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# Children and New Media: Youth Media Participation. A Case Study of Egypt and Finland

Niños y nuevos medios: estudios de caso en Egipto y en Finlandia

## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on a single case study; the first findings of a qualitative part of the Youth Media Participation (YMP) project in Argentina, Egypt, Finland and India (2009-11) on 10-18 year-old children's participation through media. Youth Media Participation is funded by the Academy of Finland (2009-11). It collects and analyses three kinds of data from children and young adults; 1) focused interviews collected in Egypt, India and Finland (24 in each country), 2) a questionnaire for statistical data collected from Argentina, Egypt, India and Finland (1,200 in each country, N: 4,800) and 3) media diaries for a separate publication about «One Day of Media» (100 collected in Argentina, Egypt, India, Finland and Kenya, N: 500). The purpose was to undertake an exploratory study to find new ways to approach research questions on children's participation through media in different countries. The YMP project was launched with focused interviews in Finland and Egypt. This paper focuses on the qualitative, explorative part of the project: the focused interviews that were used to test the original research questions, to explore the many forms of media participation, and to create the questionnaire needed in further research. The project aims at enhancing our understanding of media literacy and its connections to media participation and civic activity.

## RESUMEN

El artículo recoge un estudio de caso único sobre los primeros resultados del análisis cualitativo del proyecto PJM (Youth Media Participation), desarrollado en Argentina, Egipto, Finlandia e India. PJM es apoyado por la Academia de Finlandia (2009-11). Se analizan tres tipos de información provenientes de niños y jóvenes: entrevistas focalizadas en Egipto, India y Finlandia (24 en cada país); cuestionarios para recolección de datos estadísticos de Argentina, Egipto, India y Finlandia (1.200 por país, 4.800 totales); y diarios de medios para una publicación adicional sobre «Un día de medios» (500 totales, 100 obtenidos en Argentina, Egipto, India, Finlandia y Kenia respectivamente). Se indagaba, mediante el estudio exploratorio, nuevos enfoques a preguntas de investigación sobre la participación de niños de distintos países en medios. El proyecto PJM se inició con entrevistas focalizadas en Finlandia y Egipto. Este artículo se centra en la parte cualitativa y exploratoria del proyecto: entrevistas focalizadas para ratificar las preguntas originales de investigación, explorar múltiples formas de participación mediática y crear el cuestionario necesario para investigaciones posteriores. El proyecto busca mejorar nuestra comprensión de la alfabetización mediática y sus vínculos con la participación en los medios y actividad cívica.

## KEYWORDS / PALABRAS CLAVE

Media literacy, new media, children, civic, participation, interviews, youth.  
Alfabetización mediática, medios, niños, actividad cívica, participación.

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## 1. Introduction

This article examines the first findings of the focused interviews on 10-18 year-old children's participation through media, held in Egypt and Finland, in the Youth Media Participation (YMP, 2009-11) project. The YMP project includes Argentina, Egypt, Finland and India (2009-11). It collects and analyses three kinds of data from children and young adults; 1) Focused interviews collected in Egypt, India and Finland (24 in each country); 2) A questionnaire for statistical data collected in Argentina, Egypt, India and Finland (1200 in each country, N: 4800) and 3) media diaries for a separate publication about One Day of Media (100 collected in Argentina, Egypt, India, Finland and Kenya, N: 500). This article focuses on part 1; the first results of the explorative focused interviews that were used to test the original research questions.

1) What kinds of common features and differences can be found in youth media participation –and non-participation– internationally, especially regarding Western and developing countries?

2) What kinds of prerequisites, possibilities and challenges are young people facing in their position as agents in relation to media in different regions of the world?

3) What kinds of media literacies are young people practicing and developing in different regions of the world? (Kotilainen, 2010).

The contemporary uses of media vary greatly, especially among children. Unlike radio, the new media provide more than one-way communication. Youth citizenship may be supported through media literacy education projects involving media production, media publicity and pedagogy understood as a learning community. The converging media offer local and global venues, networks and ways of productivity in civic activity on an unprecedented scale (Carlsson, 2009; Kotilainen, 2009; Jenkins, 2006a). We analysed the focused interviews of the YMP project through this background. This article is limited to analyzing the preliminary results from Egypt and Finland, to test the forthcoming comparative analysis of the interviews from India, Egypt and Finland.

