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1 Introduction

In media consumption studies, there has been little empirical work on how media products permeate everyday life beyond the context of immediate audience-text encounter (Bird 2003; Moores 2000). In similar vein, sociolinguistic studies have only recently begun to document ordinary people’s media engagements in a variety of everyday contexts, beyond the point of initial (however, active) consumption. A case in point is studies of media appropriations and references within classroom interaction that have stressed their performative roles, as activities that develop in parallel with the formal instruction and present various interactional affordances (e.g. Rampton 2006). In this increasingly important line of inquiry, there is still much scope for exploring how media engagements, particularly those related to new technologies, as a phenomenon with increasing resonance in people’s daily lives, impact on their identities and social relations. Having as its starting point that online and offline experiences are enmeshed in daily life, and that their inter-relationships should become an object of investigation (see Georgakopoulou 2013a), this chapter focuses on the discursive (re) constructions of media engagements in the interactions of students in a London comprehensive school.

Using data from two female students, the analysis focuses on two discursive instances of media engagements that were found to raise issues of normative behaviour and to therefore be crucial for the positioning of self and other: a) talk about media engagements that interactionally make relevant issues of knowledge, access to, recognition and approval (or lack of) one another’s media engagements and b) stories about new media engagements (I call these breaking news). Using small stories research and positioning analysis (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2007, 2008; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) as an apparatus for looking into discursive constructions of self and other, I will show that both types of media engagements routinely accomplish and map with the participants’ positions in peer-groups and their –mainly gendered- identities. In particular, I will
identify two distinct positionings in the case of each of the two girls and examine what kinds of self-projects are engendered, necessitated or constrained for each of them. I will argue for the resonance of these positionings with two widely circulating and in many ways contradictory discourses about young women: the discourse of girlpower and the ‘can’ do girl on the one hand and the discourse of girls at risk and in trouble on the other. I will claim that ‘girlpower’ and ‘girls at risk’ co-articulate with discourses about new media as arenas for opportunities for social networking and self-enhancement on the one hand and as sites of danger and victimization on the other.

2 Data and methods

The data for this chapter come from the study of a London comprehensive school entitled Urban Classroom Culture and Interaction (UCCI, 2005–2008), part of the ESRC Programme in Identities & Social Action (www.identities.org.uk).¹ The project involved two phases of data collection following nine students from year nine and into year ten. The school in question was attended approximately by 1000 students with a diverse population with South Asian and African-Caribbean ethnicities forming the two largest groups. The aim of the project was to study, through a focus on interactional data, what kinds of identities the students constructed for themselves and others in their daily lives at school. Following up on previous studies of London schools (Rampton 2006), we were particularly interested in how the students’ discursively constructed knowledge in, familiarity and engagement with new media impinged on their identities at school. Key-questions in this respect were:

– How do participants locally do and report new media engagements (henceforth NMEs)?
– What do they see as a ‘critical incident’, ‘key-episode’, how & why?
– How do they account for and reflect on such practices? With what kinds of orientations to which discourses?

The different data-sets consisted of:
– A filed diary with ethnographic observations;
– 180 hours of radio-mic recordings of interactions in class and in the playground from 9 focal students (5 female, 4 male, 13+ years old when the

¹ The project team comprised Ben Rampton (Director), Roxy Harris, Alexandra Georgakopoulou, Constant Leung, Caroline Dover and Lauren Small.
project started) who were from a range of ethnicities and varied greatly in their academic performances;
- 10 hours of research interviews with the focal students;
- playback sessions with the focal students with selected key-excerpts from the radio-mic data;
- supplementary documentation covering Year 9–10 demographics and school performance, staff and parent handbooks, lesson handouts, etc.;
- a Teachers’ project with focus group interviews, questionnaires and playback sessions.

2.1 A practice-based approach to (new) media engagements and identities

The above methods of data collection allowed us to follow a practice-based approach to language and identities according to which language performs actions in specific environments and is part of other social practices, shaping and being shaped by them (e.g. Agha 2007; Briggs 1998; Hanks 1996). There is recurrence and systematicity in such actions including regularity of occurrence (iterativity) in the various semiotic choices involved. Capturing this iterativity is both an analytical aim and a principle built into data collection. It is essential, for instance, to access data that allow the analyst to capture not only what is going on in local interactions but also what the participants’ socio-spatial orientations are: who does what and how in different environments and over time. It is also important to tap into the tellers’ meta-representations and reflections on their communication practices. The method of linguistic ethnography is particularly well suited to this (for a discussion, see Rampton 2007). As I will show below, this facilitates the inquiry into if and how local interactions resonate with widely circulating discourses: what is it that the participants invoke as relevant for them, where does this derive from and what possible contestations accompany such enactments?

In previous work (2007), I developed a heuristic for a practice-based discourse analysis, which charts the inter-animations of three separable but interrelated layers: ways of telling-sites-tellers. The heuristic was developed within the framework of small stories research (Georgakopoulou 2007, 2008; Bamberg 2006), an epistemological paradigm for the analysis of narrative and identities, but it is applicable to all discourse activities. Ways of telling refer to the communicative how: the socioculturally shaped and more or less conventionalized semiotic and in particular verbal choices of a particular discourse activity. The stories’ aboutness, the types of events and experience they narrate, is important in this respect. The relations of a current telling with previous and anticipated tellings are also
significant. Above all though, ways of telling capture the sequential features of an activity and, to do so, they draw significantly on conversation analytic modes (e.g. Jefferson 1978). Sequentiality includes how discourse activities are methodically introduced into and exited from conversations, what types of action, telling roles and rights they raise for the interlocutors, what modes of co-construction and interactional management between interlocutors are to be found in them.

