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Snapshots of the Self: Exploring the Role of Online Mobile Photo Sharing in Identity Development among Adolescent Girls

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents are growing up in an increasingly mobile society; thus, it is important to understand how young consumers utilize technology to share their consumption activities and construct their identities. Teenage girls in particular use online social networks for self-presentation practices. The purpose of this study is to explore how teenage girls utilize ubiquitous technology (e.g., camera phones) and social media (e.g., Facebook.com) to develop their identities through shared consumption activities. To this extent, the study aims to answer the following three research questions: what types of consumption activities are shared, how are consumption activities shared, and why are adolescent girls motivated to share their consumption activities? Using a multi-method qualitative approach, findings suggest that mobile photo sharing allows adolescents to deliberately dramatize their consumption experiences and manage their identities. The data reveal that teenagers, both individually and collectively, display their identities and culturally shared meanings through mobile uploading. The findings are presented in two parts: identity-oriented characteristics of shared mobile photos and identity-oriented motivations for mobile photo sharing. The data illustrate four primary motivations for adolescent girls to partake in mobile photo sharing: 1) audience feedback, 2) memory manufacturing, 3) relational reassurance, and 4) bounded rebellion. The findings are supported with illustrative examples from the depth interviews and mobile photograph album analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Giggling and chatter comes streaming through the dressing room door as the three teenage girls stand inside, trying on dresses covered in rhinestones and beads. One of the girls pulls out her cellular phone and turns on the camera feature. Instinctively, the other two girls strike a pose alongside their camera-wielding friend as she snaps a digital photograph of their reflection in the dressing room mirror. With the touch of a button, the picture is uploaded from the girl's mobile phone to her Facebook profile. Almost simultaneously, her online friends begin posting comments: "Cute dress!" "Looks great - you should definitely get it!" Thus, a consumption experience that was once only privy to the girls physically inside of the dressing room is now displayed for public viewing and feedback on the World Wide Web.

As the previous scenario demonstrates, by tapping just a few buttons on a cellular phone, a young consumer has the capability of sharing her small experience with the world. Mobile technology has become a primary tool by which teens behave in the marketplace, capture their experiences, and construct their identities. The percentage of teens (ages 12-17) who own cell phones has risen steadily, from 45% in 2004 to 75% in 2009 (Lenhart et al., 2010). Moreover, teenagers commonly use their cell phones to snap and share digital photographs, on both a small scale (e.g., peer to peer picture messaging) and a large scale (e.g., posting photographs on social network sites). Users have the capability to snap a photograph and upload it to the web in real-time, regardless of location, as long as a satellite signal is available. Thus, adolescents today are not only connected, they are connected quickly and connected everywhere. The purpose of this study is to explore how teenage girls utilize ubiquitous technology (e.g., camera phones) and social media (e.g., Facebook.com) to develop their identities through shared consumption activities. To this extent, the study aims to answer the following three research questions: what types of consumption activities are shared, how are consumption activities shared, and why are adolescent girls motivated to share their consumption activities? I focus specifically on teenage girls because teenage girls are more likely to use social network sites than teenage boys (i.e., 86% of girls ages 15-17 versus 69% of teenage boys ages 15-17; Lenhart et al., 2009) and they commonly use the emerging technologies to experiment with their identities (Mazzarella, 2005).

First, I review relevant literature on modern adolescent consumer culture; namely, I discuss online self-presentation and mobile photo sharing. Second, I describe the research design and data analysis methodology used in the study, which involves a multi-method approach of visual photograph analysis and autodriving interviews (Collier and Collier, 1986; Heisley and Levy, 1991; Kvale, 1996). Data analysis follows a grounded theory approach based on constant comparative coding, as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Third, I present findings from the data and discuss emergent themes and patterns as they relate to identity development and consumer behavior. Finally, I provide implications for consumer behavior research and marketing strategy.

MILLENNIALS IN A MOBILE MARKETPLACE

Adolescence (i.e., ages 11-18) spans the interval between childhood and adulthood (Steinberg et al., 2009), a stage in which they are highly motivated to manage their identities through consumption

(Belk, 1988; Weale and Kerr, 1969; Wooten, 2006). Today's youth[1] (born 1982-2001; see Strauss and Howe, 1991, 2000) are uniquely defined by their prolific use of mobile technologies and, generally speaking, they are operating in a drastically different marketplace than that of their parents' or grandparents' generations (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008; Strauss, Howe, and Markiewicz, 2006; Twenge 2006). In addition, today's young people represent a huge cohort (i.e., 76 million in 2000) and boast significant combined purchasing power (i.e., $600 billion; Kennedy, 2001); hence, understanding how this economically attractive youth market operates in an evolving mobile marketplace is critical.

Mobile technology plays a key role in the lives of modern adolescents. In contrast to their parents, children born in America after the mid-1990s have never known a world without digital technologies (e.g., computers, the Internet, mobile phones, MP3s; Lenhart et al., 2005; Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). As an anecdotal example, phrases like "Facebook me" and "Google it" have always been a part of Millennials' vernacular. A rise in personal technology (e.g., computer based entertainments, television, mobile phones) mediates adolescents' social interactions (Ilardi, 2009; Walther, DATE). Emerging technologies distances adolescents further from traditional socialization agents, such as the family, and pull teens deeper into the modern youth culture where norms and trends are constantly shifting (Hawley, 2011; Lee, 2009). Thus, peer influence and one's social identity is increasingly important in the new technology driven marketplace to which Millennials are accustomed. Furthermore, given the ubiquitous nature of mobile technology, most adolescents never leave the marketplace, rather it travels with them. Adolescents turn to the Internet for everything from gathering information about a new product and to downloading new music (Tapscott, 2009).

Social media, particularly social network sites (e.g., Facebook.com, MySpace.com), are changing the nature of how teenage consumers behave in the marketplace and communicate with one another (Boyd, 2008). Social network sites allow individuals to create unique online profiles and define a list of other users with whom they can connect and communicate, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Companies are increasingly turning to social network sites to support their marketing efforts (e.g., Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), such as creating brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001), conducting netnographic marketing research (Kozinets, 2002), and uncovering co-creation opportunities (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Tech-savvy Millennial teens are a primary target for such digital marketing practices (Montgomery, 2007). In recent years, the percentage of teens who use social network sites has steadily risen to 73% (Lenhart et al., 2010). In addition, cell phone ownership has become is standard among even the youngest teens, and teens are increasingly using their mobile phones to access the internet and social network sites (Lenhart et al., 2010). Computer mediated communication liberates adolescents, particularly girls (Mazzarella, 2005), to experiment with social skills and identities (Maczewski, 2002; Turkle, 1997; Valkenburg, Schouten, and Peter, 2005). To that end, this chapter aims to extend our understanding of youth consumer culture and consumption by providing a link between teenage girls' identity development and mobile photo sharing practices.

