Fleur Gabriel

SEXTING, SELFIES AND SELF-HARM: YOUNG PEOPLE, SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE PERFORMANCE OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

As platforms for self-expression, social media sites require users to consciously, visibly, and deliberately perform their identity. While a dominant developmental discourse encourages young people to test and explore different identities, a self-conscious and highly visible performance of identity via social media brings into question the form and value of this activity. This article reviews a range of popular arguments about how young people use media, and demonstrates how this use comes into conflict with a broader developmental discourse. It proposes that this conflict contributes to the perception that young people's media use is dangerous for healthy development, and that a different kind of approach to youth is needed. Engaging Judith Butler's notion of performativity, the article argues that social media and the structures of performative display are a way to reconceptualise youth and the relationship between social media and young people's self-development.

Young people engage with social media to socialise, to be entertained and, importantly, to share their lives with each other. Social media present new possibilities for expression and sociality, but the effect that social media are having on young people is a subject of considerable academic and public concern. News headlines express concerns about 'sexting' and the 'sexual selfie' (Bazelon, 2013; Berry, 2013), the risk to reputations and futures from the unauthorised proliferation of uploaded images (see Banger, 2013), cyber-bullying (Battersby, 2013) and the possibility that social media absorption is creating a generation of ethically degenerate 'careless zombies' (Stanley, 2013). In contrast to moral panic in popular discourse, scholarly responses focus on the many ways in which young people use and engage with social media. Empirical research explores how, for example, young people negotiate friendship networks (boyd, 2008), represent themselves through blogs and social networking sites (Day Good, 2012; Sauter, 2013; Mazur and Kozarian, 2010), negotiate gender and sexual identities (Hasinoff, 2012; Dobson, 2012; De Ridder and Van Bauwel, 2013), develop ethics of digital media use (Flores and James, 2012; Miegel and Olsson, 2012) and come of age (McMillan and Morrison, 2006; Davis, 2010; Robards, 2012).

The following discussion analyses the popular conception that social media engagement is harmful to young people in the process of self-development. In one sense, social and participatory media have created a different context for 'growing up' (see Buckingham, 2000, 2007, 2008; Livingstone, 2002). As noted by Sonia Livingstone, 'something new is taking place' as young people's experiences of self-construction are mediated via social networking sites (2008: 394). When life is captured, captioned and shared, young people are subject to increased scrutiny of self and others (Robards,

2012: 386). In another sense, mediation via social media challenges the notion that one's youth should simply be lived. Social media demand that young people actively and deliberately think about and negotiate their own visibility – the image they project, the identity they want to have. This challenges dominant assumptions informed by developmental psychology and developmental neuroscience (to be discussed below) that young people in fact have a limited capacity to critically reflect on their own development, and that to expect this of them is to harm their 'natural' cognitive and emotional growth.

While it appears as though social media have established an entirely new ground for making sense of youth, I suggest that the problems associated with social media relate to how young people are already thought about according to commonsense assumptions that operate in both popular and academic contexts. This article contends that addressing these existing ways of thinking is an important part of coming to terms with youth media use. It thus identifies and interrogates the assumptions that underpin discourses on youth and self-development through the deployment of Judith Butler's (1993) notion of performativity.

The problems of youth media use

The sexualisation of culture is regarded as a serious threat to children's and teens' development, especially for girls (see APA, 2007; Rush and La Nauze, 2006a, 2006b; Bailey, 2011), insofar as identity is marketed to teens, and self-worth is defined, by the narrow standards of physical beauty and sexual conduct promoted by the porn and advertising industries (see Tankard Reist, 2009; Levy, 2005; Dines, 2010; Oppliger, 2008; Walter, 2010; Durham, 2009). In its expression in social media, 'sexting' is integral to social exchange, used by teens to flirt, forge romantic partnerships, joke around with friends and have fun (see Albury et al., 2013; Albury and Crawford, 2012; Ringrose et al., 2012). Studies into cultural sexualisation express concern, however, that these trends compress childhood and adolescence, and accelerate (sexual) development. In addition to fears of a loss of childhood, this process is considered unhealthy because children and teens are still developing cognitively, socially and emotionally, and therefore lack sufficient maturity to fully understand and consent to the sexual material they are both producing via social media and exposed to through the wider media sphere.

