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### **Self-Disclosure on YouTube: Coming out for personal liberation or a paycheck?**

*What is special about web video documents is that their credibility depends on the viewer's willingness to accept their authenticity, as there is no guarantee that they are not staged or manipulated. Authenticity, then, become a matter of personal belief.*

*--Robrecht Vanderbeeken, 2011*

This paper will look at the process and inner scope of private, but also shared, YouTube confessions – as popular contemporary phenomena – through the coming out process. Throughout history, the coming out process has always been intended for social, political, and cultural goals; for a superior good, helping the individual to fight to finally be himself. Privacy was fundamental for a true communication with the world. Today instead, because of a lack of communication, this aspect has been lost: what about a tender conversation with our parents, face to face, where being yourself coincides with being loved for who you are? I'll say that this shift is due to an egoistic pursuit: the individual doesn't act for his and others' good at the same time, but exclusively for a personal gain, for the ego, and to enhance career success. I am talking about a self that excludes "the other" because it's unlimitedly attached to the achievement of a selfish satisfaction. In this pursuit, in this egoistic realization of the self, the fact of being gay and the benefits that may result from being exposed, are not the crucial fact anymore. My

attempt is to consider homosexuality as part of my personal experience, while condemning narcissistic behaviors in personal situations like the coming out process.

Born and raised in Italy, 24 years old, I find myself completely absorbed in American culture, where everything is bigger and more expensive, and where online platforms are daily bread for teenagers. In the new generation in which I am immersed – and I'm not talking only about the American one – I have noticed a new phenomenon. It is very curious and I had the opportunity to dwell on it in the previous couple of months. A few weeks ago I was home, alone, in my new studio apartment in Brooklyn and I was looking for something fun to do to distract myself in that boring night.

I picked up my computer and I decided to enter the YouTube portal, the biggest video-sharing website. I selected the first page where you have the chance to look at the most-viewed videos of the moment. The first shared video I saw was about two young twins coming out to their dad as gay, on the phone, in front of a camera. I was shocked to see these brothers so readily broadcasting such private and intimate details of their personal life on an online platform.

The video is about two American handsome blonde twins, and was aired on their online blog in which they describe their everyday life, especially after their move to Los Angeles. They are from a small town in Ohio, where they lived as teenagers with everyone's dream of being rich and famous as models in a big city full of celebrities and great opportunities.

Their YouTube channel is called *The Rhodes Bros*, because their names are Austin and Aaron Rhodes, 19 year-old, fraternal twins. The video they posted online is entitled

*Twins Come Out To Dad*<sup>1</sup>. It lasts 8:37 minutes and it's a homemade video produced by themselves in their new shared bedroom: "While most of the Rhodes Bros videos are of lighter fare like *How To Take A Selfie* or *Pros & Cons Of Being Twins*, their latest video took an emotional turn when they both decided to come out to their father as gay" (Weisman, 2015). After few minutes of hesitation, anxiety and embarrassment, between tears and sobs, they tell their dad the truth. Aaron starts: "I don't know how else to put it, but I'm gay... and Austin is too. And we just wanted to call and tell you." And straightaway Austin goes on and adds: "I just didn't want you to find out through YouTube and I just wanted to be able to have that conversation, because I feel like we're close enough, and I finally feel like I'm at that point now where I'm able to tell you, and I just want to be able to have you behind us 100%. I just don't want you to not love us anymore."

Their father is not the first person they came out to about their homosexuality. In fact, as they declare, the whole family and friends knew the truth about them. He was actually one of the last. Their parents divorced years ago and therefore they couldn't maintain a strong relationship with the father. This is the reason why they hesitated to tell him.

I started reading the comments on the video, articles and interviews since I was surprised to see how two young boys' personal details were shared easily with the whole world, reaching 19 million views so far. The audience's reaction was clearly divided: part of the audience approved of the video and looked at this self-revelation as a heroic

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<sup>1</sup> "Twins Come Out To Dad," YouTube video, 8:37, posted by Aaron and Austin Rhodes. Description: With 2015 now here, we think it is time to finally just be ourselves. We hope by our actions today you can finish watching this video feeling encouraged and inspired. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3K0CJ8usPU>, January 14, 2015.

example, an inspiration for many young individuals who are not free to be themselves, in their own houses, and in general in the world. In fact, the explanatory message that accompanies the video reads:

With 2015 now here, we think it is time to finally just be ourselves. We hope by our actions today you can finish watching this video feeling encouraged and inspired. Thank you for all the support. We love you. –The Rhodes Bros.

