Presentation of digital self in everyday life:
towards a theory of Digital Identity

A thesis submitted in (partial) fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Claire Davison

School of Business IT and Logistics
College of Business
RMIT University
September 2012

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgment has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Claire Davison

19 February 2013

Acknowledgments

A PhD dissertation may feel like a solitary expedition, but it takes support from many to reach completion. Here I would like to acknowledge the support, both academic and personal, from those around me.

First, I would like to thank Professor Brian Corbitt. Occasionally in your professional life you have the good fortune to meet someone who inspires and guides you, while offering the freedom to explore ideas without restraint. Brian is just such a person. He truly understands and epitomizes the word Professor – he is a teacher, and an adviser but also someone who will challenge you intellectually. Through Brian's dedication and guidance I have been able to complete this work and for that I will always be grateful.

Dr Paul R. Cerotti is a mentor extraordinaire who has supported my academic career since I joined his teaching team in 2000. He is an inspiration and one of the greatest teachers I have met. Paul has taught me so much about academia and education. If he had not pushed me with deadlines and remained ever-vocal about finishing then I am sure I would still be thinking about my topic. I am certain that we will remain life-long friends.

Thank you to my colleagues who gave their time freely and were happy to talk anywhere and everywhere, from hallways to coffee shops, about my topic. Special thanks go to Dr Konrad Peszynski who shares my passion for Social Media (and Star Wars). His advice was invaluable throughout the process and his kind and encouraging words always came at the right time. And also to Dr Sittamont Kanjanabootra who always had something positive to say and encouraged me to focus, focus, focus! I look forward to working with you both in the future.

My appreciation also goes to the academic support that came from the University, from the OnTrack seminars, staff in the Business Research office, to the referencing genius of Lila Kemlo. I would also like to acknowledge Graeme Kemlo for reading, re-reading and offering his expert editorial opinions on my manuscript.

Recognition goes to Professor Mohini Singh who guided me through confirmation process and my first conference paper. I would like to thank her for her time.

My friends were also central to completing - a big heartfelt thank you to Melanie Gardiner who, from beginning to end, has been a sounding board and voice of reason. She has helped mind-map ideas on napkins all over Melbourne from brunch spots on Brunswick Street to laneway bars. In over four years she has never once lost interest in talking about my topic. Also to Caroline Mahon who was always asking 'how are you going?' and was actually interested in the reply! Her feedback on my completion seminar was crucial. Thanks to the Rowans' for their support and hot meals and to Danie and the girls for making sure I came up for air occasionally and left the confines of my office.

I come from a long line of teachers and academics so I am by no means the first to complete this journey but I would like to acknowledge the contribution of those who didn't get to see me complete. My uncle David, the first Dr Davison, was an influence on my academic life. His dedication to his students and passion for his discipline (mathematics) was inspiring and will no doubt be remembered by many. But mostly to my mother, Michelle, who never got to the see the path I took in life. She was passionate about education, research and literature and engendered these interests in me. Whenever she read over our work she would ask 'yes but what does it really mean to you?' I am sure she would have loved to take her English-teacher red pen to this manuscript. I would like to think that she would be proud.

Thanks go to my family. To my sister Fleur and her family, Adam, Lucy and April, words can't adequately express the thanks I need to give you. You have been through all the ups and downs of this process and never once questioned my sanity. I am incredibly lucky to have such a great cheer squad and am a proud auntie of the most well-versed social identity critics in the under-fives set.

Most significantly I would like to thank my father, Alastair Davison, who instilled in me a desire to learn and the freedom to question. His academic life inspired my own. I could not have completed this thesis without his support and dedication. He has supported every academic move I've made from Commerce, to Archaeology and now to Social Media without the bat of an eyelid, always encouraging me. He is one of the good guys. It was his unerring support that made this process, and life in general, seem a little easier.

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Abstract

This study of Digital Identity investigates how particular groups of adults over the age of 30 use Facebook and Twitter to share personal information online. The research explores whether individuals construct their identity in the same way in a digital context as they do in the 'real world'. The study examines voluntary sharing of information rather than information collected and collated by third parties, approaching the research from an individual's point of view to create, not just a footprint, but a Digital Identity.

This study explores the notion of Identity, and establishes the common characteristics and differences between the concepts of Identity Theory (Burke & Stets 2009), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1959, 1963, 1969) and Impression Management (Goffman 1956); and how they relate to the digital self. There are overlapping elements of identity formation that influence the way individuals create themselves through Role, the *self*, Audience, and Symbols. The importance of role, emphasized in all theories of identity, is used as the context for this study. The participants came from three different groups: Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives.

The phenomenon of identity is personal and needs to be conducted at a close and subjective level. Interpretivism is crucial to understand our individual differences as social actors and to allow us to interpret the everyday social roles in accordance with the meaning given to those roles (Saunders et al. 2009). The strategy of the study is ethnographic, taking the researcher close to the 'reality' of people's lives (Becker and Greer 1960) using interviews and observations. By investigating people's use of Facebook and Twitter the research interprets how individuals formed their Digital Identity. The analysis framework for this investigation is guided by the work of Klein and Myers (1999, p. 72) with their principles of the hermeneutic circle; contextualization; interaction between the researchers and the subjects; abstraction and generalization; dialogical reasoning; multiple interpretations and suspicion steering the analysis.

The three groups, Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives, have very different ways of approaching how they presented themselves online. The findings of this research illustrate that individuals form a Digital Identity in a similar way to Identity Theory with the *self*, Audience, Role and Symbols all being important. Individuals claim that they are presenting their 'real' selves online although they create specific social rules. The audience is no

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longer definable and mediated but is one block of known and unknown people. Individuals create their identity in the same way as they do in the real world but there are external factors that influence their presentation of self. The fundamental difference in the way that Digital Identity is formed is the interaction with the technology. This difference forms the basis of the beginnings of a Theory of Digital Identity which states that while the elements of role, self, symbols and audience are all used to create Digital Identity they do so in the context of smart technology that interacts and distorts Identity. So while individuals create their identity in the same way as they do in the 'real world' they have the addition of external factors that influence their presentation of *self*.

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis reports a study of Digital Identity created through the use of Facebook and Twitter. Over the past five years Social Media have evolved from what some considered a fad to an important communication and marketing tool, but the phenomenon is not without casualties. The popular press is littered with examples of people over-sharing online: risqué photographs, drunken nights out on the town, and illegal or illicit goings-on all being shared openly on Facebook. As the Internet is user driven, with high levels of interaction, the role of the user in Social Media cannot be underestimated. So the researcher questioned, given the risks of publishing information online, whether the persona we present online is a true reflection of how we see ourselves – or is it a construct?

This study of Digital Identity investigates how particular groups of adults over the age of 30 use Facebook and Twitter to share personal information online. The research explores whether individuals construct their identity in the same way in a digital context as they do in the 'real world'. The investigation examines voluntary sharing of information, rather than information collected and collated by third parties. It approaches the research from an individual's point of view to create, not just a footprint, but a Digital Identity.

As the 30th modern Olympic Games commenced the audience could engage with blogs, tweets and pages set up to celebrate and share the sports. They could also see every move that athletes made in their social lives. Just prior to the games two Australian swimmers were 'caught' online having uploaded photographs of themselves posing with guns - stupid, yes; inappropriate, yes, but the media firestorm it created was disproportional to the event.

Facebook photograph of Australian Olympic team swimmers, Nick D'Arcy and Kenrick Monk holding guns as it appeared in the media (Langmaid & Tucker 2012).

This sort of media coverage is not unusual and, if a person believes the press, they would gain the impression that everyone on Facebook and Twitter is leading sordid, dangerous and improper lives. It is in this context that this research was conceived and completed. It was this initial reaction to the negative press and the way that friends were sharing online that highlighted the need to delve further into the habits of how individuals presented themselves online.

The research field has many examples of studies into the use of Social Media by young people and college students (boyd 2007; Ito et al. 2009 & 2010; Fodeman & Monroe 2009). There are also numerous investigations into how business uses Social Media to create brand (Foster et al. 2011; Ralphs 2011; Reyneke et al. 2011), market their goods (Castronovo & Huang 2012; Dăniăsa et al. 2010; Kunz et al. 2011), and build relationships (Hinduja & Patchin 2008; Holson 2010; Turkle 2011) . Literature searches are crowded with publications about education (Anderson 2007; Tynes 2007; Peluchette & Karl 2010), eHealth (Johnson 2006; Hawn 2009; Luxton et al. 2012) and the rise of citizen journalism (Kaufhold et al. 2010; Lacy et al. 2010; Bullard 2012). Security and Privacy are well researched across the disciplines of Information Systems (Agarwal et al. 2010; Rose 2011), Computer Science (Eirinaki et al. 2012; Weyori et al. 2012), Communications (Fuchs 2011; Trottier 2012) and Law (Solove 2007; Wingrove et al. 2011).

With worldwide Facebook (Facebook newsroom 2012) users at 950 million and Twitter (Bennett 2012) at 500 million the presence of these applications is undeniable. Social Media are a pervasive and increasingly ubiquitous form of technology. The personal information that individuals share comprises personal details (Hinduja & Patchin 2008), multimedia such as photographs and video (Mathieu 2007), new hybrid languages (Tagliamonte & Derek 2008), experience sharing and creative pursuits (Carrington 2008; McCullagh 2008; Collins 2010), as well as opinions and gossip (Solove 2007). From this we can observe that individuals use Social Media for a myriad of information types. Therefore the information that is available for all to see is not uniform, predictable or comprehensive; but rather it creates unique footprints for each individual.

There are a number of reasons why individuals use Social Media. They share information (Hersberger et al. 2007), create community (Korica et al. 2006), collaborate (Tapscott & Williams

2006), have fun (Park et al. 2009), connect with others (boyd 2007), have romantic relationships (Holson 2010), build identity (Brubaker 2009), manage reputation (Solove 2007), are involved in charities (Austin 2007), society and politics (Samuelson 2009) – and for some it is to have their '15 minutes of fame' (Adrian 2008). The sum of this activity creates an online presence that can be described as a person's digital footprint (Batelle 2004; Madden et al. 2007; Brubaker 2009). While creating this overall digital footprint may not be the initial objective of sharing personal information, it is created by the residual information. In combination with audience it becomes a Digital Identity.

By investigating the problems of Social Media usage for individuals we can establish that there are a number of influences that are out of the control of the individual and can also change the Digital Identity that remains online. Issues that may impact an individual's virtual identity are uninvited audiences (Treese 2009), reputation management (Solove 2007), privacy (McCullagh 2008), security (Chen et al. 2009) and the resiliency and vulnerability of personal information shared on Social Media (Palfrey & Gasser 2008). Individuals must also be aware of the intellectual reliability (Lipczynska 2005) and data integrity (Lipczynska 2005; Worthen 2007) of information shared. By sharing information on Social Media individuals are also vulnerable to censorship (Simon 2010), hate crimes and cyberbullying (Klomek et al. 2010). While control by the individual may be conscious, Chen et al. (2009) state that one of the biggest issues for Social Media usage is that friends might share unexpected and unwanted information without the individual's permission or knowledge.

All of these issues can impact the way that an individual is presented online. While they may be conscious of the information they share, that information might be misinterpreted by an uninvited audience or their privacy infiltrated by hackers. While the literature establishes that these issues occur, there is little investigation into the impact these elements have on an individual's Digital Identity or personal life. This research then explores these ideas and how they affect the presentation of *self* online. By observing how individuals use Facebook and Twitter we can establish the elements of identity that are created in this space.

1.1   Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this investigation comes from Identity theory, Social Identity Theory and Impression Management. The discourse on identity bridges disciplines and the concept is constantly developing and therefore challenging to define (James 1890; Cheek et al. 2002; Weigert et al. 1986). This study investigates the notion of Identity, and establishes the common characteristics and differences between the concepts of Identity, Social Identity and Impression Management and how they relate to the digital self.

Turkle's (1995) seminal work of the 1990s talked about identity play in the online environment, and confirms the importance of roles on the Internet. Turkle's early studies concentrated on MUD (Multi-User Dungeon, multiplayer real-time virtual world) users and her findings were that people altered their image online; pretending to be something they were not – such as a different gender or age. The conclusions made by a number of scholars (Turkle 1995; Van Gelder 1991) are that the anonymity of MUDs allowed for deception. More recently it has been suggested that the anonymous nature of the Internet has changed and that the studies of the 1990s into MUD users does not properly represent all Internet users (Davis 2010). Jewkes and Sharp (2003, p. 3) concur, stating that the Internet allows for individuals to conceal aspects of themselves while at the same time projecting identities that are 'fantastic, fraudulent, exploitative or criminal' and that online identities allow for individuals to be whatever they wish to be. Identities can be rewritten constantly. Aboujaode (2011) proposes that the online environment provides individuals with an opportunity to not only recreate the parts of themselves with which they are unhappy, but, as a platform, to share less mature and antisocial impulses. This infers that the Internet takes away the traditional barriers of culture and social expectations. Some research (Manago et al. 2008) indicates that individuals use Social Network Sites to create idealized selves. Back et al. (2009) refute this idea after testing the idealized hypothesis and observed that there was no evidence of self-idealization. Here the researcher establishes there is a gap in the literature around understanding the problem of the formation of an active Digital Identity and how individuals create themselves online using Social Media. This is vital to the understanding of technologies. Therefore working towards a Digital Identity Theory became the core of this study and a review of different Identity Theories was appropriate.

Identity Theory emphasizes the importance of *self*, the language of presentation and interaction. It draws heavily on the early work of Mead (1934), James (1890), Cooley (1902) and Stryker (1980), and the later developments from Burke and Stets (2009). Mead (1934) proposed that self-identity had three stages that reacted to social experiences and environmental issues. He theorized that individuals, when young, develop an 'autonomous sense of self ("I") as well as understanding of the self that is governed by social rules and external expectations ("me")' (in Brubaker 2009, p. 17). He argued that identity was role-oriented and developed from 'identity negotiation' (interpersonal interactions). These ideas still remain at the core of Identity Theory (Burke & Stets 2009). When presenting *self*, or our identity, there must be meaning attached to the role we are addressing. The meaning and classifications come from the symbols, particularly language, and from the social context in which we live (Burke & Stets 2009).

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was originally developed by Henri Tajfel (1959, 1963, 1969) with further extension by Turner in the 1970s (Tajfel & Turner 1979). Tajfel observed that there are multiple layers to creating an identity. The first being personal identity which is a definition of self. This concept is then set in the context of social identity via social categorization that facilitates distinct social groups. From this individuals choose in-groups and out-groups to determine the satisfaction they have with their own social identities by comparing the two – known as self categorization (Hogg 1996). These groups are an important source of pride and self-esteem to the individual (McLeod 2008).

Based on Goffman's (1956) constructs of identity, the theory of Impression Management looks at the role that individual actors have in creating, maintaining and defending their social identities in a play metaphor. Through assumptions, settings, props, and scripts, individuals enhance their reputation. Impression Management explains the motivations behind complex human interactions and performances and is an attempt to influence others' perceptions in an advantageous way. Goffman's work incorporates aspects of a symbolic interactionist perspective (Schlenker 1980) emphasizing a qualitative analysis of the interactive nature of the communication process. Impression Management is about the *self* and interaction. Goffman (1956) proposes that interaction is a 'performance' that takes place in front of the audience and behind the scenes. This performance is shaped by the environment and the expectations of those watching and participating (Barnhart 1994).

This research, then, will facilitate a better understanding of how individuals present themselves on Facebook and Twitter. The aim was to observe how different groups use and interact on Social Network Sites and the resultant Digital Identity that was formed. The research sees to what extent individuals are consciously sharing information and the form that this takes. Using an amalgamation of identity theories, as identified above, the researcher discusses and observes the information that each participant has shared online. This research will achieve a greater appreciation of the elements of identity creation online: motivations of social network usage; the consciousness of *self* online; the changing nature of symbolism; the role of audience; context; and the external factors exerted on Digital Identity. Given the strong nature of role on identity formation, this is the core of the research – with groups creating the online perspective.

1.2   Research Question

From the review of literature it was identified that there were some overlapping elements of identity formation. These influence the way that individuals create themselves: Role, the *self*, Audience, and the use of Symbols to attain meaning. These form the basis of the enquiry and set the foundation for establishing the research question: **Do individuals construct their identity in the same way in a digital context as they do in the 'real world'?** The importance of role was emphasized in all theories of identity and hence is used as the context for this study. The participants came from three different groups: Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives.

1.3   Methodology

The researcher investigated a number of different philosophical approaches to the research and concluded that Interpretivism was the most appropriate for this study. To best understand how an individual uses Social Media to create a Digital Identity requires more information than can be obtained from a positivist paradigm. To comprehend how individuals present themselves it is important to ask them what they think and to watch what they do. By delving deeper we receive rich and abundant information that can be interpreted to form understandings. By investigating how people interact and share information on Facebook and Twitter, and by creating meaning in the symbols they use, we can interpret how they form their identity.

Inductive research allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the meanings that humans attach to events (Saunders et al. 2009). This research seeks to understand the meanings that individuals attach to Digital Identity creation. This research does not want to be constrained by a specific theory to be tested, but rather uses theory to guide the research with the goal to build on different identity theories. There is no specific theory of Digital Identity creation that can be tested, so we need to take the ideas of Identity Theory and relate them to the realities of how individuals use Social Media to create themselves.

1.4   Research strategy – Ethnography

The strategy of the study is ethnographic as it takes the researcher close to the 'reality' of people's lives (Becker & Greer 1960) and allows a researcher to develop theory from observation and practice (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983; Corbitt 2000). This research is an exploratory study and investigates identity at a close and subjective level. The best method to understand how the participants think and feel about the phenomena is for the researcher to become immersed in their world. Saunders et al. (2009) describe ethnography as a research strategy that focuses upon describing and interpreting the social world through first-hand field study.

The data was generated through three phases: Interviews, Observations and follow-up interviews. The interviews were designed with a view to establishing whether the experience of individuals supported or contrasted with the theories in the literature in respect to how they presented a Digital Identity. Questions were based on the theoretical context of role, *self*, symbols and audience. In addition, it sought new information from the interviewees, with respect to bad experiences, group context, technological factors, cultural factors and other ideas. This was to uncover how their identities were created and maintained on Social Media.

In order to understand how identity was created by individuals, different groups were identified and investigated. The three groups were Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives. The literature is rich with studies about young people and graduate students, therefore this study looked at mature participants over the age of 30 who would offer different perspectives. The literature establishes the importance of role in identity creation and in this context it defined the groups chosen to be investigated.

The three groups were under-represented in the literature and offered an opportunity to expand understanding of how individuals use Social Media. The researcher has worked in Academia and this was an interesting environment to start investigating identity formation. Stay-at-home Parents of infants and primary school aged children were chosen because of their 'invisibility' in the extant literature. The final group was chosen to represent people who had a high profile at work and how their position and reputation might influence what they shared. When examining the three groups the researcher was seeking to identify how an individual's role influenced the way they presented themselves on Facebook or Twitter.

Observational data are important in ethnographic studies to give meaning to phenomena (Saunders et al. 2009). The observation phase of the research commenced while interviews were still occurring, as each phase supported and informed the others. There were two different levels to the observational data. Firstly, all participants' Facebook pages were observed over a three day period. This was primarily to verify the data that individuals said they shared online was in fact the case. The second level of observational data was created by following four Stay-at-home Parents over different three-month periods. During this time the researcher logged on every day and followed the interactions of the individual by recording their posts, comments and exchanges with others. The follow-up interviews were developed to expand on the information collected in phases one and two and to understand better why users had responded in the way they had. From the initial findings of phases one and two, the researcher had drawn some conclusions and used the follow-up interviews to test these ideas. Therefore the interviews were unstructured and group specific.

1.5   Outline of chapters - Thesis plan

The thesis has eight chapters after this introduction, and leads the reader through the process of this research. The digital context of this study has been established and therefore the investigation commenced with two reviews of literature. The first was on the extant literature of Social Media to understand better what had already been investigated. The initial literature review looked at Social Media, specifically Facebook and Twitter, and the how, who, what, when, where of the technologies. These applications are the best means of representing the channels through which information is shared and, at this time, are the predominant Social Media sites in the world (Drezner 2010). The literature review identified the types of personal

information that individuals share, the reasons why people use Facebook and/or Twitter, the problems, and the technology issues. From this chapter we can see that individuals create an online identity through the information that they share.

The second literature review (Chapter Three) looks at previous studies on Digital Identity. The literature is embryonic in this area and, while there are some seminal studies in the 1990s, the current focus seems to be around privacy and security. By establishing that Identity is central to the argument of this thesis it was paramount to investigate the theoretical underpinnings of this to better focus the study. This chapter investigated the notion of Identity and established the common characteristics and differences between the concepts of Identity Theory (Burke & Stets 2009), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1959, 1963, 1969) and Impression Management (Goffman 1956) and how they relate to the digital *self*. From this review it was identified that there were some overlapping elements of identity formation: role, the *self,* audience, and the use of symbols to attain meaning. Given the importance of role, it was set as the context with the participants coming from three different groups: Academics, Stay-at-home parents and Business Executives. Here the theoretical foundation and research questions were identified.

Chapter Four presents the concepts of Methodology and highlights the importance of the philosophical choice to the thesis. When investigating a phenomenon as personal as identity, one needs to do so at a close and subjective level. Interpretivism is crucial to understand differences between individuals in their role as social actors and allows us to interpret their everyday social roles in accordance with the meaning given to those roles (Saunders et al. 2009). This paradigm emphasizes the meaningful nature of people's participation in social and cultural life (Zhang 2011). These ideas are the essence of this research. By investigating how people interact and share information on Facebook and Twitter, and by creating meaning in the symbols they use, we can interpret how they form their identity.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven are the findings and discussion for each of the three groups of users investigated in the thesis. Chapter Five is about the Academics who have two different approaches to Social Media; the individuals either embraced the medium completely, using it to facilitate their career, or they were cautious about what they shared. Academics related most strongly to their primary role as the online version of themselves. Academics rely on their reputations to build their career and to this end they were the most conservative of the groups.

There were some academics who did not push out information, but rather consumed the information shared by others, as they did not wish to be seen as 'foolish'. All academics in this study had set themselves very specific guidelines about what they would share online and what their personas should look like. The *self t*hat is represented online is an edited version of themselves.

Chapter Six is about Stay-at-home Parents. They were the most prolific of the groups when it came to posting, but had not necessarily thought about the specific self they wished to project. For many of this group, when they reflected on what they were sharing, it became apparent that the overall feeling they projected was positive: how well the kids were doing, how great the holiday was, how supportive their partner was and how great parenthood was. Some parents reflected that this felt inauthentic as they in fact had lots of bad days. Others said it was a deliberate choice because they didn't want to be seen as a whinger[1]. Some participants used Facebook as a public relations tool to justify their choice to stay home.

Chapter Seven presented the findings for the Business Executives who were representatives from different industry sectors; and all were at an executive or senior executive level. They had definite viewpoints and most considered Facebook a private space that had little to do with their role as an executive. The greatest disconnect between what was shared online and the role an individual played in life was in the Business Executive group. There were some Business Executives with a high awareness that the online identity was related directly to their role in business, who then edited themselves based on this knowledge.

From the combined findings of the previous chapters, Chapter Eight, presents the ideas that form the basis of a Theory of Digital Identity. Firstly, the chapter investigates the similarities and differences between the three groups, then the role of technology and finally a summary of the research. The findings of this research show that individuals form a Digital Identity in a similar way to Identity Theory with the *self*, audience, roles and symbols all being important. But there is a fundamental difference in the way that Digital Identity is formed and that is the interaction with the technology. This chapter presents a starting point for a discussion about Digital Identity Theory.

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1 The online Oxford Dictionary (2013) defines whinger as 'British and Australian Informal. to complain; whine'.

The final Chapter (Nine) presents the conclusions drawn from the research. It acknowledges the contribution of the research to existing knowledge and looks at the value of the findings to industry and individuals. It also addresses the limitations of the project and identifies a number of suggested future research areas.

Chapter Two - Literature Review on Social Media

2.1 Introduction: the conversation economy

Conversation belongs to all ages. During the height of the Greek democracy, around Plato's time, the Agora was a place to discuss issues, and in the evenings the less formal symposia were held in homes. Cicero wrote *On Duties* in 66BC about the decline of conversation. Although some venues of conversation persisted, in the Middle Ages conversation was advocated to create 'polite Christianity' (Miller 2006, p. 53) and Erasmus (1511) advocated that the polite Christian needed to lighten up and have a sense of humor. Throughout the period of the 16-18th centuries there were manuals on the art of conversation, and during the Enlightenment many of the great names of conversation also put their thoughts to paper – as well as discussing them in drawing rooms and coffee houses. These luminaries included thinkers and writers such as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift and Henry Fielding. Since the advent of SMS and internet forums in the 1990s, conversation and small talk have been restored to prominence, with messaging systems, Social Network Sites, e-mail and SMS becoming the modern conduit of conversation, particularly for conversation that is not face-to-face (Miller 2006). Some call today the conversation economy (Batelle 2012) but it is more than just conversation, although that is contained within it. Electronic communication is a way of creating and sharing ideas and processes; of making money and of establishing one's identity.

This chapter is a literature review that will identify the types of personal information that individuals share online, the uses of that information and the issues that arise from sharing the information. This will establish the information that forms an individual's digital identity. An analysis of the literature will then identify a number of factors that influence the personal information shared online.

2.2 Social Media - Today

In the last two decades communication and collaboration has grown exponentially through the plethora of new Internet applications known originally as Web 2.0, but also by the titles of Social Technologies or Social Media. Social Media is the common usage as this is written. Technologies

included blogs (weblog), microblogs such as Twitter, wikis, file sharing tools such as video-sharing sites on YouTube, photo-sharing sites such as Flickr, podcasts, Really Simple Syndication (RSS), Social Network Sites, Social Tagging (Folksonomy) and Mashups (O'Reilly 2005; Kolbitsch & Maurer 2006; Fox, Zickuhr & Smith 2009; Davison, Singh & Cerotti 2010). These represent the technologies that define Social Media and it is under these headings that we see different applications created almost daily, such as Facebook and Twitter.

The core developments of Web 2.0, from Web 1.0 (Anderson 2007; O'Reilly 2005; Pascu 2008), were the growth of user participation and socialization – for example, individuals expect to be able to read reviews and receive recommendations when they purchase goods online (Mudambi & Schuff 2010). Social Media are platforms that encourage collaboration and communication (Li & Bernoff 2008) and they change the role of the user from 'information consumer' to 'author of information' that is shared on the Social Media (Korica et al. 2006). Höegg et al. (2006) described Social Media as a philosophical change in the use of the Internet rather than a purely technological one; with interactivity, user input and new communication media at the core of the change.

Social Media use has been growing exponentially since its inception and recognition in 2005 (O'Reilly 2005). For the purpose of this study the researcher will narrow the media investigated to the Social Network Site *Facebook* and the Microblog *Twitter*. These applications best represent the channels through which information is shared and, at this time, are the predominant Social Media sites in the world (Drezner 2010). Of the world's Internet population, 74% have visited a Social Network Site or blog (Nielsen Wire 2010). Twitter is used by over 2 million Australians (Brun et al. 2012), 13% of the American (USA) population, and averages 200 million tweets a day (Smith & Brenner 2012). Facebook has more than 900 million active Facebook users world wide (Facebook newsroom 2012). An Australian study (Sensis 2012) showed that 62% of internet users have a presence on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. Facebook dominates the social media space, capturing 97% of social network users. There are over 10 million active users in Australia (Socialbakers 2012).

Smith and Brenner (2012) report that 15% of online adults use Twitter, and 8% do so on a daily basis, with daily usage having quadrupled since late 2010. They purport that the rise of smartphones might account for this change. In Australia there are 1.8 million users as of April

2012 (Murton 2012) which shows a growth of 200,000 users from the month before. The growth of these figures indicates the importance of Facebook and Twitter as primary Social Media outlets.

Facebook

Facebook was created in 2004 and is a Social Network Site. It is a site of web pages containing individual personal profiles created by the users. The pages are used for personal opinions and public commentary, and are linked to other Social Network Site pages by 'friendships' or networks (boyd 2006). These sites allow for many different avenues of communication such as instant messaging, and numerous multimedia formats including video clips, tagging, private groups, tasks and calendars, scrapbooking, hobbies, interests, and photographs (Hinduja & Patchin 2008). According to Facebook (Facebook newsroom 2012) there are more than 125 billion friend connections on Facebook with an average of 300 million photos uploaded per day (in the first three months of 2012). An average of 3.2 billion likes and comments are generated every day.

Twitter

Twitter started life as *twttr* in 2006 and was created as a microblog - a blog that limits the length of the post to 140 characters (Fox et al. 2009). But the way that users have adapted the media has shifted the emphasis from blogging to be closer in nature to Social Network Sites with users able to share not just thoughts but multimedia and links. The hashtag (#) used by Twitter users allows for trends to be formed and shared with millions, thus creating communities around ideas and shared interests.

2.3   Literature Review

The following section of this chapter is a review of literature on the types of personal information exchanged by individuals on Social Media, the motivations, benefits and issues.

The Australian Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (Office of the NSW Privacy Commissioner 2012, p.1) defines personal information as 'information or an opinion

(including information or an opinion forming part of a database and whether or not recorded in a material form) about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion'. This information could include

- written records about a person
- a photograph or image of a person
- fingerprints or DNA samples that identify a person
- information about a person that is not written down, but which is in the possession or control of the agency.

Thus personal information is more than a name and photographs, it includes all the information collected, and about, an individual.

Whitley and Hosein (2010, p. 244) define the personal information such as an address, name and date of birth as the 'biographical footprint' of an individual. This data can be used by organisations to verify information, when compared against third party databases such as a driver's license record. The introduction of *spyware,* software that is installed deceptively into computers and gathers information about the individual's movements on the internet, is a way that third parties can collect personal details (Solove 2004, p. 7). This goes in hand with tracking cookies that store authentication and access materials on an individual's computer, and create easily accessible personal information for third parties (Hormozi 2005). In this context the identity created online relates to the personal details collected and maintained by parties separate from the individual.

Just as an e-commerce user leaves behind a trail of personal information, such as bank account details (Wilton 2008), so too does the social user (Brubaker 2009). Madden et al. (2007) suggested that information on Social Media could be material provided by the individuals themselves or material about the individuals provided by others, sometimes without their knowledge. According to Norrie (2008) Social Media are not just used to share personal information but also to manage it and effectively store it for future use (Elsweiler 2008; Gwizdka 2006). Chen et al. (2009) argue that privacy issues on Social Network Sites are far more complex than the commercial privacy, which is a regulated environment. Social interaction on Social Network Sites can cause 'friends' to divulge private information, to upload a photograph without authority or to identify a person without their permission. There is also the issue that a person may not have the option to remove any online information that is not on their site. Petroni's

(2002) research discussed boundaries that a person can control, and this can be in conflict with another person whose boundary was more flexible and does not impose the same constraints and will alter the social dynamic of the site and relationship.

Personal information such as public comments on Facebook can be archived by individuals or by Facebook (2012a) and this information is searchable for an indeterminate time, even forever. According to the Australian Government Privacy Commissioner's website the information shared on Facebook can survive even after the account has been deactivated (Porter 2008). This point of view was confirmed by Norberg (2009) and Palfrey & Gasser (2009) who describe personal information as a stored good that can be accessed, used and distributed by others.

The persistent online trail that exists after the initial communication was shared is referred to as a user's digital footprint (Brubaker 2009; Battelle 2004; Madden et al. 2007). Madden et al. (2007) expanded on Battelle's (2004) original idea and further categorized the digital footprint into two areas. Firstly, the *Passive digital footprint*, which was personal data made accessible with no deliberate intervention from an individual. Secondly, *the Active digital footprint* was the personal data that was accessible through deliberate posting or sharing of information by the user.

Personal information was more than the personal details such as name, age, and gender that are shared online. It is the *Active digital footprint* that individuals choose to share online (Madden et al. 2007). This study will examine the Active digital footprint of individuals by investigating the digital identity created by knowingly shared personal information. In addition to the Active digital footprint the sites themselves store easily retrievable information. Facebook and Twitter both store the information that users upload.

Facebook reveals that it collects, on registration, a person's name, email address, birthday and gender as well as any other information that the user wishes to share – and this includes photographs, status updates and comments made on friends' sites (Facebook 2012a). All clicks through the Facebook system are logged in an individual's profile, including URLs, GPS location, IP address, the type of browser they use and the pages they visit.

Twitter (2012) states in its Terms that it can use targeted advertising, collected from a user's traffic, and that creating an account gives Twitter this right. The Terms also gives Twitter the

right to pass on Content to third parties and the user 'consent[s] to the collection, transfer, manipulation, storage, disclosure and other uses of your information as described in this Privacy Policy'. The iTunes site for downloading the Twitter app[2] does not make it explicit what information is being channeled from the user's phone or iPad (iTunes 2012). Twitter admitted in February 2012 that its phone app was uploading the contents of a user's contact list (Sarno 2012). In 1997 (p. 179) Sterne claimed that a 'time will come when we are well known for our inclinations, our predilections, our proclivities and our wants. We will be classified, profiled, categorized, and our every click will be watched'. This is the world that we live in now. While Sterne was talking about the information that was collected about an individual we must also include the information that we share ourselves. The following section establishes the current literature on personal information content shared across Social Media.

According to Madden, Fox, Smith et al. (2007), of the American Internet users who are concerned about the personal information available about them, only 54% say that they take steps to limit the information. Also that 47% of online adults have searched for their digital footprint, up from 22% in 2002. But only 3% of people monitor their online presence regularly, with 22% saying that they search for themselves 'every once in awhile' and 74% saying they had done it once or twice. Madden et al. (2007) also identify that 60% of Internet users were not concerned about how much information was available about them online, with 61% saying that they don't try to limit the information and only 38% saying that they do. These results indicate that the majority of individuals were not concerned about the personal information that was available about them online. The literature is rich with warnings on using Facebook but we can see from Madden et al. (2007) that it would seem that very few individuals are taking steps to diminish the issue.

We have established that the information shared online creates three distinct types of personal information shared: information that is shared passively, actively and obtained by third parties. Together these form an overall collection of personal information that creates a Digital Identity. For the purposes of this study the focus will be on Facebook and Twitter in the context of an individual's active footprint. The next section of this chapter will identify the types of personal information shared actively by individuals.

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[2] The online Oxford Dictionary (2012) defines an app as 'an application, especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device'.

2.4 Content shared on Facebook and Twitter

This section examines the literature on the content shared on Facebook and Twitter by individuals. Individuals share personal details, multimedia, experiences, new language, opinions and gossip.

Personal details such as address, photographs, phone number, and gender are shared on most Social Media. The extent and openness of this information has been explored in the literature, particularly in the consideration of teens and young adults. Hinduja & Patchin (2008) investigated the personal information that teenagers shared on MySpace; Lenhart & Madden (2007) looked at the privacy issues of teenagers and online Social Networks; and Thewall (2008) combined a gender analysis of MySpace with reference to online friendships. Madden and Smith (2010) investigated the extent to which individuals shared personal details online, and their findings showed an increase in the openness of information shared online. For example, 33% of Internet users (and 50% of young adults) had shared personal details such as birth date online.

In a slightly older study Hinduja & Patchin (2008) sampled MySpace for personal details. The study indicated that adolescents did not reveal nearly as much personal information as expected. The findings showed 8.8% revealed their full name, 57% included a picture, 27.8% listed their school, and 0.3% their telephone number. While it was clear that over half the sample were posting photographs, they were still protecting their 'private' information, such as address and phone number. According to Gray and Christiansen (2009) teenagers were more likely to release personal information, such as emotional or physical health issues than personal details, such as address and phone number.

The above literature indicates that individuals are conscious of the quantity of personal details that they share online. But individuals will also differentiate between the types of information they will share. Pictures are not considered private but address and phone numbers were more highly guarded. The review of the literature in this area showed that most research is about teenagers and young adults and little has been done to explore how adults present online.

Social Media facilitated the communication and sharing of varied visual content, and users could add, edit or share photographs, podcasts, (Mathieu 2007) and vodcasts (Boulos, Maramba

et al. 2006). Facebook and Twitter have made it easy for users to upload and share many formats of information. The technologies change all the time and where an individual may have had a Facebook account and a Flickr account as well as a news aggregate (such as Digg) they can now combine all of this to one Facebook account. Data such as personal photographs (Van House 2009), music videos (Cohen 2010) or explicit and confronting film (Naím 2007) could be transferred, downloaded or posted online for a wider audience. The news feed (formally the wall) on Facebook allows for individuals to share news articles and videos from other applications such as YouTube. They can also create their own data such as holiday photographs or short films. Madden and Smith (2010) stated that in 2010 42% of Internet users say that a photograph of themselves is available online; up from 23% in 2006. The newer applications are more about creating multimedia than storing it. For example, one of Time Magazines top Apps for 2012 (Aamoth 2012) was Instagram which allows for photographs taken with phone cameras to be easily edited, filtered and uploaded to Social Media (Hochman & Schwartz 2012). Photographs and multimedia can be tagged by the user to index the information, this way it can be retrieved and searched by others (Al-Khalifa 2007).

Facebook and Twitter use different symbols within the one medium, such as text, hypertext and multimedia; and in doing so the mode of communication evolves (Gorman 2005, Orr 2007). There is much discussion about the way text messaging is changing the language (Tagliamonte & Derek 2008) and Facebook and Twitter are following this trend. While blogging and wikis allow for long, extrapolated information, Tweets and Facebook status updates only allow for short sentences. The user must be concise and rely on abbreviated language (Tagliamonte & Derek 2008). Truncated sentences such as Laugh out loud (LOL) and Oh my god (OMG) are not uncommon and are used to save space (Thurlow 2006).

Social Network Sites and microblogs function to provide status updates (Fox et al. 2009). For example, Twitter used to invite users to answer the question 'what's happening'? (Twitter 2010), while Facebook encourages users to share what they are doing at that moment by prompting a status update with 'what are you thinking?' (Facebook 2010) or more recently 'what's on your mind?' (Facebook 2012b). Some argued that sharing information online was akin to broadcasting rather than a creative endeavor. Manago et al. (2012) argued that status updates were more like broadcasting than an expression of what you were thinking, while Solove (2007) observed it was a way of promoting self image.

The use of Social Media for creating, reflecting and updating is about finding an audience for an individual's endeavor. Burgess and Green (2009) see the role of Social Media to provide a platform for sharing, while not actually facilitating the creation of the art. While these activities are not unique to the online environment they find a global audience more easily (Davis LM 2010).

People have used Social Media for many different reasons and it supports a new type of content sharing. The content itself is not new, as people have been writing journals, sharing photographs or visual representations and networking for hundreds of years, but the combination of information types that are manageable on Facebook or Twitter is enormous. This rich information shared on Social Media has the added dimension of 'interactivity'. This enables people to represent voluntary information and comment and share opinions both positively and negatively. And this content is available to a very large audience in different parts of the world as well as having the ability to be enriched by expert opinions and criticized by cynics (Davison, Singh & Cerotti 2010). The following part will identify the reasons and motivations for using Facebook and Twitter.

2.5   Motivations for use of Facebook and Twitter by individuals

Park et al. (2009) identified some of the reasons for Social Media usage as socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking and information seeking. In addition to these ideas the researcher also identified collaboration, social value creation, and the development of community. Walker (2009) investigated the top reasons why people communicate on Social Network Sites and determined that the key reasons were greetings, expressing affection/encouragement, making plans, inside jokes, exchange of information and entertainment.

Information sharing is one of the main reasons that individuals use Social Media (Hersberger et al. 2007). Individuals look to the Internet (and increasingly Social Media) to answer their questions (Lih 2009). To 'google' something has entered the lexicon and represents a shift in the way that people seek information (Andrews 2008). Now Facebook acts as a social search engine (Scale 2008) where individuals look to others to give them advice. According to Rainie,

Estabrook & Witt (2007) in general, people use the Internet more than any other source of information, including family and experts. There are Facebook sites and Twitter feeds for a multitude of information categories; a punter can follow their favorite football club (Carlton FC 2012); a diabetic can receive medical information and chat to others (Greene et al. 2011); or enthusiasts can learn more about the world's luxury wine brands, such as the Bordeaux 'first growths' (Reyneke 2011). There are vast resources available on the Social Web from recommendation systems (Tapscott & Williams 2006) to 'the sum of all human knowledge' (Wales in Miller 2004). A result of this transformation is that the dynamics of political campaigning and community engagement has changed in the time of Social Media as people seek answers and assurances online (Farrell 2008; Baumgartner 2010).

A part of information sharing is Social Value creation. This is where political lobbying and social awareness is facilitated by the use of Social Media. Boland (2010) reports that Oxfam, an international aid agency, used Twitter to issue updates and information. For example, after the earthquake in Haiti financial aid from individuals arrived quickly due to the rapid spread of information via Twitter. According to Austin (2007) the model for charitable donations is changing rapidly. When comparing the levels of donations made online since 2001 a dramatic shift can be seen. After the disaster of September 11, 11% of donations were online, but after the Tsunami in 2004 the online donations made up 25% of donations. By the time money was needed for hurricane Katrina the online component was 50%. Miller (2009) investigated the shift in the way that charities raise money and considers that the Social Media aspect accounts for the shift away from traditional methods of fund raising to online interactive fundraising.

Politics was also affected. During the Obama Presidential campaign of 2008 the use of Social Media was embraced for fund raising and policy direction, and in 2012 as the Presidential election progresses we see similar patterns in Social Media usage. By harnessing the power of the user-driven web the Obama campaign was able to collect ideas, push out information and levy information for fund raising purposes (Samuelson 2009). The Obama campaign was uploading up to three messages a day onto YouTube (Grove 2008) while other lobby groups were using the same file sharing sites to portray their messages. Ward (2008) observed that the same use of web 2.0 applications occurred during the 2007 Australian Federal Election. Kevin

Rudd[3] used file sharing and Social Network Sites to encourage support in the 18-34 year old age group. There are a number of scholars who have investigated these areas; McKinney & Rill (2009) looked at the civic engagement of youth online by analysing their engagement with the Presidential debates compared to traditional journalism and found little difference; Isin (2009) discusses the increased role of activism online and Baumgartner & Morris (2010) looked at political engagement of young adults.

Collaboration in the context of Social Value creation is an important and growing area of individual participation in Social Media. In 2009, according to Last (2009), the most tweeted subject on Twitter was Iran – in the wake of the elections. Macken (2009, p24.) likens Twitter to 'a mass protest through the streets'.

Facebook and Twitter allow ideas and opinions to be published quickly and with little regulation. For example, the clips posted on an individual's news feed can be used to meet political agendas, record changes and propose popular theories, but can also be used as a propaganda tool for disinformation (Thompson 2008) and, in extreme cases, terrorism (Naím 2007).

When Fritz Henderson was terminated from General Motors, his daughter posted a diatribe on the GM Facebook site about his dismissal and criticized the organisation (Frean 2009). The strong language and angry content rapidly spread worldwide by the car industry blog Jalopnik (Jalopnik.com 2009). Creating controversy through Social Media is not only done in reaction to situations or can be a calculated expression; for example, Perez Hilton makes a living from talking about celebrities (Hilton 2010) and Solove (2007) asserts that Social Media are a conduit to spread rumor and gossip. Social Media can take traditionally private exchanges and expose them in an open arena to a larger and less conventional market. For example, the Russian NATO ambassador used Twitter to berate and bait the American government, stating that the Russians were dangerous and if they [United States of America] are not careful the Russian bear will kick them in the you-know-what (Schwirtz 2010). This shows a blurring between public and private spaces.

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[3] Kevin Rudd was the 25th Prime Minister of Australian from December 2007 until June 2010 (ALP 2012)

Anyone with a digital camera can film and upload their own news items on to their Facebook page or Twitter feed. This opens up possibilities to report stories that traditionally may not have found an audience (Jones 2006). One such example shows the shooting deaths of Tibetan refugees on the Nangpa La Pass by Chinese soldiers. It was initially seen on a file sharing site before it was picked up by international news outlets (Jones 2006; Naim 2007). The use of Social Media gives individuals a space to record their own experiences, when accessible it facilitates information sharing for international audiences in countries where governments and juntas have a questionable reputation for human rights. Stanyer and Davidson (2008) and Friedman (2007) have investigated the online exposure of human rights violations by the regimes in Burma and Zimbabwe. Kirkpatrick (2011) reports on the role that Facebook played in Columbia in 2008 where anti-FARC protests gained support through Facebook. He claimed that overnight it became 'the world's collective soapboxes, petition sheets, and meeting halls ... empowering ordinary people worldwide to have a public voice'. The Arab Spring has seen the prolific use of Twitter and Facebook to share opinions and inflame political unrest (Leight, Walton, Ananian, Cruz-Enriquez & Jarwaharlal 2011; Howard & Hussain 2011; Lotaneta 2011).

According to McAfee (2006) and Tapscott and Williams (2006) the collaborative nature of Web 2.0 technologies has been identified as a reason for adoption. Individuals can harness the collaborative nature of Social Media, amongst other things, to share ideas (Long 2006), write novels (Thorn 2009), create fashion (Romano 2009) and barrack for sports teams (McLean & Wainwright 2009).

Facebook is used to collaborate as a study tool for students for class-room related activities (Lampe et al. 2011). Schleyer, et al. (2008) discuss the use of Facebook as a place for scientific collaboration and Boucher (2010) described the shift in the doctor-patient dynamic by using Social Media to collaborate with patients in regards to their care, rather than using traditional information dissemination.

Communities of people sharing or challenging ideas grow up around Social Media usage (Korica, Maurer & Schinagl 2006). According to Gruzd, Wellmanand and Takhteyev (2011) Twitter forms the basis of interlinked personal communities and their research shows that an online network through Twitter is the foundation for a real community. King (2009) presented Zappos as an example of using Twitter to create community where customer service was

improved. Communities grow up not only around specific people or brands but also around hashtag conversations (Naaman, Becker & Gravano 2011).

Community building in Facebook is a function that is used for many different purposes. Stewart (2009) investigates the use of Facebook to encourage a virtual literary circle that was building a community of readers, while Evans-Cowley (2010) discussed the importance of using Facebook for public planning by creating interest and dialogue in a community. The example of the Arab Spring highlights the importance of community on Facebook and Twitter, where, without a common experience to discuss and a feeling of being understood, there would be no broadcast revolution.

Social activity and entertainment have been identified by Park et al. (2009) as the key reasons why people use Facebook and Twitter. The user can catch up with friends and acquaintances on Social Network Sites and read about what their favorite entertainer is doing on Twitter (Douglis 2008). Becoming a fan of a site gives individuals updates on their favorite entertainer, sports team or fashion icon (boyd[4] 2007). At the F8 conference in 2011 Mark Zuckerberg (CEO of Facebook) showed that Facebook can be used for listening to music and to watch TV and movies. Also that content could be shared easily – if a friend was watching something then you could join them by clicking through on their news feed.

There is a growing trend to interact on Facebook or Twitter while participating in another form of entertainment such as watching TV or listening to a gig (Harris 2010). 'I really believe that shared pop cultural moments are enhanced by a greater level of participation' (Valiquette in Harris 2010, p. 1). Recently an application was designed (Fango) so that audiences watching TV could interact by voting for their favorites on reality shows. Stelter (2011) reported that TV producers pay attention to the conversations occurring on Social Media and react accordingly. Simon Cowell of American Idol fame says 'It's like having millions of producers working with you,' (Stelter 2011, p. B3). Smith and Boyles (2012) claim that half (52%) of adult cell phone owners use their phones while watching television.

Gaming on Facebook is on the rise (Smith & Boyles 2012). Individuals can play against people from all over the world. 'Snack gaming' or high frequency short gaming periods have evolved

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4 danah boyd spells her name with lowercase d and b (http://www.danah.org/name.html)

from the use of Social Media (Chang 2010). Zygna is one of the leaders in the area with games with friends, such as Farmville and Words, and had $200 million in revenues in 2009 (Hung 2010). Wohn et al. (2011) claimed that social games help with online relationship development and sustaining community.

Friendster, one of the first large-scale Social Media success stories, was based on reconnecting old friends (boyd 2006) with over 46% of online adults having searched for information about someone from their past (Madden & Smith 2010). Hinduja & Patchin (2008) contend that Social Network Sites are a redefinition of interpersonal communication, and allow people to network and keep in touch with friends. In a different sense, boyd (2007) states Social Network Sites allows users to project a constructed representation of themselves to the world, where popularity is measured by the number of 'friends' that one has on their profile.

New media is changing the way we communicate within personal relationships. According to Holson (2010) couples share logins and passwords to build trust in a relationship. As a result, break-ups online are very different. Status updates are quickly shared by mutual friends, photographs removed and details are passed to the curious and to those directly involved. A study by Madden and Smith (2010) showed that individuals (48%) claimed that getting to know new people was easier and more meaningful now with the use of Social Media as they could learn more about the people they met online. Online dating sites remain popular and have embraced the use of Social Media. According to Porter (2008) intimacy is easier to create and less risky than face to face. The way that relationships are started, maintained and ended has changed dramatically with the increased use of Social Media. Gershon (2011) has researched undergraduate use of Facebook and considers it a threat to students' romantic relationships by making themselves into people they do not want to be.