Teens are also at risk because they cannot always control what happens to their personal (if not private) material once it is uploaded. The sharing of images is rapid, ephemeral and functionally simple but, nevertheless, images and all forms of online communication have the capacity to endure. Social awareness programs like 'ThinkUKnow' attempt to help teens to stay 'in control' of their online content, to know the risks and to keep themselves safe (ThinkUKnow Australia, 2013). Extensive research on the maturation of the teen brain during adolescence supports the need for this kind of intervention (e.g. see Dodds, 2011; Phillips, 2007). Research by Laurence Steinberg (2008) has revealed that during adolescence, the brain's 'socio-emotional' systems mature faster than the 'cognitive-control' systems. This imbalance means that teens make decisions and process information in a way that is more likely to emphasise emotional or social reward over potential risk (see also Rivers et al., 2008; Casey et al., 2008). On this basis, uploading a naked 'selfie' or footage of a drunk night out to a social media platform would make logical sense to a teen because the immediate rewards – like receiving attention and admiration, and achieving a sense of belonging – rate higher in the teen's mind than the risk of a future employer uncovering their unsavoury images during a routine background check. While it is true that an adult could

also make the same decision for the same reasons, it is expected that the adult would possess a fully developed capacity to reason, and therefore to bear responsibility for the consequences of a risky decision. The same responsibility is not extended to young people, however, when their cognitive-control systems are yet to mature in alignment with their emotional-reward pathways, thus increasing the potential for making a poor choice. A focus on immediate social reward as a form of cognitive immaturity combined with the difficulty of controlling online material means that there is a particular need to assist teens to safely manage their online interactions for the sake of both their short- and long-term development.

Cyber-bullying and suicide represent further risks to young people. Recently, the phenomenon of 'cyber self-harm' has emerged as a practice that appears to be fuelled by social media and their structures of visibility and performance. In August 2013, 14-year-old UK teen Hannah Smith committed suicide after being harassed on the social media service Ask.fm. Subsequent investigation revealed, however, that most of the cruel messages had come from Hannah's own computer (Funnell, 2013). Nina Funnell, a popular commentator on youth and social media, suggests that this kind of behaviour represents 'a cry for help' and 'a grab for attention'. For a teenager in pain, 'inflicting harm on themselves before an audience … makes their pain visible and therefore more "real"' (Funnell, 2013). Contentiously, Funnell argues that 'pain is not simply something we feel, it is something we "perform", often with the purpose of eliciting certain responses from others' (2013). Here, it seems that the online world is giving teens an expressive outlet for their pain, but also – due to the fact that it is conducted through a particular communication technology characterised by microblogging and micro-celebrity – it grants them an audience and provides further impetus to do harm to themselves. This issue, along with the other two trends mentioned above, gives an overall impression that by being 'performed' on social media, the experience of youth is compressed, accelerated and intensified. It seems that young people cannot just 'be' anymore, they have to 'be seen' in a certain way. Furthermore, teens appear to be over-sexed and over-exposed, subject to excessive pressure from peers and the wider consumer culture.

Responding to the problems of youth media use

All these problems are complex and not easily resolved, but three common types of response dominate public discourse on these matters. An initial reaction is often to ban, restrict or simply blame social media. Filtering content or banning access, by confiscating a computer or a mobile phone, promises to remove the immediate risk, but does not reveal the reasons behind teens' online behaviour or how they use social and participatory media (see Jenkins, 1999, 2006). Restriction also serves to limit, if not destroy, teens' access to their social world and participation in more 'legitimate' online activities like education and entertainment. In light of these reasons, restriction is an understandable but ultimately unhelpful response.

