Control Responsibility: The Discursive Construction of Privacy, Teens, and Facebook in Flemish Newspapers

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This study explores the discursive construction of online privacy through a critical discourse analysis of Flemish newspapers' coverage of privacy, teens, and Facebook between 2007 and 2018 to determine what representation of (young) users the papers articulate. A privacy-as-control discourse is dominant and complemented by two other discourses: that of the unconcerned and reckless teenager and that of the promise of media literacy. Combined, these discourses form an authoritative language on privacy that we call "control responsibility." Control responsibility presents privacy as an individual responsibility that can be controlled and needs to be learned by young users. We argue that the discourses contribute to a neoliberal rationality and have a disciplinary effect that strengthens various forms of responsibilization.

Keywords: privacy, teens, critical discourse analysis, control, Facebook

In 2006, Facebook launched the News Feed feature. Due to the aggregation of personal data and the displaying of information that previously had been limited to one's profile page, many users felt their privacy had been violated and complained by forming groups like Facebook Against Facebook News Feeds (boyd, 2008). In 2007, Facebook experimented with a new ad platform called Beacon, which allowed certain websites to automatically post information on Facebook accounts. Many users were not aware of this change and were dissatisfied with the lack of transparency and control (Cashmore, 2009). Seven years later, in 2014, it emerged that almost 700,000 users were part of a psychological experiment by Facebook without their knowledge or consent (Hunter & Evans, 2016). The Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018 drew further attention to the disempowerment of users and the intense practice of surveillance. In general, surveillance is built into the system such that the user is not cognizant of being watched until context-relative information norms (see Nissenbaum, 2010) are violated and revealed, as they were in the Cambridge Analytica case by

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whistleblower Christopher Wylie (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018). These and other revelations sparked outrage among many, but they mainly illustrate the complexity of today's surveillance or "dataveillance" (van Dijck, 2014) and the disempowerment of citizens. Although privacy is a fundamental human right recognized by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we argue that its value is undermined in today's data economy and that discussions (in and outside academia) are instead oriented toward individual control over personal information.

Following a social constructionist perspective, we argue that the notion of the individual control of privacy is being (re)constructed through discourse, acknowledging that language and concepts are not neutral but act as carriers of norms, values, and predispositions in a certain community or society (Hall, 1992). Language not only reflects but also shapes and reinforces reality, including the dominant ways we perceive privacy. When looking at the discursive construction of the relationship between Facebook and its users, previous studies have found a prevailing discourse of individual control (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010; Hoffman, Proferes, & Zimmer, 2018). Likewise, established scholarly frameworks on privacy and empirical studies that are focused on users' privacy are also inclined toward such a discourse. Our goal is to further study the privacy-as-control discourse and explore how online privacy is discursively constructed in Flemish[1] newspapers' coverage of privacy and teens, with an empirical focus on Facebook as the exemplar of many commercial social networking sites (SNSs). Following Pantti (2009) and Ploughman (1997), we believe that newspapers are an important representation of everyday life and its social, economic, and political structures.

In line with previous research, our analysis confirms the dominance of a privacy-as-control discourse, but it also finds that this discourse is complemented and reified by two other emerging discourses: one that portrays teenagers as unconcerned, reckless, and lacking self-control and another that glorifies media literacy and end-user controllability. Our analysis reflects on how these discourses with a neoliberal rationality contribute to different forms of responsibilization (i.e., making individuals responsible for tasks they previously were not responsible for; Wakefield & Fleming, 2009).

Literature Review

One of the most prominent ways of conceptualizing, and empirically investigating, privacy is by focusing on the notion of control. According to Westin (1967), "Privacy is the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine for themselves when, how, and to what extent information about them is communicated to others" (p. 7). Altman (1975) extended that approach by focusing on the environment where the disclosure takes place, defining privacy "as the selective control of access to the self" (p. 24). Petronio (2002) then adapted Altman's framework for communication privacy management theory, conceptualizing privacy as a boundary coordination process. Over the years, many researchers have employed these frameworks or developed others that emphasize the central idea of control to investigate privacy in the context of social network sites (SNSs) (e.g., Child, Petronio, Agyeman-Budu, & Westermann, 2011; De Wolf, Willaert, & Pierson; 2014; Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Lampinen, 2016). Fuchs (2011) criticizes the liberal philosophy present in these privacy conceptualizations, explaining that conceptions of privacy focus on how personal information is processed, who can have access, and how this can be controlled—thus

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[1] Flanders is the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium.

ignoring possessive individualism and the commodification of personal information. Furthermore, Fuchs introduces the notion of privacy fetishism to argue that an emphasis on privacy as control makes users ignorant of how their practices are economically shaped or commodified (p. 145).