## 2. The countries: Egypt and Finland

Finland and Egypt are geographically quite far from each other. They represent very different geographical areas, cultures, and mediascapes. The biggest Arab country, Egypt, with a population of over 80 million, lies mainly in North-Eastern Africa, with part of it in Asia. Finland has a population of 5.4 million

between Russia and Sweden in Northern Europe. Egypt's capital city Cairo has a population of 18 million; almost 95% of the population live on only 3% of land. The metropolitan area around Helsinki has nearly 1.3 million people; over 65% of the Finnish population live in cities.

In Egypt, the number of students in schools and universities is 17 million. Education is compulsory for all under 12-year-olds. Governmental schools provide education with low fees for children over 6 years of age. There are also privately owned schools. Expensive schools provide high-quality education, some following American, French, British or German educational systems and curricula. After 12 years of education, children receive the General Secondary School Certificate which is one of the qualifications for university admission.

In Finland, elementary and higher education is free for all. There are few, mostly religious private schools. School is obligatory for all children aged 7-16. The elementary levels (classes 1-9) provide the pupils with qualifications required for vocational school or upper secondary school. They provide students with eligibility to broader education, and higher education level, i.e. universities and polytechnics. Practically everyone has computer access; schools offer email-accounts and home pages for their pupils and libraries are free offering also Internet. The Finnish school system today provides rather equal learning opportunities, including special education, although inequalities are already apparent due to the latest political decisions. So far Finland has gained excellent results in the OECD countries' PISA tests (PISA, 2010). Almost 65% of Finns have completed their vocational or academic education, and many Finns hold multiple degrees (Statistics Finland, 2010).

## 3. Media in Egypt and Finland

Egypt has a wide range of governmental and private media. Egyptian Radio and Television Union, which is a part of the Ministry of Information, supervise radio and television broadcasting. There are three national TV channels, six local channels and some private TV channels. The national Channel Two broadcasts mainly in English and French, and serves for expatriates living in Egypt.

Generally speaking, viewers in the Arab World are exposed to a great number of TV channels. In addition to the land TV channels, there are 696 satellite channels; 97 are owned by governments, and 599 are privately owned. They broadcast through 17 satellites working in the Arab World (Media Committee,

2010). Of the governmental channels, 49 are general and 48 are specialized, whereas 161 of the private satellite channels are general and 438 specialized. Most channels broadcast in Arabic (76%) and English (20%). They also broadcast in other languages such as French, Persian, Spanish, Indian, Hebrew, and Urdu. Children in Egypt and other Arab countries are also exposed to satellite channels broadcasting from Europe, North America, and other parts of the world.

According to estimations regarding the new media, 58 million (nearly 75%) Egyptians have mobile phone services. The Internet reaches 65% of homes in Cairo and 40% of homes in other areas. Moreover, Internet access is provided by cafes in big cities.

There are seven radio networks people listen to all over the country. One of them, the Overseas Radio, broadcasts in more than 40 languages. In addition, there are local radio stations all over Egypt. There are also private radio stations (FM), which broadcast mainly popular music programmes favoured by young people.

Three important governmental publishing houses publish dozens of newspapers and magazines in Arabic, English, French and German. Newspapers are also numerous. It is estimated that there are more than 600 newspapers and magazines in Egypt (Higher Press Council, 2009). The publishing of private and partial newspapers is subject to the approval of the Higher Press Council, which is the regulatory organization for print media.

Egypt has a highly modern film industry, which plays in the Arab World a role similar to that of Hollywood in the West. Egyptian films and TV programmes are very popular all over the Arab World. Arab TV channels rely to a significant degree on these Egyptian programmes.

