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Ethical Dilemmas in Qualitative Research with Youth On/Offline

IJLM

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Abstract

Research on the digital and online environment poses several ethical questions that are new or, at least, newly pressing, especially in relation to youth. Established ethical practices require that research have integrity, quality, transparency, and impartiality. They also stipulate that risks to the researcher, institution, data, and participants should be anticipated and addressed. But difficulties arise when applying these to an environment in which the online and offline intersect in shifting ways. This paper discusses some real-life “digital dilemmas” to identify the emerging consensus among researchers. We note the 2012 guidelines by the Association of Internet Researchers, which advocates for ethical pluralism, for minimizing harm, and for the responsibility of the researcher where codes are insufficient. As a point of contrast, we evaluate Markham’s (2012) radical argument for data fabrication as an ethical practice. In reflecting on how researchers of the digital media practices of youth resolve their dilemmas in practice, we take up Markham’s challenge of identifying evolving practice, including researchers’ workarounds, but we eschew her solution of fabrication. Instead, we support the emerging consensus that while rich data are increasingly available for collection, they should not always be fully used or even retained in order to protect human subjects in a digital world in which future possible uses of data exceed the control of the researcher who collected them.

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Introduction

Guidance for the ethical conduct of research has been developed across the social sciences, medical, and humanities disciplines to protect human participants from threats arising from the conduct of the research and to protect researchers, their institutions, and the wider standing of academic knowledge. The implementation and enforcement of ethical regulations remains uneven cross-nationally; for instance, being more established in the United States than in many European countries (Stald and Haddon 2008). However, while regulations are being applied more widely, their value is undermined by questions about their applicability in the digital age. For example, how can researchers gain hand-signed informed consent from participants known only by their online chat names? How can they promise anonymity when a simple Google search may link unattributed data taken from online sources back to its original author? And how should researchers comport themselves professionally when their own digital footprints are available to research participants?

The idea for this article emerged from a frank exchange of views, confessions even, among qualitative researchers working with children and young people across the online/offline boundary.¹ On the one hand, research with legal minors usually demands the highest standards of research ethics, traditionally centered on the legal and moral rights of individual human subjects. On the other hand, youth are often in the vanguard of new kinds of digital activities, thereby participating in an environment that seems to deal not only in human subjects but in texts (messages, images, often of unclear or collaborative origin but of marked persistence over time) and networks (i.e., potentially unlimited webs of connection rather than discrete individuals). Those researching youthful engagement with the digital environment may find themselves in somewhat uncharted territory, often having to frame their own informal rules of thumb (Hargittai 2009) and hoping to learn from the solutions trialled by others. By examining researchers' accounts of their "digital dilemmas" and of how they resolved them in practice, we hope to pinpoint the particular challenges that digital environments pose to established codes of research ethics, thereby provoking reflection, stimulating discussion, and, perhaps, generating more constructive guidance for future research.

Digital Research Ethics

The already-significant demands of conducting research on the everyday experiences of young people are magnified in relation to digital environments. Ethical norms for research with youth already exist (Mahon et al. 1996), and norms for Internet-based research are emerging (Ess 2009; Whiteman 2012). But rather little guidance is available in relation to the further problems that arise when researching two crucial intersections: youth + online and online + offline.

Once youth go online, the challenges of obtaining informed consent, already significant for research with children and youth, are magnified. The old adage that "on the Internet no one knows you're a dog" is still pertinent, since on the Internet no one knows if you are a child. And while researchers might not always worry greatly about their treatment of adults' data, especially if those data are not sensitive, such an approach is difficult to defend if minors are (or may be) among the participants.

Once research encompasses online as well as offline contexts, the challenges of sustaining distance (important to anonymity and confidentiality) among researchers, participants, and research users are magnified. Online, blurred public/private boundaries, and collapsed contexts (Baym and boyd 2012) alter the social norms that underpin established ethical codes. Especially if the online context is linked to the offline context (where identities are known or knowable), misunderstandings or data leakages or misuses are likely, potentially harming researchers, participants, or the quality of the data.

Yet the promise for research is that tracing connections across different domains of human activities, including on/offline, will deepen the analysis and aid interpretation (Orgad 2009). Moreover, in relation to youth in particular, studying the offline with no reference to the online is becoming implausible (Slater 2002; Ito et al. 2010). The consequence is a series of dilemmas concerning informed consent, the relation of the researcher to research participants, the relation of primary (consenting) to secondary (involuntary or inadvertent) participants, and how to ensure confidentiality or anonymity in a digital environment.