Considering the social interactions and exchanges of data and information between people and how they are studied, privacy is strongly associated with the notion of control, especially when referring to teens' privacy practices (boyd, 2014). The "privacy paradox" (Barnes, 2006), or the seeming discrepancy between attitudes and behaviors, illustrates this. Over the years, researchers have demonstrated that teenagers claim to care about privacy but do not translate their concerns into practice by means of privacy control (e.g., using Facebook friends lists to segregate information or employing access controls to exclude audiences). Gross and Acquisti (2005) showed how much personal data is provided in SNSs (e.g., in their sample, 39.9% of the participants provided their phone number) and how little privacy preferences are used. Comparing survey data with the data from young users' profiles, Acquisti and Gross (2006) found—even though most users were aware of their profile visibility—significant contrasting results between the concerns and the actual information that was revealed, which the authors explained through the notion of bounded rationality (Acquisti and Grossklags, 2005). Contrary to the initial results of Acquisti and Grossklags (2005) and Gross and Acquisti (2005), more recent research has found that users of SNSs employ various privacy settings and that privacy attitudes have significantly altered over time. Longitudinal survey data (2009 n = 1,094; 2010 n = 495) by boyd and Hargittai (2010) indicate that the use of privacy settings increased significantly between 2009 and 2010. The number of participants who modified their privacy settings increased from 24% to 51%. A meta-analysis by Baruh, Secinti, and Cemalcilar (2017), investigating 166 studies from 34 countries, found a positive relationship between privacy concerns and measures for privacy protection. In addition, users who were more concerned shared less information and used fewer online services.

Although recent literature provides a more nuanced picture of privacy management, various critical reflections arise when privacy is approached as control over privacy settings. First, the privacy policy of service providers remains unquestioned. Instead, researchers' views on privacy are largely similar to those of service providers (De Wolf, Vanderhoven, Berendt, Pierson, & Schellens, 2017). Second, it is assumed "that people have agency, or power to assert control with a particular situation" (boyd, 2012, p. 349) while neglecting more creative ways that young people manage online privacy. For example, Marwick and boyd (2014) found that teenagers encode messages that can only be decoded by a select group of people, even though many more people have access to the encrypted message. Hence, limiting access to meaning is also used to preserve privacy. Finally, such an approach represents privacy as something that needs to be ensured by the individual user rather than respected by others, including the providers of SNSs and other platforms.

Following a science and technology studies approach, scholars have moved beyond the technical features of technology to look at how media and technology are socially, culturally, historically, economically, and institutionally shaped (Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foot, 2014). The role of social media companies should not be underestimated with regard to what they proclaim privacy to imply. When investigating teens' privacy practices, Raynes-Goldie (2010) argues that Facebook "challenges conventional notions of privacy" (para. 1). Although Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg argues that the platform's design

increases the efficiency and transparency of communication, "in practice, this can mean voluntary self-surveillance and full disclosure of a user's activities to everyone on their Friends list, from a significant other to a boss to a long lost childhood friend" (Raynes-Goldie, 2010, para. 1).

Analyzing The Zuckerberg Files (an online archive of the public statements of Mark Zuckerberg), Hoffman and colleagues (2018) explore how Zuckerberg positions users, commercial actors, and Facebook as equals, which obfuscates the larger power asymmetries among them while providing a general sense of control.

Established privacy frameworks, ample scholarly attention to the use of privacy settings, and Zuckerberg's public statements all ultimately reify a notion of privacy as control. Nonetheless, some scholars have questioned an individual-centric conceptualization of privacy. For example, Nissenbaum's (2010) contextual integrity theory proposes a justificatory framework for addressing privacy problems. According to her perspective, privacy is preserved when informational norms are respected. She outlines four variables that characterize context-relative informational norms: context, actors, attributes, and transmission principles. It is Nissenbaum's intention for contextual integrity theory to "serve as a decision heuristic, a framework for determining, detecting, or recognizing when a violation has occurred" (p. 148).

A recent push for online privacy literacy aims to raise awareness and control among users. Privacy literacy "may be defined as a combination of factual or declarative ('knowing that') and procedural ('knowing how') knowledge about online privacy" (Trepte et al., 2015, p. 339). Although online privacy literacy is relatively new in the field of privacy research, research affirms its importance and relevance. For example, Bartsch and Dienlin (2016) find that people with a higher level of privacy literacy show more privacy regulation behaviors and feel safer when using SNSs. Pangrazio and Selwyn (2019), however, argue for a more critical form of literacy that questions the responsibility that is transferred to the individual: "While recent software developments aim to make individual control of personal data more nuanced, these apps remain grounded in the idea of data having economic value" (p. 425). Others are also concerned about the dominance of platforms and the shift toward more control and agency. For example, Livingstone (2019) argues that it is important "to fight for regulation that reduces the burden on audiences' media literacy and capacity for resilience and resistance by designing a digital environment that treats ordinary people more fairly and equitably" (p. 178).