Sites refer to the social spaces in which activities take place and capture the conglomerate of situational context factors ranging from physical (e.g. seating) arrangements to mediational tools that the participants may employ. Recent research in sociolinguistics has demonstrated the importance of physical, lived and practiced space for language and social interaction (e.g. Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck 2005). The specific emplacement of activities can shape the semiotic resources employed for their accomplishments and equally, discourse activities can constitute a place as an arena for specific social practices. Places come with specific affordances or constraints as well as with normative expectations and valuation scales of what languages, genres, discourse activities etc., are appropriate, how and by whom (idem). In the case of stories, the concept of sites has allowed me to tap into the significance of social spaces not just for the here-and-now of the storytelling activities but also for the taleworlds invoked in the participants’ stories.

Finally, with the notion of tellers, I have paid attention to the participants of a communicative activity as complex entities, as actors with social identities, as here-and-now communicators with particular in situ roles of participation (cf. discourse identities, Zimmerman 1998), as characters in tales (cf. Bamberg’s model of positioning) and, last but not least, as individuals with specific biographies and self-projects.² Self-projects consist in the ways in which tellers see themselves over time through the stories they tell.

Following multi-scalar conceptualizations of context (Blommaert & Rampton 2011), I accept that there is durability, contingency and indexicality involved in all three layers above. Meaning making is not just a matter of the here-and-now, the

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² In Bamberg’s terms (1997), the interaction between the tellers as characters in tales and as here-and-now communicators holds the key to what tellers signal as more or less stable and consistent aspects of themselves beyond the current storytelling situation; in other words, what their ethos of self and their ‘consistent’ biographical identities are (Johnstone 2009). As I discuss in detail elsewhere (Georgakopoulou 2013b), the triptych of ways of telling-sites-tellers productively builds on these three levels of positioning but extends them a) with the addition of the layer of sites and the ethnographically grounded understandings of who people are in specific contexts and b) with a multi-method approach that ensures access to the participants’ moments of reflexivity on themselves and their stories.
Identities and discourses in the (new) media engagements

Intersubjectivity of the moment, but also of ‘resources, expectations and experiences that originate in, circulate through and are destined for networks and processes that can be very different in their reach and duration’ (idem: 9). The provenance of such resources can be signaled in more or less implicit and indirect (indexical, Silverstein 1985) ways. These assumptions inform the ways in which the analysis forges links between semiotic choices in local contexts and larger social identities. The assumption is that it is impossible to capture the whole of a teller’s social identities. Instead, the iterativity of specific ways of telling (in this case, media engagements) in specific sites can serve as a window into what specific facets of a teller’s self are presented as relatively foregrounded, durable, subject to negotiation and so on. As we will see below, the above heuristic will form a key-apparatus for the fine grain analysis of media engagements in the data and their relationship with positioning self and other.

3 (New) Media engagements-in-interaction

3.1 A survey

Peer-talk in the classroom is a broad category that content-wise includes all talk that is not ‘on-task’, the main task at hand being the lesson underway. Our analysis showed that of the many different things that peer-talk could have been about, a substantial part of it was about (new) media engagements. Such engagements ranged from actual uses of technologies (e.g. having the mobile phone on in class, even if officially this was not allowed) to performative enactments (e.g. singing, ‘imitating’ characters from TV series) and to interactional re-workings of engagements, e.g. stories about MSN interactions as well as to meta-talk: e.g. what new music video participants liked or not and why. Media engagements thus proved to be a major aspect of the students’ lived experience outside of the classroom and by extension of their talk about it in the classroom.³ By way of illustration, below is a snapshot of Nadia, a focal student, talk in class (in a lesson of Design Technology):

Min 2: Sings Mariah Carey (We belong together)
Min 6: Tells story about a text that Jerome has sent her
Min 8: Sings line from film Miss Congeniality

³ As I have shown elsewhere (2011), this engagement permeated classrooms as an unmarked state of play rather than momentarily (re)defining arrangements within them. I have also discussed (idem) what its implications are for the management of the school day and the relations between teachers and students.
Min 9: Hums same Mariah Carey song
Min 11: Tells story about communication with Jerome (again) on MSN
Min 15: Performatively enacts Danone yoghurt advertisement jingle
Min 16: Sings another line from Mariah Carey song (who am I gonna lean on?)
Min 17: Tells story about IM screen names

Media engagements (henceforth MEs) such as the above by and large did not relate to or complement the curriculum or the formal instruction of the moment. Having established the pervasiveness of MEs in the classrooms, the first step we took towards their closer analysis was to conduct a survey that would draw out any differences amongst individuals. We examined the first 8 hours of the radio-mic recordings of 5 of our focal istudents (3 female, 2 male) in the two phases of the project (2005 and 2006; 8 × 5 × 2 = 80 hrs). We identified 531 episodes in which they audibly used, referred to or performed music, TV, mobiles, mp3s, PSPs, PCs, internet, electronic games, magazines, newspaper, fashion, body-care, ‘recreational food’ and sport. These were annotated on protocols, which recorded main participants, location, +/- physical use of (new) media object, topic, mode of performance, +/- links to classroom activity, and other relevant specifics. The survey showed that MEs averaged out at 7 an hour, but, as we can see in Table 1 below, there were differences between individuals.

### 3.2 Ways of telling media engagements

On the basis of the above quantitative results, I conducted a fine grain analysis of the two (female) students, (who we call) Nadia and Habibah, who produced the largest number of MEs. This involved looking into the ways of telling of MEs, which in the first instance involved their embeddedness in the surrounding talk, in particular if they were topically relevant in relation to a preceding topic or indeed the classroom instruction. I also analyzed their interactional management, namely their initiation and uptake (e.g. who initiated what and how and who responded and in what ways). As Table 2 below shows, Nadia and Habibah present significant differences in the interactional management of their MEs. Nadia not only initiates more MEs than Habibah but also, once launched into the

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4 There were only nine episodes in 80 hours where students themselves volunteered a link between the curriculum and their MEs.

5 An episode was defined as a sequence of talk introducing and often sustaining a (new) media cultural theme, bounded by periods of talk and activity devoted to other matters. As silent media engagements (e.g. reading text-messages) might well be undetected in our radio-mic recordings, the total figure could be greater.
conversation, her MEs are largely taken up by her interlocutors and become part of the interaction. Nadia's MEs are also by and large topically linked to prior peer-talk while Habibah's aren't. As we will see below, this difference is linked with

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6 Table reproduced from the end-of-term project report (Rampton et al 2008).
what genres of MEs the two participants tend to produce, including the number and type of stories. Nadia also serves as an assessor of other people’s MEs on the basis of e.g. quality of performance (e.g. songs), good knowledge of the sources, competent uses of new media, etc. Her own contributions tend to be positively assessed, while Habibah’s clearly aren’t.

