

## “MULTIMACY”: PERFORMANCES OF INTIMACY ON FACEBOOK BY BUENOS AIRES ADOLESCENTS

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### ABSTRACT

This article addresses the performances of intimacy displayed by adolescents of the City of Buenos Aires through the social networking site Facebook. The methodology used is mixed ethnography: on the one hand, conducting observations and thirty in-depth interviews with adolescents from the study universe; on the other, analyzing personal photographs, given the centrality of this resource to the population at hand. In the results section, the performances which adolescents post on Facebook and comment on in the course of their everyday practices are described. The main contribution is the proposition of the concept of multimacy ("multitud") to account for the ways in which they construct and share their intimacy through the platform.

**Keywords:** Adolescents; Facebook; Performance; Intimacy; Buenos Aires.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The significance of the use of the internet and information and communication technologies (TIC) for a large majority of inhabitants of the City of Buenos Aires is evidenced by the available statistics. A high percentage of the city's youths possess their own internet access, which they use mainly in order to chat and gain access to the social networks, particularly Facebook (FB) (INDEC, 2012; Morduchowicz, 2012).

Let us look at some statistics and trends in connection with the social network. Within the over 1.1 billion active FB user community, Argentinians come twelfth, at over twenty-two million (Internet World Stats, 2014). On this multi-purpose platform, adolescents are the most numerous and active sector when it comes to publishing personal photographs. This can be explained, to some degree, by their high time availability, their digital native condition (Prensky, 2001) and also because they are at a stage central to identity experimentation and construction (Urresti, 2012), for which this platform is especially useful and satisfactory (Linne, 2014). Unlike what happened in previous decades, up to what some researchers have called "Kodak culture" (Chalfen, 1987), mobile digital technologies allow for this photographic experimentation and this visual-identity configuration to be recorded and put to the test in front of a wide community.

On the other hand, we found one of the justifications for this research in that the pioneering concepts used to describe adolescents have begun to get exhausted in their explanatory potentiality (Linne, 2014). It is necessary, therefore, to elaborate on the ways in which society makes use of ICTs from a sociological perspective. With that aim in mind, our paper looks at LIS and into gender differences. Although such categories are used in the specific literature, it is worth noting that uses of the Internet in LIS exhibit specific differences which the notion of digital natives and digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001) is insufficient to delineate satisfactorily.

We also think it is necessary to contribute to the investigations on LIS households because it is one of the populations which poses the most difficulties (Linne, 2014). Above and beyond what they usually face, everyday life for these adolescents consists of various

activities: attending school, doing odd jobs, looking after younger members of their family and, in some cases, working and taking part in art, trades and computing workshops. In their free time, they arrange to go out with friends; chat on *Whatsapp* and text on their mobile phones; play on their videogame consoles; watch audiovisual contents online; view, take and edit photographs, and use social network sites. In this context, FB constitutes the largest interphase and the fundamental medium of communication to articulate their entertainment and communication (Linne, 2014).

In this context, one of the communicative resources most used by adolescents in Buenos Aires City consists of the publication, viewing and commentary of personal photographs (Linne, 2015). These images may be defined as those which portray users or their peer or family groups, whose specificity lies in presenting intimate aspects of the person making the personal publication. On account of the importance granted by adolescents to this aesthetic resource as an interaction tool, this article will address the analysis of such a phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

Some questions arise based on our fieldwork and discrepancies with the notion of “extimacy” as formulated by Sibilía (2008), regarding the alleged global trend of youths spectacularizing their intimacy without any reservations. Do adolescents exhibit their intimacy without any restrictions? Do they publish all the photographs they take of themselves? Do they not develop any strategy in terms of what they post on their walls in order to safeguard or edit their intimacy? Encouraged by these concerns, this article intends to critically revise the concept of “extimacy” and propose new lines of investigation on the subjectivity of adolescents based on the centrality of the analysis of images.