One member of their audience is actress and TV celebrity Ellen DeGeneres, who invited the Rhodes brothers and their father to her talk show *The Ellen Show*, to speak out and tell the entire story. The twins also received \$10,000 to fund their lives in Los Angeles. In this interview the father says to Ellen “there’s a weight off both our sides” ever since his sons came out as gay.”<sup>2</sup> “Now we can talk about anything,” he said. “I was very proud of my boys.” This is clear inspiration –in front of this “emotional moment” – for everyone who needs to express his own sexuality without the need to create a false character that can suffocate the individual’s humanity<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> “Twins Aaron and Austin Meet Ellen”, YouTube video, 4:58, posted by Ellen Show Channel. Description: The moving video of Aaron and Austin coming out to their father made its way around the world and back. Ellen brought them to her studio to meet them in person, as well as their inspiring father, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iE-rW-9n2-4>, January 21, 2015

<sup>3</sup> There are 56,150 comments on this video so far. Some examples are: “so many negative comments, no body ever understands the struggle! Not to sound like an asshole, but if you are not gay or bi or anything else beside straight and you haven’t witnessed the heartache and pain we go through, you don’t understand! Everyone on here just assumes so much! [...] The people of the world need to be more open and not let someone else’s life dictate their actions toward topics that don’t even concern them. Ask any gay guy (Like me) we have seen the under belly of life only because we experienced to everyone a small part of who we are [...]”. Or others from the religious point of view: “I don’t understand why people hate on them; this is beautiful. You can show their dad doesn’t care and loves both of them the same exact way. I’m Christian, but I believe God would accept humans to love anyone they want”. Or again: “They were scared. That’s why. They thought their dad wouldn’t love them anymore. It’s totally understandable”.

On the other hand, critics feel the brothers have a careerist aim, a road to success for which they would do anything<sup>4</sup>. According to these critics, this is a case of oversharing since an extremely personal confession cannot be shared with millions of people. The only reason an individual would share intimate and personal details, broadcasting them online on YouTube, is to reach a goal, a goal that may be different than the one the twins originally declared.

It is possible to say that today this oversharing is a very common dynamic: tons of young individuals sit in their bedrooms, turn on the camera and start speaking without any filter. I won't say that YouTube isn't a great resource, because I use it too, but why "come out" on an online platform? In his article entitled "Why Youtube Matters" by Marc Prensky, he begins praising YouTube, highlighting its benefits from an educational point of view: "a wealth of useful explanatory video on practically EVERY subject. A psychology teacher recently wondered if there were any videos of Freud's theories of the mind – there were, to his surprise, many" or again "the ability for students to see, hear, and learn from, top experts in any field. This increasingly includes Nobel Prize winners, top politicians, award-winning journalists, Supreme Court justices, etc...."

At the same time he also explains what kind of troubles YouTube can generate. Prensky quotes Clay Shirky, leader, speaker, writer, consultant, and game designer in the

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<sup>4</sup> Some negative comments are: "why the fuck did Ellen give them 10k," or "Anyway, this video was not cool at all, and it's just two fags trying to get views [...], just come out (regardless of how uncool it is), but don't spread it to the entire damn world [...]," "Yeah, 211k subscribers - they'll make millions just from YouTube videos. Guess it's really hard being rich and attractive, they need all the help they can get." Or "I hate these kinds of videos. We don't need you to tell us your gay. They're billions of videos out there that tell the same thing. You're not paving the way for a new trend. You guys are just hungry for views and attention." Or "I'm going to make a video about coming out to my Dad about being straight. Hopefully I get 14 million videos and a cookie, because it really changes things like- nothing."

critical areas of education and learning. Shirky in his article “Here comes everybody”, points out that Youtube does not have a “content” problem, but rather a “filter” problem, i.e. we have not yet created very good “automated filters” that could evaluate a video by its content, or even by the words in it (91). That’s the real issue.

