

Patterns of Media Use and Reflections on Media among young Danes

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Abstract

The present article examines cross-media use among 10- to 16-year-old Danish children and adolescents. Our research interest is in identifying and affirming patterns among media use, gender and age. Using a methodological design that combines qualitative and quantitative methods, we interviewed participants regarding their media use and paired our qualitative findings with quantitative rating inquiries generated from Danish commercial databases. Our results suggest that although cross-media use is complex and differs according to age and gender, media are often used for similar purposes, e.g., sustaining social relationships.

Keywords: cross-media use, children, adolescents, gender

Introduction

We examine the relationships between cross-media use and gender among 10- to 16-year-old Danes¹, beginning with theories of mediatization (Jensen 2013, Couldry & Hepp 2013) and the perception of media use as a domestic and integral part of everyday life (Couldry 2004, Hartmann 2013). In our consideration of these concepts, we study this field as an “open-ended range of practices” (Couldry 2004: 4). This mixed-methods approach combines an audience rating analysis on cross-media use with qualitative interviews concerning media preferences in an everyday social context².

Numerous studies on child and adolescent media use have focused on creative methods and media literacy (Buckingham 2005, Carlsson 2010, 2012; Olsson & Dahlgren 2010, Tingstad 2006, Sørensen 2000, Stald 2004). Drotner differentiates between broad and narrow media use (Drotner 2000) and defines digital practices as key competencies in the future lives of young people (Drotner 2008, 2010). Similarly, Erstad suggests that children’s digital literacy is crucially important in a complex media culture (Erstad 2010). The comprehensive *EU Kids Online* project asserts that the more tasks children perform online, the better the children’s skills are, and vice versa (Sonck et al. 2011). The methodological design of our study is inspired by the work of Buckingham and Gauntlett, who focus on young people’s everyday media cultures using creative methods (Buckingham 2009, Bragg & Buckingham 2008, Gauntlett 2005, 2011, 2013, Awan & Gauntlett 2013a, 2013b)³. The underlying discussion in the majority of studies is two-fold: viewing children as an exposed and vulnerable group of media users or as a group with special competencies, i.e., as ‘digital natives’ (Prensky 2001).

Although a significant amount of research exists regarding children, gender and media use, the topic of everyday cross-media use from a gender perspective has not been sufficiently researched. Therefore, the present study contributes to the literature by analysing media use across platforms such as television, radio, digital media and print media and by particularly considering the significance of gender. Our research questions are framed by the everyday cross-media preferences of Danish 10- to 16-year-old children and adolescents: What patterns can be found concerning media use, gender and age? How we can understand these patterns?

Research Design: Mixed Methods

We combined specific audience rating inquiries from commercial, single-media databases (*insgallup*, *gemiusAudience*)⁴ independently of media institutions, such as *DR* (Biggest Danish public Service Television and Radio) or *TV2* (Public Service and commercial Television), to obtain an overview of how many youngsters accessed each medium, at what time and for what duration. Despite the small size of the age-group samples, definite patterns emerged. To further develop and explain these patterns, we conducted 22 interviews in four Danish schools as follows: 12 focus groups and 10 in-depth individual interviews, which followed two pilot interviews in private homes (Olsen & Povlsen 2010)⁵. Gender differences were evident; thus, we primarily interviewed boys and girls separately.

The schools in the study consisted of private and public schools in urban, suburban, and rural locations. The schools included bilingual students, children from lower-income families, and wealthy middle-class students. Thus, our qualitative data cover a range of social and ethnic backgrounds.

During school hours, we interviewed a teacher-selected group of boys and a group of girls from the 4th and the 9th grades. The interviews were semi-structured (Halkier 2002, Kvale 2002, Morgan 1997) and included cooperative projects such as media co-production, i.e., collages made from print media by the younger children and media campaigns by the adolescents (Buckingham 2009, Thomson 2008, Gauntlett 2005). Discussions on taste, dislikes and daily practices spontaneously developed, prompted by our questions and the co-productions (Douglas 1996). Thus, our interview approach combined conversation and action with conversation as action (Schatzki 1996, Reckwitz 2002, Warde 2005).

Based on the authority structure that exists at schools, researchers have debated the use of school settings for studying children's media (Drotner 1991, McRobbie 1991). However, apart from ethnographic studies in families, no reasonable alternatives to observing children in school settings have been developed. Therefore, because children normally interact at school with their peers outside the family, we consider the interviews to have occurred in a 'normal' setting, allowing us to analyse the children's discussions while being interviewed and creating media co-productions. Furthermore, we chose to conduct an in-depth individual interview with one participant from each focus group, primarily examining use of the Internet. The interviews revealed that the participants had difficulty articulating – or remembering – what they actually do online; thus, we asked the participants to do what they usually do on a laptop (e.g. gaming, chatting etc.) while being interviewed. This approach produced new and unexpected results. To enable our qualitative results to be generalized, we combine them with results from the databases.