In Finland 70% of homes have broadband connections. Internet use is common in all age groups; almost 82% of people aged 16-84 have been online during the last three months. Still, traditional media have retained their popularity: 80% of people over 12 years of age read newspapers daily. Libraries, movies, and TV are still popular. There are 2.1 million library users, and 863 public libraries providing Internet con-

nections, databases, and services to all, free of charge. Most of the over 60 radio stations can be heard on the Internet. Everyone seems to have several mobile phones; there are 8.1 million mobiles in use in Finland.

Publishing and broadcasting in minority languages, especially Swedish, is supported by the Finnish government, but rarely in minority languages spoken by immigrants. Children's media use is regulated through special measures, such as age limits and scheduling. Children's programming is supported in all media. There are two state-owned TV channels, five other national and 10 commercial TV channels; many of their programmes are also available online. A variety of satellite and cable channels are available in most of the parts of the country. Over 200 newspapers and

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3300 magazines are published in the country. (Statistics Finland 2010)

The mere comparison of the media available in the two countries, the educational possibilities, including the national strategies of children and media and media literacy, reveal an unbalanced situation from which it is difficult to draw comparisons. Thus, at this point we aim to understand the complex mediascapes of children, and especially the differences between the countries when it comes to the media use of individuals.

#### 4. The Study Sample

The preliminary test interviews (Egypt: 14 children; Finland: 12 children) included children between 9-17 years of age from cities and rural areas, connected to art and media projects, and children with immigrant backgrounds. The final interviews, 24 in

each country were done in small groups (1-4 people) of 12-14 and 16-17 year old children. In practice, some older and younger children were also among the interviewees. The preliminary interviews were included in the analysis of the final data.

The final interviews. The total amount of the children in the final interviews was 85:

- Egypt: 24 interviews, 38 children; 19 boys (10 from the metropolitan, 9 from rural area); 19 girls (10 from the metropolitan, 9 from rural area)
- Finland: 24 interviews, 47 Children: 21 boys (8 from the metropolitan, 13 from rural area); 26 girls (12 from the metropolitan, 14 from rural area)

In Egypt Cairo represented the metropolitan area, Fayoum (100 kilometres south of Cairo) the rural area. All the interviews were carried out in homes, with the

In Finland most of the interviews were done next to a computer with Internet access. In Egypt that was done whenever possible. In Egypt, on average, each focused interview lasted for an hour. In Finland, the shortest interview lasted for half an hour, and the longest more than two hours, and the average length of the interviews was 1.5 hours. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

## 6. Methodology

The preliminary interviews were used for testing the focused interview as a method of approaching children about their participating through media. The final interviews used the tested strategy covering questions of media literacy and media participation through those interests. Focusing on the special interests, desires, needs, and activities seemed to bring up the most valid results in the preliminary interviews.

The focused interviews concentrated on all children's uses of media. The focused interview has proved successful for collecting qualitative data on every day practices (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990). The conversation can be carried out flexibly, thus giving space for unexpected themes or issues. This also offers possibilities for reaching

the deeper structures of the conversation as well as the meaning-making processes (values, identities, feelings and attitudes etc.). Practically, due to the explorative nature of the interviews the study embarked on 'grounded theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser & Holton, 2004). We aimed at coming up with 'rich description' (Geertz, 1973) that would help to create more specific questions for the questionnaire later in the research project.

Our analysis was multi-sited in nature (Marcus, 1995: 117) for describing research where spaces and landscapes are analyzed simultaneously in a larger social context. Multi-sited approach is useful when people from different socioeconomically classes, of different sex and gender, of different age group and in different social contexts are interviewed. Marcus (1995, 105-106) stresses the ability of multi-sited research to highlight the complex chains, paths, relations, and positions as well as the processes (Appadurai, 1990: 21-24) – in our case in the perso-

**Finnish results express the importance of the early accessibility and availability of media, also through schools and libraries. They also indicate the positive results of media education. The results hint at certain cultural differences within Finland – such as in the case of the children of immigrant families, and the special individual uses.**

consent of the parents. In Finland, Helsinki represented the metropolitan area, and the countryside of Northern Central Finland the rural area. The interviews took place mainly in schools, but also once in the private facilities of a public library and three times at home.