In *YouTube and You: Experiences of Self-Awareness in the Context Collapse of the Recording Webcam* (2009), Michael Wesch analyzes this particular genre of video that has emerged on YouTube: the “deeply personal, unaddressed vlog.” He defines it as a “soliloquy shouted into the ether or a message in a bottle set adrift at sea,” because these vlogs have no specific addressee: “they are meant for anybody and everybody, or possibly nobody – not addressed to anyone in particular.” The *vlog*<sup>5</sup> is a blog that contains video material. The concept comes from the videotaping of people sitting alone in front of their webcams and just talking to “anybody and everybody who care to click on their video.” Another critical response comes from Erving Goffman, who in *Interaction ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior* (1967) writes: “The familiar walls that help limit and define the context are gone. The blogger must address anybody, everybody, and maybe even nobody all at once.” The fact that the video is composed by a self, who is alone in the room, can point to a new form of individualism: it’s not a face-to-face encounter, but it’s a solo act, an “uninterrupted introspective conversation with one’s self.” This unaddressed vlog, a new genre that nowadays is very common, is called

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<sup>5</sup> Using Wikipedia for the definition: A video blog or video log, sometimes shortened to vlog, is a form of blog for which the medium is video, and is a form of web television. Vlog entries often combine embedded video (or a video link) with supporting text, images, and other metadata. Entries can be recorded in one take or cut into multiple parts. The vlog category is popular on YouTube. [...]. YouTube currently ranks among the top three most-visited sites on the web. As a high traffic area for video bloggers, or *vloggers*, YouTube has created a platform for these participants to present their personal videos, which oftentimes are filmed using hand held point and shoot cameras.

a “confessional”. Wesch explains it as follows:

This uninterrupted introspective inner dialogue, combined with the perceived privacy of the webcam experience and the relative anonymity and ambiguity of the generalized other, creates the groundwork for what may be the most surprising form of YouTube vlog: the confessional. Vloggers sometimes reveal secrets on YouTube that they have not yet revealed to their closest friends and family. YouTube provides the ultimate social mirror, the mirror of all mirrors, reachable from a private space that can feel safe and secure at the moment of recording. As a result, among the plethora of videos on YouTube that typically ranges from ridiculous to shocking, offensive to banal, and outrageous to mundane, also are these profoundly introspective, self-reflexive personal narratives and confessionals forming the basis for a profound experience of human connection (Wesch, 2009).

This quotation explains the difference between a confession on YouTube that could be considered ridiculous, shocking, or offensive, and a confession in which the goal is to create a human connection with others by sharing life experiences. But how can we understand this difference? Patricia G. Lange, in her article “Publicly Private and Privately Public: Social Networking on YouTube,” affirms that one useful lens to understand and separate this dichotomy about content sharing on social networks is the concept of *fractalization* of the public and private. Lange explains that scholars usually underline the private and public divide, without actually giving a real definition of both terms. She declares that the distinction is a matter of space – private space and public space. As Peter Fletcher notes, “Lange argues that spaces are fractal in that their component parts take on the nature of the context in which they are situated. She provides the example of a home which, to the community is a private space, but within the home there are both private and public spaces.” It means that to define private and public, the distinction depends on the perspective of the observer at the moment of the observation. What is private once can be redefined as public later. For her, the same fractalization

happens on YouTube: “publicly private – where people post videos that are potentially available to a very wide audience but use the software and coded tags as a way to make the videos in fact difficult to find and view except for close friends – and privately public – where people post public videos but actively hide or disguise their identities in the movies and/or their profiles” (Fletcher, 2008). She notices that the dichotomy is due to an “erosion of boundaries” in which there isn't a distinction anymore between what is public and what is private. Is it possible today to clearly mark this difference? The answer is not easy to give because it continuously changes as the content modifies. Home, work, leisure, private, public...now they are only shades of a single color: the one of an uninterrupted flow of communication.

The first group of confessional videos contains shared private things, intended as “things that we are able and/or entitled to keep hidden, sheltered, or withdrawn from others” (Sheehan, 2002). The coming out process is a perfect example of an intimate thing that we should be able to keep hidden from others, at least hidden from the world:

Coming out is still a necessity in this world; that is a fact. Everyone deserves the right to confirm and affirm who they truly are. However, the gift is usually attached in the simplicity of the words, ‘I’m gay’. Anything other than that is wonderful, but the usual ‘anything’ normally involves acceptance; not a part on a national television show. While no one can rightfully say that Aaron and Austin are undeserving of the perks that have landed in their path, one does have to question if their moment of honesty was truly meant for the inspiration of others, or the aspirations of themselves (Brown, 2015).

I want to find out if these two guys were trying to encourage people like them to do the same, so the more gay and lesbians come out, the more political clout the community would have to fight for equal rights. And coming out rests on an action that is strictly personal: the desire and the willingness to accept one’s own homosexuality and express it



to others.