Let us illustrate some of these key-differences between Nadia and Habibah’s MEs.

1) Participants: H(abibah), L(ily). Drama lesson has begun but the two girls are standing outside the classroom door (which is half open) despite the teacher repeatedly urging them to go in.

1 H: d’ you like (.) d’ you like Mariah Carey’s new song? um how // does it- 
2. L: // where’s the light for he:re? 
3. H: //B-
4. L: //there’s darkness= 
5. H: Beau – something 
6. ((teacher talking in background)) 
7. H: oi 
8. L: ( chewing gum) 
9. H: (there) 
10. L: //chewing gum 
11. H: oi? How does Mariah Carey’s new song go? 
12. L: I don’t know j- uh 
13. H: ((sings)) we belong together (.) we belong together 
14. L: I like Gwen Stefani’s new one (.) B.A.N.A N= 
15 H & L: =Banana’s! 
16 H: yeah ((sings)) cos I ain’t no hollaback girl I ain’t no hollaback girl

((further down))

34 H: how does Mariah Carey’s new song go? 
35 L: (1) what abou::t/ 
36 H: // I love that song (.) but I forgot how it //goes 
37 L: // ((sings another song)) I steady trying to find my motive (.) motive //why I do what I done 
38 H: //no I don’t like to sing that locked up 
39 L: //freedom aint gettin’ not closer 
40 H: //if Lonely (.) Lonely (.) I’ll sing Lonely= 
41 L: =closer no matter how far I go my car is stolen ((laughing)) stolen 
42 H: ((laughs)) 
43 L: so registration ((banging noise)) 

((further down))
Instances of singing or humming, more than other reworkings of MEs, tend to be non-topically relevant and more divorced from surrounding activity (people can e.g. hum to themselves). It is therefore no accident that Habibah emerged in our survey as the participant who sang more than anybody else. This is related to the fact that Habibah’s MEs tended to be non-topically relevant: a song can be introduced in conversational medias res, without any apparent links with the preceding activity. But it is also the uptake of her MEs that is significantly reduced compared to Nadia. In the example above, Habibah’s attempts to get Lily to sing her favourite song are not taken up; in Jefferson’s terms, they are ‘sequentially deleted’ (1978). This failed elicitation along with the repeated display of lack of knowledge (how does it go?, lines 1,11, 34) by Habibah is a common feature in her interactional management of MEs. In contrast, Lily’s initiation of two songs (l. 14, 37) is taken up by Habibah. When Habibah manages to elicit Habibah’s positive assessment for her song initiation (lines 245–249), she, again, displays lack of knowledge about the video of that song. Lily’s epistemic proclamation (‘there’s videos to every song’, l. 256) followed by her characterization of Habibah as ‘you spastic’ (256) is also typical. Habibah is frequently cast by her friends and classmates as being ‘clueless’ regarding (new) media. Her lack of knowledge of specific sources frequently attracts negative assessments of this sort.

The excerpt is also illustrative of how Habibah’s MEs generated some kind of trouble both interactionally, i.e. for Habibah as a here-and-now interlocutor, and as a character in stories (see 3.3 below). Trouble is a continuum concept (e.g. see Wetherell 1998) and can certainly vary in its intensity. The interactional clues of
trouble are normally hesitations, self-repairs and delayed responses, which show the participants’ awareness of some kind of breach of normative expectations. In this case, I employ the term trouble to refer to any more or less momentary and drastic interactional departures from normative expectations about behaviour in relation to MEs. Participants routinely display surprise or other (reflexive) orientations to the unexpectedness and markedness of such instances, flagging up gaps between what is expected and what is done.

2) Participants: N(adia), H(abibah) and S(henice). Period: Textiles.

Habibah complains about her sister stealing her MSN password. Subsequently, Habibah braggs about hacking into Dylan’s MSN account and “making his life hell” to which she is heavily criticized by both Nadia and Shenice for ‘cussing people’.

1. N: Why (.) why was she on your MSN a:nyway?
2. H: She knows my password (.) innit (.) I have to change my password (2) bitch=
3 N: = You’re pissed you know
4 H: She’s a bitch! She changed my screen name everything (.) she changed everything=
5 N: = I know.
6 H: She chats bare shit to //
7 N: =//She goes ‘ha ha (.) I changed her (Habibah’s’) screen name’. I goes to her (.) Habiba’s not
gonna be happy!
8 H: ((laughs))
9 N: (.)
10 Sh: Why don’t you just change your password?
11 H: Yeah I’m gonna do that today //innit (.) I don’t even have a phone (.) fuckin’ hell=
12 N: =How come?
13 H: Not allowed (.) ((repeating parents words)) >I’m too young I’m not responsible<
14 N: =How does your boyfriend contact you?= 
15 H: =Oh online innit (.) um chat to them online or like when my dad’s not home ((hurried tone))
16 ‘quickly phone my house’ ((laughs))

Habibah was much more involved in trouble instances than Nadia both in interactional terms and in the emplotted references to MEs which invariably reported trouble (some kind of abuse of technologies by others or herself, see 3.3. below). We can see both of these kinds of trouble in the above excerpt. Here, I will discuss lines 10–16, one of the many instances where Habibah talks about her lack of access to certain technologies. Habibah is not allowed access to a mobile phone by her father who is elsewhere described by her as ‘messed up’ for policing her mediated interactions (e.g. on MSN). The delayed response by Nadia (10 secs, l. 4) to Habibah’s evaluative reference to her lack of a mobile phone (l. 11) suggests how marked not having a phone is for Nadia. Notably, her daily life and that of her peer-group are new media-saturated.
One of the most important indicators of Nadia’s key-leading role in the arena of media engagements is her interactions with the teachers.7 There are very few instances when the teachers step into peer-talk in order to police it. In tune with this, there are also few cases when the teachers attempt to join in, thus momentarily switching from their official roles as teachers and in effect bystanders of the peer-talk to more informal and symmetrical roles as fellow interlocutors or ‘peers’ with the students. As the examples below show, in these cases, Nadia tended to display resistance: this was done by her correcting or negatively assessing the teachers’ contributions, thus turning the tables on the officially dictated formal instruction arrangements which place the teacher in the role of assessor and the students in the role of the assessed.