## 5. The procedure

In Egypt the interviews were carried out with the help of two PhD students from the Cairo University. In Finland one researcher conducted all the interviews.

The principles of the research were approved by the Academy of Finland, and the Ethical committee of the University of Jyväskylä. The consent forms to the administration, schools, parents, and children were created, and each country followed also its own procedure of administrative and ethical practices. The interviewees were informed about the tasks of the project, about anonymity and reporting practices and the voluntary nature of the interviews before the interview.

nal, social, global, and local media participation and its meaning-making processes.

Along the main issues coming up in the close reading, the data was classified into three main categories:

- Mediascape: access to the new media on a national level; how and in what quantity media were available, and also the frequency of media use.
- Socioscape: the larger contexts, and social aspects of media use.
- Genderscape: the possible differences in media use between girls and boys.

These aspects will form the starting point in the forthcoming final analysis of all interviews from Egypt, India and Finland. In this article, the main question in all the categories is the nature of media literacies of children different regions.

## 7. Findings

### 7.1. Mediascape

In the Cairo metropolitan area, the interviewed children had access to all media, except for one young boy (S, 9 years) who mainly had access to television and the Internet, and used his mother's or his grandmother's mobile phone to make calls. All interviewees had access to the Internet at home; their parents mainly use DSL connections, and also usually pay for all Internet use.

In the rural area, only one interviewed girl (F, 13 years) reportedly did not have a mobile phone, but she told getting one from her father after passing that year's exams: «I think I will need it then so that my parents can contact me and know where I am». One of the girls in Fayoum did not have a computer at home, but used Internet either in her friends' or relatives' houses. The other two interviewed girls had Internet access at home.

The children in the rural area used other traditional media, i.e. newspapers, magazines, television, and radio more than those in Cairo. In the rural area, television was more important for the interviewed children than any other medium. These support the findings of previous studies carried out on Egyptian children (Kamel, 1995; El Semary, 1995; El Sayed, 1996; Asran, 1998).

The frequent use of traditional media is normal for children in the rural areas, who do not have as many out-door activities as the Cairo children. Also this support the findings of previous studies (Tayie 2008). Age factor emerged as an important difference, with respect to children's uses of the new media. Younger children were more interested in games and being visible online. They saw this as a kind of prestige and

showing off. They also created more content online than the older children. Older children were mainly interested in listening to music, watching films and downloading them.

In Finland, children's main media uses in general have shifted rapidly during the last two decades from listening to radio and watching TV to gaming and using the Internet. Belonging to virtual communities and groups is usual; expanding the special skills starts early and is many times completely separated from the children's school identity; chatting, sending text messages and gaming area part of everyday life – as has been seen in national surveys (Kangas, Lundvall & Sintonen, 2007).

The interviews of Finnish children also show how fast media use has changed in general, on a national level. In 1997, 94% of Internet users used Google weekly. In our small sample, all children in 2010 practically used it daily. Indeed, spending time online throughout the day is a norm. Watching YouTube seems to have increased; however, uploading content to the service (in 1997 8% of the population) has stayed the same – just like in our small sample shows. Compared to the 1997 study, downloading movies (52% of the population) and TV programmes (45% of population) is very common now among our interviewees. Our Finnish interviewees –like Finns in general– clearly use the Internet more than people did on average in 1997. Our material also supports the recent study on children's active media use, which includes very young age groups (Kotilainen, 2011). Our interviewees seemed to have a clear notion of their own limits and dislikes concerning media use, especially about age limits or pornographic material in media. (Kangas, Lundvall & Sintonen, 2007).

It was to be expected that there are differences not only in media policies but also on the technological level of media influence, access and use of media in Egypt and Finland. The differences in media use between the rural and metropolitan areas in Egypt, and between different groups inside the metropolitan area in Finland, opened more complicated questions.

### 7.2. Socioscape

Social background was influential in the Egyptian children's access to and relationship with media. In our case, children from high-income families had access to all media, especially the new media. Some children from low-income families, as in the cases of girls interviewed in Fayoum (F, F and R), did not have access to the new media. They used newspapers and particularly TV more than children from high-income

families. Their preferred programmes were mainly religious and educational.