The "Standard" Approach and Its Limits

Ethical guidance in the social sciences and humanities is designed to protect researchers and research participants from undue harm and to avoid academic

misconduct; it promotes research integrity, quality, transparency, and impartiality and requires that risks to the researcher, institution, data, and participants should be anticipated as far as possible and addressed before the research begins. Participation should be voluntary not coerced, and any harm should be avoided or, at most, justified against the anticipated gain to knowledge. Institutional committees responsible for research ethics (termed institutional review boards in the United States) demand robust and detailed procedures regarding privacy, intrusion, deception, gatekeepers, honoraria, data storage, conflicts of interest, reputation, and liability. They center on the insistence that, unless the alternative is supported by very good reasons, people should participate in research only under conditions of *informed consent* (i.e., they should be fully informed about the purpose, process, and outcomes of the research), any personal information collected should be kept *confidential* (i.e., not disseminated at all), and the participants should remain *anonymous* (i.e., neither findings nor data should be traceable to their source).

Within this approach exists a range of differences in emphasis, particularly between the medical/health model and that derived from anthropology, feminist studies, and cultural studies. Some of these differences are exacerbated as researchers are urged (e.g., by their universities or journal editors) to apply institutional ethical guidelines to the new and continually changing context of digital/online research. Indeed, researchers from multiple disciplines are now collecting, or asking participants to collect or produce, all kinds of digital content (text, photos, videos). Others are using content posted or “published” on social networking sites or via Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/>), excited by these new kinds of data that complement those acquired by interviews or observations. Yet others are enthused by the ease of administering surveys online or collecting “big data” from online networks without any need (or possibility) to identify or contact the individuals who produced it (boyd and Crawford 2012). But behind this apparent wealth of digital content and networks are the human subjects, sometimes children, who have participated in their making or are affected by their distribution.

In response to these challenges, digital research ethics developed from the late 1990s. Early views regarded “cyberspace” as a distinct or parallel world, although the continuities and connections between online and offline activities, practices, and identities

have since become increasingly apparent.² Most influential internationally is the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR 2002). Its *Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research: Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee* led the way in framing ethical research practices for a digitally mediated and connected world. But the continuing debates hosted by the AoIR listserv attest to the still-unresolved nature of digital research ethics. As Beaulieu and Estalella (2012) observe, digital media research practices are often not even (yet) recognized by institutional research ethics committees, especially as these practices require “ethics beyond consent forms.” The consequence is that the onus for ethical research rests firmly on researchers to work out for themselves “what’s reasonable” (Whiteman 2012), often in conjunction with participants or those responsible for the field site—as argued by Floridi and others in terms of *distributed ethics* (see Broadbent et al. 2013).

Digital Dilemmas

What problems do researchers face in practice, and are they finding solutions? The difficulty of obtaining *informed consent*, especially if hand-written signatures are required, is nearly insurmountable for online-only research. This requirement means that researchers often include an offline component in their research design so that consent for the entire project can be obtained via face-to-face or postal communication. More difficult is dealing with secondary (or involuntary or accidental) participants, and while this is problematic offline also, it is even more so online, especially for projects concerned with social groups, relationships, or networks rather than with (isolated) individuals. We can distinguish several dilemmas:

- **Dilemma 1: Wishing to collect data from those who have not consented.** In a study of young teenagers’ learning, the researchers were “friended” by consenting participants on the social networking site Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>). This made available not only individual information but also information about others listed as friends, shown in photos, or who had posted comments on a primary (consenting) participant’s profile. Since the project conceived of identity as networked rather than individual, the researcher wished to collect these data also but could not easily obtain consent from secondary

participants (see Livingstone and Sefton-Green [n.d.]).