As a result, the notion of “multimacy” is proposed to account for the processes of the construction of intimacy deployed by contemporary adolescents ever since the use of ICTs became widespread. In order to research the techno-communicative phenomena which contemporary adolescents experience, the above term offers a third way, well removed from the apocalyptic gaze concerning the relationship between youth and technology, but also at a distance from the noncritical, celebratory claims of technophiles. If traditional intimacy referred to the interiority of subjects, our hypothesis is that this new “multimacy” emerges as one of the visible spheres of the transformations between private and public.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The object of study of this article is situated at the intersection of various disciplines, hence the research methodology is “mixed ethnography”<sup>2</sup>. This combination of techniques aims at describing and analyzing a practical case in one specific population. Geographically, the research was conducted in the southern area of Buenos Aires City, inhabited by the largest concentration of working-class households in the city.<sup>3</sup> Over a third of those households, for instance, do not have access to the gas grid, and over half of the adult population has not completed their secondary school studies (INDEC, 2010).

The time frame is 2010-2014. Both the interviews (30) and observations were carried out at schools, digital inclusion centers and cybercafes. Lasting about fifty minutes, the interviews were structured around a set of questions revolving around intimacy and the practices, meanings and appropriations of ICTs. The questions were not closed but were,

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<sup>1</sup> This article is part of the research conducted for my Ph. D thesis (Linne, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> By “mixed ethnography” is meant the cross of on-site and virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> The importance of investigating low-income adolescents lies in the fact that it is a population which is commonly equated –and thus somehow pushed into invisibility– with the wider group of adolescents, whose description generally tallies with the medium-high sectors. This study explores the practices undertaken by this social group in their everyday lives, which constitute a relative gap in the field of the social sciences.

rather, meant as conversation triggers. In order to establish the right number of observations and interviews of the purposive sample, the data saturation criterion was used.

This research includes elements from various ethnographic schools, from participant anthropology (Symon & Casell, 1994) to cyber-ethnography (Farquhar, 2009) and virtual ethnography (Ardèvol & San Cornelio, 2007; Boyd, 2008 and 2014; Hine, 2012; Mayans i Planells, 2002; Moya & Vázquez, 2010). By virtual ethnography, Hine (2012) refers to the ethnography developed on the internet, whose fieldwork is fundamentally based on the participant observation of webs. Since social life is being progressively digitalized, social research must do likewise, as the offline and online worlds are more and more intertwined (Boyd, 2014). Five years ago, Ardèvol and Estalella (2009) warned about the importance of the internet for ethnographic studies.

Early internet ethnographic studies showed that internet-mediated interactions were socially meaningful and were charged with sense for their participants (Hine, 2000), a condition which came to be necessary to legitimate the social study of these phenomena in the face of previous claims that regarded mediated communication as incomplete social or second-rate interactions. (Ardèvol & Estalella, 2009: 5)

Regarding the spatial or “territorial” nature of this new ethnographic practice, Ardèvol and San Cornelio (2007) claim that this is a problem arising from studying the media practices associated to Internet 2.0. At this point, another void in research can be found: studies combining on-site ethnographic tools –describing the socio-cultural, territorial and economic coordinates of the population– with virtual ethnographic tools. It is here that this research intends to make a first contribution to its field of study by complementing and triangulating traditional ethnographic tools with observations and the analyses of images published in virtual platforms.

“Virtual” fieldwork has been largely done on FB (Boyd, 2008, 2014; Farquhar, 2009; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010, among others). The choice of this kind of ethnography was rendered the most convenient at this stage of the research, in which the focus of analysis points to the online identity construction deployed by these adolescents. As Boyd status (2008: 75), “FB became the dominant site of my fieldwork simple because this site dominates the attention of adolescents.”

This digital tool has become fundamental in order to explore the processes of identity construction and sociability which adolescents conduct in digital environments. As maintained by McDermott and Roen (2012), digital technologies are growing to be central to youth research projects: by means of these technologies, immediate information becomes available, with *insights* which do not normally emerge in on-site instances. These tools have also been employed in various works to recruit participants and make virtual observations after interviewing them, such as in the research by Boyd (2008), Farquhar (2009) and Pedroni et al. (2014).