To determine that, there is a story to look at, the history of coming out, and we can start from its definition: “coming out is a life-altering ritual that lies at the heart of the gay or lesbian experience and the modern gay and lesbian movement. It is also a social and political act that fundamentally challenges traditional ideas about the nature of nature, the structure of family, and the shape of American society,” as Lisa Bennet defines it in *Coming Out*, an essay from the *Gay and Lesbian Almanac* (1983). Coming out is not just a singular act – embodied in the statement, ‘I am gay or lesbian’ – but instead is considered a “lifelong process” as the “gay man or lesbian makes his or her identity known to people, in new situations, and in new roles.” I found it interesting that Rob Eichenberg, author of *Coming Out: An Act of Love* (1991), establishes three stages in the coming out process. The first one is a “personal phase” in which the person understands the fact that he or she is lesbian or gay and all the feelings and emotions are involved for the first time. For him this stage can take years. A second comes with what he describes as the “private phase,” when the individual starts to tell selected people that he or she is lesbian or gay. It could be friends at first and then family members. The family’s reaction could be a little different – maybe negative sometimes – than a friend’s one. The last phase is the “public stage” – and here is where I am most interested – in which the individual after struggling with himself for years, now feels free to come out to everyone. The most important thing is that from now on “the individual does not seek to die or compartmentalize his or her own sexual identity, but rather integrates it into his or her personal, professional, and family life.” (Eichenberg, 1991)

The Bloomsbury Group is a great example in the history of coming out. The

Bloomsbury Group was an influential group of associated English intellectuals, painters, artists, philosophers founded shortly before 1910. Virginia Woolf was a member of it. The other two members of the club were Lytton Strachey, the author of *Eminent Victorians*, and the economist John Maynard Keynes. They came out to their friends, writing about their love for other men. Michael Holroyd, Strachey's biographer notes: "In a society which regarded homosexuality as more grave than murder, what Lytton and Keynes were looking for almost as urgently as love itself, was a discreet and sympathetic source of disclosure" (95). During the 1950s, the first organization of gay men and women was established as an inspiration to come out. The organization was called the Mattachine Society, founded by Harry Hay in Los Angeles in 1951 exclusively for men. In 1955 the Daughters of Bilitis was created in San Francisco by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon for lesbian women. Randy Wickler, a young Mattachine Society activist, is believed to be the first gay man who came out in the news media. The idea behind these associations was to provide a secret support group of people "publicized by word of mouth and held in private homes." This is an early stage of the coming out process, but the way both societies have treated homosexuality may be considered as a mirror of the even today's coming out process. The first instance of progress on television was in the 1960s where homosexuality started to be part of the public debate. In 1961 "the first TV documentary on the subject was aired. Seven gay men spoke on a WBAI<sup>6</sup> radio broadcast, and *The New York Times* published its first significant report on the topic in 1963." We could go on with the past to see all the steps in the development of this

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<sup>6</sup> WBAI is a non-commercial, listener-supported radio station, broadcasting in New York City. What is broadcasted is leftist and progressive. The name "WBAI" is composed by the owner's name and Broadcast Associates, Inc.

history, but it's enough to say that the more we look at the coming out process, the more it is entwined with public sharing and even oversharing.

What about today? What remains of political issues for equal rights? This is not the place to discuss this, but we can still notice that the coming out process has become individualistic, egoistic and sentimental, all about the self, but a self that is not looking for knowledge, but rather a narcissistic self. In the precise example I am talking about, most of these videos are called "My Coming Out Story." In the case of popular Youtubers, coming out videos can be the *actual* coming out, and not just something that had happened already with closest friends off camera, and then Youtubers simply decide to share it with their devoted fans. *Vanity Fair*'s writer Richard Lawson says that underlining the fact that these big announcements have become common enough that a video like Rhodes Bros' seems "oddly programmed." He was actually referring to another famous coming out story on Youtube by Connor Franta<sup>7</sup>, a popular Youtuber – "a slick performance of emotion" that was created so that the "gravity" of the case wouldn't be lost, with fireworks, filling the moment with drama. Lawson says there is a common scheme in these videos: the traditional "I'm so nervous" preamble, tears, then the frank statement, the story of how it all came to be, and then the affirming message at the end.