Television

When the 9th graders in the gender-divided focus groups were asked about their media routines and the previous day's media use, boys and girls responded differently. Therefore, to obtain an overview of the different media discussed in the groups, we registered all media texts, genres, and platforms that were mentioned during the interviews, listing them separately for boys and girls.

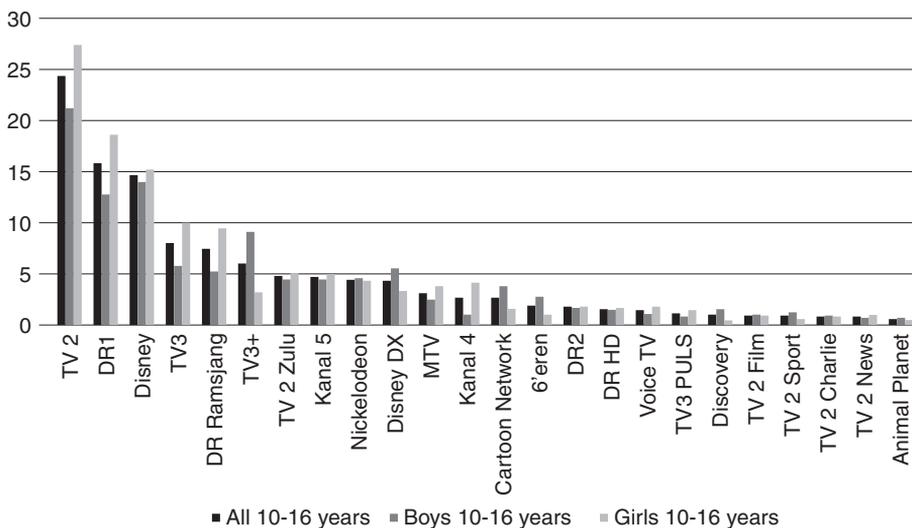
The girls mentioned several popular television channels, including public service channels and commercial channels targeting child or female viewers, whereas the boys noted a relatively large number of commercial niche channels and several full-scale public service channels.

The female students mentioned a substantial number of different programmes from a range of genres, particularly fiction and reality series, including documentaries, lifestyle programmes, weekend entertainment, etc. Conversely, the male students mentioned only a few genres and programmes, primarily sports, comedy, and reality. The distinctions between the genres, programmes, and channels discussed separately among the boys and the girls were clear; thus, we examined the available quantitative data for similarities and differences.

To create samples large enough for statistically valid analyses, we examined statistical data for 10- to 16-year-old girls and boys without subdividing them by age. In 2011, Danish boys watched an average of 122 minutes of television per day, whereas Danish girls averaged 133 minutes. Although the girls watched slightly more television than the boys did, the entire group of 10- to 16-year-olds watched significantly less television than the average Dane, who watched 198 minutes of television per day.

To determine which channels, genres and types of programmes the boys and girls chose, we analysed the viewer shares of different channels. The diagram below illustrates the dispersion of girls and boys across the different channels.

Table 1. *Television – the Dispersion of 10- to 16-year-olds' Viewing Time on Danish TV Channels*



Source: Gallup TV-Meter, 2011.

The full-scale public service channels *TV2* and *DR1* and *The Disney Channel* are the most frequently watched channels among 10- to 16-year-old students. More girls than boys watch *TV2*, *DR1*, *TV3* (commercial), *DR Ramasjang* (children), and *Channel 4* (women's commercial). In comparison, boys watch more *3+* (commercial), *Disney XD*, *Cartoon Network*, *Channel 6* (men's channel), and *The Discovery Channel*. These channels screen sports (*3+*), cartoons, and science/technology (*Channel 6* and *The Discovery Channel*). Thus, the children and adolescents reaffirm gender stereotypes regarding television preferences: girls watch full-scale channels, whereas boys watch channels with sports, cartoons and science.

Most-watched Television Programmes Over the Year and during one Week

To focus on specific programmes that were popular among 10- to 16-year-olds, we used the 2011 *TNS Gallup* television database to create a list of programmes with the largest audiences of boys and girls for that year.