Random connections are also possible with applications such as ChatRoulette that allows for complete strangers to chat via their webcam. In this instance individuals turn on the camera and they are randomly connected to another person world wide (Hutcheon 2010).

Andy Warhol (1968) spoke famously of the everyday desire for an individual to have 15 minutes of fame. Social Media and its ease of use have made this far more achievable than perhaps even he imagined.

Adrian (2008) stated that individuals create personas for themselves online to represent the standards presented in mass media, in the same way a celebrity creates a brand, so too do everyday people. Donath and boyd (2004) suggested that one of the key reasons for information disclosure on Social Network Sites is signaling. This is when specific information is shared to present the individual in a positive light or to be seen in a certain way. George (2006, p. 50) asserts that 'it's an opportunity to present yourself in a way you want others to see you'. Thus image projection and the attention created from this sharing were reasons that some individuals shared personal information on Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter. Keen (2007 p xiii) claims that 'MySpace and Facebook are creating a youth culture of digital narcissism'.

Nadkarnia and Hofmannb (2012) contend that the element of narcissism is one of the reasons why people use Facebook. A study by Campbell, Miller and Buffardi (2010) showed a positive association between narcissism and Facebook, claiming that the use of profiles and photograph sections allowed for extreme self-promotion. Mehdizadeh's (2010) research suggested that daily usage of Facebook was not just for those individuals with a high level of narcissism but also those with low levels of self-esteem. These individuals were more likely to spend more than an hour a day on Facebook and have Photoshopped their uploaded images.

There are numerous and varied reasons why people use Facebook and Twitter: from communication and information sharing, creating news and watching movies. The overriding similarity in use is the need or desire to share with others, whether it's collaborating on a fan page, romantic entanglements, or creating community around the photographs the user has tagged. It would seem that the human connection within the process is important to the user, or it could be for hedonic entertainment (Van der Heijden 2004). In conjunction with the reasons why people engage with the technology there are a number of benefits of Social Media use that will be explored in the next section.

2.6   Benefits of Social Media usage

Facebook and Twitter differ from traditional Web applications as pages are easy to create and edit (Nardi et al. 2004); are easily accessible (O'Reilly 2005); promote and support mobility (Bolter & Macintyre 2007); have real time communication (Madhaven & Goasguen 2007) and are

free or cost effective (O'Reilly 2005). These benefits encourage the increasing adoption of these applications.

Social Media have the advantage of being real time applications with the 'always-on data stream' (Carr 2010, p. WK1). There are many applications that offer information in real time. For example, the Whistler resort (home of the 2010 Winter Olympics) offered snow updates via Twitter enabling real-time decisions about skiing and snowboarding activities (Frary 2009). Sakaki, Okazaki and Matsuo (2010) have investigated the Twitter posts (Tweets) related to earthquakes, which through an algorithm enabled detection of earthquakes promptly, simply by observing the posts.

Social Media are attractive to many people as they are easy to use and maintain (Turban et al. 2010). The work by Soares (2011) showed that Social Networks Sites are relatively easy to use and that individuals quickly become skilful. Zeiller and Schauer (2011) contend that the availability and affordability of Social Media are important factors in the global adoption rates.

The way that users access Facebook and Twitter is changing; location does not limit an individual's access to Social Media provided there is an Internet connection (Madden et al. 2007). In the United States, 55% of adults connect to the Internet wirelessly, via their laptops or through a hand held device like an iPhone (Rainie 2008). There is a trend toward using Social Network Sites on mobile technologies, with 75.4% of Japanese users solely relying on their mobile phones to access Social Network Sites (Rhodes 2010) with a growing trend also occurring in the United States (Horrigan 2009). There is a move toward mobile usage for Social Media, for example 18% of young adults choose their mobile phone based on the ability to use Social Media such as Facebook on the phone (FierceWireless 2009). The rise of Facebook and Twitter for under 30s is linked to the increased use of mobile technology (Lenhart et al. 2010). Of Australian mobile phone users 29% access the Internet via the device. Of the Internet users 39% used it to access Social Network Sites (Nielsen 2010).

From this discussion we can see that the ease of use and accessibility are key reasons why people use Social Media. This is facilitated by the mobility of the technology and therefore the advantages of real time data and availability are emphasized. But with these benefits come problems and issues around the ease of access such as reliability of data.

2.7   Problems with Social Media usage

The review thus far has identified a number of uses and advantages of using Social Media such as Twitter and Facebook. This section identifies a number of problems that arise from the usage by individuals.

Cain (2008) stated that the four unique properties of a mediated public site are persistence, searchability, replicability and invisible audiences. The issue is that discussions and media are stored indefinitely and can be altered and retrieved by third parties without the knowledge of the author. Due to the searchability and persistence of the personal information shared online the audience for the information is not restricted by time. Tufekci (2008a) stated that the audience could exist in the future. In the time it takes an individual to upload a photo, have second thoughts and delete it, it could be saved and distributed by anyone (Porter 2008). People use tools like *PeekYou* and *Rapleaf* to automatically create composite profiles of users based on the information taken from Social Network Sites (Madden et al. 2007).

Individuals, friends, uninvited visitors and hackers are using the full range of Social Media (Korica et al. 2006). Individuals can authorize friends to participate in Facebook, however the 'open' nature of applications leaves room for others to view the information (Schwall 2003). People outside the user's friends can access their information such as lawyers (Ward 2007), the media (Petrie et al. 2007) and potential romantic engagements (Thompson 2008). Treese (2009, p. 14) reiterated that individuals should be mindful that the potential audience includes 'bosses, future bosses, spouses, future spouses, ex-spouses, our children, and potentially everyone else'. Research from Madden & Smith (2010) showed that online adults search online for information about potential or current relationships. Even if the individual chose a high level of privacy settings, according to Tufekci (2008b), many individuals 'friend' people that they do not know and therefore their page is read by strangers regardless of the privacy settings. Stutzman, Capra and Thompson (2010, p. 2) noted that the relationship between 'privacy attitudes and privacy behaviors is a complicated one' where the attitude and the behavior do not match.

Madden et al. (2007) highlighted that the audience could include creditors, law enforcement, and other professional investigators. The information appearing on Facebook and Twitter is considered public record and therefore can be used, for example, by criminal defense lawyers to research witnesses (Ward 2007). A UK law firm, specializing in divorce cases, reported that

nearly one in five divorce petitions cite Facebook as a contributing factor (Moscaritolo 2012) and a similar survey in the USA by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers cited Facebook as the main reason behind one out of five divorces in the US (Das & Jyoti 2011, p. 226). Research by Tahir and Jones (2009) showed that insurance companies were using Social Media to investigate individuals who claim their everyday social activities have been compromised. Das and Jyoti (2011) also claim that 80 percent of divorce lawyers use Social Network Sites to gather evidence such as flirty messages and photographs.

Palfrey and Gasser (2008) asserted that individuals are losing control over their digital information. The President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, said 'I want everybody here to be careful about what you post on Facebook because, in the YouTube age whatever you do, it will be pulled up again later somewhere in your life' (Stewart, ed. 2009). Given the rich nature of the content available about individuals online and the ease of finding this information, Madden et al. (2007, p. 2) observe that 'people are not just findable, they are knowable'. The permanency of youthful transgressive conduct was identified as an issue for individuals by boyd and Jenkins (2006); that there is no longer any statute of limitation on their youthful indiscretions.

Schwall (2003) suggested that the incidence of hacking on Social Media was not high as there was little perceived 'challenge' in hacking something that was available to all. But there is scope for people to be indiscreet, gossip and share another's 'private' information. While individuals may be conscious of their own reputation based on what they share online, Chen et al. (2009) considered one of the greatest threats to an individual's privacy was the unauthorized information disclosure by peers. There was also the threat of vandalism to information shared on Facebook (Myhill, Shoebridge & Snook 2009). Das and Jyoti (2011) drew attention to Facebook profiles that have been hacked. In 2010 an online security consultant posted online the personal details of 100 million Facebook users. This illustrated the vulnerability of profile information. From this information we could see that personal information shared online has multiple and unexpected audiences.

The development and maintenance of reputation is context based (Bagheri & Ghorbani 2006) and online information can be easily taken out of context. There are genuine issues and consequences to consider around sharing information. Madden and Smith (2010) claim that 44%

of online adults have searched for information about someone whose services or advice they seek in a professional capacity and consequently illustrates the importance of an individual's reputation.

According to Solove (2007) shaming is a growing trend on Facebook and Twitter. Azman (2010) investigated the use of Social Media to shame people who have not paid their taxes. Solove (2007) used the examples of people posting videos of anti-social behavior. His example is a woman known to the world now as 'dog poo lady' after someone uploaded a video of her ignoring her dog while it went to the toilet on the train.

Popular media reports that business is using Facebook and Twitter in hiring and decision making and even expecting applicants to share passwords (Garber 2012). Brown and Vaughn (2011) stated that this practice seems to be indicative of what peer-reviewed literature is reporting, thus highlighting the importance that an individual maintains their reputation online.

Westin (1967, p. 7) defines privacy as 'the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine for themselves when, how and to what extent information about them is communicated to others'. The privacy rights of the individual are the rights that an individual has to a private sphere, and that the individual has the right to control the flow of information about their own life (Van Hove 1995). Privacy in this context is about the control an individual has over their own information (Solove 2007).

According to Cain (2008) and Braun and Pöhls (2008) online discussions and media are stored indefinitely and can be altered and, as discussed above, can be retrieved by third parties without the author knowing. In 2007, when a violent assault and fatal shootings occurred in the CBD of Melbourne, Australia, two victims found that their MySpace photos were used by mainstream media without their permission. The provocative images on their sites were used by the media to portray them in a negative light (Petrie et al. 2007). This example highlights that images on a public website are considered 'public domain' (Joyner 2008).

Facebook and Twitter can be used to establish identity (Tufekci 2008a), but it also highlights the issue of identity verification which is a privacy and security concern (Acquisti & Gross 2006; boyd 2007). Madden and Smith (2010) show that 49% of Social Network Site users post

information using their real name, 43% do so with a username with only 5% posting anonymously.

Another issue, according to Cain (2008), is that there is a concern that younger people may open themselves up to inappropriate and dangerous behavior as a result of giving personal information in a public forum; although studies by Cassell and Cramer (2007) show that the instances of children being solicited online have decreased over recent years. Facebook and Twitter have built-in privacy features that allow the creator to choose whether their selections are for public viewing or only for access by 'friends' (Facebook 2012a).

Solove (2007) identified the taxonomy of privacy and in doing so we are able to identify a number of factors that influence personal information sharing online. He identified the following issues:

- *Breach of confidentiality* – breaking a promise to keep a persons information private;
- *Disclosure* – revelation of truthful information about an individual that may affect their reputation;
- *Exposure* – revealing other's 'nudity, grief, or bodily functions' (p105);
- *Increased accessibility-* make information more accessible;
- *Blackmail* – threat to disclose personal information;
- *Appropriation* – use of another's identity to serve another's aims or interests ;
- *Distortion* – circulating false or misleading information about an individual.

Individuals aged 18-29 are more likely to limit the amount of personal information available about themselves online (Madden & Smith 2010). Of those individuals 71% of them change the privacy settings on Social Network Sites, 47% delete unwanted comments about themselves and 41% remove their name from tagged photographs (Madden & Smith 2010).

There is some discussion (boyd 2012) around the changing dimensions of privacy and whether our concepts of what is private are shifting. If everyone is sharing a high level of information then do we blur the area between private and open? Brenton stated in 1964 (p. 25) that 'A couple of generations hence, will some automated society look upon privacy with the same air of amused nostalgia we now reserve for, say, elaborate eighteenth-century drawing room manners'. Society may be heading this way when we consider the levels of sharing occurring.

As early as 2000 the CEO of Sun Mircosystems Scott McNealy stated 'privacy is dead – get over it'. In a 2009 article written for CNN, under the heading 'Privacy is dead, and social media hold the smoking gun', Mashable CEO Pete Cashmore reiterated McNealy's view. While extreme views they highlight the on-going conversations about privacy.

One of the concerns of public forums is the tendency for contributors to be unrestrained in their ideas and language. As with any combination of information, the end result is only as good as the raw data, so the intellectual integrity of the information provided on Social Media is questionable; and evidence of bias must be taken into consideration (Marks 2006). Long (2006) and Solove (2007) contend that the effects of unregulated bias and little control of information are affecting personal reputation as there is no filter for gossip or incorrect information. Misinformation and inappropriate postings cannot be corrected by the affected individual, nor can the party responsible for that posting be required to remove it.

Individuals are paid to tweet and update their Facebook profiles. Recommendations from people have a sense of trust built into them but many are paid to give these recommendations. According to CBS news (2011) and the Wall Street Journal (2012) celebrities can get paid $10,000 or more per post to spruik about goods on Twitter. They gave examples of Snoop Dogg and Toyota, Tori Spelling and rental cars, and Khloe Kardashian Odom with Old Navy.

Franek (2006, p. 36) defined a cyberbully as 'anyone who repeatedly misuses technology to harass, intimidate, bully, or terrorize another person'. Cyberbullying has been identified as an important area of research (Klomek et al. 2010), but there are few studies into the area. Klomek et al. (2010) identify that cyberbullying can cause suicide in later life; creating challenges for parents, schools, and policymakers to provide adequate protections for children, while balancing an individual's rights to freedoms of speech, expression, and thought (King 2010).

Bullying and hate crimes are not only the domain of young users as there have been instances of people being murdered because of their use of Facebook. Such as cases where a changed Facebook status (from *married* to *single)* (Cheston 2008), photographs posted of new boyfriends online (Quigley 2012) or through the fear they may find someone else online (White 2010) have resulted in the deaths of individuals.

With 76% of Americans connected to the Internet, 61% in Australia (inc. Oceania) and 52% in Europe (World Internet statistics 2012), and coupled with Facebook and Twitter usage increasing at expediential rates there is a feeling that 'everyone' is using these technologies. When you hear that if Facebook were a country it would be the world's third largest then one tends to think about it being global. But in reality a Digital Divide occurs worldwide in that 75% of the world's population do not have Internet access (World Internet statistics 2012). Only 20% have access in Asia, 29% in the Middle East and only 9% in Africa.

While this research discusses the ubiquitous nature of Facebook and Twitter it must be acknowledged that there are levels of involvement depending on Internet access. Ronchi (2009, p.5) states that 'there are large areas of the globe that are almost inaccessible for technological, political, social, economic and/or religious reasons'.

Keniston in 2003 contended that there were four types of Digital Divide. Within a country there was the financial divide between those that could afford the technology and those who could not. Another divide occurred between the English speaking 'elite' with those who spoke only speak local languages or dialects; which Keniston considered a linguistic and cultural divide. The third divide as evidenced above was between developed nations and developing nations. And finally the divide between Technology professionals and the more traditional professional sector. Technology professionals (including biotechnology and pharmacology) had high purchasing power and a better understanding of the ICT paradigm.

A recent study from PEW Internet and the American Life Project (Zickuhr & Smith 2012) stated that the 'rise of mobile is changing the story' for groups that have traditionally been on the other side of the Digital Divide because they are using wireless connections to go online.

The Digital Divide was discussed above but there were also individuals who were reluctant to adopt the technologies. College students and High school students are well represented in the literature as early and sustained adopters of Social Media (boyd 2007; Lenhart and Madden 2007; Hinduja and Patchin 2008; Selwyn 2009). This supports statistics for the American usage of Social Media demographics where 73% of online teens and 72% of young adults use Social Network Sites. The theory of technology acceptance states that there are always individuals who are reluctant to adopt new technologies (Davis 1989), and Park et al. (2009) claims that

individuals who are concerned about their privacy may be reluctant to adopt. In 2012 boyd observed that there is a segment of America that do not adopt Facebook or Twitter for religious reasons; that the conservative nature of their beliefs stops them from being involved.

There are consequences to the information that individuals share online. One such case was when Google dismissed an employee for reporting about the personal goings-on inside the Google compound (Davis 2005). A Delta Airlines flight attendant lost her position because she posted photographs of herself in her uniform (Lee et al. 2006). In the United States at the present time there is virtually no protection against losing your job based on information you have shared online (McCullagh 2008). Students have been expelled from University for writing racially insensitive and threatening behavior on Facebook (Cain 2008), while other students have been suspended because of alcohol and drug references on their social pages. Also, students who were prospective teachers have been refused graduation for inappropriate posting on a Social Network Site (Carter et al. 2008). Peluchette and Karl (2010, p. 30) investigated why individuals shared inappropriate material on their Facebook site when they knew their employers could see it. They found that people wanted to portray a particular image and this influenced what they shared. Some participants wanted to portray 'sexually appealing, wild, or offensive' images.

Tonks (2009) investigated the unprofessional content posted by medical students on a Social Network Site. The findings showed innumerable incidents, such as profanities about the course and its staff, breaches of patient confidentiality, sexually suggestive material, photographs of students drunk or using illegal substances, and requests for inappropriate friendships with patients. Chretien et al. (2009) conducted a similar study and found that 60% (47/78) reported incidents of students posting unprofessional online content. Rainie, Lenhart and Smith (2012) state that a third of Social Network Site users have experienced negative outcomes, 49% say that have seen mean or cruel behavior online with 13% saying it had happened to them. The survey found that adults are generally more positive than teens about the behavior of others on Social Network Sites.

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2.8   The media

Traditional and online media readily run stories of how individuals, usually teenagers or young people, over-share personal information online. If you google the phrase 'inappropriate sharing on Facebook' you receive millions of hits and while many may not be relevant there are titles such as 'CFO fired over inappropriate sharing on social media sites', 'Why Facebook can help (or hurt) your future' or 'Fired over Facebook'. Open any newspaper online and you will find archived hundreds of articles about the negative side of Social Media. There are people being fired (Smith & Kanalley 2011) for sex scandals (Chacksfield 2009), stupidity (Anderson 2012), cyber bullying (Cohen 2012), suicide (Paine & Killalea 2012), out-of-control parties (Choney 2011), drug use (Hachman 2011), murder (Babwin 2012; Zennie 2011), and divorce (Hobbs-Meyer 2009). Most articles make the reader wonder 'what were they thinking?' or 'what a tragedy'. It is unknown if individuals are experiencing the same sort of bad and thoughtless experiences in the digital realm or if there is an air of sensationalism to reporting.

2.9   Demographics

According to Lenhart et al. (2011) American teenagers are so entrenched in Social Media and particularly Social Network Sites that it is almost synonymous with being online. Of all teenagers aged 12-17 years old in USA, 95% are online and 80% of those online teens are users of Social Media sites. These spaces have become where much of their social activity resonates and is augmented. Prensky (2001) described the latest generation (post 1980) as being 'Digital natives' with an innate ability and confidence in the use of Social Media, being constantly surrounded and plugged into a multitude of portable devices. This idea was supported by Tapscott (2008) and Palfrey and Gasser (2008). The literature showed that younger generations are indeed taking up Social Media in great numbers. There are many studies into how teenagers and young adults who are still creating their identity use Social Media, such as the study by Hyllegard et al. (2011) of college students' 'fanning' behavior on Facebook; Manago, Taylor and Greenfield (2012) have investigated the composition of college students' Facebook pages and how they affect communication and well-being; Moreno investigated Facebook and adolescents; Schechter and Denmon (2012) looked at the motivation level of students who are engaged with Social Media; Peluchette and Karl (2010) investigated the way that students portray themselves online to create a persona; Fodeman and Monroe (2009) discussed the impact of Facebook on

their students; Berg (2011) looked at the text that young people engage with; and most prolific in the area is boyd (2006; 2007; 2012) who investigated how young people use Social Media. This review is only a small representation of the work completed about teenagers and young adults and shows the interest from a research perspective. The attention in this area is a natural development given the high teenage adoption rates of the technologies. This review also illustrates the depth and breadth of research already undertaken in this field and reveals an opportunity to investigate other age groups using Social Media.

Research by Rainie, Lenhart and Smith (2012) showed that all age groups participate in the Social web in some way by using Social Media. The table below (Table 2.1) highlights the levels of participation and shows that while 18-29 year olds are prolific they are not far ahead of the 30-49 year olds in terms of adoption. These figures also show that nearly half of adults between 50-64 years old are engaged on Social Network Sites and a third over the age of 65. Social Media is clearly not solely the domain of the young.

Table2.1: Age of internet users who use Social Network Sites

Age	% of internet users within each group who use Social Network Sites
18-29	87
30-49	68
50-64	49
65+	29

Table 2.2, adapted from the research of Rainie, Lenhart and Smith (2012), shows the different education levels of internet consumers using Social Network Sites. The greatest number are those with some college education.

Table 2.2: Education level of internet users who use Social Network Sites

Education level	% of internet users within each group who use Social Network Sites
Less than high school	63
High school grad	60
Some college	73
College +	63

The table below (Table 2.3) shows that the gender distribution of Social Network Site users was comparatively equal, with a slight inclination toward females (Rainie, Lenhart & Smith 2012). According to Socialbakers (2012) in Australia Facebook has 46% male users and 54% female users while Twitter has a male focus with 66% and 34% female; in the US 53% are female (Murton 2012).

Table 2.3: Gender of internet users who use Social Network Sites

Gender	% of internet users within each group who use Social Network Sites
Male	63
Female	66

Pujazon-Zazik and Park et al. (2009) investigated the gender differences in Social Media. There were indications that gender played a role in how individuals share personal information. Male and female Internet users were equally likely to use a search engine to monitor their digital footprint (Madden & Smith 2010). Muscanell and Guadagno (2012) reported on the differences between the genders and their use of Facebook. For example, men used Social Network Sites to form friendships while women used it for maintenance. The results highlighted the importance of investigating how individuals use Social Network Sites. Armstrong and Gao (2011) investigated the importance of gender in news reporting on Twitter. The research examined how gender mentioned in tweets may influence news stories that were linked to tweets.

Investigations into the role that culture plays in Social Media acceptance and use is not largely investigated. There are a number of studies into specific countries and their use of Social Media but not how the culture itself influences usage. Shi and Niu's (2010) investigation in Social Network Site usage among Chinese internet users; and Wan, Kumar & Bukhari (2008) considered how localization and accommodation of different cultures might be the next major challenge for successful Social Network Sites.

2.10   Literature Review Analysis

From the above it is evident that Social Media are a pervasive and increasingly ubiquitous form of technology. The personal information that individual's share is made up of personal details (Hinduja & Patchin 2008), multimedia such as photographs and video (Mathieu 2007), new

hybrid languages (Tagliamonte & Derek 2008), sharing experiences and creative pursuits (Carrington 2008; McCullagh 2008; Collins 2010), and opinions and gossip (Solove 2007). From this we can see that individuals use Social Media for a myriad of information types. Therefore the information that is available for all to see if not uniform, predictable or comprehensive, but rather it creates unique footprints for the individual.

There were a number of reasons why individuals use Social Media; they shared information (Hersberger et al. 2007), created community (Korica, Maurer & Schinagl 2006), collaborated (Tapscott & Williams 2006), have fun (Park et al. 2009), connected with others (boyd 2007), have romantic relationships (Holson 2010), managed reputation (Solove 2007), were involved in charities (Austin 2007), society and politics (Samuelson 2009) and for some it was to have their '15 minutes of fame' (Adrian 2008). The sum of this activity creates an online presence that can be described as a person's digital footprint (Batelle 2004; Madden et al. 2007). While creating this overall digital footprint may not be the initial objective of sharing personal information, it is created by the residual information.

By investigating the problems of Social Media usage for individuals we can see that there are a number of influences that are out of the control of the individual and can also change the Digital Identity that remains online. These influences are external to the individual's control. Issues that may impact an individual's digital presence are uninvited audiences (Treese 2009), reputation management (Solove 2007), privacy (McCullagh 2008), security (Chen et al. 2009) and the resiliency and vulnerability of personal information shared on Social Media (Palfrey & Gasser 2008). Individuals must also be aware of the intellectual and data integrity (Lipczynska 2005; Worthen 2007) of information shared. By sharing information on Social Media individuals are also vulnerable to censorship (Simon 2010), hate crimes and cyberbullying (Klomek et al. 2010). While control by the individual may be conscious Chen et al. (2009) state that one of the biggest issues for Social Media usage is that friends might share unexpected and unwanted information without the individual's permission or knowledge.

Teenagers and young adults are well represented in the literature while adults have not been investigated in any great depth. But with the growing number of adoptions in these age groups, as discussed above, it is appropriate to investigate the different age groups. According to Erikson (1959) there are eight Psychosocial Stages of Development, with six occurring up to

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young adulthood. Stage six (13 – 18 years) is when individuals are forming identity and can suffer from role confusion. By the age of 30 we are established or very nearly so and complete the final two stages (Generativity and Ego integrity) over the rest of our lives. This research will look at individuals in the 30+ age bracket as they have already completed the first six stages of development.

All of these issues can impact the way that an individual is presented online. While an individual may be conscious of the information they share, that information might be misinterpreted by an uninvited audience or their privacy infiltrated by hackers. While the literature establishes that these issues occur there is little investigation into the impact these elements have on an individual's Digital Identity and on the personal life of that individual.

2.11   Conclusion

Brenton declared in 1964 (p. 25) that 'we stand on the threshold of what might be called the Age of the Goldfish Bowl'. Based on the literature above this day is upon us. The online activity of individuals has made the world a smaller place that records and shares personal information between known and unknown audiences and the result is a persistent online identity. The literature has identified the ways in which individuals share information – the content and reasons and also the benefits and issues surrounding the active digital footprint. For this research context the voluntary sharing of information rather than the eCommerce footprints or information collated by third parties about personal details is the focus. This study approaches the research from an individual's point of view. The study purports that the content and reasons discussed above are shaped by the benefits and issues also identified above, and create, not just a footprint, but a Digital Identity. The next chapter will identify and analyse the current literature surrounding Identity Theory and the formation of a Digital Identity. By investigating the current literature on Identity we can secure a framework to explore the use of Facebook and Twitter.

There was a gap in the literature around the formation of an active Digital Identity and how individuals create themselves online using Social Media. This is vital to the understanding of technologies. Therefore working towards a Digital Identity Theory became the core of this study and a review of different Identity Theories was appropriate.

Chapter Three: Literature on Identity

3.1   Introduction

O'Reilly stated in 1995 (in Madden et al. 2007, p. 1) that 'I see one important future thread in the www having nothing to do with marketing, selling, or other commercial activities, but just the way that individuals create a persistent identity for themselves in cyberspace' . The studies into Digital Identity have grown and evolved as the technologies themselves have changed, from the forums and MUDs of the 1990s to the Social Media of today. No discussion on Digital Identity is complete without a dialogue around Social Media and how individuals use the applications to create an online presence. This chapter will discuss the different theories of Identity as they relate to the context of online presentation of self.

The discourse on identity stretches across centuries and disciplines. The role of identity and its development has been discussed by many scholars, including anthropologists, social scientists, sociologists and psychologists. According to Myers (2007) the self is one of the most researched topics in psychology. It is not appropriate to discuss the entire history of identity in this chapter but rather an overview of contemporary theories on identity that relate to how we present ourselves. Identity is a nebulous term that relates to a number of different perspectives and ideas. It is an ever-evolving and challenging construct to define (James 1890; Cheek et al. 2002; Weigert et al. 1986). This study will investigate the notion of Identity, and establish the common characteristics and differences between the concepts of Identity, Social Identity and Impression Management and how they relate to the digital self. This discussion will inform the theoretical underpinning of this study by identifying common elements. While identifying the importance of roles across these theories we will establish the context of this research. This will be followed by a discussion of the research project and the research question.

3.2   What is Identity?

'Who am I?' is the question at the core of Identity Theory. There is no simple answer as it is fundamentally multifaceted and complex (Ma & Agarwal 2007). To answer this question individuals attempt to express and present their identity to others with the intention of

achieving a shared understanding. According to Oyserman (2004) the self-concept functions as a repository of autobiographical memories, as an organizer of experience, and as an emotional buffer and motivational resource.

Some part of identity is controlled by the individual but identity is also created by the world in which the individual functions. Adams (2009, p. 316) writes that the 'foundation of the concept of identity is that it is inherently a relational phenomenon: "self" is primarily defined in relation to "other".' The paradox of identity is that it is simultaneously conferred by others and individually maintained (Brubaker & Cooper 2000).

The personal identity of an individual comes from an amalgamation of biosocial markers such as age, race, gender, sexual preference and the sum of the personal life history of that individual (Brewer & Gardner 1996; Weigert et al. 1986). Redmond (2011, p. 18) sees personal identity as the aspects of the self that are unique to the individual and which are used to define the individual. Mayer et al. (2009, p. 145) expand this further to include 'moral sensibility and conscience, and also a desire for achievement, mastery, and competence'. These markers are categories that define us, but are also expanded into roles that we engage in as individuals and they influence not only our personal identity but our social identity.

Personal identity is the internalized creation of self. DeRue et al. (2009) describes it as a set of labels that are a cognitive representation of oneself that can be found by being social. The personalized identity is the beginning of the identity process that comes from within the individual. An identity is more than just an individual's name, gender, and race etc; it is also the ways in which the individual presents other parts of themselves and how they interact with others.

3.3   Digital Identity

Digital Identity has a number of different definitions in the literature. It can refer to the usernames and digital footprint that individuals choose and leave behind after using the Internet for different purposes such as banking or purchasing goods (Whitley & Hosein 2010). For others it represents the identity that a user assumes when involved in a defined environment, such as playing games (Donath 1999; Ellison et al. 2006; Rheingold 1993). The

previous chapter explored the idea of social information being searchable and resilient and these issues are important changes in the way that we present information. It is the information that is left behind and the habitual updates that create a Digital Identity.

There is growing discourse around the technical side of Digital Identity, which is not involved in the formation of sociological identity but rather includes the issues of authorization, access, identity theft and privacy (Halperin & Backhouse 2008). The technical side is more about the technology than the user (Brubaker 2009). Ma and Agarwal (2007, p. 43) state that 'the role of technology is central to our theorizing. Because technology is the foundation and medium through which community members interact, it is the key determinant of the dynamics of the community'.

Digital Identity is formed by personal profiles, cultural capital and records - such as videos on YouTube (Tredinnick 2008). Gergen (2009, p. 1) commented on Descartes famous quote ('I think therefore I am') by creating a Social Media update: 'I am linked therefore I am'. From this we infer that digital identity is created by interacting between individuals. Tredinnick (2008, p. 139) agrees that the digital realm gives us the power to 'determine how we are defined within the socio-cultural sphere'. While individuals are the product of their unique personal biography they are not entirely free to choose who they are because of social situations and interactions (Buckingham 2008).

Virtual Identity is similar to Digital Identity but is specifically the territory of virtual worlds. These are applications where people engage in MUDs and virtual platforms such as Second Life. In these worlds an individual chooses a persona and represents it with an avatar. Digital Identity is more than choice of avatar or screen name. While the studies into the significance of how we represent ourselves physically online are important, it is not the focus in this research, and has already been explored by a number of different researchers (Davis 2010; Gatson & Zweerink 2004; Boudreau 2007; Miller 2007; Nakamura 2002; Subrahmanyam, Smahel, & Greenfield 2006; Turkle 1995 & 2011; Robinson 2007; Whitty 2007; Whitty & Buchannan 2010).

As identified in the previous chapter, one of the issues of using Social Media is the fear that the information 'at the other end' is not authentic. This has been a discussion in academia since the advent of the Internet and has seen a shift in understanding over the last decade. Turkle's (1995)

seminal work of the 1990s talked about identity play in the online environment, and confirmed the importance of roles in an online environment. She stated that we no longer simply play different roles in different settings at different times but rather have become a decentered self that exists in many worlds, with many simultaneous roles. In later studies (Turkle 2004, p. 21) she stated that 'computers are more than screens to project personality but facilitate the development of personality, of identity, and even of sexuality'. Davis (2010) contradicts her emphasis on the multiplicity of self and states that there is no differentiation between online and offline selves. Turkle's early studies concentrated on MUD users and her findings were that people played dramatically with their image online; pretending to be something they were not and being loose with identity markers such as gender, age, and sexuality. The conclusions made by a number of scholars (Turkle 1995; Van Gelder 1991) are that the anonymity of MUDs allowed for deception. More recently it has been suggested that the anonymous nature of the internet has changed and that the studies of the 1990s into MUD users does not properly represent all internet users (Davis 2010).

Jewkes and Sharp (2003, p. 3) concur that the Internet allows for individuals to conceal aspects of themselves while at the same time projecting identities that are 'fantastic, fraudulent, exploitative or criminal' and that online identities allow for individuals to be whatever they wish to be and that it can be rewritten constantly. Aboujaode (2011) proposes that the online environment allows individuals not only an opportunity to recreate parts of themselves with which they are unhappy, but as a platform to share less mature and antisocial impulses. This infers that the internet takes away the traditional barriers of culture and social expectations. In the studies by both Turkle and Aboujaode, their research with patients found that their online personalities were freer than their offline selves. Some research (Manago et al. 2008) indicates that individuals use Social Network Sites to create idealized selves. They claim the profile that people create online reflects the owner's ideal-self view – rather than what they are actually like. Yet a study by Back et al. (2009) refuted this idea after testing the idealized hypothesis and observed that there was no evidence of self-idealization.

Cabiria (2008) suggested that the design of virtual worlds allows individuals to freely explore the different facets of their personalities more easily than they could in the real world. Adrian (2008, p. 367) refers to Virtual Worlds as 'domains of liquid identity' where identity is 'self-defined rather than pre-ordained'. The anonymity of virtual worlds allows for 'play' but that the

ubiquitous nature of Facebook and Twitter makes it far more difficult to maintain such a complicated lie. Facebook and Twitter are about the everyday, while MUDs and Virtual Worlds such as Second Life are a place to play games. Indalecio (2010, p. 1) states that 'if an individual created a virtual identity that is different from their real life identity, it can take a lot of psychological effort to maintain the false identity'.

Robinson (2007, p. 94) found in their study that individuals 'do not seek to transcend the most fundamental aspects of their offline selves. Rather, users bring into being bodies, personas, and personalities framed according to the same categories that exist in the offline world'. This idea is also supported by Davis (2010) whose work shows that individuals are generally inclined towards sincere portrayals of themselves. Curtis (1997) found through observational research that even though people were given the option to experiment with identity in terms of gender, age etc they chose not to.

When reviewing Facebook Van Kokswijk (2007, p. 63) observed that identity was 'a conscious construction, it can evolve subconsciously over a period of time, or it could simply be a reflection of the user in real life'. A similar view was held by Boon and Sinclair (2009, p. 18) who stated that 'the selves we re-create on Facebook are inevitably part us – re-creating ourselves in digital form – and, again to one extent of another, part who we'd like to be – the creation of something new, perhaps better, but ultimately "other".' They contend that the virtual self can be at odds with reality and because of this, individuals can see their digital selves as 'superficial, artificial or even fraudulent'. They go on to state that 'it is worryingly difficult to find the person in among all the digital artifice'. Shaw (1997) calls this self-regulated self presentation.

Another issue around Digital Identity is the concept of fragmentation. Boon and Sinclair (2009) think that online identities are fractured and not real (or unreal) but 'a seeming half truth'. But according to boyd, Potter and Viegas (2002) fragmentation is about conflicting internal identity not a social identity. They argue that online communication can reflect the multi-faceted identity rather than fragmented, highlighting that multiple sides of person is part of identity formation. Besley (2010, p. 14) supports this by saying that identity is a social presentation that occurs in different contexts and at different times. Turkle (1995) also used the term fragmentation but considered it a 'healthy' fragmented self that it allowed for self discovery and self-transformation.

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One of the key differences in presentation in a digital environment is the scope and depth of uninvited and invisible audiences that can impact the identity created online. 'The book of our lives is being written by silent hands every day' (Tredinnick 2008, p. 138). While in pre-online days gossip could be spread widely by people who knew or didn't know the gossiper, the internet (and particularly Social Media) allows for hundreds of thousands of people to interact (Solove 2007). This interaction with the information shared by individuals is the unknown factor of online presentation of self. The ownership of Identity now seems less permanent. When Identity theorists discuss interaction it is usually in the concept of people with whom the individual has made contact in one way or another. In the digital world this widens to a much larger audience.

Some of these ideas of Digital Identity, such as those from Turkle, are a Web 1.0 version of identity. In the same way that the web has shifted, we need to investigate the way that Digital Identity is formed as it should have also developed. The next three sections address Identity Theory, Social Identity Theory and Impression Management; different schools of thought on how identity is created. These theories are discussed to best identify how to approach Digital Identity in the age of Social Media.

3.4   Identity Theory

Identity Theory emphasizes the importance of self, the language of presentation and interaction. It draws heavily on the early work of Mead (1934), James (1890), Cooley (1902) and Stryker (1980) and later developments from Burke and Stets (2009).

Mead (1925) proposed that self-identity had three stages and reacted to social experiences and environmental issues. He theorized that individuals, when young, develop an independent sense of self (or 'I') as well as understanding of the self that is determined by social rules and external expectations ('me'). He argued that identity was role-oriented and developed from identity negotiation (interpersonal interactions). These ideas still remain at the core of Identity Theory (Burke & Stets 2009).

James (1890) acknowledged the complexity of identity. He recognized that people can hold multiple roles and therefore have multiple identities. Identity Theory is related to the roles that individual's play in life. The example that Burke and Stets (2009, p. 24) gave is that an individual can be 'a teacher, a wife, a mother, a friend, a PTA member and so on'. Each of these roles has its own meanings and expectations that are internalized as identity. This is reiterated by Stryker (1980) and emphasized by Burke and Stets (2009) who stated that individuals have an internalized positional designation for each of the different roles they hold in society.

McCall and Simmons (1978) were also central in the creation of Identity Theory that focussed on the concept of role identity. A role identity is an individual's imaginative view of themselves as they like to think of themselves being and acting in a social position (McCall & Simmons 1978). To keep the idealized concept of themselves, individuals need to enact role performances. Role identity exists in the differences in perceptions and actions that accompany a role as it relates to other roles (Stets & Burke 2000). McCall and Simmons (1978), supported by Burke and Stets (2009, p. 39), see identities as 'improvised and negotiated' rather than 'normative and conventional'. This applies to all the multiple roles that an individual holds.

Stryker (1980) supported this concept of multiple identities and observed that individuals have a hierarchy of identities. The more salient an identity is for the situation at hand then the higher up the hierarchy. If an individual can use the identity across many situations and environments then it has more salience (Burke & Stets 2009). Whitbourne and Connolly (1999) contend that self is not only the physical and cognitive abilities, reasoning and decision making but is also emphasized by the social roles of an individual such family member, employee and citizen. Stryker (1980) also highlighted the importance for a social context for identity and this was supported by Cooley (1902) who stated that the individual and society are two sides of the one coin.

Self-meanings are an important part of Identity, and the emphasis on internal dynamics of identity is of particular focus in the work of Burke (Stryker and Burke 2000). The meanings behind our identity provoke our behavior and the behavior then confirms the identity (Burke and Stets 1980). Burke (1980) and Stets and Burke (2005) state that self-meanings develop from the reactions of others; and over time, a person responds to themselves in the same way that others respond to them, such that self-meanings become significant or shared by all.

Emphasizing the importance of interaction and support of others, Burke and Stets (2009) assert that an individual will stop accessing a specific role identity if it is not supported by others.

Individuals are influenced by the society that they live in and in return society is influenced by the individuals that create it (Burke & Stets 1980). This is supported by Tredinnick (2008) who sees Identity as constructed by the individual and imposed by the external social forces, people, social system and structures. Identity is constructed by who we think we are and what others assume they know about us from that information.

According to Stets and Burke (2005) the salience of an identity is influenced by the degree of commitment one has to the identity. Commitment has two dimensions: a quantitative and qualitative aspect (Stryker & Serpe 1994). Firstly, it is influenced by the individual's ties to the social structure and is reflected in the number of persons that they are tied to through an identity. The more people that are involved the greater the commitment. Secondly, when the ties to an identity are stronger or deeper than the ties to other identities then a higher commitment to that identity occurs.

As the theory of Identity developed it highlighted the importance of role identity, identity salience and commitment. However, understanding the ties to structural symbolic interaction gives a more in-depth understanding of the concept of identity creation. The self-system is both an array of self-relevant knowledge, the tool we use to make sense of our experiences, and the processes that construct, defend, and maintain this knowledge (Adrian 2008). The next section looks at these notions and those of the self, language and interaction in more detail.

Burke and Stets (2009) emphasize the importance of Structural symbolic interaction to the definition of self and in the development of Identity Theory. While not the entire nature of Identity Theory, it illustrates the importance of the individual in the process of creating the self. By discovering the individual's interpretations of themselves, others, and the individual's situations we can better understand social behavior.

There are a number of different layers to creating self. The first is internalized through projecting the *self*, the next is the symbols we use to project these ideas and finally there is the interaction between others that create identity. Mead (1934) states that the *self* develops beyond

the mind as it interacts with its environment (to sustain life). The control that individuals have over their identity stems from the ability to create meanings and to specify the meaning both to the self and to others. The meaning comes from symbols such as language that is shared with others (Burke & Stets 2009).

According to Burke and Stets (2009, p. 9) the self originates in the mind of the persona and has the 'ability to take itself as an object, to regard and evaluate itself, to take account of itself and plan accordingly, and to manipulate itself as an object in order to bring about future states'. The *self* characterizes an individual's consciousness of their own identity.

The meaning of self is a shared meaning (Burke & Stets 2009). McCall and Simmons (1978) claim that selfhood is achieved when the individual acts towards their identity in the same way they act towards other people. This means that the *self*, when it merges perspectives with other individuals becomes prevalent and this interaction is facilitated by the meaning of shared symbols.

The meaning of symbols is a response to stimulus, and a good example of this is Pavlov's dogs (Pavlov 2003). We expect meaning from a response to specific objects or interactions. In Pavlov's example he conditioned dogs to expect food when a bell rang; which meant that they salivated whenever a bell was chimed. This shows that the object itself does not have the meaning but rather the response to it. The bell does not give Pavlov's dog the food but the response is the same. By sharing information of *self* using language, signs and symbols meaning can be conveyed to others beyond the simple stimulus response pattern (Burke & Stets 2009). Symbols are words, language, signs, and discourse (Besley & Peters 2007). Herbert Blumer (1962) claimed that symbolic interaction would bring order to a chaotic world.

The meaning behind symbols comes from social groups where the response to an object can be the same for different people. Language is one of the most important symbols and allows for easy shifting of meaning between individuals. If an individual typed 'sad' then their feelings would be automatically understood by another individual, and in the online world if they typed the emoticon ☹ it would have the same meaning. Baym (2010, p. 109) reiterated the importance of language in creating identity online for 'in textual media, the use of written language is a significantly more powerful force in making and forming impressions' than it is when people

were face to face. The concept of multiple selves as presented initially by James (1890) was discussed earlier in the chapter; these selves emerge as we interact with others, with each identity behaving differently within the different contexts (Burke & Stets 2009).

Interaction is the third phase of Structural symbolic interaction. Blumer (1962) observed that in order to interact with others, we must first establish both who they are and who we are. Interaction between different individuals is not about the whole person but between aspects of individuals as part of their role. When an individual speaks to their doctor they speak to them in that role not as the doctor's other roles such as mother or cyclist. Therefore the context and 'structure' of the interaction is important.

When presenting self, or our identity, there must be meaning attached to the role we are addressing. The meaning and classifications come from the symbols, particularly language, and from the social context in which we live (Burke & Stets 2009). In this section the ideas of personal and Identity Theory, particularly the individual presentation of the self have been addressed. While not an exhaustive reference list of Identity Theory it encapsulates the essence of how individuals create *self*, and also presents the function of interaction in the development of meaning for identity. It is therefore appropriate to also discuss the psychological theory of Social Identity as it is one of several types of identity a person possesses (Cheek et al. 2002; Ellemers et al. 2002; Weigert et al. 1986).

3.5   Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was originally developed by Henri Tajfel (1959, 1969) with further extension by Turner in the 1970s (Tajfel & Turner 1979). Tajfel observed that there are multiple layers to creating an identity. The first being personal identity which is a definition of *self*. This concept is then set in the context of social identity via social categorization that facilitates distinct social groups. From this individuals choose in-groups and out-groups to determine the satisfaction they have with their own social identities by comparing the two – this is known as self categorization (Hogg et al. 1995). These groups are an important source of pride and self-esteem to the individual (McLeod 2008). Tajfel and Turner (1986) assert that self categorization or identification of belonging to an in-group is at the expense of the out-group and that what

results is a need for a positive social identity. Social Identity is achieved through self-categorization, social comparison/identification and inter-group relations (Oakes 2002).

Self-categorization is the way we classify ourselves into groups to understand better the social environment. These categories might be religion, sex, ethnicity, career or any number of identification props. They are useful to understand where people 'belong'. Castells (2004) argued that it was only with the internalization and construct of meaning around the classification that gives it significance. By adopting the norms and identity of a self-categorized group the individual created Social identification and through this self-esteem grows. Once identification with a specific in-group occurred then, to maintain self-esteem, the group membership needed to be a positive experience (Wann 2006; Oakes 2002). Positive experiences were developed through inter group comparisons.

SIT is based generally on the concept of stereotyping (Spears et al. 1997) and the emphasis is on group membership and non-membership. Buckingham (2008, p. 6) stated that this 'cognitive simplification' allowed individuals to distinguish easily between self and other, and to define themselves and their group in positive ways. The communication within the group was how the membership was managed (Taifel 1978) but this communication cannot exist without the context, and the decisions made by the individuals related directly to how they are involved with the group. Individuals communicate information about themselves, consciously or unconsciously, about their social backgrounds and personal characteristics (Fraser 1978), which ultimately situate them into groups that become their social identity (Crabill 2007). Individuals define themselves by how they relate to the group as 'we' rather than as 'I'.

Oyserman (2004, p. 6) saw the self system as 'an array of self-relevant knowledge, the tool we use to make sense of our experiences, and the processes that construct, defend, and maintain this knowledge… The self-concept functions as a repository of autobiographical memories, as an organizer of experience, and as an emotional buffer and motivational resource'.

Identity can be perceived as a wholly personal construct that we produce, manage and sell to the outside world – something unique. But the reality is more complex: while we manage it to a certain extent it is the interactions with others that allow for full development of who we are. Without those interactions we have nothing to compare ourselves against and measure our own

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success. Buckingham (2008) argues that sharing our identity with a greater audience allows for validation. Swann (1983) and Swann et al. (1989) highlight the importance of identity confirmation by a group, stating that people are more satisfied and more likely to participate in a relationship when it has been substantiated. Social and personal identity are not completely separable, but overlap and interact with one another very closely to guide a person's perceptions, attitudes and behaviors as well as form a general identity.

SIT closely identifies the link between self-esteem and group membership. The higher the status, for whatever reason, the higher the self-esteem (Morton et al. 2009). According to du Gay et al. (2007) individuals who belong to a group use the status from their membership to gain and maintain self-esteem, this idea is supported by the work of Derks et al. (2009), and Morton et al. (2009). Hogg (1993; Hogg & Abrams 1988, 1993; Abrams & Hogg 1990) stated that to maintain the status within the group provided self-esteem for group members because it fulfilled the need for a positive social identity.

Self-esteem and status are elements that are important for a positive identity but are not the whole. SIT has been discussed here as a way of understanding the different approaches to identity and not as a primary focus. The understanding of self-categorization is paramount to understanding self and was described by Redmond (2011, p. 20) as 'the process of describing oneself. A person may categorize him or herself as an individual or as a member of a group. Self-categorization theory is the idea is that prior to people's social identity being activated, they must first believe that they belong to a group (Hewstone et al. 2002; Turner 1985)'.

There are a number of differing views within the context of Social Identity Theory. Both Jenkins and Giddens have contributed substantially to the discourse. Giddens (1991) argued that self-identity is a uniquely modern development where individuals can reflexively construct a personal narrative. This allows the individual to recognize themselves as in control of their lives and future. Jenkins' concept of social identity is much closer to that of Burke and Stets' Identity Theory than Tajfel's SIT. In his most recent edition of the seminal text Social Identity (2008), Jenkins states that it is redundant to have the word social before identity as all identities are social.

'One's social identity … is never a final or settled matter' (Jenkins 2008, p. 17). Jenkins argued that social identities should be seen not so much as a fixed object, but as a social process, in which the individual and the social are related (Buckingham 2008). This relationship between society and identity is negotiable where agreements and disagreements occur. In fact he believes that 'without social identity, there is in fact, no society' (Jenkins 1996, p.6). Jenkins (2008) observed that there are three orders to the world that we construct: 1. the individual order made up of individuals and what-goes-on-in-their-heads, 2. the interaction order which is the relationships between individuals and 3. the institutional order which is the established way of doing things.