Another form of response is to blame individuals for their behaviour. Demonising youth for posing a risk to society has long been the preferred response of the news media, where youth, deviance and moral panic go hand in hand (see Mazzarella, 2007; Cohen, 1972; Males, 1996, 1999). Putting the blame on to the individual for behaving badly, or looking for other reasons to explain their behaviour – such as mental illness or familial dysfunction – helps ease the pressure on the social system to bear responsibility for creating the problem (see Giroux, 2000, 2009). For example, the news reports on the three young men who shot and killed Australian baseballer Chis Lane in Oklahoma in

August 2013 drew upon the moral panic around guns, popular media and youth alienation. This extended to the prosecution of the case, where police investigated social media posts that suggested the boys had played violent video games – a perennial pop culture demon – prior to the shooting, and that they had gang affiliations (Mitchell, 2013). This case, while appallingly tragic, supports perceptions of young men as dangerous thugs and popular media as creating socially dysfunctional behaviour, a combination that ensures the continued demonisation of young people.

An alternative response is to educate parents and teens about ethical and safe media use. Cyber-safety experts like Susan McLean (cybersafetysolutions.com.au) and websites like cybersmart.gov.au advocate the importance of media literacy and understanding the (potentially harmful) effects of social media. Cyber-safety and media literacy programs seek to raise awareness about the risks and effects of online media use, model ethical online behaviour, and encourage teachers and parents to help children to critically engage with what they consume (see Burton, 2013).

What is noteworthy is that all these responses can be framed by assumptions about the developmental limitations of youth. Restriction is necessary because teen brains are not mature; they are still developing emotionally, and so should be protected from the dangers of the online world. Demonisation is legitimate because either young people are not like normal youth (rather, they are criminals or thugs), and are therefore dangerous to society, or their inherent vulnerability makes them a risk to society if their development is in some way disturbed or disrupted (by violent video games, for example). Education is needed because while young people may be digitally adept, they still need to learn ethical conduct and are still at risk from the unique issues presented by social media, like privacy, consent and online predators. Such assumptions about young people influence all the responses noted above and are reflective of a developmental discourse.

Conceptualising youth as development

As the dominant conceptual paradigm for youth, developmental psychology helps explain how young people grow into adulthood. Under the influence of theorists such as G. Stanley Hall (1904), Jean Piaget (1969) and Erik Erikson (1963, 1968), adolescent development has long been understood as a time of 'storm and stress' (Hall), as marking a shift in reasoning ability (Piaget), and as a period in which identity role confusion is resolved (Erikson). Maturation into adulthood follows certain natural stages of physical, emotional and cognitive development, which means that young people are not yet fully social because they are in the process of learning the skills of responsible adulthood. For this to successfully occur, they should be kept in a period of prolonged preparation, protected from the world or exposed to it only under certain conditions or in an 'age-appropriate' way (Lesko, 2001: 62–3). But a developmental paradigm also demands that young people 'grow up' and actively engage with the world. There is a simultaneous expectation within a developmental discourse that teens will therefore take risks, push boundaries and make mistakes in the course of maturing into adulthood, and that this is a necessary part of growing up (Klein, in Wyn and White, 1997: 53). Here, youth are subject to the conflicting expectations of protection and expansion, dependence and independence. Their actions are restricted and they are subject to social and moral panic for growing up 'too soon', despite the fact that a developmental discourse *sanctions* this kind of behaviour as part of the path to 'normal' adulthood. They are caught between reason and unreason, childhood and adulthood, belonging to neither side yet maintaining the characteristics of both.