Identity Performance through Social Media

Teenagers are at a stage in which they are "about to crystallize an identity, and for this [they need] others of [their] generation to act as models, mirrors, helpers, testers, foils" (Douvan and

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[1] Many names have been assigned to this group, including Millenials (Howe and Strauss, 1991, 2000), Generation Y, Echo Boomers (Alch, 2000), Generation Me (Twenge, 2006), iGeneration, Generation Next, Net Generation, and Digital Natives (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). Howe and Strauss suggest that Millennials is the most fitting name given that the members of the generation themselves coined the term.

Adelson, 1966, p. 179). They grapple with the question, "Who am I?" and often define themselves through their clothing choices, unique jargon, musical preferences, extracurricular activities, and possibly most important, their group associations. The internet offers adolescents many opportunities to experiment with their identities (e.g., Subrahmanyam and Smahel, 2011; Turkle, 1995; Valkenburg and Peter, 2008). In particular, teenage girls are driven to the internet because of relational and social factors, such as forming friendships and chatting with classmates.

The terms 'identity' and 'self-concept' are often used interchangeably yet without complete definitional agreement among scholars (Belk, 1988; Markus and, Nurius 1986; Turner, 1987). An important distinction is that one's 'self' exists regardless of external cues or public demonstrations, whereas one's 'identity' is based upon social relations and symbolic representations. Identity is often context dependent and validated through culturally shared meanings. For instance, when a teenager is at home with his parents, then his identity as a son is activated. He may watch what he says and keep to himself. In contrast, when the he is in the school locker room with his peers, then his identity as a jock might be activated. He may joke around with his friends and use harsh language. Interestingly, adolescents' offline social networks are increasingly converging on online social networks. For example, two-thirds of teens on Facebook.com, a popular online social network, report that they are connected to their parents through the website. In fact, 16% of teens state that befriending their parents online is a precondition of acquiring a Facebook account (Kaplan Test Prep Survey, 2011). Although social networks, like Facebook, provide customized privacy options, the fact remains that the virtual world is becoming increasingly transparent. According to the same survey, 56% percent of teens give their parents full profile access (e.g., pictures, status updates, wall posts), while 34% deny their parents access by rejecting their friend requests.

Adolescents primarily develop their identities in the context of peer groups (e.g., Douvan and Adelson, 1966; Erikson, 1963; Sherif and Sherif, 1964; Sullivan, 1953). Teenage girls commonly look to others for guidance through social comparison. Social network sites extend one's social groups to the internet and provide a more extensive range of social comparison opportunities. Previous research suggests that online communication often happens in social communities that are separate from those in real life (Turkle, 1995); however, modern social networks, like Facebook, tend to be a reflection of existing social groups. In other words, teenagers are acquaintances in real life before they become friends online. In any type of social interaction, individuals have the desire to strategically manage the impressions that other people form of them (Goffman, 1959). Social network sites allow adolescent to signal their identities online by sharing personal information, including thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and preferences.

Social media (e.g., instant messaging, chat rooms) affords teenagers the opportunity to pretend to be someone else (Lenhart et al., 2001; Gross, 2004; Valkenburg et al., 2005). Fewer face-to-face communication social cues (e.g., auditory cues, visual cues) are present on the internet; thus, teens may be more likely to explore their identities online. Although there are no apparent gender differences in the frequency with which boys and girls experiment with their identity online, they do differ significantly in the types of online identities they choose (Valkenburg et al., 2005). In recent years, the sexualization and commodification of young girls has been at the center of debates and discussion about the role of the media and consumption in adolescent identity development (e.g., Linn, 2004; Schor, CITE; Durham, 2009; Oppliger, 2008).

Mobile Photo Sharing through Facebook

Photographs are commonly used to recall memories, maintain social relationships, and express one's identity (Van House et al., 2004). Today's teenagers are increasingly turning to their mobile

phones to access social network sites and upload photographs directly from their camera phones to the internet (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, and Purcell, 2010). Young people send and receive about twice as many mobile images per month, compared to adults (Kindberg et al., 2004). By tapping a few buttons on a cellular phone, a teenage girl has the capability of sharing her small experience with the world. Mobile photograph uploading is fundamentally different from traditional digital photograph uploading on the dimensions of immediacy and mobility. Users have the capability to snap a photograph and upload it to the web in real-time, regardless of location, as long as a satellite signal is available.

The popular online social network, Facebook.com, serves as the primary social network site of interest in this study. Other social network sites, such as Flickr and YouTube, feature mobile upload options for photographs and videos; however, Facebook was selected based on the high rate of use among young consumers, with 71% of young adults maintaining Facebook profiles (Lenhart et al. 2010). Facebook's mobile upload feature is only available to consumers who own camera phones and additional cell phone data charges may apply. Users can upload photos from their mobile phones to their Facebook profiles in one of three ways: 1) by emailing photos to a personal unique Facebook email (e.g., user@m.facebook.com), 2) by using the Facebook application available on smartphones (e.g., iPhone, Blacberry, Android, Windows Mobile), or 3) by picture messaging (i.e., MMSing) photos to Facebook. These pictures are published in the "Mobile Uploads" album by default. Although the cost of each method may vary, mobile photograph uploading is available to any teenager owning a camera phone. Furthermore, Facebook users are able to post comments below their "friends" photographs.

Self-generated photographs "make visible" aspects of the self (Harrison, 2002); thus, identity is symbolically represented through visual images. Pictures capture significant life moments, portray important social relationships, and reflect people's cultural and contextual shared meanings (Harrison, 2002). Although identity and self-representations change over time, photographs are static in that each one captures a moment in time, from the photographer's perspective (Lorraine, 1990; Berger, CITE). Compared to traditional photography, online photographs can be shared with a wide audience. Mobile uploads differ even further in that they can be shared immediately. Given that teenage girls are at a stage of identity transformation and development, this study aims to explore this role of mobile photo uploads in developing one's identity.

METHODOLOGY

Given the discovery oriented nature of this project, this study employs a combined qualitative approach of visual photograph analysis and depth interviews (Collier and Collier, 1986; Heisley and Levy, 1991; Kvale, 1996) in an analysis sequence of constant comparative method (see Glaser and Strauss 1967). This research aims to explore how and why teenage girls use mobile uploading in their everyday consumption and to understand the role of online mobile photo sharing in identity development ; thus, sample recruitment focused on active adolescent female users of the mobile upload function on Facebook.com. "Active users" were defined as individuals who uploaded at least four photographs per month, on average. Informants were initially recruited from a local church organization. Sampling continued until the range of informants' responses was no longer expanding, but became redundant, consistent with qualitative data collection practice. In total, a convenience sample of 13 adolescent girls was obtained; this sample size exceeds the recommendation by McCracken (CITE) for generating emergent themes in qualitative research. The informants ranged in age from 15 to 18. About half of the informants attended an urban high school in an economically wealthy area, whereas the remaining half of informants attended a rural high school in economically

challenged area. The informants represented varying Facebook mobile upload activity levels. Table 1 presents the mobile uploading frequency of each informant. To protect the privacy of the informants, all data are reported using pseudonyms. Because all of the informants were teenagers, informed consent was obtained from each informant and her parent/guardian before inclusion in the study.