Jenkins presents Social Identity based on the work of Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902): That the process of identity or self is ongoing and has two related sections – the internal self definition and the external definitions given by others in society (Jenkins 1996). He reiterates the importance of a social context in the development of identity. While individuals are unique they are built through the social context. But it is the internal/external 'dialectic of identification' (Jenkins 1996, p. 60) that creates the basic model for identity in Jenkins' belief – whether that identity is individual or collective.

Following this, he stated that it is not enough to say who you are, you must also have that identity validated by others with whom you interact (Jenkins 2009), while Hogg et al. (1995) claim that Identity Theory and SIT 'occupy parallel but separate universes, with virtually no cross-referencing'. The literature above shows that there are similarities between the theories and that Jenkins's version of SIT leans towards the ideals of IT.

Through this discussion on Social Identity Theory we can establish the importance of society on identity formation. The two theories confirm that identity comes from two sources – the *self* and society. This could be seen in another way, as the actor and the audience. The next section of this chapter discusses the work of Goffman, who in the context of identity formation, uses the stage as a metaphor to help individuals manage the identity or impression they give the outside world.

3.6   Impression Management

Based on Goffman's (1956) constructs of identity this theory looks at the role that individual actors have in creating, maintaining and defending their social identities in a play metaphor. Through assumptions, settings, props, and scripts, individuals enhance their reputation. Impression Management explains the motivations behind complex human interactions and performances and is an attempt to influence others' perceptions in an advantageous way. Goffman's work incorporated aspects of a symbolic interactionist perspective (Schlenker 1980) that emphasized a qualitative analysis of the interactive nature of the communication process. Self-presentation is when an individual tries to control impressions of themselves. Schlenker (1980) observed that individuals package information to help audiences draw the correct conclusion. This packaging is a persistent feature of interpersonal behavior. Goffman (1956) suggested that identity was created through performances, and identity was a series of performances to portray ourselves appropriately in different environments. 'Both actors and audience members use the social context and norms as the basis for guiding the choice of scenery, props, and behaviors that an actor exhibits' (Winter et al. 2003, p. 310).

At the core of Impression Management is the *self* and interaction. These are presented through an acting metaphor that shows the different spaces an identity is created – in front of the audience and behind the scenes. Goffman (1956) proposed that interaction was a 'performance'. This performance was shaped by impressions that the individuals wanted to get across to the audience and was shaped by the environment and the expectations of those watching and participating (Barnhart 1994). The performer may not even been aware that they were performing (Adrian 2008). Self-verification comes from getting the audience to accept the individual's self concept as presented to them onstage.

There are a number of motives that govern self-presentation. Schlenker (1980) proposed that the fundamental reason was that individuals want to influence others and so gain rewards. This might be done by ingratiation, when individuals try to be happy and display good qualities so that others will like them (Schlenker 1980, p. 169); intimidation, which is aggressively showing anger to get others to hear and obey (Felson 1984); and supplication, when individuals try to be vulnerable and sad so people will help them and feel bad for them (Tedeschi & Riess 1984).

Another motive of self-presentation was expressive. Individuals construct an image of themselves to claim personal identity, and present themselves in a manner that was consistent with that image (Schlenker 1980; Allan 2006). From this a 'front' is formed where an individual presents an identity that is reinforced with every presentation to an audience that passes judgement (Goffman 1956; Adrian 2008). The response to the audience and environment is called self monitoring (Döring 1999). There are three elements that create 'front' – the setting, appearance and manner. Settings or scenery tend to create context for roles where everyone understands the context and how they should behave. Appearance is the way individuals look, which might include the clothes they wear, their hair, and accessories. Manner refers to what individuals do with their bodies, for instance the way they walk or their gestures (Allan 2006). This is what individuals present to the world via the stage.

Goffman (1956) also discussed self monitoring in the context of managing impressions. This was developed further by Snyder (1974) into a scale of self-monitoring. Snyder was interested to what extent people regulated their behavior to 'look good'. The scale distinguishes between high self-monitors who change their behavior to fit different situations and low self-monitors who are more cross-environmentally consistent.

To add to the play metaphor Goffman (1956) described everyday life as having a front stage where we manage our impressions and a back stage where there is no audience. The view being that we behave differently when we are in front of audiences and in front of different audiences – like an actor in a play. The role of the audience is important in building an impression. Bozeman and Kacmar (1997) claim, in their work about organizations, that paramount to interaction was the desire to be perceived in a certain way. Goffman (1967) argued that people desire to explain themselves to others regarding their identities before concentrating on work or other goals that may bring them together. Allan (2006) purports that Goffman is not interested in the reality or ontological standing of the world but rather only the individuals and their experiences.

Goffman's theories were set in the context of the advent of television achieving ubiquity (from 1950s to 1980s). Historically this was a time when the emphasis shifted from words to pictures. 'These shifts in the cultural context impacted the way people understood themselves. Self image became increasingly important and at the same time became less tied to real social groups and

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more informed by images seen in television, commercials, movies, and advertisements (in increasingly glossy magazines)' (Allan 2010, p. 329). As computers become as ubiquitous as TV there is an increasing number of studies conducted into the area of computer-mediated communication to investigate its effect on impression management (Albright 2001; Hancock and Dunham 2001; Becker and Stamp 2001; and Ellison et al. 2006).

Critics of Goffman say that he advocates that the backstage self is more 'authentic' and closer to the true person. Buckingham (2008) stated that Goffman appears to make a distinction between personal identity and social identity, as though group performances were separate from individual ones. This distinction indicated that the individual self was more truthful.

Oyserman (2004) notes that Goffman's *the Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* does not provide a comprehensive description of the interactive processes. While teams and interactions are explored there are some issues that are not dealt with in his work. Later studies into stigma and ritual added to this knowledge and gave a deeper understanding of 'everyday' life.

The above review shows the complex and often overlapping views of identity. The presentation of self is an important part of who an individual is and then how this is accepted and viewed by an audience (both passive and interactive) is also part of creating an identity. The next section of this chapter will discuss identity theories in the modern age.

3.7   Discussion

Turner (1999, p. 7) states there are no identity theories that are 'finished and perfect' and this discussion highlights the infinite nature of the Identity theory formation. The theories discussed above tend towards the idea that all identities are social to a certain extent. The methods that we use to portray this internal belief are symbols that are recognizable and express the ideas of self. The symbols and agreed behaviors form and re-enforce the presentation of self. By taking elements of these theories we can establish a way in which to discuss and research Digital Identity. van Kokswijk (2007, p. 24) observes that 'Identity is a characteristic defining one's sense of self' and is linked to the role an individual plays, the hierarchy of identity, the meanings that symbols are given, motivations, impressions as well as the social context.

Identity Theory explains well the internal presentation of *self*. It is important to not undervalue this part of the identity process. While interactions and social context are essential they are not the only way of developing *self*. To deny the importance of internal beliefs and representations does not fully comprehend the meaning of *self*. SIT recognizes identity as it is represented in comparison to another group, and this definition is too limiting for this research. How we present ourselves on Facebook and Twitter is not just about audience but also about internal representation and the impression that the individual seeks to share. While there are elements of SIT that support this research, such as the social element and importance of interaction, fundamentally it is better suited to describe group dynamics (Tajfel 1978). There is opportunity within the discipline to investigate Social Media use in this way but it is not the focus here.

Hogg et al. (1995) sum up the differences between Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory. The very basis is a different way of looking at the world: Identity Theory comes from sociology and explains the role-related behaviors of individuals, while SIT is a psychological theory that explains group development and intergroup relations. SIT research places the social context as the most significant factor of social identity (Crabill 2007; Krane, Barber & McClung 2001; Brown 2000; Hennessy & West 1999; Huddy 2001; Oakes 2002; Tajfel 1978; Tajfel & Turner 1986; Terry, Hogg, & White 1999; Turner 1999). Identity creation is more than which groups the individual joins online, but rather in what ways they project the *self*. The focus of both theories is very different even though there are similarities in terms of a social context. The focus of this research will be on the individual and their role in projecting the *self*. It does not explore how the identity has been received or interpreted by an audience.

Role identity is crucial to understanding the presentation of self online as it sets a social context as highlighted by SIT. The hierarchy of salience gives a good basis for discussing the way that Identity is formed. By categorizing the most salient roles that an individual maintains offline we can operate within a social context that is understood and has meaning. The importance of role to individuals sets the context for this study. The roles to be investigated are high on the salience hierarchy and therefore can be used across different environments and are enacted in most days of the individual's life. There is little written about the influence of role on Digital Identity and many questions are raised about how closely individuals identify with that which they create online. Is the resultant Digital Identity an extension of an already existing role or is it a

completely separate identity that exists in its own part of the hierarchy? This would depend on how individuals develop the *self* concept online.

Symbols and language are important to the meanings that individuals give to themselves. They also allow for others to understand that meaning. In the previous chapter we discussed the new *linga franca* and it would be interesting to see to what extent that this is true. And in what ways adapting language impacts the identity that is presented to the world.

Impression Management highlights the importance of presentation of the individual. How Social Media facilitates this presentation has not been explored in the literature. The questions that arise here explore the extent to which individuals attempt to control the impression that others form of them. Much like Identity Theory, the idea is that individuals create a presentation of the self that is then performed to an audience. Adrian (2010, p. 199) concurs that 'we can think of identity as a streaming picture of life within a particular context'. For this study the streaming pictures appear on Facebook and Twitter. There is little said about the extent to which individuals control the impressions seen by others, how far they change their identity, or how authentic is their representation.

One of the key differences in online identity is the ease with which 'unknown' or uninvited audiences can affect the presentation of self. With easy access and the ability to manipulate images and data there are real possibilities of manipulation occurring (Korica et al. 2006). Some studies (Davis 2010) have illustrated the authenticity of the information shared but there are not many investigations into whether people experience the negative side of the information that they share willingly. Gossip has always been prevalent in society but with the resilience of the information age does gossip become part of an individual's long term identity? There are many questions to be investigated around private information on the social stage. Has the line between back stage and front stage been blurred by the adoption of Social Media? Self awareness of an online identity and self monitoring are interesting by-products of the digital age. We are encouraged to google ourselves to see what is written about us and to see if posts we have made have been changed, which illustrates the concept of self monitoring.

Goffman's concept of self and front and back stages was used by Benson (2009) in her ethnographical study of Facebook, in which she investigated the offline implications of online

behavior. Backstage – where individuals let their guards down – is where they can construct their onstage persona. Facebook is a public space where we share personal information that may have traditionally been considered 'backstage'. Benson (2009, p. 6) states that one of the main issues with public backstage online is that 'people do not understand or know how to set the privacy setting on their accounts and therefore allow audiences such as employers unfettered access to the backstage area, which may damage or ruin the onstage performance'. Whether this really is the case is debatable as different people have different ideas about what is onstage and what is backstage. In Benson's (2009) work she states that her research shows that students of the University consider Facebook offstage or a private space while the University itself considers it public space. Further research could be done to explore if individuals consider Facebook and Twitter front or back stages and if it differs between roles.

Both Turkle (1995) and Aboujaode (2011) use examples of patients who have created entirely new personas online to deal with perceived or real inadequacies. These examples are often picked up by popular press to underline the issues and problems that can occur when the screen is divided between who an individual is and who they want to be. This is very much in keeping with Goffman's idea of front and back stages. Perhaps the front stage persona that individuals share on Facebook or Twitter is as authentic as the 'real life' individual. Identity is flexible and the different aspects of individual's lives only enhance who they are, rather than constrict the 'true' self. Individuals identify in 'real life' the roles that they play – for example, the researcher is a sister, daughter, lecturer, volunteer, researcher, friend, aunt, writer, nerd. Each of these roles is as authentic as the next and all make up the *self*. Individuals cannot only be defined by the job that they have or by their status in society, they are defined by all of those roles. Each has an important part to play but an individual has different versions of self depending on the social context – they are all real parts of the individual but they are different.

The idea of Impression Management is that individuals decide what impression they would like to make in the world of Social Media. The extent to which individuals consciously decide how these impressions should appear, or whether they are subconsciously presenting their character, should be considered. The way individuals communicate on these platforms is important – and the three goals of impressions (Schlenkler 1980) can be tested in this area. Are people always positive, are they trying to intimidate or do they try to get people to feel sorry for them?

Individuals are defined by *self* (whether it be 'the *self*', self-categorization, back stage) but no identity is complete without interaction. The three theories agree that there is not one identity for a person, as people belong to a number of different groups or have different roles and therefore have several selves that relate to different contexts (Turner et al. 1987). The way that we express this idea of *self* and the impressions we make by interacting with others is also an important function of identity. If the world is our stage, what symbols and props do we use to get our ideas across? This research will investigate this idea of identity and roles in a digital context.

The technologies are also at the core of this research. This is not a study about technology acceptance but rather addresses users who are already submerged in the digital world. The user will be well established on Facebook or Twitter and should log into the system at least once a day. Social context has been identified as relating to the roles that an individual holds in society 'offline' but also within the structure of Facebook or Twitter. While the study will investigate the Social Media applications it is also relevant to look at the role of hardware in self presentation. How individuals access information may relate to the frequency and ability to construct identity.

A combination of SIT, IT and IM offers the current investigation theoretical elements to develop understanding of the processes that are employed by individuals to negotiate their identity on Social Media. Therefore this research will look at how individuals present themselves on Facebook or Twitter, the social context of that presentation, and from this identify the salience of the role that the individual holds and how it influences what they share. Also of interest is to what extent individuals use different symbols and languages to get across meaning in the context of Social Media. In what ways does the audience (inferring interaction) influence the method that individuals share personal information and what negative experiences that may have occurred. By sharing information online individuals using Social Media are presenting their personal identity, but we also need to take into consideration the social context. The ownership or specific roles in real life is the basis of this study and guides the elements for understanding the presentation of self online. These roles are derived from membership of different groups. The study of Identity is complex and there were many different interpretations that bring different ideas to the discussion. The next section will identify the

different elements of Identity common to the different theories and how they can be used to form the basis of the study.

3.8   Elements of Identity

From the above discussion it is clear that there are elements of Identity theory that are common to all three theories, and for the purposes of this study will form the basis of what is investigated. To establish how an individual creates identity in the 'real world' we can see that it is not a simple projection from the individual. In fact there are a number of elements that influence what is shared and how.

The *self* is the way that an individual sees themselves and choose to share with others. It comes from within and presents the *self* that the individual wants to project to the rest of the world. Some of the personal identity markers such as gender, race, culture, sexual orientation influence the way that an individual thinks about themselves, but it is also about managing impressions through what is shared. By self-monitoring, individuals can control what the *self* looks like.

> **Role** is central to how an individual presents themselves to others as it sets the context for meaning. We expect people with specific roles to behave in a specific way. The more salient the role the more central it is to *self*.

> **Audience** is where the *self* becomes realized with feedback and validation coming from others to reinforce (or challenge) the presentation of *self*. This interaction gives meaning in a group context.

> **Symbols** are the way in which the *self* and audience can create meaning from what is shared and the interactions that occur between the two. Language is just words unless the parties involved understand and give meaning to what is said. But symbols are more than just language – they also include pictures, photographs and multimedia.

These four elements represent the way that individuals create an offline identity. This study will investigate if these elements are common to the way that individuals create an online identity. The elements are shown below (Figure 3.1) to show the way that individuals present themselves

in the real world. An individual presents the self which is influenced by the many roles that an individual has and by the many different audiences that can interact with the individual. Audiences can be segmented to relate to specific roles or specific versions of the self for example using polite language at work.
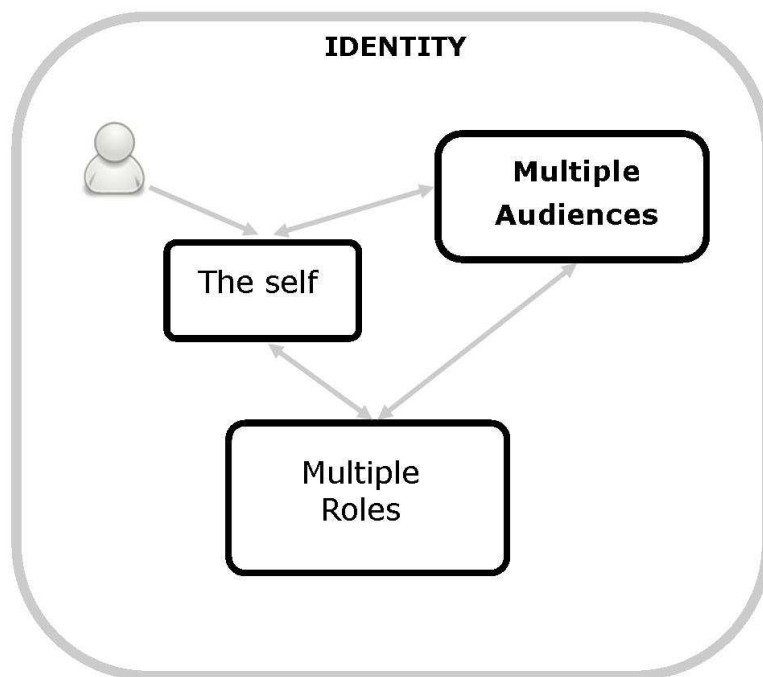
Figure 3.1: Elements of Identity theory

The interaction between these elements created a real world identity. The individual presents self and is affected by audience and roles. The arrows represent the symbols used to convey meaning and to show the pathways of interaction. This figure represents the way that real world identity will be constructed in this study.

3.9   This study

The previous chapter has shown the depth and breadth of current research into Social Media and how it is used. From this we can see the different ways that individuals are using the technologies, the results of this and some of the issues. There has been a fundamental shift in the way that people communicate and share information. Previous research has established that this process was occurring but little information has been written around how this change in sharing of personal information affects the online identity of the individual. There were anecdotal

references to people pretending to be others and studies from the pre-Social Media days of the Internet, but are people really misrepresenting themselves online to the extent that popular media insinuates? Naturally questions then arise around what information people are sharing, the manner in which they are sharing, whether they feel concerned about any content or if they are aware of their audiences. From the above discussion we can see some common threads in the ideas of identity and how it is built. The underlying premise of this research is whether individuals form their Digital Identity in the same way they do offline.

An opportunity exists to remove a current gap in the research by establishing the extent to which membership of a group influences the information shared online. This chapter has established the importance of Role in determining the identity of an individual. In this research roles are a determining factor in the way that the research is approached. This research will access the impact that primary roles have on the establishment of a Digital Identity. Therefore different groups were established and investigated that related directly to the salient role of the individual. The publication of information by individuals about themselves online allows for feedback on how an individual sits within that social group. It is the comparison between these groups and how they approach Identity formation online that is at the core of this research. The three groups chosen for this research are Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives.

This study will investigate the way in which individuals use Facebook and/or Twitter to build their Digital Identity and will define the extent to which the identity that we create in the real world is reflected in the identity that we create on these applications. Identity is a social construct and therefore this study will use a group context to set apart the different social identities created by an individual. Through the interaction online between the shared personal information and friends and followers another layer of identity may be formed. In the context of digital information the way that individuals presents themselves is linked to the way they wish to be perceived. This study will investigate the extent to which individuals do this consciously, or without thought, taking the ideas of Goffman's self presentation and linking them to the idea of *self* from Identity Theory.

3.10   Research Question

By identifying how individuals form identity offline we are able to set a foundation for this investigation. The literature is rich with examples of teenagers and young adults therefore this investigation will focus on adults over the age of 30. Therefore, in the context of the three groups, Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives, this research will investigate the presentation of self online. The research question is: **Do individuals construct their identity in the same way in a digital context as they do in the 'real world'?**

The overall focus of this research is observations of Digital Identity on Facebook and Twitter, with a view to working towards a Theory of Digital Identity. The two Literature review chapters have established the theoretical and technological background of this study by investigating Social Media, Identity theories and Digital Identity. This has culminated in the identification of a research question. The next chapter will discuss the methodology used to investigate this question.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology, Research Design and Data Generation

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter established the current literature on Social Media and Digital Identity. While this illustrates the work that is currently published, it highlights the infancy of this area of investigation. We have hardly begun to understand the influences and risks that are attached to sharing personal information on Social Network Sites, and it warrants further investigation. This chapter outlines the justification for the selection of the research methodology including research paradigm, research approach, research strategy, data generation techniques and analysis processes.

Keen (1987, p. 3) argues that the mission of Information Systems research is to study 'the effective design, delivery, use and impact of Information technologies in organizations and society'. Since the time of Keen there have been a number of developments in the field with the 'softer human, social and organizational issues' (Avison & Myers 1995, p. 44) becoming part of the discipline. The researcher believes that you cannot overlook the importance of the user in the investigation of Information Systems. By investigating how individuals use and relate to technology we are able to have a clearer understanding of systems and their place in society.

4.2 Research topic

This research will facilitate a better understanding of how individuals present themselves on Facebook and Twitter. The aim is to observe how different groups use and interact on Social Network Sites and the resultant Digital Identity that is formed. The research will observe to what extent individuals are consciously sharing information and the form that this takes. Using an amalgamation of Identity theories, as documented in the previous chapter, the researcher has examined through interviews and observations the information that each of individuals has shared online.

This research will also achieve a greater appreciation of the following elements of identity creation online: motivations of social network usage; the consciousness of *self* online; the changing nature of symbolism; the role of audience; context; and the external factors exerted on Digital Identity. Given the strong nature of role on identity formation, this is the core of the research – with groups creating the online perspective.

The research methodology, design and generation were based on the work of Saunders et al. (2009) as presented in diagram one. This model offered an efficient pathway to reach the ultimate research aim as considered above. Although other paradigms were investigated, Interpretivism is the logical philosophical basis for this research. Avison and Myers (1995) discuss the interdisciplinary nature of Information Systems. That the discipline is essentially pluralistic is illustrated by looking at the variety of approaches to Information Systems development and research. The researcher comes from a sociological background and this way of looking at the world is an important part of cross-disciplinary understanding and gives the Information Systems perspective a depth of understanding that might be missing from a positivist interpretation.

The Saunders et al. (2009) research 'onion' (Figure 4.1) illustrates well the layers of this study. From an intrepretivism philosophical standpoint the research approach is inductive, the chosen strategy is ethnography, using multi-method, and is cross-sectional in time while using qualitative data generation methods and analysis.
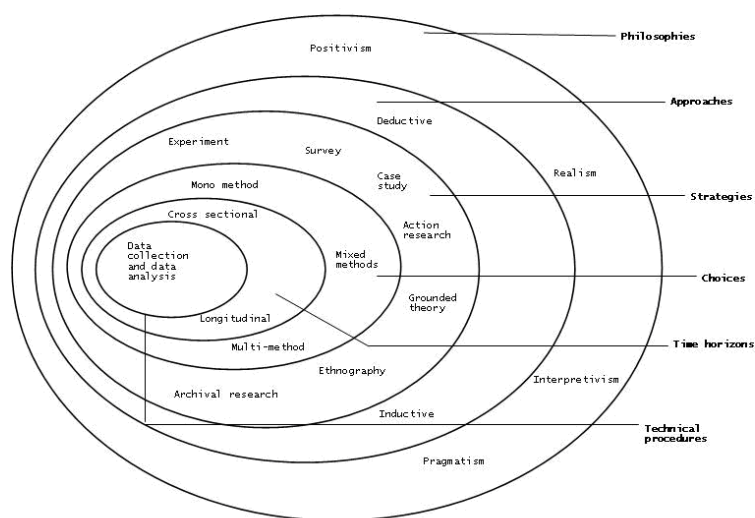
Figure 4.1: Saunders et al. (2009) 'Research onion'

4.3   Research philosophy/paradigm - Interpretivism

The research onion (above) illustrates the choices that we, as researchers, make in the way that we approach the world and our research. There are multiple views and perspectives that suit not only specific research projects, but also the individuals who guide the research. This research will be guided by an Interpretivism philosophy, not only because there is a natural synergy with the topic, but because it is the way the researcher approaches the work. This study also aims to develop a deep understanding of how individuals from different groups create a Digital Identity online and this can best be achieved by employing an interpretive research approach (Corbitt 2000).

Interpretivism is crucial to understand differences between individuals in their role as social actors and allows us to interpret their everyday social roles in accordance with the meaning given to those roles (Saunders et al. 2009). This paradigm emphasizes the meaningful nature of people's participation in social and cultural life (Zhang 2011), and people give their own and others' actions meaning by analyzing this participation (Cohen 1993). These ideas are the essence of this research. By investigating how people interact and share information on Facebook and Twitter, by creating meaning in the symbols they use, we can interpret how they form their identity. To use a positivist paradigm for this research would not be appropriate as the methods of natural science are not suitable to understand an individual's motivations and beliefs.
Walsham (1995, p. 376) sums up well the strengths of Interpretive research and the way that it relates to this research:

> Interpretive methods of research adopt the position that our knowledge of reality
> is a social construction by human actors. In this view, value-free data cannot be
> obtained, since the enquirer uses his or her preconceptions in order to guide the
> process of enquiry, and furthermore the researcher interacts with the human
> subjects of the enquiry, changing the perceptions of both parties. Interpretivism
> contrasts with positivism, where it is assumed that the "objective" data collected
> by the researcher can be used to test prior hypotheses or theories.

The symbolism of identity is mirrored in interpretive studies as researchers seek to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them (Walsham 2006). Walsham (1993, pp. 4-5) discusses research in Information Systems as 'aimed at producing an understanding of the context of the information system, and the process whereby the information system

influences and is influenced by the context'. This research will investigate how individuals present themselves online, the meaning they attach to role, the *self*, symbolism and audience. These realities are created by the social actors themselves and do not exist separately to the situation. Interpretivism is appropriate as it is able to investigate identity formation in the context of Social Media, as it is a means of identifying the individuals' realities.

The guiding elements of Identity developed in the previous chapter shows the different variables that influence the formation of Digital Identity by an individual. The factors of role, symbols, the *self* and audience all play an important part in identity formation. This research will investigate these variables but is not bound by their limitations. Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) state that unlike the positivist paradigm, interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables but draws attention on the full complexity of human sense-making as the situation emerges. This approach was appropriate in this research as the variables are unknown in such a young discipline and require an exploratory outlook. The goal is to understand the Digital Identity formation phenomenon in the context of Facebook and Twitter and, to gain insight, this needs to be done from the point of view of the participants through Social Media. If this research were designed to be quantitative then the details and rich information about specific individuals and their belief systems would be lost. According to Boland (1985) the way that Interpretive researchers access the information they require is through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. This is echoed in the importance of symbolism in Identity Theory. The way that the researcher approached the research was influenced by their way of looking at the world.

From an ontological point of view this research is guided by subjectivism and seeks to 'understand the meanings that individuals attach to social phenomena' (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 119). The assumptions that this researcher has about the world is that it is socially constructed by the actors who exist within it and the realities are a product of their interactions. This study investigated the meaning that individuals attach to their presentation of *self* (by sharing personal information online) on Facebook and Twitter. By looking at this from a subjective point of view the researcher acknowledges that the data and its interpretation is 'socially constructed, subjective, may change, [and could be] multiple' (Saunders 2009, p. 119).

Epistemology refers to the assumptions about knowledge and how it can be obtained within the context of a study (Hirschheim 1992). From an Interpretive perspective it is the view that all knowledge is a matter of interpretation. Saunders et al. (2009) suggest that interpretivist studies are those relating to 'feelings' rather than being 'resource' focused. This resonated well with this study as it is concerned in the subjective meanings and social phenomena of identity-building online. The focus is on the details of the situation and the reality behind these details. In looking at these minutiae we are able to establish subjective meanings and motivating actions. This knowledge is important to the context of this study and illustrates the significance of detailed information. By concentrating on social phenomena with no external reality we are able to better understand the phenomena being studied. This research looks at the 'invisible' and unmeasurable phenomena rather than using positivist methods such as counting phenomena that you can touch and see.

In an Interpretivist study the researcher is part of what is being researched and cannot be separated; which means that the research will be subjective (Saunders 2009). To have credible results it is important to establish the significance of the researcher's own values in the process. These values influence every stage of the research design from topic, and methods to philosophical approach (Heron 1996). Therefore the researcher has a heightened awareness of value judgments made while drawing conclusions from the data.

From an interpretivist point of view there is no objective reality but rather it is something that people form by their interpretation of reality. These ideas are influenced by the individual's values, other people's reactions and the negotiations and compromises that arise from the first two occurrences (Fisher 2007). Using this stance enabled the researcher to look at differing accounts of the same phenomena and this requires an empathetic stance. This allows the researcher to interpret the social roles of others in accordance with their own set of meanings. This is important in Information Systems research because identity building is complex and unique and by entering into people's world we can better understand their world (Saunders 2009).

As a participant in the online world of Social Media and belonging to one of the groups (Academia) the relationship of the researcher to the research is emic (Hallebone & Priest 2009), which means that it is subjective rather than objective research. This also makes the researcher

ideally placed to explore their experiences from the 'inside' – a key characteristic of phenomenological research (Blaikie 2009).

Phenomenology takes the subjective standpoint of individual actors as the central focus of attention. While an objective approach views the social world as a reality that exists independently of any individual's perception of it, phenomenology posits reality as constituted by people's view of it. This means that there is not one objective social reality that can be analyzed in the same manner that a scientist might analyze physical reality; instead, there are multiple realities. Each perspective creates a new social reality. According to Hewitt and Shulman (2011, p. 16) 'the phenomenologist accounts for human conduct by attempting to "get within" and describe the subjective perspectives of people, on the premise that one can only understand and account for what people do by understanding the reality they perceive and act toward'. In this research the realities are created by the individuals who present their ideas about *self*, symbols, role and audience. How this information is given meaning in this context is explained through the research strategy of the study.

Blaikie (2009) outlines four major research strategies that are deductive, inductive, retroductive and abductive. He states that the aim of inductive research is to 'establish universal generalisation to be used as pattern explanations' and that this is done by accumulating observations or data. This is the most appropriate way to view this study.

Induction is the process of creating theory and in this research it manifested in the creation of new elements of Identity theory in the context of digital applications. Inductive reasoning allowed the researcher to make generalizations that caused a revision of the initial concepts of Digital Identity that were identified in the literature. This theory came from the narratives and conclusions. As data reduction occurred the researcher selected examples and aspects that were relevant to the study. This allowed for generalizations to be made of the motives and actions of the actors in particular situations. This highlighted the way that experiences were different and also how themes were connected. This culminated in the development of a Digital Identity theory.

Inductive research allows for the researcher to gain an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events (Saunders et al. 2009, p.127). This research seeks to understand the meanings

that individuals attach to Digital Identity creation. Inductive research is about theory building rather than theory testing. This research does not want to be constrained by a specific theory to be tested, but rather uses theory to guide the research with the goal to build on different Identity theories. According to Blaikie (2009) the goal of observations is to produce generalizations that will further explain the world. There is no specific theory of Digital Identity creation that can be tested, so we need to take the ideas of Identity theory and relate them to the realities of how individuals use Social Media to create their identity. Saunders (2009) proposes that Ethnography is rooted firmly in the inductive approach where the researcher is immersed in the world as closely as possible.

4.4   Research strategy – Ethnography

The strategy of the study is ethnographic as it takes the researcher close to the 'reality' of people's lives (Becker & Greer 1960). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) and Corbitt (2000) ethnography allows a researcher to develop theory from observation and practice. The purpose of the research is to explore the ways that individuals share information online to create a Digital Identity. The strategy for this research is an exploratory study. Robson (2002, p. 59) states that this type of study is used to find out 'what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light'. As established in the literature review of Social Media this is a relatively new area of study and there is much room to explore and assess new ideas and realities. Interpretivism is the philosophical foundation of this study and there are a number of different strategies that a researcher can use to approach this design. Due to the nature of this research the strategy is ethnography.

Wagner (1990) states that ethnography allows for the description of activities in relation to a particular cultural context and from the point of view of the participants. This is supported by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p. 53) who purport that ethnography allows for the 'production of descriptive cultural knowledge of a group; the production of a list of features constitutive of membership in a group or culture; the description and analysis of patterns of social interaction; the provision as far as possible of 'insider accounts'; and the development of a theory'.

4.5   Justification

When investigating a phenomenon as personal as identity it needs to be conducted at a close and subjective level. The way to really understand is to ask and observe. The best method to understand how the participants think and feel about the phenomena is for the researcher to immerse themself in the world of the participants. Saunders (2009) describes ethnography as a research strategy that focuses upon describing and interpreting the social world through first-hand field study. The purpose of entrenching oneself into the research is to enable the participants to offer their own descriptions and explanations of their realities in their own way. This essentially means that the researcher seeks to interpret the research from the perspective of those involved, rather than as an impartial observer.

According to Lewis (1985) the ethnographer immerses themselves in the life of people they study and seeks to place the phenomena studied in its social and cultural context. This research strategy is not traditional in Information Systems but according to Myers (1999; Avison & Myers 1995; Klein & Myers 1999) there is a small but growing number of Information Systems researchers who have recognized the value of the ethnographic method for Information System research. Avison and Myers (1999, p. 48) list Bentley et al. (1992), Harvey and Myers (1995), Hughes et al. (1992), Lee (1991, 1992), Orlikowski (1991), Preston (1991) as examples of ethnographic work. A more recent survey of the literature also identifies Klein & Myers (1999), Schultze (2000), Corbitt & Thanasankit (2000), McBride (2008) and Eaton (2011).

Although this approach is still not widely utilized it is a growing area of research that is important to the future of understanding Information Systems. As the Internet becomes even more user-centric, the content becomes user-driven and is expected to be interactive, so there is a need to understand further the human motivations and group-specific aspects of the systems. The best way to create rich data and understand a deeper level of technology acceptance is to observe and ask participants in the discipline. This sort of information cannot be gained from surveys or quick questions and answers. Better systems, more tailored technology and intuitive applications will be the consequences of understanding, not only for the end users, but also the people who create the technologies.

According to Burgess (1985) there are four features to ethnographic studies: that the research should take place in a natural setting; that the study should be flexible and change if the

circumstances require; that the research was as much about the observation of social process as it was about the search for meaning, given to the process, by the participants in it. These ideas are supported by Corbitt (2000, p. 122) reiterating that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously and, as a result, 'it is dialectical in that theory emerges from the data rather than from the imposition of theory on data'.

Ethnography is best understood when research is done in context. Historically the major change in the field of ethnography was when it moved from the museum-type collections of cultural oddities (Myers 2009) to 'trying to understand the meaning of particular cultural practices in context' (Harvey & Myers 1995). Geertz (1988) supports the thick descriptions (semiotic) school of ethnography. Myers (2009, p. 96) states that 'the ethnographer has to search out and analyse symbolic forms – words, images, institutions, behaviours … he [Geertz] says that anthropologists need to understand the "webs of significance" which people weave within the cultural context, and these webs of significance can be communicated to others by thickly describing the situation in its context'. This best describes the way that the researcher has approached this study, with context being both group/role focused, and digital.

Ethnography is a naturalistic way of researching phenomena in the context in which it occurs. It seeks to gain an individual insight into what participants think, and it is not appropriate in this situation to use data generation techniques that over-simplify the complexities of everyday life. This is why ethnography often uses observational techniques to understand better what is occurring in reality (Saunders et al. 2009).

Nguyen et al. (2006, p. 26) describe ethnographic studies as 'complex, messy, dynamic and changing, and rarely able to be moulded or fitted into some recipe'. This description seems to be accurate for this study, but the design of the research strategy came from Bryman's (2004, p. 89) model:

1. General research questions,
2. Selecting relevant site(s) and subjects
3. Collection of relevant data
4. Interpretation of data
5. Conceptual and theoretical work (a. tighter specification of the research question/s and b. collection of further data)

6. Write up finding/conclusions

By following these steps the subsequent design was created to best answer the research question and identify how the elements of Identity theory adapts to the Digital domain (Figure 4.2).
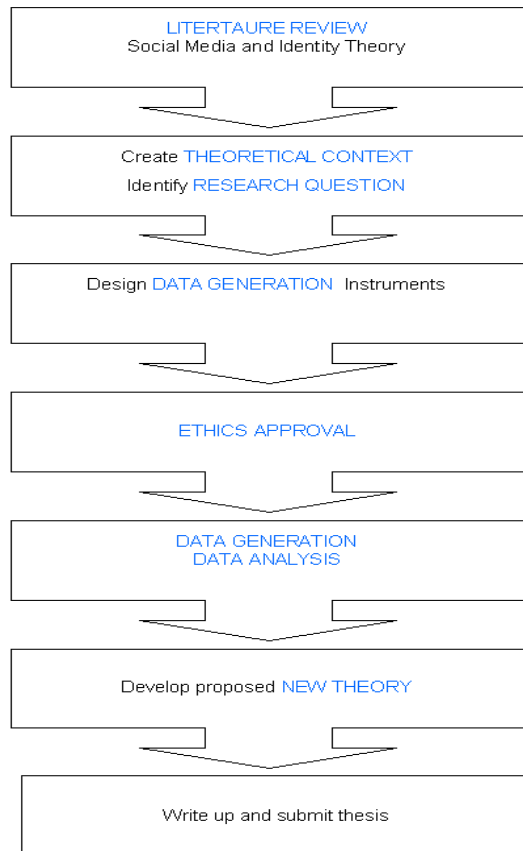
Figure 4.2: Research design

Following Bryman (2004) as a guide, the research design commenced with an in-depth review of existing literature in the areas of Social Media and Digital Identity. Then a theoretical context was developed and data generation instruments were designed. After ethics approval was granted the data generation stages began. The first phase was semi-structured interviews, the second phases were online observations (part I for individuals and part II for groups) and finally follow-up of semi-structured interviews were administered. The different methods of data collection allowed for methodological triangulation of the results thereby providing richer information (Saunders et al. 2009).

The results were analyzed and this informed the next phase of the research as well as the theoretical context. The analysis was done in cycles to find meaning in the context of the extant

literature. The interviews and observational data were coded into tables in order to understand any similarities, differences and patterns. The findings resulted in a modification of the framework. The final stage is the discussion of findings and further revision of the framework.

Ethnography requires the researcher to be entrenched in the research and, for this study, to gather information at an individual level. To gain a well rounded understanding of individuals and their formation of identity on Social Media it was important to generate data in a number of different forms. While interviews may have sufficed, an additional dimension of observation was structured to allow for richer information to emerge. This permitted cross-referencing between what individuals thought they did and what they actually did by way of watching their online behavior. Therefore this research design included three phases to collect and analyse data so as to strengthen the information shared. Meaning can be garnered from the way individuals present themselves and to draw attention to patterns and sequences of which they may not be consciously aware.

The data for this study was generated between February 2011 and April 2012. While the initial concept was that the study would be cross-sectional it became evident as the study progressed that the timeline was to become to some extent longitudinal. Because the data was gathered at two or three different points in time, the study was carried longitudinally across a period of time. The information gathered presents a moment in time for the individuals in terms of how they present themselves; but the interviews, observations and follow-up interviews clearly indicate that information was gathered over time. It was not the purpose of the study to compare the different time horizons but rather to question findings over a period of time. This not only gave the researcher time to analyse data and reflect on its meaning but rather to also to give the participants time to reflect on how they use the technology. While ideally it would be interesting to follow the participants over a period of time to see how their identity develops and changes, this was not possible due to the time constraints of the project.

Data generation commenced in February 2011 and continued until April 2012. The following table (Table 4.1) illustrates the timeline.

Table 4.1: Timetable of data generation

Phase one	Semi-structured interviews	February 2011 – November 2011
Phase two I	Observations (all individuals)	February 2011 – March 2012
Phase two II	Observations (3 month intensive)	September 2011 – December 2011
Phase three	Semi-structured interviews	February 2012 – April 2012

This section discusses in detail the way that the data was generated for this study. It outlines the three phases of data collection and the analysis process. Bryne (2001, p. 1) states that 'qualitative methods seek to represent holism and to provide contextual knowledge of the phenomenon being studied'. The method for this study was chosen to represent different groups as a context for the Digital Identity.

The research aim, of observing individuals to gain an insight into how they present themselves on Facebook and Twitter, provided the framework for the literature review in order to determine the boundaries of what was relevant (Blaikie 2009). From this, a research question was chosen and a theoretical context of elements from Identity theory were adopted. The research design included an ethnographic study using the methods of semi-structured interviews, observation, and concluding with follow-up interviews. The analysis was guided by Klein and Myers's (1999) principles for Interpretive field research with particular emphasis on the Hermeneutic circle.

This study will make a major contribution to the current knowledge on the management of personal information on Social Media and the formation of a Digital Identity.

4.6   Methods

This study was achieved through three phases of data generation to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic.

1. Semi structured interviews: Structured interviews with 30 adults from three different Groups.

2. Observation of Facebook and Twitter accounts

3. Follow-up interviews to validate the key findings
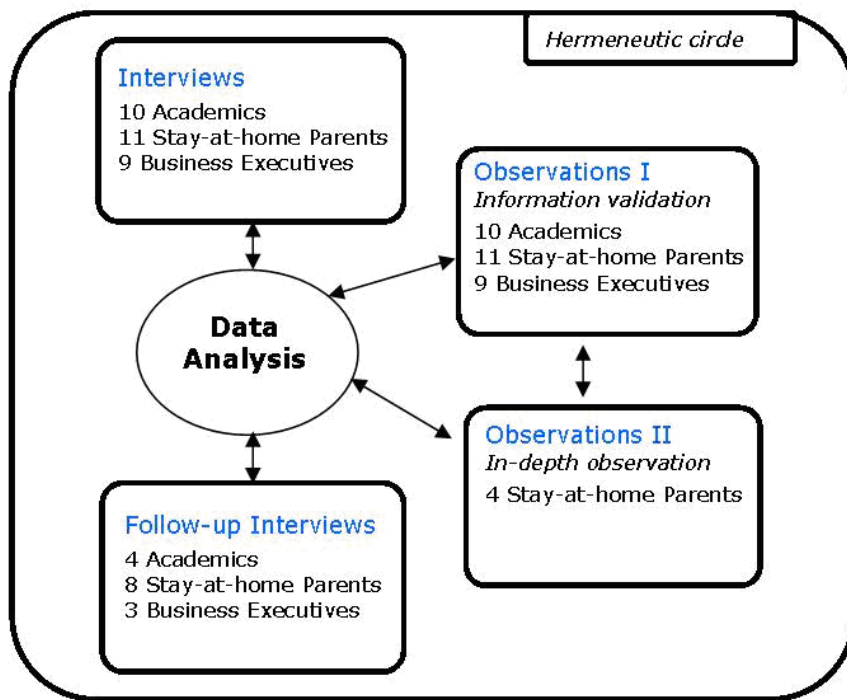
Figure 4.3: Data generation and analysis phases

Phase One: Semi structured interviews

The interviews sought to frame the information gained about the everyday practice of using Facebook or Twitter. The how? and why? were coupled with questions about the extent to which language is adopted, whether decisions are made consciously, and the extent to which the individuals have had any negative experiences were all addressed. This was to uncover how their identities are created and maintained on Social Media. The nature of the semi-structured interview was so that organic and unanticipated questions could be asked and information shared.

The interviews were designed with a view to establishing whether the experience of individuals supported or contrasted with the theories in the literature with respect to how they presented a Digital Identity. This was done by asking questions based on the theoretical context of role, *self*, symbols and audience. In addition, it sought new information from the interviewees, with respect to bad experiences, group context, technological factors and other ideas.

The interviews were voluntary and took place in the person's home or place of work. This was a comfortable and non-threatening environment that allowed for a more natural flow of

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information; it also allowed the researcher to observe them in their own environment. Each interview took between 30 minutes and one hour. The interviews were recorded on a digital device (audio only) which helped to fill in the gaps of notes taken. This practice did not seem to concern the participants.

The interviews were then transcribed and any additional notes taken were added to the transcripts, particularly in regards to body language and eye contact. Ryle (1971) calls the results of ethnographical enquiry 'thick descriptions' which explains behavior within its context which allows a non-involved reader to gain a better understanding.

While the interviews were semi-structured there were still a number of questions that guided the process. The questions were developed to get participants to reflect on role, the *self*, symbolism, audience, negative experiences and culture. It was the experience of the researcher that if a participant were asked outright about the way they presented themselves online their reaction was quite guarded. So it was much better to build the ideas of identity around questions that expanded the knowledge without creating defensiveness. It was explained to the participants that the purpose of the research was to determine how and why they used social media. Specific reference to identity creation was not made. The participants were told that the study looked at different groups and that they had been chosen as part of that group, for example as an Academic. This group identification may have influenced the information that they shared about themselves but the researcher believes that the participants were honest and open in the discussions.

The interviews commenced with an introduction to the topic, explanation of the paperwork (and acquisition of appropriate signatures), collection of demographic information and a confirmation that the individual was a daily user of Facebook and/or Twitter. Then in a conversational tone and context the following questions were asked, although in no particular order. Following is a table (Table 4.2) that summarizes the questions asked during the initial interview phase of the data generation.

Table 4.2: Questions for data generation

Questions	Theoretical rationale
How often do you sign in?	Verification of criteria
How often do you status update or tweet?	Technology factors
What sort of information do you share on Facebook/Twitter? Have a look over your last week of use – did you upload photos, share experiences, play games, comment on other posts etc?	The *self*
What private information do you share? Any of the following? o Photo of yourself o Date of birth o Address o Email o Phone number o Religion o Sex o Relationship status o Favorite movies/books/music o Do you belong to a network eg Australia or School or University Alumni	The *self* Audience Symbols
Do you share photographs of your family and friends?	The *self* Audience Symbols
Do you restrict who sees your photographs?	Audience
Do you ever remove your name from photos that have been tagged to identify you?	The *self* Audience Negative experience
What motivates you to use Facebook/Twitter? What are the main reasons you use it?	The *self*
Would you use Facebook/Twitter if your friends didn't?	Audience
How do you most often access Facebook/Twitter? eg computer, laptop, tablet (iPad), smart phone	Technology factors
Where do you most often access Facebook/Twitter? eg Home, Work, Smart phone, Public space (eg Library), Educational Institute	Technology factors
Is your profile restricted? To what degree? o Friends only o Friends of friends only o Open for all to see o Certain lists of friends have more access	Audience

Do you ever add a friend that you have never met?	Audience
Do you use an alias?	The *self*
Do you share something online that you created yourself, such as your own artwork, photos, stories or videos?	Symbols
Do you post or tweet 'in jokes' that only some people will understand? For example if you are feeling angry but don't want everyone to know about it you might post a song lyric or cartoon	Symbols
Do you use acronyms like LOL?	Symbols
Do you think that your cultural heritage influences what you share online?	The *self*
If so, how does your culture influence what you share online?	The *self*
Are there certain things that you do not share because of your culture? Such as?	The *self*
Do you care what your friends think of what you post/tweet?	Audience
Do you care what a stranger thinks about your post/tweet?	Audience
Do you find that you mostly only post/tweet positive things?	The *self*
Do you deliberately use Facebook/Twitter to create a certain persona? Eg super mum or funny intellectual	The *self*
Do you think about what people in the future might say about what you post?	Audience
Have you ever looked up someone you didn't know yet on a Facebook/Twitter?	Audience
Have you, personally, had any bad experiences because embarrassing or inaccurate information was posted about you on a Facebook/Twitter?	Negative experience
Have you ever asked someone to remove information about you that was posted on a Facebook/Twitter? including things like photos or videos, comments	Negative experience

Alvesson (2003, p. 17) purports that, ideally, the research interview can become '… a site for exploring issues broader than talk … without falling too deeply into the trap of viewing interview talk as a representation of the interiors of subjects or the exteriors of the social worlds in which they participate'. These questions were augmented with other ideas that the

individuals shared as part of the interview, such as how they used the technologies for work. At the conclusion of the interview the researcher thanked the participant.

Each interview was then transcribed. The transcriptions were sorted into groups, and themes identified from the responses. The focus of the research was the collection of the personal experiences and recollections of these participants and their opinions on ways they create online identity within their group context.

Phase Two: Observations

Observational data is important in ethnographic studies to give meaning to phenomena. While the researcher did not interact with the participants on their Facebook and Twitter pages, the observations were still considered participant observation due to the qualitative nature of the data. The researcher was not interested in creating statistical patterns but rather in gaining meaning from the communications shared in relation to group identity. Gill and Johnston (2002, p. 144) say that it is good way for a researcher to not only observe what is happening but to 'feel it'. Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994, p. 34) note that participant observation implies 'immersion in the research setting, with the objective of sharing in peoples' lives while attempting to learn their symbolic world'. The observation phase of the research commenced while interviews were still going on as each phase supported and informed the other.

There were two different levels to the observational data. Firstly, all participants' Facebook and/or Twitter pages were observed over a three day period. This was primarily to verify the data that individuals said they shared online was in fact the case. This included looking at photographs, comments, status updates and the levels of privacy set across the application. These observations were added to the notes that accompanied the interview transcriptions.

The second level of observational data was created by following four Stay-at-home Parents over different three-month periods. During this time the researcher logged on every day and followed the interactions of the individual. All interactions were recorded in field notes and this information was stored in an Excel spreadsheet by date. The spreadsheet listed all communications such as status updates, photographs shared, comments made on other walls, how many comments or 'likes' their own work attracted. Each Stay-at-home Parent had a

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separate spreadsheet and the information was categorized and coded to match the interview and identified new categories.