According to Murthy (2008), new technologies have become an unforeseen fieldwork platform, confirming that the everyday life of a great part of the world is becoming more and more mediated by ICTs. This sociologist claims that a balanced combination of digital and on-site ethnography affords a greater variety of methods and permits to offer centrality to the perspective of the study subjects. The greatest challenge, as stated by Murthy quoting Sassen (2002), is developing analytic categories which enable to capture the complex imbrications of technology and society.

The virtual ethnography on which this study is based started with the creation of a FB profile in early 2012 based on *ad honorem* teaching work carried out at the computing workshop and coaching lessons in Spanish language, Literature and English at the Social

Inclusion Center CONVIVEN<sup>4</sup>. Such a profile has been maintained for three years by means of daily observation work. At present, the contact count of this profile has reached approximately 3,000 contacts, mostly low-income adolescents from Buenos Aires City.

Care has been taken in order to protect the identity of the adolescents comprising the sample. Firstly, neither names nor personal details are used which enable their location. Secondly, faces have been pixelated by means of digital editing programs in all images, which lends an anonymous nature to the material taken as evidence and prevents personal identification. Also, as regards the interviews, express authorization of the participants has been sought. Further, it is made clear that FB is a public social networking site sharing the publicity conditions with most of these sites: it does not present restrictions for over-13-year-olds, as any person over this age can have access to it; also, all users have signed an agreement with FB whereby they agree to their data being published online.

### 3. STATE OF THE ART

The ease adolescents enjoy in surfing the Internet clearly characterizes them as digital natives, i.e. those born after 1990, who grew up from their infancy alongside multimedia tools, but especially who were “weaned on the Internet”. This new generation is considered ‘native’ speaker of computer language, videogames and the Internet. Digital natives are also defined as “Generation @” (Morduchowicz, 2012), “Multimedia Generation” (Morduchowicz, 2012), “Internet natives” (Gui & Argentin, 2012) or “Net Generation” (Tapscott, 2008; Preston, Wilson & Becket, 2013).

By multitasking, a definitive category shared by most adolescents, we mean the capacity to execute many tasks at the same time in different screens or interphases in one single screen. This concept is useful to exemplify the use of dichotomic categories, as it is a characteristic practice of digital natives which is absent from digital immigrants, whose main feature is a *lack of* (Linne, 2014).

The computer has succeeded television as totem, with the proviso that ‘digital natives’ find a different meaning in it and project on this device a great many expectations linked to play, experimentation, learning and socialization, to the extent that they regard it as part of their identity (Boyd, 2014). Even though, as we have claimed, the explanatory potential of these categories –like ‘digital natives’– starts to exhaust itself, they are still useful to provide a context to some features shared by the contemporary generation of adolescents. Let us now look at the specific subject of our investigation, practices and representations touching the online search for a partner by LIS adolescents in Buenos Aires City.

Eco (1968) was the first to posit that there have always been two positions concerning technology: on the one hand, the “apocalyptic” view, which associates technological progress with the degradation of classical culture; and, on the other hand, the “integrated” view, showing enthusiasm before new technological advances which become widespread in society. In this article, a distance is established with the approach of these contemporary views. Whereas this apocalyptic line holds that adolescents employ ICTs to exhibit their intimacy and seek superfluous affection or sex relationships, it is argued in this paper that the resources displayed by these adolescents are usually calculated and a part of the many strategies used for online self-presentation.

A key author relevant to the state of the art regarding this issue who might fall under the first category is Sibilia (2008), who maintains that contemporary adolescents exacerbate

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<sup>4</sup> CONVIVEN is located in the southern area of Buenos Aires City, in the Mataderos neighborhood. Hundreds of young people in the area –from Lugano and Mataderos, as well as from nearby neighborhoods– attend its workshops on culture, art, IT, languages, academic support and recreation.

and spectacularize their intimacy before others through the internet, a phenomenon she terms “extimacy”, since that which was inward is made outward. Both Sibilia and the authors taking up her notion too often overlook the construction of meaning adolescents undertake by means of these practices.