3) Participants: Nadia, Shenice, Basheera, Mr Vaston. The girls discuss the group ‘Destiny’s Child’ and their teacher, Mr Vaston, joins in the conversation.

1 B: ((Hums tune to Destiny’s Child, ‘Lose My Breath’))
2 N: I hate that song. I love to dance to it but I hate the song!
3 B: Yeah I know but it’s – the video’s heavy though ( put it out)
4 Mr V: are you two talking about Destiny’s Child?
5 B: yeah.
6 Mr V: no::: Nelly is the best
7 B: (don’t) you //like them?
8 N: //Kelly
9 Mr V: Nel//ly
10 N: //there’s no Nelly (in it)
11 B: ((in sing-song voice)) Kelly ((laughs))

We can see how Nadia corrects Mr Vaston’s erroneous reference to one of the singers in Destiny’s Child as Nelly. Basheera clearly has the chance to do so (l. 7), but she does not. In similar vein, in the excerpt below, it is again Nadia who takes the teacher on, in the whole class discussion, about his reference to the London radio station Kiss.

4) Participants: N(adia), L(aura) and Mr T(urner)

1 Mr T: Failing that we can just say hey lets listen to (1) whatever radio stations you listen to ()
2 Kiss one hundred ((100))

7 Although Nadia was the informant most frequently involved in media engagements episodes (c. 15 episodes per hour), she was seldom challenged or reprimanded by teachers, and she was also the highest school-achiever among our informants.
Nadia here too enacts a gate-keeping role by negatively assessing the teacher’s media engagement in unmitigated terms (l. 5) and eliciting a performative enactment of a song from the teacher, only to assess it negatively (l. 22). The teacher’s subsequent reference to his ‘big, frilly hair’ (23) in the past can be taken as a display of (past) qualities of being trendy, an attempt to produce his past credentials and participation in the popular culture which in the current context seems to be monopolized by Nadia (primarily) and the other students.⁸

Nadia does this sort of gatekeeping of MEs vis-à-vis her classmates too, both in the peer conversations and in the interviews. In the excerpt below, she employs a knowingly cryptic reference while talking about UK celebrities Jordan and Jodie Marsh: ‘smart ones will get that joke’ (l. 17). The term ‘smart’ is recurrent in association with media engagements. ‘Smart’ and its opposite ‘stupid’ are frequently employed to refer to (in)competence and knowledge (or not) in the area of MEs.

5) Playback interview with N(adia), Sh(enice) and L(aura)

1 I: So why do you think people want to be famous?=
2 N: like Jordan and Jodie Marsh? I don’t give them any ratings at all!=
3 Sh: =ne//ver
4 L: // mm-mm

⁸ Elsewhere, Nadia suggests that she listened to Kiss when she was three and calls a friend who confesses listening to Kiss ‘sissy’. Shenice who frequently acts as a teller-aide for Nadia, also suggests in the playback interview, that ‘white people no offense would listen to Kiss’.
To sum up so far, Nadia in her MEs emerges as somebody who engages in productive referencing. She is an initiator, an assessor and a recipient of positive assessments. Her MEs are taken up. She displays recognition, competence, and knowledge. It is worth noting here that throughout the interactional data, Nadia displays a propensity for: creatively reworking stock phrases and one liners from films and TV series; stylizing media references and being asked by other participants to produce performative enactments of e.g. characters from films, etc. She is also never caught not-knowing in the very frequent quizzes in the local context about who sings what, who appears in which video, etc. In contrast, Habibah tends to be non-productive in her MEs. She is an elicitor rather than an initiator and when she initiates, her referencing is non-topically relevant nor is it taken up. She negatively self-assesses and is negatively assessed for her MEs. She displays non-recognition, lack of knowledge & access and her MEs frequently generate interactional trouble and/or report some kind of trouble in stories.

I have shown elsewhere (2011) that more than an illicit, side activity, MEs in peer-talk seem to have developed, in Bourdieu’s terms, in a social field that carries a lot of symbolic capital for the participants (1986: 176ff) and that tends to resist regulation or appropriation from the teachers. On that basis, their common discursive re-working in the classroom becomes an activity in which participation or lack of it has real implications for their roles within the peer-group. Rather than being egalitarian, social fields are arenas for the struggle over resources. From this point of view, we can assume that the above differences between Nadia and Habibah get drawn into their peer-group roles and relations but are also important constituents of their self-projects. Below, I will show how this is the case.
3.3 Small stories of new media engagements: Routines and transgressions

A significant number of both Nadia’s and Habibah’s NMEs were in the form of small stories: 45% in Nadia’s case and 37% in Habibah’s. These stories were mostly reports of recent mediated interactions (e.g., on MSN, on myspace) of the participants with boys they were interested in. In fact, Nadia told on average 12 such stories per period. I have called such stories breaking news and defined them as stories of very recent (‘yesterday’) and/or still happening (‘just now’) events that routinely lead to the need for further narrative making with frequent updates on the evolving events and/or projections (stories of events to take place in the near future). Stories have been focal in the study of identities and have been widely held as a unique mode of communication for constructing self (e.g. for an overview see chapter 6 in De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2011). Several studies have demonstrated how the telling of stories can afford numerous opportunities for interactionally positioning self and other in multiple scenarios that are revealing of how the tellers perceive themselves and others and what they deem as in/appropriate behaviour and action (e.g. Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; Schiffrin 1996). Such positionings are to be found in, among others, the narrators as characters in their tales, in what stories are told and how. In the data at hand, the stories’ plot shows the importance of new media as arenas for reportable experiences and relational work in the participants’ daily lives. As characters in tales, Habibah and Nadia present largely opposing positionings: Habibah frequently reports trouble in her stories of NMEs, as we will see below. Nadia on the other hand emerges as somebody who participates actively in new media sites and develops a web of sociabilites: she is the one who is ‘contacted’ (texted, called, asked to chat on MSN, etc.) as opposed to being ‘blanked’. The following example is typical of this.