Our Approach

The literature review exposes the role of theory, researchers, and social media companies in the discursive construction of privacy. To our knowledge, no previous study has explored the role of newspapers in the same process. Therefore, we propose the following research questions: How is online privacy discursively constructed in Flemish newspapers, and what kind of representations of (young) users do the papers articulate? To answer these questions, we conducted a discourse analysis of the news coverage of privacy, teens, and Facebook in Flemish newspapers. Although critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been criticized for being ideologically committed, we argue, in line with Carvalho (2008), that an "ideological instrument is an explicit agenda of CDA and does not equal analytical distortion" (p. 162). In this study, we criticize the dominant liberal notions of privacy that neglect larger social, political, and economic processes and enforce, rather than mitigate, responsibilization. Following Foucault's (1995) conception of power, we not only describe how the discourses represent social reality and perceptions of privacy but also show how they have a disciplinary effect

and act as a form of social control that legitimizes the revenue model of service providers, the negative perception of teens, and a digital-by-default society. We highlight the importance of privacy as a human right that should be enforced and guaranteed. Before outlining the different steps in the analysis, we first frame our approach and further substantiate our focus on newspapers.

Discourse and Newspapers

Critical discourse analysis emerged in the late 1980s as an interdisciplinary European school of discourse studies, and "since then, it has become one of the most influential and visible branches of discourse analysis" (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 447). As with all approaches to social constructionist discourse analysis, Foucault's (1995) interpretation of power as productive rather than oppressive and bound up with knowledge has also left its mark on CDA. Foucault argues that "power operates through discourse by creating our social world and identities in particular ways" (Schrøder & Phillips, 2007, p. 894). Power in general and issues of power asymmetries, manipulation, and exploitation in particular are the central focus of many investigations in the field. Critical discourse analysts typically stress "patterns of domination whereby one social group is dominated by another" (Phillips, 2006, p. 288) and reserve the concept of discourse for text, talk, and other semiological systems while distinguishing between discursive and other social practices. These discursive practices are believed to play a crucial role in the maintenance of the social world, "including those social relations that involve unequal relations of power" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). According to Richardson (2007), CDA is thus mainly used to explore how discourses are realized linguistically in texts to investigate knowledge and social relations, the involved stakeholders, and their network of power relations.

Our choice to analyze newspapers follows Pantti's (2009) suggestion to regard news narratives as means of understanding the social world in addition to a conceptualization of representations as symbolic power that "coexists with and reproduces, but may also change, dominant relationships of power (economic, political, and cultural)" (pp. 89–90). News media in particular are believed to reflect "the social, economic and political structures within which they operate" (Ploughman, 1997, p. 119). Therefore, a critical approach to the coverage of privacy by mainstream news outlets should place these processes of construction and power relations at the forefront of the analysis. Our methodological design is informed by the works of Fairclough (1995), Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), Chouliaraki (2006), and Carvalho (2008). Their understanding of CDA allows us to analyze the news output by exploring linguistic strategies in addition to the social practices surrounding the text.

Procedure and Analysis

We gathered our data by means of GoPress, an online database and press monitoring service for Belgian newspapers and magazines. We searched for combinations of the keywords *young people*, *Facebook*, and *privacy*.[2] We focused on eight Flemish newspapers, consisting of both quality and popular newspapers

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[2] We mainly focus on Facebook for practical and substantive reasons. First, it would be impractical to analyze or even compare the various SNSs using a CDA framework. Second, Facebook gives users a feeling of more control over their personal information while, arguably, also violating users' privacy. We consider Facebook's

(*De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, *De Gazet van Antwerpen*, *Het Belang van Limburg*, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, *Het Nieuwsblad*, *De Tijd* and *NL Metro*) from January 2007 through April 2018. Initially, 320 news items were selected. After an open-ended reading, only 210 articles were found to substantially describe and discuss privacy, Facebook, and teens. In 2007, Facebook was quite popular in the United States, especially among young users. In Flanders, however, it was not yet known to the general public. Today, about 74% of the Flemish population (older than age 15) has a Facebook account (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018), and 82% of teenagers are active on a monthly basis (Bastien et al., 2018). The large time span allows us to examine a broad array of phenomena and various "critical discourse moments" (Chilton, 1987): governmental awareness campaigns, whistleblowers and data breaches, yearly research reports on teens' privacy practices, interviews with social media experts and politicians, media literacy conferences, and so on. Moreover, we studied a variety of social actors, such as experts (academic and nonacademic), politicians, and members of the Belgian Data Protection Authority.