From a divergent viewpoint, Boyd (2014) emphasizes that everyday communication by adolescents through sites like FB has forced them to change their conceptions of private due to consideration of the logic of network interactions proposed by this type of sites. Even though their “personal communities” help them develop their identity, they can also reinforce gender and class issues. Thus, Pedroni et al. (2014), based on a sample of Italian youths and adults, claim that FB users normally regard their friends as their audience, and that they select the aspects of their profile that they wish to expose before others accordingly. However, as they make it clear, users’ everyday interaction with the platform causes various tensions and conflicts.

In a recent study dealing with self-presentation on FB by Brazilian women, Lins de Almeida (2014) holds that users often reveal aspects of their intimacy in a consensual and calculated manner, seeking to obtain status within their contact network. The researcher observes a particular kind of photograph which is repeated frequently: women next to their partners or spouses, which Lins de Almeida designates construction and exhibition of “marital capital.”

In this article, contributions by Goffman and Butler are taken up in order to test the hypothesis in connection with “multimacy,” which seeks to go beyond the argument between the apocalyptic and integrated views. Firstly, Goffman’s dramaturgical approach (1959) is used. This author claims that people present themselves before others like performers playing roles on the stage, and these are constitutive of their identity, in the sense that a person’s repeated actions become their identity (*self*). Secondly, Butler’s performativity notion is used (2005) in order to account for the discourse that goes into the construction of identity, in all its sex-gendered dimensions –bodily, esthetic, linguistic, among others. Butler stresses the fact that performativity of identity performances are what we are, that there is no previous or hidden interiority being expressed or enacted, but those actions have the performative nature of becoming embodied and evolving into identity. Also, the researcher designates the corporalities linked to desire which are disseminated through the mass media as the “bodies that matter.” Both Goffman and Butler coincide in the fact that neither identity nor presentation occurs in any one way, or at any one time, but that they are processes which are actualized in everyday interactions.

On the other hand, it is worth clarifying that the alleged absence of the body and social signs from the internet is one of the matters most discussed by the state of the art (Turkle, 1995; Sibilia, 2008, among others). This “disembodiment” has led many researchers to believing that interaction in these spaces is conducted with a lesser degree of prejudice and “authenticity.” Nevertheless, in line with Farquhar (2009), it is claimed that the body is present on the internet via the “human extensions” of the various devices, and through the personal texts and images published by users.

Regarding the direct precedents of this study, Farquhar (2012) explores the performances made in their personal profiles by a sample of American college students, and how the latter tend to simplify their self-presentation to render their social network profiles more readable and legitimate. Moreover, this author claims that social relationships among youths often fluently alternate instances of both online and offline intercommunication.

In brief, the proposal here is for *performances* as an aspect of identity, and “self-presentation” as a set of techniques and strategies used by adolescents in order to show themselves and make themselves known to their contact network and the potential contacts browsing their biographies.

#### 4. MULTIMACY

The social network has evolved into the operations center from which adolescents articulate a great part of their everyday sociability and peer bonding. This platform is their fundamental communication and entertainment environment: blogs, email and instant messaging do not appear as independent applications any more, but have been subsumed in FB (Linne, 2014).

The participating adolescents may be considered “prosumers”: performative actors and voyeuristic subjects who constitute audiences and, at the same time, present “scenarios” and “performances” (Urresti, Linne & Basile, 2015). These performative practices generate conflict in various environments (family, school, sex-love relationships) and account for the diverging conceptions of intimacy as expressed by adults and adolescents as to what is valid to show on social networks, and what has to be reserved for the private sphere.