6) Participants: N(adia), S(henice). Period 1, Design Technology

1. N: Oh how can yesterday yeah
2. I was like who is my boo WHO is my boo
3. (     ) (canine) d-dum
4. Andy (.) d-dum
5. Jack (.) d-dum
6. All of them yeah
7. S: Mm
8. S: [your face you’re like] (further down))
9. N: Today yeah (2) I put them all in a conversation together and I wrote hi
10. everyone started writing hi innit?
11. yeah (.) and all you see is
As we can see, in her mediated interactions, Nadia assumes and is ascribed a variety of positive online roles and attributes (e.g. beautiful, Excerpt 7, line 28) that are nonetheless not divorced from her everyday offline roles and relationships. For instance, the use of the kinship term ‘future wifey’ (Excerpt 7, line 28) is suggestive of a developing relationship between the male character and Nadia, as our ethnography attested to. Furthermore, Nadia is frequently seen and talked about as ‘beautiful’ by her friends and interlocutors, but as in the story above, this is put in the mouths of other characters in Nadia’s tales and echoed by her interlocutors in the here-and-now of the storytelling situation. As studies have shown (for a discussion see Georgakopoulou 2007), inserting positive attributes about the teller in the taleworld can be an effective means for positive self-presentation in the here-and-now.
with notions of popularity. Two-thirds of Nadia’s breaking news stories reported social networking that brings self-enhancement but 75% of Habibah’s stories reported transgressions, such as incidents of improprieties in relation to the use of new media (e.g. hacking, stealing people’s account details, etc.). For the two girls, new media sites operated to different degrees as arenas filled with opportunities for socialization particularly in terms of hetero-sociality, but also as worlds that pose risk to personal well being and safety and that can bring ‘trouble’ in their personal lives.

If we go back to excerpt 2 about Habibah’s sister stealing her MSN password, we can see how stories of trouble are frequently accompanied by negative attributes about the characters in the taleworld. Habibah’s sister’s reported transgression attracts negative evaluations from Habibah (‘she’s a bitch’ line 4, ‘she chats bare shit’, line 6). The interlocutors collude in such assessments but at the same time, their feedback is typical of the interactional drafting of such stories, as I will discuss below. For instance, Shenice’s suggestion that Habibah change her password (line 10) puts the onus on Habibah to protect herself from this and other possible transgressions. Similarly, as I have already argued, Habibah’s admission that she does not own a mobile phone (line 11) because ‘she is not allowed one’ (line 13) is received as a marked and dispreferred response (Pomerantz 1984), as the significantly long pause of 10 seconds by Nadia in line 14 suggests. Nadia’s and Shenice’s feedback to Habibah’s transgression lead to the realization that the main mode of communication between Habibah and her boyfriend is online, which makes the impact of her sister stealing her MSN account even more severe in Habibah’s everyday life.

How participants deal with the transgressive behaviour directed at them tends to be the main talking point generated during the telling of such stories. The collaborative formulations and assessments of the events make relevant notions of personal accountability, knowledge and competence in new media, as arenas where the onus is on the teller to manage and avoid any inappropriate behaviour directed against them: little contestation or feedback is provided on the actual inappropriateness of the events and actions reported. Instead, it is the agentive courses of action that the teller ought to have undertaken that were discussed, as can see in and debated. This applies to Nadia’s transgressions too. The excerpt below is from a story about Nadia’s face-pic having been stolen and put

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9 Our data pre-date Twitter and the Facebook explosion but the notions of new media popularity that we found to be operative in our study are readily compatible with the concepts of followership and the high number of friends on Facebook as indicators of networking esteem.
on various sites without her permission.¹⁰ Miranda’s contribution is typical of the feedback that this and other transgressions tend to receive.

7) Participants: M(iranda), N(adia)

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55 M(iranda): Don’t trust anyone (with )
56 N(adia): I don’t trust (. ) I don’t send my pictures to no one (. ) only my // bredrins
57 M: / /So how did he get it (.) he’s / /(   )
58 N: / /Cos he STOLE it
59 M: (inaudible))
60 N: yeah it was my display picture (.) and he stole it> copy and pasted it everywhere< and put it=
61 M: = No no (.) the stealer programme ain’t you got that? I have that=
62 N: =no but I can still take you lots’ picture (.) you don't need // no pro-
63 M: / /How?
64 N: Just (.) click screen innit
65 M: Is it a // nice one?
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We can see here how the onus is placed on Nadia protecting herself. But Nadia constructs expertise in technologies by counter-acting Miranda’s suggestion that she use a specific programme for protection (l. 62, 64). In contrast, Habibah in excerpt 2 seemed to be unable to act upon the feedback provided to her due to lack of access to a mobile phone. As I will show below, Nadia and Habibah also differ in how they reflect on their stories of transgressions.