Large sporting events such as the *World Football Championship* and the *European Football Championship* attracted a significant proportion of young male viewers; notably, sports appeared three times in the top-10 list for boys, and two further sports programmes appeared in the top-20 list. Also present on the top-20 list were *Christmas calendars*⁶ and the talent show *X Factor*. These programmes feature specific events or are broadcast during specific seasons of the year. Christmas calendars and talent shows also appeared on the top-10 list for the girls' television viewing. Girls watched more full-scale television and entertainment, with sports as the only exception. The most popular programmes were viewed by nearly half of the girls, whereas less than one-third of the boys watched the same shows.

This tendency applies to the programmes that we refer to as "blockbusters": the best-rated programmes throughout the year for this age group. To obtain a picture of television viewing as an everyday activity, we conducted a data inquiry for an average week in 2011⁷.

Girls generally clustered around specific programmes, whereas boys appeared to be more differentiated in their choices. Sports programmes did not appear among the 10 most popular programmes watched by boys during the selected week in 2011. However, the absence of sport programmes from the most popular programmes among boys is explained by the simple fact that no major sports event was broadcast that week. Notably, watching news programmes was popular among boys. In an ordinary week, girls watched more television entertainment than boys did, whereas boys watched more news programmes than girls did.

We found an incongruity in this area: although the boys discussed sports in the interviews, the quantitative inquiry indicated that boys did not spend a significant amount of time watching sports programmes on television. Conversely, although the boys did not discuss many news programmes, this type of programme was among the most popular during a normal week.

We understand this incongruity to be a consequence of using media talk as a form of social bonding that is gender-specific for boys. Thus, we attribute the result to gender performance in single-gender focus groups (Butler 1990, 1993), an approach that often

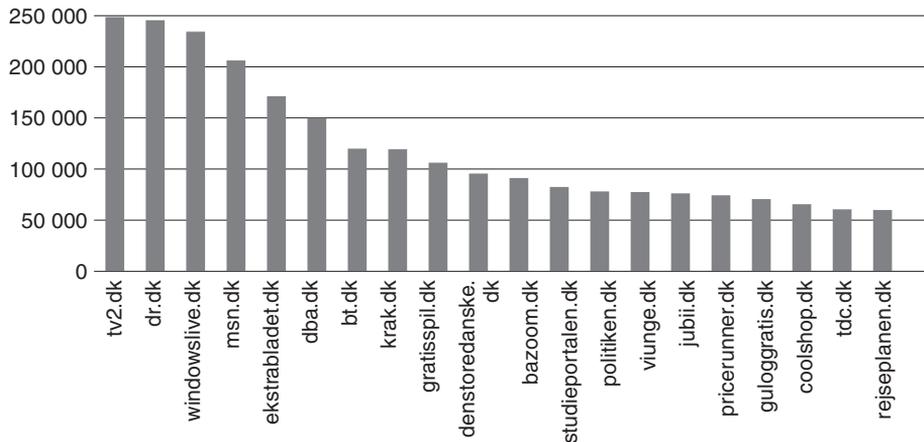
generates consensus among participants (Morgan 1997). Hence, sports appear to be part of ‘appropriate’ male gender performance among boys. With regard to news programmes, the opposite pattern is obvious: whereas the boys do not frequently discuss the news, the girls do tend to discuss it.

Websites

The quantitative data on the use of websites in Denmark (*gemiusAudience*) cover only the largest websites; in other words, the “long tail” of niche website use is invisible (Anderson 2009). The database *gemiusAudience* indicates the amount of time spent on a given website; although the database produces imprecise⁸ measures, it represents the best indication presently available.

To obtain an impression of the websites on which 10- to 16-year-olds spend their time, we selected the 20 most popular websites for analysis.

Table 2. 10- to 16-year-olds’ Top 20 Websites



Source: gemiusAudience, January, 2012.

Table 2 is dominated by public service media such as *tv2.dk* and *dr.dk*, search engines and chat websites, travel planners, and newspaper websites such as the tabloids *ekstrabladet.dk* and *bt.dk*, the daily newspaper *politiken.dk*, and what were originally newspapers, but now websites, *dba.dk* and *guloggratis.dk* (like *craigslist*).

Separating the data for boys and girls, we found differences in the bottom 10 websites. The girls’ list included three new websites: the weather report, cooking recipes, and a medical advice site. The boys’ list included *coolshop.dk* as a popular site, whereas *gratispil.dk* was number 15. At the bottom, the boys listed a soccer website and a gaming and humour website. From these data, it is evident that Internet use is relatively homogeneous across genders. However, *gemiusAudience* provides no information regarding what people actually do on the different websites. On *tv2.dk*, for instance, users can play games, read the news, stream television, etc.