- **Dilemma 2: Collecting data from secondary participants inadvertently.** When the researcher studied young people's mobile phone communication, she gained consent from six 14-year-olds and their parents to record their conversations and log their text messages for a week. When she got the data, she found she had received information from all 66 people who had participated in those conversations and messages, half of whom were minors. Legally, she did not need to obtain consent from "the other party" at the end of the line (according to Danish law), but she considered it to be ethically problematic (Laursen 2013).
- **Dilemma 3: In research on collaborative practices, one participant may deny consent.** In their video-based research on the social practices of classroom learning communities, having one or more learners, or their parents/guardians, deny consent to participate was problematic. This problem cannot be solved simply by directing the camera away from the student or taking the learner out of the classroom or learning environment while conducting research.³ The dilemma has implications for how to account for the learning community as a whole and for realizing the educational goals embedded in the research.⁴

Each of these dilemmas has nondigital parallels, the point being not that digital and online research introduces entirely new ethical problems but that it exacerbates or complicates known problems. Offline, a researcher may observe secondary participants at a field site, but collecting data from them without their awareness requires a deliberate act on the part of the researcher. But with digital recording (audio or video) of offline events, or with the online collection of naturally recorded digital data (as from social media sites), a researcher can easily capture and record data far beyond that for which formal consent was obtained. Thus, to stay within traditional ethical norms for data collection, researchers find themselves impelled to positively discard already collected or already available data. Moreover, once researchers recognize that identity and interaction are fundamentally social, separating data from primary (consenting) and secondary

(involuntary) participants without damage may be difficult.

Additional dilemmas concern traditional expectations regarding the distance or separation between researcher and researched. Beaulieu and Estalella (2012) describe this as the problem of where knowledge is produced now that the contiguity of settings challenges distinctions among the fields of data collection, analysis, dissemination, and accountability. Social networking sites especially undermine the hitherto strict *boundary between the researcher and participant*, resulting in further dilemmas.

- **Dilemma 4: Young people may reveal more of their private lives than anticipated.** In a study of young people's "Learning Life" in a multiethnic suburb, a 15-year-old immigrant boy unexpectedly contacted the (female) researcher via Facebook to explain that his culture did not permit him to socialize alone with women, so any interview must be confidential. While subsequent face-to-face interviews produced rather standard answers, the boy followed up each interview with more elaborate information via Facebook messages, generating a rapport that provided sensitive information, some of it beyond the scope of the project and of which his family might disapprove (see Roth, forthcoming).
- **Dilemma 5: How should the researcher perform his or her identity online?** In an endeavor to understand the process of becoming a filmmaker, the researchers used Microsoft's MSN Messenger program to conduct online interviews with young filmmakers in Scandinavia. One of their female participants used emoticons to show her emotions in regard to not submitting a film to a particular film festival. The researchers were unsure how to reply to the familiar and informal tone suggested by the informant's use of emoticons.⁵

These additional challenges also exist offline, but they are exacerbated online. Not only are channels for communication multiplied today, but each has distinct characteristics—and those that are informal or emotional challenge the formality expected by even the most empathetic researcher in order to control their relation with participants and to protect themselves. This problem is linked to that of *traceability* (Beaulieu and Estalella 2012) or *anonymity* over time. As every interaction in the digital environment leaves

a digital trace or footprint embedded in the field site, traditional boundaries between public and private, researcher and researched are reconfigured. As the following dilemmas illustrate, this can result in problems for the participants, the researcher, the data, and the data's dissemination.

- **Dilemma 6: How should the researcher address the later traceability of online participants?** Communicating with adolescents online can enable a researcher to get closer to adolescents' preferred mode of interaction, and so the researchers created a dedicated online research space (a field blog). But this meant the adolescents left online traces about their practices, perceptions, and activities that could be retrieved by third parties (even though the field blog had a restricted access). The ethical dilemma, then, is how to balance the legitimate need of the researcher to create a friendly space for interacting with participants with the later protection of participants' privacy (see OssCom 2010).
- **Dilemma 7: Can the researcher protect his or her own privacy?** The researcher examined Italian blogs using snowball sampling to contact bloggers from different social circles, starting with those she knew offline from a bloggers' meeting. The participants she got in touch with wished to be sure that she and her research were not fake, but they could not easily check out her digital footprint because she did not have her own blog and had not worked out how best to present or protect her personal information (see Locatelli 2008, 2014).