Phase Three: Follow-up interviews

The follow-up interviews concentrated more on the role that the individual held, and not all individuals were re-interviewed. The follow-up interviews were developed to expand on the information collected in phases one and two and to understand better why users had responded in the way they had. From the initial findings of phases one and two the researcher had drawn some conclusions and used the follow-up interviews to test these ideas. Therefore the interviews were unstructured and Group specific.

> **Academics** – four follow-up interviews were conducted to discuss the ideas around separation of role and life.

> **Stay-at-home Parents** – eight follow-up interviews were conducted to discuss the role of parent and the identity created online. Some interesting findings from interviews and observations in relation to new identity formation and motherhood had arisen and needed further investigation. The Stay-at-home Parents were asked about the use of Facebook as a way of creating a new role in what can be an isolating experience of parenthood.

> **Business Executives** – three follow-up interviews were conducted to discuss the ideas around separation of role and life. The individuals were asked to comment on the findings of phase one and two in relation to distinct identity of their work roles and their social selves.

4.7   Sampling and participant profiles

Due to the large size of the groups studied in this research it was not possible to collect data from the entire population; therefore a sample was selected. Henry (1990) argues that sampling gives better overall accuracy than completing a census and Sanders et al. (2009) suggest that fewer cases means that the information collected can be more detailed as there is more time to be

spent on the processes of collecting and analysis. A sample can capture the composition of a population and its range of views.

Due to the interpretative nature of the study non-probability sampling was used. This sampling can be used to create generalizations about a population but not statistical inferences about an entire population (Saunders 2009). Marshall (1996, p. 524) suggests that the purpose of qualitative research, by means of sampling, was to gain an 'improved understanding of complex human issues is more important than generalizability of results'. Purposeful sampling was selected to create the population to be interviewed. This was necessary because the criteria for participation were very specific; the individual needed to belong to one of the groups, be active on Facebook and/or Twitter and log in every day. Purposeful sampling also allows for the data to achieve representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected (Byrne 2001); and in the small sample selected the 'homogeneity provides more confidence that the conclusions adequately represent the average members of the population than does a sample of the same size that incorporates substantial random or accidental variation' (Maxwell 1998, p. 235). There was also an element of snowball sampling with the Stay-at-home Parents in order to identify relevant participants. Purposeful sampling is used in multi-case qualitative studies where it can highlight differences in settings and individuals (Maxwell 2002).

The decisions around sampling took into account the research design and how feasible it would be to generate the data, the analysis, and validity (Bickman & Rog 2008). The sampling was consistent with the purposive nature indicated by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Patton (1990), and included a representative range of Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives.

Participants were recruited through the business, academic and social contacts of the researcher. Emails, phone calls, Tweets and Facebook status updates were used to find participants who were already engaged in the use of these Social Media tools and fitted the group criteria. The requests were sent to online networks and to 'friends of friends' and followers. The group criteria influenced the type of person that responded. Not all of the individuals were personally known by the researcher so this limited the likelihood that the participants were predetermined to 'impress' the researcher.

Each group is represented in the study and meets the criteria of the participant profile. All participants were aged between 30 and 70 years old (Table 4.3). Each participant was a regular user of Facebook or Twitter, meaning that they signed in every day. The participants identified themselves as belonging to one of the groups and were questioned based on this selection. Each group was represented in the three phases of data generation. The in-depth semi-structured interviews took place with nine to eleven adults per group with the total number interviewed at 30. The decision to cap the number of interviewees at 30 was due to time limitations and the point where data was being repeated (saturation point). The observational data was collected initially from all 30 participants by looking at their profile/s. Then the second observational phase was concentrated on the Stay-at-home Parents where four mothers were followed for three months each.

Table 4.3: Participant profiles

Group	Male	Female	Age 30-39	Age 40-49	Age 50-49	Age 60+
Academics	4	6	3	4	1	2
Stay-at-home Parents	1	10	8	3		
Business Executives	5	4	4	5		
Total	**10**	**20**	**15**	**12**	**1**	**2**

The Academics and Business Executives have fair gender representations while the Stay-at-home Parents are mostly women. This represents the societal gender split with most Stay-at-home Parents being mothers (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009).

The participants are well educated. The table below (Table 4.4) represents the highest education standard showing the highest level of education. Only 10% of participants do not hold a University degree while 60% had a post graduate qualification.

Table 4.4: Education level of participants

Group	VCE	Diploma	Degree	Post Grad	Masters	Enrolled in PhD	PhD
Academics				1	2	2	5
Stay-at-home Parents	1	2	5	2	1		
Business Executives			4	1	3	1	
Total	**1**	**2**	**9**	**4**	**6**	**3**	**5**

The following table (Table 4.5) shows the names of the participants for each group. Their names and those of their children have been changed or blocked out to protect the identity of individuals.

Table 4.5: Names of participants

Academics (10)	Stay-at-home Parents (11)	Business Executives (9)
Tomasz	Anuk	Richard
Karim	Bella	Julia
Aran	Emily	Alessandro
Anna	Chloe	Laura
Danila	Eloise	Kelly
Allison	Charlotte	Daniel
Rose	Kennedy	Scott
Amy	Samantha	Grace
Stephanie	Vivien	Henri
Hamish	Olivia	
	Noah	

4.8   Analysing Interpretive field research data

The analysis framework for this study was guided by the work of Klein and Myers (1999, p. 72) with their principles for Interpretive field research. Ethnographic studies can be done by way of case studies or field studies and, in this instance, the field was Facebook and Twitter. The following principles were used to steer the analysis:

1. the hermeneutic circle (guiding principle)

2. contextualization

3. interaction between the researchers and the subjects

4. abstraction and generalization

5. dialogical reasoning

6. multiple interpretations

7. suspicion

Hermeneutic circle

Coffrey and Atkinson (1996, p.2) make the case that data analysis should be conducted simultaneously with data collection, allowing the researcher to progressively focus their interviews and observations, and to decide how to test the emerging conclusions. In this instance the analysis and data collection were done in hermeneutic circles to gain the best results

from the information provided. 'Our task is to extend in concentric circles the unity of the understood meaning. The harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding' (Gadamer 1976, p. 117). This idea is supported by Kvale (1996) who believes that analysis occurs during the collection of data as well as after it.

The interviews and observations were done over an 11 month period and this allowed for appropriate time between interviews to transcribe, make notes and bring that knowledge to the next interview. 'Hence, in a number of iterations of the hermeneutic circle, a complex whole of shared meanings emerges' (Klein & Myers 1999 p. 71). Sometimes the researcher would listen to the interviews multiple times to pick up nuances and connections between information.

The choice of ethnographical process was also important to the observations made through textual interpretation of an individual's Facebook and Twitter pages. By using hermeneutics the researcher made 'an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study' (Taylor 1976, p. 153). Gadamer (1976, p.117) states that 'the idea of hermeneutic circle refers to the dialectic between the understanding of the text as a whole and the interpretation of its parts, in which descriptions are guided by anticipated explanations'. Klein and Myers (1999, p. 72) suggest that 'all human understanding is achieved by iterating between considering the interdependent meanings of parts and the whole that they form'. By investigating and observing how individuals create an identity the research is able to form a view about the whole of Digital Identity.

While the literature gave a clear research focus to phrase questions and guide the research, it was not a rigid framework, but rather allowed for an inductive approach. The themes and similarities of data were identified as the information was analyzed. There is an element of a deductive approach in that a theoretical framework grows from the collection and analysis stages. The researcher began by understanding that Identity – roles, audience, symbols and the *self* – are all important to creating a Digital Identity, but the relationships and understanding of how this emerges comes from the data.

According to Maxwell (2002, p. 236), the main categorizing strategy in qualitative research is coding. Unlike quantitative research, the coding is not predetermined, but rather is generated as the work is collected. The focus in qualitative work is to find meanings in the coding rather than

counting how often phenomena occur. Strauss and Corbin (2008) call this 'fracturing' the data into categories allowing for comparison between things in the same category and between categories themselves. In this research some of the categories came from the literature on Identity and were based around the elements as established in chapter three, while others came from the individuals who were studied. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) observe that using categories makes it easier to understand and to appreciate the overall picture. This allows the researcher to create themes, conceptualize the theory and to collate the data so that it can be easily called up and applied to the research question. Maxwell and Miller (2008) see that one of the issues about fracturing data can be that it neglects the contextual relationships of the data, since it makes associations on sequence rather than similarities, thus impeding a variety of ways of viewing the data.

Contextualization

The principle of contextualization requires reflection on the setting of the research, in terms of both the current society and its historical experience. Unless this is included the study will not be relevant to the present situation. The context of this study is paramount as it creates the differentiation between Identity and Digital Identity. By discussing the importance of Identity we can see how Digital Identity differs or follows closely the formation of *self*. Gadamer (1976) believed that there would be differences between what a participant shared and what the researcher saw because of the time difference between the two. Therefore an understanding of the context is important to analyze the data.

Interaction between the researchers and the subjects

The researcher was embedded in the digital context. In an ethnographical study the researchers are the instruments of the research. This research was an investigation into the meanings behind the individuals, interactions, symbols and objects. Read (1965, p. 247) observes the way that data is analyzed and retold by field studies is done so 'as it appeared through my own eyes, filtered through my own background, my likes and dislikes, qualified by my own strengths and weaknesses', thus highlighting the importance of the researcher as an instrument in the research.

The research was conducted in natural, uncontrived, real world settings – this was important to the researcher as the comfort of participants was considered paramount to authentic recollections. In ethnographical work context can influence the meanings (Cohen 1993). Participants were met in their home or work environments where they felt most at ease. The observational phase of the research was done within a specified time frame online but the participants were not aware of the specific days that they were being observed. The participants were informed that the observation could occur at any time from February 2010 to March 2011. The length of this timeframe was designed to minimize self-editing due to being observed. It is possible that some participants may have been more aware of their usage but this would be difficult to sustain long term. This strategy was invoked to minimize bias.

When observing online the presentations on Facebook or Twitter, the researcher did not participate in the conversations. Some ethnographers (Bell 2001; Miller and Slater 2000) advocate active engagement to gain 'superior' data collection, but the researcher chose to be a silent observer in order that they did not influence the behaviors of the individuals. The researcher did not want the participants to become self-conscious and edit themselves further. Some argue that this is 'lurking' (Sveningsson 2004), but in this case permission was gained from the participants before the observations commenced so that the individuals did not feel 'spied upon'. By 'lurking' it was better to gain insights into actual usage rather than what the individuals thought was the correct behavior. The researcher could not view the information on Facebook without an explicit invitation from the individual. Twitter was already an open platform that could be viewed by anyone.

Abstraction and generalization

Klein and Myers (1999, p. 75) assert that in research 'unique instances can be related to ideas and concepts that apply to multiple situations'. Data analysis allows the researcher to interpret the findings of the research and in this case to see if there was a synergy between the literature about Identity and how individuals were using Social Media; and the reality of how individuals perceived their use.

We have discussed above the order and timeline of the data generation, and that analysis occurred parallel to collection. While these data analysis steps seem linear they occurred over an

extended period of time. The different data generation methods served as a means of triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Miles & Huberman 1994; Patton 1990) to confirm or discount indicative trends in the data and to provide additional means for new trends to emerge.

The interviews were the first event to be conducted. The semi-structured one-on-one interviews were audio taped using an iPhone and Dragon microphone, and handwritten notes were also taken by the researcher. These interviews were then transcribed and the additional notes were made. Each interview was transcribed and saved separately. The next phase of the observational data was collected daily for three months and tabled into a spreadsheet and used in conjunction with the interview data.

Over the three phases of the research large quantities of data were generated, with over 30 hours of initial interviews, more than 50 pages of observational data and 10 hours of follow-up interviews to analyze.

The notes were summarized, combined and from this the themes, similarities and differences were identified within the each group. The information was categorized and coded based on the transcripts and notes. These categories came from the original Identity theory literature such as the concepts of the *self*, symbols, audience, and role; but also expanded to include other factors such as bad experiences, positiveness, unknown audience, and technology. These additional categories came from the expressions that emerged from the research and the actual wording of participants (this idea of categories is supported by Strauss and Corbin 2008).

From the categories the different data were broken into units. These units were sections of transcripts, usually not longer than one or two sentences. This commenced the process of data reduction. Once coded the data was summarized into vignettes of all data collected. The data was then compared with the literature.

The researcher chose not to use a computer program for the thematic analysis of the interview data but rather transcribed the interviews and used color coding to develop themes. This was a personal preference that came from the visceral experience of reading and re-reading notes to gain better insight. The experience of writing, collating, color coding and re-writing has been a

proven positive cognitive process for the researcher. The initial classification data was continually refined, enabling data patterns to emerge and interpretations were further verified with follow-up interviews of selected participants. The researcher acknowledges that there are some excellent programs to facilitate coding and hyper linking between texts for interview data.

The second phase used a computer as it required large amounts of text taken from Facebook and Twitter. The researcher followed four Stay-at-home Parents for three months and detailed their everyday movements on Facebook. The researcher used Microsoft Excel to store and analyze this information. Each participant had a separate spreadsheet and the information was updated daily. The data from each participant developed its own categorization headings, such as children, sport, entertainment, local politics, asking for help etc. Each status update or tweet was coded with a category so that pivot tables could be created to facilitate the analysis of this data. The data was presented in a table format where it was easier to ascertain any similarities, differences and patterns in behavior of the individuals.

By then combining data and reformulating it into color categories and units the researcher was able to 'pull apart' the data and place it back in an hierarchical way (as suggested by Saunders et al. 2009) to gain meaning for the research question. From this, propositions were developed around the specific groups that then required follow-up interviews to further qualify the information. For example, it was noted that many Business Executives did not talk about work on Facebook but were very open about sharing their social lives. It therefore needed to be established whether this was because they made no connection between their work reputation and their social life, or if work had a strict confidentiality or technology policy. This gives further depth to the information collected so that the correct generalizations can be made. This was done by looking for alternative answers or negatives in the data and by conducting further interviews. The semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted with a sample of the participants to see what their reactions were to the themes and ideas that had come from the previous stages. At the end of each month the researcher created an interim summary that reviewed what had been done to that point.

The analysis was then reported by way of narrative. This gave the individuals an opportunity to tell their own story (and in many cases using their own words) which conveyed meaning to the researcher (Coffrey & Atkinson 1996). The results were presented in sufficient detail to enable

the reader to draw conclusions.

Dialogical reasoning

The intellectual basis of this research is described earlier with discussion around Interpretivism. The researcher has identified the 'reality' with which they view the research that is reached by interpreting the interactions between social actors. This philosophy is used on the field data in the way it is 'construed, documented, and organized' (Klein and Myers 1999, p. 76).

It has been noted by Klein and Myers (1999, p. 76) that 'Hermeneutics recognizes that prejudice is the necessary starting point of our understanding'. This is where challenges can arise because the researcher must differentiate between the 'true prejudices, by which we understand, from the false ones by which we misunderstand' (Gadamer 1976, p. 142). This means that the researcher must be aware of their own prejudices, acknowledge them and move on to understanding the text through the eyes of the participant. The researcher went through a number of different cycles during the research. At first the researcher thought that Digital Identity was something quite separate to the 'real' identity and was something that individuals 'played with' to gain popularity and feed the ego. But the research challenged this idea and the false perceptions that were created by many negative press stories had to be rejected and the ideas of identity formation readdressed.

Multiple interpretations

The purpose of the field research was to gain multiple interpretations (Klein and Myers 1999) of how individuals used Facebook or Twitter. It was important for the researcher to gain multiple perspectives to better understand the ways that role and group acceptance played in personal information that is shared online. These multiple viewpoints, and their reasons, may explain the effect that these have on the social context. The Business Executive group had the most disparate views on what should and shouldn't be shared online, and the reasons on the surface seemed different. However, when analysed, it came down to reputation management. There were also conflicting interpretations within the Academic group where some participants were actively involved in using Social Media to support their careers while others saw it as inappropriate for educators.

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Principle of suspicion

Klein and Myers (1999, p. 78) acknowledge that not all researchers will follow the principle of suspicion in their work. This is because it necessitates that the researcher read into the social world of the participants and their beliefs. Without deliberately engaging with the principle of suspicion, it should be noted that the researcher approached the data always with a critical eye and, as part of the process, compared what individuals said they did with what they actually did online.

4.9 Reliability and validity

Reliability refers to the extent to which the data collection techniques and analysis procedures will yield consistent findings at another time, or by other researchers. This is made possible by a transparent process of how the raw data were collected and analyzed (Saunders et al. 2009). This chapter lays out that process in detail, with diagrams that can be followed to replicate the study. However, Maxwell (2002, p. 41) states that 'as observers and interpreters of the world, we are inextricably part of it; we cannot step outside our own experience to obtain some observer-independent account of what we experience. Thus, it is always possible for there to be different, equally valid accounts from different perspectives'. This is part of the Interpretive process, whereby the researcher brings their own perspective and experience so that no two studies will be exactly alike.

The threats to reliability are participant error or bias and/or observer error or bias. This study used multiple methods of data collection to mitigate these risks. By triangulating the information the researcher was better able to address any errors that may have occurred. Further discussion on bias is found below in the validity section.

All field work done by a single field-worker invites the question, 'Why should we believe it?' (Bosk 1979, p. 193). The issue of verification or seeking validity in the interpretation of data is important in research. Some factors that influence the validity of the interpretations of the data are the method by which the study was conducted, how the study was reported and the influence of bias. This section argues the approach taken by the researcher to enhance the validity within the study.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 11), 'the meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their "conformability" - that is their validity'. This was done as part of the hermeneutical cycles that occurred during the data collection and analysis. The conclusions of the study were then compared against theoretical knowledge as suggested by Eisenhart and Howe (1992).

Crowther and Gibson (1990, p. 41) warn, however, that the nature of qualitative analysis leaves it open to subjective bias. Qualitative inquiry is an intensely personal process and there is the potential for individual values and attitudes to create bias. The researcher addressed any potential biases by creating multiple methods of data generation and verifying the interpretations directly with a sample of the participants during follow-up interviews.

This research followed the suggestions of Miles and Huberman (1994) that to strengthen the data the researcher needed to have some familiarity with the phenomenon and setting under study. The researcher was immersed in the context of the study which allowed for a high level of familiarity. The research was done face-to-face with observation of Social Media use and follow-up face-to-face or email interviews giving multiple and deep understanding of the experience. Miles and Huberman (1994) also state that the research needs to be checked for research effects and bias, and representativeness. The multiple sources of data and the feedback gained from the participants helped minimize the impact of biases in this study. They also reinforced the value of getting feedback from participants and the triangulation of results. This approach reduces the risk of chance associations, of biases due method choice and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that are developed.

Wolcott (1994, p. 337) argues that validity 'does not seem a useful criterion for guiding or assessing qualitative research'. He does not, however, abandon the issue of 'seeking validity' and added the following points to satisfy the implicit challenge of validity:
- record accurately
- let readers 'see' for themselves
- report fully and write accurately
- seek feedback.

Attempts to minimize biases and enhance the validity of the interpretations were supported by the full reporting of the participants' evidence. The interviews, observations and follow-up

interviews were all transcribed verbatim. They were annotated with additional field notes to further record accurately the symbols and context of the study. The findings of the research were reported as narratives to best capture the essence of what the individuals had shared, which gives the reader the opportunity to 'see' for themselves. The narratives were built from the accurate notes and were reported without distortion. Finally, the findings and discussion were used as part of the feedback loop that allowed for richer information and deep understanding. In seeking further clarification from individuals the study was able to detect any bias that may have occurred in reporting and analysis.

While we have discussed the steps taken to ensure reliability and validity it is also important to note further details about researcher bias. Bias is a word often associated with quantitative research and some question (Smith 1998) if it is relevant in the world of qualitative research because of the subjective nature of the field. Denzin (1989, p. 12) states that 'Interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher' and while this is true the researcher would argue that in order for the research to be of value it must move beyond the researcher and researcher's situation.

Mehra (2002) says that a researcher's personal beliefs and values are reflected not only in the choice of methodology and interpretation of findings, but also in the choice of a research topic. In other words, what we believe in determines what we want to study. Given the length of time over which a PhD study occurs, it is important to choose something that interests the researcher so as to sustain the momentum. Krieger (1991) argues that our external reality cannot be separated from the inner reality of our lives and experiences, and that the external is only a small part of our *self*.

Mehra (2002, section 8) questions 'If there is more than one truth out there, if we believe in multiple realities, subjective and constructed realities as opposed to single, objective, given reality, then how much weight should we attach to our findings which may reflect only one or partial version of the truth or reality?' This raises an issue of how qualitative researchers interpret and present their findings and conclusions. It is important to be objective when collecting data by planning questions and methods thoroughly (Saunders et al. 2009) to guard against seeing only data that conforms to the researcher's ideas or manipulating data to fit their expectations. But it is important to be an insider and understand the context so that the most

accurate interpretations of what we see and hear are put forward. All interpretations they make from the data will be the researcher's, which means that they will be subjective interpretations - based on their reality and their worldview. So even though they believe they have objective data, they do make interpretations and analysis based on their subjective reality.

Given that the focus of this study is emic, then it is important that personal judgments are kept out of the interpretations as much as possible (Mehra 2002). The reality that is portrayed belongs to the participants rather than to the researcher. Researcher bias was minimized by regular reflection and analysis of the ways in which the researcher's self, including personal bias, opinions, beliefs, and values were influencing the research process (Mehra 2002).

By following Wolcott's (1994) validity steps the notion of jumps in logic and false assumptions should be negated. There are a number of points during the research process where these issues can occur and these were minimized by planning and reflecting on research choices. One such point was the identification of the research population. It was important to choose the sample to reflect the populations and to limit the claims of generalizing because of the sample sizes.

By having the third phase of data collection to follow-up on information with participants and test ideas the researcher was able to decrease the risk of having leaps of logic and making false assumptions about the data and findings.

As part of the research process the researcher is required to present their findings to a panel. The panel takes into consideration the reliability and validity of the study and comments on any false assumptions.

4.10   Ethical considerations

When working with people it is important to take into consideration the ethics of the situation. Ethics are the moral values of human conduct, and the principles that should govern it (Field 1932). This section explores the ethical dimensions of the research and the processes in place to ensure fairness, equity and high standard of care taken within the research context.

The application for ethics approval is appropriate when the research is with or about people (or their data or issue) and must be achieved before data generation commences. The first step in

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applying for ethics approval is to identify the level of risk associated with the project. There are three categories: negligible risk projects, low risk and more than low risk. By completing a checklist it was determined that this study was low risk, as participants will not be exposed to physical, psychological and social risk greater than the everyday norm; but there may be an element of slight risk to participants because personal information was to be recorded. The application included developing Participant information and consent forms.

Ethics approval was received from the Chair of the Business College Human Ethics Advisory network at RMIT University on 20 December 2010. The research was deemed 'low risk'.

Participants were given a Project Information Statement and a consent form via email prior to the interview and a hard copy at the time of the interview. The statement set out the guidelines for the study and gave individuals the following rights:

- the right to withdraw their participation at any time, without prejudice.
- the right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
- the right to have any questions answered at any time.
- the right to request that audio recording be terminated at any stage during the interview.

Time was given to read through the statement and then the participants completed the consent form. The form was witnessed and then filed.

The anonymity of the participants has been preserved throughout the study by assigning aliases. No personal information or individual specific information will be reported in the publications which can identify any participants.

Fincher (2008) identifies a number of areas where discrimination can occur in the research design process. There was no discrimination against any individual or group of people and issues such as the use of discriminatory language, gender, or race that had potential to be an area of contention were acknowledged by the researcher and monitored as the research process evolved. No issues of discrimination occurred.

The researcher ensured that the confidentiality and cultural understanding was valued during the study by respecting differences, not making preconceived judgments about an entire group of people and communicating to participants that all information was to be given freely and without pressure. Confronting and sensitive questions about the cultural influences on the use of Social Media are out of scope of this research.

While the misuse of the results of this research is not foreseen at the publication of this dissertation, according to Fincher (2008) there is always potential for the results to be put to use by others with agendas quite different from those of the original researcher. In this instance it was intended that the research would be useful in understanding how individuals use Social Media to form Digital Identity and the role that membership of a group had on this process. Any nefarious use was not the intent of this study.

There was no power relationship between the researcher and the participants. All individuals participated voluntarily and could opt out at any time.

The participants were informed via the Information Project Statement that the results of the research would be published as part of a PhD and that it could also appear in book chapters, journals and conference papers. At all times the anonymity of the individuals would be kept and any identifying information would be replaced.

The participants were advised that there were no perceived risks outside their normal day-to-day activities. They were also advised that if they were unduly concerned about their responses to any of the questions or if they found participation in the project distressing, that they should contact the Executive Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation. The information regarding the anonymous nature of the research and their right to cease participation at any time was also reiterated during the sessions and in the documentation given to individuals.

All hard data will be kept in a locked cabinet and soft data in a password protected computer in the office of the principal investigator Ms Claire Davison, School of Business IT and Logistics at RMIT University. Data will be saved on the University Network System where practicable as the system provides a high level of manageable security and data integrity, can provide secure

remote access, and is backed up on a regular basis. All electronic data will be stored in secure folders (eg. Password protected or hidden folders with a selected user group). Only the Investigator will have access to the data.

4.11   Problems and limitations

Some practical problems arose in carrying out the research and conducting the interviews. The participants had 'too much' information they wanted to share and hence the allocated time for interviews went, in some cases, beyond the one hour allocated.

There was some potential for skewed results, arising from the possibility of:
- participants reporting their experiences in more favorable terms than the reality
- participants may not have reflected accurately or comprehensively on their usage of Facebook or Twitter
- participants telling the interviewer what they think the interviewer wants to hear.

Alvesson (2003) and Fincher (2008) discuss ways that can prevent interview data from becoming superficial. Interviewees can also be so deeply involved in a discussion that the data they provide is too complex for the researcher to extract worthwhile generalizations. Although the above were possible concerns of this research, the researcher was of the opinion that, due to the nature of the personal reflections, the presentation of *self* and the observations, meant that the results were neither right nor wrong.

As the research was limited to a total of thirty participants, the results must be seen as representative of a relatively small sample. A larger group of interviewees would give further depth to the study. Additional interviews and observations would add to the richness of detail.

The future outcomes of this research relate to a number of different aspects of life. The results might be used by individuals to better understand how their identity is formed online. This allows for better decision making and more thoughtful use of technology. A number of times participants said that they hadn't thought of a specific aspect of themselves until they had been asked the question in the interview. Reflection is a useful tool to assist with personal growth and interaction.

The results of this study can be used by business in a number of different ways. The behavioral information could be used by companies when marketing to specific groups. For example, businesses might be able to better target Stay-at-home Parents by using Facebook, but would not look to reach Business Executives about business issues on Facebook but would more likely use Twitter. Human Resources could use the information to gain access to individuals and ICT could use the outcomes to set guidelines for acceptable use of Social Media based on a better understanding of usage.

The research outcomes will allow for government to better understand its citizens, especially around their beliefs in privacy and what constitutes personal information. There is future potential for the research to be exposed through presentations at conferences, publication in professional journals such as a contributing chapter in a book.

4.12   Conclusion

This chapter has described the research methodology, research design and data generation used for the study. It began with a discussion of the appropriate philosophical and methodological orientation and the choice of ethnography as the strategy for the study. The data generation methods were outlined and aligned to the research topic. The number of participants and the role of the researcher were recognized as potential factors of support and bias. The analysis framework by way of Klein and Myers (1999) for interpretive field studies was outlined, and provided a supporting rationale. Then the multiple means of data collection and researcher involvement were described to enhance the validity of the study.

The next three chapters will examine the findings from the three groups. It will provide narratives for each of the participants and make observations of similarity and differences.

Chapter Five: Academics

5.1 Introduction to groups

It is hard to gauge how people present themselves online without asking them. It is also hard to understand the characteristics of an identity without analysing it. Therefore the information collected below is a combination of interviews and observations. This chapter presents the results of the data generated through semi-structured interviews in 2011, follow-up interviews (done in person and on email) in 2012 and observational data collected over different three month periods between July and November 2011. This ethnographical design was discussed in the previous chapter but comes to light here where the information from all three collection methods are brought together to give a rich understanding of how and why people share personal information online. To understand better the Identity that is created online, the individuals were asked to comment on a number of different aspects, including: what technologies they used, how restricted the information was, how careful they were about sharing, the motivation of use, the choice of language and symbols to represent their ideas, whether they cared about the audiences, any bad experiences, and the role of cultural background. As the interviews were semi-structured there were many other topics discussed such as Social Media policy and persona building. All of these issues can help draw together a sense of identity as portrayed by the individual. These questions are driven by the core ideas surrounding identity theory: symbolism, the *self* and the role of audience. The thoughtfulness and thoroughness with which individuals approach this on Facebook and Twitter is presented below. We have established the importance of role in this study and it is in this context that the data is presented. The primary role for each individual pertains to membership of a specific group.

5.2 Rationale for choice of groups

In order to understand how identity was created by individuals in roles, different groups were identified and investigated. The literature discussed in Chapter Two illustrates that there were many studies about young people and graduate students. This research looked to extend the understanding of Facebook and Twitter use by deliberately choosing mature candidates who

would offer different perspectives. The three chosen groups represent three distinct pathways that post-30 year olds had taken in their career paths. These are individuals who have been working for many years and remember a time before technology and Social Media were entrenched in the everyday. Thus, their choices in representing themselves online come not only with maturity of 'having lived' but also with the confidence to decide their level of Social Media participation.

The three pathways that have been identified are Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives. The researcher has worked in Academia and this was an interesting place to start investigating identity formation. How do people who are well informed about technology and have interacted with younger audiences create themselves online? The second group was chosen because of its 'invisibility' in the literature: parents who stay at home with pre-school or primary school aged children are often overlooked. But anecdotally the researcher could see a surge in usage by friends and family who were in this position and realized that there were opportunities to investigate. The final group was chosen to represent people who had a high profile at work. The popular media is full of warnings from recruitment agencies about how an individual's Facebook page can influence decision-making and careers. This research investigated what is actually happening in the business world. When examining the three groups the researcher was seeking to identify how an individual's role influences the way they present themselves on Facebook or Twitter.

The following chapters present the findings of the three groups. Each chapter presents the narratives as told by the individuals within that group and the subsequent discussion. This first chapter is on the subject of Academics.

5.3   Introduction - Academics

The Academics selected for this study were chosen through the social and business networks of the researcher. They represent ten individuals from different disciplines and Universities. Half of the participants have continuing (tenured) positions within their University while the other five are sessional (adjunct) staff. All have been an academic for more than five years with some having been employed in Higher Education for 30+ years.

The Academia group has the most diverse age brackets of the study and this is because in Australia there is an aging workforce (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). The age category breakdown was three aged 30-39, four aged 40-49, one aged 50-59 and two aged 60+.

The gender breakdown of the group was deliberately balanced with four male and six female participants. While some educational institutions are dominated by 'pale and male' (Toth 1997) experiences this does not represent the Academia of 2012 and gender equality within this study was sought to gain insight into the experiences of all academics.

Given the expectations of Educational institutions, it was not surprising that the level of education was high amongst the Academics, with 70% either enrolled or having completed a PhD. The remaining three had Masters level qualifications. This level of education meant that individuals understood the process of research and were reflective and thoughtful in their responses.

The participants are all residents of Australia. One was originally from New Zealand, another Persian[5] and one from Thailand.

5.4   Narratives of participants

The following sections are the narratives from the ten different perspectives. The individuals represent Academics from different disciplines and at different stages of their careers. All were daily users of Social Media with nine engaged in Facebook; but of this nine only three also used Twitter. This was the only group with an individual who did not use Facebook (but favored Twitter). Most of the individuals uploaded photographs, commented on posts, shared information and updated their status/tweeted.

Anna

Anna has a PhD and is an academic in Information Management. She uses Facebook mostly to be a 'sticky nose'. Her children call it internet stalking. But she says that involves a degree of participation while her habits are more passive. None of her direct friendship group is on

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[5] The participant identified themselves as Persian rather than Iranian

Facebook so it is mostly work colleagues, people in the profession such as previous students, a couple of groups like the State library and overseas family. She doesn't use Facebook to build friendships with close friends or develop relationships, 'I almost deliberately don't do that'.

'I would very rarely engage', she says, by commenting on the goings-on of others, such as the in-laws overseas. She ponders that this might disappoint some people who are very engaged with the technology and who she thinks post on Facebook to gain an audience and expect replies. But the non-engagement is a deliberate stance chosen by Anna. 'I couldn't really care less about what they're doing. I just want to know what they're saying they are doing - I don't go on to [Facebook] and wonder what such and such is doing today - it's more about checking in '.

Off Facebook, Anna is not particularly reserved or shy but is shy of public comment and 'I would deliberate if I did it, I would be careful of what I wrote and how I wrote it ... it matters to me that it's spelled correctly and that it sounds right and is not misconstrued. And I can't do what a lot of people do – which is just throw stuff up there'. Anna does not share photos of herself or events online but has been tagged in a number of them. She hasn't removed a tag but would consider doing so if the picture was awful.

Anna speculates that her conservative approach to Social Media is related to her training as a teacher where she was taught to careful about her reputation and how information could be misconstrued. She was trained to 'be pretty careful about what I say because it could be used against me in my career and also because I worry about what people think of me'. She states that this is the shallow aspect of it – she worries that people will think she is stupid. 'I don't comment or share a lot' as she worries about others, 'I don't want to forget that it is public and upset someone or say something damaging to me'. Anna does not think that culture has a lot to do with how conservative she is online, 'I am a naturally conservative person - a person of my generation. I am 57 … I think I am a product of my generation and my profession. I was not brought up to be private, so culturally it isn't relevant', she says, adding that it is not just about Facebook, but also emails and forums.

Anna says that by looking at what others do she is not being a voyeur, just a sticky nose. 'It's not judgmental – I'm just interested and I want to know what they're doing. It's trivia cluttering up my head for no good reason.' She doesn't want to compare her life to theirs but just know what

they are doing, which comes down to being an academic. She likes to know 'stuff' so when people ask her she has the answer.

There is both a professional and personal pressure to be on Facebook. She felt that she was missing out on things because they were discussed or shared on Facebook. Because of the overload of 'stuff' she made a deliberate stand to be passive and not engaged. 'Very occasionally I am worried about getting addicted to it.' She uses the IM Facebook page to talk with students and past students who are now working in a professional capacity, but this is something that she feels she must do. 'When you teach about collaboration and the importance of information sharing there is a progression into showing students how it should be done.'

Karim

Karim is an academic in Information Systems with a PhD in Aerospace engineering. He has been in Australia since the 1990s and describes himself as Persian. His profile has a lot of detail including profile picture, phone number, email, networks, employment history, education and where he lives. Karim uses a mix of professional and personal information on Facebook while friending colleagues, family and friends. His feed is littered with photographs of trips, jokes shared and news that relates to his work.

Karim does not update all that often and is now very conservative with what he shares. Early on when using Facebook he participated in all the 'fun things' like polls and games, but over time has learned that this is not all fun and can be detrimental. This is for a number if reasons. 'I am often worried about when the information is out there it's out there'. After using an app that shared all the places he had been in the world he 'realised maybe it's not a good idea for everybody to know that because basically with the information that is out there people can do pattern recognition and they might come up with patterns that I might be following unconsciously and therefore they would know more about my movements than I consciously do … I do a lot of text mining [in my work] and things like that … that is a very scary thought so I got rid of that'.

Karim is also careful because of the political situations where friends and family live. 'It's difficult for my friends and family in Iran to get access to Facebook because of its involvement in

the uprisings last year … so I tend not to send photos back home. I have had friends in Iran who have been called in and put into jail because of very innocuous e-mails that have been sent, so I am very aware that information can be misconstrued.' He has seen other ex-pats who have posted things online that might be deemed inappropriate so he worries about what can happen to his friends or family who are still there. It would also impact if he wanted to go back to Iran.

Karim likes to share funny stories and the work of comedians, particularly Persians. This is because he likes a good laugh but also likes to share new things that people may not have experienced before. He is also very mindful of 'liking' things that his friends like, which may be inappropriate because they turn up in the news feed. He once liked a friend's post where she had liked 'sex'. He thought that was funny so liked her post, but it turned up in his news feed as 'Karim likes sex', which he found embarrassing.

Karim keeps the tone of his Facebook very light and positive because of the reasons mentioned above but also because of the longevity of the information. He gave examples such as WikiLeaks that used information from disabled Facebook and Twitter accounts[6]. 'You can still see it in Google history and if the courts ask for the information it can be mined.' In this case Karim sees that it is not only his cultural heritage that makes him conservative, it is past experience and his own knowledge of technology due to his career.

Allison

Allison uses a multitude of different Social Media and has done so deliberately to hone herself as a 'research instrument' by sharing ideas and creating communities. Allison is currently completing her PhD in the School of Management and is an academic in Information Management.

Allison has always been an early adopter because of the library profession 'from CD-ROMs and databases to all those things … that's quite defined in the literature' and Social Media is no different. While Allison uses a plethora of Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter, Yammer and YouTube, she finds Twitter the most useful. She particularly likes the Twitter hash tag and the groups of people that congregate around those hash tags. For example the PhD chat hash tag has

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[6] At the time of printing this information remains unsubstantiated

a great community, 'you can put things out any time … people just use that hash tag to share information … I make my contributions through tagging … there are quite a few people that I know quite well and I have developed relationships with by using Twitter'. She has recently put together a conference panel with people that she only knew through Twitter.

This is the action learning aspect of her PhD for she sees a high level of participation on Social Media as a way of being a committed and active member of the scholarly community. In the same way that presenting at conferences builds this reputation so, too, does her use of Twitter. 'I don't actually decide that I'm going to share every day but rather it is when the spirit moves me'; for Allison it is not a commercial activity but it is written for herself as much as for an audience. She feels that it assists with her writing. Allison was 'terrified' of her identity as a writer, but writing the vignettes for her blog was one way to create the identity of being a writer. She found that because of her background as a librarian she felt that she was very good at collecting material but not that next step. What blogging and tweeting has done is to allow her to share her ideas and to label herself as a writer – 'it gave me the confidence'. This springs from Kamler and Thompson's (2006) book that talks about text giving a writer an identity.

Allison uses the Twitter hash tag to control the information that she delivers across applications, 'I don't do them all separately, I can hash tag them'. Her interest in hash tags and identifying them as being 'very helpful' could be because of her training as a librarian and extensive use of cataloguing.

Allison considers Facebook as 'my private space'. 'I do have a professional persona and there are some things that I just wouldn't share, but I would share on Facebook.' She uses Facebook to share information about her life; for example, they built a house last year and uploaded regular photographs of the progress. She says that 'I don't put any inappropriate photos as I do understand that there is a big wide world out there and once it's out there it is out there … there have been very few times when I have thought I wish I hadn't done that'. She has never untagged herself from a photograph.

Allison is protective of her space on Facebook and says that she moderates her Twitter followers, simply because she does not want any marketing companies or spam following her – 'I don't want them linked to me'. Most often she reports them as spam. While Allison does not

deliberately post/tweet in-jokes she does find that there are conversations that might be considered 'in', but not because she is trying to create a private space but because on 'Twitter I find that there's a lot of conversations that people don't really understand or aren't aware of because they're out of context'.

Allison does not fit herself into the category of creating a persona online because the use of Social Media is not a marketing tool. She finds that her work is often retweeted and this creates a circle of influence 'because your reputation has been built because I've been there for so long … I think I'm doing it for the right reasons; it's an action learning strategy for me and is one of the research methods in my PhD. Using Social Media is how I am doing a true reflection and interacting with the community. I am not marketing myself as a specific persona but have created a reputation'. She has used the applications for such a long time that people listen to what she has to say.

When asked about whether her cultural heritage influences what she shares online Allison replied, 'I haven't really thought about cultural heritage'. She goes on to talk about how Twitter and other Social Media are a global platform and she is not just sharing with other Australians but rather is 'out there in the world'. She reflects that 'I don't knowingly think it does, but quite possibly does [although] the cultural and social underpinnings I think it possibly has more to do with me. I don't sell myself as I think it's embarrassing; perhaps that's a cultural thing … I'm not good at blowing my own trumpet although it probably doesn't look like that, but it's not the reason I'm out there in the world'. When thinking about her audience she states that 'I care about what people think. I don't want people to think I'm an idiot but I am not defined by what people think. I'm happy to share a lot of my PhD stuff because I would like to know now that is crap or not – I'm testing the waters'. So, while audience is important, it doesn't choose the topics that she talks about.

Allison says, 'I mostly tweet positive things – but that is just me. I would probably share anyway … I think it's just me, I'm a glass half full kind of person'. As discussed previously, she does not deliberately create a persona, 'I try to be as naturally like who I am so I can't get into trouble … it is all too hard, it's hard enough just being me'. When discussing the impact of future audiences on what she chooses to share she says she hopes 'that there might be some gems of wisdom as time goes on because I think a lot of the stuff that we are doing at the moment is cutting edge –

it's all new and the whole PhD chat idea is something that is great to be a part of. I would hope that people would get something out of it in the future but I don't lose any sleep over it - it's not a legacy'.

Rose

Rose holds a postgraduate degree and works in the field of Information Management, but is also an academic. Her motivation comes 'usually from curiosity and you need to know what people are talking about. Also my niece went overseas and I thought I could keep up with it. She actually doesn't do it as much as I thought she would'. Ease of access is also a big part of why. There is immediacy about the iPad – 'it's much quicker to get onto the internet as my laptop is old. I occasionally look at it at work but mostly at home'. Rose uses both Facebook and Twitter. Facebook is a more personal space although she does follow some work-related pages such as Library week while Twitter is purely for academic purposes.

Rose uses Facebook and Twitter for a 'multiplicity of stuff'. She catches up with friends, gets feeds from work sites and generally seeks information. 'I can't see the point of putting "everything" up there.' When she takes holiday photographs she tends to upload them to Picasa. 'I am conscious what you can and can't do in regards to their personal information. I have removed photos of people whose permission I don't have. I never really see who sees Twitter – I haven't thought about who else may see it. I haven't hash tagged or tagged things.'

'A number of my friends are frightened of Facebook because of the bad press … there are so many bad news stories.' Rose has not friended people she doesn't know but has friended friends of friends who she hoped to know better. 'I don't unfriend people but I block their news feed. Most of my interest is professional and I suppose this is because most of my friends who are not in the information sector are not engaged.'

Rose has used Social Media to share a presentation and 'if I was much younger I would see that as imperative – I am at the end of my career so I am not trying to establish a profile. Previously the information would have appeared in conference proceedings etc'. But her hesitancy to fully engage with the technology comes from a fear of being 'seen as an idiot'. 'At the moment I think

I take more than I give. Don't want people to think I don't know what I am doing. I have always been happy to share.'

Rose doesn't post in-jokes, and she sometimes receives information in French from her overseas friends. Rose does not use acronyms to any great extent – she is aware of them but doesn't really use them. 'I like the idea of "c u" since I hate typing and I am a lazy texter. I'm not a good typist – one hand goes faster than the other so acronyms are purely practical. Wouldn't use truncation in Twitter as it is professional but the brevity is a problem.'

When asked to reflect on the role of her cultural heritage in her use of Social Media Rose thinks that it 'probably does' but 'I don't think it's necessarily related to my background but more about the sort of person I am. I am not conscious that this is something that would have been my parents' intention but I think very early on I had a strong sense of exploring what is out there'. So being part of Facebook and Twitter makes Rose feel like she is exploring – 'I like a sense of what is what. If I had not moved into the teacher librarian field I don't know that I would have necessarily looked at it [Social Media] in the depth that I have. I am intrigued by it. Being in the information field you have to follow the way that information comes to you. This is one of the ways of keeping abreast. It becomes almost a point of pride to stay ahead of the technology. There is an assumption that someone of my age would not be up to the latest things. The things that I am interested in doing are technologically driven – for example, I wouldn't travel again without an iPhone or iPad to access the Internet'.

Rose is not convinced there will be a future audience for her work but she thinks that the technology 'probably has a life in terms of usefulness. It is pertinent at the time but technology and the focus of the research moves on. I realize it's accessible by future audiences but I don't really think about it'.

Amy

Amy works in the IT sector and is an academic in a Masters program at a large University, she is currently enrolled in a PhD. She uses Facebook 'mostly to keep in contact with friends and family' and the initial motivation to use it 'all started when we started travelling'. She consumes information on Twitter, especially around her PhD topic and has her professional life on

LinkedIn. 'I check every day because of the iPad. For example, I got to see my nieces in a play because they advertised it on Facebook. Only when I got the iPad did I start logging in every day.'

'Initially had my nickname … as my name, so no one found me [on Facebook]. I have locked it down and have only 'friended' someone I didn't know by mistake. I locked down Facebook because my sons have friends that I have taught and it's to give me some privacy.' Amy has found that 'a lot of people in my age group don't have Facebook. I am not common. Only a handful of friends are on it but mostly my younger family - nephews and nieces … [my husband's] sister said their mother wasn't allowed Facebook because it was the devil! And she is only two years older than us'.

Amy rarely pushes out information and mostly makes comments on other people's pages. It is mostly 'milestones that I announce ... like graduating' and 'when we travel we put photos up'. She tags her photographs and is also tagged in other people's photographs. 'I couldn't be bothered un-tagging (even with a photo of me in bathers).'
She doesn't use it to get information such as fan pages, it's 'just social' and reflects that she 'possibly wouldn't be on Facebook if our friends weren't'.

Amy does not use in-jokes in her status updates but when commenting on others she sometimes has an element that only some of the audience will understand her meaning. She does this by using multimedia - song lyrics, photos etc …'makes it much more fun'. She doesn't use acronyms, 'I don't even think about it ... I'm old school – it doesn't come to me naturally'.

Amy doesn't think it is so much her cultural heritage that influences the way that she shares information online 'but rather the 1984 syndrome. Being brought up in that era … the cold war was a suspicious time and it had a big influence. So I think it is more upbringing that culture'.

Amy believes there has been a real shift in the way that people share 'openness by default rather than privacy by default'. When we discussed what she would share she says 'I don't put anything up there that I wouldn't show my mother. So I have internal rules'. She is also aware that she has a variety of audiences so she is careful with what she shares. For example, 'parents

don't see you as a person they only see you as a teacher'. She is not always positive in what she shares online but 'would never use strong language. I am very careful with choice of words'.

She 'never thinks about the future of the information. I think my age is more to do with what I share'. She hasn't had any bad experiences online – she 'would share adventures but they are not "bad"'. And this is simply because it is not part of their lifestyle, 'What you see up there is pretty much who we are. We are pretty boring'.

Aran

Aran is an Information systems academic who has recently submitted his PhD. Originally from Thailand, he is currently an Australian resident. Aran uses both Twitter and Facebook and moved from using Hi5 to Facebook because his friends moved on to it. He finds that it is 'good for day-to-day chatter with friends because I can't be bothered writing emails. Email is annoying and old fashioned – you have to do so much to get to the message'. It was all the news around Twitter and Ashton Kutcher[7] a few years ago that pushed Aran into taking up Twitter but he says 'I don't have many followers as I don't really contribute'. He is very careful not to share private information online – 'I talk about work and study. If I have a super, super shitty day I will share it. I take photos if I go places. I have friends who are photographers who give me advice'.

Aran does not share specific work about his PhD. This is because much of it is 'super technical stuff about study … people won't understand'. If he wanted to discuss his work he would message people but 'not open to the world'. When the researcher asked why this would be the case if people didn't understand it he replied, 'I'm not really sure about why I don't tweet about my work'. Aran would rather share specific experiences. 'I put things up that is new for people at home, things that they would never get to see. It's mostly entertaining stuff. ' He does talk about 'nerdy stuff' such as new versions of technology. Aran has never friended someone he doesn't know, 'I think this reflects my personality. Ice-breaking activities anywhere, anytime – I hate it - to pretend smiling etc.'; he shudders with the thought.

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[7] In 2009 the actor Ashton Kutcher challenged CNN to a popularity contest on Twitter to see who could reach 1 million followers first (Sutter 2009).

Aran was not aware of the openness of Twitter until he got a response from Telstra[8] about a complaint he aired on Twitter. After this time he became much more aware that people paid attention to what he shared. If it is something that he doesn't want people engaging with then he will write in Thai. Sometimes he doesn't want English speakers to know what he is saying and this is usually because it is about 'the situation in my third world country … where things have gone stupid. Or I complain a little bit about things here that are supposed to be a developed country and yet there are some things in my country that are much better … like cinema, public transport. I want to send a message back to my friends that this is a wonderful land, but there are elements that are not as good as home. Things are not always easy'. In this way he uses language to differentiate conversations. 'When I speak in Thai I am differentiating the conversation so that only some people will know about it.' He also believes that 'people aren't holding back content but they are holding back context' and this is clear with the different uses of language and in-jokes that people share online.

While Aran does not wish to offend anyone with what he shares, he does not censor himself based on what 'the government of my home country might think, but I am careful with people's privacy. Never say names. Don't worry about people reading it. In Thailand we live together'.