During the first, open-ended reading of the articles, we identified debates, themes, and actors that were addressed in the newspapers (e.g., defriending, Safer Internet Day, Andrew Keen, Edward Snowden). Simultaneously—using NVivo 11 software for qualitative data analysis—we coded pieces of text that mentioned the word *privacy* as either "individual control" or "basic right." Whereas the first category underlines the importance of individual responsibility, the second one describes a dependence on others and the situation (e.g., other people sharing information or Facebook's privacy policy). We also coded viewpoints expressed toward teenagers and online privacy with codes such as "insecure," "unaware," and "critical." And we coded the opinions of the various experts that were mentioned in the newspapers, such as "Eric Schmidt" or "European Commission." This preliminary analysis allowed us to structure the data and interpret recurring discursive moments. Subsequent coding phases followed the same coding scheme, but it was refined in the process. Throughout the analysis, particular attention was devoted to journalists' discursive construction of different phenomena. For example, we examined how the same phenomenon (e.g., a research report or a data breach) was articulated differently among the newspapers. Although a detailed linguistic analysis of the newspapers is beyond the scope of this study, we did investigate how privacy was objectified or subjectively positioned (e.g., "their," "our," "your," or "the" privacy). Finally, we integrated the wider social context in our research design as being central to CDA. For example, when discussing the relation between media literacy and privacy as control, we also provide background information on the media literacy policy in Flanders.

Results

This section first reports our analysis of two opposite, though connected, discourses on privacy: privacy as a human right and privacy as individual control. Later, we explain that teenagers are often perceived and represented as uncaring and reckless and that this perception reinforces the privacy-as-control discourse. Finally, we argue that media literacy has been framed as the solution for many Internet-related problems, privacy included, and that it emphasizes even more the importance of control. We illustrate our findings with excerpts (translated from Dutch) from the newspapers.

paradoxical behavior to be of value in studying online privacy discourses and representations. In the analysis, however, other social media are brought up as well, such as YouTube and WhatsApp.

Privacy as a Human Right or as Individual Control

Privacy is often described as individual control over personal information, which brings together norms of responsibilization, transparency, and awareness. Analyzing how Zuckerberg discursively constructs Facebook and its users in press releases, Hoffman and associates (2018) argue that a discourse of control prevails. Such a discourse is also present in Flemish newspapers, and it is articulated in various ways—mainly by referring to the available privacy controls in SNSs and highlighting that they are not known and/or not employed by users. In 2009, *Het Laatste Nieuws* reported on two students who bragged on Facebook about how they cheated during an examination. Because they shared their posts publicly, both were caught and received failing grades. "'Not smart. People should think twice before they post something publicly,' says the Data Protection Authority. They argue in favor of an awareness campaign that educates young people about the risks on the Internet" (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, August 26, 2009, para. 1).

In discussions about the surveillance of (potential) employees, as part of the ongoing datafication process (van Dijck, 2014), a similar line of thought dominates. Users should be aware of the networked environment of SNSs and are responsible for controlling personal information in an adequate manner:

> "It's up to the developers and managers of social network sites to point out the risks and opportunities for users to protect themselves." Christian Dekoninck (specialized in Privacy Law) holds social media users primarily responsible for their actions: "When you write your memoirs, you shouldn't react indignantly when people cite you." (*De Morgen*, September 10, 2009, para. 11)

Users are reminded of their responsibilities not only when regulating information toward other people but also in terms of privacy vis-à-vis third parties, such as service providers and governments (Raynes-Goldie, 2010). Young users are often depicted as unconcerned and reckless: "Few young people are concerned with how their data is used by third parties" (*De Standaard*, December 17, 2015). "Only when their privacy is gone will they [referring to teens] notice how fundamentally important it is" (*De Morgen*, October 21, 2017). "Some civilians, mostly teenagers, are increasingly less bothered to completely give up privacy" (*De Standaard*, December 14, 2007).

> The privacy-as-control discourse, we argue, is also sustained by positively framing users' practices.

> Modern consumers do not remain passive observers but take countermeasures by adding fake personal details to their online profiles to protect themselves. In addition, they make use of coded messages on their Facebook pages to avoid "social listening" (a tactic used by brands to follow and steer conversations on social media). They are like modern-day Robin Hoods. (*De Standaard*, March 28, 2015, para. 6)

If not as control, then individual awareness is put forward as a necessity rather than questioning the data collection and usage of commercial parties. The following quote from a social media expert serves as an example:

What worries me is the way commercial companies make use of our data. Google uses 57 parameters, like your location or type of computer, to learn your profile and influence the search results you get to see. You should know this stuff, whereas people are barely thinking about it. (*De Morgen*, March 22, 2013, para. 3)

Many articles—especially those that quote researchers who investigate teens' privacy practices—explain that individual privacy management is insufficient and simply not possible. Indeed, privacy is a contextual accomplishment dependent on others and the constraints of a specific situation (Nissenbaum, 2010). The following extract illustrates how teens' skills are stressed as well as the potential to negotiate private information via tag controls. However, the notion of control itself is rarely contested or problematized. "Talk to your children. And, especially, do not underestimate them. We notice that young people are quite conscious on social media. Many delete pictures on Instagram on a monthly basis, while making agreements about tag controls has become routine" (*De Morgen*, March 12, 2016, para. 8).