Understanding this discursive framing helps explain popular perceptions that social media are harmful to young people. Dominant representations of the use of social media characterise the online world as a threat to young people's well-being because it disturbs the 'natural' course of development. However, the idea of 'natural' does not sufficiently take into consideration what it means to be self-aware (young people worry over their appearance and how others perceive them, seek to attract sexual and romantic interest and fit in with peers), and this is increasingly mediated by social media. To be young on social media is to 'perform' one's youth, and this can be considered harmful because to perform youthful identity rather than to just 'be' young changes the context of youth, making it into something other than the natural process of development it is supposed to be. While teens are meeting the expectations of youth development by actively engaging in their own process of becoming adult, they are at the same time situating themselves *outside* the context of their youth as pre-social and neurologically vulnerable, by deliberately performing it online.

An alternative approach: Youth as performance

It seems that young people are *set up* to be transgressors by the very manner in which a developmental discourse conceptualises youth (see Gabriel, 2013). Marked by conflicting expectations, youth is always seemingly 'in breach' of its own (developmental) boundaries. Yet a defining and paradoxical feature of youth is that it is a transitional life phase, and therefore 'liminal' (Thompson, 2010: 397; Blatterer, 2010: 69). Youth exceeds the binary limits of adult and child and also, by association, those of reason and unreason, mind and body, presence and absence. Likewise, social media produce a similar kind of conceptual excess by collapsing boundaries of public and private, real and virtual. Young people's lives are increasingly lived and expressed virtually, and these virtual experiences are both private *and* public, not to mention intensely 'real'. Young people are representing their own coming of age processes, negotiating identities, sexualities and friendships, and making moral and ethical decisions regarding their online conduct. These practices of self-development, reflexivity and active meaning-making are at once supported by developmental principles and not attributed to young people in social networking environments due to broader issues of moral panic.

A different way to understand this engagement, and thus understand youth self-development, draws on Judith Butler's notion of performativity. Writing on the question of gender identity, Butler argues that in order for the dominant subject of male to appear as fixed, whole and present, it must be defined against its opposite, the female, whose identity is excluded from the domain of autonomous subjectivity (1993: 3). The male subject therefore relies on this 'abjected outside' in order to come into being, but it must also disavow this reliance if it is to appear self-present and complete. Thus the male subject is defined by its 'constitutive outside', the female, but this 'outside' is also always '"inside" the [male] subject as its own founding repudiation' (Butler, 1993: 3; see also Spivak, 1988). The 'presence' of the male subject is therefore always breached or split from within.

Like the female subject, youth similarly unsettles the dominant adult subject and the binary structures that follow from and support it – child/adult, absence/presence, nature/culture, body/mind – by being both like adult and yet not adult. Here, youth is not an 'abjected outside', treated as essentially different from adult in the same way that a gender binary assumes an essential difference between male and female; rather, youth is temporally different. Youth is always 'becoming adult' and adulthood is always 'to come'. In other words, youth may be posited as the undecidable 'in between' on

which these binary positions depend for their meaning but which neither side can fully contain. This helps explain the 'slippage' of youth from what are meant to be its determining binary and biological boundaries.

In place of trying to 'hold' young people to these structures that are evinced in attempts to restrict, reform and demonise youth online behaviour, it is more useful to approach 'youth' as an effect of these conceptual boundaries. Butler (1993) argues that a traditional marker of fixity – like the body, for example – is constituted not by its own material presence; rather, its materiality is rendered meaningful by discourse (1993: 2). The body is therefore a discursive effect or a performative display, whereby 'discourse produces the effects that it names' (1993: 2). With regard to gender, this means that, 'There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results.' (Butler, 1999: 33)

In a similar way, youth can be understood as an effect of biological and neurological discourses, the expressions of which performatively constitute the biological and neurological 'reality' of youth as prone to risky behaviour, as lacking foresight, as in need of protection, as required to forge an identity and to 'come of age'. By creating profiles, writing blogs, sharing naked photos and engaging in self-harassment, young people are performatively constituting the meaning of youth as transgressive, as at risk, as lacking foresight, as in need of protection, and as creative, capable, reflexive and self-aware. This performativity also involves practices that are particular to social media, like the imperative to act and respond immediately and always with regard to the (absent) presence of others. Social media create new structures of self-awareness, visibility and display, and with this new ways to performatively constitute what it means to become adult, and also to see what young people perceive adulthood to be. As such, social media engagement in fact becomes a function of adulthood.