Table 1. Informant Demographics

Informant Pseudonym	Age	Date of First Mobile Upload	Total Number of Mobile Uploads	Uploading Frequency (per month)	Total Number of Comments
Claire	15	November 2009	124	6.9	184
Kimberly	16	February 2011	33	8.3	27
Kenlyn	16	March 2010	135	9.6	202
Madison	16	September 2010	86	10.8	93
Caitlin	16	July 2010	128	11.6	96
Jayma	15	December 2010	86	14.3	134
Krissy	17	June 2010	184	15.3	192
Ellen	18	December 2009	295	16.4	340
Paige	16	November 2010	123	17.6	135
Alyssa	18	October 2010	166	20.8	159
Heather	16	April 2011	42	21.0	34
Sherie	16	November 2010	200	28.6	143
Anne	15	June 2010	453	37.8	617

Qualitative interviews are useful for understanding cultural meanings and personal experiences from the informant's point of view (Kvale,1996); hence, in the spirit of Heisley and Levy's (1991) autodriving method, each informant participated in a depth interview centering around each girl's mobile upload album(s) on Facebook. The informants granted the researcher access to their Facebook mobile upload albums prior to the interviews, producing a total of N=2055 photographs and N=2356 comments. During each interview, the informant and the interviewer discussed the photographs together; thus, the teenage informants acted as "expert guides leading the fieldworker through the content of the pictures" (Collier and Collier, 1986, p. 106). This photograph driven interview method allows informants to spontaneously tell stories about the photographs, explain the symbolic meanings of objects in the photographs, and provide a richer understanding of social, cultural, and contextual factors represented in the photographs (Collier and Collier, 1986; Hagedorn, 1996; Pink, 2003; Rich, Lamola, Gordon, and Chalfen, 2000). A general semi-structured interview protocol (see Table 2) supplemented the free association photographic interviewing method. The informants were probed where appropriate and were encouraged to elaborate whenever they were discussing their shared consumption experiences and identity processes represented in their online photographs. In line with the constant comparative nature of grounded theory, the interview process resulted in new questions being added to the interview process as new themes emerged. The data were documented via field notes and subsequently transcribed into electronic journals.

I analyzed the mobile upload albums to identify recurrent themes and compare findings across informants. In accordance with the grounded theory approach, several different categories and sub-categories of data emerged during the open coding process, and axial coding linked these categories and sub-categories to dimensions of adolescent consumer identity construction as defined in the

literature. To achieve respondent validation, I went back to several informants with tentative results to refine and confirm the findings.

Table 2. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Topic	General Interview Questions
Frequency	How often do you use your phone to take pictures?
	When did you first start using the mobile upload feature on Facebook?
	How often do you upload pictures to Facebook?
Subject	Where do you normally take pictures that you upload to Facebook?
	Who do you normally take pictures of (e.g., friends, family, coworkers)?
	What do you normally take pictures of (e.g., food, clothes)?
Experience	Describe a typical experience in which you might take a picture and upload it to Facebook. What kinds of things go on?
	Why do you use the mobile upload feature on Facebook?
	What is your most memorable mobile uploading experience?
	What is your worst experience with mobile uploading?
Reflections	Describe your interaction with friends on Facebook after you've uploaded a photo.
	What do you think you gain from uploading pictures on Facebook?
	How long do you leave your mobile uploads up on Facebook?
	Do you ever get your camera phone pictures printed as hardcopies?
	How do your mobile uploads reflect who you are?
	Photograph Specific Interview Questions
Mobile Upload	Tell me a little about this photograph and what was going on when you took it.
	Why did you decide to upload this photograph?
	Who was involved in taking this picture with you?

FINDINGS

In the process of data analysis, themes emerged suggesting that the social network serves as a platform upon which adolescents are able to interact and negotiate their consumption experiences. Social networks enable image management and identity construction among adolescents. The data reveal that teenagers, both individually and collectively, display their identities and culturally shared meanings through mobile uploading. Here, I present the findings in two parts: identity-oriented characteristics of shared mobile photos and identity-oriented motivations for mobile photo sharing. The first part examines the identity-oriented characteristic of shared mobile photos: 1) edited self-presentation, 2) symbolic consumption, and 3) culturally situated social spaces. The second part proposes four primary motivations for adolescents to partake in mobile photo sharing: 1) audience feedback, 2) memory manufacturing, 3) relational reassurance, and 4) bounded rebellion. The findings are supported here with illustrative examples from the depth interviews and mobile photograph album analysis. While these themes are presented as distinct ideas, it should be noted that informants more typically related information about the themes in a highly intermingled fashion.

Identity-Oriented Characteristics of Mobile Photo Sharing

Edited self-presentation. Teens take on various identities throughout adolescence. Social network sites provide platforms upon which teenage girls can act out various identities. In this way, the social network is the stage and the adolescent is the actor. Through mobile photo sharing, girls get into character (e.g., gender bender, rebel, tough girl, sex kitten), edit their performances, use props and costumes (e.g., brands, products, clothing), and shoot the performances on selected sets (e.g., retail store, school, bedroom). When a girl is "in character," she behaves in accordance with the given personality and plays to the expectations of the audience. Thus, mobile photo sharing allows adolescent girls to adopt character traits, follow scripts, and create scenarios as part of their identity experimentations.

Each photograph uploaded to the social network offers a glimpse into the ever-evolving adolescent self-concept. Informants in this study showed an overwhelming propensity for uploading self-portraits, normally taken by holding the cell phone at arm's length or by capturing one's reflection in a mirror. Whereas adults may commonly turn the camera toward external stimuli (e.g., their children and grandchildren, landscapes and traveling), teenage girls appear to be the stars of their own shows on social networks. This supports previous scholarly work suggesting that adolescents are egocentric by nature (e.g., see Elkind, 1969) and increasingly narcissistic (e.g., see Twenge, 2007), particularly on social network sites like Facebook (Mendelson and Papacharissi, 2010). Anne's self-portraits reflect a wide range of identities. As she suggests, social desirability plays a role in the photos that she selects to upload. Mobile photo uploading offers a tool by which girls can strategically edit their social self-identities. As Anne points out, she takes multiple self-portraits, but only uploads the favorable ones. Thus, she deliberately creates and controls her self-identity. Prior to uploading, teens further edit their pictures using photo-editing mobile applications (e.g., PicSay for Android, Mini Paint for Blackberry, iCamera for iPhone), which contribute to purposefully creating an ideal self-image.