In our qualitative interviews, the 10- to 16-year-old students rarely mentioned specific websites. Even when mentioning *Facebook.com*, the students focused on gaming activities. Because the discussion of Internet use in our qualitative data centres on gaming

practices among boys and chatting and online social activities among girls, the following two sections will concentrate on these themes.

Gaming Practices

Although *gemiusAudience* does not list data for *Facebook.com* or *Y8.com*, the database does include the website *gratispil.dk*, a gaming site that is similar to *Y8.com*. This website is listed as number nine in popularity for boys and girls. The youngest participants spent more time on the website and frequented it more often than did the older participants. In the qualitative study, participants in the 4th grade often discussed and mentioned games on this site, whereas 9th graders rarely mentioned them. Consequently, we conclude that it is socially acceptable to discuss these games as a type of social bonding in 4th grade but not in 9th grade.

Approximately 14% of the boys and 20% of the girls visited the website *gratispil.dk*. The girls visited the website slightly more often than the boys did and spent more time when they visited (approximately one hour for girls versus 45 minutes for boys). In other words, girls spend more time more frequently on this gaming website. In contrast to the common perception that boys spend more time playing computer games than girls do, we find the opposite to be true in our study. However, the games available on *gratispil.dk* are predominantly ‘simple’ games that do not require long-term engagement or previous knowledge of the gaming universe, factors that appear to be more important to girls than to boys. For example, we found that the boys in the focus groups and in the individual interviews were more focused on gaming practices using gaming consoles and large-scale games such as *Counter Strike*, *FIFA*, and *GTA*. Overall, the girls tended to choose simple and easily accessible online games, whereas boys engaged in more complex gaming universes. Because the *gemiusAudience* data cover only selected websites, we supplemented these data with the survey *BIG*⁹. For example, although the *gemiusAudience* inquiry for *gratispil.dk* showed that younger girls used this website more often than the other groups did – including a broader range of Internet gaming practices – the self-reported *BIG* data showed another gender imbalance. In both age groups, boys played computer games more frequently than girls did. Comparing younger girls with older girls, a significant decline occurred in the percentage of girls playing on a daily basis; whereas one-third of the 10- to 12-year-old girls played on the Internet on a daily basis, only one-sixth of the 13- to 16-year-old girls did so. Conversely, there was little decline observed when comparing the boys’ age groups. Thus, we find that boys and girls play different games differently on different devices.

Table 3. Share of 10- to 12-year-olds and 13- to 16-year-olds Playing Games on the Internet

	All 10-12	Girls 10-12	Boys 10-12	All 13-16	Girls 13-16	Boys 13-16
Gaming on the Internet						
Daily	34 %	30 %	38 %	25 %	14 %	35 %
Never	5 %	4 %	6 %	12 %	15 %	10 %
Sample	505	272	233	763	435	328

Source: Borne Index Gallup, 2010.

The discussion of gaming practices in the focus groups and interviews revealed differences in how the Internet, gaming consoles and computers were used by 10- to 11-year-old boys and girls. For instance, whereas boys and girls in the 4th grade mentioned approximately 20 different items, only *Facebook*, *Y8*, and *YouTube* were noted by both groups.

Although boys and girls in both age groups used *Facebook* for gaming and networking, gaming was indisputably the most important feature for the younger users (10- to 11-year-olds). Nearly all of the younger participants played some of the numerous games on *Facebook*, e.g., *Restaurant City* and *FarmVille*. During an individual interview with 11-year-old Bo, he demonstrated how he played *FarmVille* on *Facebook* with his older cousins, classmates, mother, and father. Nearly all of the interviewed children played games with their peers on *Facebook*, and as Bo's example shows, some children also played with their parents and other family members. In the following section, we will take a closer look at three examples.

Chatting and Other Social Networking Services

In the qualitative interviews, the 10- to 11-year-old girls in the 4th grade expressed an interest in chatting and social networks, whereas the boys did not express such an interest. However, Table 4 and 5 depict the quantitative data on chat services, which reveal that boys also chat online albeit to a lesser extent than girls do.

Table 4. *Share of 10- to 12-year-olds and 13- to 16-year-olds Chatting (e.g., MSN, Skype)*

Chat services	All	Girls	Boys	All	Girls	Boys
	10-12	10-12	10-12	13-16	13-16	13-16
Daily	13 %	16 %	11 %	38 %	47 %	31 %
Never	53 %	46 %	60 %	18 %	10 %	25 %
Sample	505	272	233	763	435	328

Source: Børne Index Gallup, 2010.