Approached in this way, social media activities are not taking teens outside of the context of their youth or otherwise harming their self-development; rather, they reveal that youth has always been a discursive construction and a social 'performance'. As such, youth can be defined differently. If sexting, selfies and self-harm constitute unacceptable behaviours because they threaten the well-being, reputations and futures of young people, then the discourses used to make sense of these practices can (and ought) to be subject to critical interrogation. For example, moves to amend child porn laws in response to the phenomenon of sexting indicate a discursive shift regarding the meaning of youth sexuality and issues of intent, content and consent (see Law Reform Committee, 2013). Here, the safety of youth remains critically important, but a change in the legal definition of child pornography creates social effects that do not necessarily demonise or criminalise youth, demand restriction or perpetuate notions of threat, risk and moral panic. Indeed, such a shift recognises the role of social media in the performance of becoming adult.

This kind of approach to youth involves 'an initial loss of epistemological certainty' (Butler, 1993: 30), which entails not only becoming more aware of our investments in youth but also taking responsibility for the effects of those investments. Social media collapse the previously distinct relations of public and private, real and virtual, but as such they permit an understanding of youth as similarly 'undecidable', as forever slipping from attempts to define it. Social media provide a way to understand the effects of existing assumptions about youth development in ways that were perhaps not able to be 'seen' prior to the advent of these media. While they appear to challenge the meaning of youth, social media actually provide a way to better understand it. We can

therefore embrace social media for revealing how youth is constructed, and thus how it could be constructed differently in order to respond to the increasing 'presence' of social media in teen lives beyond the fear that currently defines popular debate.

Conclusion

This article has addressed perceptions that social media use negatively impact on young people's self-development. Outlining arguments about and common forms of response to why youth media use is problematic, it has articulated these reasons as reflective of a developmental discourse that is marked by contradictory assumptions. Pointing out how these contradictions create problems for trying to understand young people's social media activity, Butler's notion of performativity was deployed to understand how social media offer 'new' ways to think about youth by revealing the conditions upon which youth has *always* been thought.

References

Albury, K. and Crawford, K. 2012, 'Sexting, Consent and YoungPeople's Ethics: Beyond Megan's Story', *Continuum*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 463–73.

Albury, K., Crawford, K., Byron, P. and Mathews, B. 2013, *Young People and Sexting in Australia: Ethics, Representation and the Law*, ARC Centre for Creative Industries and Innovation and the Journalism and Media Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

American Psychological Association (APA) 2007, *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls: Executive Summary*, APA, Washington, DC.

Bailey, R. 2011, *Letting Children Be Children: Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood*, Department for Education, London.

Banger, M. 2013, 'Young Ones: Your Online Reputation is, Like, Forever', *The Age*, 5 September, www.theage.com.au/digital-life/digital-life-news/young-ones-your-online-reputation-is-like-forever-20130904-2t4md.html.

Battersby, L. 2013, 'Parents Underestimate Risk of Cyber-bullying for Teens', *The Age*, 3 August, www.theage.com.au/digital-life/digital-life-news/parents-underestimate-risk-of-cyberbullying-for-teens-20130802-2r4h.html.

Bazelon, E. 2013, 'Another Teen Tragedy Proves Sexting is More than Bullying', *The Age*, 16 April, www.theage.com.au/technology/technology-news/another-teen-tragedy-proves-sexting-is-more-than-bullying-20130416-2hqv.html.

