CHAPTER 1

Understanding Identity Online: Social Networking

If we are to investigate the available ways of understanding identity in the context of online communication and digital media cultures, then there is enormous value in paying attention to how identity can be seen to be "performed" in one of the most popular, contemporary online platforms and practices – social networking. In an always connected and cloud driven communication environment, identities are performed, articulated, represented, and negotiated in relation with those who are not necessarily physically present in our everyday lives but also with those we engage with in the "networked social." Founded in 2004 and available for use by anyone aged 13 years and above, Facebook has over 1.3 billion active users as of June 2014. The largest social network by virtue of active users, Facebook represents approximately 18% of the world's population. Facebook is rivaled only by social networks that originate in China and, despite common predictions in early 2010 of its eventual downfall in favor of newer sites, its name is increasingly synonymous with online activity – more so even than Twitter. Facebook has come to stand for the notion of representation of identity and selfhood online as much as for communication among potentially distant friends. By its very name, Facebook points to the interface between the corporeal and the digital, a site through which identity is both expressed and acquired: the face (traditionally the site that betrays or hides facets of identity but that is the point of corporeality through which we routinely make relational contact with each other) is replaced by the more complex array of what we post, how we read posts, how we post about each other, and how we interact through varying, complex degrees of friendship and affiliation online.

Social networking sites have been investigated and discussed by researchers, journalists, and public commentators. Much of the time the range of uses, tools, functions, or gratifications of social networking sites are overlooked giving them the appearance of having a singular, unified activity or sole "purpose". A site for sharing personal experiences among friends or sometimes strangers (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007, p. 1143); as a site for the articulation of one's identity-based interests through the construction of

Digital Identities.
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taste statements which act as identifications with objects and with other people (Liu, 2008, p. 253); as a site for relationship maintenance (Hoadley, Xu, Lee, & Rosson, 2010, p. 52) and connecting unfamiliar people with one another (Hoadley et al., 2010, p. 53); as a networked space for the expression or representation of preexisting and salient aspects of users' identities for others to view, interpret, and engage with (boyd, 2008b); as a space for young people to engage with each other outside of the physical world's constraints and parental surveillance (boyd, 2008b, p. 18); as a site for the expression and/or self-regulation of narcissistic personalities (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008); and prioritizing the idea that being friended and linking to friends whether close friends, acquaintances, or strangers as "one of the (if not *the*) main activities of Facebook" (Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008, p. 531). These are all ostensible reasons for the use of social networking – conscious, self-aware purposes articulated by different users in varied contexts.

However, an alternative approach to understanding social networking and identity is to take into account some of the ways in which social networking activities, as digital media use *par excellence*, are performative acts of identity which actively constitute the user. This requires us to make use of some of the most powerful, albeit complex, theories of identity performativity circulating in poststructuralist writing, particularly the work on gender performativity by Judith Butler. A Butlerian approach to identity as performative helps us to understand how identities and practices of using online communication in everyday life are interwoven and cocreative, rather than to take the more simple approach of assuming that we have a fixed identity which we express and represent (perhaps truthfully, perhaps fraudulently) through our activities online. We can therefore draw together poststructuralist, antiessentialist theories of subjectivity and identity with prior work on social networking to do two things: (1) expand the critical frameworks by which social networking can be contextualized within the broader cultural practices of identity and selfhood; (2) further destabilize the problematic dichotomy of a "real identity" in an offline capacity and a "virtual identity" represented in digital, networked communication. Additionally, by exploring social networking through Butler's theories of identity performativity, it is possible to show that social networking activities and behaviors are both a means by which subjectivity can be performed and stabilized and, simultaneously, made more complex and conflicting. This comes from the fact that social networking is not a singular activity but a set of interrelated – sometimes incompatible – interactivities which include

identity performances through profile management, friending, liking fan pages, tagging, being tagged, updating statuses, and having responses given by others to one's own status updates. That is, an *array* of activities requiring the users to "work" to perform a coherent, intelligible selfhood extending across all these online activities in addition to offline behaviors.

Working from a poststructuralist, antifoundationalist perspective that draws on Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida, Butler's theory of performativity is based on the idea that identity and subjectivity is an ongoing process of becoming, rather than an ontological state of being, whereby becoming is a sequence of acts, that retroactively constitutes identity (Salih, 2002, p. 46; Butler, 1990). That is, identity formation occurs "in accord" with culturally given discourses, structures, and practices which, once stabilized for the subject come to feel like common sense, and by which any actions, performances, or behaviors of the subject appear to emanate from that identity rather than constituting it. The self or "I" is made up of a matrix of pregiven identity categories, experiences, and labels (Butler, 1990, p. 40) that, through repetition, lend to the illusion of an inner identity core (Butler, 1993, p. 12). Where Butler's theories provide an important perspective for the study of social networking and identity construction is in extending the very idea of performance from the bodily, the experiential, and the affective into the field of online acts; in other words, online social networking behavior is just as much a performance as any other "real life" act, and equally constitutes a sense of self and identity. That is, online behavior should not be understood as an activity separate from those more ostensibly embodied performances of identity categories.

Working Butler's theory of identity performativity alongside existing discussions of social networking, I argue that the online performance of subjectivity is articulated in at least two, sometimes competing ways: (1) modifying your own profile (boyd, 2008a, p. 122) by: (a) developing the profile through choosing particular categories of common identity coordinates or demarcations as well as stating categories of taste and providing and deciding on particular information that, in the act of deciding, is in itself a performance of identity, that is, age, gender, relationship status, indicators of sexual orientation/identity, and making biographical statements; (b) ongoing activities such as status updates, uploading and captioning photos, sending messages, rewriting biographical statements, and other forms of updating, refining, and manipulating one's profile; (2) identifying in a relational sense with various friends and networks through adding and accepting adds – and, of course, updating, changing, and making new additions or

deletions to your friends list. Both of these are performances of self-identity which, in Butler's formulation of subjectivity, retroactively constitute identity, just as offline performances of selfhood do. Separately, these two social networking activities are acts of identity performance; however, the extent to which these two areas of social networking operate together toward a coherent, unified self needs to be explored. Lewis and West (2009) have indicated that while social networking sites require "both the presentation of self and a process of "friending" … there is a degree of incompatibility between these imperatives" (p. 1224). Since identifications are, as Butler (1993) noted, "multiple and contestatory" (p. 99), and the subject is produced at the "cost of its own complexity" (Hall, 2004, p. 127), a stronger understanding of the use of social networking in the construction of intelligible and coherent identities can be explored by thinking through the ways in which the complexity and multiplicity of social networking friendship activities, comments, discussions, tagging, etc., work both to build and undo narratives of selfhood. Concentrating on Facebook as the most common example of social networking, this chapter will begin by giving a theoretical account as to how Butler's performativity can be utilized to understand the contemporary cultural role of social networking in relation to how identities are constituted, played out, transformed, and stabilized online. The first section of this chapter will argue that profile management can be understood as an act of identity performance, while the second will explore some initial approaches to understanding how the relationality of friendship lists provide a somewhat different framework for the performance of identity. In the final section, I analyze some of the ways in which these two areas of identity performativity – profiles and friending – produce gaps and rifts in the coherence of an identity narrative, creating "extra work" for identity self-management. Ultimately, this chapter intends to provide a few directions for continued theorization and analysis of identity and subjectivity in an online context, and the ways of approaching, in greater complexity, the relationship between Web 2.0 interactive environments and contemporary shifts in how selfhood and identity are constructed and played out.

