumption.

However, there are concerns raised about the potential for such practices to remain free from corporate or government interests, that is, for young people to craft out truly public spaces, given the encroachment of interested parties, including corporate media, the advertising industry and also mainstream politics, upon them (see Castells 2007). There is some evidence that young people are moving away from the sites taken over by major corporations (for example, MySpace having been bought by News-Corp and YouTube by Google), and towards less commercial networking sites (see Boyd 2007b; Castells 2007). However, it remains that the internet and mobile phones have been an enormous boon for those seeking to capture the youth market, and at best young people who use them are engaged in a constant negotiation of advertising interests (Barnes 2007). But even if corporate and government interests are advancing on youth online spaces, parents and other authority figures are some distance behind, and in this regard, these activities allow young women to connect with their

peers away from the prying eyes of the adults in their lives. In this sense, they contribute to the making of a whole lot of albeit 'thin' youth communities to which their members feel a commitment and in which they actively participate.

Conclusion

Online DIY cultures and social networking are important examples of the ways that young women are negotiating the absence of traditional citizenship identities and the emergence of new, somewhat problematic ones in their place. Young women engage in these activities at times to develop new modes of activism and political subjectivity, but more often to create unregulated, public spaces for peer communities and to construct public selves. These practices reveal the challenges for young women in positioning themselves within a regulatory culture that rewards them for their capacity as ideal neoliberal consumer subjects. I have suggested that the ways in which young women are using new technologies demonstrate that, in the light of the so-called crisis of youth political engagement, and in concert with the pressures to perform as particular kinds of consumer citizens, many are already doing their own kinds of participation. This is a different argument than the idea that an emergent collectivist politics or conventional civic or political activity will flow out of such practices. It is not always or even predominantly the case that conventional or activist offline participation emerges out of these. But it is important to recognise the ways that simply participating in online cultures and networking is a form of developing citizenship skills, regardless of any specific involvement in political causes.

More than this, though, I would also suggest that we need to consider the value of these practices in themselves, rather than only looking towards what 'better' or more conventional participatory practices they might turn into. Riley et al. (2010: 54) draw on the work of Maffesoli to make a case that activities of these kinds are both a sovereignty- and sociality-oriented politics that reject traditional political structures and instead invest in self-determination and social affiliations. As they say, 'for Maffesoli (1996) politics occurs in terms of survival, in the ability to create spaces to enact cultural rituals that enact sociality, solidarity, sovereignty, hedonism and vitality'. It is important to acknowledge in the face of the widespread youth citizenship panic that young people, and young women in particular, are participating in their own communities and are expressing a desire to occupy public space on their own terms.

References

Baumann, Z., 2001. *The Individualised Society.* Cambridge: Polity.

Barnes, S., 2007. A Privacy Paradox: Social Networking in the United States, *First Monday,* 11 (9) [online]. Available at: <http://www.firstmonday. org/issues/issue11_9/barnes/index.html> [Accessed 28 September 2007].

Bessant, J., 2000. Social Action and the Internet: New Forms of Political Space. *Just Policy,* September Issue, pp. 109–118.

Boyd, D., 2007a. Social Network Sites; Public, Private or What? *Knowledge Tree,* 13 [online]. Available at: <http://kt.flexiblelearning.net.au/ tkt2007/?page_id = 28> [Accessed 3 November 2011].

Boyd, D., 2007b. Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life. In: D. Buckingham, ed. *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning – Youth, Identity and Digital Media Volume.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press [online]. Available at: <http://www.danah.org/papers/WhyYouthHeart.pdf> [Accessed 3 November 2011].

Bortree, D., 2006. Review of Girl Wide Web. *New Media and Society,* 8(5), pp. 851–856.

Burgess, J., Foth, M. and Klaebe, H., 2006. Everyday Creativity as Civic Engagement: A Cultural Citizenship View of New Media. *Communications Policy and Research Forum,* 25–26 September 2006 Sydney. Unpublished paper.

Castells, M., 2007. Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society. *International Journal of Communication* 1, pp. 238–266.

Coleman, S., 2006. Digital Voices and Analogue Citizenship: Bridging the Gap Between Young People and the Democratic Process. *Public Policy Research,* 13(4), pp. 257–261.

Davis, R., 2005. *Politics Online: Blogs, Chatrooms, and Discussion Groups in American Democracy.* New York: Routledge.

Dewey, L., 2002.Girls On Line Feeling Out of Bounds. *Camping Magazine,* 75(5), pp. 48–50.

Driscoll, C. and Gregg, M., 2008. Broadcast Yourself: Moral Panic, Youth Culture and Internet Studies. In: U. Rodrigues and B. Smaill, eds. *Youth, Media and Culture in the Asia-Pacific Region.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, pp. 71–86.

Gibian, J., 2003. "They're All Wog Rooms": The Online Chat of Culturally Diverse Teenage Girls in Western Sydney. In: M. Butcher and M. Thomas, eds. *Ingenious: Emerging Youth Cultures in Australia.* North Melbourne: Pluto Press, pp. 47–65.