##### 4.1 Interviews

“I try to go on Facebook every day, any time I can. All my friends are there, so I find out how they are doing, tell them about me and hear about things that are going on in the neighborhood and with the neighbors”. (Male, 18 years old)

“On Facebook I try to show the best things about me. You never know when some boy is going to turn up that I may like, or something. Anyway, I also do it so my friends see it. Just like the rest. It’s a back and forth. And so we get to know each other better and keep in touch when we don’t meet”. (Female, 17 years old)

By means of FB, most adolescents constitute networks of contacts with which they share intimate aspects of their lives. The most frequent modality of this practice is through personal photographs, which may be divided into two wide categories: self-photos and photos with groups of peers. Both have great identitary, esthetic, sexual and recreational components, since adolescents experiment with their own image and construct their corporeality in a performative fashion, as they try out different accessories, dress and editing software (Linne, 2014). On being inquired on the practices she develops on FB, one adolescent replied:

##### 4.2 Interview

“We make videos or take photos, for example, edit them and post them on Facebook. There is nothing else like it. It is unique, and anyone can do it. We take pictures at school, at the mall, hanging out together at someone’s place, when we go out. We always go out with the camera. And use odd times to see the pics others post”. (Female, 15 years old)

For the adolescents under study, the centrality of the images does not only lie in their value for identitary construction, but also as proof of fidelization. In this sense, it is adolescents themselves that claim to use basic information, cultural preferences and, above all, personal photos, to tell active, “actual” users (defined as those who have photos of themselves and are tagged<sup>5</sup> by others) from those profiles that look “suspicious.” The latter are accused of attempting to conceal their identities in order to undertake potential

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<sup>5</sup> Tagging consists in the application of other users’ name tags on published photos. In this way, when the pointer is hovered over the people in the photo, their names appear if they are tagged. When someone is tagged, a link is created to their profile.

clandestine, sometimes illegal, activities, such as spamming, cyberbullying, theft, scams and abuses.

### 4.3 Interview

“Often, if they don’t have photos of themselves or posts about their lives, we don’t accept them. Because it’s dodgy, you don’t know who they might be. We add strangers as contacts, but just as long as they show some of their things: photos with their friends, where they live, that sort of thing”. (Female, 18 years old)

Indeed, the least reliable users are those who exhibit a lesser flow of interactions and a greater percentage of negative comments from the community. New users –due to their lack of photos, friends, tags and comments– must provide additional proof of their identity if they wish to be accepted within a contact network. These “autobiographies” consisting of different snapshots of their everyday lives demonstrate that they are actual users, not accounts created with potentially harmful or simple voyeuristic ends.

Self-presentation performances involving corporeality became widespread first among women, though they are becoming more and more frequent with teenage males. This is so to a great measure because both find in FB an effective vehicle to exhibit their performances of intimacy and to consume the performances of their acquaintances.

Both men and women who achieve significant visibility on FB exhibit a corporeality that they build effectively to be liked by a large part of their contact network. This successful corporeality may be conceived as the effective or potential assets which are conducive to the attainment of resources (offline or virtual) via their corporeality being valued by others. Nonetheless, fieldwork evidences that this practice is thought-out and that its greatest interest lies in communication with their peer groups, in keeping in touch with their intimacy performances and, above all, with what happens in the neighborhood and at school.

Among the adolescents in the sample, slimness is one of the most valued aspects in the construction of their corporeality, as well as the exhibition of muscles when it comes to men, and curves in the case of women. Most published images present slimness, as though overweight among these adolescents “did not exist” or were a taboo. Although in on-site fieldwork several overweight adolescents were interviewed, they either do not normally publish photographs of their bodies or edit the images with a view to “disguising” that which they do not deem desirable. Unlike those who reveal overweight, thin adolescents usually prioritize a full-body corporeality aimed at enhancing their sensuality. This practice reinforces the hypothesis at hand: intimacy is not exhibited without reservations, but as a result of a thought-out, strategic practice shared by peers.