1 APPROACHING IDENTITY

Before we can investigate the usefulness of a Butlerian account of identity performativity for understanding how our selves are constituted and played out, in part through online activities, it is useful to think about other approaches to identity and whether or not they have value for

understanding the complexity of selfhood in online frameworks and digital cultures. Modern identity emerged in Western Europe and Great Britain during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, culminating in the humanist figure of the free and autonomous individual in the eighteenth century Age of Enlightenment. Humanist notions of subjectivity, provide the conceptualization of the subject as having unquestioned certainty, truth, and presence. Central to the contemporary, everyday, and "common sense" understanding of identity and selfhood is René Descartes' (1596–1650) fifteenth century notion of *cogito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"), which operates as a first principle for the idea of an "I" as a conscious and reasoning individual in which thought or "mind" is given preference over corporeality and bodily sensations. Significant to western thinking on identity, this notion of the autonomous, coherent, unified self was extended and solidified by numerous writers and thinkers, including John Locke (1632–1704) who posited the liberal and free individual; Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) who argued for a human individuality grounded in nature; and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) who equated selfhood and consciousness.

However, although the notion of the unitary, autonomous, coherent, and essentialist subject remains commonsensical, everyday understanding of identity, theories, and philosophies emerging throughout the twentieth century have questioned this notion of identity and rejected the idea of subjectivity as a self-contained being. Several competing theoretical positions led to the decentering or rejection of the humanist subject in poststructuralist theory. Marxism refuses recognition of the subject as a "conscious" subject, attributing it a "false consciousness" in a capitalist socioeconomic system. The structuralist–Marxist critique of subjectivity undertaken by Louis Althusser (1971) questions the integrity of the universal subject by showing it to be bound by its interpellation through institutions and ideology. In Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic critique, the discovery of the unconscious fragments the subject at the point of its consciousness, and suggests that one's identity is bound by one's desires. Jacques Lacan (1977), extending Freud's theory through structuralist semiotics, makes clear that desire and subjectivity are inseparable: there cannot be a subject without a concept of desire – in coming in to language in the Symbolic, identity is separated from the unconscious. Other, thereby resulting in a subject that is always described as "split." For Lacan, desire is constituted by lack, as a result of the inability to reacquire the preoedipal and premirror stage *jouissance*, hence the subject (always unsuccessfully) seeks fulfilment by trajecting desire toward

the *objet petit a* (an object of desire), be it a sexual object, a "personal goal," or otherwise – a desire that can never be satiated. Thus, the psychoanalytic approach posits a subject which is always "in process."

From the 1960s and 1970s, the Enlightenment humanist notion of subjective identity was put further in question by theories of social, cultural, and discursive constructionism in which the subject is not born or the result of nature, but produced within the environment, language, and sociality. Both building upon and rejecting the dominant psychoanalytic critique of identity, this antisubjective structuralist and poststructuralist criticism has become the prevailing understanding of a critical and cultural theory of identity, although it has by no means resulted in a wholesale rejection of the Enlightenment figure of the subject in contemporary everyday and pedestrian thinking about identity. Significant among constructionist approaches to identity is the work of Michel Foucault (1926–1984) who posits identity not as an "effect" of power, disciplinarity, and biopolitics, which includes processes and techniques of surveillance and normalization. Foucault's theory of subjectivity as a *form* constituted in and by discourse approaches a poststructuralist position – and contributes heavily to it. For Foucault, the subject is inculcated by, and through the deployment of power-relations, normalized variously in accord with regimentary, disciplinary, and biopolitical discourses. The humanist subject of Descartes as self-existent, coherent, and consciously active is rejected by the Foucauldian position in favor of the disciplining of bodies made "docile" (Foucault, 1977) and conforming. Three modes of objectification of identity in Foucault's work can be identified: the first is dividing practices, such as the isolation of "the mad" in asylums. Second is the Foucauldian concept of "scientific classification" arising from modes of inquiry given the discursive status of science. In the context of Web 2.0 digital media environments, we might similarly refer to this as profile categorization or "naming"; a discursive practice which in Foucauldian analyses of identity plays a pivotal role in the inculcation of the subject as subject. Finally, there is "subjectification," the processes "of self-formation in which the person is active" albeit with conformative regimes. Biopolitics is a technology of power that both analyzes and constructs not the individual subject but whole populations as subjective through a range of techniques from statistical measurement to health promotion to immigration controls; its governance mechanics are generally, but not always, located within the administration of the nation state. Emerging slightly later than discipline in the second-half of the eighteenth century as part of the further developments of governance for larger states, biopolitics can be a

useful tool for understanding the relationship between online environments and identity in that the use of digital communication tools results in the capacity for large-scale data collection on the level of whole populations, thus, producing certain forms of identity which are normalized not along the disciplinary normal/abnormal distinction but in terms of distance from a norm along a distribution curve of normativities (Foucault, 2007).

Building on the work of Foucault (although at times deploying Lacanian psychoanalysis), Judith Butler projects one of the most useful, poststructuralist theorizations of identity by suggesting that the subject is constituted by repetitive performances in terms of the structure of signification that produces retroactively the illusion of an inner subjective core (Butler, 1990). Identity/subjectivity becomes a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience, and is the resultant effect of regimentary discursive practices. The subject, then, is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that, from a humanist position, have been considered the essential subject's subsequent conscious actions. As Butler notes, "performativity is not a singular, deliberate, and self-conscious act, but a reiterative and citational practice in which discourse produces identity as its effect in a form which stabilizes through repetition over time, but remains always at risk of showing itself up by the constitutive failure of genuine repetition. For Butler, discourse remains the key to subjectivity, but her extension of Foucault's thesis provides a less universalized account of subjectivity. Butler has taken great pains to point out that her theorization of performative identity does not suggest a conscious performance with all the agency that would be accorded in a humanist account (Butler, 1993).