> **Lexi (age 15, comment):** beautiful!! is it even possible for you to take a bad picture?
> **Claire (age 15, comment):** girl, i just airbrush all my pics into gorgeousness… you know i don't look this good in real-life. ;)
> **Lexi (age 15, comment):** ohh puuullease.

As Claire suggests, teenagers can create inauthentic or deceptive portrayals of themselves through mobile photo sharing. Previous research corroborates that individuals falsely portray their physical attractiveness online (Hancock and Toma, 2009); however, an interesting finding from this study suggests that teenage girls are likely to use editing applications to create less desirable mobile photo uploads. For example, several of the informants posted pictures of themselves and/or their friends, using FatBooth, a popular face-distorting mobile application that adds a significant amount of weight to a person's headshot.

> **Kimberly (age 16, interview):** Oh my god, I am obsessed with [FatBooth]. I think it's hilarious to see what I'd look like if I ever got fat. I used it on my Grandma the other day. I could barely breathe it made me laugh so hard! I used it on my dog too. I don't get what's so mean about it. It's just meant to be funny. It's not like I'm going around taking pictures of strangers calling them fat. Oh, but my friend David actually did get written up because he took a picture of this really fat girl in our class and posted it on Facebook saying that it was a FatBooth picture.

Theories of social identity and social comparison suggest that one's self-concept is derived from membership in a given social group (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and that people evaluate their own opinions and behaviors through "social" comparison with other people (Festinger, 1954). Obesity is

viewed as a socially undesirable physical characteristic, and using applications like FatBooth reflect the in-group versus out-group prevalent during adolescence. One informant admonished the use of FatBooth saying that it is "no different than making fun of someone who is overweight. It's like saying 'Thank God I don't look like you.'" Nonetheless, teenagers use mobile uploading to stretch the boundaries of social identity and group norms. For example, they use mobile uploading to experiment with their gender identities and highlight gender stereotypes. Like the FatBooth photos, the majority of gender bending photographs of themselves or their friends appear to be taken in jest and the comments that follow each photograph tend to be derogatory in nature.

> **Kimberly (age 16, mobile upload):** A teenage boy is holding two grapefruits in front of his chest, suggesting female breasts.

> **Kenlyn (age 16, mobile upload):** Two teenage boys posing shirtless. One is wearing a short jean skirt. The second is wearing pink plaid shorts.

> **Anne (age 15, mobile upload):** Anne stands in front of the mirror wearing a team jersey and flexing her left bicep.

> **Madison (age 16, mobile upload):** Two girls posing in a dressing room wearing men's boxer briefs.

> **Claire (age 15, mobile upload):** Claire is buried up to her neck in sand at the beach. The sand covering her body is shaped to resemble the male physique.

Before the advent of digital cameras or camera phones, roll-film cameras were the standard of personal photography. In contrast, today's teenagers are growing up in a marketplace of digital technology. They have been raised to immediately view and critique their photographs – and consequently, they view and critique themselves. From a performance perspective, teens are essentially air-brushing and editing their own photos, which ultimately reflect their identity expectations. The data reveal that teenagers use their camera phones and mobile uploading to practice and perfect the physical presentation of their bodies. They practice facial expressions, flex their muscles, and pose for the camera, in order to gain a mastery over their bodies. On the one hand, a better understanding of which physical attributes are one's best may enhance self-esteem. On the other hand, a constant critique of one's physical flaws may deflate self-esteem. Despite technology's capability of creating unblemished photographs, many of the informants posted pictures with self-deprecating captions and idealized image portrayal. Examples of such captions are as follows:

> **Caitlin (age 16, photo caption):** seriously, i hate feet. my toes are totes (slang: totally) disgusto.

> **Heather (age 16, photo caption):** I am fully aware of how fat my arms look; it's cool.

> **Claire (age 15, photo caption):** If only I were tan ❤️

> **Jayma (age 15, photo caption):** besties!!! ... i look rough but love you girls.

Girls use the social network as platform upon which they can experiment with new identities and gauge audience reaction. They can upload a self-portrait and immediate get feedback, both solicited and unsolicited, from their peers. All of the previous captions were met with steadfast compliments and reassuring feedback ("e.g., omg, please! i wish i was as pretty as you on a "rough" day!"). The characters that teenage girls portray on social networks are reflective of their emerging identities. Although family members, friends, and pets are also commonly featured in adolescents' mobile uploads, these characters play are meant to play more of a supporting role to the individual lead performer. For example, Paige posted a picture of herself posing with four other girls in a mirror. Each of the girls had her own cell phone out to take her own picture. Even though the picture was meant to capture the collective group, each girl remained fixated on her own individual image, as captured with her own camera phone. Finally, echoing the technologically driven marketplace to which today's youth are accustomed, teenagers commonly use mobile uploading to post pictures of other digital media. In this way, teens identity projects are meta-mediated through technology. For instance, Kenlyn's mobile upload album includes several photographs of her computer screen in which she captures a Facebook chat conversation with a friend or documents a Skype date with her boyfriend. Likewise, other informants uploaded mobile phone screen shots of text conversations and multiplayer mobile games.

Symbolic consumption. Symbolic consumption is integral to the creation and continuation of a stable, harmonious self-concept. Online social networks provide a platform upon which adolescents can present identity formation processes through symbolic consumption practices represented in their mobile uploads. In particular, girls use consumer products as props and costumes while exploring different aspects of their identities through mobile uploading. Evidence in the marketing literature suggests that consumer products reflect one's identity (e.g., Belk 1988). Consumption and anti-consumption of particular products may reflect an emerging identity (e.g., make-up and cosmetics reflect femininity and womanly beauty) or loss of a past identity (e.g., ceasing to sleep with a baby blanket or stuffed animal associated with childhood). Furthermore, anti-consumption, or "a resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment of consumption," is symbolically related to self-concept factors (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy; Zavestoski, 2002, p. 121) and undesired self-states (Hogg, Banister, and Stephenson, 2008). Through mobile uploading, girls demonstrate anti-consumption practices by posting photos in mockery of particular brands, services, or ideals. For instance, Madison posted a photograph of a President Barack Obama chia pet with the caption, "AFRObama. No you can't." The clear mockery of President Obama's former campaign slogan (i.e., "Yes we can!") suggests that Madison is symbolically disassociating from Obama supporters. Interestingly, Madison was not old enough to vote in the 2008 Presidential Election.

In studying symbolic consumption, it is critical to take into account the dynamic nature of the self-concept. Girls adjust their props and costumes to mirror the characters they want to display. For instance, a teenager who once enjoyed shopping at Justice, a fashion retailer catering to young girls, may now view the store as immature and childish, as she takes on a more mature identity. The store itself does not change, but her evaluation of the store changes to reflect her emerging identity. In this way, girls are torn between their past childhood selves and their emerging adult selves. Their mobile uploads reflect this state of liminality. For example, many of the informants posted mobile photos of old photographs taken during childhood, thus incorporating their past selves into their emerging identities. Mobile upload albums reveal an oscillation between a childlike identity and a more mature, adult identity.