Aran has never untagged himself from a photograph and has never found anything bad that he doesn't like online. When asked about the influence that cultural heritage might have on his information sharing he says, 'I don't know the answer to this one. What I feel deeply inside myself is, I like to share things with people at home who will never get to see the things I do – what outside our third world country is doing. This is why we are still developing. We want to make our lives better. I try not to upset anyone'. Aran cares about what people think – but more about their feelings. 'I don't need them to like me. It's not about popularity, it's about sharing. It is an outlet for me to shout out something that I think is not right but I don't know who to say to'. But he is careful with what he says online because he doesn't wish to 'waste people's time. It's the same as I wouldn't knock on someone's door to complain'. When he posts he doesn't think about the future audiences of his work – he is strict in keeping 'names out of things and I don't share a lot'.

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[8] Telstra is Australia's largest telecommunications and information services company (Telstra 2012)

Danila

Danila uses a number of different Social Media applications, including Twitter and Facebook, and has a specific distance that she creates in the public persona. She is an academic in post graduate education and has a PhD. Danila has a well thought through strategy in developing and maintaining her online presence. She runs a successful blog designed to assist post graduate research students and maintains this avatar across Facebook and Twitter. She also has personal Facebook and Twitter accounts. 'My outwardly facing Twitter' as apposed to her personal account 'is my biggest push-out of information. I started because it was a good way for me to follow magazines or news articles. Very little conversation develops around Facebook with [her blog persona]. There are a lot more silent lurkers'. Her closed accounts are for discussing the everyday such as Masterchef, her child and work.

Her rule for Facebook is she has 'to meet the person in the flesh – and [asks the question] would I be comfortable getting drunk in front of them', so for example she would not friend someone from a conference. She attempted to take up Google+ but it was 'too much emotional and intellectual effort to move onto Google+ … [she had] circle fatigue'.

Twitter quickly becomes the focus of the discussion as it is the prolific centre of her online presence. 'Twitter is me and not me – probably the best parts of me as a teacher.' She has found that there is a 'High level of discourse [on Twitter] and I prefer the minutia. I can deal with it on Twitter because it is like a waterfall that I can dip in and out of. It took me awhile to get there. People on Twitter helped with this. [She has developed using] lists so you will catch certain ribbons in the waterfall'. Danila thinks of her role is 'like a curator, but then more like a DJ. I have my albums that I share. If you want to look at the music it's on the list. Shout out to other PhD students'. She thinks about her information mix like a DJ would approach a party – '80% dance hits, 10% weird stuff and then 10% talking – where I talk about Mr [blog persona] and [blog persona jnr]. It creates distance. It's real but not too personal'. She has learnt a lot from watching others on Twitter and using their methods.

Danila approached the use of Social Media with a specific idea and outcome in mind. A family member had said to her 'you can do a lot more if people know who you are' and suggested that she start a blog to explain to the world what she does and who she is – because in essence 'no one understands you'. From this idea she had to work out what she wanted to achieve. From the

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beginning she established that she wanted it to be collaborative and she knew that she couldn't sustain writing two blogs each week. It started with the blog, then to Twitter and finally to Facebook and she likes the multiple channels so that there is less likelihood that things will get missed. She muses that she is in fact 'a lot bigger in the UK'. She has become an opinion leader through her work and she is 'comfortable with that – I only talk about what I know about. I don't tell people what to wear or eat. I feel authorized'. There is a 'funny confidence barrier' with Social Media, you need to 'feel like you have a right to say this is something I know, a knowledge claim. It actually takes a lot of guts'.

Her online persona is 'always upbeat' and very positive and this is a definite decision. 'It's like being in a pub – different channels are different rooms, different feelings'. She considers this her 'academic identity'; the same one that she uses in the classroom. 'I want you to jump on the Danila train. I'm going to take you with me and charm you into doing things you don't like to do. It's like the hide the vegetables approach. For example, it is very hard to get people to engage in discussion groups but they are so important because 'you portray an identity when storytelling. Tell stories and let others tell their stories and that way the collective knowledge increases'. She uses her positive identity to get people enthused into doing the exercise.

She has found that the classroom has been affected by her use of Social Media. The online presence is an 'active creation of presence … curatorship of content and voice is a way for creating presence [and this] is now happening in classroom. Teaching is a conscious performance … because you have to construct it – what does your avatar look like … branding icon (avatar of messy pile of paper)'.

Danila sees mobility as the key and her phone is central to participating. For example, she also has a Tumblr blog of food ethnography of academia that is easy to maintain because she can take photographs and upload them at any time. It is a 'three dimensional sense of presence. It includes space. If I am uploading from where I am - photos to Twitter or Tumblr there is a sense of a person moving through a space and having a life and sharing some of that strategically'.

Danila talks of Social Media allowing users to be 'nerdy'. She considers this a 'great thing' as it stimulates conversation and discourse. It also allows her to find an audience that is interested in what she has to say – 'not all of one's friends want to have a discussion about grammar'. She

finds it interesting that email is the channel that people switch to if they want to talk to her as a 'proper' academic – 'Dear Dr …'.

When asked about cultural upbringing and its influence on the way she presents online, Danila states 'I've never thought about that at all … because I'm skippy ... and we are a protestant family that don't really hug or don't even give each other nicknames, although we are deeply affectionate'. But she thinks that her upbringing has influenced the way that she uses different faces depending on what she is doing. 'I was taught – I went to a bogan jungle school – my mother worked hard to instill in me a good private school girl accent. Never let me slip into bogan. [I considered myself] Bilingual bogan. I always context switched – I played the bogan at school so as not to have the crap beaten out of me but at home I was nice middleclass'. This sets up an early understanding of context and makes her 'always disciplined'. 'Also I am very, very shy. I have watched other people, … play a role. Teacher face, [blog persona], architect. There is nothing but the mask – I was always uncomfortable thinking it was somehow fake but you turn facets of the mask around, nothing inside.'

'Google+ forces me to be the same person all the time whereas I can wear different masks on Twitter etc. I don't want to look like Danila (avatar) when I am talking as the [blog persona].' She thinks that 'changes in identity aren't lies – authenticity is interesting concept– what does it mean. [Blog persona] is very authentic but is a construction. It's an authentic construction. It's coherent. Different dimensions and facets and moves through space … '.

Stephanie

Stephanie is a journalist who is also an academic in Public Relations and Marketing, she has a Masters degree. She only has a Facebook account and signs in regularly but 'if I'm particularly busy at work, I sign in less because I don't have time when I'm working, and I'm too tired once I get home. It's like having a conversation with someone, you need to have the energy to do it'. Stephanie accesses primarily from her computer at work, followed by her laptop at home and then her mobile.

Stephanie uses Facebook for many different activities, 'in the past week I've uploaded a photo of something funny I saw while out and about, commented on friends' posts, sent messages to a

couple of friends and used online chat. I used to play online games but I don't any more. I got bored with them'. Her profile is restricted to friends only and thinks you would 'have to be insane' to have it open to the world. She is considering giving certain access to lists of friends. 'I don't have this at the moment, but am looking to. Again it's a matter of having time. I am also considering grouping people according to what they share in return. Don't really have any interest in sharing information with people who don't give anything in return'. She would not consider friending someone that she didn't know.

Her profile has the following information: profile photo (not of herself but a building), date of birth, email and favorite movies and books but this is 'from 'liking' things – which is usually because I want updates from the things I like rather than wanting to show others I like them'. When asked if she listed relationship status she states 'hell no'. Like many professionals she uses LinkedIn for her work information and networks. She rarely uploads photographs and occasionally removes tags from photos that have been tagged by others. She has not had any negative experiences online 'thank god. Although I have been tagged in photos by a friend who has an open profile. I only share my photos with friends so I untagged myself'.

Stephanie is motivated by communication and 'a lot of the conversation between friends happens online, so if you want to participate you need to log in. Early on I used it to keep in touch with past work colleagues, but I have now migrated many of them to LinkedIn instead and deleted them from Facebook'. She has considered using an alias.

At the moment she does not share any creative work online but would consider it in the future. When asked about her use of acronyms she says, 'occasionally. I think I probably would if I used a mobile to access Facebook more'. She doesn't use in-jokes to create online spaces.

When discussing how cultural heritage may influence how she uses Facebook, Stephanie states 'I'm sure it does but I'm not sure how. Within my own culture I see a greater difference between age groups and how they share information and the amount of time devoted to sharing information. I certainly spend a lot less time sharing information than younger family members/friends. I don't separate who I am for different groups of people, but I know many people who do and I think that's a reflection of their offline behavior too. I definitely consider whether the things I share will become a problem in the future. However, the longer I use

Facebook, the more relaxed I've become. I'm still very careful, but I certainly share a lot more now that when I first started using it. This might also be a consequence of society becoming a lot more relaxed about what's considered "acceptable" to find online. I'm troubled by reports that employers would like prospective employees to hand over log-in details for their Facebook account, that's something I could never do – or ask for. If an employee is publicly sharing information that's potentially problematic to an organisation that's one issue, but for them to be concerned about things happening in private – which couldn't come back [to] damage the corporate image – that's quite another matter'. When asked if it stops her sharing information she says 'I'm not sure. There are some things I would never share, but I'm not sure whether that's driven by culture'.

The feelings of her audience are important to Stephanie and she cares about what they think when she posts. 'I wouldn't want to hurt or embarrass anyone with something that I posted. In terms of whether they think I'm an idiot, that worries me a lot less. They already know what I'm like.' She is far more certain about future audiences as 'I definitely consider what a future employer or business contact would think before I post things … and I have deleted posts after re-considering whether they were a good idea as it related to my work'. She usually posts positive information and while she is careful about her online presences she does not consider it a constructed persona. For her is 'the same as anything I would otherwise send in a text or an email'.

She frequently uses Google to look up people for work and 'will look at their Facebook or Twitter profiles to get a better idea of what they're like before I speak with them. Which is why I'm cautious about what I share publicly as I think about others doing it in return'.

Tomasz

Tomasz is an academic in the Information Systems area and has a PhD. He does not use Facebook, but rather 'keeps the finger on the pulse by using Twitter'. He uses it for work and also for hobbies such as cycling and movies. He's in the habit of tweeting something every day, for example, tweeting while watching Star Wars. He says it is 'not so much who is following me out there, but more kind of sending stuff out there and if someone reads it and finds it interesting it's cool. I do it more for myself'. He closed his Facebook account because he did not

want to add students and 'too many people wanted to add him'. He felt that Facebook didn't have the real added value and he felt pressured to add people that wouldn't normally be friends with. He felt compelled to go online and post updates on Facebook but does not feel the same compulsion with Twitter.

He reads Twitter mostly when he's on the train to and from work. This makes it a lot easier to access he says, 'if it didn't have the same mobility I would feel locked into a computer'. He likes the brevity of tweets so you can skip messages if you want to, which makes it much more flexible than Facebook. Twitter is all about 'ease of access, ease-of-use and less about friends. It connects me with people that you would never be friends with on Facebook'. For example, Tomasz follows wrestlers, 'where else would I get the opportunity to hear the inner thinking of someone like The Rock'. He is also interested in personal training and likes to follow trainers like Michelle Bridges (coach on Australia's Biggest Loser[9]) because she acknowledges individuals doing a really good job. He can follow real people training and trying to lose weight which is more of a connection than commenting on a post on Facebook.

Tomasz does not really use Twitter for work, 'I don't know who at work is actually on Twitter', although he does use it to keep up with information like conferences, and new things occurring in the industry, particularly in the personal training area. 'Twitter doesn't have the same pressure to use it for work, I use it mostly for fun - it allows friends to know what's going on without having to have my finger on the pulse all the time.'

There is a definite division in between work and play at this point though he suggests that this might change in the future. 'Being a teacher does limit what I share. For awhile I kept my Twitter locked down but now I've opened it up but have not had any of my students try to follow me. What I do with Twitter doesn't really resonate with my students.'

When Tomasz joined Twitter in early 2009 it was more about curiosity, 'it's not about keeping up with friends … It's the ability to find out what others are doing and lets me into their lives, to connect with celebrities and people I never thought you would be able to talk to'. Tomasz says that he does choose the persona that he appears as on Twitter, 'I suppose in all honesty I want to

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[9] The Biggest Loser is a reality television program where contestants lose weight to win prizes (http://thebiggestloser.com.au/)

post messages that are kind of smart, are funny and quirky rather than dull and droll'. He wishes to be 'funny and contemporary'. He finds the play between Twitter and real life to be interesting. He has conversations online with his brother and 'he can find out things about me which he wouldn't normally … it's almost an inter-textual context finding threads to talk about with my brother … it's different to how we see each other and what we might have done in the past, which is great. I am not specifically aiming things at him but he's getting things out of it'.

Tomasz follows people that he doesn't know and, in turn, he has lots of strangers following him. He knows only 22 personally. 'If I don't feel that I'm getting anything out of following someone then I obviously disconnect them.' 'I like to have my finger on the pulse, like to see what's out there … the more information that people can feed me the better.' Tomasz says that the 140 character limit is the 'beauty of Twitter … micro information … people thrive on it in our current society … feeling on top of that being able to inform someone else that you know … it gives a sense of power control'.

Hamish

Hamish is an academic in eCommerce and has a Masters. He is relatively new to Facebook and uses it mostly to keep up-to-date with what friends, family and some work colleagues are doing. The initial factor that set Hamish to go onto Facebook was an email from an overseas friend 'telling me to look at their family photos on Facebook'. Until that time Hamish says that 'I was not interested in getting a Facebook account as there were too many other things to do, and better ways to communicate with family and friends'. In a busy life of work, committees and writing there is minimal time for activities that Hamish describes as 'trivial'. Hamish's profile is closed and has virtually no information and his profile is set to friends only. The profile picture is a half-face photo from a holiday, and the only other distinguishing information is his email address, but Hamish says 'I refuse to put any more data on the site – and, anyway, my family and friends know most things about me'. He rarely updates his status and has not uploaded any family photographs, preferring to burn them to CDs and deliver them to the people concerned. He accesses Facebook on his computer at home and has any updates pushed to his email, which 'I will follow the link if I have time'.

Hamish has not had any bad experiences online and hasn't seen any photographs worth 'untagging'. His main motivation for using Facebook is 'to see what family, especially, and close friends are doing, see their photos and maintain contact with interstate and overseas friends'. 'I wouldn't see any need to use Facebook if the family and friends weren't using it'. He concedes, though, that it is easier for a family member, while on holidays, to upload their photos onto Facebook rather than sending them by email.

Although he may enjoy reading a comment or viewing a photograph on Facebook he would prefer to talk to the person rather than subject them to a 'thumbs up' and a comment that 'Hamish liked this'. For example, Hamish keeps track of a young friend on Facebook who is active in commenting on and promoting social causes. Rather than reply on Facebook Hamish says that 'I see him every few weeks and we discuss the issues he has highlighted on Facebook and I get a deeper insight into what he is doing – which I would not get by adding a comment on Facebook'.

Hamish is conservative in his use of Facebook, he has never added a friend that he has never met, and he has not shared his artwork or creative pieces, nor does he use in-jokes or acronyms. He is bemused by the often banal use of this form of communication, 'and I sometimes think that some people need to get a life'.

Hamish does not believe that his cultural heritage influences the way that he presents himself online. As an academic he is loathe to allow anything personal to be accessed by students and hence his reluctance to embrace Facebook totally. Contact with students is made via email or in person and Hamish says, 'I do not think Facebook is an appropriate teacher-student means of communication, especially where there some disciplinary measures in play such as plagiarism or low-standard work'. He is also very wary of Facebook as he has lectured on the issues of security on the Internet and has seen problems with unwanted material such as photographs being posted without the permission of the subjects, and the trouble that some people have in having material 'untagged'. He has not received any requests from people to share more on Facebook, but says that 'I do feel guilty sometimes that I have not posted photos for my overseas friends to enjoy; but when I think I have time to do that I suddenly realise there are more pressing items on the agenda'. Hamish gives no real thought to a future audience because he shares so little and doesn't see strangers or future audience as 'relevant'. 'I do not see' concludes

Hamish, 'the need to promote myself on Facebook as the people who are listed as my friends already know me quite well'.

5.5   Discussion

For Academics there were three different approaches to engaging on Facebook and Twitter and these choices are driven by reputation. The first group embraced the medium completely, using it to facilitate their career and build a deliberate online personality. The second group used the technology to share themselves with friends and family but also have links to work and share links about work topics. The final group were cautious about what they shared, and rarely talked about work online. The participants were either creating reputation or protecting it by being conservative about what they shared. Academics thought about the identity they were constructing.

Academics were the most likely to use Twitter with 40% using the application. All but one used Facebook but felt that it was more of a personal space and most did not give students access to this space. The two academics who had open academic personas online also had private Facebook accounts that were not discussed in this context. This meant that for the purposes of Facebook they were conservative and closed off with what they shared, much like the third group. It was the second group who blurred the lines between work and play. The general consensus was that Facebook was a personal space that was protected from the academic world while Twitter was used to have intellectual discussions, build reputation and follow people who were important in the different fields of research. This illustrates the importance of role for Academics.

Academics related strongly to their primary role as the online version of themselves. Academics rely on their reputations to build their career and to this end they were the most conservative of the groups with the information they shared. There were no photographs of drunken evenings or inappropriate comments. Academics rely on their reputation both in the classroom and in the wider academic community. One participant stated that academics are always 'on' – they work weekends and nights so the role becomes who they are – and that the distance between who they are and what they did for a living was very small. There was much discussion around reputation management on Facebook or Twitter. There were some academics that did not push

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out information, but rather consumed the information shared by others, as they did not wish to be seen as 'foolish' (Anna) or lay themselves open to be 'nit picked' by the academic world at large. All academics in this study had set themselves very specific guidelines about what they would share online and what their personas should look like. The *self* that is represented online is an edited version of themselves.

Academics had all 'friended' or followed colleagues and had at some point talked about work online. The *self* that they presented was a tried and tested version of themselves. Most did not see the platform as a place to take risks or be adventurous in presenting the *self* because of the resiliency of the information and likelihood of criticism. Some commented that they did not want to look 'stupid or uninformed'.

Of the participants who shared information, all were greatly influenced by their role as an academic. Most of them pushed out information about their area of expertise, whether it was links to news articles, blogs or their own work; they would share links and ideas. Most did not go into the minutia of their everyday work or discuss specific grants but would attempt to start conversations around their interests.

The academics as a whole were very thoughtful, with rules around what they shared, but the formation of *self* was very different for the three groups. The first group presented the Academic *self* as the online Facebook and Twitter *self*. For example, the persona was a construct as Danila observes 'Twitter is me and not me – probably the best parts of me as a teacher'. She was clear that her persona was real but it was not personal. The second group blurred the lines between onstage and offstage. There was no differentiation between the Academic person and the individual. Therefore on the same Facebook account they shared photographs of their partners, dogs, weddings with the latest updates from their field of research. The lines between personal and academia were indistinct. The final group were influenced by reputation management and what they saw as appropriate communication channels with students. They do not share any information about work or 'friend' students. These restrictions also influenced their everyday interactions, Stephanie says that she always imagines that whatever she writes on Facebook can be seen by everyone in the world now and in the future. 'Sometimes that idea is daunting and can stop me sharing innocuous things but I feel it's better to be safe than sorry'.

The *self* is a well constructed and composed side of the academic. All of the participants think about how they appear to the audience and present the *self* in a way to represent that. This is the only group who admitted to creating specific personas and driving how they want their audiences to view them. Even some of those in the second group said that they were attempting to create a fun and smart persona rather than just anyone on Twitter. The third group had chosen to be a conservative *self* that involved rules about how they would interact with people.

Academics shared photographs and played games but they were the most likely of all the groups to share links to other platforms such as newspapers, blogs (including their own), video streaming sites, jokes such as 9gag.com and event requests. They were the most likely also to use in-jokes and song lyrics to speak to a specific audience within the context of the larger Facebook audience. Or they may have used foreign languages to define the audience. Many of the participants used acronyms, even though they admitted to being very strict about spelling and grammar in the 'real world'.

The links and information that academics shared have generally not been created by them but were used to create a persona that fits in with their academic *self*. It was a multilayered way of building an identity that was accessible and tailored to what the individual wants to share. By using Facebook and Twitter the individual was able to convey, at times, complex ideas in an easy way and thus build the online persona that was appropriate to them. The changing use of symbols such as acronyms and sharing photographs and jokes showed that, for many of the academics, they also wanted to be seen as fun and, sometimes, a little nerdy. This came out in the interviews and was reiterated with the observations.

The Academic group were generally aware of the way that Facebook and Twitter can be used to build a specific *self*, which meant that they were also aware of the role of audience in that equation. This knowledge affected the way that they interacted and the way that they presented themselves to others. Role was fundamental to this and the reasoning comes from the belief that Academics are rarely 'off'. Hamish said that Academics are habitually academics and don't clock in and out or leave their work at the office. Most work seven day weeks and therefore find it hard to separate the online *self*. This entrenchment in role either empowered the individual to share their ideas and look for fellow academic and expert feedback and a discussion/debate; or it paralyzed their sharing because of fear of being thought of as stupid or uninformed. Hamish

says that Academics 'sometimes can have a "take no prisoners" sense of righteousness about an issue, you see it all the time at conferences where people attack each other – that can be daunting for some' and would be a contributing factor to why some people won't share online. Coupled with the resiliency of the information he surmised that people do not want to be involved in flame wars that may come back to haunt them later.

The Academics were looking for validation of identity through interaction with others. They did not feel that they *needed* the feedback loop from their interactions but felt it verified their intellect when people commented or agreed with them.

Some academics said that due to the nature of their work (such as data mining) they are aware of unknown and uninvited audiences and this affects what they share online. Karim and Stephanie do not rely on security settings to prevent people from viewing their data as they realize they are not particularly secure but rather don't share much information for fear of it being mined or ultimately read by an unintended audience. Those that did share felt that they were careful about what they shared and with whom, and did so because they felt it was building their reputation. But not all audiences are considered negative. Most people joined Facebook to maintain friendships and sustain family relationships with overseas relatives.

When questioned about cultural influences on the presentation of *self* and interactions, nearly all participants admitted it was not something they had thought about. They felt that it did not influence what they shared online. While investigating the daily use by participants it could be seen that some backgrounds, such as the Asian and Middle Eastern, were more conservative than others. Some participants made comments on, or pushed out information in different languages, not seeing this as a reflection of their culture, but just 'who I am'. The most influence that culture seemed to have on what individuals shared was in relation to sensitive information that could be consumed by friends in parts of the world where there is heavy censorship, and where freedom of speech is not a right. A number of individuals within the Academic group restricted their opinions and the information they shared in case the recipient could be implicated. This means that participants' ethnicity and culture played a role in the choices they made about what they shared and with whom. They made specific choices about what information they would share and the languages that they would use to get across their expression of self. This means that it affected the way that the self was presented and that the

audience was at the forefront of decision-making about content. So while individuals felt their cultural background was not relevant to their digital identity it was evident in the choices they made.

The academic group were the only participants not to disregard the importance of culture entirely. Most of them said that they had not thought about it before and agreed that it had more to do with the households they were raised in rather than cultural influences. Stephanie summed it up well when she said 'I'm sure it does but I'm not sure how'. Both she and Amy felt that it had more to do with age than culture. Amy felt that her age group did not share openly as a rule and Stephanie felt that the younger age groups were sharing a lot more than she was.

'I don't put anything up there that I wouldn't show my mother. So I have internal rules' (Amy). The Academics were the group that had the strictest and most deliberate rules. The first sub-group, who built their reputation online, were prolific in the way that they shared but also had self-imposed rules about what they shared. Danila talked about having a formula for how much of herself she shared with others. Only 10% was personal information and even then it was behind pseudonyms. So while she and Allison might seem to share excessively in comparison to the others they are strategic personas that have internal rules of engagement. The second sub-group who share links and converse about academic issues online have also made rules for themselves about how they share information and what they will and won't discuss. The final sub-group also have rules about what they will share and for some of them it means that they do not push out any information. Amy does not share widely and discussed the 'mother rule' which is that she does not share anything on Facebook that she wouldn't be happy showing her mother. It would seem that a number of the Academics had similar rules. When the researcher was finding samples for this study it was found that many academics, who were invited to be part of the study, did not have Facebook or Twitter and some of them had been instructed by their Schools not to have a profile.

None of the participants reported any specific bad experiences with Facebook or Twitter. Danila alluded to trolling in some of her posts but it would seem she considers this part of the territory of being present online. No one felt that their photographs, work or comments had been taken out of context or misused. Most of the participants felt that this was because they had the social rules in place, as discussed above. All of the participants had googled themselves at some point

to see what was written about them online and most were happy with the result as it usually highlighted their publications. The audiences for the Academics were larger than they expected. Through observation of their Facebook sites it could be seen that information was more easily retrievable from Google than they thought. Three of the Academics who had what they considered 'closed' profiles could be searched and found (and tagged) based on their sites. This shows a disconnect between who they think they share with and how large their actual audience is.

The Academic group were the most likely to use whatever technology was around them. The increased mobility of smartphones and iPads had made it easier but did not dictate whether they were going to be on Facebook or Twitter. Most said that it facilitated the ability to snack on the information rather than be the catalyst of engagement. This group were the most likely to log on using a PC or laptop in addition to other technologies. The use of technology added to the use of Social Media. The more access that individuals had to the technology the more likely they were to be connected and on Facebook of Twitter. Tomasz said that he would not be on Twitter if it wasn't for his mobile (cell) phone.

Academics were aware of how the applications could be used as tools to enhance or destroy a reputation. For some, Facebook was a personal space that was not shared with work, but for about half of the cohort their personal Facebook site was used to share with colleagues and in some cases with students.

The two academics who chose to build academic personas online mostly used Twitter for this (in conjunction with blogs) while Facebook remained personal. Danila also had a Facebook page for her persona but it didn't have the same traction as her Twitter account. For this sub-group the technologies allowed them to have discussions with large groups of people in diverse disciplines. Their goals were to support others in similar situations and to encourage academic discussion, and in doing so to gain online support and communities of practice around their disciplines.

The second sub-group of Academics did not use Facebook and Twitter to create a separate academic persona but rather fused their personal and academic accounts together to create a mashup of their presentation of *self*. There was little or no delineation between the Social *self* and

the Academic *self* and this is perhaps because the function of role is so strong for academics that they can't differentiate easily.

The third sub-group of Academics did not actively engage in work discussion on Facebook and in some cases rarely interacted with Facebook or Twitter. Rather, they watched from the background to see how and what others did online. For these individuals the *self* was presented in an edited and pared down way.

The common element between the Academics was that their role was central to the way that they presented themselves online. To a certain degree they did not differentiate between the social and academic *self* and presented both to the same audience. Most of the participants sought to present a specific persona or at least a specific idea of who they wanted to appear as to the audience. Academics had the strictest rules around what they would or wouldn't share.

5.6   Conclusion

The literature seemed to dwell on the way that people play with their identity and present themselves in an inauthentic way – playing with gender and age for example. While the academics were careful about the way they were perceived, and could be considered conservative with what they share, it was still a representation of the true *self*. The identity that was presented as a persona to an academic audience was still the teacher or mentor part of the academic. It was one of the many masks (or roles) that the academic plays. This behavior was not inauthentic, but rather part of the individual and represented how that part of them was portrayed. The literature was also drawn to what Aboujaode (2011) called antisocial tendencies, but this group was conventional and unadventurous in the way that they shared with their audience. These findings are in contrast to what the literature painted, perhaps because Facebook and, to a lesser extent, Twitter do not allow for the anonymity that Turkle (1995) and Van Gelder (1991) claimed facilitated deception.

The lines between real world and digital world for some of the Academic group were blurred. In the real world, role is central to creating identity and academics are greatly influenced by their role. If individuals create a persona, share indiscriminately or not share at all, they are still influenced by their role and see it as the main reason why they share the way they do. The *self*

was constructed and involved internal rules on what they considered appropriate to share. The level of appropriateness was up to the individual and will differ, but the presentation of *self* was thought through and developed. Symbols are changing the depth of information available for individuals to share with each other and giving audiences far more information to draw conclusions and help form identity. Academics were very aware of their audience and how it relates to their reputation. How an audience will react to their identity was part of the decision making process for the individual. The building blocks were the same and the digital *self* is a fair replication or the way identity was created in the real world.

Chapter Six: Stay-at-home Parents with young children

6.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the Stay-at-home Parents group. The participants were identified through social and business networks. The criteria was that the parents have at least one child, either pre-school or at primary school. All of the participants were couples with one Stay-at-home parent and one parent working fulltime. The majority of Stay-at-home Parents were not engaged in paid work but three of the parents worked part time in addition to being the primary care giver for the children. The focus of this study was the parents that stayed at home with the children.

Eight of the participants were aged from 30 – 39 years old and the remaining three were aged 40-49 years. The minimum age for this study was 30 years old so it was understandable that the majority of the participants would be at the younger end of the age scale as they have young children. It is more likely that parents with young children will be at home rather than those with older and independent children.

The Stay-at-home parent cohort was dominated by women. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics report *Work, life and family balance* (2009) 'for those couple families with young children … it was more common for only one parent to work full-time, with mothers less likely to be in paid work'. Ten of the participants were women and one was male. This gender inequity represents the 'real world' inequity.

The participants had children under the age of six with the following gender and numbers.

Table 6.1: number and gender of children of Stay-at-home Parents

Children	Participants
2 girls	Anuk, Bella, Vivien
2 boys	Emily
1 boy, 1 girl	Chloe, Charlotte, Samantha, Olivia, Kennedy, Noah
1 girl	Eloise

The majority of the Stay-at-home Parents were well educated with five having completed a University degree and a further three having finished post-graduate work. Of the remaining

three, two had diplomas and one had completed VCE. All participants had worked before staying at home to care for young children, six of them at a managerial level and two at senior executive level. The Stay-at-home Parents were Australian with two living as ex-pats in Hong Kong.

6.2   Narratives of participants

The Stay-at-home Parents were all actively involved online – not entirely prolific – but all uploaded photographs, commented on posts, gave status updates and viewed brand pages. There was only one participant who reported mostly on their children's activities and not their own. Only one used Twitter, but all used Facebook. The following vignettes show how these individuals presented themselves online and include quotations taken from interviews and the three month observations. There are eleven different perspectives.

Bella

'Facebook is almost like a little gossip magazine - when friends aren't writing what they are doing I feel like I don't know what they are up to – even though I might see them'. Bella was a 38 year-old fulltime mother of two girls. She logged into Facebook most days via iPad, iPhone and/or Mac. And it was the mobility of the former two that made it easy for her to access and incorporate the technology into her everyday activities, 'when I was at the osteo[path] before, I jumped on Facebook while I was waiting and wished someone a happy birthday'. She liked the convenience and the accessibility of finding out what people were doing in real time.

'You can keep up with people without having to make much effort … I feel like I am being good and keeping in contact with say, second cousins (who I only see once a year), without too much work – it's a really good feeling'. And while she appreciated the goodwill this fostered she also conceded that 'some of it is quite generic – someone I went to school with 20 years ago I feel like I have to post something to wish them a happy birthday because they wished me a happy birthday. Regardless of the fact that there is no genuine friendship whatsoever and I haven't seen them since my 21st'. In this example it was more about being polite than fostering any real friendship. But that was a part of the attraction of the technology. She could gain glimpses into other people's lives, people who were are not her closest friends. This was a form of entertainment.

Bella shared an account with her husband and they had a relatively open profile as it was available to friends of friends. In turn, she liked to look at the profiles of her friends' friends.

> I like to look at people who I am not friends with, but are linked to my friends, because I find that there are some interesting people … for example one of the girls I went to school with is friends with a stripper who has the most amazing body and uploads heaps of photos of herself. There is an element of voyeurism. But it's also just general interest … seeing someone's life that is completely different to my own. I don't look at the pages of other mothers in the same way … but this one – she is my age – and her life is so different – so I think OMG how did you get to that point?

Bella showed the researcher the Facebook page that had a lot of photos of the girl and equally as many of her breasts, Bella commented that she had clearly 'had a lot of work done'. She said, 'it's just like watching those transformation shows on TV, but it's real life'. A friend of Bella moved to the USA and was living with an American and they posted EVERYTHING: what she described as 'inane crap'. This drove her husband 'crazy' but she found it entertaining, 'it's my thing of trash … [I like to see] what is she doing today'. This was where she drew the analogy of gossip magazines, Facebook allowed her to be entertained by the everyday goings on of people's lives.

While Bella stated that there was an element of voyeurism at play, it was mostly encouraged by the individuals. She said that there were a lot of mothers, who uploaded heaps of photos of their children, who were, 'clearly putting them up because you want people to comment on how gorgeous your baby is'. Often it was for positive things. One of her girlfriend's children started kinder and she was posting lots of information which Bella liked to see. Not only was she sharing a big moment, but she felt her girlfriend was seeking 'reinforcement that you aren't the only one'. Bella believed that many mothers looked to Facebook for support. She said that if a new mother was posting 'baby woke up at 2am, 3am and 5am' it was 'almost like they are saying I need help – I need to get it off my chest'. She believed this was more about 'exasperation rather than being negative'. For example, when one of her children drew on the walls she posted it to Facebook. Not because she wanted people to feel sorry for her but more because she couldn't believe they had done it and she wanted to share with someone but it wasn't 'big enough to call someone'.

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It's almost, to a degree, you wanting people to believe you're not a boring mum sitting at home with the kids day after day doing the same thing. In person you chat to your friends and you know the mundaneness that comes with motherhood but you don't want that same representation online. I personally probably only post something like a status update or photo once a week but I still look online a couple of times a day (mainly via iPhone) to see what other people are up to. So although I may not be hugely active I'm always aware of what's going on.

Bella said that she did not normally post, 'but if I see someone who is asking for help then I will post something ... for example getting kids to sleep ... I give them advice that I received from professionals and other people … sometimes it can be a good thing'. But other than sharing the occasional holiday photograph or cute photo of the children for family she did not share any of her own work. The site was more about them as a family than any individual storybook of her thoughts and reminiscences. 'I use Facebook rather than Twitter because I am not celebrity – when I do a status update I know who the information is going to … my friends … but if I used Twitter anyone could read it and I'd be embarrassed. Who wants to hear what I did with my day?'

Bella has asked people to remove photos of herself that she did not like. This was to do with vanity rather than security. She used her own name and had minimal details on her profile. An analysis of updates and posts showed that she mostly shared happy photographs of events or holidays and commented on other people's posts. It was a positive space that represented the 'good times'.

 I think that Facebook isn't a true representation of you. I think in some respects it's your own idealised version of your life. You certainly don't want people looking at your page going "oh my goodness she's so boring" or "could she be a little more upbeat she sounds so depressing". People don't want to go online and be presented with other people's problems, they want to see something exciting (like people going on holidays), photos of kids or outings that can give you ideas, (movies they've seen with the kids, zoo visits, arts and crafts).

Bella consciously made the decision to keep her profile positive.

She also thought that there was a set of standards as to what people liked to see.

> I know a girl online (a school acquaintance who I haven't spoken directly in 20 years) who details everything of her personal struggle to find a man, she's a single mum with two girls but she's always posting about finding a man etc, etc. At one point she found a man, they dated and got hot and heavy super fast and she was posting every encounter with him. Needless to say it lasted all of three weeks and then she went into extreme detail about the break up, obviously wanting assurances from all her friends online. But what was interesting was that one friend wrote (from memory) "I think you need to revaluate what you write – online – you as are appearing very desperate and vengeful right now and I don't think that is the true you and I wouldn't want people thinking bad about you, my suggestion is to take down this whole post as it is pretty nasty and desperate stuff".

Bella said that it was then taken down.

Bella went on to talk about how she understood why some people got caught up in being negative but that was not what she used Facebook for – it's not to just seek advice and moan about life but to celebrate the good things and peek into the lives of others for some fun.

Emily

Emily was 37 years old, had two young sons and was a Stay-at-home Parent who had just returned to contract work. Friends of friends could access Emily's Facebook page and she had minimal data about herself beyond date of birth and a profile photograph. Emily used Facebook for entertainment and to ask/share information. 'I use it more to get what I want, so if I need something I'll post "does anyone have an XYZ that I can borrow?". I like being able to ask your friends for help without having to email them. Email seems so formal, it's more like "I'm asking you specifically" while Facebook is you only have to contribute if you see it and have an answer. It's much less in your face. It's a good way to find tradespeople, like a tiler.'

Emily posted occasionally about her life and her children but logged in every day to see what people were doing. She found that her use of Facebook increased since she purchased a smartphone because she could access the information anytime 'perhaps when my husband is

talking and I don't want to listen' she says with a laugh. The mobility allowed her to dip in and out of different applications and snack on what appears on Facebook.

Emily found the behavior of people on Facebook interesting. She said 'I think a lot of people who post are fishing for compliments. For example "I just went to the gym". It makes me think that what they want to hear is you don't need to go to the gym, you should go to the beach because you're so hot'.

Emily made a decision to be careful with what she shared online simply because of the things she had seen others share online. She says, 'I saw the most inappropriate use of Facebook … one was a friend posted a picture of sick baby as her photo. That is not her right … it's not her baby. You could have posted [a status update] but not as a picture'. Another one was 'a friend's sister who had died and her husband put it on Facebook and then all these friends were posting sorry messages. People were putting, "I miss you". It becomes a place to grieve online. I went online to look at her photos. I found it weird. And finally the example of an 11 year old boy who posted a status update that said "I don't call it rape, I call it surprise sex". I wanted to call his mother. A boy of 11 – he doesn't know what it means. No one commented on it.' Emily felt very uncomfortable and thought that someone should be telling this boy that it's not okay. Emily shows the researcher some photos of friends who have had babies and shared photos that seem a 'stretch of appropriateness'. 'For example, one was of this friend's nipple with the caption "booby time". That is "all shades of wrong". There is often the rule of "would I show this to my mother", and these examples do not seem to pass this test.'

She was also very aware that many people used Facebook to promote their lives. 'People who use it to say "my marriage is so perfect and my children are so perfect" annoy me. There are also people who use Facebook to reinforce this every day, "look at my beautiful children". If it's an occasional one then you think "that was nice" but if it's a constant barrage needing reinforcement then I don't like it'. She was happy to share positive moments but did not want people to think she was justifying her life. She was 'conscious of being a mother that talks nothing but the children. I upload photos'. But she did not talk only of her children. She found it difficult when people uploaded every minutia of their lives, 'for example "… Kids woke up at 3am, at 5am, I have to put out the washing. What will I cook for tea, kids woke up at 6am, no one had a nap today…". OMG your kid sleeps and naps and meals and poos … 8 posts a day

are too much. Feel free to upload if they do something funny but not about everything. You are just a sad mother now who doesn't have a life'. Watching this affected her own online behavior.

Facebook allowed Emily to feel more engaged with people. 'When friends have a baby I don't feel like I have to rush and do something as I get to see all the photos online'. She found it a great tool to effortlessly communicate. It was 'an easy way of keeping in contact with people without actually having to keep in contact'. She saw the world online as being quite superficial. She shared some photos online but had asked people to remove photos of herself that she didn't like. She said that, in the time before digital photos, if she saw one she didn't like then she would rip it up. This was just the online equivalent. She also mused, 'I really like looking at people's profile photos as it's where they think they look the hottest'.

Emily did not have any negative experiences online with people sharing inappropriate information about her but pondered: 'It's a strange place Facebook, isn't it? When I think about security, I think that sometimes I shouldn't put up photos of my kids'. But then she wondered: What was the point of Facebook if she could not share their lives to some extent with people who cared? She paused to think of the implications of this and admitted that she looked at the profiles of friends of friends and investigates people that she did not know. This was for curiosity, it was 'nice to measure yourself against other people. I look at friends that I went to school with and their friends and think to myself that things aren't so bad'. Without wishing them badly she thought to herself, 'you've gone to shit and you're not looking so good. And it makes you feel better about your own life '. Emily believed this was human nature.

Anuk

Anuk, a 42 year old mother of two girls (one pre-school, one at school) was employed part time. Originally from Melbourne she moved to New South Wales a few years ago and this was when she started using Facebook to 'keep up with everyone'. She did not post every day but used her iPhone, laptop and PC to access information 'anywhere, anytime'.

Anuk was very open and honest with her profile. Her posts were usually fun and positive. She uploaded photos of events and the girls, but was not solely presenting the children. Being a mum was part of who she was, not the whole. This was represented by her varying array of

status updates: there were posts about fun nights out, events she was organizing with others in her area and even the occasional hangover. Being 'new' to an area, Anuk used Facebook to link up with other women in her neighborhood to go on outings and have play dates with the kids – 'I use it socially to invite groups to outings'. For example, she had just organized a high tea which she coordinated through Facebook.

Anuk usually updated about the great things in life like hanging out with friends, the girls getting up to mischief and having fun, and catching up with family. She reflected on this and said 'I'm not into constant updates on what you are eating but I don't mind telling something crap that happened as long as not too serious, but a way to say I'm human and I'm sure you can relate. It does help you to belong as an individual – not just a mum. Keep your cool in your own head anyway'. A recent example of this was a status update:

> talk about multi tasking – fixing plumbing blockages, coloring hair, cooking dinner, bathing kids, printing photos, washing, putting away washing the list goes on. I know many of u can relate. Gone r the days with the luxury of time.

Her profile was closed, available to friends only, and in doing so she found that she did not edit herself greatly. The information that she shared was her date of birth, profile photograph, gender, and relationship status. She shared information on Facebook with the expectation that people would interact with her and comment on her status updates. Anuk could not recall having any negative experiences online and had never asked someone to remove a tag from a photo.

Anuk was very much 'what you see is what you get'. She did not attempt to create any specific persona although she attempted to be authentic in what she shared. She did not friend people she didn't know, did not share in-jokes or speak only to specific groups online. Only occasionally she used acronyms. She cared about what her friends thought of her posts but did not consider what strangers might think of her online experiences. Occasionally she reflected on the future audiences, such as her girls, but it did not factor to any large extent into the way she shared online.

'Facebook is a social tool for me to touch base with friends that live far away so I still feel like part of their lives and share photos and updates on what we are doing. I also love reading links attached by others such as music, news, events, recipes keeps me in touch.'

Chloe

Chloe was the Stay-at-home Parent to two young children, a girl and a boy. She engaged with Facebook every day, mostly to 'catch up with friends, because I'm nosey. I can see what's going on at anytime of the day without leaving home or getting on the phone.' Chloe had a closed profile that could be accessed only by friends and she shared the following information on her profile: date of birth, profile photo, gender, relationship status, school network and previous employment. She accessed Facebook via a laptop at home and signed in a few times a day.

Chloe's main motivation for using Facebook was to see what other people were doing. Not because she felt as though she needed reinforcement in her life but because it was fun! 'It doesn't really affect my own choices or make me reflect on my own life. I am just really nosey and discuss what I see with other friends that are mutual Facebook friends with the same people.' When we discussed the idea of it being like a gossip magazine, like Bella had suggested, she agreed 'that's a great and correct analysis – it's like having a gossip magazine for your friends instead of celebrities'. When asked if she looked up people online that she didn't know, the answer was a resounding 'hell yes!!!'.

Chloe was aware of how she appeared online, just as she did offline. She did not hesitate to remove tags from photographs she might not like, 'I don't want my other friends to see them'. Although this was the extent of her 'negative' experiences online. Overall she did not feel there was anything online that was inappropriate or harmful to her reputation. Chloe was also aware of her audience and considered what her friends would think when she uploaded information, but this same consideration was not given to strangers or hidden audiences (such as friends of friends). Also, she did not take into consideration any future audiences, including her children. The language that Chloe used online was straight forward and rarely had any hidden meaning (such as in-jokes). She used a few acronyms 'but not all the time'.

Her updates were about her own life and ran the gamut of personal time, '[my daughter] sound asleep, Mummy just poured a wine to try and calm the nerves for the first day of school tomorrow'; updates about the kids, 'The terrible twos have well and truly arrived ARGHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!'; holidays, events and interaction with friends and family. 'Wishing I stopped at two glasses of wine last night'. She also asked for suggestions from her audience – such as books, places to take the kids or restaurants to eat at. Her timeline was full of all parts of her life, often presented in a light hearted and enthusiastic way. Sometimes when she posted status updates she did so hoping that people would comment. 'I'm hoping people will react in the same way that I did. For example, when I put up the picture of [my daughter] for the royal wedding I thought it was funny and cute. So, I hoped it would give people a laugh'.

Chloe did not develop a specific persona for use on Facebook but rather represented herself. She did not think that culture influenced the way she shared online but rather it was just who she was. She did not push out only positive information, but believed it was about half and half. 'I definitely agree that I would not communicate anything terrible that had happened to my friends/family on Facebook. I would tell them other ways. But if I am having a good day during a shit time I post it to let my friends not worry about me that day. I check in and post photos for the same reason to set my friends' minds at rest as it's the quickest method to communicate en-masse'.

Eloise

'To see what is going on in my friends' lives, chat with friends and mums from [my daughter's] school' – this is what motivated Eloise, a 37 year old mother to use Facebook. She was the Stay-at-home Parent to one daughter of school age. Eloise was actively engaged in Facebook, logged in every day and posted regularly. She did not have her own profile photograph but rather used that of her daughter, she shared no other personal information except for her relationship status. Eloise used her iPad to access Facebook, mostly at home at the 'kitchen table or watching TV'.

Eloise kept her profile limited to friends only but has friended people she personally did not know because they were her husband's relatives who live in Argentina. She tended to be upfront with the information that she shared, so she didn't use in-jokes or different language/tones to distinguish her audiences. But she did use acronyms to get her point across

more quickly - 'yes sadly I do' use acronyms. Like many of the Stay-at-home Parents Eloise did not share her own work online but uploaded photographs of some events and holidays. She has removed tags from photographs that she did not like but this was not a regular practice, '[my sister] put one on of me at her wedding – and I looked like the size of a house so I removed it'.

When asked if her cultural background influenced what she shared online she stated 'no not really. And my husband's relatives in Buenos Aires also tend to share similar things online to what we share in Australia.' Having come from a relatively conservative background she thought that it did not wholly influence what she shared. 'I wouldn't tend to put my religious views or political views on Facebook as I feel this is private and doesn't need to be shared'.

She was aware of her audience and cared about what her friends thought of what she posted. 'In some way yes – it's always nice to read the comments that they make – sometimes it can solve a problem – I couldn't find something – [a friend] saw my post and was able to locate the item for me! So it is a way of solving problems, sourcing ideas etc'. She was also cautious of uninvited audiences 'I wouldn't want a stranger reading it so I have set up my Facebook page to only be viewed by my friends'. She used Facebook to share stories about her daughter and the lighter things in life. 'I will post any funny antics [my daughter] may have done – as other friends can relate and it is a way of other family members and friends keeping up with what is going on in our lives/house'.

Overall she saw Facebook as a place to share positive experiences. While she did not choose a specific persona online she did try to be mindful of the people reading and watching her life. 'I always make sure that I don't write negative things – I have seen friends whose children go to school with [my daughter] who post things about other mums and it has gotten out of hand … it's gotten to the point they don't talk over a comment left and taken out of context … and people de-friend each other'. At the time Eloise had just gone through a personal loss and her Facebook had only one mention of it to say thank you for the kind words. She was a private person when it comes to 'things that really matter'.

Eloise did not use Facebook to justify her choice to stay at home with her daughter; rather she saw it as a celebration of that. She understood that being a mother was hard work

with [her husband's] hours and [her daughter] at school rarely do I go anywhere that is for me - sadly I am "just the mum" and don't really have a life outside of school drop offs/pick up, helping out at school, home duties. My social life consists of taking [my daughter] to kids' birthday parties and play dates'.

Sometimes she found what other people posted exhausting

'for me some mums from [my daughter's] school post things - in particular one lady will detail all her cleaning she does pretty much every few days and how organised she is - when reading these posts it tends to make me feel I have been lazy and need to do a bit more and will often clean up as a result'.

Charlotte

Charlotte was an ex-pat Australian then living in Hong Kong and primarily used Facebook to update family and friends on the 'adventure' of living overseas. Charlotte, aged 40, was the Stay-at-home Parent for a girl and a boy, both at primary school. Charlotte used a PC and an iPhone to access Facebook and did this at home and out in public. Her profile was restricted to friends only and had the following information: date of birth, profile photo, gender, and relationship status. Her then profile photo was of Chinese lanterns, but it had also been pictures of her children (never herself). She rarely updated anything personal about her own life but updated on the children and their progress at school and extracurricular activities.