Butler's theoretical account of the performativity of identity puts both liberal–humanist essentialism and postmodern radical constructionism into question in favor of a Foucault-driven antifoundationalist view of identity. The essentialist/constructionist debates are best delineated by Butler (1993), who points out the ways in which both sides have missed the point of deconstruction by refusing "the constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection and its disruptive return within the very terms of discursive legitimacy" (p. 8). While the essentialist position, for Butler, is both Cartesian and phallogocentric, constructionism leaves a residual essential subject on which cultural construction (sometimes referred to as "socialization") overlays ideological concepts and gets them "wrong." She also identifies an overly radical constructivist position which dislodges not only the essential subject but makes a claim to the constructive composition of all objects. She argues (1993) that this position understands culture as exhaustively

constituting identity, ultimately creating and determining it in its naming that which it names, or, rather, it is that kind of transitive referring which names and inaugurates at once. Her answer to these two positions is to dislodge both the fixity and foundationalism of essentialist views and the determinism of the radical constructivist position in favor of performativity as establishing the subject as effect and, more specifically, viewing the subject as a process that stabilizes to produce the effect of fixity over time.

2 WEB 1.0 AND ONLINE FLUIDITY

In the early days of the Internet, which were marked by slow communication speeds and therefore involved activities that centered on text, still images, a decreased capacity for immediacy, and access predominantly through nonmobile desktop computers, a number of approaches to online identity worked to produce a notion of cyberculture that was deemed separate from the "real" of the "real world." This produced the idea that there were different "modes" of identity, a real, corporeal, and embodied social experience and a separate, new, and playful identity that was experienced by "jacking in" to the Internet, usually depicted as occurring privately and engaging with distant others online. Early approaches were therefore quite narrow in their definition or were sometimes highly utopian via the notion that playful fluidity in the realm of cyberculture opened new ways of thinking about identity that would change how we culturally produce, articulate, and represent identity categories and norms, particularly around gender, sexuality, and race. Mark Dery (1992), for example, focused on the subversive and oppositional forms of identity that emerged in early Web 1.0 Internet use, while Howard Rheingold (1993) presented an idealistic conception of harmonious, online virtual communities. Despite the substantial shift from Web 1.0 text-based personal hyperlinked webpages toward Web 2.0 social networking – characterized by participation, audio/video sharing, interactive remixing, and upfront, nonanonymous engagement – older theories of online identity presenting the notion of the digital self as theatrical and, sometimes, fraudulent, have continued to frame much public discourse on subjectivity in online contexts.

One such example is the concept of the fluid self, marked and produced in online play in text-based, Web 1.0 chatrooms. Discussing such a self, cyber theorist Sherry Turkle (1999) contended that theories of identity that frame the self as largely decentered, such as Mark Poster's (2006) approach to anonymous speech on the Internet as being without limits, gender, religion,

ethnic, or national requirements, face a constant disjuncture between concepts of unitary identity as an illusion and, on the other hand, lived experience in which the unitary self is popularly felt to be the most basic reality. The Internet, particularly in the form of early Web 1.0, text based chat rooms, offered technological objects to think with that allowed postmodern understandings of identity as multiple, and always decentered, to be explored by facilitating experiential understandings of the illusion of a unitary self (Turkle, 1997). In the often anonymous environments of text based, virtual reality, multiuser domains (MUDs and MOOs) one could invest in and construct oneself in a simulated environment understood to be free of embodied territorial constraints. In effect, one could challenge the idea of unitary identity through the willful experimentation with identity categories. Turkle (1999) introduced the well known example of a user known as Case: a male industrial designer who maintains a "Jimmy Stewart versus Katharine Hepburn dichotomy" of online personae to exemplify a notion of identity as distributed and heterogeneous, facilitated by text based online forums. For Case, presenting himself as a feminine "Katharine Hepburn ideal" online allowed an externalization of an aspect of himself that he would be unable to fully explore in "real life" masculine embodiment.

From today's perspective, examples of identity play such as Turkle's are not only highly outdated in the context of the broader use of online communication for visual representation of the self, but can be understood to be problematic for two reasons. First, they maintain the real world/virtual world dichotomy that is pervasive in much of the cyberculture and mainstream discourse of online communication and social networks. The dualism of the human and machine boundary is far less discernibly established and may be more usefully described in terms of a series of performances across a sociotechnical network wherein the "interface" consists of a multiplicity of aligned and dynamic encounters between different configurations, including as persons and machines. Examples of identity play and identity fluidity through the utilization of online sites, such as Turkle's exploration of Case, rely on acts self-stereotyping in order to maintain online personae. While not explicitly explored, Case's use of film icon stereotypes highlights the theatricality of his online personae, which falls short of the performative approach to identity espoused by Butler. Although celebrated as examples of identity fluidity, these online performances are thus theatrical and maintain the consistency and coherence of offline embodied identity, rather than being a genuine challenge to prevailing everyday concepts of unitary and essentialist identity.

Resulting from the increased materiality afforded to multiple and divergent identity category expressions online, it is understandable that early cyberculture theorists postulated a future where the unbridled expansion of identity categories might lead to a utopian world wherein "identity" could be extricated from foundationalist principles. What the success of a social network like Facebook might suggest, is that all of the identity "choices" presented online necessitate a mediatory tool if one is to readily articulate a coherent and intelligible self and present a picture of selfhood for the scrutiny of a plurality of gazes. However, despite the shift from early anonymous text based communication, Turkle's early work remains helpful in framing the possibility for some technologies to impact "older, centralized ways" of considering identity. Within Turkle's framework, objects anchor experience and memories. So while her example of Case's online personae is problematic, it is nevertheless helpful in highlighting how objects contribute to identity construction.

3 PROFILES AND PERFORMATIVITY

Many current approaches to understanding the relationship between Web 2.0 environments (characterized by YouTube, Wikis, and – most particularly – social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook) are grounded in the notion that social network use emanated from a coherent *a priori* self (e.g., Donath & boyd, 2004; Liu, 2008; Livingstone & Brake, 2010), despite the powerful arguments put forward within poststructuralist theory that "show up" the possibility of a genuinely coherent, intelligible, and unified self (Cover, 2012b). Although, from a Foucauldian, Butlerian, and poststructuralist perspective, all performance of identity is relational in that it requires the citation of discursive categories of identity, is performed for recognizability, and operates within constructed "truth regimes," the relationality of Web 2.0 digital media and communication environments further implicates identity within a network of others in which mutual surveillance can be understood as the key to identity articulation in an online environment – a surveillance in which online users are always from the beginning complicit. Identifications and categorizations online thus function to assert individuality and often involve a process of stereotyping that allows group members easily to distinguish self, others, and group members (Buckingham, 2008).