Table 5. *Share of 10- to 12-year-olds and 13- to 16-year-olds Chatting in Open Chat Rooms*

Open chat rooms	All	Girls	Boys	All	Girls	Boys
	10-12	10-12	10-12	13-16	13-16	13-16
Daily	5 %	4 %	5 %	13 %	13 %	13 %
Never	64 %	61 %	66 %	51 %	48 %	55 %
Sample	505	272	233	763	435	328

Source: Børne Index Gallup, 2010.

Chat services such as *Skype* were primarily of interest to the girls. The difference between 10- to 12-year-old girls and boys is relatively small. Conversely, nearly half of 13- to 16-year-old girls chat on a daily basis, compared to less than one-third of the boys. One-fourth of the 13- to 16-year-old boys never chat, whereas only one-tenth of

the girls never chat. Open chat sites are used significantly less and show no noticeable gender difference. Overall, girls chat more than boys do, and the difference becomes more distinct as they get older; nearly half of the girls from age 13 to 16 chat every day.

Although chatting is a tool used for social interaction through live media communication, another method of engaging in social networking is by sharing content or experiences on websites such as *YouTube*. In the qualitative study, boys and girls expressed the same level of interest in and use of *YouTube*; the same pattern appears in the *BIG* survey data.

Table 6. Share of 10- to 12-year-olds and 13- to 16-year-olds using *YouTube.com*

youtube.com	All	Girls	Boys	All	Girls	Boys
	10-12	10-12	10-12	13-16	13-16	13-16
Daily	29 %	31 %	27 %	54 %	55 %	53 %
Never	10 %	10 %	11 %	3 %	2 %	3 %
Sample	505	272	233	763	435	328

Source: Borne Index Gallup, 2010.

Nearly one-third of 10- to 12-year-olds and more than half of 13- to 16-year-olds visit *YouTube* daily, whereas few participants report that they never use *YouTube*. Older children tend to use *YouTube* more frequently. Although the quantitative data do not reveal what users do on the website, e.g., what type of content they watch, who they watch it with, etc., this type of information is available from our qualitative data. A consensus of gender stereotypes was negotiated in the focus group interviews (Morgan 1997). Boys viewed ‘funny videos’, e.g., ‘where people get hurt’, whereas girls watched the music videos of young female artists/idols that allowed them to sing along or imitate dance moves.

The Internet is an important medium for sustaining social relationships. Girls enjoy chatting and engaging in other social networking activities, and boys’ online gaming patterns contain a social dimension that is relevant to relationships with their peers, family and other friends.

Both girls and boys communicate and sustain social relations while chatting or gaming, and additionally, both use online practices as the basis for off-line social relationships. The students discuss chatting and gaming practices with their peers, thus employing their media use as a tool for performing gender and maintaining social relations.

Qualitative Cases Regarding Gender Differences in Use of Digital Media

In an in-depth individual interview, 11-year-old Julie described the game *Habbo*, emphasizing the game’s chat function. Similarly, a focus group of 4th grade girls discussed the way in which they use *Skype* to chat after school. The girls also discussed mobile phones, text messages, and MMS, whereas boys in the 4th grade discussed gaming consoles such as *Nintendo*, *Play Station*, and *Xbox 360 plus*.

The boys’ interest in hardware and gadgets was reflected in the collage of a student named Patrick; although the collage was supposed to include only favourite foods, Patrick could not resist placing a photo of a *Wii* among the pictures of sweets.

Illustration 1. Patrick's Collage



In the individual interview with Patrick, it was obvious that ‘small talk’ is not a skill that he possesses; thus, interviewing him proved to be a challenge:

Moderator: Do you have a, er, what’s it called, profile (*Facebook*)?

Patrick: No.

Moderator: You don’t use that?

Patrick: No.

Moderator: What about Messenger? Do you and your friends use that to chat?

Patrick: Nope.

Moderator: Nope. Do you text each other?

Patrick: No.

Moderator: No? Do you call each other?

Patrick: No.

Moderator: No that either? Do you have a cell phone?

Patrick: No.

Moderator: No? Well, it’s difficult texting each other when you don’t have a cell phone. What are you going to do when you go to Emil’s this afternoon?

Patrick: Er...

Moderator: Are you going to Emil’s?

Patrick: Er, yes, because I brought my DS (*Nintendo DS*).

Moderator: Okay.

Patrick: And then, er ... because ... he has one at home too, and then we can play together.

This conversation demonstrates the fact that some boys do not express themselves at length. In this case, Patrick’s underprivileged social background likely plays a role.

Because numerous girls talked in a lively manner and at length, gender *and* social background appear to have influenced Patrick's inability to engage in small talk.