These virtually shared corporealities are praised or criticized on FB, both through Likes and comments on the wall or via the chat feature. For adolescents, who are undergoing a key period in their identity configuration (Urresti, 2012), validation by means of the publication of personal photos becomes crucial. Thus, the intimacy performances that they publish function as “currency.” Like forum users, who are rewarded by other users with a score or credit when they post valuable contents, here adolescents who offer intimacy performances are rewarded within the FB logic: hundreds or tens of Likes and comments elevating the degree of visibility of their publication within their contact network.

To conclude, adolescents employ the platform as an operations center to display various strategies with which to construct their intimacy among peers. In this context, they express concern about their corporeality, as they link it to their social success. If their publications should not obtain impact among their contact network, they tend to feel undervalued.

What is of interest in this specific population is their strategies to construct an intimacy among peers which may be deemed attractive even when often they bear corporealities which diverge from contemporary beauty standards as reproduced by advertising esthetics and the media. In this respect, close-up photos of their faces or mid-shots (from the waist upwards), or fragments of their bodies may be observed. The following images are characteristic among the adolescents in the sample. Image 1 reflects the choice of mid-shot in the profile photo in order to construct her corporeality based on the face and breasts, together with the allusion to marijuana in the cover photo through the exhibition of a giant cigarette. Image 2 shows an adolescent revealing his bare torso leaning against the hood of a car, alcoholic drink in hand.



**Images 1 and 2. Facebook publication screenshots**



**Source:** contents analysis based on virtual ethnography.

On the other hand, the objects they photograph themselves with function as “extensions and prosthetics” of their corporeality. Women tend to publish personal photos as they pose with hats, makeup, shades, rings, ear-rings and piercings (see next image). The props selected by both sexes are mostly cell phones, photo cameras and headphones; to a lesser degree, soccer jerseys (Urresti, Linne & Basile, 2015).



### Images 3 and 4. Facebook publication screenshots



**Source:** contents analysis based on virtual ethnography.

In the first image above, the exhibition of the belly button piercing is paradigmatic as a sign of a specific appropriation by adolescent women in this population. In the second, the adolescent (16 years old) shows himself in a selfie wearing the jersey of his local soccer club (Nueva Chicago), a cap and a photo camera. Adolescents also show their digital camera, camera-telephone, television set and computer. In the next image, an adolescent (17 years old) shows herself on her profile photo through a close-up of herself and of the cell phone which she used to produce the selfie; on the cover, she also presents herself in a mid-shot, with her bed, white school pinafore and DVD player in the background.

### Image 5. Facebook publication screenshot



**Source:** contents analysis based on virtual ethnography.

These devices used to take selfies or peer group pictures account for control over the front stage and a strategic construction of intimacy performances, i.e. a new configuration referred in this paper as “multimacy.” To that end, they use the elements they regard as the most attractive and prestigious in their personal images, e.g. cars, motorcycles, alcoholic drinks, trainers and expensive brands of clothes, as well as technological objects associated with communication, information and entertainment.

If all images can be read as front, it is also possible to find other images which point to the backstage. In this sense, the “photo *escrache*”<sup>6</sup> is a native category denoting a

<sup>6</sup> “*Escrache*” is a term originating in human rights organizations, like HIJOS, which “*escrachaban*” (pointed out, showed up) the houses of military men from the last dictatorial regime who had committed crimes and gone

“spontaneous” photograph showcasing a supposedly unedited image, which assumes a certain exhibition of the personal backstage even though it is nothing but another edited performance in order to publish the front. It may consist of a self-“*escrache*” (selfie of an adolescent who just got up all disheveled) or an “*escrache*” to a friend (sleeping or inebriated). In the example that follows, an adolescent (16 years old) brags about showing herself “the way she really is: ugly.” This post had a high acceptance rate, as it obtained over a hundred Likes.