Alyssa (age 18, mobile upload): Alyssa posted a picture of chalk drawings that she and her boyfriend created on the sidewalk.

Alyssa (age 18, mobile upload): Alyssa posted a picture of herself carrying her 3-month-old nephew on her chest in a front-facing baby carrier.

Anne (age 15, mobile upload): Anne posted a picture of herself riding a rocking horse kiddie ride at Chuck E. Cheese.

Anne (age 15, mobile upload): Anne posted a picture of herself hanging upside down, suggestively wrapped around a metal firefighter-style pole.

In contemporary culture, the transition from childhood to adulthood is not instantaneous; thus, as evident in the previous examples, teenagers fluctuate back and forth between a youthful, past identity and a mature, emerging identity.   Props and costumes are used to symbolically demonstrate these identity transformations. The transition from childhood to adulthood is largely marked by physical changes that adolescents experience as they go through puberty. Mobile uploading provides a platform for teens to instantly post evidence of their physical transformations (e.g., breast development). Teenagers post mobile photos on social networks to show off their developing bodies. For example, girls post pictures of themselves wearing cleavage revealing bathing suits and clothing. In this way, adolescents allow their online friends to partake in the transitional journey with them. Before, during, and after pictures remain posted so that the audience can easily watch the sequence of changes overtime. From a consumption perspective, physical enhancements such as tattoos, piercings, haircuts, surgeries, and hair coloring, are also shared through mobile photo uploading.   For example, when Anne dyed her hair for the first time, she posted several pictures, including a picture of the hair color aisle at Target, a photo of the box that she chose, and before, during, and after pictures of her hair. In particular, getting one's braces removed seems to be a significant physical transformation in adolescence.

Interviewer: I see here you got your braces removed. (In reference to before and after pictures of herself on the day that she got her braces removed.)

Krissy (age 17, interview): Finally! I was so excited.

Interviewer: How long did you have them?

Krissy (age 17, interview): Four years. I had to have two surgeries, spacers, an expander, tongue spurs, and rubber bands – basically everything but headgear. It was awful. I took this picture while I was still at the orthodontist. I got them off in June so we weren't in school and I wanted all my friends to see.

Mobile photo sharing allows teens to instantly share their symbolic consumption with a wider network of friends. In many cases, products serve as the impetus for uploading a photograph in the first place. The data reveal that girls feel more justified in uploading photographs in which they are posing with an object. Even the most seemingly mundane objects can be transformed into meaningful props, with which the girls can use in their identity performances.   Common props and costumes featured in adolescents' mobile uploads include awards (e.g., 4-H medal, pageant crown, MVP trophy) and achievements (e.g., earning a varsity letter, receiving a good report card), creative undertakings (e.g., playing guitar, baking a cake, practicing new make-up techniques, drawing a comic strip), cultural collectibles or celebrity promotions (e.g., Sponge Bob Square Pants, Elmo, Justin Beiber) , food and beverages (e.g., McDonald's Happy Meal, Monster Energy Drink, specialty cupcakes) , and new or desired products and clothing (e.g., prom dress, nail polish). These props and costumes are used to symbolically convey one's identity while simultaneously drawing the attention back to the actor, in this case, the teenage girl posting the photograph.

Culturally situated social spaces. Given that teenagers are not yet adults considered adults, they have less freedom to explore new locales; thus, they interact within a fairly limited set of social spaces. Adolescent girls act out their identity performances within the boundaries of culturally situated social spaces, which are evident in their mobile uploads. Much of their time is restricted to day-to-day school interactions (e.g., classes, lunch breaks, athletic team practices). The data reveal that other venues of importance include retail environments (e.g., department stores, the mall), restaurants, entertainment settings (e.g., movie theatre, skating rink), community establishments (e.g., YMCA, church), and personal spaces (e.g., bedrooms, cars). Furthermore, dramatized shared identity performances appear to commonly take place in bathrooms – in school, at home, at the mall.

> **Krissy (age 17, interview):** We're not supposed to have our phones out during school but everyone does it anyway. Most of the teachers are cool with it as long as you're not like texting during class or trying to cheat, but everyone has their phones out at lunch and between classes. We're allowed to sit outside for lunch at the picnic tables but if it's raining, me and my best friend always go pose for pictures in the bathroom mirror. It's just something fun to do because school is so freaking boring.

As evident in the previous quote, bathrooms play a particularly important role in setting the stage for mobile uploading among girls. A bathroom is a venue of choice given its relative level of privacy and its presence of mirrors. Mirrors and other reflective surfaces (e.g., Christmas ornaments, chrome automobile accents) appear to be a key component in the mobile uploading process, and importantly, mirrors physically reflect an individual's identity. In addition to inner identity transitions, adolescence is a period of immense physical transformation. As mentioned in the previous section, teenage girls embark on the often tumultuous and uncertain experience of puberty in which their bodies develop adult attributes. Mirrors allow girls to explore their physical self-images.

> **Interviewer:** Tell me a little about this picture.
> **Sherie (age 16, interview):** My friends were spending the night and we put on a ton of crazy make-up, like bright blue eyeshadow and stuff. Then we just decided to dress up in kind of, like, skimpy outfits and have a mini-photo shoot. We like to pretend we're on America's Next Top Model, so we do all these crazy poses and stuff.
> **Interviewer:** Where were you in this picture?
> **Sherie (age 16, interview):** We were in the bathroom. We took the picture in there so we could all see ourselves in the mirror. We took some in my bedroom mirror too, but I don't think I posted those.

As Sherie suggests, she and her friends enact adult consumption practices such as wearing make-up and donning more revealing clothing. Moreover, by taking the photos in the bathroom, they can see their reflections in the mirror, allowing themselves to actively dramatize their facial expressions and poses. Dressing rooms, like bathrooms, are common locale in which teenagers directly dramatize their consumption experiences, likely due to the prevalence of mirrors and the opportunity to experiment with new identities.

> **Interviewer:** These few pictures seem to be at the same place. Tell me a little about them.

Anne (age 15, interview): My friend Lindsay and I were in the dressing room at Charlotte Russe, trying to find something to wear to the Katy Perry concert. I tried on this purple leopard tube top thing, but we couldn't decide if it was supposed to be a shirt or a dress.
Interviewer: Who made the comment on this picture? (In reference to the comment: "put that tongue back in your mouth..wearing a skimpy thing like that !!")
Anne (age 15, interview): My dad. He's dumb. He would die if I wore that out in public.
Interviewer: So, I take it you didn't buy that outfit for the concert?
Anne (age 15, interview): God no! We were just trying stuff on for fun. We ended up making our t-shirts for the concert – they were amazing!