There were very few photographs of Charlotte on her own site with most of them being of the children, although there were links to her husband's site where there was more information and visuals. When renovating the kitchen she posted updates but this was a rare glimpse into the adult world. She had never removed a tag or asked anyone to take down a photograph. Her choices about what she shared related directly to her prevailing situation. While she noted that some women used Facebook to promote a happy family to help them with the lifestyle choices that they had made she conceded that 'It is a big decision to give up work for family, I am also in a different position, as a family we are living away from Melbourne in HK where there are different expectations and lifestyles as an ex-pat. I guess my use of Facebook is more about justifying the move to family, that by posting about the kids achievements etc it allows grandparents especially to be a part of [my children's] day to day life'. Charlotte's audience was her greatest motivating factor. She cared about what her family and friends thought about her

posts and wanted them to feel included. She gave no thought to what strangers might think about her posts or what future audiences might garner from the information. She did not post looking for comments but rather posted to share the information knowing that her audience was interested. She did not need the feedback to fulfil her purpose. From an observational point of view she attempted to highlight everyday achievements so as to bring family closer. So while she would use Facebook as long as her family were on it, she wouldn't if it were only her friends.

Charlotte saw that her experience of using Facebook was unique to her position. While she did not chose a specific persona around how she presented herself, she made definite decisions about what she shared and why. Charlotte tried to be positive on Facebook. When thinking about her status updates she said, 'I'd like them to be [positive], but looking back clearly not'. Charlotte talked mostly about the experiences they had in Hong Kong such as the certificates in Chinese that the children received at assembly, the art adventures they had and the idiosyncratic moments of life as an ex-pat. She also uses Facebook to make arrangements and talk about any trips to Melbourne that they have planned, which they average a few times a year. While analyzing why she attempts to project a positive image she shares, 'I do prefer to post positive thoughts etc, but it's not about perfection, it's more about reminding myself what a fantastic opportunity we have now, and not to let things go by as its too easy to get caught in a routine'.

Charlotte has never friended anyone that she didn't know. Nor did she use in-jokes or exclusive language to create online privacy, but if she happened to do it, it was 'not intentionally'. In terms of language she did not use many acronyms but mostly because, 'I don't know that many'. When asked to think about how culture influenced her decisions online she was quick to say that she did not think it was relevant 'at all'. Charlotte has had no negative experiences on Facebook – she had never been in a position where she was unhappy with the information that was uploaded about her. Charlotte's use of Facebook seemed to be single minded – she wished to document the extraordinary experiences of being an ex-pat child to her immediate family back home.

Kennedy

Kennedy was a parent to two boys and one girl at primary school and worked part time as a teacher. She was 36 years old and resided in Australia but was originally a New Zealander. She updated her status 'about four times a week; it really does depend on what I am doing though, especially over the weekend, if out and about will often update status if out doing something with the kids'. With a profile restricted to friends only, it had her profile picture, date of birth, gender, relationship status, favorite movies/books/music and work network, high school alumni, school mums network, children with apraxia network. She used Facebook on her laptop and smart phone and accessed 'usually at home, in the car or at work, waiting for the kids after school so using my mobile to log in'.

Her motivation for using Facebook is

> 'I think it is nice to see what family and friends are up to, it's not always easy to catch up with everyone face to face and Facebook keeps me in touch with everyone. Also it is a good way to chat privately with friends when you can't always use the telephone. I have a friend who is hearing impaired and it is much easier to do private chat with her rather than talk over the phone, so Facebook works really well for that. I also have relatives interstate and overseas and Facebook is a nice way to keep in touch. I have cousins that I have not seen or spoken to in over 15 years, as we all live in different states, and Facebook allows us to keep in touch without being intrusive in each other's lives.

While Kennedy kept her profile to friends only, her idea of friends included people that she had not met: 'I have done this a couple of times as I needed more neighbours on a game I was playing and added friends of friends for this'. She'd had no bad experiences online but considered this 'lucky'. She had not removed a tag from a photograph. Kennedy used acronyms and posted in-jokes sometimes 'Not jokes or cartoons, but at times I do status shuffles [taking other people's status and presenting as your own, usually funny] and only a couple of people would understand the meaning behind them'.

She did not think that her cultural heritage influenced the way she shared online and said that she did not censor herself because of this. While she was aware of her audience it did not factor in to the way she shared information – 'I generally only post things that I wouldn't mind others knowing about, otherwise what's the point in posting it, if you don't want people to know

something, don't put it on Facebook'. But she did not worry about uninvited audiences as 'strangers wouldn't have access to it'. When asked about future audiences 'haven't really thought about actually, would be quite interesting though to know what people in the future thought'.

She attempted to keep her posts positive, '95% of the time it is all positive' although she doesn't create a particular persona 'no not really, just sharing normal day to day stuff, pretty boring really'.

Vivien

'I like to read what other people do and then complain about it. I started using Facebook because a friend moved overseas and we wanted to stay in contact. I live in Hong Kong, my family and friends are in Germany or Australia, so Facebook is quiet handy'. Vivien, aged 32 with two children, shared more personal information than many of the other Stay-at-home Parents – date of birth, profile photograph, gender, relationship status, email, phone number, religion, favorite movies/books/music and previous workplaces. She accessed Facebook from home on her laptop as she did not have a smart phone.

Vivien had her profile set to friends of friends, although she only had a small circle online, 'I only have 33 friends and I know them all very, very well' which meant she would never friend someone that she did not know. She shared photos of her family but had never asked anyone to remove a tag of her. She says 'I write about things that happen to me, positive or negative, a bad flight, a good day, nothing too personal, nothing I wouldn't tell someone I've just met. For example, when a helicopter flies below my window and the pilot waves at us ... '.

Vivien was audience-focused and considered not only what her friends thought of her post, but what strangers might think. With this in mind she was conservative about what she shared and did not consider any future audiences because of this. She did not use an alias, in-jokes or acronyms 'no never, I hate them, I only use proper words'. When asked to reflect on her cultural upbringing and how it related to Facebook, Vivien did not see any connection.

When asked if she had specifically chosen the persona that appeared online she replied 'No I don't! but that is a good idea – I might! As I said I only have Facebook friends that know me well so they would look through that'. Therefore Vivien saw the face that she presented as being authentic. But this also highlights the fact that she wouldn't use Facebook if her friends weren't on it. Vivien acknowledged that she used Facebook as a gossip source and had also used it to look up people she did not know. Once she looked up an author that she admired and sent her a message and the exchange led to her meeting the author. But this was the exception not the rule; the vast majority of interaction was between her small group of friends.

'I think Facebook is very much a way of showing off. I think if someone writes something on Facebook they want someone to comment. I have noticed that many of my female friends like to get compliments or sympathy from their friends. Which they can't expect from me', Vivien says with a laugh. She did not attempt to show only the positive side of her life but felt that it was fairly even. Her updates revealed many instances of reporting good experiences rather than the bad. This may have been simply a reflection of her life. ' I also like to use Facebook to show off, especially if my kids do something great, yes I do post photos of them, mostly of them actually, maybe one a month.'

Vivien reported no bad experiences online such as bad photographs, bullying or generally incorrect information being shared. During a follow up email conversation Vivien spoke about comparing her life to others online and whether that was part of the attraction of using the application.

> I find it difficult to compare my family with my friends, we have such a strange life, well maybe with [another ex-pat] but she is too perfect :), sometimes it makes you feel a little bit better about your own life.

Vivien reflected on how she uses Facebook as a 'mother'. 'I can understand that it would be hard going from a career woman to a mummy, you do turn a bit into [my children's] mum instead of Vivien. But I don't mind that, I was never very career driven, it means more to me to have a nice home-life, than something I needed to fulfil me'. When asked to comment on other mothers she gave the example of one mother …

> using Facebook a bit as a theatre stage; at home she is mummy but on the computer/stage she is this other woman, with the exciting fabulous life, where it never

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rains and the grass is always green. Life sucks sometimes and it should be ok to let your Facebook friends know that. BUT I think this is the main problem, are all your Facebook friends actually friends or only people you met once? Mine are real friends, people who have been to my house and would know straight away if I would lie or embellish the truth a bit.

Samantha

'I am wary of what you say on Facebook in case it comes back to haunt you at a later date'. This is how Samantha saw her audience on Facebook and she said it filtered the way that she interacted online. Samantha, the Stay-at-home Parent to a boy and girl (preschool), worked in finance. Her profile had the following information: date of birth, profile photo, gender, relationship status, email and school network. She accessed Facebook primarily from her iPhone while at home. Her motivation to join Facebook came from wanting to 'See what my friends are up to, and share photos with family and with family overseas makes this a handy tool to keep in contact'.

Samantha had her privacy settings on friends only and had never friended someone that she did not know. Samantha mostly used Facebook to share photos with friends/family, so she would continue to use Facebook if her friends didn't because of the link to family overseas – this was a greater priority. She was concerned by what her friends might think of her posting but gave no thought to what strangers might think because of her security settings. But having said that, she was conscious that information online was resilient and could come back in the future, so she was careful about what information she shared. Sometimes she considered future audiences and what they might think of what she said. She thought this conservativeness came from her work experience rather than any cultural expectations.

When asked if she chose a specific persona to present on Facebook she replied, 'No point, most of my Facebook friends would know I was full of BS if I did'. She used acronyms when writing online but didn't use any in-jokes or exclusive language because, 'I like everyone to know when I am peeved.' Samantha did not choose to create a purely positive environment online because she saw that as more authentic – 'don't mind posting the odd sarcastic comment even if it's the

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lowest form of wit'. Samantha has never had a bad experience online and hasn't removed a tag from a photograph.

> I do upload photos from time to time and sometimes update my status if the kids are driving my crazy. When I do upload or update my status it's for things I hope one of my friends may be interested in. My discussions about being a mum are more held amongst friends, those from mothers group and outside and are more done face-to-face rather than on Facebook. I know that this is probably old fashioned in my view but with the ease of being misquoted I am conscious of what I put out there in case one day it comes to bite me. While I will happily share what my kids are doing with my friends face-to-face I am less inclined to reveal everything on the web. I also find that if I do want to talk about the kids driving me crazy I want to discuss it at the time and not wait to see who will post what comment when.

Samantha reflects on the changing nature of her interactions on Facebook and how she used it initially as a life line.

> When I first joined Facebook it was at the time that I had just had [my daughter] (mid 2007). She was a challenging baby in the first 6 months suffering from colic and reflux. Being a first time mum my confidence levels weren't that high and combined with sleep deprived nights I did feel it. Many a time I would be logging on (even in the early hours) to see what people were up just to have a sense of normalcy. Sometimes I would feel a little sad as I realised that the life I had known had changed and the freedom that some of my Facebook friends seemed to have no longer applied to me. I didn't use Facebook so much to show that I was still a person with a life. I used it more to still feel connected to people particularly in the moments when I was feeling a little lonely and in need of a friend.

But as her children grew and her life has changed so too did the way she used the application. She said:

> Life is different now compared to those first 6 months. Because I am a little more at peace with my life, a little more confident in my parenting skills and overall happy, my use of Facebook has changed. I still like seeing what people are up to and the comments that get posted. Now I enjoy using Facebook to post (what I think) a witty comment or a picture that I think my friends might enjoy. I use it more to stay connected to people

rather than the *need* to feel connected to people. I do agree that Facebook doesn't 100% represent me. Sometimes what I am doing on Facebook isn't particularly exciting.

When Samantha was asked to reflect on some of the feelings that other mothers had about not wanting to be perceived as 'just a mum' she felt that it did not resonate with her.

I personally never had the sense of being 'just a mum' when finishing work the first time. While I do worry what people think of me (I am female after all) I have never really been worried if I was seen as 'just a mum'. I think it just wasn't a trigger for me - perhaps because I was more worried about what people thought of my mothering skills. Perhaps because I knew that I would always be returning to the work environment in some form or capacity. So my use of Facebook probably wasn't in the same context as [other mums].

Samantha felt that she had experienced the other side of these feelings of accusation where she was made to feel 'less of a mum' for working and putting her children in day care ('the scandal and shame'). She found this happened more so with the older generation but she said it didn't impacted the way she interacted on Facebook.

Having said that, Samantha did understand why some mothers would use Facebook to sell a certain type of lifestyle and could appreciate their feelings.

I have seen friends go through … similar things … and some of them have used Facebook in the same context. I think this … highlights how judgemental people can be to mothers. Unfortunately that judgement is often coming from other mothers who feel the need to impart their ethos on others. I have also seen some who use Facebook as their own political agenda to post items such as "you should not be feeding your baby this", the environmental issue with nappies, children should not watch TV, etc (I have unfriended people who have gone too far!!!). To be honest I wasn't really sure of why I was friends with them in the first place but that gave me the push that I needed to unfriend them.

Olivia

Olivia was a 38 year old mother of two pre-school children, a boy and a girl, who stayed at home full time with them. She had a closed profile for friends only but her profile contained a lot of information such as date of birth, profile picture, email, mobile number, her likes and dislikes for movies/books/fashion, school and previous employment details, gender, relationship status and religion. Olivia accessed Facebook on her iPad and iPhone and did so anywhere.

Olivia was not a fan of acronyms on Facebook: 'I hate all those shortening of words', but she admitted to using a lot of in-jokes on Facebook. 'I love being able to talk to specific audiences within my friendship groups. Sometimes I use song lyrics that my really good friends know and other time I use pictures and cartoons to get my ideas across. I don't see anything wrong with that'. Olivia has never had a bad experience online with information that other people have posted but she has un-tagged herself regularly from photos that she did not like.

Olivia updated her status most days, covering a variety of things. Her status updates were also automatically tweeted but she did not interact on Twitter in any other way. Her updates included the 'wonderful and fun things that my kids do, I try to capture the everyday for them so they can see what their childhoods were like when they are older. I think it's just the same as having a photo album. I can't wait until they are old enough to appreciate it'. Based on this statement we can see that Olivia is very aware of her future audiences and is in fact planning for it. She states that she is very conscious of how people perceive her online and before posting most things decides what her friends, her children, her old colleagues and people who don't know her think. Keeping this in mind Olivia posts about most facets of her life including what she is cooking, what she is reading and watching, the events she holds and those she goes to. 'I even post what outfit I am going to wear – sometimes, when I can't decide, I get my friends to vote on which one I should wear. It's fun'.

Olivia tried to create a positive environment online 'I think people respond better to positivity rather than negativity'. When Olivia first discussed her reasons for joining Facebook she expressed the usual line of wanting to stay in touch with friends and family. But during a follow up interview she said she hadn't been entirely honest and that she had taken up Facebook because she was lonely in her role as a new mother. She had found the transition very hard and

she felt isolated from her old life and who she felt she was. She said that her life needed to be put in context: 'I was a manager in a big firm and had hundred of people reporting to me, I went out to dinner four or five times a week, I travelled all the time for work and we always had exotic holidays. Then all of a sudden it was gone.' She said:

> When I left work to have my kids I suddenly had to find a different version of myself. I was no longer an Operations manager working for a big firm but I became "just a mum". It was a big and lonely shift for me and I found Facebook allowed me to redefine myself. I could post pictures and talk to other people and I used it almost to be a PR agent for the choices I had made. It was a big deal for me to "give up" my career and I wanted the world to know that I still had worth and had made the right choice.

Olivia went on to explain that she didn't want to be thought of as 'mumsy' so she continued to post information about her life and not just her children. She would check in when at the pub which was very occasional but still showed her friends that she 'had a life'. She reflected,

> I remember my mother telling me that once you become a mother you lose your sense of who you are as you are known for the next 20 years as "Olivia's mum". When she told me this it made me sad but I think that Facebook allows me to show the world that there is more to me than being "[son] and [daughter]'s mum". It's part of who I am, and I'm proud of what they do, but there is more to me'.

From this point of view Olivia has embraced Facebook and has used it to present her entire life from a positive point of view.

Noah

Noah was a 36 year old male who worked, but was the Stay-at-home Parent for his three children. While he signed-in everyday he was far more active during the holidays, 'the main reason I joined Facebook was to play the games. I am not a big fan of sharing personal information online as I know that it can come back to you. I often look at what others have posted and cringe at what they are sharing.' Noah did not have a profile picture, and listed only gender and relationship status on his profile. He kept his profile restricted to friends only and

stated that he had no interest in everyone seeing his profile or photographs. He accessed his account via the computer at home.

He did not usually share photographs of the family but 'my wife has loaded photos of the kids under my profile by accident'. Noah said he did not recall a time when he'd had a bad experience with information on Facebook and had not untagged himself from a photograph because 'wouldn't even know how to … I don't believe that I have been tagged before'.

Noah joined Facebook originally to play online games.

> 'I don't really use it for much else. I can see real benefit in it for people that are away from family and friends (eg: on holidays, etc) but otherwise why can't you just talk to people. I find it funny when people put posts on telling everyone what they had for dinner or that they are out with … at ... (they must be really enjoying themselves if they take the time out to post it on Facebook).

He has added people he has never met through online games but 'as I move on I do remove them'. He does not post in-jokes and doesn't use acronyms 'to be honest I don't even understand what a lot of those even mean. I first thought that LOL was Lots Of Love. Wasn't until a friend pointed it out to me what it really was'. He did not use Facebook to look at people he did not know – except those in the public eye 'the only thing that I would classify in this category was when I looked up a TV show that I liked and the presenters had their own public profiles'.

Noah did not really take his audience into consideration when posting although 'I am cautious of what is put on because you can't hear the tone in what it was said – could be jokingly or sarcastic however it may read very differently'. Strangers did not enter into the equation because he had not shared with strangers. He admitted that he did not post too much as 'it can be misinterpreted' and he did think about his future audiences. While his own online experiences had been positive, 'I have certainly read some about others' who have had embarrassing or inaccurate information posted about them. He also thought you had to be careful as a parent, 'a friend did put one on about Santa not being real. When I pointed out that her nine year old daughter could see it as she had a Facebook account and was friends with her, my friend quickly removed it'. Noah did not believe that he presented himself as a Stay-at-home Parent online, 'most people would have no idea'.

6.3   Discussion

The Stay-at-home Parents were the most prolific in sharing information, 'gossiping' and seeking advice online of the three groups of Social Media users studied. It became apparent as the interviews progressed that the majority of Stay-at-home Parents wanted to use Facebook as a positive place. It was a place to gossip and see what others were up to, share experiences and their children's experiences and overall to be entertained. For some the self was constructed to present the best side of themselves but for some it was a record of the day-to-day. Role was central to who they were and this is reflected in what they shared. Symbols were different to real life and they relied mostly on photographs and short comments to give meaning to what they were sharing. The audience was the most important element when investigating the presentation of *self* for Stay-at-home Parents and influenced what and how they shared information.

There are a number of studies (Rubin 2007; Harrington 2002; Lupton & Schmied 2002) around the loss of identity that Stay-at-home Parents feel after having children, but what we see in this research is technology facilitating the formation of a new identity online. The role of parent was, in many cases, a shift from another primary role and they used Facebook to form and broadcast the change in identity salience.

Of the eleven participants only one of them used Twitter and she used it to aggregate the information that appeared on Facebook. It was not a separate identity that was maintained in a different way but, rather, a regurgitation of the information already shared. It was Olivia's hope to reach a larger audience but she didn't actively search for new audiences. The other Stay-at-home Parents felt that Twitter did not relate to them as they didn't have anything 'interesting' or scandalous to share with others. There was a feeling that it was more for celebrities and those wanting to be involved in specific personas rather than a place where personal information was shared. Kennedy said, 'I'm on Facebook to share things with friends and family – why would I go on Twitter and share it with strangers? I'm not doing it for them, I'm doing it for me and my family'. This became a common theme. Facebook was used for specific audiences and was not considered attention-seeking behavior for unknown audiences.

The Stay-at-home Parents had all worked previously and found that email was a good way to communicate with people, with many conversations between friends occurring during working hours. Facebook filled this gap and worked as a good communication tool so that Stay-at-home Parents didn't feel isolated from the conversations still going on – even though they are not at work, or on email all day long. Therefore Facebook kept them in touch with the outside world and with people from their industry. But many of the participants commented that the importance of this changed over time. For example, Bella thought that when she first left work she would stay in touch with her industry and network while still at home. But she said that, as the years passed, she didn't feel the need to be so connected to work as she had started to find herself in her new role. She stayed in touch with friends from work but didn't really engage with what was happening in the day-to-day of the organization. She also found that people she talked to wanted to use it for fun and not talk about work so it was hard to keep her finger on the pulse.

Facebook was the application of choice because it was prolific ('all my friends are on it' Kennedy), easy to use, trendy ('I don't want to be out of touch' Charlotte) and allowed for maintenance of relationships without great effort. But most importantly to the participants, it was fun! It allowed for participants to read about the lives of others and share their own experiences.

The parent group had an average age of 35 and the majority had successful careers prior to stopping work to look after their children. They found that, by leaving the workforce, their networks were diminished overnight and the feedback they had received at work was no longer available. Some of the participants used Facebook to fill this need – gaining support in the forms of 'likes' and comments on their exploits into the 'exciting world of parenthood' (Olivia). Some used the medium to ask questions of other parents and seek advice; but were very careful not to sound desperate or undisciplined, which might infer failure on their part. Stay-at-home Parents were looking for a different type of validation – some were looking for confirmation about their life choices while others were seeking reassurance that there were not isolated, particularly in a role that is often lonely. Samantha reiterates this well when she is discussing logging into Facebook late at night to 'have a sense of normalcy'. So for some it was a lifeline in the early days and later a vehicle to share fun and pleasant things with friends and family, but some were more calculated in its use, being quite selective about the posts they made.

Olivia was very open about her motivations for using Facebook and Twitter and some of the participants agreed with elements of her presentation of *self*. Most of the Stay-at-home Parents were definite that they did not want to be seen as boring or mumsy and wanted to project positiveness about their role as a parent. Olivia went further to say that she used Facebook as a public relations tool. She had left an executive position to stay at home with the children and found that she needed to justify the decision to herself and to others in her social circle. So the posting of positive experiences was part of her new brand strategy. There was a direct link between her self-worth and how she presented herself. She wanted the world to think that she was as good, at being a parent, as she was at being a business executive. In follow up interviews some of the mothers agreed that they understood her point of view and that they did similar things to a certain extent such as posting information about going out. Anuk says 'I don't think this is just about being a mother, I think it's human nature. As we get older we remember fondly our youth and all the fun things we used to do. We don't want to let go of that completely and we really haven't – Facebook is a way of reminding ourselves and our friends that it's not just about mortgages and runny noses'.

Role is central to identity building for Stay-at-home Parents and while the uses may vary the presentation of themselves is linked directly to who they are as individuals. Eloise observes 'I am very much a mother online because I am very much a mother offline; if I was a banker then that is probably who I would be online instead'.

Stay-at-home Parents were the most prolific of the groups when it came to posting but most had not necessarily thought about the specific *self* they wished to project. It was only after the initial interview questions prompted reflection that they thought about the reasons and motivations for what they were attempting to present to the world. For many of this group, when they reflected on what they were sharing, it became apparent that the overall feeling they projected was positive – how well the kids were doing, how great the holiday was, how supportive their partner was and how great parenthood could be. Some parents reflected that this felt inauthentic as they in fact had lots of bad days while others said it was a deliberate choice because they didn't want to be seen as a whinger. Bella says 'in person you chat to your friends and you know the mundaneness that comes with motherhood but you don't want that same representation online'.

Not all the participants were as considered as Olivia in their development of an online identity. From the online observations of the participants it was noted that Stay-at-home Parents were the most prolific as a group with daily use. This does not mean that they updated their status everyday, in fact they were more likely to comment on the work of others than share their own life. But when they did share it was usually done to share their lives with others. Most of the Stay-at-home Parents updated when their children had done something interesting/funny or if they had an organized an outing. Bella, Emily, Chloe and Olivia often checked themselves into places by updating their status while they were out. Sometimes this was to prove they have a life but most often because they are having fun and want to share this with their friends. 'I think the more confident you become in your new role as a parent the less you have to prove' (Samantha).

The participants of this study were very aware that they did not want to be an 'oversharing' parent. They all had stories of friends or friends-of-friends who update their status every time their child 'eats, sleeps or poops' (Emily). Interestingly the Stay-at-home Parents did not respond well to this type of use of Facebook. Most believed this was done by new parents who were still trying to work things out, but if it went on after the child had turned one or two they often 'unfriended' them or blocked their news feed. Bella observed that Facebook was often used to share things that happened that were funny or exasperating but were not 'big enough' to ring someone about. Emily thinks that 'It's not just about getting people to agree with your life choices but it's about you enjoying it too. Yes motherhood is hard but it's also fun and crazy. I want to have fun in my life and I want to enjoy it and that is reflected in Facebook. Why would I only want to talk about bad things, that just makes me depressed and wallowy (sic)'.

While all of the participants claimed they did not choose a specific persona to present to the world, they were thoughtful about the information they shared with others. The desire to be positive was underlying in the majority of the responses. Also, for most the driving force of presentation was to share their lives with others – it was far less about them as individuals and more about them as a family enjoying life.

For some participants the presentation of *self* on Facebook was about redefining themselves after leaving a career and creating a new identity both online and offline, but for others it was having fun and sharing in the lives of others like gossip magazines.

The Stay-at-home Parents used a variety of symbols to present the *self* on Facebook. They used language, photographs and multimedia. They were the group who were least likely to use in-jokes or song lyrics to express information to a specific group. They were upfront about the information that they shared and felt that if they were annoyed or angry they wanted everyone to know. The group also discussed that their audiences were known to them and therefore they didn't feel like they needed to talk to only a few at a time. They felt that some people would just ignore it and their close friends would respond if it were appropriate. The information they shared was generally upfront and 'who I am – not someone I pretend to be' (Anuk). The group as a whole did not feel like they changed their symbols for different audiences as they would in the 'real world'.

The participants also share links to sites that might be of interest to other parents. The researcher observed in the lead up to holidays, such as Christmas, that they shared web links to toy sales and places to buy the latest trends.

The participants believed that their language usage was mostly friendly and casual. They used acronyms but many disclosed that they did not use many as they didn't know what they meant. They agreed that their everyday language was changing, but that it probably had more to do with texting than the use of Social Media. The observations made about changing symbols was that they didn't like to read large portions of text but rather expected information to be presented to them in a concise manner.

The participants accepted that the changing nature of symbols was relevant to the use of Facebook. They liked to see photographs and other multimedia and didn't want to engage with large amounts of text. Most felt this was a natural progression of technology just as email replaced memos.

The majority of Stay-at-home Parents shared information with their audience so that the audience could keep up with the family (and what the children were up to). Nearly all of the

participants had family overseas or were overseas themselves and want to share their lives and make sure that grandparents got to be part of the day-to-day. Sharing included telling stories and uploading photographs of fun days and 'firsts' (steps, concert, day at school, tooth, party dress etc). Most of the participants admitted that they post so that others will comment; they were looking for a response of some sort – usually hoping that readers will find things funny or cute. In this sense they are not just building their own identities but the identity of their family unit.

Stay-at-home Parents were looking for different types of validation from their audiences; some were presenting their new identity and expecting responses from the audience to reinforce their new life. While others were seeking reassurance that there were not alone, particularly in a role that is often isolating. Others sought to be good friends or family members by sharing information with those they didn't see all the time. This made them feel better about their relationships.

Participants did not consider unknown audiences when they posted as they believed that their privacy settings regulated who could view their information. From observations it was clear that 'friend' networks were actually larger than individuals anticipated and that the settings were not as strict as they thought. It could be seen from investigation that in most cases friends-of-friends and the next layer of friends of those friends could view information shared by an individual who thought they were only sharing with a select group of friends. Some of the Stay-at-home Parents had some interesting ideas about 'knowing' the people they friended. All of the participants said that they did not invite people they didn't know well into their friend circle but both Kennedy and Noah openly admitted to 'friending' people that they don't know to join their game playing. The familiarity of playing games with someone online built an online friendship even though they have never met or actually spoken to the person.

Future audiences were not of a great concern to individuals in this group. Only two of the participants worried about what people might say about what they share, and therefore edited themselves, but the majority felt that they didn't have anything 'that interesting' to share that they would be worried about in the future. In fact Olivia considered her children as the future audience of what she was creating so that they could experience all the steps and milestones of their lives from her perspective.

A few of the participants had seen others involved in flame wars online and were therefore very careful about the way that they interacted with others. Eloise for example said that she would always be polite online because she had seen so many online arguments flow over into the real world and damage relationships.

Since the individuals felt protected by their privacy settings they felt they could share widely about their lives and were therefore greatly influenced by who they thought was at the other end of the conversation. All but one person cared about what their friends thought of what they said and did. Audience played an important role in the creation of identity for Stay-at-home Parents. Some sought direct validation from their audience, while others enjoyed watching and communicating with audiences. Vivien commented that Facebook would be a lonely and worthless place without her friends.

All of the participants were asked to comment on the extent to which their cultural background might influence the way that they present themselves online, and all believed that it did not influence the way that they interacted. Instead they felt that they were far more influenced by how entertaining something was, and how much fun they could have, than they were about culture. The standard response was that culture had nothing to do with their involvement.

The Stay-at-home Parents had some rules that they had set for themselves around what they would share online. The participants' experiences suggest that they want to project a mostly positive, polite and enjoyable performance online. No one wanted to be seen as a whinger or as a 'mean girl' but there were some participants who wanted to be 'authentic' with their everyday *self*. This meant that Anuk would update if she had had a crazy day, not in a whiney way, but rather because she thought that others could relate to her and wouldn't feel so overwhelmed by their own craziness. She thought that if it was always perfect then people would feel inadequate about their own 'up-and-down lives'. Eloise mentioned that she sometimes felt bad about her housekeeping skills when she read what other parents were capable of achieving.

Most of the participants do not have many rules about what they will share online about their children. This is, in essence, because they believe they know all of their audience well. Children's names are shared, as are photographs. But the parents don't have identifying

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information such as their schools, kinder or play group details. They are also keen to share funny photographs that might come back to haunt the child when they are older.

Participants were asked to comment on any negative experiences they might have had on Facebook or Twitter. The Stay-at-home Parents felt that they did not have anything to report. They had all googled themselves at some point to see what would come up, but were not surprised by any information that appeared. Most commented that they were pretty 'boring' and that they didn't participate in anything scandalous or salacious that would create a situation they would consider negative. The observations supported these ideas and did not show any different perspectives of individuals that might put them in a negative light. But there was a gap between who they thought they were sharing with and who could access their accounts. It was noted on Samantha's account that friends-of-friends had commented on some of her pictures. This illustrates that Facebook allowed access to friends of friends through linked photographs without the knowledge of the individual who originally shared the information.

However, most of the participants admitted to un-tagging photographs of themselves that they did not like. This trend was not to do with privacy, but rather vanity.

The participants all felt that mobility was the key to their continued use of Facebook. While a few used a PC to access their accounts, the majority used an iPad or iPhone. To log on to the computer was a conscious choice to engage with the technology but the mobile technologies allowed for all-day snacking on the information. The participants said that they were most likely to use the mobile devices while watching TV or doing chores. Of all the groups, Stay-at-home Parents spent the most time logged on to Facebook, as it was often in the background on a laptop or iPad as they went about their day. All of the participants spoke about how they would not be on Facebook if it wasn't for their phones or tablets and that the mobility of the technology was just as important as the technology itself.

Facebook was used to create a true indication of the real life *self* of Stay-at-home Parents. It was the social side of being a parent – they shared the ups and fun things that occur in the day-to-day. In most cases, the *self* was not carefully constructed but was a by product of wanting to share their lives. The four elements of Identity – the *self*, role, symbols and audience were all present in the online environment. In this group the role and audience were the primary

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elements that formed identity. There was a strong connection between the role of a Stay-at-home Parent and with 'who' and 'how' they present online. And audience was central to the choices that the individual makes in terms of presenting the *self* and what symbols they used. In this case the audience was believed to be known and trusted with an already established relationship, therefore allowed them to share information openly.

The common elements between the Stay-at-home Parents group was that they used Facebook mostly as an entertainment outlet. While not wanting to appear as a whinger or as a boring mum did influence how people shared information, they did not as a rule attempt to create a specific persona such as 'super mum'.

6.4   Conclusion

There is so little written about Stay-at-home Parents in the literature on Social Media that the initial expectations were low. From anecdotal discussions with others, the prospect for this research was that participants would be over-sharing parents who broadcast every moment of their child's life and very little of their own. Also, that these individuals were sharing all sorts of private information with little thought to who would be seeing it and what their privacy setting would be. The reality, as found in this research, is somewhat different. Individuals are sharing information about their children, but not as often or with such abandon as was expected. In fact individuals did not want to be seen as too mumsy. Others were more calculated in their presentation of *self* and needed to justify their lives and did so by using Facebook.

The Digital Identity of a Stay-at-home Parent was a close version of their real world identity. They shared information about their role and this influences the way they share. They used photographs and shared links to establish identity within the context of everyday language. Audience was important when setting the social rules that they follow with what they shared. The digital world was a reflection of their offline role. The four elements that were used to create an offline identity were used to create an online identity with additional elements at play such as technology and internal rules about what will be shared.

This group, more than the Academics and Business Executives, used Facebook as a real communication channel. Not only did they put up photographs, stories and comments about

their own life and the activities and milestones of their children, but they used Facebook to seek information, such as remedies for sick children, or a good restaurant in the area. Facebook became a conduit for sharing all types of information with a select group of friends. Only two parents allowed for friends of friends – all the others restricted their group and had a desire to be positive and natural with them. These people put their social persona on Facebook and as such their pages are a reflection of their personality. Only Charlotte did not like to mention herself, posting mainly about the children. Others parents were exuberant about the whole family's life and doings, with a major focus on the on children. Some parents used Facebook as a diary to express their feelings about events and the children, yet most posted only if they think something was important enough to be of interest to their friends. For the two Stay-at–home Parents who were ex-pats, the attitude and engagement of viewers was slightly different. Facebook served a double function in that it was also a conduit for allowing the grandparents based in Australia to be 'involved' in the activities and life of their grandchildren. More than one parent indicated that their involvement with Facebook was to gain a sense of normalcy when their parenting role became 'topsy turvy'.

Chapter Seven: Business Executives

7.1   Introduction

The Business Executives chosen for this study were selected through social and business networks of the researcher. They represent nine individuals from different industries and sectors. The participants were employed at Executive and Senior Executive levels such as Project Manager, Managing Director and Director.

The Business Executives were aged between 30 and 50 years old, with four between 30 and 39 and five between 40 and 49. The participants were mature individuals who have followed specific career paths to reach their current positions. They needed time and experience to reach their level and this is reflected in the age of those involved. While older participants were identified they did not meet the eligibility criteria of being actively involved in Facebook or Twitter daily.

The gender of the sample was balanced with five males and four females interviewed. The researcher sought to represent the workforce and population by representing the views of both genders.

The minimum education level of Business Executives was a University degree. Four of the nine had completed a Masters degree and one was enrolled in a Doctor of Philosophy. Given the senior level of the executives involved in this study, it was not unusual for them to have completed postgraduate work.

The participants were all Australian from varying backgrounds such as Chinese, Italian and French. One of the participants resided in London.

The Business Executives were all at an Executive or Senior Executive level and were in different industry sectors. The breakdown of the Industries is shown below (Table 7.1) and represents a broad cross section of business areas. While there were three participants from the IT Industry they were engaged in very different core businesses.

Table 7.1: Industry sectors of Business Executives

Industry	Participants
Information Technology	Richard, Julia and Alessandro
Finance	Laura and Scott
Entertainment	Kelly
Engineering	Daniel
Politics	Grace
Recruitment	Henri

7.2　Narratives of participants

This section includes the narratives of the nine participants. The executives were all active online and all used Facebook with only two using both Twitter and Facebook. Most of the individuals uploaded photographs, commented on posts and updated their status. Only one of the Twitter users Tweeted information; the other was a passive user.

Julia

Julia, an IT executive, is an Australian resident originally from China. Julia said she signed in 'first thing in the morning … to get the news, to see what's happening. I read the news, the musing of others on Facebook. I think it is about people that you care about and I think it's really something that people get into it - what is happening to these people's lives that you know? I think is mostly for people who want to stay in touch'. Julia used her laptop to access Facebook and does so only at home.

'I used to always put different types of funny things on Facebook. Now that I have a new job and my boss is on Facebook, I'm a little more conservative and far more aware that things are in the Public Domain. Before I was my own boss and I could do anything I needed to. Now I have to be aware of my career and how I am perceived'. From this we can see that Julia has toned down her use of Facebook, she used to be what she calls a 'Facebook addict – on all the time, every day. Now since I started working I am more reserved'. When she worked for herself she had 'a number of different names such as my Chinese name so as to prevent customers from finding me'. She says she did this as many people did not like the decisions that the business made and therefore she wanted to keep herself private. The people on her Facebook were 'mostly friends and family that are close to me. It is my closest and nearest. I do mean to stop

some people from seeing things on my Facebook but I haven't got around to it yet. But most of the people on my new Facebook are my friends'. On closer inspection of Julia's site she had many people who were work colleagues and fellow students but she interacted mostly with her friends. 'I definitely link on to friends of friends to see if there's anyone that I don't know … although when I don't have much time I don't usually link onto people I don't know'.

Julia did status updates 'every now and then' but was careful about what she said. She did not play games on Facebook and used it 'as a communication tool'. She described it as the 'only way to communicate with people offshore'. She corresponded with people who lived in countries that were highly monitored and censored, but that was not something that she thought about when she shared her own ideas. 'I think the things that I say wouldn't have an impact'. She has never removed a tag because 'I don't get into silly situations'. She shared photographs 'mostly … to share my life with other people'. While she saw Facebook as quite protected she said, 'I need to be very careful', particularly with photographs. Although she admitted, 'I can't help myself and I rant sometimes about things that drive me crazy'. And she doesn't worry about this so much as Facebook was mostly for really good friends who could accept this. She liked the idea of being able to segregate Facebook so that she could continue to network online while still being herself with her friends.

Julia had concerns with smart phones, 'I think it is dangerous to have it on iPhone because with GPS people can know where you are'. This fear was not just about security. Friends might say 'why [are] you going to this place and why am I not involved? It is so dangerous'. She shared other creative things via Facebook, doing this to get feedback rather than to reach an audience. She used acronyms like LOL and did post in-jokes to create a private space online. She posted song lyrics or quotes from a movie to convey ideas with different meanings. She said:

> Sometimes I'll post a phrase to stir up and see how people respond to it - it can be ambiguous and it can have a few meanings. I love that people don't respond in the ways I expect them to. When you are engaging a group it's more about the humour - I want to play with words and it is not so much about hanging shit on people, it's the fun side. I do try to keep things in a positive manner because I'm quite a positive person. I try to encourage people and have positive people.

Some of my friends say that 'I have a very professional intellectual standard with what I try to share'.

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Cultural background did make a difference to what she would share online. She says in 'Chinese culture we have a saying, "words can hurt and what we put out is very hard to take back". This is why I am careful about what I share and the number of people who it goes to'. She has embraced Facebook rigorously because of the traditional notion of *guanxi* (networking) and she says in Chinese culture it is very important. 'This helps me keep those ties very strong, it's fun because you know what other people are putting out in their languages'.

'I use it to practise English with some people'. She would use different languages every day and this helped perpetuate the private jokes. 'You are your culture, and you don't share things online because of who you are. My online personality reflects who I am off-line'. She was happy to use casual language and didn't worry too much about some Chinese beliefs, such as superstitious about 'photographs and how many people appear in it - I don't think that way – I don't really care what other people post. But, if someone puts a photo of me that I don't look good in, I will tell them'. Julia did not care what strangers thought about what she posted. She never thought about the future of her posts –

> what people will think in 10 years – I forget about posts and sometimes when people remind me of it then I'll think about it but it's not a concern. But if I saw something that was wrong I would respond to it. I would go on defensively; I have never asked anyone to remove anything. I believe that if you are not a criminal you have nothing to worry about – you shouldn't have anything to hide. It's just a social thing. It's happy.

Facebook was good to share because 'I don't have time; I'm not seeing people having started a PhD … so this is the best way to stay in contact with some people'. She also thinks that Social Media is a good place for 'young people to build their confidence … when I first started by going into forums, I wasn't sure who I was and now I have friends all over the world from that'.

Richard

Richard, a senior executive in the IT Industry, worked for a large multinational company. He shared a Facebook account with his wife. 'From a corporate point of view Facebook is frowned on. We use LinkedIn or Office communicator. We have a lot of meeting stuff, web connect and virtual meetings, whiteboard and chat rooms and we tend to focus around that.' He used his laptop mostly to access Social Media but said he needed to add it to the iPhone and iPad.

Richard used his LinkedIn profile as if he had a work Facebook account. This profile had a brief working history but no photograph. 'Most of us in this area are working on contract and we move from company to company which means that emails change so LinkedIn is much easier to keep in touch with people.' He says he did not push information out on it but used it mostly for finding contracts and workers. He deliberately did not put too much information because 'if you put too much out there you get a lot of wide hits. The people who know you use it to keep tabs on you. Recruitment agencies will ring every six months to see if I need a new contract'. He only made connections with people he knew or an agency he wanted to see. He received a lot of spam from [the company's] workers in India.

The personal account was used mostly to upload holiday photographs and keep up with friends while overseas. Others people known to him uploaded photographs and this was acceptable because he was not the primary account holder, and it was hard to find him on Facebook. For example, 'my nephew tags me in photos and I don't un-tag them'.

Richard said he was very strict about what he shares online, 'I was pleased there was nothing about me when I google'. The company that Richard worked for had a website about Social Media and the participation guidelines; that is, what you could and could not do. These guidelines are very strict about 'what you can say and is very strict about what is a personal view and what is a company view'. He said there was also a corporate Facebook and Twitter and this was where the business conversation needed to be done, reiterating that the company was very strict about this. 'They have rules such as – identify yourself, separate facts from opinions, be engaged and informed … aim for quality not quantity … don't pick fights … '. Richard said he had not yet seen the business value in Twitter.

When asked about in-jokes and commenting on other people's work Richard replied that 'we don't do this [make jokes] at work. But we do make sarcastic comments on internal [email]. Nothing like that would happen on LinkedIn or Office communicator'. A number of Richard's colleagues have 'fallen into the trap of writing something casual and it comes back to bite them - so the people I work with are very cautious'. Richard noticed a downturn in the number of YouTube clips sent via email and thought this was because of the rise of Social Media. Richard

did not use text speak acronyms but did use 'IT corporate speak, for example BO is business objects'.

Richard said it was his cultural background that influenced the way that he behaved online. He thought it was 'mix of the era and profession. [His] profession breeds mistrust. I can see how easily people can hack things'. But it was more than just about the security of the information, it was also highly related to reputation. 'It's all about image and role and responsibility of say a $100million project and they have a perception of the type of person they want to do that. They have a certain image and that imagine can be changed if they google you and see you drinking with your mates – is this the person you want to depend on for your whole company?'. But Richard conceded that there was good information online in Social Media, 'If I am going into a company I will look them up. Check background and see if there is something common. Find if they have worked on something common. A way the sales guys can use as an anchor or hook. A way of validating stuff … it's all about networking'.

Daniel

Daniel was an executive in the Automotive Industry and used both Facebook and Twitter. For Daniel, using Twitter was about getting real-time information quickly. For example, as a big fan of AFL (Australian Football League) he could follow any tribunal as it happened, rather than having to wait for the news at 6:30pm. Daniel made the distinction between his two accounts: Facebook was more for friends, 'seeing what they are up to, but Twitter for me is real-time stuff'. He admitted to tweeting 'a lot of random stuff'. The previous night his football team won so he tweeted a congratulatory tweet and then other fans re-tweeted it. He looked for re-tweets and responses when he updated. He had 203 followers on Twitter and only knew about 15 of them, and he has tweeted over 2500 times. 'I find it interesting that people I have never met interact with me. I've been re-tweeted by Triple M Breakfast [radio], and on the TV Footy Classifieds – although that was not too positive. What I said was a joke but they didn't see it as a joke.' Daniel used Twitter more than Facebook, especially during football season. He said he also interacted with other types of sports and received responses from NBA basketballer Andrew Bogut and other sportspeople. The person on Facebook and Twitter is the 'social Me. It's the passion part of me'. Daniel talked about all the things he was passionate about online, such as sport.

Daniel deliberately set up his accounts in this way - Facebook was for friends only, not work, and was restricted. He did not link between the two, 'otherwise you look like you are repeating yourself'. 'Work doesn't filter me but I would never talk about work and certainly not in a negative way. You wouldn't know where I worked based on what I tweet and status update.' Daniel has never taken anything down from Facebook or Twitter and was 'pretty happy with what is on there – there's some photos but they're not ridiculous'. He said he did talk about drinking on Facebook and 'I am happy to do this as I know my security settings. It's also not stupid stuff – like last night "oh what a big night". I'll just say – "good night". I don't talk about specifics. And most of my friends are like this'. Not only is the security setting to friends only but he is also careful about who he friends, 'I only friend friends – I don't friend someone that I have met for 5 minutes'. He has never blocked a follower on Twitter because he tweeted consciously knowing that it is an open platform. He said:

> You are bit more anonymous on Twitter because your profile is so limited. You don't even have to have a photo of yourself. And you can get lost in the chatter. I wouldn't put anything on there that I wasn't willing to back myself on - I wouldn't put a picture of myself nude on there or anything, for example. But some people do. I look at some photos and think "Really?"

Daniel commented that photographs were a way of getting past the security on Facebook and this could be unnerving as 'you see people in other photos yet I can see my friend in the photo and then I can drill through to people I don't know'.

To update Daniel used Twitter and Facebook in very different ways – if he was going to the football then he wouldn't list that on Facebook as all his friends already knew that he supported Carlton and would be at the game. But he talked about it on Twitter because the audience was different. 'People will respond that I don't know and this is for what I want – a wider audience than just my friends'. When asked 'Why?' he said it was because it was interesting how people responded. Twitter was more than social for him as he also used it for information such as traffic alerts and news. Daniel was always positive online. 'If there is a dodgy umpire decision in a sport I'll tweet something negative'. But he was not negative about himself or his life. 'I hate the ones that go, "crap day" and that's all they write'.

Daniel used Facebook to keep up with people, whereas Twitter was to 'have fun and keep informed'. He loved to read the news of the world on Twitter and commented:

> It's amazing how many news stories break on Twitter before they hit the news here. People are usually amazed that I know about something when they say to me "Have you heard about … it's only in the paper this morning – how do you know?". For example, when Schumacher was returning to GP racing, I found out on Twitter and posted it to Facebook. I got a call from a colleague of where I used to work - a director of V8 super cars - rang me at 3 in the morning – "what is this about Schumacher coming back". So I told him it's just been announced – he thought I was having him on, but then I said "well why are you ringing me at 3am – are you serious". The information had just come out – he was amazed and asked how I found out this stuff.'

The answer was Twitter. And Daniel says, 'you've just got to grab it'.

To Daniel, Twitter and Facebook were for 'entertainment and knowledge'. 'I like having the scoop! I like being first'. His wife described it as 'technologically funded gossip.' But it's more than that to Daniel. He would play a version of fantasy football called Supercoach and used Twitter to gain 'inside' information because 'if there is a player out this can affect the outcome'. He made decisions based on the information and then, once it came out on the internet, people always ask, 'How do you find this stuff out? I take pleasure in doing that. I'm passionate about it. If it was happening at ballet I wouldn't care'.

Kelly

Kelly worked as a marketing/sales executive in the entertainment industry for a large multinational organization. She only used Facebook but had a Twitter account set up to access work forums and conversations but this was not a daily practice. Facebook was a private space for her friends only, 'I don't even have friends from work on Facebook, I just don't accept their friend requests. For me it is purely social. If I have anyone on my FB that has to do with work, it's because we are mates first and colleagues second'. She restricted access to Facebook but she could be found easily on Google (because of work network) but she managed this by ignoring anything that wasn't from a friend.

Like a number of Executives she used LinkedIn for work and Facebook was purely social. This was a specific decision that she made. She said she was 'very conscious of how I look on Facebook … in the event that someone puts up a photo of me or whatever … I'm like "nope take that down". I am very conscious of it because the first thing I do when I recruit someone at work is I look at their Facebook profile. So you don't want the same things. Even though it's a friend zone I am still aware'. She said:

> I feel like I am very aware of how small the world is and who is to say that the next job doesn't come because I'm mates with someone on Facebook who recommends something else. I am very conscious of what is on Facebook not ever coming back to bite me. And the reason for this is when I was working overseas we were ready to go [with hiring someone] and we looked at his Facebook site and he was just a freak – so we didn't recruit. We don't know this bloke but we've just had a massive insight into his life … anything you put up there is very much in the Public Domain. I am a lot more guarded than say, my husband.

Kelly also worked for a family friendly organisation with very specific rules around Social Media usage, in fact 'we sign Social Media agreements. There are certain things that we are not allowed to tweet or Facebook about. If we go to an event I am not allowed to tweet about it, my guests can, but I can't. The guidelines that we follow are very particular. But equally I wouldn't because it's not who I am. That environment is not about work'.

Kelly was very guarded with her profile, 'I have untagged photos and sometimes I will stop my husband or my friends writing things as they start to upload them. I am very guarded about my avatar '. She said, from a cultural point of view,

> this is a combination of my work and my upbringing. I think work because I've been told to tone it down and because of my upbringing because I think I have an incredibly conservative family. My mum has just got on Facebook and even that makes me think twice about what I post. I only friend real friends, when I was on holidays recently we were at a bar having a drink with some other people on holidays and they wanted to friend us on Facebook. Immediately the friend request came through. Having a round at a bar does not mean I want to be your friend.