Gregg, M., 2006. Posting With Passion: Blogs and the Politics of Gender. In: J. Jacobs and A. Bruns, eds. *Uses of Blogs.* New York: Peter Lang, pp. 151–160.

Gregg, M., 2007. Thanks for the Ad(d): Neoliberalism's Compulsory Friend-ship. *Presentation at Goldsmiths College,* July 2007 London. Unpublished paper.

Harris, A., 2004a. *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty First Century.* New York and London: Routledge.

Harris, A., 2004b. Jamming Girl Culture: Young Women and Consumer Citizenship. In: A. Harris, ed. *All About the Girl: Culture, Power and Identity.* New York and London: Routledge, pp. 163–172.

Henderson, S., Taylor, R. and Thomson, R., 2002. In Touch: Young People, Communication and Technologies. *Information, Communication and Society,* 5(4), pp. 494–512.

Herring, S., Kouper, A., Scheidt, L. and Wright, E., 2004. Women and Children Last: The Discursive Construction of Weblogs. In: L. J. Gurak et al., eds. *Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community and Culture of Weblogs* [online]. Available at: <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/women_and_children.html> [Accessed 3 November 2011].

Hopkins, S., 2002. *Girl Heroes: The New Force in Popular Culture.* Annandale: Pluto Press.

Kann, M. E., Berry, J., Grant, C. And Zager, P., 2007. The Internet and Youth Political Participation. *First Monday,* 12 (8) [online]. Available at: <http://www.firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1977/1852> [Accessed 4 November 2011].

Kaplan, N. and Farrell, E., 1994. Weavers of webs: A portrait of young women on the net. *The Arachnet Journal on Virtual Culture,* 2 (3) [online]. Available at: <www.ftp_byrd.mu.wvnet.edu/pub/ejvc/Kaplan.v2n3> [Accessed 17 October 2007].

Kasesniemi, E., 2001. Finnish Teenagers and Mobile Communication: Chatting and Storytelling in Text Messages. In: A. Furlong and I. Guidikova, eds. *Transitions of Youth Citizenship in Europe: Culture, Subculture and Identity.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 157–180.

Lenhart, A., Rainie, L., and Lewis, O., 2001. *Teenage life online: The rise of the Instant message generation and the Internet's impact on friendships and family relationships.* Washington, DC: Pew internet & American Life Project [online]. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Report.pdf> [Accessed 17 October 2007].

Mazzarella, S. R., 2005. It's a Girl Wide Web. In: S. R. Mazzarella, ed. *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet and the Negotiation of Identity.* New York: Peter Lang, pp. 1–12.

McRobbie, A., 2000. *Feminism and Youth Culture.* London: Macmillan.

McRobbie, A., 2007. Top Girls? Young Women and the Post-Feminist Sexual Contract. *Cultural Studies,* 21(4), pp. 718–737.

Melucci, A., 1996. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miles, S., 2000. *Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Mitchell, A., Rundle, L. and Karaian, L., 2001. Introduction: A Conversation with Allyson, Lisa and Lara. In: Mitchell, A. and Rundle, L., eds. *Turbo Chicks: Talking Young Feminisms.* Toronto: Sumach Press, pp. 11–24.

Orlowski, A., 2003. Most Bloggers "Are Teenage Girls" – Survey. *The Register* [online]. Available at: <http://www.theregister.co.uk/2003/05/30/most_bloggers_are_teenage_girls/> [Accessed 3 November 2011].

Ratliff, C., 2004. Whose Voices Get Heard? Gender Politics in the Blogosphere. *CultureCat* [online]. Available at: <http://culturecat.net/> [Accessed 17 April 2007].

Riley, S., Morey, Y. and Griffin, C., 2010. The "pleasure citizen": Analyzing partying as a form of social and political participation. *Young,*18(1), pp. 33–54.

Schofield Clark, L., 2005. The Constant Contact Generation: Exploring Teen Friendship Networks Online. In: S. R. Mazzarella, ed. *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet and the Negotiation of Identity.* New York: Peter Lang, pp. 203–221.

Stasko, C. 2008. (r)Evolutionary Healing: Jamming with Culture and Shifting the Power. In: A. Harris, ed. *Next Wave Cultures: Feminism, Subcultures, Activism.* New York: Routledge, pp. 193–220.

Tannen, D. 1995. *Gender and Discourse.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thiel, S. M., 2005. IM ME: Identity Construction and Gender Negotiation in the world of Adolescent Girls and Instant Messaging. In: S. R. Mazzarella, ed. *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet and the Negotiation of Identity.* New York: Peter Lang, pp. 179–202.

Vromen, A., 2007. Australian Young People's Participatory Practices and Internet Use. *Information, Communication and Society,* 10(1), pp. 48–68.

Vromen, A., 2008. Building Virtual Spaces: Young People, Participation and the Internet. *Australian Journal of Political Science,* 43(1), pp. 79–97.

White, R. and Wyn, J., 2007. *Youth and Society: Exploring the Social Dynamics of Youth,* 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press.

Wolak, J., Mitchell, K. J. and Finkelhor, D., 2003. Escaping or Connecting? Characteristics of Youth Who Form Close Online Relationships. *Journal of Adolescence,* 26(1), pp. 105–119.