Interestingly, like Anne, many girls do not end up purchasing the items that try on or use in their mobile uploads. In this way, they can "try on" identities (e.g., try on a skimpy outfit, try on athletic gear) without actually committing each possible role. Anne was able to try on an outfit that she ordinarily would not wear. She then received feedback from others (i.e., her dad) and did not purchase the outfit. Instead, she selected to create a new t-shirt and wear shorts from her existing wardrobe, representative of maintaining her existing self-conception. Interestingly, although Anne recognizes her father's disapproval of wearing revealing clothing in public, she essentially circumvents this rule by posting it to her Facebook page where all of her friends can view it. Instead of telling his daughter to remove the picture, Anne's father partakes in dramatizing the consumption experience by posting a comment on the photo.

Facebook provides a platform upon which girls can discuss their experiences, share consumption activities, and negotiate their identities. Mobile photographs taken in the marketplace can spark brand discussions and word-of-mouth among adolescent consumers. For example, in the following dialogue posted on one of Caitlin's mobile uploads, Caitlin and Sarah discuss their retail store preferences and shopping behaviors. Furthermore, Caitlin's Facebook friends can witness the interaction in real-time as it unfolds; thus, the conversation becomes privy to a wider audience than would ordinarily be included in traditional face-to-face communication.

> **Caitlin (age 16, mobile upload):** Caitlin stands in dressing room wearing a casual sundress. (July 11, 2010)
> > **(caption):** New fav dress. (:
> > **(comments):**
> > Callie: cute dress(:
> > Brent: Beautiful dress
> > Tori: this is cute! (:
> > Sarah: i love ur dress!! :)
> > Caitlin: thanks! i do too! it's pretty great. haha. (:
> > Sarah: ha no prob. where did u get it?
> > Catlin: Aerie, in the mall of ga. (:
> > Sarah: cool cool!! yea i love that store lol.. i have to go to mall of ga to get my new ipod wendsday :)
> > Caitlin: i do too! i love american eagle also. they're basically the same. haha. that's cool.
> > Sarah: ha yea same here..but i loooove Hollister
> > Caitlin: haha, i bet. i just love the mall in general. (:
> > Sarah: i just wish they werent so expensive :/..but ha same here..i kinda like mall of ga better tho,its bigger lol :)

Caitlin: that's what i meant. haha. they have every store you could think of. haha.
Sarah: for real lol..just think about how big the mall of america must be..haha we should go there!!
Caitlin: oh honey! i'd have a major heart attack if i went there! hahah. we could totally take a road trip it. (:
Sarah: haha same here!! and yes we definately could :)
Caitlin: it really would be fun! when i turn 18, we should definitely try and go!

Finally, vacations (e.g., spring break, field trips), destinations (e.g., amusement park, college football game, concerts), and significant events (e.g., prom, 16th birthday, graduation) appear to prompt an increase in mobile uploads. These ritualized events and novel places embody the exciting, potential identities to which teenagers may ascribe, opposite of the mundane, day-to-day identities to which they are accustomed.

Identity-Oriented Motives for Mobile Photo Sharing

Audience feedback. Girls are motivated to take part in mobile photo sharing because it carries an element of instant gratification – the audience can weigh in on the uploaded photograph as soon as it is posted. For instance, Karley posted pictures of her new pet pig and invited her friends to suggest names for him. Prior to the advent of camera phones and social media, personal photographs were printed as hardcopies and placed in photo albums. Today's youth are growing up in a period in which consumption experiences can be shared with their network of friends as the experience progresses. From vacations and concerts to slumber parties and prom dress shopping, a wide range of consumption experiences are shared with a wider network of friends through social media. As such, teenager girls choose their mobile uploads purposefully, in anticipation of audience feedback, both positive and negative. Humor plays an evident role in mobile photo sharing. Teenagers upload pictures that they hope will be deemed entertaining and funny among friends. For example, Krissy posted a photo of a classmate drooling while asleep in class. She included a caption that mocked the classmate and encouraged her online friends to join in on the conversation. A camera in hand grants the young photographer an opportunity to be a cultural critic, at the expense of others.

> **Heather (age 16, interview):** I just take pictures of random people and funny stuff that I see. Did you see the one I posted of the mullet man at Wal-mart? I still laugh every time I look at it. I got a little worried after I uploaded it though, 'cause I thought maybe he'd come hunt me down and attack me. I post a lot of embarrassing pictures of my friends too. They sometimes get pissed about it but I figure they can untag themselves if they want.

Mobile photo sharing grants the photographer immense social power. As Heather suggests, she not only critiques the shortcomings of strangers, she also sets out to embarrass her friends. Interestingly, although some of his friends respond with cries to remove the incriminating photos, none of them "untag" themselves, as she suggests they could. Thus, from the adolescent perspective, all publicity is good publicity. In fact, Heather continued in her interview to say that she and her friends make a point of trying to upload embarrassing pictures of each other—particularly of the opposite sex. In this way, mobile uploading provides a method of flirtation. Moreover, through the comment feature on Facebook, teens are provided with a platform through which to publicly voice their ridicule of one another and their condemnation of certain products and services. This supports previous research that finds peer ridicule to be a key factor in shaping adolescents' consumption norms, social identities, and

brand preferences (Wooten, 1996). Facebook is a social network in which users can communicate back and forth. By posting a photograph, the floor is open to critiques. For example, in her interview, Claire talks about a picture that she posted of herself in a bikini, which prompted a negative response (i.e., "eww, gross.") from a "friend" and subsequent back and forth online comments between the two of them.

> **Interviewer:** I see here on this photo that you seemed to kind of get into an argument with a friend. What happened?
>
> **Claire (age 15, interview):** Honestly, that girl was just jealous because I'm prettier than she is. She has some kind of secret problem with me and I am not all about playing those smart ass sarcastic Facebook games so I deleted her after that. [Torie clicks through to a mobile upload photo of a Facebook screen shot.] See, I left her this message before I deleted her, then I uploaded a picture of it because I knew she'd delete it. [The message reads: "before i delete you, i thought i'd leave you a little message. i have never met anyone with the amount of immaturity you possess. you are a cruel, mean, manipulative girl. you use people and me. i appreciate that little comment you left me when you thought it was okay to blow up facebook talking shit. look in a mirror. being a fake bitch won't get you anywhere in life. i know this comment will be deleted as soon as i press share because you have the balls to talk big when I can't see, but you can't take a dose of your own medicine. have a nice life "princess" and don't ever contact me again. xoxoxo :D" (sic)]

Claire may have been hoping for positive feedback on her photograph. Instead, the picture stirred social drama. By posting photographs online, girls open the forum for others to discuss and comment on the pictures. Some girls even explicitly ask for feedback. For the most part, audience feedback on teens' mobile uploads are positive and reaffirming.