In addition to control, privacy is described as a fundamental human right that highlights the role of data protection policies and the curating role of third parties. Here, privacy is described as a collective good ("our privacy") that should be protected rather than as an individual commodity ("your privacy") that needs to be managed. The following quotes from two interviews with Paul de Hert, professor at the Free University of Brussels, illustrate this line of reasoning:

We need to provide a safe Internet to everyone, with respect to the privacy of its users. Facebook is not the best student in class. Netlog, the Belgian social network site, puts more effort in protecting their consumers. We need to take care of business. The government looks into the safety of cars and the companies that make them. Why shouldn't the government control providers on the ways they protect their consumers? (*De Standaard*, January 28, 2010, para. 5)

Privacy is a container full of human values that are part of *our* cultural heritage. Like the right to personal identity, liberty of choice, and self-determination. We should cherish these values. (*De Tijd*, November 13, 2010, para. 23, emphasis added).

Individual control is, or at least should be, redundant when privacy is conceptualized as a fundamental human right. Paradoxically though, many articles that describe privacy as a human right also discuss control options that users should enable to guarantee their privacy and/or refer to new legislation that provides users with more control and/or transparency. It is not the right to privacy but the right to control privacy that prevails in discourse.

Surfers will have more control over their privacy. European institutions have agreed upon new rules on data protection. Specifically, users will have the right to be forgotten, and young people under the age of 16 will need permission of their parents to share information on Facebook and Snapchat. (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, December 17, 2015, para. 1)

Analyzing the dominant privacy-as-control discourse, we argue that it both regulates and legitimizes certain practices. First, it devalues privacy negotiation processes that are highly contextual and dependent on others (see Nissenbaum, 2010; Petronio, 2002). Second, it justifies service providers' attention toward control and transparency rather than questioning their privacy policies (Hoffman et al., 2018). We define this disciplinary effect as *contextual responsibilization*—the responsibility of individual users to define and control the social situation. Indeed, a heightened awareness and reflexivity of users is needed in SNSs, being aware of both social (e.g., family, friends, colleagues) and institutional (e.g., service providers) others. As described in the next section, it also justifies privacy literacy as a socially accepted response and designates teens as those to whom the response should be directed.

The Unconcerned and Reckless Teenager

The second dominant discourse that emerged from the data positions the teenager as problematic and is embedded in a broader societal discussion that includes several policy decisions, laws, and initiatives. In 2009, the Data Protection Authority in Belgium launched the website *www.ikbeslis.be* (which translates as "www.Idecide.be") with the aim of educating teenagers and making them more aware when disclosing personal information online. The newspapers reported on this initiative by stressing its urgency while pointing toward the dangers of the Internet that "our" teenagers are confronted with:

> The website "*Ik beslis*" ("I decide") is a first realization of a long-term vision with the goal of helping young people in making more informed decisions when sharing personal information. "We need to learn to live with the fact that the Internet is like a jungle. It all seems neat and tidy, and a lot of effort is done to keep it civil, but please protect your personal information." (*De Morgen*, March 11, 2010, para. 8)

The name "I decide" gives the wrong impression that privacy is fully individually controllable, and the discourse applied by the newspapers builds on the long-standing myth of teenagers being unconcerned, reckless, and therefore careless about their privacy.[3] On the contrary, much research has found that young people do care about privacy and are more likely than older generations to protect their privacy (Blank, Bolsover, & Dubois, 2014; Madden, Lenhart, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013; Walrave, Vanwesenbeeck, & Heirman, 2012). Unfortunately, this myth of the unconcerned teenager has persisted. The following extract from a conversation with Peter Van den Eynde of the Data Protection Authority in Belgium illustrates this myth. Interestingly, the conversation shifts remarkably fast from blaming people in general to teenagers specifically.

> A man in Great Britain was fired last year because he posted pictures of himself on social media paddling in the sea. That particular day he called in sick at work. He questioned his discharge for privacy reasons but was unsuccessful. "Flemish people as well are too

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[3] This discourse is not limited to discussions about privacy but extends to other topics that portray young people as reckless and unconcerned (e.g., teens' addiction to smartphones, their disinterest in societal themes). Some have labeled this as a moral panic with dystopian narratives about how the youth engage with (new) media (boyd, 2007; Marwick, 2008).

careless when posting information on the Internet," says Peter Van den Eynde. "We need adequate campaigns to make teenagers more aware, and the government should support this." (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, August 26, 2009, para. 6)

The voice of social researchers is well represented in Flemish newspapers and either goes along with the myth of the unconcerned teenager or questions this image and perceives teenagers as active agents who are literate, sometimes even more literate than older generations.