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Kelly was calculated in her postings and 'everything is well thought through. I usually post about location. It's usually because something that has happened is thought-provoking, or funny, that invites conversation. Not just that I'm having a glass of wine'. She is very conscious of her audience, 'I post in the knowledge that people will comment. But it's the idiosyncratic things of everyday life not the everyday. I don't just say I went out for breakfast because I think who cares?'

Always positive about what she posted (unless it was funny), Kelly said:

> Nothing annoys me more than people who are like pissy and moany or people who update that their baby just ate solids. I am just like [exasperated] … that's why I don't want to tweet about the fact that I'm cleaning my teeth. I had a friend who encouraged me to update more so one day I wrote that I'm just letting Kate know that I cleaned my teeth and now I'm on the tube. She responded saying that she loved that I just did that, but the fact is nobody else cares. If no one else cares why would I bother to say it?' While she doesn't use in-jokes to establish privacy online she does use 'language to just talk to this group of people.

She thought that only about 10% of the 'real her' sits in Facebook. 'I'm not active enough for it to be any more. I'm on it every day but I only comment every few months. I'm on it to find out what is going on and keep up with people. Then I might inbox them or have a more personal conversation with them. But to update my profile in that wider social environment I just don't do that sort of thing.' She was not convinced it was 'my real *self* – it's my avatar and that's why I don't have much to contributes'. She said that mothers at home used real time, real life information such as toy sales at Big W, but because she was so conscious of what she looked like online she didn't really work in that real world. There was more distance between who she was and how she appeared online. 'I would never say just what was in my head but my husband would'. She also discussed the real time aspect of Facebook, 'I don't have the desire to have information the second it breaks. I don't demand real time information, I'm happy to wait until the news. I'm not as demanding of Social Media'. She said that the more that you were used to having something on demand the more you demanded it. 'I'll find out when I find out … less actively involved because I don't have an ongoing desire to know what people are doing and where they are at.'

Alessandro

Alessandro, an executive in the IT industry used Facebook as an individual as well as for his band. He engaged with Facebook only and not Twitter. Alessandro accessed Facebook at work and home and did not use his phone. He wrote that:

> Generally work shuts out Facebook and YouTube but I have permission as a manager. I do get sucked into having to answer straight away – when I get home sometimes it's the last thing I want to do. It's not standard practice at my work. And I am dead set against it in the office – I don't want my staff tweeting and Facebooking when we have lots of tasks to be done.

'Facebook is nice to talk to Aussies when I'm in town but I use it mostly for my band – to get people to buy CDs. I don't always use it.' He has had to use it for work to look at games and their development because the company that he worked for was 'veering down that path: something that we will get into. We wanted to establish what determines what games people use etc. The competition (Zygna) are well researched'. Because of this he signed in more than he used to. 'Before I realised its power for advertising, for want of a better word, I hardly ever used it.' Alessandro had virtually no information on his profile, he did not share photos, he had his real name but that was all. The band page was different, with music, gigs and artwork. This was because 'when I'm looking for a job I don't want anything there'. He commented occasionally and 'likes' things even more occasionally, and he admitted that he had 'been slowly brought into it'. He had been forced into it with work and his band and his friends but this was not how he generally acted.

Alessandro says he 'definitely untags photos of myself. Some are suggestive photos but nothing that sordid'. He said it was not a huge problem in his field as it was considered 'creative' but he was still aware of how it looked.

> I'm a manager and I have people working for me, and I hire and fire people and I don't want people to know about me. You don't want to expose yourself too much. I don't allow my photos to go up. I have never put one of myself on my profile. Only that other people have tagged me. There are probably 2 or 3 I have untagged, this is the thing I find disturbing about Facebook – I know we have some control over what is on our profile but we don't have control over photos that we are in and on other people's profiles and that is the thing I have an issue with. I don't like it.

He had not even uploaded photographs of his wedding or baby.

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Unwilling to friend people he did not know, Alessandro said, 'I'll google them first to make sure I know them'. He did not have the same filter for the band site or LinkedIn. He had more than 400 friends, 'because I have worked in a number of countries and have family in four countries. I like to keep in contact with old colleagues as it's good to keep networks open. Whilst Facebook is still frequented by millions of people I'll use it for music. I felt very pushed on by my friends. I found it really fucking annoying at first. I didn't like the loss of control. That was my concern to begin with. [Although] I like being able to have international conversations but when it's local friends having conversations online instead of offline, I think it's weird'. He went on to talk about how some people felt shut out because of conversations that happened online and that people became 'outcasts for that issue or conversation'. This did not support the inclusiveness that Facebook is known for.

Alessandro felt that Facebook had been tailored for a modern lifestyle.

> I guess I still have an old school way of things. I'm a minor celebrity in my town so I like to get out and talk to people and I see people at gigs. I don't like that people get left out because they might not use Social Media. Most of us in the modern, hectic office-electronic-world (and there are varying degrees of that life) Facebook seems to benefit people more at the top end of that new life, and new way.

Alessandro did not like to use text speak and did not use acronyms very often. 'I will use it ironically, sometime I LOL to my wife because she knows how much I hate it. I don't mind typing – rather type hehehe than LOL'. He did use in-jokes but mostly on the music page, 'we talk in a silly way' and he used different languages.

When asked about cultural heritage Alessandro admitted that he had 'never thought of it. Yes, in the sense that most of what I do is music-centric and that is multi-lingual. But my culture – I don't think so. I'm always aware of culture, it fascinates me. I talk to friends in different languages'. He described it as a mixture, 'if you mean culture in broader sense – ethnicity - then my initial concerns about what I should share online were work related. [I] don't want people who are hiring me to see anything that they wouldn't like. But the social aspect of revealing too much to people I don't know, it may be my culture'. Alessandro was very aware of who he was and had a strong sense of *self*; he was just not convinced that he wanted 'it expressed online'.

Alessandro was controlled about what he shared and 'I think about the future audience in terms of work but not with the kids. I'm a bit of a mad bastard. [My son] knows who I am, he's a mature kid. He understands context so it's not so much that, but more as a working schmuck. I have to pay the bills, because music doesn't always'. Despite the fact that he censors himself online for prospective job offers he does not look up Facebook when he hires people. He realizes that others do this, which is why he is careful but 'I still don't look up Facebook for that – I'll look at LinkedIn or their website. I've not even thought to. I'm a little hesitant – I don't like the idea. I'm aware of what it can do and can't do. There are other things for this'.

Laura

Laura was an executive at a multinational consultancy firm in the Finance sector. She was a relative newcomer to Facebook. She only used Facebook and she read the corporate Yammer stream. To do more than read and contribute was 'on the to-do list'. She found it useful to identify someone within the organization to help with something – a specific skill – but admitted that she found the non-professional topics 'annoying'. She liked the way that you could set up subgroups and join specific conversations. Laura used the iPad and work laptop to access Facebook – but not usually at work. 'Now I have the iPad it's much easier. I love it – it's great. Open it up and it goes, it's made Facebook much easier'.

Laura aggregated all her social media through her email, because she was on email all the time, 'so even my Facebook comes into my inbox. Because I am on it every day – I don't login to Yammer directly'. Previously she was a silent member of Facebook. 'I had my name and I accepted or rejected once a month but then on recent holiday because we had a tsunami alert I thought it would be a good way of letting people know. On the same trip my husband was on my Facebook and he updated my status to say we were in Singapore and then one of my friends who had moved to Singapore contacted us so we could catch up. Laura realized at this point that it was a useful tool and said:

> I didn't want to text my mum or sister specifically about the Tsunami warning but enough friends are on Facebook that I thought by letting friends know I thought then that people would know we were okay. Of course, my sister then rang me anyway. I got a lot of responses – a great way to update without identifying who to send the email to.

From a holiday point of view I like it. Because it was general and if people want to read it they can.

Laura had a profile photo and her husband (who is more active on Facebook) had tagged her but she said she did not share her own photographs. She had not removed any tags but this was because she did not put many up. 'We still use Flickr'. When they returned from holidays and Laura had a renewed enthusiasm for Facebook she added 'a lot of information, such as being married and my friends starting poking fun at me about "finally", "congratulations". Then [my husband] went in and edited it all because apparently I had put too much information in there (such as year I was born). No children's surname. He sanitized it. I am not too good'.

Her motivation beyond holiday was to 'check older friends on Facebook. See what they are up to. I found out one was separated via Facebook, which was sad. It's less about gossip and more about keeping up. Then I reach out by ringing etc. Sending messages is easier with one particular friend who doesn't answer the phone'. Laura was careful about who she friends, 'I get lots of friend requests – but because they don't have clear pictures, or have new surnames, I don't know them. So I check with another friend who went to school with us to see if they are okay'. She had not friended anyone that she did not know. She saw Facebook as good for people who were overseas or far away. Facebook was better for communication 'rather than having to have detailed email correspondence. And it's difficult with time differences overseas to call'.

Laura was not a big user of acronyms and thought LOL meant 'lots of love'. 'When I got it from a work colleague I was worried. I am probably quite formal compared to most people.' Laura was brought up in a conservative home and that influenced what she shared. 'I don't understand why people would say "I am in a shop". If you've got time to do that can you come and help me as you've obviously got too much time on your hands. I don't understand it. I'm an open person and I'll explain my holiday but as to … my daily life - I don't really get that.'

'I care about what friends think. And I care about what a stranger would think. I am fairly aware of what I put up. Because I know people can access it. I don't want to be embarrassing, and I would be careful that it couldn't be misconstrued.' This conservative approach 'absolutely has to do with my career. I know recruiters will look. And that is part of the mental process. You get so used to using it every day that you can fall into the trap of thinking that this is just me and my

buddies and you forget about the protocols and how it might be perceived by someone who doesn't know me'. The media horror stories about people over-sharing served as a warning but 'it shouldn't make the media but it does'.

She considered her future audience when posting, 'Yes. But then again it's so bland. You have to be careful with photos on their sites – less control. No I haven't had any inappropriate photos. You don't want colleagues or children seeing you drunk'. She reflects 'we aren't as severe as the American political system but the slightest thing can jeopardize a job. They might not think they are going to be someone who is important - it might be an innocent photo. But individuals always need to be thinking of the bigger picture'. She posts hoping for a response from people so 'my pattern of behaviour was that I usually had specific communication for specific people so I did hope for a response. But on holiday I didn't expect to get [a] response. By people clicking *like* it's the response I need while not filling up inbox with just a confirmatory response'. Laura would not talk about work on Facebook, and if she did it would not be in any detailed form. 'You've made me think about it. I wouldn't want any trail of correspondence. While it might be private space its really public. I might say I'm busy' but she would not give any more detail. If she was having a problem with anyone it would be a one-on-one conversation and not a public interaction.

Henri

Henri was a senior executive in an International Sustainability Recruitment Consultancy and was a conservative Facebook user with fewer than ten friends. 'The concept [of Facebook] is relatively interesting but to be brutal it doesn't help me professionally and has the potential to negatively impact me because of those you associate with.' Henri initially set up the Facebook account so that people could find him and that it could be of benefit (depending on who could find him). He has been contacted by old school friends on LinkedIn who have become very successful and involved online. 'It is important for those sorts of connections to be made through Social Media; Facebook is more social than professional … as opposed to domestic Social Media'. His friends on Facebook and connections on LinkedIn were a 'small handful of people who are professionals that I have worked with in the past, and the rest are friends and family. I don't go out of my way to find people on Facebook which I do with LinkedIn'.

Henri used LinkedIn at work, not only for his own professional development, but as a tool to find executives for appropriate roles. He used it as a means to identify potential clients and prospects as well. 'When you ring a company you may not be able to get the information about an individual that you need – perhaps not even their name but it's usually readily available online'. Henri's profiles were open and they basically said 'here I am and if you want to contact me feel free to do so. They are not restricted at all as there is nothing bad'. He accessed Facebook on a PC as he 'only has an old BlackBerry' and this was 'normally after hours in bed' ... he was not connected every minute of every day.

While Facebook was recreational rather than business, 'I also set up Twitter. A CEO that we were working with had a very active account so I set it up – to appear to be current and to be there. The reality is I haven't used it but I should make an effort'. Henri 'very rarely updates Facebook, never on Twitter and most commonly on LinkedIn'. Even though he identified it as a recreational space Facebook was still more of a professional profile. The information was 'this is where I work, this is my position, this is what we do more or less, and every few months I'll update it. Not doing the day to day'. Henri 'like[s] going through the process of getting to know people – rather than reading about it all on people's Facebook'.

Henri admitted that we were all voyeurs of some sort but said he had 'a friend who sneezes and posts it'. Facebook was 'a bit of entertainment really'. Henri would click on friends of friends and while there was an element of voyeurism at play it was also to see what networks they had. He says that 'it's hard to track people down because names are common etc so to use a network is a good way to do this'. He did not share photographs. Henri conceded that the industry he was in …

> alerted me to the potential negative impacts, and indeed our consultants always check Facebook. If there are pictures of people with guns or very offensive t-shirts then automatically a question arises. You need to be crystal clear and pure in terms of your market presence. With the labour market as it is, with a skills shortage at the senior level, anything that is negative or perceived as negative will discount you. And there's always someone else just as good or better waiting. Highly political – almost big brother in the approach that is out there but I'm talking about senior executive levels. [The fact is that] organizations are conservative and you can't have a manager that worries shareholders.

When asked about the amount of time he spent on Social Media he stated 'People of my generation don't seem to be as prolific. I've tried to track down friends who were tech savvy in their time who aren't on Facebook.' He has not added anyone to Facebook that he hasn't met and he 'deletes invitations from people I don't know. But LinkedIn is different – but I still check profile for appropriateness'. Henri tended not to use acronyms, not even when he sent texts.

Henri said that his conservative nature came more from his work culture than his cultural heritage. 'No, I give no thought to that whatsoever. The public profile is manufactured – the way I want to be seen – my own brand.' He was aware of his audience but only for business. 'I don't think about what my children might think because I know that I am controlled and everything is to some degree of my own making. It does not concern me. No sex scandals to be found!' While he seemed to be controlled he had recently discovered that his wife was more concerned about photographs uploaded from a 40th birthday than he was and 'my wife was concerned that my friend hadn't asked me. But because they weren't tagged I didn't worry about it … I wasn't stressed'. Henri had never untagged himself but this was because he had never been tagged. He finds it incredulous that some people (like his Personal assistant) who post 'photos every five minutes – lots of glamour-puss shots like in magazines' doesn't think of the consequences. He emphasized that he did not understand this usage and couldn't see why the receptionists at work would be on it 'ALL' day.

Henri believed that the use of Facebook was changing social norms. He described being at a work function and a group of people were on their iPhone for two hours of the two and a half hour lunch. They were constantly taking photos of each other and uploading, 'I find it annoying and find it rude and I find it socially unacceptable … but it seems to be the norm. I think it provides a different level of communication'.

Henri was very aware of a future audience,

> 'I am acutely aware it is almost there for perpetuity and that your actions and behaviours that you say today can come back and haunt you – so you have to be so careful. When I was younger my attitude was very *laissez-faire* and I didn't give two hoots if I did something wrong, it was fun, it was enjoyable – with a total disregard for any potential consequences. Thank goodness they didn't have all these things. These days you have to be cautious of it. We had an instance when one of our secretaries in Sydney (5 years ago)

left and heard that she had posted a Facebook tirade (all swearwords) about corporates and managers. That will come back to bite her. If they are doing due process when they hire her then – they won't hire her. I respect an individual's desire to speak their mind but there are ways and means and it doesn't need to be public. To be honest it would be nice to be in a world where you didn't have to worry about such things where you could speak your mind and as long as it doesn't hurt anybody and so forth but we aren't in that world. You get judged on what you do and what you say'.

It can be 'very dangerous, very detrimental'. So, based on this, Henri stated that 'unfortunately, Facebook and I are very superficial'.

'I have noticed that people put their birthdates on Facebook and this concerns me. For security. One piece of information seems harmless but it's not hard to put the puzzle pieces together. And it is voluntary so you can't blame big business.'

But Henri thought that most things were context based. His work was very conservative but if your working environment accepted and condoned certain behaviors then you were less likely to have some of these issues. For example

if you have reached a point in your life where you've matured and then the mid-life crisis hits and … if you are in group where everyone is the same – safety in number – it gives you the confidence [to act out] and values start to erode and things that previously were unacceptable start to seem as accepted. So I'm going to go around and chase young girls at clubs at 4am and tweet about it. Even though I'm old enough to be their father, that makes me seem cool, or feel cool. And it's okay because everyone around me – my business partners, my colleagues - are doing the same thing. So I think environment has a lot to do with it.

Scott

Scott, a senior executive in the Finance sector, used Facebook.

On Facebook I share holiday photos or photos of what I am doing at the time. I also share posts as to what I am and occasionally check in to places. I normally check in to places just to be a schmuck if I'm somewhere "fancy". I don't ever play games and I do often

comment on other peoples posts or like their posts if they have done something good, fun or have posted nice photos.'

Scott's main motivations were 'part boredom – ie something to do – but mainly as a way to see what news my friends have and what they have been up to. Also to catch up with friends from the past I haven't seen in years and to see what they are up to through either their photos or updates or information shared'.

Scott's profile was fairly limited and included a profile photo, gender, and relationship status.

> I don't really share private information. I was uncertain of security features when I first signed up to Facebook, so only included my name and the absolute minimum. I've kept that going forward and will continue to do so as I think that's the only information I need to give and if friends want to contact me, they can send me a message.

He shared photographs but was also wary, 'I only add photos, though, that I think family and friends would like to have of themselves represented in social media (ie not falling over drunk or topless on a beach)'. And he set his security settings so only friends could see them, 'I don't want randoms seeing my photos'. He has removed tags from photos. 'If the photo doesn't look good of me I will remove it. I've removed only five, probably, but all for the same reason'. Scott uploads photographs and 'I've shared videos that I have created before – but that's it. If I did artwork or took photos or something though, I would post my best work'.

While Scott was somewhat conservative with his friends he accepted one friend request from someone he didn't know really well

> It was a friend of my sister and she was friends with my sister too. She asked to be my friend so I accepted. I've never communicated with her though and would probably walk past her on the street!' But it was friendship that encouraged his use of Facebook 'I don't wish to see what random people are up to so if my friends all stopped using it, so would I.

Most often Scott accessed his site via mobile '90% of the time on mobile phone and 10% of the time on the home laptop. I would only look on the laptop if I am doing something else on the internet though. I wouldn't log on especially'. When he consumed the information varied, 'split

between home and work. Of a morning and night I access Facebook at home on my phone. During the day I'll access it at work on my phone either at my desk or at a cafe/restaurant while having lunch'.

Scott understood that using in-jokes created private spaces online; he did this 'only a couple of times and always an in-joke that my partner would get and that's it. Often after posting this, though, and her reading it, I would post something else generic so my latest update is not isolated to only one person'. But he doesn't like acronyms 'so don't use them. I write "I laughed out loud" instead, though, if making a comment'.

Scott said that his cultural heritage influenced what he shared online. 'When living overseas for an extended period (10 years) and returning home to Australia for brief holidays, I would always post something that is 'typically Australian' so my friends around the world could see how culture is in Australia and what things look like (beaches, BBQ, animals, sun)'. But he did not think that he censored himself because of this upbringing. He said he sometimes attempted to create a specific persona as 'I have an extended period of holidaying and not working so posted a lot of pictures and updates accordingly. Whilst being back working now that I just post what is my normal *self* and persona.'

Scott was very aware of his audience and cared about what they thought 'although a lot of my posts/tweets are deliberately being a show-off (eg sitting on the beach on a work day) so I'd expect them to be a bit pissed off or jealous'. He doesn't give any thought to strangers, 'If I don't know them I don't care what they think about me'. But he does think about future audiences, 'I'm aware that what you post today could be misinterpreted when looked at tomorrow. I will always give a thought to what I post and think about this'. He used Facebook to look up potential candidates at work 'when a new starter has come to the office or I need to interview someone for a role I check to see if I can see them on Facebook and access their page to get an idea on how they portray themself on Facebook'.

> I tend to keep negative things to conversations I have with closest friends and family rather than posting negative things to Facebook'. While Scott hasn't had any bad experiences online he has asked people to remove information about him. 'When I split

with a partner I asked my family and friends to take off photos on their pages of myself and the ex partner to ensure they didn't keep coming up as a reminder.

Grace

Grace was a senior executive involved in state politics. She used Facebook, 'I do not use tweet – I do not have the time to use this device and find Facebook enough'. She 'started on Facebook to communicate with my sister who at the time back then had a very small child and this was a good way to communicate. It also opened a whole new world of communication with family friends and friends from school etc whom I had not seen or spoken to in many years'. She used the home computer, iPhone and iPad to access Facebook, 'probably the iPad the most because it sits on the couch and you can check whilst watching TV etc. Never at work, always home or out socially on the iPhone'.

Her site was closed to everyone but friends although you could search on Google. She participated in Facebook but 'updating status depends on what I am doing etc. I am not one to constantly update my status but I feel if I have something nice/humorous that I want to share or check in somewhere, I will'. She used Facebook to 'Check in status, photos and comments. Sometimes play scrabble with my sister who also uses Facebook. I do not play the other games Farmville etc. She sometimes comments on other people's posts and quite often will 'like' a post'.

Grace had the following information on her profile: profile picture, date of birth ('got to love all the birthday wishes from people who under normal everyday circumstances would not know it is your birthday.'), email, gender, relationship status, favorite movies/books/music. She shared photographs but only of 'family and friends who are already on Facebook though'. She has removed herself from photographs 'because they were taken many years ago and I feel the need to let everyone know how daggy you looked ten or years ago is not appropriate'.

Grace and her husband shared a page (it is in his name), 'it was recommended in my workplace that we do not have a Facebook page. I shut my personal one down and use the page in my husband's name because I did not take on his surname. All my friends know I do this and I am visible in the photo'. This meant that officially she has friended people that she didn't know

'because my husband and I share one Facebook page and I do not know some of his childhood friends' but generally she is conservative about who she shares with.

Grace did not use in-jokes to share information online. 'I find it annoying when people do that. Either say it or talk to someone privately about it'. She also did not use acronyms for the same reason, 'it is annoying when they are used and I do not understand what they are. Someone once used LOL and I thought it meant lots of love'.

When asked whether her cultural background influences what she shares online she stated 'No, I try not to get too personal on Facebook anyway'. Grace doesn't care what her friends think of what she posts but 'I really take care in what I write'. This was not only because of her work but because she considered future audiences and what they might think. Grace attempted to be positive online. 'Everyone has their own problems and I think that part of your life should be shared privately not for Facebook to see.' Grace did not attempt to create a certain persona online although she was careful about what she wrote. 'But, given my husband and I are childless, sometimes the posts can seem like we spend too much money.'

While she had not looked up someone she didn't know she had 'certainly tried to see if the exes are on Facebook'. She hasn't had any negative experiences with what people have posted on Facebook but is aware of the press surrounding these sorts of incidents. She had never asked anyone to remove information.

7.3   Discussion

There were two different types of users in the Business Executives group: those that shared openly about their social life and then those who were very cautious due to work. But all agreed that Facebook and Twitter were not the spaces to talk about work or project a business persona. Facebook was developed for themselves and their selected audiences and Twitter was to receive and send real-time information, about 'being in the know'. The nine different perspectives showed the diverse ways in which Business Executives created an identity online.

There was only one active user of Twitter and two others who had accounts but only viewed information rather than Tweeting anything. All of the participants had Facebook accounts

although two used their spouses' accounts instead of having their own. Facebook was a private space that was for friends only, where they controlled their content and audience. It was a place where they felt safe enough to share drunken nights and silly jokes and to build an identity that was not related to work in any way. Twitter was an open forum where the audience was not managed so in this space they felt far more anonymous as people didn't know them directly. The Business Executive group was where the understanding of different audiences for different applications became most apparent.

The greatest disconnect between what was shared online and the role an individual played in life was with the Business Executives. There were some executives who had a high awareness that the online identity was related directly to their role in business and these individuals tended to be people who were involved in the recruitment of others within their organization. Those who had little to do with recruitment did not see the connection between the person they were at work and the person they were on Facebook or Twitter. The Business Executives have definite viewpoints about how they use the technology and most considered Facebook a private space that has little to do with their role as an executive.

None of the executives discussed work on Social Media nor did they friend people from work. Henri used Facebook and Twitter as a recruitment and business tool because of the application's ability to tap into other people's networks. All of the other participants did not share what they do for a living on Facebook and not even Henri discussed the day-to-day running of the business.

Given the bad press around people being fired for what appears online (Smith & Kanalley 2011), it was surprising to see the sort of information about their social lives that people shared. At first the researcher thought it was because they had not made the connection between Facebook and work and shared with abandon unknowingly. But with the follow-up interviews it became clear that the participants had all made specific decisions about Facebook and Twitter and how they would use it. For some, like Richard and Kelly, it was a directive from work that sought to restrict what they would share while others had decided not to talk about work. All of the participants realized that there could be consequences to the information they shared. They all felt that they were well protected either by not sharing anything or by restricting their audiences to friends only.

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The culture of the organization was a factor in how individuals presented themselves online. If Facebook was not an acceptable manner of presentation then the individuals were conservative about what they shared. But if the organization were open-minded, such as Alessandro's sector, then they felt that they could share much more. But even if the participant was 'allowed' to use the Social Media in the context of work, they chose not to because they felt that Facebook was a social space and they didn't want to pollute it with work. 'It's hard to have fun and let your hair down if your boss is watching you' (Laura) while Alessandro says 'there might be some mad photos but I don't worry because I'm usually standing next to my boss in them'.

Whether they share information openly or not the Business Executives are influenced by their role. Their role dictated how much they shared online and with whom. They have networks, followers and friends who were associated with work but they don't discuss the ups and downs of everyday operations.

The *self* that Business Executives related online was far more to do with their other roles, such as husband, wife, socialite, than with their business life. For some it was a deliberate choice to keep their personal life on Facebook separate from their work environment in order to protect an aura of professionalism and avoid criticism; but for others Facebook was private and was not related to their employment. There were examples of high profile executives posting information about heavy drinking and womanising that might not be considered appropriate behavior. Their response was that it had 'nothing to do with work'.

While role was central to the decisions they made about what they would share online, the *self* was related to the social side. The Business Executives looked for validation in an identity that was created beyond the work persona and they used the online spaces for purely social purposes. Most executives thought that the privacy settings on their account protected them from over-sharing. Others were conservative about what they shared or created a specific work profile. There were some participants who wanted to be anonymous and felt they had to protect their reputation and therefore chose to use a shared account with a spouse. These accounts did not have any of their details but they did share photographs and interacted with audiences who knew that they would be online.

The participants were adamant that the social space be a positive space. None of the participants wanted to be thought of as a whinger. It was important that they portrayed the fun side of life and did not share the bad. Most felt it was not an appropriate forum to have serious or important discussions and that they would much rather have those one-on-one. Kelly was conservative about what she shared because of work instructions but felt that this reflected who she was anyway – she was not an 'over-sharer'.

These different behaviors showed that all of the participants had internal rules about what they were willing to share online. Whether conservative or very open, they still decided how their *self* would appear on Facebook and Twitter. And for the vast majority it was a space for entertainment and not for work. In terms of identity it was definitely 'fun-and-social- Scott, not work-Scott'.

The majority of the participants created casual space on Facebook and Twitter with the type of language that they used. The tone was conversational and fun. They used acronyms and emoticons to get their ideas across. This was because it's easy and enjoyable and for some they felt it was expected of them. There were a number of individuals who used in-jokes and different languages to speak to specific sub-groups in their audience. They were aware that everything they read goes to the wider audience. When they just wished to talk to their partner or mates they used these different symbols to create the private space. Some used song lyrics others movie quotes; most often it was to make people laugh or to provoke a conversation.

The Business Executives shared photographs that were usually uploaded from their phone and were mostly of holidays or nights out. They also shared links to funny videos on YouTube and music videos. Business Executives used multimedia to present a sense of themselves to their audience. By looking at their profiles you could get a good sense of the person – what they liked to watch and comment on. The social selves that were presented by the Business Executives relied on multimedia and created a rich idea of who the person was. Much more than if you had met the person briefly at a social event. This can build an identity very quickly online and allowed people to form ideas about who that person was and what they were like. This forced or quick intimacy was a result of the changing way that we use symbols to create identity meaning.

When looking at audience there were the conservative participants who were aware of their current and future audiences, and therefore controlled the information that they shared. Then there were the participants who do not think about the work audience as it was a social space and therefore 'none of their business'. Nor did many of the participants think about the wider audience, believing that they were protected by their privacy settings and who they allow to view their profile. From observations of their usage, it would be prudent that they gain a better appreciation of the low level of data protection they actually have. It was easy for the researcher to access all of the profiles from Google and for some of the participant's photographs and comments to be accessed and downloaded by non-friends. This means that the privacy settings are more complicated and harder to tailor to the individuals needs than the participants believed.

The element of audience presents itself as a paradox for the Business Executives. Most of the members said they were well aware of their audience now and in the future. However, this did not stop them from sharing very private information and photographs that might not be considered appropriate for someone in their position. Several participants realized that being tagged in a photograph by someone else could lead to their Facebook page, but most did not appreciate that this widened their audience. Only one person saw photographs as a major breach of security and did not put any photographs on his site, and was vigilant in removing tags. Most of the participants permitted access to friends of friends without realizing that this increased the domain of their audience. Nearly all the participants thought that, by closing the Facebook page to outsiders, they were sharing information with a select group and that it was secure from reading by a wider audience. This was highlighted by Scott who 'shows off' on Facebook, but claims he knows his audience, yet then contradicts himself by saying that he is concerned about strangers viewing his page. Another participant (Henri) says he was not concerned about photos being tagged but then explains that the pieces of the puzzle on the web could be put together to identify a person.

It is clear that most of this group do not have an appreciation of how their persona can be identified. Two people shared a Facebook page with their partner and thought that this circumvented a business directive not to be on Facebook. However, Grace was known by her maiden name and used her husband's Facebook page and so reduced the risk of identification.

In a sense this group has the most to lose by a poor use of Facebook, yet does not appreciate the security 'holes' in the system.

In general the Business Executives don't necessarily think that culture affected the way that they presented themselves online. There were exceptions, such as Julia, who felt that her Chinese background influenced her behavior in two ways. Firstly that she was very careful about not hurting people's feelings online and secondly that it facilitated her desire to network. She talked about *guanxi* and the importance to her of building and sustaining relationships and thinks that Facebook allows this to occur easily and with more frequency than the real world.

A number of participants said that the way they shared information was because of their nature rather than a cultural need to do something specifically or act in a certain way. Both Kelly and Julia stated that they were positive people who liked to be perceived that way, it's not because of the Aussie belief that 'nobody likes a whinger' but because that was how they approach the world.

From the above discussion on *self* and audience we can see that individuals have social rules that they have put in place for themselves about what they share online and with whom. The levels of sharing and what was considered okay varies among individuals. What was acceptable for one person may horrify another, but the underlying belief was they were all playing their own role in containing and maintaining how they were presented online. No one was sharing thoughtlessly or in an out-of-control manner. One participant who uploaded photographs of nights out on the town would never upload a picture of his wife in a bikini. So, what appears as if many photographs have been dumped from a phone onto Facebook, has actually been edited and chosen specifically.

The participants did not believe that they have had any negative experiences on Facebook or Twitter. Half of the participants regularly google themselves to see what their online presence looks like, but the others don't ever think about it because they can not see anything they do going wrong. When asked, 'if you don't check what you look like online how, how do you know if everything is okay?', the answer was that there had not been any consequences, so everything was fine.

While mobility was important for ease of access, it did not dictate the way that Business Executives accessed Facebook and Twitter. Some used PCs only and did so at home. Most felt that it was not appropriate to log in at work unless it was using Twitter for a specific purpose. Daniel was the exception and used his iPhone to be constantly up-to-date. When out socially some of the participants updated photos and status a few times a day/night. As with the other two Groups the Business Executives felt that the mobility of the technology was the factor that influenced their usage the most. If they had not been able to take photographs with their phones then they would not have shared as many 'nights out' as they had. The ease with which they could 'check in' their locations using Facebook or photographs events with their phone or Instagram allowed for increased and more casual usage.

With one exception, it was clear that the participants wished to present a social identity to the rest of the world via Facebook. It was not a specially selected persona designed to build a Business reputation but rather a private representation of who they were. For those interviewed Twitter had a different purpose and was used for breaking news (such as Daniel's example of Schumacher's return) and making real time comments on events, such as football matches.

Business Executives were common in that they did not consider Facebook or Twitter to be a place that they discussed work. The Executives did not use Social Media to build or sustain their business reputation and discuss current events in their industries rather it was a social space where the engaged with friends and were entertained. At first glance it might seem that the Business Executives shared with little thought of the consequences, but they considered what they uploaded and did so with specific audiences in mind.

7.4   Conclusion

The literature and the popular press report about the reckless abandon with which individuals share information and play with their identity online (Aboujaoude 2011). In conjunction with this and the researcher's own observations in her social circle, there was an element of expectation that the Business Executives would be sharing inappropriate material with little thought to the consequences. There seemed to be a disconnect between who they were at work and the sorts of information that was shared online. There were elements of truth to these assumptions, such as: they were the most overt in sharing online photographs of drinking and

'mucking around' (Scott). However, the study has shown that these were not thoughtlessly shared, but rather a true representation of the social *self* of the Business Executives. Like many of the groups there were those within the group who shared very little and were conservative with what they shared. This was a direct response to the bad press around Social Media and the expectations of their workplaces. But there were also many Business Executives who shared openly. What the researcher had not expected to see in the findings was the thoughtfulness with which the participants who shared openly approached the information that they posted. The individuals felt that they were careful about what they shared and restricted their audiences so as to protect their privacy and reputation.

Role was important to the Business Executives in the sense that it dictated the level of involvement the individual had with the Social Media. Their roles dictated how careful they were in constructing a self that followed the company rules or expectations. Or alternatively individuals disconnected the work self from the social self that they portrayed on Facebook and Twitter. With this group they were freer with their information but were still wary of audience. Business Executives created identity using the elements of identity theory: self, audience, symbols and role. And from this perspective it was clear that the real world influenced the digital world. The digital self was an edited version of who they were, but was still an authentic representation. The individuals may not have used it to build a business reputation but they did use it to build a social reputation. They reported and shared with friends on the things they felt 'passionate' (Daniel) about. This was still a real part of the individual. It just did not include the whole. The digital Business Executive did not present that side of himself or herself, but rather a digital social self.

7.5   Summary of Group findings

The three groups, Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives had very different ways of approaching how they presented themselves online. The Academics were thoughtful and rule-bound in their presentation of *self* and were conservative about what they shared. The Stay-at-home Parents were the most likely to share openly, contributing information, 'gossiping' and asking advice online. The Business Executives were socially focused and did not engage in work conversations, and were more personal about the *self* they constructed rather than linking it to the 'work' persona. All of the participants created social rules for themselves for what they

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would or wouldn't share; the levels were different, but the basis was the same. The groups were interested in creating positive experiences online and not wallowing in self-pity and most were adamant that they did not want to be seen as a whinger. The level of *self* awareness (or how aware a participant is in creating their own role) was a determining factor in how individuals chose to present themselves online. Different contexts develop different concepts of *self*, and people have clear concepts of themselves in some areas, but not in others. The depth with which the individual related to their primary role in the context of Social Media related to how strongly they shared information with the outside world.

6.6   Similarities between the groups

The three groups approached their Digital Identity in different ways but there were some over-riding similarities between them. Most individuals had specific rules about what they would share; the levels of the rule were different but individuals have all talked about their own guidelines. Most participants agreed that the presentation of *self* was authentic but that it was not the whole of them.

The overwhelming similarity was the desire to be seen as positive online. Most people who were interviewed wanted to share the good things in their lives and not dwell on the negative. Regardless of the group most people wanted to engage in a social and positive way. Many of the individuals were concerned about who might see their information but no one had had a bad experience online. They believed that this was due to their privacy settings and by editing what they shared. There were also similar responses to the role culture played in the formation of *self* online. All of the participants felt that culture did not influence what they shared to any great extent with the majority stating that it had no bearing.

Regardless of the amount of personal information a person wished to share on Facebook or Twitter, they were bound by individual rules that they had created for themselves. The majority of the participants were not restricted by the policy of employers, but rather chose the level of what they wanted to share because of personal boundaries and beliefs. In the real world we have rules about what we will say and how we will present identity – 'don't swear in front of your parents' etc. These rules were carried on to the digital realm. While the popular press would have us believe that individuals share and say anything online without thinking about

the consequences, the reality was quite different. Even the individuals who shared drunken nights and rude jokes did so with thought (how much thought is debatable) but they believed that they were just being themselves. So, Identity formation online is facilitated by rules that the individuals have set for themselves. For example, Amy had the 'mother rule', meaning that she would not share anything that she wouldn't want to share with her mother which showed consideration for her audience. Not all participants were formal in the application of the rules that they set for themselves and some had realized that it was a subconscious decision that they later labeled as a rule after speaking with the researcher. They had known what they would or wouldn't share but hadn't thought about it as being a set of guidelines.

There were also a number of other common rules across the groups about not compromising the family by sharing too much personal information. Many participants were concerned with audiences and did not share anything that would come back to 'bite'[10] them because of the possible impact on future employment.

The participants felt that the depiction of their *self* online was a genuine representation of who they were. The identity that was created online by using Facebook and Twitter was a facet of the individual's offline or 'real world' identity. No identity that an individual presented online or offline represented them as a whole, and individuals chose different masks to wear according to audience or context. The *self* was still real even though it was edited. Bella stated: 'I think in some respects it's your own idealized version of your life. You certainly don't want people looking at your page going "oh my goodness she's so boring" or "could she be a little more upbeat she sounds so depressing". People don't want to go online and be presented with other people's problems; they want to see something exciting (like holidays)'. The online Identity was not false, as it was the same way people created different versions in real life. The way that Daniel acted as footballer player was different from his employment role.

Just because Academics did not have a definitive line between role and social *self* did not make their presentation any less authentic than the business person who quarantined the business side of themselves. The *self* was genuine, unlike the representation of Digital Identity in the literature. People shared personal information about themselves in an authentic way that

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[10] According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus (2011) 'If something will come back to bite you, it will become a bigger problem in the future because you have not dealt with it'.

showed the world who they were. Individuals did not reveal all of themselves online, but this did not mean that this *self* was not real.

The sense of wanting to be positive online seemed to be behavior modification. Some individuals didn't mind seeing the world as both good and bad, but many of the participants wanted to be seen as positive. Daniel stated, 'I hate the ones that go, "crap day" and that's all they write'. Generally the discussion about being positive on Facebook or Twitter came from a response to watching others. It was not a decision they made about their online personality until they had to deal with people who did nothing but complain about their lives on Facebook. There would appear to be markers here about the maturing of the way Facebook was used by individuals. Where once they friended everyone, and wanted to hear about everything, they soon tired of people who constantly wanted to 'bring the tone down' (Stephanie). Most of the participants, in all groups, felt that Facebook and Twitter were a social space that should be enjoyed and it was hard to enjoy themselves when there were people complaining all the time.

Academics were the least involved in the positive message concept, as they found that they were inclined naturally to be positive, rather than consciously wishing to be portrayed that way. Both Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives made particular choices about being positive online. This was because their profiles were far more social than the Academics and they wanted to enjoy the space and the interactions that occurred there. Interestingly the Stay-at-home Parents who were interviewed did not want to be associated with the type of parent that updated everything their child was doing every second of every day. They wanted to share the positive experiences and good times, although they were sympathetic to cries for help.

When questioned about cultural influences on the presentation of *self* and interactions, nearly all participants admitted it was not something they had thought about. They felt that it did not influence what they shared online. While investigating the daily use by participants it could be seen that some backgrounds were more conservative than others. The Asian backgrounds such as Chinese and Thai were more careful about what they shared, while those from a Latin background were more emotional in their responses. Some participants made comments on or pushed out information in different languages but didn't see this as a reflection of their culture but just 'who I am'. The most influence that culture seemed to have on what individuals shared was in relation to sensitive information that could be consumed by friends in parts of the world

where there was heavy censorship, and where freedom of speech was not a right. A number of individuals within the Academic group restricted their opinions and the information they shared in case the recipient could be implicated, such as those living in Iran.

Given that the cultural context for the study was Australia, the reaction to the question about culture could be considered an *Australian* reaction. In general Australians do not have a strong cultural connection with who we are as a nation. For example, we do not have the patriotism of the United States of America (Haller et al. 2009), nor the 3000 year cultural history of the Chinese. Australia is a young nation with a hard-to-determine cultural identity (Stokes 1997). If the participants did not readily identify with an Australian culture then it would be difficult to determine how influential it was on their sharing of personal information. From this study it would seem that individuals related more strongly to their professional role than cultural background, even for those participants with a different ethnic background. There is much scope for this idea to be investigated further and no absolute decisions can be made from the questions asked.

All of the participants across the groups agreed that they had not had any bad experiences on Facebook or Twitter. Overall the participants felt that Facebook and Twitter were positive spaces that allowed them to have fun and communicate with others. Most people had untagged themselves from photographs or deleted photographs, but did not consider this a bad experience. It was generally felt that they didn't have anything to worry about based on what they shared. When asked if they thought the information was resilient, most participants thought about it in an ephemeral way. Some stopped the information from being posted by heavily editing themselves, but the majority didn't think about future audiences.

All of the participants agreed that mobility of the technology had drastically changed the way that they used Facebook and Twitter. Daniel said, 'I probably wouldn't use Twitter to the same extent if it wasn't on my phone'. Virtually everyone used a mobile device of some description and said that it was much easier to access and contribute using their phones or tablets. This change in technology altered the way that people interacted and allowed for real-time sharing of experiences; thus building richer information for identity creation.

Facebook has a function where individuals can 'check in' to a place, and the GPS shows the audience where they are at that time. The conservative Academics used this function the least – one commenting that they found it 'creepy' (Hamish) and felt that people could make false assumptions about their activities. The Stay-at-home Parents used it sparingly but as one parent commented 'it's a way of showing my friends without kids that I still have a life' (Chloe). The most prolific users were the Business Executives who used it to check into bars, sports games and even sometimes at home. It has a new way of creating identity for an individual and allows them to add layers to their story without having to say it. Daniel comments that 'I can see that [my friend] is a Football fan without having to read his likes because every weekend he checks into a game. It also says to the world – I'm a real supporter as I participate, I don't just watch from home'. While Julia felt that this function was dangerous as people would know where you are at any time, this was not just a security problem, but may make her friends feel left out.

From the above discussion a number of similarities between the groups has been identified. The following section will highlight the differences between the user groups.

6.7   Differences between the groups

For all of the groups, the elements of how individuals present the *self* online were similar. The building fundamentals of role, the *self*, audience and symbols were all prevalent in the creation of Digital Identity.

One of the major differences between the groups was how they presented their social selves. Academics blurred the line between social and academics selves – and for many these were one and the same. Academics did not have fun on Facebook or Twitter in the same way that Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives did. Due to reputation and teaching concerns they did not feel they could afford to share fun activities. Stay-at-home Parents were social, but in the context of their main role as parent and were more easy-going about the use. Business Executives were solely social and did not integrate the role of Executive into their Facebook persona.

For a mix of social reasons the Stay-at-home Parents used the features and functions of Facebook more than any other group. They shared information, asked questions, played games and talked

about the family unit. Daniel was the only Executive who had a similar approach with his discussions about football and his other passions: his dogs and food. Business Executives and Academics were far more self-centric in the way that they shared and used the functions of Facebook. The sharing was more about pushing out information and talking about themselves.

Audience was important for all of the groups but the way they approached it was different. Academics saw their audience as a way of reinforcing their reputation or the problems with protecting their reputation. They were aware of their audience and of future audiences: both known and unknown, and they acted accordingly. However, Stay-at-home Parents were not concerned by their audience and rarely thought about future audiences. They shared information in the hope that people would interact with them. For the majority this was facilitated by the way they set their security level to friends only. Business Executives were social and only thought of the audience in this context. While some of the Executives were vigilant about what they shared, a majority, like the Stay-at-home Parents, did not think about other audiences because of their security settings.

The three groups that were explored in this study each represented a primary role that the individual held in real life. The participants were then asked a series of questions that explored how they presented themselves online, what symbols they used and the role of audience in their Identity decision-making. These questions sought to clarify how they created an online identity through their use of Facebook and Twitter.

7.8   Summary

The types of personal information that participants from all groups shared was varied. The more conservative in the Academic and Business Executive groups did not share photographs or multimedia, but the majority of other users shared this type of information. Each group had individuals who updated every day with status updates and Tweets, although the majority of users were far more sporadic with their information sharing. Most found it more interesting looking at others' information and the drive behind using the technology was to 'gossip and eavesdrop' – in the sense of being curious as to what friends and acquaintances were doing.

All Facebook users restricted their profile to some extent and most limited the viewing to friends only, or friends of friends. The Twitter users did not restrict their profile in any way. The majority of individuals felt that Twitter was an open forum and therefore less personal, while Facebook was seen as far more like a 'private journal that you allowed others to read' (Stephanie).

The majority of users accessed their profiles via a mobile device, such as phone, laptop or tablet. Very few used their PC and they were more likely to 'snack' on the experience rather than sit down and deliberately put time aside to participate online. It was more likely that Facebook or Twitter was open in the background of the laptop and easily accessible via an App. Individuals believed that it was this ease of access that led to their prolific use – rather than any desire to receive or give feedback constantly.

Chapter Eight: Towards a Theory of Digital Identity

8.1   Introduction

This chapter will summarize the elements of identity creation in this study. By looking at the participants' use of role, the self, symbols and audience we can better understand how a digital identity is created. The discussion will focus around the differences and similarities between real world and digital identity working towards a theory of Digital Identity.

8.2   The role

Individuals are defined by the different roles they have in life (Mead 1925). The role that we do for 'work' is most often the way we define ourselves in Western culture. Blumer (1962) stated that before we interact with others, we must first establish both who they are and who we are.
 The first question that is quite often asked when a person meets someone for the first time is "What do you do"? Their answer indicates where they fit in a socio-economic context, what level of education they may have and where they fit in relation to the group. For the purposes of this study the researcher interviewed individuals in the context of the working group to which they belonged. Each cohort may have had many different roles but it was the primary 'employment' role that defined their position in the study. For example, while a mother may have varied roles, such as partner, daughter, sister, charity worker, student and online hobbyist – it was their role of Stay-at-home Parent that formed the core of this study

The primary role of all individuals was central in presentation of *self* online. Burke and Stets (2009) discussed the multiplicity of roles and how individuals can change depending on the context. The participants of this study identified with their offline roles in the digital context and presented these roles online in varying degrees. The strength with which the individual related to their primary role linked to how much they shared information with the outside world. Academics were inextricably linked with their professional role and their Facebook or Twitter identity was presented as one and the same. Stay-at-home Parents were influenced by their role as parents and most often presented this role as the principal identity on their Facebook page. Business Executives were influenced by their primary role in as much as it stopped them from making Facebook or Twitter a work identity.

Many of the Stay-at-home Parents thought at first that they would reconnect with the business world through Facebook, but actually found that they built new networks rather than used old ones. While they did not 'unfriend' people from work, they found that their primary role influenced the interaction they had online. Tredinnick (2008) argued this online definition of roles allowed for categorization into socio-cultural contexts. With the primary roles of participants at the core of how they presented themselves online it allowed for group identification and reinforcement. The role was central to what individuals presented as their Digital Identity.

8.3 The self

Annie Colbert, a ghost writer for celebrity tweets said 'it's a great opportunity for them to shape their image – everything they put out there is generated by them or someone on their team. They're not going to get that in mainstream media' (Biba 2011, p. 95). This research has shown that everyday-people are starting to think like celebrities – their personas on Facebook and Twitter are well thought-through and are usually made to create a specific impression.

The presentation of *self* online differed between the groups – Academics saw a close association between who they were at work and who they were on Facebook or Twitter. Stay-at-home Parents often created a new identity as a parent and Facebook worked as a platform to facilitate this shift. For the most part Executives saw the digital *self* as a separate identity to their work role and were more focused on the social *self*. Schlenker (1980) and Goffman (1956) observed that individuals package information to help audiences draw the correct conclusion and these three groups packaged their presentation of self to enforce their real world identities and roles. By being able to monitor their *self* the participants were able to see how their known audiences interacted with them.

Most participants admitted that, to varying degrees, they created a deliberate persona online; not that it was inauthentic, but rather it was an edited version of themselves. One academic, Tomasz, said they wanted to be seen not just as intellectual but also funny and irreverent. A number of Stay-at-home Parents wanted to be seen as 'successful' (Olivia), while the Executives wanted to show their 'cool' (Scott) side beyond the suits they wore every day. Döring (1999)

highlighted the importance of self monitoring and it was evident that participants were looking at the way that they presented themselves and altered their persona based on the feedback. The propensity to express a positive attitude on Facebook and Twitter is an example of altering behavior to appear in a specific way. In this way the individuals were creating a front by altering their manner online. Participants who were conservative about what they shared on Social Media (because it might come back to bite them) managed their presentation to a much higher degree than those that shared freely. In doing so they did not give away too much backstage information. Those that were more prolific with what they shared were more likely to blur the lines between the front and backstage. For example sometimes Olivia would describe in detail the daily lives of her children, sharing photographs of them having a bath and getting dressed – these are traditionally backstage events that would not appear onstage. This is a deliberate choice by Olivia to document their lives.