> **Kenlyn (age 16, mobile upload):** Ellen posted a picture of herself trying on a long red evening gown.
>
> > **(caption):** "Ahhh! i felt like a princess in this dress... and i LOVED it! ❤️
> >
> > **(comments):**
> > Dawn: Awwwwwww girl u r beautiful!
> > Lizzy: work it :)
> > Sarah: Hot stuff!!! haha what is this dress for?!?!!?!?!?
> > Tyler: DAMN
> > Keeley: your soo pretty! im jealouss! :(
> > Brittany: OH EM GEE! [Ellen] this dress is GORGEOUS!
> > Ellen: dawn: thanks sweetie!!! love yaaa! ❤️
> >   lizzy: OH YEAHHH! (:
> >   sarah: thankssss... and i was just trying them on. lol.
> >   tyler: thankkksss! (;
> >   kenzie: awwwwh... thankss! you're pretty too! (:
> >   brittani: haa. thankssss! :D
> >   renee: awwwwh. thanks sweet peaa! ❤️
> > Dawn: anytime babe:D love ya too
> > James: Anslee has a nice boo-tay ;) haha
> > Ellen: haha... you would say that! thanks James.
> > Keeley: Awwh thanks [ellen](:

Ellen: you're welcome sweetieee! (:

When asked about this photograph, Ellen mentioned that she and all of her friends, meaning her Facebook friends, loved the dress. She expanded her already positive opinion of the dress to include the others' feedback, which resulted in increased desire for the dress. Teenage girls post mobile uploads with the expressed intention of getting feedback from their friends. Moreover, this feedback loop appears to be reciprocal. As in Kenlyn's case, she thanked and complimented those that complimented her, whereas Claire struck back against the friend that disparaged her.

Memory manufacturing. The data suggest that girls act out identity performances with the intention of creating memories – deliberately and purposefully. They foresee memories in the making. In other words, they create experiences for which they are already anticipating nostalgic feelings. By posting a photograph of a shared consumption experience, the individuals involved can immediately revel in the memory. Mobile uploads are typically uploaded immediately after the photographs are captured; in fact, evidence from the interviews suggests that photographs shared through mobile uploads on Facebook are taken for the sole purpose of uploading. In other words, the picture is taken with the deliberate motive of sharing it on the social network. Thus, to an extent, these capture "memories" are manufactured and mediated through technology.

> **Anne (age 15, interview):** We about got kicked out of Party City the other day because we were putting on all the Halloween costume stuff they have in the back and the manager lady came back and yelled at us and told us that we need to stop treating the store like a playground. We just laughed. It was really funny.
> **Interviewer:** Were you shopping for a costume?
> **Anne (age 15, interview):** No. We had went over there to Old Navy and Rue 21 to look for clothes but we had to wait on my mom to come pick us up so we thought it would be funny to go take pictures of us dressed up at the party store.

As Anne suggests, the desire to take photographs was an initial impetus for the consumption experience. Mobile upload albums on Facebook act as instant scrapbooks, documenting the adolescents' idealized experiences. The data reveal that very few mobile uploads depicting negative events. Rather, nearly all of the photographs show pleasant and enjoyable experiences.

> **Jayma (age 15, interview):** In middle school, I guess was in the preppy group or whatever, but when I started high school, all my friends started hanging out with Seniors and going to parties and doing drugs and stuff. So I stopped hanging out with them as much, because I wanted to be good, but they are forever posting pictures of stuff they do together, and it's just kind of annoying to have to see it on Facebook 'cause you're like, "Oh awesome, all of my friends are at the mall without me. Thanks for the invite, guys." So yea, seeing other people's pictures, of like what they're doing, sometimes makes me frustrated because you realize that you were left out.
> **Interviewer:** Well, it seems like you are having a lot of fun in your pictures.
> **Jayma (age 15, interview):** I mean, I'm not going to post some picture of me like sitting at home alone, crying in a corner or something. I'm not that emo [slang: emotional]. I don't really care if they don't invite me, I just feel like—well really this one girl in particular, always posts pictures of all of them going to the movies or out to eat or something and I think she just does it on purpose sometimes.

Teenage girls desire to be portrayed as fun and exciting. To an extent, mobile uploads become a competition in which teens try to make their individual lives seem the most appealing, relative to their peers. It is worth noting that teens appear to be more likely to post negatively charged status updates (e.g., "fml" [slang: fuck my life]) on Facebook than they are to post negatively charged mobile photos. In general, the memories depicted in mobile uploads reflect generally happy and fun-loving adolescents. These photographs are almost immediately used to collectively reflect on teens' shared experiences (e.g., commenting on the picture, viewing the photo online). The girls reminisce about a moment captured in a photograph and develop a narrative only understood by those who were involved in the photograph. In this way, teenage girls upload mobile photographs to preserve their histories, to share their stories, to visually demonstrate their ideal identities, and to entertain their friends.

Relational reassurance. Relationships are paramount in adolescence. Peers and parents serve as the primary socialization agents in teenagers' lives. Mobile uploads are a reflection of these relationships. For example, Paige has a mobile upload album almost entirely devoted to her best friend. Moreover, teens' online friends comment with reaffirming statements (e.g., "i love us!" "OMG!!! we are soooo awesome :)" "don't lie. you love me.") Mobile uploading allows teenagers to demonstrate the level of closeness they share with other individuals. Girls not only post pictures of the people who are important in their lives, but also of artifacts that represent those relationships (e.g., love notes, Valentine's Day gifts, matching best friend bracelets). Relationships are reaffirmed by posting pictures and commenting on them.

> **Kenlyn (age 16, mobile upload):** Karley uploaded in photo in which she and six of her friends are piled on top of one another on a small couch.
>> **(caption):** "❤️❤️❤️"
>> **(comments):**
>> Ashley: Tim's face is a little too close to my crotch area haha and his tongue is out which makes it so much worse
>> Tim: omg only you would notice that u dirty hoebag jk
>> Tim: and ur wearin my hat fool
>> Ashley: Haha of course cause your nearest to me.....it's okay though we are besties so I can wear your hat:)
>> Tim: ur right i totally forgot about that ur right lol but this is the snuggle train
>> Ashley: Hahaha If That's What You Call It
>> Tim: that is the cuddle train lol
>> Ashley: Hahah Okay Hooker Now Text Me Back!!
>> Tim: ok you dirty whore lol
>> John: CUDDLE TRAIN!!!!!!!!!!!!!! hell to the yeah
>> Kristen: ohh we all look so cute! :)

Interestingly, all of the above comments were posted the day after the photograph was uploaded, which supports the previous motive of manufactured memories. In this way, the teens immediately turned to Facebook to relive the events of the previous night and continue their bonding experience. Also, only individuals present in the photograph made comments on the picture; thus, the friends are reaffirming their social identity. The picture is important to each of them as members of a social group. Like the "cuddle train" mentioned in the previous quote, physical closeness (e.g., hugging, cuddling,

kissing) documented in mobile uploads portrays the seriousness of relationships. This is particularly the case with romantic relationships, which begin to develop and take precedence during the adolescent years.