Birgitte Tufte described a comparable difference in a study conducted at a time (1998-2001) when Internet access was less common: "[...] We find that boys tend to play computer games more than girls, whereas girls – if they use computers and have Internet access – use their computers to chat" (Tufte 2003: 72). However, according to our study, girls' previously 'weak linkage' to computers and the Internet has changed.

In 2004, Gitte Stald suggested that a change had occurred around the millennium in boys' and girls' media use. This transformation was attributed to computers with Internet access, which provided activities that also appealed to girls (Stald 2004). Stald emphasized that research before 2000 described a more significant gender difference in relation to digital media use than after the millennium. However, our study shows that although girls and boys are equally active online, we find differences in their discussions regarding use of media. Although the dissimilarities in time spent and websites visited are not immediately obvious, these differences become evident when we focus on preferences for content and genre. Notably, *Y8*, *YouTube*, and *Facebook* are the only websites mentioned by both boys and girls. Whereas Stald's discussion of gender differences focused on the use of digital technologies and digital media platforms, we suggest that gender differences in children's and adolescents' media uses are found in relation to genre and content. Identifying these differences requires a qualitative enquiry, such as the one we conducted in 2010, which showed that girls' use of digital media differed from boys' use: Girls were interested in social networking, whereas boys used digital media for gaming. Because boys often engage in these games with peers or family, we also view these practices as social networking activities.

All-round or Selective Media Use

In *EU Kids Online* 2011, boys display stronger digital competence than girls do. However, some studies find that girls represent a significant percentage of digitally skilled media users (Sonck et al. 2011). In a Norwegian study that categorized media users by type (Endestad et al. 2011), 33% of the advanced users group were girls. This result is consistent with our quantitative findings presented above. We also found several advanced female cross-media users in the qualitative portion of our study. The most remarkable of these users was 16-year-old Halima, who attended the same suburban school as Patrick and was one of two Somalian girls in a group of six 9th graders. The other girls in the focus group called Halima a 'computer guru' who 'knows all the great links' and has a 'red-hot laptop'. The discussion revealed that Halima was one of the best students in her class, although she had to cope with social challenges such as caring for her handicapped mother and managing the family household. The advanced media use in this case mirrors broad academic and social competencies, as other research also has suggested (Drotner 2000).

We also found girls in the 4th grade with remarkable patterns of media use. Zehra, a student at a private city school, came from an academically oriented home environment. Unlike the majority of girls, she emphasized her extensive media use and the significant amount of time spent gaming: "I game for hours; I might game four hours or so". Zehra discussed *Skype* and *Facebook*, and she explained that students can game

and chat on her school's website. Zehra was interested in networking online, and she discussed magazines and weeklies; she subscribed to *Donald Duck* and read books in many genres. She had just been to the cinema to watch *Avatar* and was the only girl to mention *Nintendo*. Zehra listened to music on the commercial radio station *The Voice*, watched music videos on *MTV*, and used her mobile phone frequently:

Zehra: I almost had to pay my bill (cell phone) myself because I used it for something that I shouldn't have.

Moderator: Okay, for what?

Zehra: A game...

Moderator: Oh well (laughing).

Zehra: And then I had to pay about 130 Euro.

Moderator: Oh my. What did your parents think about that?

Zehra: They got angry, and I wasn't allowed to play that game for a week or so.

Zehra, a frequent user of a broad range of media, showed excellent media literacy and was an all-round media user who spent a significant amount of time engaged in media use.

In addition, Zehra also played sports, participating in handball matches every weekend. Similar to numerous girls in the study, she enjoyed drawing and tidying up her room while listening to music. Her behaviour supports the hypothesis of 'the more, the more', that is, the more time children spend on sports and other social activities, the more time they will spend engaging with media (Endestad et al. 2011).

The counterpart to Zehra's all-round media use is Patrick's extreme unilateral interest in the computer game *Counter-Strike*. In the focus group, we discovered Patrick's preoccupation with gaming and subsequently chose him for an in-depth interview. Here, it became clear that *Counter-Strike* played a major role in his life. Patrick usually played *Counter-Strike* with his father, and he eagerly described the gaming characters, testing whether the interviewer was able to distinguish the characters on the computer screen. Patrick was so absorbed in the game that the interviewer had to ask him repeatedly to shut the computer down before he reluctantly acquiesced.