Berry, S. 2013, 'The Sexual Selfie', *The Age*, 15 July, www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/life/the-sexual-selfie-20130715-2pyrp.html.

Blatterer, H. 2010, 'The Changing Semantics of Youth and Adulthood', *Cultural Sociology*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 63–79.

boyd, d. 2008, 'Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Changing Place of Digital Media in Teenage Social Life', in D. Buckingham (ed.), *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 119–42.

Buckingham, D. 2000, *After the Death of Childhood: Growing Up in the Age of Electronic Media*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

—— 2007, *Beyond Technology: Children's Learning in the Age of Digital Media*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

—— (ed.), 2008, *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Burton, L. 2013, 'How Young People are Sucked in by Raunch Culture', *The Age*, 28 August, www.theage.com.au/comment/how-young-people-are-sucked-in-by-raunch-culture-20130827-2so9s.html.

Butler, J. 1993, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, Routledge, London.

—— 1999, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 10th anniversary edn, Routledge, London.

Casey, B.J., Getz, S. and Galvan, A. 2008, 'The Adolescent Brain', *Developmental Review*, no. 28, pp. 62–77.
Cohen, S. 1972, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and the Rockers*, MacGibbon and Kee, London.
Davis, K. 2010, 'Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinnings of Girls' Blogs', *Journal of Adolescent Research*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 145–71.
Day Good, K. 2012, 'From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives', *New Media and Society*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 557–73.
De Ridder, S. and Van Bauwel, S. 2013, 'Commenting on Pictures: Teens Negotiating Gender and Sexualities on Social Networking Sites', *Sexualities*, vol. 16, nos 5/6, pp. 565–86.
Dines, G. 2010, *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA.
Dobson, A.S. 2012, '"Individuality is Everything": "Autonomous" Femininity in MySpace Mottos and Self-descriptions', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 371–83.
Dodds, D. 2011, 'The New Science of the Teenage Brain', *National Geographic*, October, pp. 42–59.
Durham, M.G. 2009, *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualisation of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It*, Overlook Press, Woodstock, NY.
Erikson, E. 1963 [1950], *Childhood and Society*, W.W. Norton, New York.
—— 1968, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, W.W. Norton, New York.
Flores, A. and James, C. 2012, 'Morality and Ethics Behind the Screen: Young People's Perspectives on Digital Life', *New Media and Society*, vol. 15, no. 6, pp. 834–52.
Funnell, N. 2013, 'Digital Self-harm: Teens Tap Out an Online Cry for Help', *The Age*, 20 August, www.theage.com.au/comment/digital-selfharm-teens-tap-out-an-online-cry-for-help-20130819-2s7av.html.
Gabriel, F. 2013, *Deconstructing Youth: Youth Discourses at the Limits of Sense*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
Giroux, H.A. 2000, *Stealing Innocence: Corporate Culture's War on Children*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
—— 2009, *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability?* Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
Hall, G.S. 1904, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* (2 vols), D. Appleton and Company, New York.
Hasinoff, A.A. 2012, 'Sexting as Media Production: Rethinking Social Media and Sexuality', *New Media and Society*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 449–65.
Jenkins, H. 1999, *Congressional Testimony on Media Violence*, http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/jenkins_ct.html.
—— 2006, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*, New York University Press, New York.
Law Reform Committee 2013, *Inquiry into Sexting*: *Report of the Law Reform Committee for the Inquiry into Sexting*, Parliamentary Paper No. 230, Session 2010–2013, www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lawreform/article/944.
Lesko, N. 2001, *Act Your Age! A Cultural Construction of Adolescence*, Routledge Falmer, London.
Levy, A. 2005, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*, Black Inc., Melbourne.
Livingstone, S. 2002, *Young People and New Media*, Sage, London.
—— 2008, 'Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy and Self-expression', *New Media and Society*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 393–411.
Males, M. 1996, *The Scapegoat Generation: America's War on Adolescents*, Common Courage Press, Monroe, ME.
—— 1999, *Framing Youth: 10 Myths About the Next Generation*, Common Courage Press, Monroe, ME.