> **Interviewer:** Have you ever deleted one of your mobile upload albums?
> **Claire (age 15, interview):** No. Well not a whole album. I've deleted pictures before, like I posted a picture of my ex-boyfriend and I kissing and my mom made me take it down because she said it was "inappropriate," since I'm friends with a lot of my relatives on Facebook. She said she didn't want my Grandma seeing a picture of me making out. It really didn't matter anyway because we broke up like a week later so I deleted all of the pictures that I had posted of us together anyway. Guys get super jealous if you have pictures of old boyfriends and stuff on your Facebook, so you have to be careful what you leave up. It's stupid.

> **Ellen (age 18, interview):** I was looking at this guy's profile and I see he still has pictures of him and his ex. I thought, "Hmm, okay. Why are they still there?" I'm not his girlfriend. We are only talking, so I can't really say anything, but if they have broken up, I don't really understand what he is holding onto.

Adolescence is a period in which young girls commonly begin to explore their sexualities, and, in a sense, teenagers use mobile uploading as currency in relationships. The frequency of appearance and nature of the content demonstrate how meaningful the relationship is. When the relationship ends, mobile uploads can be symbolically dissolved as well. From family and friends to love interests and even pets, mobile uploads reflect the significant relationships in a teenage girl's life. In and of itself, mobile uploading can establish the positive status of a given relationship, and relational bonds are solidified through commenting on the uploaded photograph.

Bounded rebellion. Mobile uploading allows teenage girls an opportunity to test the waters of risk-taking and rebellion. Although Facebook began as a venture targeted toward college students, it now caters to a wider market of consumers. All of the informants said at least one of their parents were friends with them on Facebook, and many of them were friends with aunts, uncles, grandparents, school faculty, church pastors, coaches, and other adults; thus, today's young girls construct and deconstruct their identities in full view both their parents and their peers. Sometimes they seek approval from authority and sometimes they rebel against it. Mobile uploading provides a platform upon which teens can act out rebellion within certain boundaries. For instance, teens use promotional products, such as a Marlboro hat or a Bud Light t-shirt, to symbolically represent their risky consumption behaviors.

> **Ellen (age 18, mobile upload):** Ellen posted a picture of herself and her friends in the beer and alcohol aisle of the supermarket, despite being under the legal drinking age.

> **Claire (age 15, mobile upload):** Claire posted a picture of the digital clock in her as it read 4:20, which refers to the to the cannabis consumption subculture.

> **Alyssa (age 18, mobile upload):** Alyssa posted a picture of her friend playing Nintendo DS under the desk during their chemistry class.

Uploading photographs in which teenagers toe the line of rebellion allows them to experiment with their identities through bounded risk-taking. Madison posted a picture of herself and a friend standing

next to a restaurant sign, which read "Now serving beer!" The photograph caption states, "Calm down, Mom. We are just kidding (sort of)." When asked about the photograph, Courtney said that she just likes "to mess with" her parents. In fact, her dad commented on the photograph, saying "ye root beer, ha ha." As in Madison's case, mobile uploading through social network sites may provide opportunity for parents and other adult role models to communicate with young people about their risky consumption behaviors. The social network site provides a captive audience for teens to perform their risky consumption behaviors and receive positive or negative feedback from their web of friends.

DISCUSSION

Drawing on previous research on adolescent identity and social media, the findings of this study provide a better understanding of the characteristics of and motivations for mobile photo sharing among adolescent girls. The social network site (e.g., Facebook) provides a platform upon which teens can publicly negotiate their identities through the mediated interface of the internet. They engage in deliberate self-presentation, they symbolically portray their identities through consumption, and they capture the photographs in meaningful social spaces. The data reveal that teen girls actively take part in partake in mobile photo sharing in order to gain audience feedback, manufacture memories, reaffirm relationships, and rebel within boundaries. The present study builds upon and extends previous research on adolescent identity and consumer behavior by identifying the process by which adolescents negotiate their identities through mobile uploading and the underlying motives for doing so.

The findings from this study lend support to the notion that ubiquitous technology and social media are fundamentally affecting the ways by which adolescent consumers interact in the marketplace. Social spaces that are traditionally thought of as private (e.g., bathrooms, bedrooms, dressing rooms) are willingly made public by teenagers eager to share their consumption experiences with their online friends. Young girls are using social media to gain feedback from their peers, and as evident in the findings, even from their parents. From an identity development perspective, adolescence is traditionally a period of life in which individuals begin to separate themselves from their parents and family and develop an identity that is more in line with that of their peers. This new age of mediated communication is creating a convergence of traditionally separate social groups. For instance, a teen girl may be Facebook "friends" with a wide range of individuals from varying social groups – her mom, her best friend from school, her science teacher, her soccer coach, her friend from summer camp, her pastor. The traditional view of identity suggests that individuals will take on different identity characteristics depending upon their social setting; however, with all of their social groups converging online, teens who engage in mobile uploading through Facebook show evidence of using the Facebook platform to test run identities regardless of the varied audience. In this way, Facebook provides a "one stop shop" for identity feedback.

Consumption plays a key role in this online identity development process. Mobile uploading often takes place in marketplace settings (e.g., retail stores, restaurants) and consumer products serve as the justification or pretext for taking and sharing mobile photos. In this way, identity development on Facebook is performative in nature. For instance, a girl can try on a pair of high heel shoes at the store with the sole intention of taking a picture of the experience to share with her Facebook friends. Thus, the girl uses the product to create a memory of the experience without committing to the purchase of the product. It is important for marketers and retailers to understand how adolescents are interacting with their products for the purpose of identity construction in this new mobile marketplace. From a marketing perspective, if adolescents are simply using the marketplace as a stage upon which

they can perform their identities through photo sharing a challenge becomes whether or not to embrace the trend (e.g., encourage and provide photo sharing opportunities) or attempt to circumvent it (e.g., prevent in-store photography).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study represents a beginning understanding of how adolescent consumers use social media to construct their identities. Online photo sharing is only one tool with which adolescents can create, edit, and negotiate their identities. Future research should examine how other social media tools may be different or similar to online photo sharing in the context of identity development. Furthermore, although this study focused primarily on adolescent girls, that is not to say that boys do not use mobile photo sharing at all. Although they likely use it to a lesser degree, the nature of their use may differ; thus, future studies should explore gender differences, and on a similar note, age differences (e.g., early adolescents vs. emerging adults). Finally, given the transitional nature of identity over time, a longitudinal study is an imperative next step toward understanding how adolescents use online social media to negotiate their identities and to exploring the role of consumption and consumer products in this process.