"WhatsApp is successful because of the group conversation feature," says social media expert Pieter Baert. In groups people are able to share messages and content with multiple people at once. "Young people are more and more aware of privacy," says Baert. "They choose not the share family pictures on Facebook anymore but post them in a smaller group on WhatsApp. That way they control the spreadability." (*Belang Van Limburg*, February 3, 2016, para. 2)

After many years, the debate continues. In 2017, then Flemish secretary of state for privacy Phillipe De Backer toured secondary schools to educate teenagers about the risks of the Internet to make them more aware of their behavior. In the numerous articles that were devoted to this occasion, young people were framed as naïve and appalled. This was especially noticeable in descriptions of students asking questions after the course:

The privacy course came as a shock to many. After class many students were asking questions of the secretary of state, but they also wanted to take a selfie. One student wanted to know what happed to the pictures on Instagram: "When you take pictures in private mode, do they stay private?" Another student asked if a webcam can truly be hacked. "Definitely. When you walk out of the shower, make sure you cover yourself or your webcam," said De Backer. (*Het Nieuwsblad*, May 12, 2017, para. 1)

The role of journalists in constructing this discourse should not be underestimated. The previous quotes were published in *Het Nieuwsblad* in articles titled "Secretary of State Teaches Privacy" and "Ask Yourself, Do You Need to Post This?" The latter title suggests that young people "freely give up personal information" (see Barnes, 2006) and treats the disclosing of (private) information and giving up privacy as one and the same thing. Moreover, teenagers are represented as a homogeneous and monolithic group. Other headlines that report on the privacy practices of teens draw a similar image: "The Digital Native Is Digitally Naive" (*De Standaard*, January 12, 2017); "Privacy Is Becoming Something for Old Farts" (*De Tijd*, May 9, 2009); "Privacy? We Are the Facebook Generation" (*Gazet van Antwerpen*, March 22, 2011). Teenagers' voices are only indirectly present. Teenagers are mostly spoken for by experts and journalists. Interviews with young people are seldom.

Another critical discourse moment occurred with the 2012 International Conference on Privacy, Empowerment, and Technology in the context of SNSs. The conference, which was held in Brussels, was co-organized by researchers involved in two research projects. The first project (SPION) aimed to tackle the responsibilization of individuals with the task of mitigating privacy and security concerns in social networking

sites. The other project (ESMOC) focused on critically assessing users' (dis)empowerment in the social media culture. Indeed, both projects assessed the complexity of privacy and various power relationships. However, the news coverage focused on users of SNSs who were considered lazy (e.g., a newspaper article titled "Privacy? We Are Just Too Lazy"). Early in the article, the journalist asserts that users' actions have little impact: "We are concerned about our privacy on the Internet. However, we often do little, and the things we do have little impact" (*De Standaard*, November 29, 2012, para. 2). And later, the journalist refers to citizens' carelessness and poor usage of the available privacy settings: "Few people adjust their privacy settings on Facebook. Apparently, it shouldn't take too much of an effort" (para. 7).

The discourse is also noticeable when academic research is presented in newspapers. For example, in 2011, researchers from Antwerp University organized a survey among teens that explored their practices on Facebook and Netlog. The results indicated that three-fourths of the teens were critical when accepting or refusing friend requests; most teens insist on having seen the requestee in real life. Moreover, when discussing the disclosure of personal information, half of the teens put their cell phone number online, but only a small proportion shared this publicly. Some press coverage highlights teens' agency in headlines— for example, "Youth Critical Towards Facebook" (*Gazet van Antwerpen*, February 5, 2011). Others, however, magnify the teenagers' apparent lack of awareness and control: "Half the teenagers throw cell phone numbers on social media" (*De Morgen*, February 5, 2011).

Likewise, journalists paid considerable attention to a biannual survey on young people's digital practices in Flanders. In 2012, the researchers found that teenagers are more critical than what is usually assumed:

> Do young people think about their online privacy? Birgit Segal: "People talk more about the safety of young people on the Internet than with them. Teachers and parents rarely talk about this. But teenagers are really concerned. Less than 5% display their cell phone number and address on their Facebook profile. It should be noted that for most teenagers the safety measures on Facebook are confusing." (*Het Nieuwsblad*, May 8, 2012, para. 11)

In 2014, in the same newspaper, a journalist reported on the new iteration of the survey and mentioned that now teens were really aware: "What is especially noticeable is how 12- to 18-year-olds are now really aware of their online privacy" (*Het Nieuwsblad*, May 20, 2014, para. 1).

The above examples demonstrate that teens' privacy practices on SNSs are widely covered in the newspapers, but the teens are usually portrayed as being irresponsible. These longitudinal examples demonstrate the discursive process of reproducing and reinforcing meaning whereby an idea or a notion is established in a very specific manner: Privacy is seen as a matter of individual control, and young people are viewed as unconcerned. Moreover, the discourses are perpetuated in a vicious circle. When arguing that young people do not care about privacy because they lack control over their personal information, it is also assumed that privacy equals control and vice versa. In addition, when researchers tackle this myth by referring to the (creative) ways that young people control their information, they, too, tend to treat privacy and control over privacy as one and the same thing. The discourse of the unconcerned and reckless teenager, we argue, not only expresses a prejudice toward teens but also justifies a linear process of development that we label *maturational responsibilization*. We use this concept to refer to the responsibility

of teenagers to acknowledge and then to anticipate and appropriate the role of a responsible adult in his or her transition into adulthood, including the appropriate way to manage privacy. In the latter reasoning, "Adulthood is seen as the 'unmarked normal' or the 'civil state' of humanity in opposition to 'the primitive state of childhood' and the 'unruly barbarism of adolescence'" (De Leyn, De Wolf, Vanden Abeele, & De Marez, 2019, p. 178).