The parents of children from low-income families (for instance the girls from Fayoum) were more involved in their children's media use. The children also mentioned that they tend to discuss some contents of newspapers and magazines with their parents, mainly fathers.

The children from high income families talked more openly about many things, including the private and personal uses of mobile phones or Internet. However, it took the interviewers a bit of time to encourage the children to talk about personal matters. They did not mention sex or sexuality at all. Instead, children talked about having friends (boyfriends or girlfriends, but without mentioning sexual relationships). Children from low income families were less open in an interview situation and sometimes even very reserved compared to other interviewees.

In Finland, the availability of media was understandably good amongst all children due to schools and libraries. Old and new media, as well as social media, were part of their everyday lives through the day. Generally, their media use appeared quite similar to that described by the Egyptian children; many children followed some newspapers, practically all read several magazines. Almost all followed TV programmes and watched movies, some listened to music on the radio; everyone used more than one device for listening to music. In general, there were no clear divisions between girls and boys or children from rural and urban areas. However, a closer look at the uses of new media made it clear that there are big individual differences in Finland.

First of all, the age factor became crucial in our sample. Playing and learning by doing was a major factor at the age group of 10-year-olds and younger, and so was the social factor – playing with friends. Still, the children aged 11-13 used new media mainly for pleasure – for gaming and being in contact with friends and the family. In the interviews of the older children, especially from the age 14 onwards, the change from visibility to privacy, as well as gaining special skills becomes central. Young people gain pleasure from specialized media uses connected to one's own interests, such as making music videos for YouTube, collecting fashion items to a picture gallery, or arranging football fan info on a website. However, the social uses, the importance of communication, and the frequent use of mobile phones are prominent in all age categories also in Finland.

Secondly, the social factor made some difference

when the Finnish interviewees talked about owning or purchasing media. There were few examples of economic inequality; however, it did not follow the geographical distribution, but became visible when comparing the groups of children of immigrant families with others. The other clear distinction was a religious one: a certain evangelical wing of the Finnish Lutheran church prohibits all TV use. However, within this religious group children and young adults were allowed to watch movies, TV-series, or TV-programmes online, as did one of our interviewees.

Thirdly, in Finland there was a special aspect connected to families' social situations. This aspect of media use focused on reducing the distance between family members and relatives. This was apparent in two different situations: one is divorce (more than half of marriages end in divorce after c. 12 years) – the other the situation of the children of immigrant families. For them social media provides contacts to their own culture and relatives, but also a way of learning a new culture – 'doing a special identity work', as our interviewees called it. In Finland it has become common practice that children of divorced parents stay with both of their parents, for example on alternate weeks. In this situation social media provides a possibility and neutral place for contacts of old and new siblings and parents.

Fourthly, being a fan, or having particular hobbies seem to support participation in international networks, such as websites, groups or communities. Football fans – and especially the fans of Japanese popular culture – seemed to skip the national websites and go straight to the major English or Japanese sites. Also, gaming lowered the children's threshold of using international sites, supporting the learning and using of English. As Jenkins (2006a) has showed, joining international fan-based communities is clearly something worth following in national and international studies on children and media (Jenkins, 2006a; Hirsjärvi, 2010).

Surprisingly, according to the interviews of our sample, participation in Finland – in the traditional sense of the term – is not fostered through the media themselves, but locally, in everyday social worlds – at school or in community activities.

### 7.3. Genderscapes in media use

- Egyptian girls. Gender emerged as an important factor when comparing the media use of girls and boys in the rural area. In the urban area, no such striking gender differences emerged. However, the variation between the responses of the urban (Cairo) and rural (Fayoum) areas was remarkable.

In the urban area, both girls and boys frequently used the Internet, iPods, and mobile phones. Only one girl (I) claimed that she did not need a mobile phone; this was a matter of principle rather than an economical issue, as she is from a high-income family. All girls mentioned that they mainly used mobile phones to keep in touch with parents, relatives, and friends. The father paid the phone bills in all cases. Boys used the mobile phone more than girls; however, girls were more frequent Internet users.