Much of the early current literature on social networks describes the conscious, willful use of an online technology like Facebook. This position is coterminous with early cyberculture work that maintains the "real life"

versus "virtual self" dichotomy and, effectively, the reification of a "real" identity out of which the "virtual self" could be voluntarily created. However, several more effective and theoretically grounded approaches to understanding the relationship between social networking and identity build on the work of Erving Goffman (1959). Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of identity performance offers a convenient framework for the analysis of identity expression only. Social networks, situated in the broader cultural practices of individualism, self-narration, and interconnectivity, offer many parallels to Goffman's work. Goffman points to the self-conscious presentation of selfhood in different contexts as well as the symptomatic elements of performance – that is, what people "give" and what they "give off." An individual, for Goffman, performs identity through both of the forms of intentional and unintentional expression. In the context of social networking and other online forms of relationality, Goffman's approach to the performative expression of selfhood points to the ways in which the online acts of typing, updating, uploading photos and videos, and other activities serve as both intentional and unintentional forms of expression to varying degrees depending on intent and context.

Beyond the anthrosociological work of Goffman that makes available the notion of front-end and back-end performances of selfhood, poststructuralist and feminist theory since the 1990s has contributed to a broader understanding of subjectivity as contingent, multiple, and fluid, operating variously through historical, cultural, and narrativized structures and frameworks. This is a substantial and critical shift from the more traditional, Enlightenment perception of identity as emanating from an inner essence, and represented through behavior and communication. While it is a critical standpoint, it is also evidenced in the cultural frameworks through which subjects are beginning to articulate concepts of identity in digital frameworks through which social relationality, through "always connected" digital belonging, becomes increasingly normative. Judith Butler's work on performativity has been particularly important in expanding the ways in which such behavior, communication, articulation, and activity can be understood as constituting – rather than merely representing – identity and selfhood. Although Butler's work is complex and wide-ranging, there are four nodes of her theories of performative identity which are significant in the study of online, interactive behaviors and experiences. These are best summarized as follows. (1) Extending the work of both Nietzsche and Foucault, there is no core, essential self from which behaviors and actions – both offline and online – emerge, only a set of performances that retroactively produce an

illusion of an inner identity core: the actor behind the acts is really only ever an effect of those performances (Butler, 1993, p. 12). (2) The self is performed by the citation and repetition of discursively given norms, categories, stereotypes, labels, and expressions: in the context of social networking, such discursively given language is always mediated by interactive relationships, including available lists of profile categories ranging from a user's gender and relationship status to choices around favorite films and other taste categories, plus many other complex articulations, posts, interpretations, searches, and what appear ostensibly as choices. (3) Selves are constituted in discourse but can be reconstituted or reconfigured differently if encountering different, new, imaginative discursive arrangements (Butler, 1991, p. 18): these include new categories or alternative names and norms of identity encountered online – for example, the decision to add or "like" a fan page on, say, animal rights which might reconstitute a coordinate of that user's identity as vegetarian. (4) While never complete or without flaw, the process of performing identity occurs within a narrative of coherence over time, motivated by a cultural demand or imperative that we are coherent, intelligible, and recognizable to others in order to allow social participation and belonging (Butler, 1997, p. 27). In other words, a sense of self is forged across an array of identity categories or "coordinates" (Cover, 2004a) – which include common axes of discrimination such as gender, ethnicity, ability, and age but might also be comprised of spurious experiences that are less easily categorizable and less well demarcated in an identity/difference dichotomy – and that these are articulated through an ongoing process of "shoring up" or "answering" any anomalies between those coordinates to present a coherent, recognizable, and intelligible self.

Performativity, then, is identity produced through the citation of culturally given identity categories or norms in a reiterative process, and occurs across both offline and online actions – in this theoretical framework it would be a mistake to think of social networking behavior, for example, as being only a disembodied representation or biographical statement or set of conscious and voluntary choices. Such performance which, in the context of social networking, might be "liking" a fan page, adding a friend, or choosing a gender category are not merely voluntary, self-conscious decisions but acts which at a deeper level of analysis can be seen to construct the identity or self perception of making those decisions. Contemporary western culture compels such acts of identity in the demand that one articulate oneself as a rational, reasonable, coherent, and recognizable self (Woodward, 2002, p. 89), despite poststructuralist theory "showing up" the impossibility of

a genuinely coherent, intelligible, and unified self (Butler, 1997, p. 99; Jameson, 1985). Social networking sites, and particularly their profile management function, can thus be understood as one tool or mechanism for attempting to be effective in articulating a coherent and recognizable self, much as diaries, journals, conversations, or other communicative acts have been. As the work of self-coherence becomes ever more difficult, the time spent in profile maintenance, which may be as complex as profile revision or as simple as making a status update or adding an image caption, pays off as the (never quite) coherent and intelligible profile continues to perform the self over time.

Aspects of social networking sites such as Facebook can thus be said to be the tools *par excellence* by which to perform as a coherent subject. As Helen Kennedy (2006) pointed out about webpages generally, they are a media form which is never entirely finished, just as identity composition is a continuous process – both are constantly "under construction" (p. 869). A user exploiting Facebook for performing identity in a never ending process toward coherence and intelligibility is, effectively, doing what we do when we have a conversation, perhaps in a café with a friend and speak of ourselves, desires, experiences, recent actions, and tastes. Within a disciplinary society of surveillance (Foucault, 1977), we police each other's subjecthood for coherence, often in line with stereotypes and easily recognizable "norms" and narratives: one subject's taste for classical music, but punk outfits, demands an explanation for consistency, intelligibility, and uniformity in order to belong and maintain participation in social. Within cultural frameworks that posit the stereotype that gay men are particular about interior décor (an old but persistent stereotype), one's queer identity but household messiness is seen as noncomplementary or outside the restrictive norm or stereotype demanding explanation. Two conflicting political views must be smoothed over as in conversational language: "But you said earlier…" demanding the work of bringing the performance, articulations, expressions, back into coherence and stabilizing once again the projection of identity.

On social networking sites such as Facebook, the tools for producing and articulating oneself in coherent and unified intelligibility are effectively supplied in the profile management interface, providing a discursive framework used to give performative acts of identity consistency and coherence. The profile basics can be said to include: gender, birth date, gender of sexual/romantic interest, relationship status (and who), a biographical statement, political views, religious views, a short written biography, a profile photograph or image, a favorite quotation, education and work, and

likes and interests. Notably, sites such as Facebook have responded to the ever increasing idea of microcategorizations of identity by expanding the possibilities for how one represents oneself – the expansion of multiple gender categories being one such notable example, whereby gender can be expressed by choosing one from a vast range of gender descriptors beyond the more common and violently limiting male/female descriptors.