### 3.4 Ways of telling and sites as windows into the tellers of media engagements

#### 3.4.1 Situated identities

NMEs connect with sites in two ways: one pertains to the tales, that is, the world of the stories about NMEs, and the other pertains to the here and now. Within the tale, new media sites, as we have seen, provide the productive settings of plots and create the characters’ social worlds. This is where the tellers present both themselves as characters and other characters in the dual capacity of agentive and epistemic selves (cf. Bruner 1990): as individuals who undertake more or less appropriate actions that in turn shape and are shaped by their feelings, thoughts and beliefs. As studies of storytelling have demonstrated (Georgakopoulou 1997; Schiffrin 1996), there are many meaningful associations to be made between how tellers present themselves in their stories and how they wish to be perceived in

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¹⁰ For the full storytelling event and a detailed discussion of it see Georgakopoulou 2013a).
the here-and-now of their telling. Within the telling situation, MEs shape the classroom site as a polycentric space (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck 2005), where peer-talk occupies a very important position alongside whole class instruction. One useful heuristic for analytically tapping into the interconnections between ways of telling and sites comes from Zimmerman’s (1998) mapping of local interactional identities onto larger social identities. In his terms, *discourse identities*, which encompass the local participation roles in a given interaction, coalesce with specific *situated identities*. These link the local activity with the affordances or constraints of a specific social setting (e.g. an institution, p.94). From this point of view, the expectation in the data would be that the participants’ situated identities would be in the form of an ‘identity set’, that is, teacher-student, with different permutations, e.g. a good student, a bad student, a disciplined student, etc., coming into play in a particular situation. Nonetheless, as we have seen, the students’ discourse identities are shaped by media engagements, which make other situated identities relevant in the multi-space of the classroom. These situated identities include that of a friend, a member of a peer-group and a popular and new media culture user, consumer, connoisseur. These identities, as we saw, also pertain to the tellers as characters in their stories. In Zimmerman’s terms (1998), situated identities propose to interlocutors how they should understand the relevance of a given exchange and what kinds of things they should expect in the ensuing discussion (89). They also provide a glimpse of which ‘transportable’ identities, that is, identities that the speakers *bring along* with them to any interaction (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity) but not necessarily *bring about*, may be relevant in a given exchange.

If we apply the above to Nadia’s and Habibah’s differences in their discourse and situated identities around MEs, we can note how they link to their profiles and positions in the peer-group prestige hierarchy (cf. Georgakopoulou 2008). Through our ethnography, Nadia emerged as the leading figure in the popular girls’ group in the class. This popularity was multi-faceted and included aspects that the participants audibly oriented to or were in a position to reflect on in interviews, such as her looks¹¹, the way she wore her uniform¹², her taste in music, her ‘smart’ uses of new media, the fact that she was ‘liked’ by boys. We can speculate about the importance of other factors, e.g. the fact that her family allowed exten-

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¹¹ Mixed-race looks both for boys and for girls appeared to be the most aspired to in the school under study.  
¹² Nadia wore trousers and she pulled them very low in her waist, which was clearly the ‘cool’ way of wearing the school uniform.
sive access to new media (MSN/internet/mobiles) or that she had an older brother in the same school and could socialize with older kids and be protected by them.

In contrast, Habibah maintained rather fraught relationships in a relatively isolated and ethnically insulated girls’ group, which comprised girls of Indian or Pakistani origin. Their family environments imposed many constraints, including not allowing any relationships with boys and, as we saw above, restricting access to new technologies. Habibah’s lack in popularity was profoundly shaped by the fact that, as we saw above, she was a follower rather than a leader in popular and media culture, with tastes that were sometimes mocked. Habibah struggled with the categorisations ‘fat’ and ‘ugly’; and was generally unsuccessful with boys, despite strenuously seeking their attention. A factor that may have inadvertently made Habibah’s daily life at school trickier and contributed to her lack of socializing was that she was academically weak and frequently disciplined by teachers.

3.4.2 Reflections

As I have suggested, one aspect of our multi-method approach involved capturing orientations to normative expectations in moments of participants’ reflexivity both in local interactions and in situations in which they are asked to produce their own commentary on their communication practices. What was notable in such moments was that the individual’s ability to handle new media competently and knowledgeably so as to avoid and manage any breachings of norms emerged as highly valued. Exactly as in the interactional management of media engagements in the classroom data, a premium was placed on the individual being able to act in a ‘smart’ way in new media so as to maximize opportunities for socialization while at the same time managing trouble and transgressions. Nadia’s and Habibah’s interviews both attest to this in different ways. As we have seen, even in the case of transgressions, Nadia presents herself as somebody who ultimately manages trouble and who forms a strategy for dealing with comparable situations in the future. This is done in the actual tellings of the stories with Nadia’s attempts to formulate generic scenarios out of the individual events. But it is also done in reflexive environments that are temporally removed from the events and their telling. When asked to listen again to their stories of new media engagements and reflect on them, Nadia positioned herself as somebody who had formed a strategy for dealing with comparable situations in the future. Con-

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13 Ethnically-inflected discriminatory terms, such as ‘freshie’ and ‘Paki’ were frequently employed against Habibah and her friends by other students.
sider Nadia’s response to the story about her face-pic having been stolen, when played back to her by Lauren, the fieldworker, in the playback interview session:

9) Playback interview session with Nadia

1  L(auren): alright I’ll just play the next one (.) and I’ve got some questions for you ok?
2  So this is just the next bit ((extract played))
3  N(adia): seriously (.) I sound like a man
4  L:  but how do people get your pictures then?
5  N:  O:h (.) they’re my friends (.) I send it to them.
6  L:  Okay/
7  N:  But //only p- I don’t sent my picture to just anyone (5 seconds)
8  L:  Okay if you go on websites and stuff (.) do you put your pictures // on
9  N:  I put my picture on one of my friend’s website (.) and then bare people stole it (0.5)
10 L:  Okay.
11 N:  And like some girl was claiming she was me (.) an – cos someone goes to me oh 12( .) one of my friends said to me (.) this girl’s saying she’s you and I was like
12 L:  Okay/
13 N:  WHAT? and then this boy added me (.) and I didn’t know who he was
14 L:  right=
15 N:  =and he goes (.) is that you in the picture (.) and I said yeah
16 L:  mhhmm
17 N:  and this is him (.) why are you lying for (.) cos that’s my firend Sherelle (.)
18 L:  I said WHAT? I SAID DON’T CHAT RUBBISH ( .) she was like yeah
19 N:  he goes yea:h that’s her innit? but then – and then he goes (.) here’s her email
20 L:  if you wanna talk to her (.) I looked at the email and I already knew who she was
21 L:  Oh (.) // okay
22 N:  // So I was like ( .) why is this girl beggin it for (.)and then she got boyed off funny though
23 ((further down)) min 8.33
    min 16.45
188 L:  okay let me ask you a bit more about face pic and stuff then ( .) because we are 189talking about what you do ( .) or how you know people are who they say they are
190 N:  so if you find out someone’s using false information ( .) what do you do about
191 L:  that?
192 N:  you boy them off (.) you make them cry (.) and then you >block and delete 193them< and say don’t ever talk – chat to me again
194 L:  so how do you go – how do you do that then?
195 N:  what? boy them off?
196 L:  yeah
197 N:  cuss them down
198 L:  okay