Contrasting Solutions

Digital networked environments make information readily traceable, making confidentiality (of data) and anonymity (of sources) difficult to ensure.⁶ Thus AoIR (2012) calls for caution. Given the many uncertainties and the considerable cultural diversity that online research may encompass, knowingly or otherwise, AoIR advocates ethical pluralism. Rather than detailed rules or "recipes" for ethical conduct, it offers a few telling principles to guide researchers as they tackle specific and emerging ethical challenges. First, it stresses that no institutional codes or rules should override the researcher's own ethical responsibility, which lasts from initial conception of a project through to eventual publication *and beyond*—this being a further conse-

quence of the impossibility of forgetting in the digital era (Soep 2010). Then, AoIR stresses the importance of minimizing harm, which puts the onus on researchers to reflexively examine their expectations (of the research), the norms (of the setting), any anticipated consequences of ethical and methodological decisions, participant vulnerabilities (which are often unknown), research benefits (which may be less specified than they should be), and worst-case scenarios (which should be faced for any project).

Further, recognizing uncertainty in a digitally mediated world over what is human and what is "merely" text, AoIR advocates "the distance principle," meaning that researchers should inquire not (or not only) into the distance between researcher and researched but into the distance between the object of study and the person(s) who produced it, however distant or unknown he, she, or they may be from the point of view of the researcher.⁷ As Orgad (2009) observes, what matters is not only whether the researcher or research users can identify the author from an online text but whether the authors or any others are themselves invested in that text as a private part of themselves. For example, if young people treat publicly posted messages as personal or intimate, the researcher should follow suit, no matter where they have been found.⁸ This means, in effect, not collecting data that, from a research point of view, is useful.

Is this sufficient? In a provocative article, Markham (2012) offers a radical alternative. Concerned that academic methods remain conservative while innovative means of cultural analysis thrive beyond the academy (consider the insights to be obtained from "remix" or other forms of collaborative and creative cultural expression), she observes that ethical anxieties about anonymity, authenticity, and authorship are generating overly restrictive workarounds. She calls for researchers to fabricate their data—not as a form of cheating or academic misconduct but as its very opposite: as an ethical act of representation by weaving, interpreting, or narrating. Specifically, she invites researchers to create composite accounts of the data rather than faithfully reporting extracts from the digital content of (supposedly) anonymous individuals.

This not only promises to solve the problems of anonymity and confidentiality, but it also takes the sting out of the challenge of informed consent. If anonymity and confidentiality can be guaranteed (by making up an account of the data), failing to

obtain informed consent—including for secondary participants—is unlikely to prove harmful, because nothing can be traced back to human subjects (although representing certain groups adversely may still be unethical). By conceiving of fabrication as making rather than faking, Markham echoes constructivist and feminist epistemology, displacing the positivist metaphor of discovery or exploration—of data “out there,” of “naturally occurring behavior.” As constructivists have long argued, positivism denies the shaping role of the researcher’s own standpoint, instead holding out the impossible vision of data “uncontaminated” by the relationship between researcher and participants. Instead, Markham proposes that we accept research as a social construction and focus on how to do it well—to which end she suggests a series of tests: do the findings “ring true,” are they messy not idealized, recognizable by participants, and can the researcher elucidate transparent steps from fieldwork to conclusions?

Researchers’ Confessions

How have researchers themselves tackled the challenges they described to us? None adopted Markham’s solution. Rather, to fit the conservative strictures of research ethics in a digital age, each sought to constrain either what was collected or what was used.

The first three dilemmas hinge on the ways in which digital media capture both primary and secondary participants, posing difficulties for informed consent in a socially networked context. Dilemma 1 (whether to collect data from social network “friends”) was addressed in a way approved by the researchers’ institutional research ethics committee. Specifically, the researchers decided to treat information and interactions on the Facebook profile, wall, friends’ list, and album as part of the target child’s identity but not to follow the target child as they posted on others’ sites and not to refer in any detail to information about others on the target child’s site (see Livingstone and Sefton-Green [n.d.]). This decision operationalizes a simple and defensible cut through the interconnected profiles of social networking participants, collecting only such data as the child could be said to “own” and give consent to (i.e., on their own profile, whether posted by or about them). Two problems remain: one is that the researchers doubtless saw information posted by nonconsenting secondary participants; the other is that even quoting from those who

did consent could lead assiduous searchers to find the identities of those linked to them.