For Sonia Livingstone (2008), whether those choices are limited or expansive, such choices are always acts of biographization of the self, in which users "select a more or less complex represent of themselves" (p. 403). To view this in a framework of performativity, the establishment and maintenance of a profile is not a representation or biography but instead a series of performative acts which constitute the self and stabilize it over time as the effect of those choices. Written, selected, and revised, this is a performance which requires carefully chosen responses that present an intelligible self with integrity, unification, and recognizable coherence. An inconsistency (say, conservative political views that rub awkwardly against the act of "liking" an antiwar fan page) can be explained and made intelligible, cohering together through perhaps a lengthy biographical entry on the Facebook Info Page. A straight man's status of relationship with another man can be indicated or recognized as an act of irony or humor, leaving the identity of heterosexuality intact (depending on the reader's digital–cultural literacy or knowledge of the person). The important element here in understanding social networking as a site for an intelligible identity performance is that different users will exploit these tools in different ways and to varying degrees, and that at no stage is this necessarily a conscious, voluntary moment of identity construction but just as reiterative, hidden, and disavowed as a masculine way of walking performs, stabilizes, and is consistent with a male identity, or choices around household furnishing performs and coheres with, say, a middle-class income bracket, affiliation, or identification. These are never complete, but always and forever remain a process – persistent maintenance of the self and constant maintenance of the profile.

Subjectivity as an effect within an interactive digital environment occurs not through an external act of "naming" but in "taking" the name or category or label as if one were interpellated by it simultaneously, as if it were simply a choice for a convenient representation. None of these forms of performativity online operate as freefloating decisions but, in line with a theory of performativity are constituted by the available, provided categorizations in line with the available discourses of selfhood. An obvious but significant example being that gender configurations in contemporary

society are expected to conform to available cultural categories (masculine/feminine and various emerging, sometimes controversial alternatives) but, in performing these online through an enunciative act on a social networking profile, one is required to declare a category on the assumption that this is a fixed and relatively unchangeable necessary facet of selfhood. This forecloses on the broad range of alternative possibilities that might emerge in languages not yet utilized or terms not yet categorizable or, indeed, by articulating nonwestern androgynies which cannot be expressed through either a dichotomy or even a singular concept label. As Ian Buchanan (2007) put it in discussing the cultural, linguistic, and discursive options available to us around gender identity, "you can choose to be man, woman, or transgendered, but you cannot choose to be nongendered." The categories available in making profile choices in social networking sites provide, indeed, the same limitations – if not stricter ones – as the discourses available to us. In Butler's (1990) terms, like discourse, these are "constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity" (pp. 33–34).

Although not wholly constrictive given the range of counter options for performing otherwise (e.g., the biography text-box or ongoing status updates), the provided categories on social networking sites offer a notion of freedom to "choose" that which is endemic to neoliberalist thinking and digital technology's either/or framework (Lazzarato, 2004, 2009). Yet they risk for some users the violence of a normative truth regime that excludes alternative, postmodern, poststructuralist ways of reconfiguring identity, self-complexity, or doing subjectivity otherwise (Butler, 1993, p. 53). In other words, while culture might demand identity coherence in accord with a culturally recognized discourse, the social networking tools of subject performance provide limited scope for playing out an identity in accord with anything but the most simplistic and simplified discourses articulating only the most limited normative choices – at least around gender, age, and relationship status as three areas of demarcated and heavily politicized identity coordinates. What is important about the profile pages of Facebook is that the information, often provided as an initiation into social networking (boyd, 2008a, p. 128) and subsequently updated as the "narrative" of our performed identities, might change, shift, or stabilize over time, in response to the cultural demand for coherence. Social networking sites provide the tools for smoothing over the inconsistencies into an intelligible, recognizable presentation of selfhood. This is not the site of the chatroom experiment of Turkle's (1995) pre-Web 2.0 understanding of Internet

identities, but is coterminous with an offline sense of self, masquerading as a biography and representation but just as constitutive of self-identities.

Social networking sites can therefore be understood as sites through which identity categories are most effectively performed. Most social networks are built around individual user profiles, even though these are always produced and utilized in relation to others. The first step for the creation of any given profile is to engage in a form filling process; a process that now occurs countless times over one's lifetime. As Butler notes, the repeated act of "naming" identity categories is an institutionalized form of regimentation that produces and circulates normativities by requiring the construction of an identity in accord with dominant discursive arrangements like heteronormativity and naturalized principles of sexual difference. As initial profile creation frequently involves submitting gender and age, and often includes sexual preference, nationality, and relationship status, it can be viewed a set of acts that are repeated over time to produce a mythical reality.

4 IDENTITY, FRIENDSHIP, AND THE NETWORK

Although not wholly disconnected from profile management, the act of friending and relating to others through social networking on Facebook is a separate set of performances of identity expression. This second "field" of online performance focuses on the social or relational, producing conformity through interactive identification with others: friends, acquaintances, strangers, persons known only online, coworkers, employees, students and teachers, parents, and family – all typically presented under the problematically simple label of "friends." Online relationality is developed through (1) the creation and maintenance of friends lists through the reciprocal adding and accepting of friends (Lewis & West, 2009, p. 1210) and (2) engaging with those friends to varying degrees through interactive communication such as updating, commenting, responding, and tagging (Green, 2008, p. 7). Both are performative acts of identification articulated through frameworks of relationality and belonging; specific activities which produce, constitute, and stabilize the self. Friendship, kinship, and other relationships are significant elements in the performance of identity (Lewis & West, 2009, p. 1210) and within this theoretical approach it can be argued that the act of coherent and intelligible identity performances are not only to maintain norms for social participation but are done in the context of those in our circle of friends who – often unwittingly but within disciplinary society – surveil. Those who will engage with the narrative of my performance, those who

will look for coherence, and those who will recognize my self as a subject do so on behalf of power formations of normalization. This is something that occurs within a construction not just of identity norms, categories, and names as given discursively, but within a matrix of identification and belonging.

Much writing on social networking and identity draws on the early work of Erving Goffman (1959), Erik Erikson (1968), and the slightly more recent accounts of subject formation presented by Anthony Giddens (1991). For these writers, a notion of performance is utilized to place the process of identity maintenance, and the overcoming of identity crises through reflexive behavior in relation to the presentation of the self, among a group or the public in sociality. In some recent work on how users present themselves through social networking on LiveJournal, Hodkinson (2007) points out that friending is about an individualized set of choices as to how one interacts and customizes the self within shifting personal priorities rather than within fixed and ongoing group structures (p. 646). Following Donath and boyd (2004), Liu points out that a user's friends' connections are an expression of identity and "the public display of friend connections constitutes a social milieu that contextualizes one's identity" (Liu, 2008, p. 254). They are, for Liu, "willful acts of context creation" (p. 254) that aim to produce group identifications through solidarity between a user's tastes and a social group's taste norm (pp. 261–262). This perspective is notable for the way in which it places identity within the context of surveillance through spectatorship and interaction with others within a social network. Liu sees this as a self-conscious act by which performers are reflectively aware of the impressions fostered within the network of friends. However, the relationality of social networking can be understood as a nononstensible activity taken up unwittingly by users as part of the "biographical 'narratives' that will explain themselves to themselves, and hence sustain a coherent and consistent identity" (Buckingham, 2008, p. 9). In line with Butler's more nuanced approach to performativity, we can thus argue that the performances of identity which may appear to be wilful and reflexive are acts which constitute the narrative of selfhood, retroactively establishing the subject who speaks – or in this case, speaks the self through status updates and interactions with friends or speaks the self through the performative acts of friending. The performative interaction and relationality with others online comes in two forms: (1) friending and friend list maintenance and (2) synchronous and asynchronous communication between those "friends," both of which I will outline below.