Mazur, E. and Kozarian, L. 2010, 'Self-Presentation and Interaction in Blogs of Adolescents and Young Emerging Adults', *Journal of Adolescent Research*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 124–44.
Mazzarella, S.R. 2007, 'Why is Everybody Always Pickin' on Youth? Moral Panics About Youth, Media, and Culture', in S.R. Mazzarella (ed.), *20 Questions about Youth and the Media*, Peter Lang, New York, pp. 45–60.
McMillan, S.J. and Morrison, M. 2006, 'Coming of Age with the Internet: A Qualitative Exploration of How the Internet has Become an Integral Part of Young People's Lives', *New Media and Society*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 73–95.
Miegel, F. and Olsson, T. 2012, 'A Generational Thing? The Internet and New Forms of Social Intercourse', *Continuum*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 487–99.
Mitchell, P. 2013, 'Chris Lane Alleged Killers Influenced by Video Games, Drugs and Gangs: Police', *The Age*, 27 August, www.theage.com.au/world/chris-lane-alleged-killers-influenced-by-video-games-drugs-and-gangs-police-20130827-2snhq.html.
Oppliger, P.A. 2008, *Girls Gone Skank: The Sexualisation of Girls in American Culture*, McFarland and Company, Jefferson, NC.
Phillips, S.F. 2007, *The Teen Brain*, Chelsea House, New York.
Piaget, J. 1969, *The Psychology of the Child*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
Ringrose, J., Gill, R., Livingstone, S. and Harvey, L. 2012, *A Qualitative Study of Children, Young People and 'Sexting': A Report Prepared for the NSPCC*, NSPCC, London.
Rivers, S.E., Reyna, V.F. and Mills, B. 2008, 'Risk Taking Under the Influence: A Fuzzy-trace Theory of Emotion in Adolescence', *Developmental Review*, no. 28, pp. 107–44.
Robards, B. 2012, 'Leaving MySpace, Joining Facebook: "Growing Up" on Social Network Sites', *Continuum*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 385–98.
Rush, E. and La Nauze, A. 2006a, *Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of Children in Australia*, Discussion Paper no. 90, The Australia Institute, www.tai.org.au/documents/dp_fulltext/DP90.pdf.
—— 2006b, *Letting Children Be Children: Stopping the Sexualisation of Children in Australia*, Discussion Paper no. 93, The Australia Institute, www.tai.org.au/documents/downloads/DP93.pdf.
Sauter, T. 2013, '"What's on Your Mind?" Writing on Facebook as a Tool for Self-formation', *New Media and Society*, 8 July, http://nms.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/07/05/1461444813495160.full.
Spivak, G.C. 1988, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Macmillan, London, pp. 271–313.
Stanley, T. 2013, 'Living Life is Not Enough for Zombie Generation', *The Age*, 21 July, www.theage.com.au/entertainment/living-life-is-not-enough-for-zombie-generation-20130720-2qb5n.html.
Steinberg, L. 2008, 'A Social Neuroscience Perspective on Adolescent Risk-taking', *Developmental Review*, no. 28, pp. 78–106.
Tankard Reist, M. (ed.) 2009, *Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls*, Spinifex Press, Melbourne.
ThinkUKnow Australia 2013, 'How to Stay in Control', www.thinkuknow.org.au/site/control.asp.
Thompson, K. 2010, 'Because Looks Can Be Deceiving: Media Alarm and the Sexualisation of Childhood – Do We Know What We Mean?', *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 395–400.
Walter, N. 2010, *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*, Virago, New York.
Wyn, J. and White, R. 1997, *Rethinking Youth*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Fleur Gabriel *is an Assistant Lecturer in Media and Communication Studies in the School of Applied Media and Social Sciences, Federation University Australia.*