For dilemma 2 (collecting phone conversations that inadvertently included others), the researcher let the participants decide whether to tell their conversational partners that a recording was taking place (Laursen 2013). She also received information about the physical location of participants making the calls, data she did not realize she could have asked for and got consent to. Because the legal department of the telecommunications company that made the recordings for the researcher also missed this, she discarded these data, not using the calls that were not legitimately collected. In dilemma 3 (videoing classroom interaction without informed consent from all), the researchers decided to include all children in the project’s learning activities but to exclude from analysis and dissemination any video or other artifacts from those children who were not granted parental permission to be part of the research.⁹ The researchers’ rationale was that to exclude some children from a shared learning activity could be as negative in its consequences as could including them without parental consent.

As Whiteman (2012) points out, the institutional context (in dilemma 2, the company; in dilemma 3, the school) matters for establishing ethical practice even though the legal and ethical issues of institution and researcher may not be aligned. This relates also to the “importance of accountability: both to the field of research and to the research subjects” (boyd and Crawford 2012, p. 672). In practice, this means that researchers must be ready “to continue to rethink, reinvent and redeploy principled ethical strategies as future research environments and tools evolve” (Charlesworth 2012, p. 101). Future researchers will likely have to discard more data than ever before, given the ease of collecting data that may not ethically be used.¹⁰

Boundaries between researchers and participants are often blurred, and online social networks enable new forms of interaction. The solution adopted in dilemma 4 (participants reveal more than expected) was for the researcher, who suspected she was being used to experiment with cultural rules, to raise the question with the participant of how to distinguish public and private communication, with the result that he became less forthcoming in the face-to-face interview (Roth, forthcoming). In this case, transparency compromised the quality of the data by

treating the participant ethically (i.e., making him or her conscious of the implications of his or her choices). Possibly, this too will be more common as researchers announce themselves in digital environments where it can be harder to gauge the participants' reactions or where the communicative context may be more delicate or ambiguous. A similar solution was adopted in dilemma 5 (how should researchers perform their identity online?): so as not to impose the researcher's style on participants or the online context, the researcher let the participants introduce emoticons before the researcher followed suit.¹¹ Related problems concern how the researcher should talk online (or, offline, handle such practical matters as what to wear to an interview).

The last two dilemmas concern the near impossibility of forgetting or deleting online information. The existence of powerful online search tools makes the reporting of digital data (for purposes of illustration, transparency, or accountability) while also protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of participants very difficult. Dilemma 6 (how can the researcher protect the privacy of participants?) was solved by informing (or warning) interviewees in advance of the characteristics of the platform used and, in particular, of the searchability of data disseminated via the blog (even though the blog had restricted access). Second, the researcher deliberately did not prompt interviewees to post private or personal information, leaving the decisions about what to post to them. Dilemma 7 (how can the researcher protect his/her privacy?) was solved by contacting participants via instant messaging software (a platform they were comfortable with). The researcher also made the project blog public to the participants, thereby communicating the authenticity of the project while making her digital identity only partially available to them (Locatelli 2008, 2014). Managing the status of the researcher depends in part on the affordances of the digital context being observed. As Whiteman (2012) argues, on some platforms one may observe without also being observed, while in others this is not possible. Both stances pose difficulties.

Conclusions

The desire of researchers to share and solve their ethical dilemmas testifies to the commitment of digital media researchers to ethical research practice. A host of practicalities remain: how to negotiate the bureau-

cracy of the university research ethics committee, how to get informed consent from "subjects" who are accessed only online, how to anticipate future uses of reported or archived or still-online data, and so on. Essentially the problem is one of principle: how to protect the human rights of dignity, autonomy, and privacy (or, as AoIR states, how to ensure respect for persons, justice, and beneficence) in a digital age where human activity includes the creation and distribution of digital content in a networked and complexly manipulable environment. This problem is even more challenging when researching children and youth, because additional ethical considerations apply, because their rights are easily overlooked, and because in the online environment it may not be clear whether legal minors are involved.

In this article, we have taken up Markham's challenge of identifying emerging practices, including researchers' rules of thumb, in researching youthful digital media engagement. Despite the beguiling and audacious nature of Markham's proposal to fabricate digital data, we suggest that the potential costs—to the credibility of social science, social scientists, and their institutions, especially in a time of widespread media and public skepticism regarding academic research—are too great. Instead, we have witnessed researchers following ethical principles such as those invoked by AoIR—to minimize harm, recognize the rights of human subjects, balance benefits and risks, and extend ethical consideration to all research participants at all times, including into an unknown future. At the same time, their solutions to the digital dilemmas show that, in practice, adhering to ethical principles results in costs to the knowledge and insight that can be gained, as well as to the richness and authenticity with which researchers can document, report, and be accountable for their findings.