The Promise of Media Literacy

Finally, the plea for transparency and control regarding privacy is also embedded in a broader discourse of media literacy. The term *mediawijsheid* (media wisdom) is the central concept in parliamentary discussions on media literacy in Flanders (Van Audenhove, Mariën, & Vanwynsberghe, 2018). References to privacy literacy (Trepte et al., 2015), personal data literacy (Pangrazio & Selwyn, 2019), and other academic concepts are missing. The term first emerged in 2006 in a meeting of the Commission of Culture, Youth, Sports, and Media. In a Concept Note, jointly developed by the minister of media Ingrid Lieten and the minister of education Pascal Smet, media literacy is defined as

> the whole of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that allow citizens to deal with the complex, changing, and mediatized world in a conscious and critical way. It is the ability to use media in an active and creative way, aimed at societal participation. (Van Audenhove et al., 2018 p. 68)

Clearly, the definition puts forward an emancipatory approach according to which parents, schools, and other educational organizations have a responsibility to educate teenagers. This approach strongly resonates with the discourse we found in the analyzed news output on privacy.

> To make teenagers aware of online privacy a game "Master F.I.N.D." was developed. The target population consists of teens between 12 and 16 years old. "In the game you play a web detective who experiences how easy it is to untangle the full identity and intimate details of a person's life," according to Child Focus [the European Center for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children]. (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, May 3, 2014, para. 1)

> Government campaign. "Think before you post" is the new slogan of a campaign that has to inform young people from high school and let them think about privacy on the Internet. The campaign was announced yesterday by the Flemish Minister of Education Hilde Crevits: "ready-made educational packages are developed to learn about online privacy." (*Het Belang Van Limburg*, October 10, 2014, para. 1)

When discussing YouTube, advertising, and data collection from children, the need for media literacy is also underlined:

> Regulation is difficult to attain and needs to happen on an international level. We could, however, invest more in media literacy. We pay companies with our personal data. Even the youngest among us are exposed to this. It's evident that social media are free, but the

conversations on this topic are missing. What about advertisements or privacy? It would be
a shock to know the things you grant permission for. (*De Morgen*, April 14, 2018, para. 31)

This is not to say that privacy as a human right is not discussed in relation to media literacy. For
example, the new data protection regulation in Europe (General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR)
contains specific requirements for the processing of minors' personal data. In some European countries,
users need to be 16 to have a profile on Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp. However, member states have
the possibility to derogate from this age restriction. In Belgium, the proposed age of consent is 13 years.
The following quote notes the necessity of protecting teenagers. However, yet again, the importance of
awareness and control is highlighted, portraying the right to privacy as a right to control privacy:

> According to the Children's Rights Commissioner, "It would be meaningless to ban social
> media for teenagers below the age of 16. It would be unworldly. Of course, we need to
> protect them, that's why we plea for media literacy and social media service providers to
> respect the rights of young people." (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, February 13, 2018, para. 5)

Critical thinking and media literacy, by all means, are necessary to function in today's digital society
and to stimulate societal participation. However, the articulation of this emancipatory approach on media
literacy does little to question the responsibilization it often entails. We question whether updating privacy
settings, reading terms of service, and granting e-mail consent under GDPR help establish privacy or
reinforce the notion of privacy as control. However, this individualized understanding of privacy appears to
be self-evident. As with previously mentioned discourses, the promise of media literacy also has a
disciplinary effect that justifies the ongoing role of users to educate themselves to keep up with new digital
innovations and services. We see the latter process as a type of *societal responsibilization*, entailing the
responsibility to learn and control personal information in an "adequate" manner, and so to function in a
digital-by-default society.

Discussion

In recent years, and in the context of SNSs, many scholars have defined privacy as a boundary
coordination or a control process, inspired by Westin's (1967) notion of privacy and freedom, Altman's
(1975) boundary regulation theory, Petronio's (2002) communication privacy management theory, and
others. Although much research has shown the complex process of privacy management as an ongoing
negotiation of audiences, content, and boundaries in a collapsed and networked environment (e.g., Marwick
& boyd, 2014), it rarely questions the underlying assumption(s) of (individual) control. Whether the focus
is on controlling personal information, the social situation, or the self in general, privacy is perceived as a
negotiable rather than fundamental right. Instead, we argue that, although control over privacy is an
important part of privacy and that it is important to investigate and understand in networked contexts such
as those of SNSs, privacy and control should not be treated as one and the same thing. Doing so neglects—
or is at least unmindful of—individualism, larger power asymmetries, and responsibilization processes.