Friending. To understand the identity implications of the act of friending we need to explore the way in which the performance of subjecthood operates in the context of online social networks: that is, by asking what this "friendship" might actually come to be. There is some emerging work which looks the ways in which friends are categorized variously by the user via new mechanisms that allow certain information to remain private from certain groups (Diaz, 2008); others have explored some of the ways in which friendship online is understood as a weak form of relationality with others as opposed to social contact in a fully embodied, offline sense (Ellison et al., 2007, p. 1146; Baym, Zhang, Kunkel, Ledbetter, & Lin, 2007, p. 737; Tong et al., 2008, p. 537); and still others have suggested that social networking sites' singular conceptual category of friend (regardless of various privacy distinctions on Facebook) is a flattening out of the complex relationships and multiple categories of friendship, kinship, and acquaintanceship experienced in offline spaces (Lewis & West, 2009, p. 1211). We can advance these important points by noting that the act of friending – of adding a friend, whether that be an acquaintance, a stranger, an old friend, or some other category of relationship, is an act of identity performance in and of itself. But that act is channeled through a concept of identification – of acknowledging and thereby producing and stabilizing some relationship and some sense of like (whether that be liking in the sense of fondness or being akin to another, noting that Facebook frequently uses the signifier like as a means of response to friends' comments and the terminology for joining a group fan page). Choosing to add a friend may well be a voluntary act of seeking information or gaining access to another's profile; in Butler's performativity framework it is what that act "says" about a user that retrospectively makes it a factor of identity performance.

In the case of Facebook, one thus forms an identification with another through the performative act of adding a friend or liking a group, and this responds to the very gray set of distinctions between identifying with another in relation; possessing another as a friend on a list, and possessing a particular "friend count" (Tong et al., 2008, p. 545). Given that friending on Facebook, as on several other social networking platforms, is also an action which allows access to one's profile of "managed" self-information, prior postings, photographs, and other artifacts (Tufekci, 2008, p. 23), the act is a sort of double performative – it is an identification that is simultaneously an articulation of the history of identifications given through that profile, a simultaneous act of relationality and of speaking the self. None of this is to suggest that there is some flattening out of all persons on a friendship list,

as if a group has come together through sameness. Rather, identifications can be constituted in difference and distinction (Butler, 1995, p. 441). For a singular user, what can occur is a set of identifications that are marked by varying gradations and fragmentations of identification, of sameness and difference, of closeness and distance, and of other categorizations which may not be stated obviously through Facebook's friends lists. The act of adding – and, by corollary, the decision not to add – friends is thus an act of performance that constitutes the self through a complex array of claims to relationality and sociality.

Networked communication. As for the second form of performativity through friendship and relationality, identifications are stabilized through commentary, updates, discussions, communication, and interactivity. The performativity of relationships and belonging in social networking is, in other words, not limited to (1) owning a list of friends and/or (2) being on another's list of friends, but on maintaining flows of communication through the multifarious vectors of friendship and relationality on social networking sites. These are by no means the only ways in which relational communication flows: social networkers today utilize a multiplicity of communication platforms both offline and online, through synchronous and asynchronous means, and across more than one social networking site. Communication and comments are not always necessarily simply updates on one's actual status, thoughts and feelings, or responses to others' comments, etc., that can be read by or are intended for a wider audience. Rather, they can work within various sets of connotations and significations that may be understood by, for example, the friends of the user: common experiences, shared amusements, in-jokes among a close inner circle (Lewis & West, 2009, p. 1222), or "seemingly random statements that only their recipients could truly appreciate" (Walker, Krehbiel, & Knoyer, 2009, p. 686), are among the codes of speech of insider remarks and asides that formulate and perform certain types of belonging in the space of the social networking site.

Perhaps the best way of understanding the interface between belonging and identification through social networking sites is in line with Manuel Castells' network morphology that characterizes contemporary sociality across political, economic, labor, and technological environments (Castells, 2000). It is no surprise that the relationality of social networking fits with Castell's description of the network (despite predating the uptake of Facebook and, slightly before that, MySpace), given social networking sites are, of course, the culmination of its logic. As far as the logic that directs social networking sites goes, Castells suggests that relationality occurs along the

lines of an increasing complexity of interaction (Castells, 2000, pp. 70–71) which is witnessed in the multiplicity of communicatory engagements across a social networking site from the perspective of a single user (and, indeed, also in offline situations). For example, a user makes a status update that is able to be seen by all or some on a friends list who have access to that profile's wall. One friend can begin a commentary that surreptitiously questions how that update fits within the user's recognizable identity: "But you said last week that you preferred…" demanding an explanation. The complexity occurs not because the borders of a community are being policed through surveillance and the imperative to confess for normalization, coherence, and recognition, but because the original status update is open to a multiplicity of "activated meanings" within a complex set of discursive reading formations (Bennett, 1983, p. 218). For different friends, this will depend not on where they are located within a network morphology, but on how they are located. Friends lists are not a flattened group of individuals but identify with users variously, through multiple typologies: family/friend/acquaintance, extent of experience with the user, shared identity experiences, and production and maintenance of online and offline knowledge. Of course, each user's typology of friends and how they operate on the network of relationality will differ (perhaps rapidly) over time, and will include how other meanings and identifications are produced in other ways across the network – such as how that user commented on a photograph on the friend's sister's partner's site. In other words, complexity is found in the variances in knowledge around a user and the considerable variety of networkers, but is managed through the technological paradigm of a social networking site. Simultaneous complex and easy belonging becomes not a thing but a momentary intersection between different dimensions of identification, which is managed, but always persistently in flux. Online relationality, identification, mutuality, and performance, are constituted by a structural logic of "nodes and hubs" (Castells, 2000, p. 443). Within Facebook, as well as other social networking sites, friends become placed in an amorphous nodes, hubs, and points framework, allowing us to see a reveling of relationalities such that from the perspective of all users there are multiple network formations at play.