We can see above how between Nadia’s first telling of the events and her reflections on it, Nadia has formulated a generic scenario for dealing with comparable transgressions that involves ‘blocking and deleting’, ‘boying off’ and ‘cussing down’ culprits. The recurrence and idiomacity of the lexical choices for the recommended course of action attests to a level of crystallization in it. The generic
course of action also seems to suggest that Nadia has attempted to manage risk in new media environments. This is in line with other reflexive choices of Nadia regarding transgressions where she positions herself as somebody who can move from having been exposed to risk to re-claiming agency in navigating that risk. In contrast to this, in her playback interview, Habibah displays uncertainty and lack of familiarity with new media in general and appropriate conduct in them in particular. She is also positioned by her friends who are being co-interviewed as lacking in ‘smart’ behaviour in new media sites.

10) Playback interview session with H(abibah), L(ily) and M(assuda)

In the above excerpt, the interviewer seeks Habibah’s reflections on stories of transgression involving people stealing her personal details online, as we saw in excerpt 2. When Habibah is selected by the interviewer as the recipient of the question of how she got on Hi-Five (line 5), Massuda self-selects to respond by saying that it was she who sent Habibah the details (line 6). Habibah’s friends frequently claim introducing Habibah into new media sites. In line 9, Massuda sets up an explicit contrast between her own ‘smart’ behaviour (I’m not stupid) on Hi-Five and Habibah’s (‘but she does’). Picking up on Lilly’s mitigation of this criticism of Habibah (line 10) and Masuda’s upholding of it (line 11), Habibah goes on to diffuse her own responsibility for incompetent use of new media by talking in third parties terms (some people NO they’re not sad (. ) they want to meet new people, line 12). When she moves away from this generic discourse to first person narration (line 13, I met bare people), she shifts emphasis from her own accountability to the people who conduct themselves in inappropriate ways using the evaluative attribution ‘bare’, which we discussed above. This position-
ing of remaining the victim is very different to Nadia’s agentive positioning of developing strategies for managing transgressions, which we saw above.

3.4.3 Positionings of girlpower and girl (in) trouble
What sorts of transportable identities do the above positionings make – more or less indirectly relevant? Nadia and Habibah operate in MEs as girls of a specific age and with specific regulations from adults, be their parents or teachers, interacting with boys, getting in trouble with boys etc., and so to suggest that gender (in its co-articulations with other identities, such as ethnicity and age) is relevant in these cases seems to me to be a rather uncontroversial statement to make. What is more notable however is that Nadia’s and Habibah’s gendered engagements with the media, particularly the new media, present distinct resonances with discourses about new femininities and meanings that converge around them in a variety of public and policy domains (e.g. the press, schools, parents). Cultural studies analysts who have proposed new femininities as characteristic of the ‘90s and beyond in the UK contemporary life (e.g. Harris 2004; McRobbie 2007) have claimed that they have marked a shift from earlier (e.g. in the 70s) positionings of young women as invisible and peripheral in the youth culture towards the emergence of young women in the spheres of leisure, consumption practices and employment as agentive, pleasure-seeking individuals who find their place and voice in the new world order, take their destiny in their hands and assert their presence in the new times. This new category of young womanhood is associated with capacity, success, attainment, enjoyment, fun and entitlement. The terms which are often employed to refer to these changing modes of femininity are indicative of a changed engagement with the social world not just on the part of (young) women but also on the part of feminist scholarship: new femininities (McRobbie 1991), ‘can do girl’ (Harris 2004), third wave feminism’, ‘post-feminism’. These changes have been closely associated in the literature with late modernity and the explosion in the ‘90s of rave/club culture, young women’s magazine readership, fashion, girl bands such as the Spice Girls, etc. (see Hollands 1995).

Two largely competing discourses have been claimed to describe best the lived experience of contemporary young women (in the Anglo-American world), that of ‘girlpower’ and of ‘girls at risk’ (Aapola et al 2005; Harris 2004). Girlpower epitomizes the ‘can do girl’ culture and the new femininities as described above, suggesting to young women that they can get what they want and do what they want. ‘Girls at risk’ on the other hand articulates a set of moral and social concerns in relation to young women such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, drug taking, involvement in crime, and more recently, risks from the
use of new media. The two discourses are by no means completely separable or unrelated: As Gonick (2006) suggests, moral panics focusing on out-of-control girls can be seen as expressions of anxiety concerning the changing position of young women in society. Furthermore, girlpower and girl at risk should not be seen as orthogonal. Instead, they can be assumed to co-exist and be inhabited by the same woman in the same interaction, etc. (Kehily 2008). As Kehily puts it, ‘we can see them as subject positions available across a range of social sites’ and intersecting with class-based and other identities (62). Their intermingling is increasingly being documented in studies that see new media as environments for ‘taking risky opportunities’ (Livingstone 2008) for young people, young women in particular.

Another note of caveat has to do with a considerable backlash regarding new femininities. Feminist scholarship has increasingly been alive to the realization that the girlpower representations may also regulate and oppress women and the earlier over-celebration of the pleasures of the can do girl have been giving way to a more balanced view of what tensions or pains may be involved for young women (e.g. Kehily 2008; McRobbie 2007). Within popular culture and (new) media in particular, there is evidence of a continued objectification of young women and their bodies at times co-opted by a neo-liberal and girl-powered pressure for girls to self-disclose, to present themselves in public and digital arenas as confident, ‘sexy’ and ‘available’ (e.g. Dobson 2012; Gill 2007).