Previous work has studied Zuckerberg's public statements, how Facebook is represented, and the
ways for people to understand what Facebook is (Freishtat & Sandlin, 2010; Hoffman et al., 2018). In line

with Pantti (2009), we argue that news narratives, besides the voices of technology's purveyors, shape our understanding of the social world and, hence, our notions of privacy.

Our results indicate that in Flemish newspapers the privacy-as-control discourse is dominant and complemented by two other discourses: that of the unconcerned and reckless teenager[4] and that of the promise of media literacy. Representing teenagers as unconcerned because they lack control over personal information and simultaneously positioning media literacy as a necessity in today's digital society (e.g., reading terms of service or granting e-mail consent under GDPR) both reinforce a privacy-as-control discourse. Combined, these discourses form the "authoritative language" (Jordan, 1992) on privacy, which we call control responsibility. Specifically, the discourses present privacy as an individual responsibility that can be controlled and that needs to be learned by young users. We argue that such a responsibilization is caused not only by social network infrastructures and organizations that run them but also by prejudices toward young people (by various actors, including social media experts, schools, and privacy advocates) and a neoliberal belief in full controllability. If our aim is to diminish such responsibilization, it is necessary to question and tackle all three discourses at once. On a conceptual level, to subsequently complement cognition by action in a further stage, we therefore argue for differentiating among three forms of responsibilization: contextual, maturational, and societal. We do not suggest that individuals disengage from any responsibilities. Rather, we want to put the authoritative language on privacy into perspective, highlight its disciplinary effects, and diminish extensive responsibilization on different levels.

Future Research and Concluding Remarks

We chose to examine broad representation of privacy, teens, and Facebook in Flemish newspapers, paying less attention to differences among newspapers. However, our analysis demonstrates a dominant discursive strategy toward privacy that manifested itself in all the selected newspapers. One element that did differ across newspapers was the amount of attention devoted to the issue of privacy. The two leading quality newspapers, *De Standaard* and *De Morgen*, reported substantially more on privacy, with 44 and 46 newspaper articles, respectively, in our sample. Future research could conduct a more systematic comparison between newspapers and/or the different actors represented (e.g., social media experts versus journalists). Although we were able to find dominant discourses, the social actors who sustain them are difficult to clearly identify, or, to be more precise, their individual contributions are less defined because they largely represent themselves as an alliance or network of (arguably temporary) partners in discursively sustaining and reinforcing a commonly shared ideology over privacy. Regarding the Flemish context, newspapers are still among the most popular media used for information purposes in Flanders. Our sample of newspapers is very broad in terms of ideological background and reader audiences, hence representing the bulk of mainstream media in Flanders. On an international level, the print media in Flanders/Belgium can be seen as an exemplar for many Western European markets (De Bens & Raeymaeckers, 2010) and for Hallin and Mancini's (2004) North/Central European democratic corporatist model. Additional research could

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[4] To be fair, a few newspaper articles in the sample did describe teens' creative ways to manage privacy and contradicted the unconcerned and reckless teenager discourse. However, the notion of individual control remained unquestioned in these articles.

delve into the question of how the different discourses on privacy are represented by different users, social media experts, journalists, and other stakeholders involved, in other (non-Western) regions and countries.

In a society where datafication (van Dijck, 2014) prevails, it would be undesirable to preach against more control and transparency for users. Moreover, we consider the latest effort of stimulating factual, declarative, and procedural knowledge about online privacy (Trepte et al., 2015) to be incredibly valuable. Indeed, the dynamics of social media and its underlying political economy require a constant reflexivity among users. But when a privacy-as-control discourse gains the upper hand, it creates a false consciousness of controllability and stimulates rather than diminishes the responsibilization processes. In addition to investigating privacy management practices, future privacy research might focus on the ways users, and teenagers specifically, experience these different types of responsibilization. Doing so gives a voice to the users, besides stimulating awareness, knowledge, and control. Also, we recommend employing privacy approaches or frameworks that embrace privacy as a societal value or a fundamental right, because such research not only is oriented toward notions of (individual) control but also takes into account larger social structures and the organization and functioning of society (see Anthony, Campus-Castillo, & Horne, 2017). For example, Weinberg (2017) argues that a focus on individual privacy could "obfuscate how information technologies produce profit; profit is produced through the aggregate of anonymized data from all users that then allows for predictive analytics to determine who is most likely to provide a return on capitalist investment" (p. 16). Reviewing privacy and human behavior research, Acquisti, Brandimarte, and Loewenstein (2015) conclude by stating, "Privacy policy should [also] protect real people who are naïve, uncertain and vulnerable and should be sufficiently flexible to evolve with the emerging unpredictable complexities of the information age" (p. 514). Indeed, even as increased reflexivity is required of users to control privacy, protection is equally needed to prevent that reflexivity from becoming excessive.

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