Relationality may thus depend on a number of social factors, but how it is expressed online conforms to this newer logic of the network that shifts from one formation to another depending on different contexts, times of day, topics of conversation, issues arising, and so on. Thus, the framework of identifications which occur across the network in its very instability, amorphousness,

and flux are multiple, and this aligns with Butler's point that identifications are always multiple and occurring all the time, therefore never driven by a singular identification or rule (Butler, 1990, p. 67). The degree to which social networking friendship constitutes one's subjectivity is, of course, variable and must never be considered out of the context of the full, complex array of relationships, spaces, places, and experiences occurring across everyday life – that is, not just the Web 2.0 world of online communication and interactivity. What social networking has enabled, however, is a shift in the logic of identification and belonging from spatial, kinship, and community patterns into an everincreasing cycle of complexity in which belonging continues to be the primary aim of performing identities toward intelligibility and coherence, but whereby the notion of belonging is defined differently now through the network of flows. Ultimately, this makes subjectivity more complex: the logic of social networking postmodernizes subjecthood in a way different from the late capitalist postmodernization of identity through consumption (Jameson, 1985). While some might bemoan the simpler, more stable frameworks that belong to Enlightenment's demands for coherence, this somewhat rival logic opens up new possibilities for, at the very least, alternative ways of being a subject.

5 IDENTITY, MULTIPLICITIES, AND UNDOING

While profile maintenance and online friendship/relationality are both sets of performative acts which in Butler's framework of performativity constitutes narratives of selfhood, while evaluating their effectiveness as tools for the coherent and intelligible performance of identity there emerges a critical argument that these two facets of social networking compete with each other and risk the undoing of identity narratives and coherence. That is, while they both provide a useful and effective means by which to articulate self-identity, in ways that aim to fulfill the cultural demand for intelligible selfhood, viewed together they open either the possibility of revealing the basic incoherence and multiplicity of identity or adding to the task of "identity work." It is important to remark here on some of the ways in which the use of Facebook generates an inconsistency is in the performance of a coherent identity. This incompatibility of the two activities might best be figured as one of the gaps in citation, reiteration, and repetition of which Butler (1990) has demonstrated "shows up" the persistent instability of coherent identity (p. 145). In fact, it may only be by taking the risk of showing an identity's incoherence that identification with others – the networking

with, for, and by friends in various formations – can occur. The profile, as I have been arguing, is the site of a reiterative performance or practice of identity that, carefully constructed, works as part of an overall narrative and a strategy toward the coherent performance of a unified identity/subjectivity, answering the Enlightenment imperatives for intelligibility and recognition in order to participate socially and achieve belonging within a disciplinary society of norms. While sites such as Facebook and other social networking formations provide a convenient tool for the construction and clarification of selfhood online (and one that is capable of being utilized as an archive for offline performances for others and self), they also present the greatest risk to narrative coherence through the specifically digital and asynchronous forms of friending and friendship communication and interactivity. This occurs in three identifiable ways: (1) through the capacity of social networking walls and commentary spaces by which a friend is invited to surveil, identify, and point to a breach in identity coherence most easily; (2) through the possibility of disruption by being able to point to the specific moments in the record of identity narrative represented by wall posts and status updates and in contrast with other parts of the social networking site such as photographs; and (3) by the fact that the narrative of the self is not entirely "managed" by the user (in the same way as, say, a diary maintained over time has been), meaning his or her performance of coherent selfhood is persistently countered by the comments about that person and – particularly – the possibly unwanted tagging of the user in photographs that may be unwanted, not in his or her possession, and not under his or her control (except to keep tabs on this regularly and remove tags where possible).

5.1 Commentaries

The fact that participants in the social networking nodes and hubs of relationality are in a position to surveil each profile, creates the possibility for the undoing of identity coherence, noting the point that this is not necessarily a negative thing, but something which creates difficulties in fulfilling the continuing Enlightenment imperative of intelligible, reasonable, and recognizable subjectivity. This is akin to the "café conversation" mentioned earlier. In the act of conversing about oneself, one may be called upon by a friend to clarify any perceived incoherence in identity, frequently seen as a lack of "integrity": "But yesterday, you said that you were a vegetarian…" or "but I had no idea you'd slept with women, so are you bisexual or what…?", and so on. The call from the friend to clarify in terms of a known, recognizable, and perhaps normative narrative is undertaken on

behalf of contemporary culture's imperative for coherence. This might easily be resolved by an explanation that reweaves the life story, the narrative of identity. The response restores one to recognizability, even though it may be a recognition or rethinking of the self: "Yes, I am vegetarian, I had a moment of weakness", "sometimes I do eat fish", "I've always found both genders attractive", or "it was something I was doing in college – everybody was." But once this "conversation" and the demand for confession, clarity, and coherence shifts to the Facebook wall we have a markedly different scenario which more effectively undoes identity coherence and selfhood than a fleeting verbal remark: a textual comment, a request written on the wall is no longer simply a spoken demand for a recognizable identity narrative but is on the one hand a call that is made in a semipublic environment and on the other a call that persists over time.

The fact that the conversational policing of identity occurs through wall and photo/video commentary responses provides what might otherwise have been a spoken request the cultural perception of authority that comes with written/produced text (Foucault & Bouchard, 1977, p. 128; Biriotti & Miller, 1993, pp. 2–6, 12). At the same time, however, it should be remembered that this is not a one-sided form of conversing whereby an author–user is interrogated by a reader–feedback–friend. Rather, this goes both ways, for the request for a clarification, a comment, a caption, etc., made by a friend is also his or her act of subject performance, an articulation constitutive of the self within the nodes and hubs arrangement of the network morphology of online identification. The multiple directions of the flow of such performative commentary and conversation is an interactivity which, for Mark Andrejevic (2002), has an element of the confessional culture that stems from a contemporary desire for subjection to "a discursive regime of self-disclosure" (p. 234). For some time now, media scholars have noted the ways in which confession of the self has been remade as entertainment, across television shows such as *Sex and the City* to reality television to the talkback show epitomized by *Oprah* (Attwood, 2006, p. 84). However, the Facebook Wall can be characterized as confession of the self, remade as friendship and relationality, indeed there have been suggestions that earlier homepages and other interactive sites of biography are the culmination of a confessional society (Kennedy, 2006, p. 870).

Where disciplinary surveillance itself shifts into a network morphology, its efficacy is no longer in the possibility of being watched, as Foucault puts it using the metaphor of the Panopticon (Foucault, 1977), but in the certainty of that surveillance operating within the network flows of

relationality. Friends are no longer thus those who might surveil and normalize; rather, their relative placement as nodes and hubs, in an interactive flow of question and answer, constitutes their performativity as Facebook friends within a framework of regularization and normalization. In that sense, Facebook friendship is the disciplinary regime of confession *par excellence*. However, due to the multiplicity of flows that contrast with the centralization of the Panopticon metaphor, we see not its effect as normalization, rather multiple attempts to normalize from multiple angles that can come with diverse "conversations" from different friends, about different updates, across different formulations of private and public speech, and alongside different activations of meaning – the user and his or her narrative of recognizable identity risk being forcibly fragmented or, at the very least, requiring even greater "identity work" to perform, retain, and stabilize coherence and intelligibility.