**Image 6. Facebook publication screenshot**



**Source:** contents analysis based on virtual ethnography.

These performances which they design, post, comment on and consume on a daily basis account for a new kind of intimacy. The sphere of intimacy is publicly translated on FB into performativity scenes, given that for contemporary adolescents intimacy demands a communicative instance, unlike the confined, inner space which corresponded to its traditional conception. To the question of how the adolescents in the sample manage the level of openness of their publications, the following replies are paradigmatic:

#### 4.4 Interviews

“We post photos of outings or of ourselves, but we don’t make them public for all to see, we just let our friends see them, so we keep it chill”. (Male, 16 years old)

“We take a lot of photos when we get together with friends but we only choose some for Facebook. And we edit them heavily, it’s not like you want to make an ass of yourself. It’s important to take care of your image, but also to be natural, spontaneous”. (Female, 18 years old)

By means of the analysis of the images and voices of the interviewees, this article demonstrates that adolescents from Buenos Aires City display various strategies to offer their best versions when presenting themselves, partly with tools favored by the very platform, and partly by a series of “netiquettes”<sup>7</sup> acquired through experience and practice, such as checking on a user/potential friend’s identity based on their interaction on the platform.

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unpunished –a doorstep protest. Starting with the widespread use in the mass media, the term was appropriated by Buenos Aires adolescents, who gave it particular meanings.

<sup>7</sup> This term refers to rules of behavior or digital etiquette not made explicit in writing, but which apply to wide groups of “netizens”, e.g. not publishing photos depicting nudity is included in the *netiquette* of various user groups on FB.

As Boyd (2014) argues, the communicative dynamics of sites such as FB have forced adolescents to modify their conceptions regarding privacy. This author's claims contribute to comprehending why there exist different degrees of openness to publications among adolescents. In brief, throughout this article we have contributed abundant empirical and theoretical evidence to support the proposed hypothesis of "multimacy": different audiences have access to different intimacy performances. It is stressed that adolescents safeguard their privacy from others –especially parents and strangers–, but they exhibit certain intimate contents on FB as part of their self-presenting performances.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Personal photos are central to the configuration of the online profiles of Buenos Aires City adolescents. The photos most habitually published by the adolescents in the sample are selfies and photos with peer groups. Particularly, the objects which are evidenced in the fieldwork are piercings, tattoos, soccer jerseys, caps, cell phones, photo cameras, television sets, sound systems, computers, motorcycles and cars. These devices function as "human extensions" or "prosthetics" of corporeality, i.e. as tools to construct their intimacy in a society in which the public/private configuration is in a state of constant flux.

The spaces they photograph the most are normally their school, squares, street corners, malls and homes. Posted photos function as a personal diary of everyday life, which is part of the intimacy shared among peers. Through these personal images which they show before their contact network, they construct and regulate their intimacies as they try out different accessories, outfits and editing software.

In this sense, the "multimacy" category postulated here proves useful since it accounts for the strategies used by adolescents on FB with the purpose of showing intimate and attractive aspects of them online. Given that the identity they show is often constructed and that they evidence in the interviews that they represent an image before the others; this category enables to describe analytically the ways in which adolescents expose various aspects of themselves on social media.

The word "multimacy" accounts for the processes through which adolescents display an intimacy by means of the exchange of performances of self-presentation, including intimate aspects. By the same token, if adolescents seek to create the best version of them, it is not possible to think that their link to intimacy is simply "spontaneous." Thus, the proposed notion alludes to an emerging multiple intimacy among peers constructed by adolescents. This "multimacy" is neither spectacular nor compulsive, but rather a new type of bonding revealing novel configurations in connection with public and private, and subjectivity.

The practice of "producing" and sharing intimacy further reinforces the argument that the performances of self-presentation undertaken by adolescents are regulated and meaningful. As has been claimed, with this argument a distance is established with authors who suggest that adolescents use ICTs without building any meaning or mediations, and mainly to exhibit their intimacy. On the contrary, it is demonstrated here that the resources deployed by adolescents are often mediated and are a part of the many different strategies with which they construct their front.

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