Social status has been shown to play a role in children's media use. Researchers suggest that children from middle-class homes have better skills and a more varied range of online activities than do children from homes with limited incomes and lower levels of education (Sonck et al. 2011, Drotner 2010). The cases of Patrick and Zehra, for instance, reflect differences in the children's social status. Whereas Zehra attends a private school, lives in a single-family home, and has one parent with a higher education, Patrick attends a state school in a socially challenged area and lives in public housing. At the time of the study, his parents were divorced, his father had no permanent job, and his mother was attending a brief job qualification course. Patrick's media use is obviously narrow compared to Zehra's broad range of online and offline activities, and it is also clear that the two students differed in their levels of media literacy and in other competencies.

Among the boys in the 9th grade, no student stood out in the way that Halima did among the girls. In retrospect, it appears that the older boys strongly influenced each other to restrict comments on extraordinary media use. For example, the group mocked Henning, a suburban school student, when he mentioned that he reads *Donald Duck*.

Although the social data obtained in the present study are not systematic enough to allow us to draw clearcut conclusions, the results suggest that unilateral media use is

an indicator of social issues and other problems. Conversely, frequent and all-round media use often indicates strong social and academic competencies. In general, media use mirrors social relations and other skills in the lives of children.

Print Media

The quantitative data on 10- to 16-year-old students' interest in weeklies/magazines, comics, and books show that comics are popular among younger boys. With regard to weeklies and magazines, there is no significant difference between the age groups. However, a substantial difference occurs according to gender: 16 to 17% of the girls indicated an interest in reading weeklies/magazines, compared with only 2 to 3% of the boys.

The reading of books revealed significant age- and gender-related differences. The percentage of 'very interested' book readers among 10- to 12-year-olds (21%) was nearly double the percentage of those aged 13- to 16-years (12%). Furthermore, we found a significant gender difference particularly in the older group, where 19% of the girls were very interested in books as opposed to only 5% of the boys.

Table 7. Interest in Reading Books

	All 10-12	Girls 10-12	Boys 10-12	All 13-16	Girls 13-16	Boys 13-16
Books						
Very interested	21 %	27 %	16 %	12 %	19 %	5 %
Sample	505	272	233	763	435	328

Source: Borne Index Gallup, 2010.

In the qualitative study, several gender dissimilarities recurred. For instance, girls frequently discussed magazines, books, and newspapers, whereas boys only mentioned a single book title, a few magazines, and no newspapers, apart from general references to the sports section.

The girls demonstrated extensive knowledge of a wide variety of magazines in the focus group discussions. They mentioned niche magazines, free magazines, and weeklies on fashion, lifestyle, children, gossip, etc. The boys read men's magazines and magazines about cars, gadgets, and sports. Similar results were found in regard to newspapers: the boys mentioned only the sports sections and did so without referring to specific newspapers. Conversely, the girls mentioned four different newspapers – two morning papers and two tabloids – and made general references to sections on living and culture. In accordance with our data on television viewing, the girls displayed interest in a wide and diverse range of print media.

We found a similar pattern in relation to books: the girls cited 10 different book titles, whereas the boys mentioned only *Harry Potter*. Even comics appeared to reflect the girls' interest in a wider range of material; they mentioned both *Manga* and *Animé*, whereas the boys only discussed *Donald Duck*.

In some focus groups, student's reading practices – or lack thereof – appeared to be an important element in establishing a group identity. As the following conversation demonstrates, a lack of reading becomes part of the boys' group identity.

Moderator: How about books and stuff like that?

Nicolai: No, are you crazy?

Bo: We haven't fucking got time for that!

Moderator: Okay.

Kevin: What are books?

Bo: We wait for the movie to come out.

The social control exerted in the boys' groups distorts the picture of the boys' actual media use. It is evident that some media use is not appropriate for students to mention when in the company of their peers. In a group of 9th grade boys, Henning was socially excluded because of his choice of comics:

Kevin: *Donald Duck*, right Henning?!

Nicolai: Do you still read that?

Henning: Many years ago.

Moderator: Many years ago?

Henning: Five.

Bo: Weeks?

Henning: Years.

Nicolai: It's bloody not five years ago you read *Donald Duck*!

Henning: No, no.

Kevin: What are you talking about?

Nicolai: You read *Donald Duck* in 8th or 7th grade or something like that.

Henning: Okay, that too...

Nicolai: Two years.

Henning: But still.

As shown by Henning's violation of the group norm by reading *Donald Duck* comics, the peer group acts as a social control mechanism to define appropriate media use within the age group. Immediately after the quote, Henning attempted to re-establish his position in the group by mentioning that he normally reads the newspaper sports sections. In this way, he attempted to re-establish his authority and save face, even though the group clearly did not cooperate (Goffmann 1969). Thus, reading about sports or discussing sports is essential in the boys' social interaction in the same way that gaming practices are. Appropriate use of media is a social skill enacted in groups of boys, and the mechanisms of social control operate within a peer group when a person uses media in a manner that is not considered proper in relation to his or her age and gender.