What is more important for the individual, first of all, is not only the political and social positive or negative result, derived from the act of coming out, but an inner satisfaction in the individuals' heart and mind, achieved by the freedom of no longer hiding themselves in the closet from relatives, family and friends. It can place people in

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<sup>7</sup> "Coming Out", YouTube video, 6:28, posted by Connor Franta. Description: "Your support means the absolute world to me and I hope this doesn't change a thing. I love you guys and can't thank you enough for everything xx". December 8, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYodBfRxKWI>.

an invidious position. The process though, is not always the same. It is “constructed differently depending on the individual (i.e. their race, age, family background) and the time, place, and space in which that individual is located” (Rasmussen, 2004). It depends on which context the individual is situated in; the act of coming out in a different country can be prohibited violently, and the person could find himself old and unhappy as a consequence for keeping everything unrevealed. It depends on the education the family lavishes on the child: it can be a strict family or a liberal family. A parent can react differently than what is usually expected, and this is due to the fact that “coming out and the closet are constructed via moral, political, and pedagogical considerations related to the production of sexual identities.” (3) The most powerful value that blocks an individual in the act is his morality. The Internet is full of interviews with young teenagers, raised within oppressive Christian families, who didn’t come out because they were too scared of their parents’ reaction.

Europe, for example, is a ‘land’ of morality and religion – Catholic, most of the time –, where the act of coming out may be read by the gay or lesbian son, as a huge responsibility, since it does not agree with the right moral and traditional values. The process may also not happen for some individuals, as I said.

The YouTube video is inspiring, so why has coming out always been considered problematic? The Rhodes Bros made it look easy and shareable with millions of people. Were they sure of their father’s response? Would they have posted the video anyway, even if their dad had reacted in a bad way? The dangerous aspect of the YouTube

confessional is the audience's reaction. It is complicated to predict the reaction, and that means that the twins were courageous, ignoring the response; but at the same time they both took a tremendous risk. If 'coming out' is extremely easy – as they demonstrated – why do people resist? Unfortunately the absurdity of our attachment to traditional values – often without even knowing the meaning of them – forecloses the chance to live a simple and free life. In *Coming Out Is So Last Year* (2014) Suzanna D. Walters says that the force of the closet is “an active part of American culture” and that changes of the past twenty years have modified the boundaries of the coming out process:

Undeniably, coming out retains a place in the lived experiences of many gay people, but there is no doubt that it has receded as “the story” in popular culture, even as it is clear it has not wholly disappeared. In this era of liberal gay visibility, contemporary culture has other motifs to choose from, and the coming-out story no longer represents both the beginning and the end of how gay identity is imagined in popular media (Walters, 2014).

She exemplifies this saying that the TV series *Modern Family* features a gay male couple that has already adopted a little girl; the “least of their issues” is the coming out. She draws up a list of TV series – *Will & Grace* as an example – in which they are “already out.” If so many gay and lesbians are “already out,” why is it so debated? The struggle for a young individual in these circumstances is most of the time connected to their families. Family is home, the place you expect to be yourself, always. This doesn't erase the fact that the fear coincides with our parents' reaction, for emotional closeness. The fear of coming out is no less pervasive than the fear of the unknown and the fear of rejection. Penny Guisinger explains the coming out process in this way: “Coming out is like unfolding a road map. It's awkward and full of creases, and once you get the thing

open, you'll never get it back in the glove compartment. Instead, you'll stuff it in the pocket of the door where it will ride next your left elbow as the miles roll under your radials. Coming out is like that." Or again: "Coming out is not an act. It's a process composed of a thousand acts, a thousands conversations. It happens everyday, every moment, every time someone ask 'So what does your husband do for work?'" (Guisinger, 2014).

I will never forget my father's face when I told him this summer. It's a face you can never forget. We were sitting in my kitchen, with only my mother and father and I screamed it in their faces. It was casual, not "programmed." As a consequence, I was absolutely not prepared for that moment. When two parents see their child crying, and nothing can stop the tears, they force the child to explain what is wrong. My dad looked at me, calmly and maturely, but with two melancholy eyes that were saying "my son is gay," and said, "I love you more now, because I know what you are going through," while my mother had a different reaction: "I don't believe you. This is not possible." I understand my mother's words. She is proudly Catholic, where her sons' future can only be to get married, and have kids. For her, this wasn't possible for me anymore.