As stated in Chapter Three Aboujaode's (2011) work inferred that the internet takes away the traditional barriers of social expectations. From the findings of this study it seems that social expectations are not only instilled but at times magnified. Friends on Facebook who constantly complain and brag are unfriended quickly while in real life they might be given more flexibility. There is an element that participants wished to be seen in a positive light when they shared information but it was not done to conceal themselves – they all seemed very well aware that they had problems and that they knew others did as well. They did not consider it concealment but rather that they wanted an entertaining space that they could enjoy with their friends. The idea of not wanting to be a whinger was a common element.

The use of an alias was very rare. There was one exception, a participant who used a professional avatar and name on Facebook and Twitter, but had a subheading that showed their real name. People wanted to be connected to the information that they shared, there was no 'fun' in being anonymous. Participants felt that there was fun in receiving feedback about one's own life and experiences or ideas: and not about pretending to be someone else or a different *self* from themselves. Even if they were projecting a specific persona this was still seen by the individual as genuine. This is in contrast to the literature in Chapter Three where Turkle (1995) and Aboujaode (2011) observed that individual's wanted to play with their identity online and present fraudulent (Jewkes and Sharp 2003) sides of themselves. This research has shown a determination of the individuals to be authentic in their representation of *self*.

Through Social Media we need to make far more assumptions about who someone is than in the real world. In the real world you can see someone in their work environment but it is more difficult to verify this online. Information integrity (Marks 2006; Worthen 2007) is a concern when dealing with unknown audiences, as it is much more difficult to establish who the members of that audience are in the online environment. This makes receiving feedback about *self* difficult as we define ourselves in terms of how others relate and react to us.

8.4   Symbols

In this study there was a definite shift in the way that individuals shared their information and presentation of *self* through the use of symbols online in contrast to the real world. The traditional symbols of language, pictures and photographs were unquestionably at the core of identity creation but there were changes in the way they were formed and translated. This was no different from what the literature (Mathieu 2007) presented about what people liked to share online.

Academics were the most conventional when it came to sharing photographs. Their postings tended to be of holidays or specific events and then shared only with family. Stay-at-home Parents uploaded the most photographs, usually of the children or seminal moments such as start of Kinder, first tooth or a ballet concert. Business Executives were more random with the photographs - they shared holidays, nights out, and children; but none of the participants had uploaded photographs of work. All groups tagged their photographs and rarely asked permission of those who were in the photograph before it was placed on Facebook.

Creative pursuits were identified as one of the reasons people use Social Media (Carrington 2008; McCullagh 2008; Collins 2010). When asked about whether they shared their own creative endeavors online all participants answered in the negative. There were a few exceptions of people who posted photographs of craft pieces they had created and blogs they had kept, but these were not the norm. This lack of interest was not for the same reasons of presenting *self* and being frightened of the feedback, but rather that Facebook and Twitter did not encourage creativity in them. Facebook and Twitter were considered primarily a communication tool, not a creative tool. If the researcher had interviewed artists then the results may have been different.

Nearly half of the participants updated their status or tweeted on a regular basis and some of them admitted to using in-jokes and imbedded meaning in pictures and lyrics to get across information to specific audiences. Some used different symbols to express feelings:

> whenever I feel angry at someone I post the Stampy the elephant sequence from *The Simpsons* on my wall. The final line in the clip is something like – some elephants are just jerks. The reason for this is that I don't want to be a whinger on Facebook, one of those people who always complains, so if I want to get a reaction from the people who know me well then I post Stampy. My close friends then usually inbox me to see what has happened (Olivia).

This approach was not specific to one group. Most often lyrics from songs were a way that people expressed feelings, and a number of different participants used different a language, such as Thai, to reach specific audiences. boyd (2012) discusses this phenomenon in the context of teenage users who use these ways or communicating to create a private space in a public network. The participants of this study are not as prolific as teenagers, but they do create similar spaces.

Tagliamonte and Derek (2008) discussed the way that text messaging influenced language and that people were more likely to use abbreviations. While not all participants used acronyms they were popular, which supports their research and that of Thurlow (2006). There were very few participants who did not use acronyms of any sort. Most used basic LOL or IDK text-speak, but were not in the habit of using more than one in a post. Academics, who claimed that in the real world they were sticklers for grammar and spend much of their time editing papers, found themselves using acronyms. Individuals claimed it was for ease of use (especially with the limited characters of Twitter) but also because it was expected. Their audience often had younger family members or students to whom they did not want to look 'old' or 'out of date'. Both Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives used acronyms because it was 'normal', but not in every post.

An easy way of participating on Facebook, without having to be proactive or push much information out, was to use the LIKE button. Individuals felt that they were part of something bigger by liking information and comments. It is a way of communicating without having to put

the effort or thought into the transaction. The participants, especially the Stay-at-home Parents, saw it as a way of contributing to a conversation without exerting much effort or without putting themselves in the firing line of being criticized. Stay-at-home Parents was the group who used 'like' the most, with the Business Executives next. Academics were less inclined to 'like' and were more likely to comment or forward it to their own wall. Stets and Burke (2005) asserted that self-meanings develop from the reactions of others, and in the context of this study self meaning can come from the feedback of 'likes'. Participants didn't depend on the responses but they had a positive reaction to them. This interaction re-enforced the notion of being positive online. There is not a DISLIKE button on Facebook so the application encourages positive behavior.

Symbols added further dimensions to the identity that participants created online. The information was richer as an audience could see, not only what the individual said, but they could view photographs, comments from others, 'checked in' information, likes, re-tweets and tagged photographs. The overall identity became complex and intricate through the use of the symbols presented. By sharing this type of information users were changing the depth of information that was shared about each other and with larger audiences. In the past you may have shown your holiday photographs to a couple of people only – now they could be viewed by all your friends and their friends. While the symbols used – especially language – is evolving, the actual information is not evolving – it's similar to what they would share offline – although to a wider audience.

8.5   Audience

Interaction is a large part of using Social Media – in fact it is the defining feature between the old web and the new (O'Reilly 2005). The way that individuals relate to each other is fundamental in creating identity. Individuals in this study used Facebook and Twitter to communicate to the world who they wanted to be, and then to have someone validate their ideas and experiences by interacting with them. For others, particularly the Stay-at-home Parents, it was a way to connect to people having similar experiences. Oakes (2002) discussed Social Identity being linked to self-categorization. The participants built their idea of *self* though their interaction with their audiences; by comparing themselves to others it made them feel better about themselves. Many of the Stay-at-home Parents were honest in their recognition of this need to be re-categorized in

their new role. They also found that they liked to watch what others were doing to make themselves feel better about their own lives. Emily said she liked to look at photographs of people she went to school with to make herself feel better. There were participants across all of the groups who liked to be 'sticky beaks'. This supports not only Oakes (2002) but also Wann (2006) who said that in-group identification helped maintain self-esteem. A number of participants untagged themselves or removed unflattering photographs. Mehdizadeh (2010) suggested that this sort of behavior was because of low self esteem or narcissism, but the participants in this study saw it as 'normal'. Emily said that she would rip up a picture in real life and this is just the online version of that action.

This study shows that individuals hold multiple roles and they present some of their roles online, but have much less control over the interpretations of these roles than in the real world. Audience is different in the digital realm to the real world as it is accessed in a different way. In the real world an individual has more control over their audiences. They can choose how they want to be presented to specific audiences (Goffman 1956) while online those barriers are eroded. For example, Amy is careful about what she shares and thinks about how her mother would relate to anything she posts but some of the participants don't think in this way. They feel that they are protected because their parents or employer are not on their Facebook page. But if their parents or employer are friends of friends then it is possible that they can view what is being posted. Consequently in real life an individual may not swear in front of their parents but their parents may be able to access their crude comments on Facebook. Therefore the control over audience has been diminished.

Due to the resiliency of the information shared on Social Media audience can exist in the future (Tufekci 2008a). We have not imagined how the future *self* will be presented online, and some participants were sharing today as though there were no future. Most participants cared what their friends thought about their status updates, and how they were perceived; but gave little thought to how future audiences might interpret their work. While this may be the case, they still edited themselves before they shared the information, which meant on some level they were concerned about what their known audiences might think, but also about how long the information might remain online. Some of the Stay-at-home Parents were concerned about what their children might think while others said they were very honest with their children and

didn't need to edit. The social rules that individuals set about their audiences are in direct contrast to the loss of control that Palfrey and Gasser (2008) purport.

Popular press is full of examples of embarrassing stories and lurid warnings about inaccurate or changed information available on Social Media (Chacksfield 2009; Anderson 2012). All participants in this study said they had googled themselves, and the majority did so regularly, to see what was written about them or what information was freely available about them on Social Media. None of the participants recalled a time when they had found embarrassing or inaccurate information about themselves. The literature (Myhill, Shoebridge & Snook 2009; Das & Jyoti 2011) discussed the frequency of hacking but none of the participants had experienced this sort of invasion.

The prevalence of out-of-control online behavior, or embarrassing information, was not high for any of the three groups that were investigated. Most participants thought it was because they did not do anything interesting enough to post, or that their friends had similar internal rules about posting. There was no evidence that uninvited audiences had altered information or posted Photoshopped pictures. What was interesting about the observational data was that many of the participants who said they had blocked their profiles to be visible to friends only could be viewed from Google. Of the thirty participants, only two had profiles that could not be viewed by googling their name. So, while they did not think that they'd had any bad experiences online, their audiences were much greater than they thought, and it was not something they checked when they googled themselves. This supports the ideas of Cain (2008) and Braun and Pöhls (2008) that information on Social Media can be retrieved quite easily by third parties without the author's knowledge. It also highlights the work of Stutzman, Capra and Thompson (2010) who state that the relationship between privacy attitudes and behavior is complicated. This is evident in the findings of this study where the reality and beliefs are very different. Benson (2009) saw this use of Facebook as making the backstage public and that this occurred often because of the misunderstanding of privacy settings. The study also supports Tufekci's (2008b) work that some individuals 'friend' people that they do not know and therefore their page can be accessed by a stranger regardless of the original privacy settings.

We can see from the summary above that individuals created identities for themselves online through sharing information about their primary role in life. At the core of this was reputation.

The roles were very much prevalent in their presentation of self. This study shows that people are thinking about the information that they share online. There were some who were very controlled in their behavior and set themselves social rules about what they have shared and what they have not shared. Others were using the applications to show the world a specific side of them, such as being 'fun'. While they may not have sat down and drawn up a list, they were consciously making decisions on the material they shared; for example, Business Executives did not share information about their work. This meant that they kept their work-role backstage while showing the world their social persona onstage (on Facebook or Twitter).

8.6   Facebook and Twitter: different stages for performance

One thing to come out of this study of Social Media was how strongly it related to audience. The two different applications were seen as focused on different audiences and therefore a different *self* was in play for each. The participants saw Facebook as a personal space where the audience was controlled, while Twitter was open for all to view. Allison considered Facebook as 'my private space … I do have a professional persona and there are some things that I just wouldn't share, but I would share on Facebook'.

This study showed that in Facebook you chose the audience but in Twitter the audience chose you. In Identity Theory there are multiple audiences for the different roles of an individual (Stryker 1980). The roles sometimes overlap but are mediated by the individual. Social Media removes these controls and creates one single audience, and it is difficult for the individual to speak to only one audience. Occasionally participants used symbols in the form of in-jokes or different languages to create a private space in a public domain, but generally the audience was one single unit. These differences in audience modify our understanding of Identity theory by creating a single audience of known and unknown observers.

Interaction was not just about awareness of the audience but was also about how the identity was interpreted by the reader. It was a two way affair. What an individual posted was based on who their audience was. Stay-at-home Parents navigated towards others online who shared this role and validated their own role by interacting. The application (ie Facebook or Twitter) used by individuals was also about the type of interaction they wanted. Facebook was very audience - dependent where individuals tended to know their audience (virtually all participants had

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never made a friend of someone that they had not met). In contrast, Twitter seemed to be a universal audience where knowledge of audience was not paramount to the experience. Only one of the Stay-at-home Parents was on Twitter. This affected the information that individuals shared online as the level of intimacy was dependent on which application they used. Identity through interaction was not just between people but also with the technology. The technology is the way that the individual creates their Digital Identity. It facilitates the sharing of information and the feedback from others which in turn reinforces the Identity of the individual (Stets & Burke 2005). This is the same as in the real world. What appeals to the participants is the real time access to information and the instant gratification of receiving feedback and being the first to know something. Daniel is a good example when he talks about sharing information about sport. A combination of the application and the mobility of the technology is what makes the use of Social Media so appealing and ubiquitous to these groups.

Some of the Twitter users felt that they would be lost in the noise of the Twitterverse and therefore would feel more anonymous. Twitter users have built communities of practice around their followers and who they followed. The users seemed to have specific areas that interested them and were 'addicted' to specific hash tags. This coincided with their enthusiasm for specific topics, such as Tomasz's interest in wrestling and Daniel's fervor for sport. This illustrated well that their differing passions drove their usage.

Facebook and Twitter were the digital context in which this study was executed. Context is important to give meaning to presentation of self (Bagheri & Ghorbani 2006). Giddens (1991) argued that self-identity allowed for individuals to reflexively construct a personal narrative thus giving them power over their lives. To a certain extent Facebook and Twitter permit this creation as it then allows for social rules and editing to occur; but as discussed above there are opportunities for others to be involved in the identity forming process and if the audience is unknown then they can misinterpret information without the correct context. Loss of control then occurs because of the inability to control information once it has been posted by the individual. This does not mean that the consequences are always 'bad' as is reported in the media but means that it is open for misinterpretation.

Identity is never set or final (Jenkins 2008; Buckingham 2008) but is a social process. This is no different online; for while the information is resilient and can be accessed by future audiences

the Identity of the individual can change and adapt to the current situation. The Figure (3.1) in Chapter Three shows that Identity is created in an ongoing way by the interaction of role, the self and audience. The internal *self* and the external self endorsed by others in society (Jenkins 1996) are at the core of who we are as individuals. This research has shown that these elements are important in the digital environment and that Digital Identity is created using the same building blocks. But it would seem that there is less control over the external definitions as there is in real life. For example Olivia uploads to her Facebook site photographs of her male best friend and without the social context of introductions, friends of friends often assume that he is her husband. She said that many people have commented to her that they didn't realize it wasn't [her husband]. The social context had been removed and therefore people made incorrect assumptions. Bagheri & Ghorbani (2006) and Adrian (2010) stated that reputation is managed through context and that online information can be easily taken out of context as it is sometimes hard to replicate the context.

From this discussion we can see that real world and Digital Identity are created in similar ways with role, the self, symbols and audience central to the creation. There are a number of issues in relation to this presentation including the blurring of lines between known and unknown audiences, the automated technology sharing information without consent and the difficulty in maintaining context in the Digital realm. These issues impact the way that identity is created and maintained on Social Media.

8.7   Digital Identity

The *self* concept offers control for the individual and, to varying degrees, this control is what creates a Digital Identity. The identity created through using Social Media does not create a different identity that is disconnected from *self*, but rather a form of *self* that already exists. In contrast to the literature in Chapter Three which said individuals were thought to recreate parts of themselves with which they are unhappy, and also use Social Media as a platform to share less mature and antisocial impulses (Aboujaode 2011). This study shows that individuals consider their online identity to be an authentic representation of *self*. Digital Identity is a specific persona with rules and new symbols, but it is a representation of an already established role.

Rather than creating something false and disconnected, people are projecting their real selves on to the screen in a way they wish to be viewed. This Digital Identity is an online representation of an already existing role. The idea of the *self* is specifically about building a person with whom others will interact. The concept of social interaction is common to Identity, Social Identity and Impression Management theories as identified in Chapter Three. And while some participants felt that they would continue to use Facebook even if their friends didn't they still felt that interaction with people was important to the process. Bella stated that if she was only recording her own life on Facebook and not interacting with others or being able to watch what others were doing, then she 'wouldn't bother' using Facebook.

The literature in Chapter Three discussed the experimentation that occurred in the digital sphere because of anonymity (Turkle 1995; Van Gelder 1991; Jewkes & Sharp 2003). This sort of Identity play was not prevalent in this study. The participants felt that the day-in day-out nature of Social Media tended towards an authentic voice because of the repetitive nature and exertion that would be caused by constantly lying. This supports the ideas of Indalecio (2010), Robinson (2007), Davis (2010) and Curtis (1997) who felt that audiences were leaning towards authenticity with what they presented to others. The participants were mostly thoughtful about what they shared online to the extent that they had personal rules and ideas about what they should share and also they thought about what symbols to use. This situation varied from being careful about using unprofessional language to being conscious about how they want to be perceived. Some strived towards very specific personas while others wanted to be defined beyond their everyday roles. Manago, Graham, Greenfield & Salimkhan (2008) believed that individuals create an online ideal-self identity rather than what they are actually like. The participants created online versions of themselves, but they were not only ideal selves they also involved the daily minutia of their lives. Kelly pointed out that there was a difference between wanting to be positive online and only representing an idealized life. She said: 'being positive means I want to share the fun things and get people talking about issues. Being idealized means I would present myself to the world as perfect. That is just as boring as being a whinger'.

The way we behave online is very much influenced by the roles we have in real life. Regardless of the roles, all participants had internal rules about what they would share to create the *self*. They used new symbols and secret languages to share personal details such as emoticons, acronyms and in-jokes. These were dependent, to a great extent, on interaction to sustain and

reinforce their identity. All groups sought validation in different ways. Stay-at-home Parents not only wanted to know that they had made the right choice, but also that they were not alone. Academics wanted to reinforce that they were intellectual and thoughtful. Business Executives were the most diverse with some claiming the Social Media was used only as a communication tool while others subconsciously set themselves up to still be 'cool or fun' beyond the business suit. For them it was more about who they were away from work, with their families and friends, than about who they were as an Executive.

What became evident when observing the individuals was that there was a discrepancy between the way that they thought their information was protected and the reality. Most participants in the Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executive groups felt that they did not have to edit themselves highly because they were hand-selecting their audiences. But what occurred when the researcher googled the participants was that the majority could be searched, found and read online. The levels of security were not as high as the individuals had anticipated. Individuals felt that they had control over their identity, but, in reality, it was far more readily available than they thought. This seems to come about because of the convoluted and complicated privacy settings on Facebook which permits third party access through friendship links. The participants did not expect the same level of privacy on Twitter.

The other interesting observation that came from looking at the profiles of individuals was the 'distance' that their information could travel. Many believed that the information that they shared could be viewed only by their friends. What occurred was that if a friend commented on an individual's status, for example, it then appeared in that friend's news feed. The news feed could be read by any of the friend's friends without the individual knowing or 'friending' them. This meant that other individuals could form an opinion as an audience without the knowledge or consent of the individual – or knowing the context of the original post. In this way the technology itself acted as a conduit of information to unknown audiences and did so without any interaction by the individual other than the original post. Therefore there was a gap between what individuals thought they were sharing, and with whom, and the reality. So, the implication is that Identity can be formed outside of the presentation of *self*. Information moves very quickly between users online and many of the participants felt that they were protected by their privacy settings. The reality was different and the influence of the uninvited audiences could be much larger than expected.

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8.8   Proposed Digital Identity Theory

The findings of this research show that individuals form a Digital Identity in a similar way to Identity Theory as identified in Chapter Three with the *self*, audience, role and symbols all being important (Burke and Stets 2009; Tajfel & Turner 1979; Goffman 1956). But there is a fundamental difference in the way that Digital Identity is formed and that is the interaction with the technology.

Chin et al (2009) indicated the biggest risk to privacy and reputation for individuals online was not what they shared, but what their friends shared about them, and this highlighted one of the issues with Digital Identity formation. While an individual might be very careful about what they share and with whom they share it, their friends may not care. Therefore individuals might form an unintended identity that doesn't represent them (or that they don't even know about). As observed in this research, the technology itself shares information with known and unknown audiences without the explicit consent of the individual. Audiences are no longer separate and multiple: they are one audience made up of known and unknown people.

This study has shown that role is common to both Identity Theory and Digital Identity. The primary role we have in the 'real world' is the one that is predominant online. Even with Business Executives who did not 'talk' about work, the decision to not discuss work was still a conscious decision that was guided by their employment. They did not share information about work because of the perceived ramifications.

In Identity Theory, the *self* and audience interact to create the Identity – with multiple audiences for multiple roles. Initially we identified the elements of role, the *self*, audience and symbols to influence identity creation in the real world in Chapter Three. The diagram below shows these influences (Stryker 1980; Burke & Stets 2009; Tajfel & Turner 1979; Goffman 1956; Schlenker 1980). The figure in Chapter Three (Figure 3.1) showed that identity was made up of many different roles that influence both the way that the *self* is projected and the way that audiences interact with the individual. The audience influences the role saliency – Burke and Stets (2009) agree that the more a role is supported, the more important it is to an individual. The *self* is projected by the individual and comes from within, and is influenced by role and audiences

(Burke & Stets 2009). The way that we behave is influenced by what role we are portraying and by which audience is watching (Tajfel & Turner 1986). The way that the Business Executive talked to the Board of Directors was different from how they spoke to their partner or their mates at the pub. Individuals use different symbols to give meaning that enhances the experience to each of these audiences. In the real world it is relatively easy to separate audiences and specific roles (Stryker 1980).

In Digital Identity Theory the roles are multiple but the audience becomes one group of known and unknown viewers. Both sections of this audience can interact with the individual. What differs is the role of technology. The technology uses personal information posted by the individual and re-posts it without the individual necessarily knowing about it. Facebook, for example, can take a comment on a post out of context and share it with an audience that does not know the person commenting or the original party. This means that the technology is acting towards Identity creation without the control of the individual.

A Digital Identity uses the same fundamental elements as in Identity, but has different interactions and different perspectives (Figure 8.1).

Role is central to presentation of *self* (James 1890) and remains at the core of the proposed theory. In the digital realm multiple roles are presented to one audience. Known and unknown audiences are no longer separate but rather exist on the same platform. Facebook and Twitter do not easily allow for individuals to choose to whom they speak. Sometimes this can be achieved if they use different symbols such as in-jokes and song lyrics to create private spaces. These findings are much like boyd's (2012) work with teenagers. The *self* is presented via Social Media to known and unknown audiences. It is presented by the individual and influenced by role. These elements are common to Identity Theory and show that individual use the same elements online to create identity as they do offline.
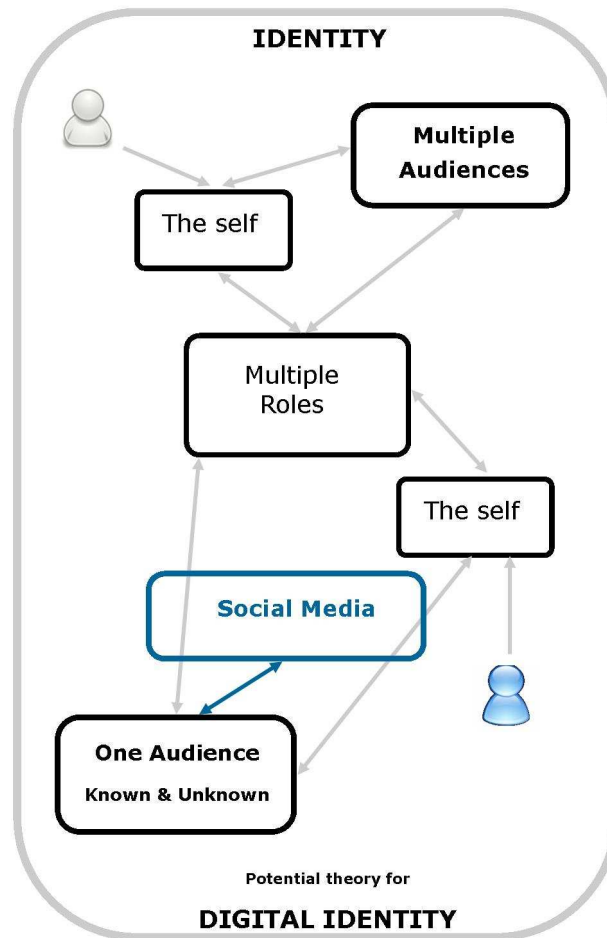
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Figure 8.1: Proposed theory of Digital Identity
Grey arrows represent the controlled elements of Identity creation while the blue represent the uncontrolled interactions between the Social Media and audience.

This figure (Figure 8.1) shows the addition of Social Media as an element that influences identity creation and is the most obvious differentiation between real world and Digital Identity. Social Media and, specifically in the context of this study, Facebook and Twitter, are used by the individual to project *self* to the audience (both known and unknown) and in turn audiences interact with *self* to create identity saliency. The Social Media can then continue to interact with different types of audiences without it having come from the *self*. Comments and photographs can be shared by the Social Media and both unknown and known audiences can share with other unregulated audiences. In the diagram, the section and arrows in blue illustrate how the technology works towards identity formation without the control of the individual.

8.9   Revisiting the research question

The research question **Do individuals construct their identity in the same way in a digital context as they do in the 'real world'?** has been addressed in the work above. Identity on Facebook and Twitter is considered true and there is a direct link between the building blocks of real world identity and Digital Identity. But there is the added element of technology that alters the way that Digital Identity is formed and maintained.

Role is central to both theories and while the types of symbols used are changing, they are still the way that information is given meaning. The presentation of the *self* is what gives the Digital Identity its authenticity. Individuals claim that they are presenting their 'real' selves online, although there are specific social rules that they have created for themselves. The audience is no longer definable and mediated but rather one block of known and unknown people who can interact with the Identity of the individual. While the elements of role, *self*, symbols and audience are all used to create Digital Identity they do so in the context of smart technology that interacts and distorts Identity. So while individuals do create their identity in the same way as they do in the real world they have the addition of external factors that influence their presentation of *self*.

The following overview can be made (in this specific context):
- Identity on Facebook and Twitter is a representation of everyday *self*.
- There is a direct link between the elements (role, audience, the *self* and symbols) of 'real world' Identity and Digital Identity.
- There is the added element of technology, in this case Social Media, that can alter the way that Digital Identity is formed and maintained.

This is different from the images that are presented in popular press and how much of the literature presents Digital Identity. Much of the extant literature is restricted to teenagers or young adults who are yet to develop their identity fully. The ubiquitous nature of Social Media makes it difficult to sustain the role play of early years and, as one of the participants Bella stated,

> …where is the fun in being someone else? Why would you pretend to be something you aren't because then the interaction and responses aren't real either. That is boring. If I wanted to pretend to be someone else I'd play one of those avatar games.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1   Introduction

In 1993 (5 July) The New Yorker published a cartoon by Peter Steiner that showed two dogs using a computer with the caption 'on the internet no one knows you're a dog'. The cartoon became famous and synonymous with the identity-play research of the 1990s, such as Turkle's MUD users, and was picked up by the popular press to highlight the dangers of interacting online. People felt that the anonymity of the Internet allowed for the person on the other side of the screen to be anyone, including a dog. If Steiner were to review that cartoon today it would be a very different picture. If the dog is using Social Media, not only would we know it was a dog, we know what it looked like, its preferred drink, what its favorite TV show was and how its friend, the schnauzer, thinks it is stupid for liking 'throwing a Frisbee'. The point being, that everyone, including dogs, share enough personal information on Facebook and Twitter to build a Digital Identity. On Facebook everyone KNOWS you're a dog. This cartoon illustrates the significant shift in the way that we present ourselves online over the last 20 years of Internet usage.

This study has investigated the way that different groups present themselves on Facebook and Twitter. This was done by investigating how people differentiate their real and Digital Identities, and how this impacts what they share on Social Media. Three different user groups were explored – Academics, Stay-at-home Parents and Business Executives. This study has illustrated that when individuals share information on Facebook or Twitter they use the same elements of Identity building that they do in real life; and that they are influenced by role, the *self*, symbols and audience. This means, in what ways individuals do think about the concept of *self* online, how they communicate it through symbols such as language and photographs, and finally the validation and input of their identity from others through interaction with friends and strangers. These concepts, in the context of Facebook or Twitter, create a Digital Identity for these two specific Social Media.

By using the four elements of Identity to create a basis of enquiry, this research looked at the what, how, when, why, and who of Social Media. By interviewing and then observing each

participant online, the researcher was able to establish how the applications of Facebook and Twitter were used to create identity and how, and if, it differed from the everyday. The data generated was then analyzed to find themes, similarities and differences between the groups and how that information affected the individual's identity creation. Then the observational data provided an added layer. This allowed the researcher to see how the personal information shared by individuals was related to the technology. This highlighted the importance of audience and the ways that the Social Media spread and shared information by reposting. With these particular groups, the findings challenged the preconceived ideas as presented in the literature and in popular press by showing an overwhelmingly well-thought-through identity created in a positive space, rather than an over exposed negative persona that was shared with little thought to consequences.

This is a study of a very specific place and time in history. The data were collected within the applications of Facebook and Twitter as they exist in 2011 and 2012, but it should be noted that these applications continuously evolve and shift in focus – such as the introduction of the Facebook timeline that was launched in late 2011. Therefore the concepts and information shared in this study are a moment in time, a glimpse of how individuals represented their identity online through two popular applications. The online studies from the 1990s and early 2000s show a very different and less interactive social space where anonymity was easier and people tended to play with their identities more frequently (such as playing between gender and age). At the turn of a new decade this study shows that the situation today is quite different. People are now sharing what they consider to be a true representation of self and are less inclined to manipulate identity markers such as gender and age. Most of the participants in this study admit to editing what they share and not uploading the 'whole' of themselves but feel what they do share is a true representation of themselves. The use of Social Media, particularly Facebook, is ubiquitous and the participants of this study were all daily users, and often checked-in several times a day on their mobile devices. It was this ease of access that facilitated long periods of time spent on Social Media, which in turn encouraged authenticity because participants stated that that they could not sustain the lie in the long term, nor did they understand why they would want to.

Previous studies into the personal information shared by individuals online were focused on younger age groups such as teenagers and college students. This study investigated the usage of

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adults ranging in age from 30 to 70 years old. This group has not been the subject of previous studies in this area. When studying identity it is important to not only look at those forming a sense of who they are but also those with life experience and a formed sense of self. But Identities are not static and the Stay-at-home Parents are an excellent example of individuals having to rebuild identity dependent on their change of primary role.

This chapter presents a summation of the research. It discusses the contribution of this research and its findings, will also explore the implications this research has for individuals and business, and examine the limitations of this study and propose further research.

9.2   Contribution of this research to existing knowledge

In the 1950s Goffman offered his ideas about how individuals presented themselves in everyday life. His idea of the play metaphor was set in the context of television becoming ubiquitous. This was when communication emphasis shifted from words to pictures. And this self image was influenced by the images seen on TV, in glossy magazines and newspapers. Today we see, through the use of Social Media, a return to an emphasis on words as well as the importance of pictures. The digital realm expects not only multiple channeled communication, but for it to take the form of language, text and other symbols, while being strongly a visual medium where photographs and multimedia are an expected part of self presentation.

This study investigated Identity in the digital age and adds to the ongoing conversation about how we manage our personal information online. This research has found that individuals use the same elements in creating identity in the digital realm as they do in the real world: Role is central to identity salience; self is presented but controlled by internal rules created by the individual; symbols are changing and add richer information to our presentation of self; and audience is key to how all groups share information. These findings enhance our understanding of Digital Identity that is created through using Social Media. It must be remembered that Identity is an ongoing personal investigation and people will never stop asking, 'Who am I?' But this study adds significant understanding to the contemporary discussion. How we form a Digital Identity is vital to our understanding of modern life and the way we participate in both the real world and the digital world.

Increasingly, as we live our lives on the screen and in the public domain, it is important to understand how people form identity. In doing so we can begin to understand how to manage our online profiles and protect our information assets. The main findings of this research group were:

- Identity was formed in the same way on Facebook and Twitter as it was in the 'real world'. The early literature portrayed Digital Identity as something that people played with and through it misrepresented themselves and allowed for anti-social behavior. These representations seemed to have very little to do with the real world self. While the onstage presentations from this study were a true indication of the person in the real world.

- In Impression Management people want to be perceived in a certain way and they plan their performance to gain the desired impression of themselves. In this study individuals employed specific rules to establish what they would share on Facebook and Twitter. The way that individuals shared information was thoughtful and not ephemeral. The media portrays individuals as sharing with abandon with little thought to consequences, but in reality the groups in this study were well aware of their audience and how they want to be perceived.

- Individuals change their online behaviors based on what they see in others – for example, there was an overwhelming trend in wanting to be positive on Facebook and Twitter because individuals did not want to appear as a whinger. The media and literature present the negative side of involvement in Social Media whereas people want to be positive in their postings. This means that individuals are delineating onstage and backstage performances. Whinging and negative interactions are saved for backstage (or offline) while the impression given to the online audience was overwhelmingly positive.

- This study highlights the importance of technology in the formation of a Digital Identity. While this might seem obvious, it is overlooked by individuals who believe that, when they are using Social Media, privacy settings and control of content keeps their identity intact. While individuals may feel that they are segregating their onstage and backstage performances, the technology is interacting between the two to lessen the division. Backstage information can be shared easily with unintended audiences.

- Facebook and Twitter have different audiences and individuals use them for different reasons. Many of the participants felt that they didn't need to be on both technologies. If they were on Facebook they didn't feel the need to be on Twitter. However, this study

shows that people use them in different ways and while most choose one or the other, the way they think about each audience is different: Facebook is a personal audience while Twitter is for the world. These applications are the stage and props to present Digital Identity. They are new tools to present a specific impression and the biggest difference is that there is less control over the audience.

These findings assist in our understanding of how Identity is presented on Social Media. The section below illustrates how this relates to the contemporary discourse by illustrating the value to individuals and organizations.

There are many fabrications portrayed in contemporary media about what individuals share on Social Media. This research allows individuals a better understanding of how they form identity online and highlights the less reckless presentations of self in a digital context. The research should provoke discussion around how an individual is seen online and give people a better sense of how they are presented to others.

The findings highlight the shifts in the way that individuals communicate. From the past concept of random postings of personal details the scene has shifted to this age cohort (30+ years old) that is generally careful in the way it presents and responds to online posts. As the Social Media platforms have matured, so too have the patterns of communication behavior as well as presentation of self. The change in the way we communicate offers new channels to explore relationships and sustain acquaintances. Many of the Stay-at-home Parents discussed the ability to sustain relationships with very little effort.

The research should make individuals question their usage of Social Media: how they use it, how often, what it says about them and its purpose in their lifestyle. Reflection is an important tool for growing and this is a major component of the use of Facebook particularly. Part of the drive of this research is to get individuals to reflect on the way they use and present themselves on Facebook and Twitter. The hope is they will make appropriate social comments and choices for how much of themselves they share with known and unknown audiences. Some participants had never thought about future audiences and the possible impact of unknown audiences and

information resiliency. The findings of this research should act as a catalyst for people to become further aware of how far their information travels.

The importance of a dialogue about the control of information and privacy on the Internet is discussed widely in the literature and in the media. By understanding better how individuals form identity and how information flows, they will gain more control over their own digital appearance. This research also highlights the need for individuals to understand the privacy settings on their Facebook accounts. Many believe that they are adequately covered from prying eyes but are, in fact, sharing with much wider audiences than they anticipate.

While investigating how identity is formed on Social Media may seem unrelated to the business world, the two are in fact intricately linked. Individuals are involved in all parts of business. They are, amongst other things: employees, decisions makers, clients and designers. By understanding how they use technology, business can better understand the human factors in running a business. This research helps business to appreciate the needs of clients and of employees.

Clients can be serviced when an organization understands how and why they do something, as it allows them to tailor their products and services. For example, Stay-at-home Parents are a large marketing segment and by understanding how this group uses Facebook and Twitter will allow for targeted marketing. This research also allows business to keep pace with their market. This group is on Facebook every day and shares information about what they find. This is a good market to understand and target appropriately. Understanding how people use technology and the ways they interact with it is important data for strategic channel marketing. By investing Social Media use a company will be able to better understand the attitudes and habits of some of their buying public. Social Media users frequently use Facebook and Twitter to react to the products and operations of a business. The feedback available to a business allows IT and technology companies to better design online applications.

9.3   Limitations

As previously stated, this research covers a specific time, specific groups and specific applications and the research is limited by these boundaries. The limitations of this study serve as an opportunity for future work to be done in these areas.

Time is a limiting factor in this study. This area of research is dynamic and the way that individuals use Social Media, and select applications, changes quickly. It was important to capture the data and publish in a short period of time to keep the findings relevant and timely. This is an emerging area of research and therefore the possibilities for inquiry are large. This research was limited to specific groups and how the individuals present themselves on Facebook and Twitter only. Many individuals use multiple applications on different technologies and it would be interesting to see the differences in identity creation across the applications.

To gain a deep understanding and have rich results it was necessary to choose a relatively small sample of individuals to interview and observe. In total 30 people were interviewed and followed on their online Social Media applications. However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to all sections of the groups represented. A larger group of interviewees would give more strength to the study.

The ethnographic nature of the study makes an element of researcher bias inevitable and part of the process. While the measures to contain this limitation were discussed in the Methodology chapter, it is important to recognize the influence it may have over the findings. The closeness of the researcher to the study is both a positive and negative. It allows for detailed findings but also brings the researcher's beliefs and values to the forefront. However, the multiple methods of data generation and the hermeneutic circle of analysis lessened the impact of any researcher bias.

The Interpretivist paradigm is the natural fit for this study and, as discussed in the Methodology chapter, it is the lens with which the researcher is most comfortable as a way of looking at the world. But the rise of critical research in IS (Brooke 2002, p. 50) is another way of approaching this research and would evaluate 'the importance of values and assumptions at the individual level'.

While these limitations are important issues they do not undermine the integrity of the study. The findings need to be identified clearly as a very specific representation of groups in a particular context. Further work in this research area is required to build towards a theory of Digital Identity.

9.4   Future work

This is an early stage in the discourse development around presentation of self online. The concept of *digital self* has only just begun to be explored. The way that we present *self* is not disconnected from the *self* we create in the 'real world'. The options for future research are bounded only by the imagination of those involved. We are in the middle of a technological boom (particularly in Social Media) which brings with it the dark side of issues such as privacy, corruption, bullying, and cybercrime. How these all relate to the future of identity is unknown. While this study has shown the link between the roles we define for ourselves offline and the presentation of that identity on Facebook or Twitter, and how it affects what we share online, it is only a small moment in time - a glimpse of how we perceive ourselves.

There is scope to do a longitudinal study to see if the way that identities are created and maintained online is consistent across a period of time/lifetime. Within the period of observation, the researcher has noticed a change in the way that individuals use the technologies. Samantha highlighted this change with her remarks about the different ways she used Facebook as her children grew. Much like the 7 Up series in the UK, it would be interesting to check in with the different groups over a period of time. While this study has not included children, teenagers and young adults the conversation would benefit from expanding the longitudinal study to see if these cohorts change the way they interact and share information over time. Do different cycles of development influence what they share?

This study looked at Facebook and Twitter and further investigation into different applications such as LinkedIn and Yammer will gain further business perspectives. There are many cross-disciplinary studies into how business is using Social Media and measuring ROI but it would be beneficial to see how individuals with a profile within an organization harness the technology.

Future studies could involve how organizational identity is measured with Social Media and how individual identities within an organization can influence stakeholder perceptions.

This study has looked at the formation of identity though presentation of self through symbols. It would be beneficial to see how the specific choice of symbols and avatars change or present an Identity. How do avatars, not just in virtual reality sense, but through an individual's choice of profile picture relate to Identity? Some parents present photographs of their children as their avatar. Does this mean a loss of identity or a high connection with their primary role?

The sample size of this study is small so it would be advantageous to expand the numbers associated with the groups and gain further insights. When investing larger groups it would be appropriate to explore different methods such as large scale surveys and analysis tools such as Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS).

This study pared down Identity theory, Social Identity Theory and Impression Management to identify four core elements to the theories. The next step would be to test these elements in different identity development situations. It would also be worthwhile to investigate how group dynamics affect identity in a group environment of known and unknown audiences.

There is also the information management side of the thesis that identifies the ways that individuals share information, but does not explore how individuals would manage the growing level of information about themselves online. We have discussed the role that technology plays in distorting or changing an identity, now it would be valuable to see how this can be managed.

As discussed above, this study is a moment in time and with specific groups. Therefore there is great scope to investigate other groups and different age groups. This study deliberately chose older individuals who had already formed an identity. It would be useful to see if other specific age groups behave in a similar way. We have established that role is central to the way that individuals present themselves on Social Media, so the choice of different roles would be a natural progression.

This is a study framed within the ethos of a Western society. While some participants were from other backgrounds such as Asian and Middle Eastern, the majority were Anglo-Australian. Even those from diverse backgrounds had studied/worked in a Western society for a number of years and their outlook had a western orientation. Therefore there is scope to investigate the development of identities in other cultures, such as those with collective environments and more rigid concepts of power. How would countries with strict rules about censorship and government intervention react to how individuals are presented?

The role of culture is also an area of exploration as participants of this study had not attached much significance to this area. Further expansion of this idea could see if there is evidence to support the idea that culture influences what and how people shared information online. In this study the individuals were asked about the influence and felt that it had little relevance. Future research could involve how different cultural backgrounds react to the same issue on Social Media such as how a Wedding is shared or the birth of a child. It would also be interesting to see the link between Australian cultural cringe (Hirst 2007) and the belief that culture does not influence the way that we share. Do Australians not identify with a strong cultural identity and therefore do not see its importance in identity creation? Culture was a subsidiary element of this study and was therefore not explored in depth but would be a starting point to further examine the ways that it shapes information sharing.

In addition to culture it would be beneficial to investigate the influence of religion on Social Media usage. Do those that identify highly with a particular religion in the 'real' world carry that identity into the digital realm? Or does the conservatism of some religious beliefs influence an inherent presence on Social Media – that is, is it religiously appropriate to be online? In what ways does Religious observance or intolerance by others (bullying) cause individuals to change what they share online?

In this study we have measured the 'real' world through identity elements. A different approach could be taken to measuring this detail such as personality type testing. Then, by investigating different scenarios with different cohorts, it would be interesting to see the different responses to information sharing.

The participants in this study were well-educated and employed individuals (or family units that were well provided for). It would be of significance to see if the experiences are similar in other socio-economic groups. In what way does the Digital Divide impact on Digital Identity? How do different socio-economic markers such as education and wealth influence what and how people share online?

This work has shown a link between the mobility of the technology and the increased use of Social Media. This could be explored further to corroborate the preliminary findings here. There is much work to be explored around mobility – is the information shared on a mobile device more ephemeral or does it have the same level of thought process as from a work or home PC? Do individuals manage information differently on a tablet or mobile phone?

We have established that individuals set themselves rules around what they share and how they share it. A theme to come out of the study is that individuals feel overwhelmed by the choices of Social Media and use them for different things. While this study concentrated on Facebook and Twitter, many of the groups talked about using other applications such as LinkedIn and Yammer to share personal information. The sense was that each role they had was linked to a different application and this became overwhelming. Many of the Executives, were particular about Facebook being a personal space, and often they presented their work persona on other applications such as LinkedIn. Others found the volume of information that needed to be updated was overwhelming and thought that using separate applications was not a good idea. Some academics used software to manage the different applications but were not sure that the audience saturation was worth the effort. This raises the question of identity fragmentation. It would be important to investigate the different fragments of an individual on different applications. Individuals in this study talked about the volume of information being overwhelming at times. Therefore a study to investigate the sum of an individual's online identity (as apposed to just Facebook and Twitter) would be helpful in measuring the different types of information that is shared on different applications. One of the findings of this study was the difference in audience for Facebook and Twitter, so another approach would be to look at all the different types of Social Media (Tumblr, Reddit, Instagram, etc) and see what elements of identity are at play. Given the influence of role over the way an individual shares information, and the likelihood that different roles are developed in different applications, then there is a possibility of identity fragmentations causing conflict within the individual. This has

not been measured in the Social Media context and would add to the knowledge on how individuals present and perceive themselves online.

9.5   Conclusion

In this instance the Digital self is constructed in the same way as the 'real world' self. However it can be changed by the element of technology that can distort the Identity as well as create fissures in the security settings made by the individual. Google has recently released a new Image application that can 'de-pixelate' an image and identify it against Internet data such as Facebook, and so identify it to a larger audience. This is an example of how technology acts on its own to change the initial way that information was originally shared on the Internet. An individual may deliberately pixelate an image to protect an identity but the changing technologies allow for this to be undone without the individual's permission.

The popular press is full of stories about how Social Media has changed the world. There are elements of truth to this – we communicate more freely, quickly, frequently and in real time. The space in which we share information has the potential to have a larger audience than before and we are able to view it on mobile devices. This research has shown that people are influenced the most by their primary roles when presenting their identity online. Individuals seek to have an authentic voice that is close to the 'real' identity. To do this they have self constructed rules around what they will share and what they won't. Digital identities differ in the same way that everyday personalities differ. The tendencies we have offline are usually brought across to the digital world. The stage of Social Media gives individuals the opportunity to present their Identity to audiences, but the element of technology and misunderstanding of privacy settings can blur the lines between onstage and backstage performances.

In the 1950s Erving Goffman discussed the *Presentation of self in everyday life* in a changing world exhausted from war, and excited by color television. According to Allan (2010) this was historically a time when the emphasis shifted from words to pictures and this changed the way that people understood themselves. They gained personal reinforcement about Identity from movies and magazines and less from real social groups. This development has been sustained as we seek the same verification of Identity from online audiences. We present ourselves online in a richly visual way with photographs and multimedia. In this environment individuals can seek

to receive reinforcement of their own identity. This study was a way of looking at the Digital realm through the lens of Goffman and how individuals presented *digital* self in everyday life. The context today is one where anyone can have their own 15 minutes of fame. We have created a culture that is obsessed with celebrity (Cashmore 2006). People can be famous for being famous and individuals can follow the lives of celebrities and pseudo-celebrities on reality television, and through tabloid TV like TMZ, magazines, blogs, Twitter and other Social Media. Technology has facilitated this change; anyone can be a pop star on YouTube. This changes the way that we view ourselves and influences the way we share online. The participants of this study have rules around what they will share and had no desire for fame (or infamy). The ease of access to information in real time and the 24/7 nature of information collection makes it easy to view many different facets of peoples lives. Some participants likened Facebook to a gossip magazine about their friends rather than celebrities. Perhaps our friends will become the reality celebrities of the future.

Postscript

When I look back to 2007 when I first put together a proposal to commence research in 2008 Facebook was still relatively new and had become popular with generation Y while Twitter was considered for celebrities or 'a waste of time'. This is one of the interesting aspects about studying phenomena in the Information Systems field – it moves at the speed of data transmission. Now in 2012 Social Media is ubiquitous. It has changed so much about the way we communicate, build and sustain relationships and share our lives with others.

When I first considered the topic for my dissertation I would look at the way that users shared personal information online, shake my head and ask the question 'Why?' At that time, and still now, the media was littered with examples of people over-sharing. Risqué photographs, drunken nights out on the town, and illegal or illicit goings-on were all being openly shared on Facebook. These reports, coupled with my own observations of friends and work colleagues sharing so much of their lives on Social Media, pushed me to investigate this further. At this time I wasn't on Facebook or Twitter and it all seemed like a foreign place.

Much has changed during the past five years and now I can hardly get out of bed before I have checked my Twitter feed. Having immersed myself in the world of Facebook and Twitter I realized there was so much more to it than prolific oversharing. The more I researched the more I saw that it was a way that people built their identities and maintained their self esteem.

Technology has changed enormously in the time that I have undertaken this project. The Literature Review originally encompassed all types of Social Media, not just Facebook and Twitter. At the time people used multiple applications – they would share information on Facebook, upload their photographs to Flickr, tag news on Digg, and follow celebrities on Twitter. It was disjointed and I felt that I had to get a picture of all the technologies to really understand how an individual presented themselves. But it became quickly obvious that this was too large a project and then, as time progressed, the number of sites people used decreased. They could now aggregate all their information through Facebook if they so wished. The applications that people used were changing also; my first draft included a discussion of MySpace and an in-depth description of the brand new micro-blog Twitter.

Once I had settled on Facebook and Twitter these applications also adapted and changed quickly. The wall on Facebook became a news feed and then there was the unpopular introduction of the Timeline format. Twitter became more popular and I started to see people create communities of practice around hashtags rather than just following their favourite stars. I used Twitter to help with my research and applied the #PhDChat on many occasions. The privacy setting seemed to be changing constantly and it was hard to keep ahead of what was relevant to the individual. Technology presents a challenge for researchers to keep abreast of the field and for individuals to understand and manage issues such as privacy, reputation and digital self.

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