We have identified a growing gulf between the ethical considerations that apply to the moment of data collection and those that apply to the moment of data use. In the digital age collecting large and rich datasets is increasingly easy, and consequently the crucial decisions are not only a matter of what to collect but increasingly also a matter of what to use and what to throw away. In making the latter decision, considerations such as the difficulties of obtaining informed consent (especially among secondary or networked participants), the digital footprint or other visibility of the researcher to participants, the persistence of data and the impossibility of anticipating

future contexts of use all mean that the ethics of data use (present and future) is increasingly constraining the ethics of data collection. How matters develop from here poses some larger dilemmas for the research community.

Notes

1. We thank those involved in the European research network Developing Innovative Methodologies for Researching Connected Learning, supported by the MacArthur Foundation. The network included research projects located in different countries (United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Italy) and representing different disciplines (primarily media studies, education, and sociology). The focus was on how children and young people use digital media to learn across formal, informal, and semiformal locations in order to develop appropriate and innovative methodologies to characterize existing and new kinds of digital media learning. We also thank Charles Ess and Natasha Whiteman for their helpful criticisms of an earlier version of this article.
2. In 1999, the American Association for the Advancement of Science program on Scientific Freedom, Responsibility, and Law organized a workshop about the “Ethical and Legal Aspects of Human Subjects Research in Cyberspace” (Frankel and Siang 1999). See also the work done since 2001 by the Panel on Research Ethics in Canada, which develops and regularly updates the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, available online at <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/>.
3. In more public places, people may not even be aware that recording is taking place. As the researcher of a study in a science center explained to us, notices were placed at all of the entrances to the exhibition, as well as near the recording cameras, to inform visitors of the recording and to provide them with the opportunity to refuse to be recorded. Further, school classes that were known to visit the science center on the recording days were contacted to inform them about the research project and provide the teachers with the opportunity to refuse to participate. The teachers were also provided with copies of an information letter about the project, intended for the children to bring home and discuss with their parents. Even so, the researcher acknowledged that she could not be sure that everyone on her recordings had been informed (see also Laursen 2013).
4. See Kristiina Kumpulainen’s “Virtual Interactive Space for Collaborative Innovation” research project, funded by the Academy of Finland (project no. 129265)—details at <http://www.visci.fi>.
5. See the Scandinavian project “Making a Filmmaker” (2008–2012), led by Øystein Gilje, Faculty of Education, University of Oslo (Frølunde et al., 2009).
6. Some participants may, for various reasons, wish to be identified—for example, to be acknowledged as authors of their intellectual or creative work (Bruckman 2002).
7. The distance principle was articulated in an early version of the AoIR (2012) ethical recommendations but omitted from the final version. Nonetheless, we find it a helpful consideration.
8. The boundary between public and private places and, therefore, data must be treated as “relationally established rather than naturally defined” (Whiteman 2012, p. 48). Privacy should be understood in contextual rather than absolute terms (Nissenbaum 2010). Thus, the border between public and private can be defined by considering the participants’ expectations, the “*tacit* and *explicit* markers of privacy” (Whiteman 2012, p. 50; emphasis added), the kind of content considered, and the (technical) features of the environment (e.g., the accessibility of the place). This problem is exacerbated online, since a single environment may include multiple communicative channels (Facebook, for instance). AoIR’s (2012) recommendations reflect the notion of *contextual integrity* (Nissenbaum 2010); namely, that the distinction between public and private should recognize the norms of the context and the expectations of its participants.
9. See Kumpulainen’s “Virtual Interactive Space for Collaborative Innovation” project.
10. For example, in the Norwegian “Learning Lives” study (Erstad and Sefton-Green 2012; Roth, forthcoming), the research agency was able to use Global Positioning System technology to track people’s movements in a community but was unsure how to deal with any ethically problematic information about participants’ activities that might be thereby revealed. The researchers decided not to use this tracking method at all, thus prioritizing the protection of participants’ privacy over the integrity of contextualized and multi-method ethnographic data collection.
11. See Gilje’s “Making a Filmmaker” project (Frølunde et al. 2009).

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