5.2 Disrupting the Past – the Archive

Confession in the face of the other is, as Sally Munt (2002) has pointed out, a technique of the self which renders the subject "visible and plausible to itself, and to others" through a reiteration which gains the force of a plot and involves a persistent and retrospective reordering (p. 19). But what happens to that retrospective remembering and reconfiguring when the momentary articulations of an identity performance, and the many conversations and regimentary instances of surveillance and confession, are laid out across a social networking wall as a written history? What Brett St. Louis (2009), following Stuart Hall, has referred to as narratives which account "for peoples' arrival at the present through a past that is imaginatively reconstructed and dramatized" (p. 565) and Buckingham (2008) points to as part of the "project of selfhood" in which biographical narratives articulated over time, are both useful in pointing to the ways in which the narrative of performative selfhood, that is developed by the user through profile management, is put asunder by friendship wall discussions, additions, commentary, and tagging that acts as an archive. That is, the memorialization of the past is not as easily refigured, reordered, and reremembered when an order, a history, and a set of collective memories are laid out as an archive. An autobiography or a reflective construction of a user's online profile involves a memorialization of a past which never existed but which retrospectively narrates and justifies the current moment of identity coherence in order to lend the illusion of an ongoing fixity of selfhood across time (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2011). However, an archive of the past is precisely that which opens up the possibility

of incoherence by having documented the past identity configurations at various moments.

For Castells (2000), the network captures within its domain "most cultural expressions, in all their diversity" (p. 403), and it is in the powerful tools of a Web 2.0 digital environment that data and articulations from different points in subjective time are brought together. This, again, will be in the form of status updates, commentaries, feedback, conversations, images, and videos which flow across the network but are gathered together on a single page as a documentation of every shift in identity. I can look at my friend's wall and read a biography which is presented in reverse order, hitting the "older posts" button to take me further and further back. While my friend's profile presents a coherent and constructed narrative, a biography and set of educational and employment posts, a list of various tastes, combined with my knowledge of his or her other activities and experiences, there is a clear and discernible narrative available to me. This profile may have been revised a dozen times, but when read as a profile there is no necessary reason to tease out its constructedness. But reading the wall posts, commentary, and friends' views along with the updates on when friends were added and so on, I can see a documentary record of momentary snapshots of a fragmentary self that has not been shaped into performance masquerading as a representation of intelligible selfhood. My friend's recognition as a coherent subject is at risk. What is important to note, however, is that online commentary can be, to use Vikki Bell's (1999) phrase, "the constitutive moments and modes of identity" (p. 7). For performativity to "work," those constitutive moments must be smoothed over, disavowed, forgotten, or rememorialized into something else. It is precisely this that the documentary record of these moments does not allow, instead making visible the fact that any subject may have had a multitude of those moments corresponding to shifts in identity.

5.3 Tagging

Tagging of images and other artifacts has sometimes been a slightly controversial element of Facebook, given that it allows a user to link the name of another user to a photograph which the tagged person may not have seen, been aware of, or authorized. Tagging is very much the epitome of an interactive, participatory Web 2.0 culture of communication (Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westermanand, & Tong, 2008, p. 30). Tags create identificatory links, giving an association or a connection between a user and a set of behaviors that may be discerned in a photograph – which is not to deny the

multiplicity of meanings that can be interpreted, read, or activated by viewers of that image. To tag a photograph on Facebook, a user uploads it to an album, selects the tagging tool, selects a face or other body part (or anything else really) in the image, and either chooses a person's name from their list of network contacts (friends) or types any other name or tag. Now, there is nothing particularly new about being able to make this kind of association in an online capacity. One could establish a website and caption or otherwise tag people's names to images which, again, they may not have seen or authorized for distribution. What is significantly different in the case of Facebook is that once tagged, an alert will appear on a user's wall, fed to the newsfeed seen by all other people in that person's network. This, of course, is part of the increasing capacity of digital environments to organize data and online artifacts in ways which are more easily accessible through classifying, filtering, and tagging, even though it replicates older conceptual issues around the relationship between image and word (Prada, 2009). An image of a user may be captioned, but for anyone searching for those images, without digital tagging they would be difficult to find, similar to, for example, a handwritten caption in an analog, physical album in grandmother's attic. This element of rationality has caused concern and panic around the privacy and control of information over the past couple of years in the popular press. There have been concerns about the ways in which tagged nontextual items become increasingly searchable online (Hearn, 2010a), which, given how different in tone and context an image or video can be from text, may have an impact not just on how one is represented but on how one perceives oneself – particularly if the tagged image or video comes back as a surprise. According to recent reports, several European countries' regulators, including those in Switzerland and Germany, are currently investigating the practice of posting photos, videos, and other information about people on sites such as Facebook and tagging them without their consent as being a breach of privacy laws (Privacy Battle, 2010). It might be argued that privacy concerns are not only about control of ostensible information but about the management of identity performance, and preventing the presentation of the self from spiraling out uncontrollably across networking sites and over time.

An example of the ways in which tagging acts to disrupt or undo the coherent narrative of an identity performance is as follows: a recent news report has addressed issues of jealousy that might occur when one's current partner is tagged in photographs by – and with – an expartner (Who's that girl, 2009), clearly addressing the distinction between an older model of

analog photographs and the social practices around the removal or hiding of photographs that present past relationships. Where acts of coupledom are central to identity practices in contemporary culture (Cover, 2010), an unwanted, unintended reemergence of a past relationship can create, preserve, and archive additional layers of relational identifications for that user, and indicates an incompatibility with the invited profile statement naming the current partner. This might, of course, be further complexified should the gender of the past partner be different from the current one, opening fragmentations for some networked friends in the sexual orientation of the profiled user. From the perspective of the user who has utilized Facebook's profile function and wall in the construction of a performance of coherent identity which has, by necessity, involved disavowing past experiences, the undoing of identity is initiated by an encounter with the past. Not a memorialized past – rewritten in one's memory or narrative through the framework of an identity present, but an archaeological artifact that might grate against the currency of one's identity performance, both online and offline. In other words, tagging not only takes identity out of the myth that it is represented, articulated, commanded, and controlled by the subject through profiles and performances, but acts as a reminder that the network framework commandeers and potentially thwarts the performativity of an intelligible selfhood.

In advancing our understanding of the relationship between social networking (and other online activities) and the performance of identity within contemporary cultural norms, structures, and frameworks, it is important to bear in mind that social networking uses, activities, changes, updates, and account management are not only conscious representations and choices made for access, but simultaneously activities or performances which construct identity and selfhood. What is significant here is that rather than thinking of social networking as singular activities, the ways in which sites social networking through Facebook have developed through the growth of applications, user-uptake and favored user activities has provided us with a multiplicity of activities and communicative forms which, as I have been arguing in relation to (1) profiles and (2) friendship networking, are not always mutually compatible with the project of subject performance. This theoretical account is one among several ways in which we can approach social networking and identity; additional empirical work will reveal other understandings of this significant tool of everyday identity.