Radio and newspapers were hardly used by this group of girls. All girls had email accounts. They also mentioned that they used the Internet to download music and movies. Friends were the main source of the information on media.

Among the traditional media, the interviewees mentioned television most often. This matches the findings of previous studies (Reda 1994; El Shal 1997; El Abd 1988). All girls had satellite receivers at home. The most popular TV programmes were mainly films and serials. One girl (I) also indicated that she liked programs which encourage viewers' participation, and added that she would like to see more programmes open for viewers' participation through landline, not just via mobile phones. This girl did have a mobile phone, but an anti-mobile phone attitude. One girl (M) preferred religious programs, which educate people on the basics of religion.

The girls in the metropolitan area could use new media without limitations, but watching TV at home was controlled. One girl (M) said that she herself avoids the programs that are not in tone with her culture and traditions (apparently programs dealing with sexual matters/relations).

When asked about their hopes or expectations concerning media, the girls said that they would like to see TV programs tailored for specific age groups, not just children and adults generally. The girls in rural areas indicated that they expected more serious and educational programmes, and more programs which reflect the reality in their own geographical area.

The girls from Cairo talked openly about their media uses, though at the beginning of the interviews they were reserved. However, girls from the rural

area were more cautious, and did not talk about private or personal matters. They used media for education and informative purposes, and they used mostly traditional media, especially television. Still, all except one had access to the Internet (F). Two girls (F & R) had mobile phones they had received recently.

Girls in the rural area used newspapers, magazines, and television more than the girls in Cairo. They also mentioned that in most cases they watch television with other members of the family, i.e. parents, brothers and sisters, and that they talk frequently about media contents with their parents. Conversely, the Cairo girls said they never talk with their parents about media contents.

- Boys. All, but especially Cairo boys were avid users of the new media. All boys from Cairo (10) had an Internet connection at home, paid by their parents.

**The differences of media uses were clearly not so much connected to the interviewee's sex but to the availability of the media, children's personal interests, and the support available on everyday media use and its purchasing. Similarly, boys and girls alike spent plenty of time on using media, including the Internet, and for both the mobile phone was the most important single medium.**

Internet was used mainly for gaming or chatting with friends, most commonly on Facebook and YouTube. One boy from the rural area (A) had had an Internet connection for only three months. Before that, he had used his friends' or relatives' web access.

The Internet was mainly used for chatting, especially among younger boys. Only one boy indicated that he went online to do his school assignments. Downloading programmes and films was common. One boy indicated that he watched downloaded films on TV. Facebook was the most visited website. All boys indicated that they had learnt about it and other websites from their friends. All boys except for one (S, 9 years) had mobile phones. S used his friends' or his grandmother's and mother's mobile phones. Boys from Cairo had owned and used mobile phones for many years, whereas the boys from the rural area had been using theirs for a shorter time.

The Cairo boys had state-of-the-art mobile phones, whereas the rural boys had older models. All Cairo boys indicated that they used the mobile phone on a daily basis and at any time of the day. Boys used mobile phones more than girls; however, they used the Internet less frequently.

All children in Cairo indicated that they used mobile phones during the breaks, though it was forbidden, telling that they put their phones on silent mode so that the teachers would not find out. Boys in the rural area said that they never took their mobile phones to school as it was forbidden.

Boys in Cairo used mobile phones for surfing the Internet. One boy even indicated that he always views films on his mobile phone. Boys in the rural area used the mobile phone only for making calls: «I use it only in cases of emergency, the mobile phone was meant to be used only for these cases».

The Cairo boys frequently used their mobile phones for messaging their friends. Even at home they never used landlines, preferring their mobile phones. Rural boys used SMS less and they used landline at home.

Boys in Cairo hardly mentioned newspapers, magazines, or even TV; in rural areas these media were frequently mentioned. Two boys from Fayoum told they usually watch television with the other family members. The Cairo boys usually watched TV alone, as all of them had TV sets in their own rooms.