That night, I had the most beautiful conversation I've ever had with my parents. Everyone was frank and honest. For the first time, I could have been my self in my house, with the people who are supposed to love me the most. I waited for that moment for a long time, and finally I had the opportunity to introduce my self to the world, to scream who I was from the bottom of my heart! We started talking about everything they missed in these years; bullying, fake girlfriends, life and love. Yes, their son was gay, but for them it wasn't God's mistake, a problem to fix or a heart to fix. Everyone learned

something from the conversation and still, every time I'm with them, there is the chance for them to know me better, as a human, as their child, as a person who suffered. They see how important I am in the world. I also remember my friends and the conversation I had with them; I remember me doing it not for a social goal, but for a superior good that most of the time coincides with the chance to be your self in those small everyday realities, as your own house, within the relationship with your friends. Maddi – my best friend, Catholic and cynic – told me “knowing you deep in your heart, I'm changing my opinion about homosexuality.” Think about that. How powerful a simple, intimate conversation can be with your best friend! She was faithful to everything I am in her life, faithful to the value I have, and she gained the world, a world's perspective that she didn't know before.

This conversation is the first step in the coming out process and the advantage that is possible to obtain is profuse. As usual, the process doesn't really happen on YouTube, but at home, in the kitchen, with the majority of the family. The dynamic of sitting down and talking about something emotionally important can be the biggest resource to start accepting yourself, to start living *with* yourself. This moment of tenderness, truth and maturity is the only way, in my opinion, to delete an uneasiness that belongs to you since you were born. But, as matter of fact, this is not obvious for everyone. The value of a heart to heart conversation with one's parents can also not be recognized.

Tyler, for example, a 15-year-old Canadian, decided to come out to his parents about being gay. His father's reaction wasn't tender as we hoped in these occasions; in fact, Tyler was forced to live with his aunt and not at home anymore. He was interviewed by the British newspaper Daily Mail and by Huffington Post B.C. to discuss about the

Facebook conversation that Tyler had with his father right after he came out to him. He decided to post on his Tumblr account, giving everyone the chance to read the dramatic conversation between the two of them. The father started insulting him saying “We took care of you since you were a baby. We loved you, took care of you when you’re sick. Lost many days and nights in all your fifteen years. Now this is what we get in return, shame and embarrassment” or “You are trying to ruin me. This is worse than death.” Tyler, in the interview explained what his original intention was: “Maybe he could accept me, because that’s all I want... I just want him to be there for me” and even after the fact he concluded, “I’m hoping there’s still the possibility that he could change, even if it takes a while.”

Homosexuality is real, and the struggle for a gay or lesbian individual is real. Bad conversations and reactions are possible everywhere, because being gay and what it means for the individual is something still unknown and unpopular today. Can we still claim that the coming out process can be part of a tender and mature conversation? In this occasion, no! But what matters is the goal a person has in the process, being accepted, being himself; this is what sets the heart free.



## **Conclusion:**

There isn't a conventional answer to homosexuality, and giving an end to the topic would result wrong and out of context. It's complicated to give a judgment in an argument that is way too big for me. My paper is, in fact, an open question.

We can look at these two young boys, crying for the drama they have, and be emotionally struck by the inspirational act they decided to share online, with the world. What was the purpose? At a certain point, the motivation for posting the video doesn't even matter as much as the outcome the video had. As Karoliina Talvitie-Lamberg suggests in her academic dissertation about confessions through social media, "one needs to perform the right type of confessions in public to make oneself visible" (198). On one hand, the visibility an individual needs can be inside his own place, within his small reality – family and friends – in which the person necessarily wants to be free. On the other hand, the visibility is for social goals, and not for superior goods.

"By doing that, the performer produces disclosures – even partial ones – of oneself and, thus, is a means to produce truth about the self. Through this confessional act, the individual is formed not as an object, but as a subject – of the communication" (Lamberg, 2014). In this quotation from *Confessions in Social Media*, Karoliina Lamberg explains her concerns about a new way of communication that began to be popular in online confessionals. She points out that, instead, in a normal face-to-face communication, the individual looks at the truth of the self and not at a performance in which he is the best actor. Being a subject of the communication is all that matters. In a direct dialogue with parents there is the chance to deepen the relationship with them,

there is the chance to discover and realize who you are. Producing truth about the self, where finally the individual is in a dialogue with someone, and not just with himself, doesn't mean to produce a self-disclosure online that everyone can watch. A tender and mature dialogue is not possible anymore; the only possible thing is a me-centered communication that excludes everything, except myself. It's a narcissistic self, where personal gain and ego are the only dimensions to care about.

The richness, the knowledge of myself that I obtained through my dad's eyes and my mom's tears are the values of communication. This is the priority. In the infinite process of the coming out, a story that will belong to me forever, all I care about is who is surrounding me and those "thousand conversations" I can have with them in which I can be who I am supposed to be.

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