With all the above qualifications in mind, the discourses of girlpower and girls at risk are readily identifiable in the MEs of Nadia and Habibah, with girlpower and the ‘can do’ girl being more prevalent in Nadia’s case and with the risk and trouble elements being more pronounced in Habibah’s positionings, as I showed above. Nadia in particular, as we saw, seems to be able to move from a positioning of having exposed herself to risk to a positioning of re-claiming agency in navigating that risk. We also saw how we can identify elements of these discourses in the interactional management of NMEs and the values of the local social network.

The convergence of new femininities with the active consumption of NMEs that emerges in the data is an under-researched configuration. As Kearney (2006) remarks, “even though the digital revolution has been part of young women’s active participation in the changing late modern landscape, it remains a considerably understudied component of contemporary female youth culture” (p. ■). There are however two notable observations in the scarce research that both connect with the findings of this study and make the need for further studies imperative. The first is that empowerment discourse features have very frequently accompanied media education programmes for girls (e.g. for American girls in the late 1990s). These have combined with an emphasis on how girls can protect protecting themselves from media representations that will affect their self-esteem
The other observation concerns the (earlier) association of new technologies with stereotypical notions of masculine identities which cast the girls as technically ignorant (idem). In this respect, the emphasis of the local social networks in this study on competent and smart NMEs can be seen as closely associated with the counter-discourses of new girlhood that have departed from some of the core stereotypes of feminine identities (e.g. technical ignorance). The findings of this study also connect with another growing line of inquiry. The internet was initially seen as a transformative space for the performance of femininity, within a liberal and girl-powered milieu. There is a move away however from such celebratory views towards more measured and empirically grounded studies of the pressures and constraints that the participation and self-representation of girls in digital media may be posing (e.g. Dobson 2012). This study can advance our understanding of this with its focus on how girls’ NMEs, can impact on their everyday, offline, positionings and roles within their friendship groups.

4 Concluding remarks

Having as its starting point the increasing importance of MEs in the daily lives of adolescents, this chapter has focused on the interactional (re)constructions of MEs in the school-based interactions of students in a London comprehensive school. Our initial finding that MEs, in particular NMEs, permeated classrooms, was further substantiated by a survey of the focal students. On its basis, a fine-grain analysis was conducted for the MEs of two female focal participants. The analysis drew on the heuristic of ways of telling-sites-tellers, developed as part of small stories research, as a practice-based paradigm for social interaction and identities analysis. Two interactional instances of MEs were found to be salient: a) talk that interactionally make relevant issues of knowledge, access to, recognition and approval or lack of one another’s MEs and b) small stories about NMEs. Nadia and Habibah were found to differ significantly with respect to the ways of telling both these instances of MEs. Nadia’s MEs were interactionally ratified and positively assessed while she too appeared to take on assessing positions vis-à-vis her interlocutors’ MEs. Her stories positioned Nadia as a prolific and knowledgeable user of new media. In contrast, Habibah’s MEs foregrounded her lack of competence in uses and familiarity with sources and her experiences of trouble. They also tended not to be taken up so as to create topics of relevance within local interactions. I argued that media-related situated identities were paramount in the classrooms and at the expense of officially designated identities such as that of a student. As a result, positive positionings around media-related identities carried a lot of symbolic capital for the participants. Such positionings
involved the tellers actively participating in and telling stories about new media environments, about how they cater to their relational enhancement in them, and about how they manage risk and trouble. The joint construction of breaking news stories in particular involved shaping norms and expectations about (im)propriety in such environments. Concepts of regulation, risk and trouble around NMEs were focal considerations in the peer groups of the particular school. The positioning of an empowered, knowledgeable and competent self in relation to new media environments was highly valued. As I showed, for Nadia, MEs entailed a predominantly empowering discourse about self that stressed networking and enhanced sociability, while in Habibah’s case, regulation featured prominently, with much more emphasis on lack of access, risk and prohibition. In this respect, both girls’ media-related positionings appeared to be resonant with the socio-cultural context of young women’s new femininities and the freedom but also the constraints and the dilemmas that they are associated with. In this respect, the differences between the two girls should not be over-stressed. Rather than serving as dichotomous choices for Nadia and Habibah and their friendship groups, girl-power and risk and trouble are implicated in the stories and interactional management of NMEs in varying ways and to varying degrees, resulting in contingent, more or less affiliations with one or the other.

The above findings provide evidence for how knowledge, expertise and forms of participation associated with instances of MEs are inextricable parts of individuals’ identities. MEs prove to serve as major structuring forces in peer-group interactions, shaping the individuals’ distinct sense of self within these arenas that includes their sense of heterosociability, their ethical scenarios about how to display oneself and their social relations inside and outside of school.

Further studies can usefully draw on this study’s methodology and build on and extend the remit of its findings by exploring (new) media engagements as a site for individual struggle or self-enhancement, posing specific challenges or providing opportunities to individuals for aligning with specific micro-cultures, for finding a voice or having their voice stifled, for making certain voices more hearable and more widely available than others (see Shuman 2005). There is also scope for exploring what kinds of new communication practices in individual students and in their peer groups are more or less directly associated with MEs, in particular with social media engagements¹⁴ which have exploded, since the empirical work for this study was conducted.

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¹⁴ As Boyd remarks with reference to the popularity of social networking sites among adolescents, they provide ‘teens with a space to work out identity and status, make sense of cultural clues, and negotiate public life’ (2007: 18).
References


Hollands, R. 1995: Friday night, Saturday night: youth cultural identification in the post industrial city. Newcastle upon Tyne: The University of Newcastle upon Tyne.


Transcription conventions:

// the point in a turn where the utterance of the next speaker begins to overlap
= two utterances closely connected without a noticeable overlap
( ) speech that can't be deciphered
(text) analyst's guess at speech that's hard to decipher
(( )) stage directions
(.) micro-pause, not timed
(1.) approximate length of a pause in seconds
___ emphasized speech
> < faster than normal speech
::: extended speech
? Question
↑ ↓ Rising Falling Intonation