In another group of boys in the 9th grade, the participants explained that they had read *Harry Potter* when they were younger; now, however, they did not even read for their homework. Conversely, the girls in the 4th and 9th grades discussed their love of books and noted that they were reading several books simultaneously. Halima, who loved computers and software, presented a hypothetical choice between computer and books, concluding that she would definitely choose books over computers. Hence, there was a significant difference in the way in which boys and girls discussed books. Reading print media and books is part of the girls' collective identity, whereas an absence of reading serves a similar purpose among the boys.

Conclusions

Boys and girls use media differently. Gender-segregated groups reinforce a tendency to discuss certain media uses more than others. In particular, girls understand – or demonstrate their knowledge of – a wider variety of uses within the majority of media, media genres and specific contents.

In the triangulation of our qualitative and quantitative studies, the media use of the 61 participants in the qualitative study deepens the picture painted by our quantitative data. The quantitative data provide insights into the extent of media engagement, whereas the qualitative data provide depth and complexity through the individual accounts of everyday use. Here we find that gender differences in children's and adolescents' media uses are found in relation to genre and content. Although the quantitative and qualitative data both confirm gender differences in media use and media preferences, the qualitative data elucidate these differences and allow us to put them into context. For instance, in the present study, it is evident that girls maintain their social networks online, whereas boys use computer games as a social activity.

Future research might provide additional insight into what media users actually do when accessing different websites. Because the majority of websites offer a multitude of possibilities, we must determine **what** a group of people use a website for and **how** they use it in a mediatised society (Jensen 2013). To establish this knowledge, we must conduct additional qualitative studies in the field, and additionally, our quantitative databases must cover not only single-media use but also cross-media use in all age groups. Because media practices intersect, they cannot be understood separately; instead, these practices should be researched and understood across media genres and platforms, as we have demonstrated here.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data in the present study identify gender as a central factor in evaluating the media use of children and adolescents. Boys and girls use different media to a varying extent, and their preferences regarding content are significantly different. Despite these differences, however, the study also indicates that one important purpose of media use and media discussion is very much the same: to sustain and strengthen social relations.

Notes

1. The empirical data in the present article originate from a subproject within the cross-disciplinary research project *Cool Snacks* (Krogager 2012; Grunert, Brock, Brunsø, Christiansen, Edelenbos, Kastberg, Krogager, Mielby & Povlsen (2015). The project, which was funded by *The Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation: Food and Health* (FØSU 2009-2012), aimed to develop snack products that target children and adolescents and to include these products in a media and marketing plan.
2. We purchased access to the following commercial databases: *tnsGallup* (television, print media, radio, etc.), *BIG* (children and adolescents) and *gemiusAudience* (Internet). Because no databases specifically address cross-media use, we performed audience rating analyses by combining statistics from the single media databases in a cross-media analysis.
3. Many related areas of research on children and media have been omitted from this review.
4. *tnsGallup*: television-meter, *tnsGallup*: radio-meter, *tnsGallup*: print media, *tnsGallup: BIG* (children's media use), *gemiusaudience*: Internet. Only *BIG* presents cross-media uses, but builds on only 200 children and adolescents.
5. We paralleled the empirical data provided by other researchers in the *Cool Snacks* project (Krogager 2012, Grunert, Brock, Brunsø, Christiansen, Edelenbos, Kastberg, Krogager, Mielby & Povlsen (2014).

6. Denmark has a long-standing public service television tradition of so-called *Christmas calendars*: television series (primarily for children) that consist of 24 episodes shown from 1 December until Christmas Eve, 24 December.
7. Quite often, the fourth week of October (the week following the Danish autumn holiday) is chosen for analysis because it is considered to have a fairly 'normal', representative television week programme schedule.
8. Time registration begins when the user enters a website and ends when the user enters a new website. If the user does not continue to a new website but instead closes the browser, the time registration registers no closing point, and the time is registered as 1 second. Conversely, if the user keeps the browser open while doing something else, the time registration continues counting until the moment the user resumes browsing activity and enters a new website.
9. The *Børne Index Gallup (BIG)* survey measures different aspects of media use among children and adolescents. A significant difference between the analyses in *gemiusAudience* and the data from *BIG* is that the *BIG* data are survey-based (children and adolescents report on their media use), whereas *gemiusAudience* is based on automatically listed behaviour through the use of 'cookies'.

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