All boys listened to radio. Cairo boys used radio and musical services on their mobiles. Boys in the rural area listened to radio at home, not on their mobile phones. They liked listening to religious, educational, and news programmes. All Cairo boys used the iPod, whereas boys in the rural area had never even heard about it.

In sum, the data indicates that in Egypt, the social and geographical factors emerged as important influences on children's new media literacy, their media use, and participation.

- Finland. In Finland there was striking equality in the access and ownership of media among the interviewed girls and boys. However some smaller differences were apparent in this sample. The IRC gallery, an online forum that is based on uploading one's pictures to a profile (it has also other qualities of social media, such as chat) was used more by girls than boys. Also use of social media and for example commenting on blogs or websites etc. was more common among girls.

Producing content for public sites was connected to special interests. Those few girls who were active fans of certain genre (fantasy, anime) were also very productive, like makers of anime music videos on

YouTube, writing and publishing fan fiction (fiction written about certain media texts, such as movies or TV series) and attending discussions on web pages. This supports the findings that fans of science fiction literature (Suoninen 2003, Hirsjärvi 2009) or fandom in general (Jenkins 2006a, 2006b) tend to be exceptionally active in their media use.

The gender factor became most apparent in the group of younger girls from immigrant families of the metropolitan area. In particular, only a group of four girls of the single interview had the least opportunities of influencing their purchase of media, and their media uses seemed to be more strictly supervised than those of the other Finnish children. Their competing with the quality and the style of mobile phones as well as the knowledge of using the media (especially social media) became evident during the interview.

The differences of media uses were clearly not so much connected to the interviewee's sex but to the availability of the media, children's personal interests, and the support available on everyday media use and its purchasing. Similarly, boys and girls alike spent plenty of time on using media, including the Internet, and for both the mobile phone was the most important single medium.

However, one particular gender factor came up in both preliminary and final interviews. The children interested in Japanese popular culture, especially anime, seemed to use media a versatile manner, such as writing fan fiction or creating fan pages of music videos. One 14-year-old interviewee talked about her identity work involved in seeking her lesbian identity. The questions of sex and gender came up also in other interviews in a very natural way.

- Media Budgets. All the girls in Cairo mentioned that they were allowed to use mobile phones, which were paid by their parents. The situation for boys was somewhat different. Three of them (in Cairo) were given a certain amount of credits (paid by their fathers); after those ran out, they bought prepaid credits with their pocket money. These children spent most of their pocket money on credits for their mobile phones, and for going out with their friends during the weekends. Two boys in Cairo were allowed unlimited credit, paid for by their fathers. The youngest boy (S) did not have a mobile phone, or any money for any other media.

Boys and girls from the rural area had limited mobile use, paid for by their fathers. They had what they called «controlled lines», meaning that they could use them only for speaking for a limited number of minutes per month. Newspapers and magazines were

mainly bought by their parents. In Finland parents usually supported the notion of buying children mobile phones. Certain limits were set, either by using pre-paid connections or by setting the limit that the parents would pay. It was usual that children got gadgets, games, or programmes as a reward for good school grades or for taking care of small chores at home. If they needed computer programmes –for example for creating websites– the children could find what they needed online. The interviewed children usually got the magazines they wanted, as well as books. However, as the children pointed out, the Finnish library system gave the interviewees equally access to the magazines and books they were interested in.

## 8. Conclusion

The results discussed above show clearly that media in Egypt –especially the Internet– set the agenda for children. The Internet provided them with conversation topics with peers and friends, and the social element of media use is important. Media was hardly used for educational purposes. The younger children were more active than the older ones in creating and producing online content. Moreover, there were traces of addiction for the new media among children.

Finnish results express the importance of the early accessibility and availability of media, also through schools and libraries. They also indicate the positive results of media education. The results hint at certain cultural differences within Finland – such as in the case of the children of immigrant families, and the special individual uses.

The deeper analyses of the interviews of all three countries are on the way. They shall also compare the meaning-making processes of media uses, identity work and participatory culture – especially in connection to the converging media (Jenkins 2006a, 2006b).

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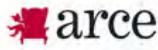


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